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## Peering Into The Future: Three Essays on the Nascent Phenomenon of Collaborative Consumption

Rebeca Dellegrazie-Perren  
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PEERING INTO THE FUTURE:  
THREE ESSAYS ON THE NASCENT PHENOMENON OF  
COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Marketing  
in the College of Business Administration  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The primary objective of this dissertation is to examine the theoretical and practical implications of the collaborative consumption phenomenon for individuals, businesses and society. To accomplish this goal, a research approach at three levels of analysis is used to explore how market institutions and consumer practices negotiate a social order that combines the social domain of peers with the economic domain of market exchange. The first essay of the dissertation approaches this objective from a macro level to examine how social order is produced and sustained through the systemic interactions of service firms and peers. This essay provides a framework to understand the emergent business models by developing a typological theory that explains how platforms can be configured for higher value creation. The second essay approaches our understanding of the phenomenon from a meso level analysis to examine how peers interact with the social order of collaborative consumption markets to negotiate key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation. This essay explores the metaphors that peers use to construe the field of collaborative consumption. Through the interpretive analysis of participant-generated images, this research uncovers the prevailing use of a liberation metaphor that reveals a new way of thinking about resource circulation. Lastly, the third essay employs a micro level of analysis to examine how participation in collaborative consumption practices provokes intrapersonal dynamics leading to moral decay. By relying on a social cognitive framework that considers how behaviors impact personal and environmental factors in a recursive fashion, this essay scrutinizes when and how prolonged participation can erode moral identity and negatively impact prosocial behaviors. Together, this holistic approach advances our theoretical understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon and provides practical implications for managerial practice and public policy.

I dedicate my dissertation work to my adored family. Thank you for your steadfast support and believing wholeheartedly in my potential. I could not have accomplished this work without the encouragement and support of my exceptionally loving husband and the profound inspiration from my daughters Arianna and Daniella. I will forever be grateful for taking this ride along with me – it wouldn't have been nearly as much fun without you ♥.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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### **Abstract**

We review a marketing reality borne of the digital era, collaborative consumption, in which individuals actively engage in the production of service offerings for the benefit of others. This phenomenon is rapidly gaining momentum with the advent of new technology and firms that seek to develop profitable business models by leveraging their Web platforms to engender trust among strangers and facilitate transactions among consumers. As a result, collaborative consumption has helped push traditional consumption communities from localized marketplaces with limited economic activity to collaborative global communities with important economic, environmental, and social effects.

Since the widespread adoption of Web 2.0 (2000s) there has been an enormous shift in the ability of consumers to provide services and coproduce consumption experiences for themselves and others. The proliferation of networked technologies has transformed exchanges among individuals, as online and mobile platforms are deployed to equip ordinary people with the ability to monetize their resources and skills. Reduced economic costs, time, and effort required for consumer participation in the production of market offerings has rendered exchange among individuals convenient, easy, and as readily available as Internet access. This phenomenon, which Botsman and Rogers (2010) call collaborative consumption, is rapidly gaining momentum. Collaborative consumption has been featured as one of 10 ideas that will change the world in the coming years (Walsh 2011).

Collaborative consumption, which was estimated at more than \$3.5 billion in 2013 (Geron 2013), allows revenues to flow directly into individuals' pockets. For example, Konrad Marshall, a journalist, spent a week immersed in collaborative consumption, earning \$335 for about 20 h of work that included hauling bricks for a suburban resident building a backyard chicken coop (\$50), writing a bio for a band (\$80), unpacking boxes and organizing their contents in a new home (\$60), and a few other jobs (Marshall 2014). Similarly, Larson Frederic generated about \$3000 income a month renting his home and transforming his Prius into a de facto taxi (Geron 2013). As Konrad and Larson illustrate, collaborative consumption allows individuals to leverage online and mobile platforms to monetize their skills and their idle assets. Such exchanges also operate largely within an informal economy as profits often go unreported and local taxes or fees uncollected.

## **Background on Collaborative Consumption**

Collaborative consumption is also referred to as the ‘sharing economy’ because individuals are sharing access to resources (for a fee or other compensation), or ‘peer-to-peer’ exchange because both the service provider and recipient are individuals rather than businesses. Although exchange among individuals has taken place as long as people have been trading, bartering, and swapping, these traditional face-to-face peer exchanges had limited appeal and were restricted by geographic bounds.

Moreover, exchange models such as garage sales or swap meets are temporary in nature and people who participate in these exchanges tend to oppose traditional marketplaces (Belk et al. 1988). As such, their attractiveness is limited to a niche market. With the advent of new technology, however, these traditional consumption communities have evolved from localized marketplaces with limited economic activity to collaborative global communities with significant economic, environmental, and social consequences. Chalmers et al. (2013) analyzed nearly 100 articles published in marketing and consumer research and identified several dimensions on which consumption communities vary. Based on this structural classification, collaborative consumption communities are scalable, nongeographically bound, and enduring platforms that operate synergistically with traditional marketplaces. These new platforms of peer exchange are attractive to a broad market because they bring the convenience and access associated with traditional business-to-consumer practices to consumer-to-consumer exchange.

Beyond technology, what has propelled collaborative consumption practices is the involvement of firms that facilitate exchanges among peers. Older, established firms, such as Craigslist and eBay, have given way to a wide variety of firms that serve to connect or facilitate peer exchanges. These firms are growing tremendously in number, size, and profits. For example,

Lyft provides on-demand peer-driven rides in cities across the United States and has recorded more than one million rides since it was founded in 2012 (<http://blog.lyft.com>); TaskRabbit, which outsources household errands and skilled tasks in the United States and the United Kingdom, boasted 1.25 million new users in 2013 alone (<http://blog.taskrabbit.com>); thredUP is a clothing resale platform earning sellers \$3.2 million and saving shoppers \$21 million in 2013 (<http://www.thredup.com/resale>); the 1 million members of Quirky, a community of inventors who collaborate in developing unique products, have developed over 350 products (<https://www.quirky.com/about>); and LendingClub, a peer-to-peer lending platform, has provided more than \$5 billion in total loans, earning investors nearly \$500 million in interest as of September 2014 (<https://www.lendingclub.com>). Indeed, firms and marketers have good reasons to be interested; a 2012 consumer panel survey found that generation X consumers with household incomes exceeding \$75 thousand per year find collaborative consumption most appealing, indicating a healthy market potential (Franz 2012).

Collaborative consumption markets are structurally different from the traditional buyer-seller dyad; they are triadic, rather than dyadic (Perren et al. 2014). Firms in this market serve as intermediaries between an individual providing a service and the person benefiting from the service. Each actor in this triadic exchange is interdependent and actively involved in the coproduction of a unique consumption experience. Importantly, the roles of the firms, sellers, and consumers can differ across types of markets (e.g., some require buyers to contact sellers directly, in others buyers and sellers have no contact; some firms assume responsibility if a product or service fails, others do not). As such, collaborative consumption markets are more dynamic, flexible, and less institutionalized than traditional markets.



In addition, collaborative consumption markets are challenging existing business models and current regulatory environments. Collaborative consumption has emerged as a viable alternative to traditional business in industries such as transportation, hospitality, retail, and banking. As the popularity of these practices has grown, so has its economic, environmental, and societal impact. Recently, discussion of collaborative consumption has risen to the level of heated debate, along with increased attention from legal and regulatory bodies. Some collaborative practices have been deemed illegal (e.g., short-term rentals are prohibited in cities like New York and San Francisco) and lack of regulation and oversight of these informal transactions in areas traditionally regulated such as food preparation, banking, or transportation could expose collaborative consumers to risks.

Although collaborative consumption has gained the most popularity in wealthy countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, developing nations are also embracing these new business models. Moreover, developing economies have a great potential to benefit from collaborative practices to alleviate lack of access to resources. Firms like Airbnb and Uber have already entered markets in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, while local entrepreneurs have sprung-up businesses to tackle problems such as access to education and financing.

### **Collaborative Consumption and the Evolution of Consumer Roles**

Marketing research has documented the evolution of consumer roles in market exchanges. Service marketing scholars recognized the participatory role of the customer in value creation by highlighting the importance of ‘partial employees’ in the conceptualization of service quality (Kelley et al. 1990), as well as the value of ‘commercial friendships’ in interpersonal

exchange between customers and service providers (Price and Arnould 1999). Consumers' helpful, discretionary behaviors were conceptualized as 'customer voluntary performance' (Bettencourt 1997), and later as 'customer citizen behaviors' (Rosenbaum and Massiah 2007). A second rich body of literature in consumer research centered on the concept of 'brand community' (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) recognized that individuals can be an important information source for other individuals, providing social benefits and representing a form of consumer agency (Schau et al. 2009). Finally, scholars have recently attempted to subsume many of the behavioral manifestations toward a brand or firm under the concept of 'customer engagement behavior' (VanDoorn et al. 2010).

None of these conceptualizations captures the full extent of activities involving individuals in collaborative consumption, however. For example, partial employee, customer voluntary performance, and customer citizen behaviors are conceptualized in the context of consumer receiving a service from a firm, not being the service provider themselves. Similarly, customer engagement behaviors are theorized as customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase but don't necessarily address the service provider role that customers adopt in collaborative consumption. Collaborative consumption challenges all these traditional views of consumers (Vargo and Lusch 2004) and point to a new stage in the evolution of the consumer role.

Likewise, this evolution of consumers from passive recipients of goods and services produced by businesses to active participants working collaboratively with enterprise in the marketplace is underscored by the proliferation of literature in sociology and consumer culture literature advocating its significance as well as criticizing its merits. Consumer culture theorists in particular have critically examined the marketing discourse and worklike activities carried out

by consumers (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Dujarier, forthcoming; Cova and Cova 2012; Zwick et al. 2008). Nonetheless, the concepts of ‘prosumer’ and ‘prosumption’ have become central to understanding the growing role of collaborative practices in shaping economic relations in contemporary capitalist society (Comor 2010; Denegri-Knott and Zwick 2011; Ritzer et al. 2012).

### **Differentiating Collaborative Consumption from Other Online Collectives**

Collaborative consumption marketplaces where people coordinate the acquisition and distribution of a resource in exchange for a fee or other compensation (Belk 2014) can be differentiated from other consumption communities studied in marketing and consumer behavior literature. Table 1 provides a summary of the similarities and differences among key online collectives. First, brand communities such as online groups for Star Trek fans (Kozinets 2001), are virtual meeting spaces where individuals can connect with each other to share experiences and advice; these groups focus on a central brand or product and foster a sense of collective belonging (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). Second, collective innovation communities refer to collaborative platforms where collective participatory actions of online consumers give rise to creativity and innovation (Kozinets et al. 2008). Similarly, virtual peer-to-peer problem solving communities focus on collaborative problem-solving activities related to consumption experiences of any type (Mathwick et al. 2008). The latter two online collectives provide a space for consumers to collaborate, innovate, and problem solve. Third, digital content sharing communities focus on sharing of digital ‘e-goods’ distributed for free among peers (Plouffe 2008). Web sites such as Kazaa and Napster provide a meeting space to share digital content.

**Table 1. Differences and Similarities Among Online Collectives**

	<b>Collaborative Consumption</b>	<b>Brand Communities</b>	<b>Collective Innovation Communities</b>	<b>Digital Content Sharing Communities</b>
Definition	Market model that enables individuals to coordinate the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation, where the interaction is at least partially supported or mediated by technology	Specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. At its center is a branded good or service and it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility. ( <i>Muniz and O'Guinn 2001</i> )	Online creative consumer communities are collaborative platforms where collective, participatory actions of online consumers give rise to innovation ( <i>Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau 2008</i> ). Peer-to-peer (P3) problem solving communities are networks of practice where consumers are "working" to solve problems related to their shared consumption experiences ( <i>Mathwick, Wiertz and De Ruyter 2008</i> )	Sometimes called P2P Systems or P2P networks. Described as a form of exchange between individual consumers who operate in conjunction with one another, all outside the realm of traditional channels and the value chain, broadly construed. ( <i>plouffe 2008</i> ) or just simply as file-sharing networks that have become channels to obtain "free" music ( <i>Lysonski and Durvasula 2008</i> )
Prototypes	Craigslist, Ebay, AirBnB, LendingClub	Ford Bronco, Macintosh and Saab online communities ( <i>Muniz and O'Guinn 2001</i> ) Star Trek fan communities ( <i>Kozinets 2001</i> )	Flickr, Wikipedia, Crash the Superbowl ( <i>Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau 2008</i> ). Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree Forum and VirtualTourist.com ( <i>Mathwick, Wiertz and De Ruyter 2008</i> )	Digital downloading websites such as Kazaa, Napster, Morpheus and AudioGalaxy ( <i>Plouffe 2008, Lysonski and Durvasula 2008, Levin, Conway Dato-on and Rhee 2004</i> )
Community Purpose	Alternative marketplace to exchange of goods/services	Virtual meeting space to connect with others, share experiences and advice	Virtual space to collaborate, innovate or receive consumption problem solving advice	Virtual meeting space to share digital content
Type of activity	Commodity Exchange	Sharing	Sharing	Sharing
Economic Activity	Underground economy (often taxes are not paid, income goes unreported)	N/A – no economic activity takes place	N/A – no economic activity takes place	Illegal economic activities (often users do not have rights to distribute downloaded music)
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can be online or both online and face-to-face</li> <li>▪ Appeal can vary from limited to broad</li> <li>▪ Focused on consumption activity</li> <li>▪ Easy access</li> <li>▪ Heterogeneous participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online</li> <li>▪ Appeal can vary from limited to broad</li> <li>▪ Focused on a brand</li> <li>▪ Access can vary from easy to limited</li> <li>▪ Homogenous participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online</li> <li>▪ Appeal can vary from limited to broad</li> <li>▪ Can be focused on brand or consumption activity</li> <li>▪ Access can vary from easy to limited</li> <li>▪ Homogenous participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online</li> <li>▪ Broad appeal</li> <li>▪ Focused on consumption activity</li> <li>▪ Easy access</li> <li>▪ Heterogeneous participants</li> </ul>
Service Provider Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Varying roles depending on the extent to which it facilitates the exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ N/A – not involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ N/A – not involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides platform for exchange</li> </ul>
Key differences from collaborative consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ -Sense of collective belonging</li> <li>▪ -Built around brand loyalty</li> <li>▪ -Not an exchange/marketplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ -Sense of collective belonging</li> <li>▪ -Built around shared desire to solve consumption-related problems</li> <li>▪ -Not an exchange/marketplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ -Not a marketplace</li> <li>▪ -Participants do not derive income from activities</li> </ul>

Collaborative consumption communities differ from brand communities, collective innovation communities, and digital content sharing communities in three key aspects: community purpose, type of consumption activity, and type of economic activity. Collaborative consumption communities are formed with the explicit purpose of facilitating economic exchange of goods and services among individuals and rarely have a brand-specific focus. In contrast, the aforementioned communities have more prosocial purposes and their members engage in noneconomic activities such as sharing experiences, advice, or digital content.

### **The Effects of Collaborative Consumption**

The effects of collaborative consumption can be felt at multiple levels, including the environment, the economy, individual consumer, and society at large. Consider, for example, potential effect on the environment. Marketing scholars argue that consumption turns into problematic behaviors – over-consumption – when the level of consumption becomes unacceptable due to environmental consequences, unaffordable due to economic consequences, or when it negatively affects personal and collective well-being (Sheth et al. 2010). Participation in collaborative consumption mitigates over-consumption by altering the consumption cycle and allowing individuals to acquire, use, and dispose of their assets in a way that positively influences the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social (Huang and Rust 2011). Environmental benefits are realized by extracting more use from assets that would otherwise go unused. For example, most power tools are used less than 13 min in their lifetime (Botsman and Rogers 2010); when consumers are enabled to rent out or sell a tool to other consumers, the environmental impact can be minimized while maximizing its utility during the

product's lifespan. In short, collaborative consumption potentially results in more sustainable consumption behaviors that benefit individual consumers, businesses, and society (Botsman and Rogers 2010).

Collaborative consumption has also had a major economic effect on traditional markets, disrupting existing institutions in key industries like transportation, hospitality, and banking. For example, hotels lost revenue from the 9 million guests who used Airbnb, banks failed to collect interest from the \$5 billion loans funded through Lending Club, and taxi and car rental companies lost millions of customers thanks to Uber, Lyft, and other ride-sharing businesses. Zervas et al. (2014) did find that Airbnb penetration into the state of Texas was negatively correlated with hotel revenues, with lower-end hotels and those with little conference space incurring the most financial cost. Their model projects that in the state of Texas, a 1% increase in the market size of Airbnb will result in 0.05% decrease in total hotel revenues. In short, collaborative consumption represents an important societal shift by altering the traditional exchange between consumers and firms, requiring even well-established markets to adapt their existing practices or marketing strategies. Significant effects can also be seen at the individual level.

Collaborative consumption may serve as a platform upon which individuals can enact and reinforce their political and personal ideologies. For example, proponents of collaborative consumption view it as a prosocial consumerist movement whereby individuals engage in political consumerism, using conscious consumption as a political tool (Parsons 2014). Since these exchanges are less costly than traditional market-places, individual consumers benefit economically by fulfilling consumption needs at lower costs. The consumer providing the product or service also benefits from receiving supplementary income (as does the business

facilitating the exchange). These marketplaces may also enhance social and individual well-being by strengthening a sense of community as consumers collaborate with each other. Yet, recent findings suggest that this may not always be the case. In a case study of car sharing conducted in Boston, Massachusetts, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) found that Zipcar users do not have an interest in meeting and socializing with other member despite the company's efforts to foster a sense of community. Others have noted that relationships with neighbors may be strained as individuals rent out their homes to strangers who may not ascribe to community norms of noise or cleanliness, disrupting the process of community building and sense of safety among local residents (Zervas et al. 2014).

There is little doubt that collaborative consumption will continue to have an important effect on society and that firms participating in these exchanges will continue to grow. Start-ups such as Airbnb and Lyft have raised \$130 and \$83 million respectively, in venture capital funding (Owyang 2013). Similarly, Lending Club received \$57 million from investors in 2013, placing the company's valuation at \$2.3 billion and creating anticipation about going public in 2014 (Calvey 2013). Most recently, Uber raised \$1.2 billion in a round of funding with a valuation of over \$18 billion, making the 5-year- old San Francisco start-up more valuable than companies such as Whole Foods and United Airlines (Knowledge@Wharton 2014).

### **Future Research Directions**

Despite its importance, scholarly research investigating this consumption phenomenon remains scant (Prothero et al. 2011), and the implications for firms, individuals, and societies are not well understood. Research is needed to understand the structure of collaborative consumption markets. What role do consumers and firms play within this market? What 'logics' dominate?

How are various collaborative consumption markets similar or different from one another?

Answers to such questions would provide practical guidelines for service marketers and help develop theory to advance theoretical understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon. Collaborative consumption communities also are fertile grounds for academic research to examine the evolving role of consumers as coproducers of their consumption practices and the strategies organizations deploy to harness its power. In terms of sustainable consumption, Prothero et al. (2011) argue that the full consumption cycle needs to be further investigated, as individuals' postpurchase behaviors (e.g., product usage, product life extension, and disposal) all have significant effects on the sustainability of consumption. Thus, how does the increased adoption of collaborative consumption markets affect sustainability? At the same time, alternative outlets that allow consumers to alter how they use and dispose of their belongings could have important consequences for nonprofit organizations that rely on donations.

Participation in these marketplaces could enable individuals to pursue independent business opportunities instead of traditional employment, creating a new wave of micro-entrepreneurs. Research is needed to investigate whether collaborative consumption gives rise to new forms of consumer agency and how that shapes the labor force. Moreover, the regulatory environment remains in flux, and both firms and lawmakers could benefit from quality research that sheds light on the role of laws and regulation in assisting or inhibiting the growth of these business practice. For example, how can research better assess the effect of the largely informal economy, including the income that probably goes unreported? What are the consequences for local governments as sales and service taxation goes uncollected? Some evidence has surfaced to suggest that the total impact of collaborative consumption activities could be more positive than



expected. A report commissioned by Airbnb claims that the company contributed an estimated \$56 million to San Francisco's economic activity in the period from June 2011 to May 2012, providing locals with substantial income and having a positive effect on local neighborhoods that are 'off the beaten path' (Triple Pundit 2013). However, more extensive independent studies are needed in order to measure and assess the real effects of this collaborative economy.

Organizational, legal, and community-level questions and concerns also arise. What effect will collaborative consumption have on organizations? For the collaborative consumption firms themselves, there are unique challenges such as how to contend with the complexities of serving two separate parties in the exchange and manage the increasingly volatile regulatory environment. More generally, will certain businesses be better able than others to integrate collaborative consumption models into their existing platforms and thereby tap into these lucrative markets? If so, will collaborative consumption be co-opted by more powerful markets (e.g., Avis acquired Zipcar in 2013)? The power struggle between emerging collaborative consumption markets and more established, traditional ones, is already being played out in a number of communities. For example, in 2012 the California Public Utilities Commission issued fines against car-sharing firms (Lyft, SideCar, Uber), yet American Express card members can now use their reward points for rides through Uber. Even organizations unrelated to the collaborative consumption movement may find themselves struggling with the realities of networked peer platforms. The University of California (UC) system found itself in the middle of a media storm when its director of travel services sent a message to faculty members warning them not to use the new peer-to-peer or sharing businesses such as Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb when traveling on UC business because "these services are not fully regulated and do not protect users to the same extent as commercially regulated business" (N.B. 2014). After the California

lieutenant governor sent a letter urging university officials to reconsider such policy, UC's office of travel services issued a retracting statement.

For individual consumers, we might ask how and when does participation in collaborative consumption shape or change identities? There is an inherent incompatibility between prosocial values and the self-serving benefits linked to collaborative consumption. Does increased participation diminish the importance of moral identity, and thus weaken associated values and motives? Amid the aftermath of the global financial crisis during the 2000s, a heated debate has been brewing in the popular press about the nature of collaborative consumption practices, questioning whether the so-called 'sharing economy' is a manifestation of the empowered and entrepreneurial consumer or just the latest form of contemporary capitalist exploitation. The dualism between individual voluntaristic action and constrained deterministic behavior echoed in this contemporary discourse has long been at the center of scholarly debate regarding the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior. Yet we know little about how peers experience these coproduction practices or how they perhaps construct entrepreneurial identities as a way of negotiating key tensions in this structure–agency dichotomy. Moreover, prior research investigating interactions among consumers surrounding marketer generated word-of-mouth campaigns suggest that the “intrusion of commercial ‘hype’ presents a type of moral hazard when it contains the inappropriate and unsanctioned mixing of dominant norms, such as sharing, caring or market exchange” (Kozinets et al. 2010: p. 85). Thus, consumer research is needed to determine if and how tensions arise due to both the social and commercial nature of exchange between peers. For example, how does monetary versus nonmonetary compensation affect exchange behaviors in collaborative consumption markets?

What are the antecedents necessary to develop trust in other peers? And what effect does collaborative consumption have on interpersonal relationships, including neighbors?

What is needed is a broad research approach that includes different levels of analyses (structural, organizational, and individual) to understand how social structures, market institutions, and consumer practices interact to generate, maintain, and enforce a social order that combines the social domain of peers with the economic domain of market exchange. Such an approach could advance theoretical understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon and provide practical implications for managerial practice, public policy, and communities.

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## **CHAPTER TWO: ASSEMBLING PEERS: ADVANCING A TYPOLOGICAL THEORY OF COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION MARKETS**

### **Abstract**

The proliferation of networked technologies has transformed exchange among peers, as online platforms are deployed to equip ordinary people with the ability to monetize idle resources. This phenomenon, recognized as collaborative consumption, is rapidly gaining momentum as intermediary firms facilitating exchanges develop profitable business models. Yet these intermediaries remain largely unexplored, leaving marketers little guidance for developing strategies to leverage the disruptive potential of these practices. This research provides a framework to understand the emergent business models and explains how platforms can be configured for higher value creation. The authors present a new way of thinking about collaborative consumption markets by building a typological theory at the intersection of prior work in service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory. The typology, which emerged organically from netnographic data, distinguishes four ideal types of collaborative consumption markets—Forums, Enablers, Matchmakers, and Hubs. Each represents a unique combination of attributes that determines the distinct ways an organization cocreates value with peers. This framework provides practical guidelines for marketers and promotes theoretical understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon.

The past decade has witnessed a radical shift in consumers' abilities to actively participate in service provision and coproduction of consumption experiences for themselves and others. For example, consider a couple from Berkeley, Calif., who offered a range of services to other consumers, transforming prized belongings—including their family pet—into a stream of income through the use of previously unheard-of technologies. They rented an air mattress on their office floor for \$25 per night to a 35-year-old man attending a computer-programing camp and their camper to a couple from Portland for \$131 through Airbnb.com (a website that matches travelers with hosts). They also secured \$150 for a weeklong rental of their 1992 Saab to a French woman visiting the area, received \$25 for allowing the wife of an investment manager to try out their old guitar for two weeks, and even rented their border collie, Clementine, for \$3 an hour to a 60-year-old financial analyst they found through a post on Craigslist (Baedeker 2011).

Such practices have rapidly gained momentum as firms developed profitable business models by leveraging their web platforms to facilitate peer exchanges; as a result, many for-profit and nonprofit organizations have flourished (Belk 2014). Often referred to as the “sharing economy” or “peer-to-peer” (P2P) exchange, this phenomenon is a powerful economic force, with revenues flowing directly into people’s wallets estimated at more than \$3.5 billion in 2013 (Geron 2013). Therefore, an enhanced understanding of these practices holds powerful implications for marketers who want to learn about and facilitate peer exchanges. As Belk (2014, p.1599) concludes, “few industries are exempt from potential disruptive change within the sharing economy.” The rapid and transformative rise in collaborative consumption practices has received increased attention from marketing academics (e.g., Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Lamberton and Rose 2012; Plouffe 2008). Yet, despite its disruptive potential and economic



impact, a framework for understanding and managing the plethora of emergent business models is lacking. This research aims to address this challenge.

Collaborative consumption firms bring together distributed networks of individuals, acting as intermediaries between peers (Koopman, Mitchell, and Thierer 2014). The collaborative consumption phenomenon is unique in that social and economic domains intermingle; peers engage in exchange activities that blur the line between what is social and what is business. As the popularity of these practices increases, advancing the understanding of the interconnected, dynamic, and systemic nature of value creation is an important concern for marketing scholars (Wieland et al. 2012). One area of opportunity lies in understanding the way different types of intermediary firms cocreate value. Moreover, how should firms configure their platforms? When are reputation systems essential? When should firms offer assurances and process payments? The purpose of this research is to provide a framework to clarify how collaborative consumption firms can configure business models for higher value creation.

To elucidate the distinct ways firms can assemble peer networks for value creation, we build on prior work in service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004) and consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005), thus contributing to the growing work at the intersection of these two theoretical perspectives (Akaka, Schau, and Vargo 2013; Arnould 2007). This intersection is germane to building theory that explains collaborative value creation because it allows the exploration of complex relationships in a dynamic environment while remaining pragmatic enough for managerial application. Service-dominant logic serves as a theoretical foundation on which we build a typology, while consumer culture theory offers a compelling practice-based framework to develop theory about collaborative value creation. By integrating these two “natural allies” (Arnould 2007), we incorporate multiple levels of the complex social

structures that frame value creation (Akaka and Vargo 2013) and offer a holistic approach to understanding collaborative consumption markets.

This work contributes to the emergent literature on collaborative consumption by advancing a typological theory that explains how firms cocreate value with peers. Following the procedures Doty and Glick (1994) outline, we identify and describe four ideal types of collaborative consumption market structures and specify the relationships between these constructs and value creation. The ideal types emerge organically from our data, each representing a unique combination of attributes that determines a distinct flow of service provision between firm and peers. Next, we apply Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006) practice-based model of markets to examine systematic variations across ideal types. The central argument of our typological theory is that the ideal types identify the configurations of organizational attributes that result in higher value cocreation between firms and peers. In addition, we propose that each ideal type offers a unique value proposition: Forums *connect* peers, Enablers *equip* peers for effective service exchange, Matchmakers *engender trust* among peers, and Hubs *centralize* exchange between peers. This typological approach allows us to explore theoretically the complex, dynamic nature of value creation in collaborative consumption markets, while providing practical guidelines for firms seeking to participate in this space.

## **Conceptual Development**

### ***The Collaborative Consumption Phenomenon***

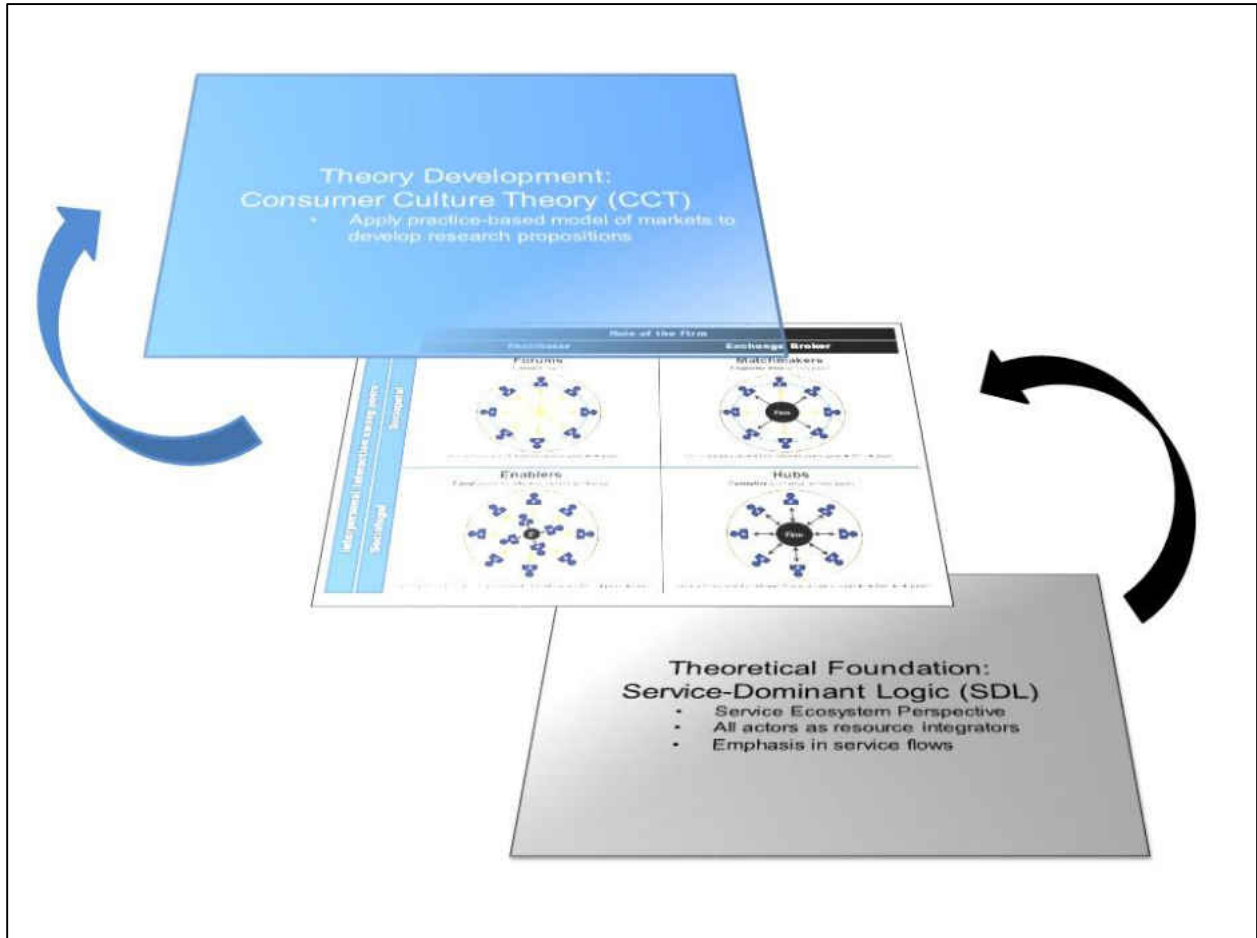
Terms such as “the sharing economy,” “peer production,” and “P2P” services have been employed to describe business models premised on principles of collaborative consumption.

Although popular press has adopted a vocabulary of sharing and peer exchanges, we forgo these

labels because they either are misleading (Belk 2014) or conceal the critical role of firms in a collaborative exchange. Instead, we favor Belk's (2014, p. 1597) definition of collaborative consumption activities as "people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation" because it offers two important distinctions from other consumption activities, such as sharing, gift giving, and traditional business-to-consumer (B2C) market exchange. First, it clarifies that ordinary people, rather than traditional businesses, exchange resources. Second, it is inclusive of activities such as buying, selling, renting, trading, bartering, and swapping but clearly excludes the activities of sharing and gifting, in which no compensation is involved (Belk 2014). In summary, collaborative consumption practices are not defined by ownership; rather, they redefine the *nature of ownership* by altering how people acquire, use, and dispose of resources. Thus, market-mediated nonownership alternatives are only a subset of the collaborative consumption domain.

An important implication of collaborative consumption activities is that ordinary people coordinate the exchange of resources; consequently, traditional categories of "producer" and "consumer" become unsuitable to explain their roles. Therefore, our theory-building efforts require a foundation that can transcend entrenched mental models of market exchange. Moreover, to provide a holistic understanding of how firms can participate in collective exchange practices, we need a theoretical framework that explores how social structures influence and are influenced by the actions and interactions of multiple actors (Akaka, Schau, and Vargo 2013). Thus, we build our typological theory at the intersection of two theoretical perspectives. Service-dominant logic serves as a theoretical foundation on which we build our typology and anchors one of its dimensions; in turn, consumer culture theory informs the other

dimension of the typology and offers a practice-based framework to develop theory about collaborative value creation. This theory-building framework is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Theory-building Framework**

Building theory at this intersection integrates the foundational premises of service-dominant logic with emerging consumer culture theory, underscoring markets as dynamic institutions shaped by practices. Examining practices is a valuable approach that offers a compelling framework to explore business model configurations. Importantly, examining practices also facilitates understanding of the processes that lead to value creation (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). Furthermore, both theoretical perspectives try to explain social phenomena in a way that does not privilege one actor (e.g., the firm, the consumer) over all other actors in a

network; as a result, we are able to bridge the micro–macro divide and offer a holistic approach to understanding collaborative consumption phenomenon.

### ***Developing Theory Based on Service-Dominant Logic***

To build a theory that explains the interconnected and systemic nature of value creation in collaborative consumption markets, we employ the perspective, terminology, and assumptions advanced by service-dominant logic. Vargo and Lusch's (2004, 2007) work on service-dominant logic has stimulated an extensive stream of research offering a unified understanding of the purpose and nature of organizations, markets, and society. Central to this logic is the idea that *all* economic and social actors (regardless of whether they are individuals, business firms, nonprofit organizations, or households) share a common purpose to cocreate value (Lusch and Vargo 2014). Furthermore, we adopt the lexicon of terms supplied by service-dominant logic to describe the phenomena of interest: *Service* refers to the application of competencies, such as knowledge and skills, for the benefit of another party; *resources* can be anything an actor can draw on to support value creation (e.g., money, assets, skills, information); *value* is benefits of any kind (e.g., economic, social, symbolic); *coproduction* refers to an active participant collaborating in the development of the value proposition; and *cocreation* is a more encompassing form of collaboration in which the service beneficiary integrates a service offering with other resources and, in the process, determines value (Lusch and Vargo 2014). This broad interpretation of social and economic exchange is valuable for examining the scope of the collaborative consumption phenomenon in which social and economic domains intermingle, while platform-providing firms act as intermediaries in the exchange among peers.

Consequently, we adopt service-dominant logic's assumption that all actors are service-providing and value-creating enterprises, thus eliminating distinctions between producers and

consumers. This abstraction to *resource integrating actors* enables us to build theory that transcends distinctions among organizational types (i.e., for profit, nonprofit, private, or public), increasing its potential impact. Within the broadened view of service presented by service-dominant logic, the fundamental purpose of organizations is to create value. As such, we avoid distinctions between types of organizations as well as the terms “consumers” and “producers,” except when citing others. When relative reference between actors is necessary for clarity, we use “firm” to refer to the platform provider and “peers” to refer to the users. When further precision is warranted to distinguish between the roles of peers, we use “provider” to refer to the peer providing the direct or indirect service and “beneficiary” to refer to the peer reciprocating indirect service through money or other compensation. Because service-dominant logic is broadly applicable to all types of organizations and implicitly normative (Lusch and Vargo 2006), it provides a foundation from which to develop practical guidelines for a wide audience of marketing practitioners.

To understand collaborative value creation, we emphasize the critical role of institutions and the dynamic nature of markets through a service ecosystem perspective (Vargo and Akaka 2012; Wieland et al. 2012). A *service ecosystem* is a “relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors that are connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange” (Lusch and Vargo 2014, p. 161). This perspective proposes innovation, such as a collaborative consumption business model, as the institutionalization of practices that provide novel solutions and directs attention to the importance of institutions that guide the interaction among actors (Vargo, Wieland, and Akaka 2015). Accordingly, firm strategy should focus on increasing the effectiveness of its role as resource integrator within the service ecosystem by concentrating on service *flows* between

actors (Lusch and Vargo 2006, 2014). In adopting a service ecosystem perspective, the emphasis on service flow serves as a valuable distinguishing characteristic to examine systematic differences in the configuration of business models facilitating collaborative consumption.

We conceive *markets* as continually cocreated by actors seeking solutions and other actors offering them through value propositions (i.e., institutionalized solutions to actors' problems; Lusch and Vargo 2014). This view of markets as service ecosystems links service-dominant logic to contemporary social theories that regard actors as both enabled and constrained by the social structures in which they are embedded. Thus, the service ecosystem perspective lends itself well to incorporating emerging consumer culture literature, underscoring the view of markets as dynamic institutions that are continuously performed and reshaped by market practices (Araujo 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). As a result, our theory-building efforts can incorporate the performative role of market practices while developing guidelines for marketers developing and managing collaborative consumption business models.

In addition, we consider collaborative consumption markets multilevel. The micro level of an ecosystem encompasses interactions and service exchange between actors coordinated through institutions (e.g., exchanges between peers through online platforms); the meso level emerges from the cumulative micro-level interactions (e.g., collaborative consumption markets); and the macro level is materialized as the meso-level system functions over time, yielding a more rigid structure (e.g., collaborative consumption phenomenon) that, in turn, has a downward influence on the meso and micro levels (Lusch and Vargo 2014). In other words, service-dominant logic links micro-actions to macro-structures, which enables us to develop a macro-level framework to understand value creation generated from micro-level interactions (by examining the service flow between peers and firms) and the resulting meso-level structures

(ideal types of collaborative consumption markets). Service-dominant logic's service ecosystem perspective and link to social theories on performativity of market practices enable us to build theory to provide a holistic understanding of the interconnected and dynamic nature of value creation in collaborative consumption markets.

### ***Consumer Culture, Theories of Practice, and the Performative Role of Market Practices***

This research links service-dominant logic to social theories because the latter provide a culturally rich view of collective value creation (Akaka, Schau, and Vargo 2013). Drawing on economic sociology, consumer culture theorists underscore the need to investigate the performative role of market practices in constituting markets (Araujo 2007; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007). That is, markets are not just described by practices but also performed as actors engage in market practices. This perspective highlights the use of theories of practice as “a lens to magnify aspects of common social processes which generate observable patterns of consumption” (Warde 2014, p. 279). Practice theory has made inroads in marketing literature, particularly to investigate value creation. For example, scholars have demonstrated the usefulness of practice theory to understand the patterns of collective value creation in the context of brand communities (Schau, Muniz, and Arnould 2009) and to explore what people actually do when cocreating value in a health care setting (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012). According to Warde (2005), two central notions of practice identified in the literature are (1) practice as a coordinated entity comprising understandings, procedures, and engagement (e.g., the approach Schau, Muniz, and Arnould [2009] take) and (2) practice as a performance.

Building on the latter notion of practices as performance, we conceive *market practices* as “all activities that contribute to constitute markets” (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, p. 842). Influenced by work in science and technology studies, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006, 2007)



develop a heuristic model useful for organizing empirical observations that conceptualizes markets as continually performed by the enactment of an interlinked set of three market practices: *exchange* practices, or the idiosyncratic activities related to the exchange of service (e.g., web-enabled transaction between peers); *normalizing* practices, or the activities that contribute to establishing normative expectations for actors (e.g., guidelines for using collaborative consumption platforms); and *representational* practices, or the activities that shape images of markets and how they work (e.g., portraying peers as microentrepreneurs). These three categories are linked through social processes, forming a configuration of interrelated practices that address the dynamic nature of service ecosystems (i.e., how markets are continually performed and reshaped through the activities of social and economic actors).

We employ Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006, 2007) practice-based model of markets because it is well suited to examine service ecosystems and build theory that links the micro actions of individuals to macro structures, given that it does not assume distinctions between levels of analysis. We examine how the concrete activities undertaken by peers and firms intersect and affect structures at the micro, meso, and macro levels by shaping the idiosyncracies of exchange transactions, the norms and rules of conduct, and the images of the market that are produced. In addition, this model assumes that markets are characterized by multiplicity (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006); in other words, multiple configurations of market practices can coexist. With this approach, we analyze the consequences of multiple simultaneous efforts to realize value as present in the emergent collaborative consumption business models. Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) prescribe this practice-based model of markets as a practical tool to enrich theorizing about variations in market forms by exploring differences in the configuration of exchange, normative, and representational market practices. Accordingly, we turn to practice

theory as a valuable theoretical framework to examine the different ways collaborative consumption markets are being configured.

### ***Advancing to Collaborative Consumption Markets***

The intersection of service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory provides a new lens from which to examine the collaborative consumption phenomenon. Integrating these two perspectives draws attention to underlying mechanisms of markets, as well as the central practices and processes driving value creation and market formation (Akaka, Schau, and Vargo 2013). This emphasis in understanding the broader context and the complex social structures that frame value creation reveals the critical roles of networked technologies and intermediary firms in the propagation of collaborative consumption practices.

Notably, in defining the scope of collaborative consumption activities, Belk (2014, p. 1595) argues that collaborative consumption is a phenomenon “born of the internet age” and that it relies especially on interactive technologies to give rise to its practices. The connective abilities of networked technologies have dramatically collapsed the economic costs, time, and effort required for consumer participation in value creation (Etgar 2008; Koopman, Mitchell, and Thierer 2014), making exchange between peers convenient, easy, and readily available. Thus, the diffusion of digital networks has transformed localized in-person peer marketplaces with limited economic activity into collaborative global communities with scalable economic, environmental, and social impact (Botsman and Rogers 2010). In addition, many recognize that the increased attention to collaborative consumption corresponds to the growing number of firms that are facilitating these consumption practices. In other words, we argue that the term “collaborative consumption” is used not to refer to all consumption activities that are collaborative in nature but rather to a specific set of practices facilitated by online intermediary platforms.

These additional specifications concede to the crucial roles of networked technologies and the intermediary service firm in facilitating coproduction practices by enabling collaborative consumption activities to be scalable, convenient, and geographically dispersed. This view is consistent with a service ecosystem perspective that conceptualizes technology as a critical resource for value cocreation (Akaka and Vargo 2013) and emphasizes the importance of institutions as guiding forces in the value creation process because they enable and constrain the enactment of interactions among multiple actors (Vargo, Wieland, and Akaka 2015).

Thus, we regard *collaborative consumption markets* as the institutionalized solutions (through networked technologies and platform-providing firms) for peers seeking to integrate resources to coproduce value for themselves and others by engaging in collaborative consumption practices. That is, a collaborative consumption market is a dynamic value-cocreating configuration of people, technology, organizations, and shared information (Maglio and Spohrer 2008), in which a firm offers a technology-enabled platform to coordinate the exchange of service between peers. Expanding the scope of collaborative consumption markets in this way builds on Belk's (2014) definition of collaborative consumption but aims to explain this social phenomenon in a way that does not privilege one actor over all other actors in a network. As a result, we are able to bridge the micro–macro divide and offer a holistic approach to understanding collaborative consumption markets by developing a typological theory.

### ***Building a Typological Theory***

Considering the multiplicity of patterns associated with collaborative consumption practices, advancing a holistic understanding of this phenomenon requires theory that can explain complex relationships in a dynamic environment. In this respect, typological theories are uniquely valuable because “they allow us to move beyond traditional linear or interaction (i.e.,

contingency) theories” (Doty and Glick 1994, p. 244). This approach seems particularly complementary to building theory at the intersection of service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory. In addition, developing a typological theory is advantageous because it permits representation of synergistic effects resulting from complex multidimensional patterns of organizational attributes in a given market configuration, revealing how firms may reach the same desired end state in distinct ways (Doty and Glick 1994). Consequently, we employ a typological approach to explore theoretically the complex and dynamic nature of value creation while offering pragmatic guidelines for firms wishing to participate in this space.

Typologies are important to marketing scholarship because they simplify complex phenomena. As demonstrated by Fournier and Lee (2009), typologies offer heuristic value for firms’ strategic planning efforts, bridging the divide between academics and practitioners. Inspired by Fournier and Lee’s approach to marketing phenomena, we develop a typology of collaborative consumption markets. More specifically, the typology we develop examines the distinct ways firms cocreate value with peers in collaborative consumption markets and uncovers four ideal types that represent divergent configurations of market practices. In addition to managerial guidance, this research develops a typological theory that can direct programmatic research agendas. As a result, the typology proposed is both informed and elucidated by rich qualitative data. This framework emerged from a highly iterative process tightly linked to data, which has the potential to produce theory that is novel, testable, and empirically valid (Eisenhardt 1989).

Typological theories underscore the internal consistency of a set of attributes revealing how entities differ; furthermore, a carefully constructed theory explains why this pattern results in a specified outcome identifying why such differentiation matters (Doty and Glick 1994;

MacInnis 2011). Two important criteria for theory development are (1) identifying constructs and (2) specifying relationships among them (MacInnis 2011). In the section that follows, we identify four ideal types of collaborative consumption markets and use a unique combination of organizational attributes to describe the patterns surfaced in our empirical observations of business models. Ideal types are “complex constructs that can be used to represent holistic configurations of multiple unidimensional constructs” (Doty and Glick 1994, p. 233). After describing the four constructs, we specify the relationships between them and value cocreation among market actors. Then, we advance a global proposition that explains value creation as a consequence of configurational fit with the ideal type. Finally, we apply practice theory to conjecture a set of propositions that explain the systematic differences observed in exchange, normalizing, and representational market practices for each ideal type.

## **Method**

To organize the many varieties of market models, our theory construction is based on a close and grounded examination of a multitude of platforms identified as collaborative consumption markets. We followed a similar qualitative approach to other scholars in the field, aiming to generate specific propositions about this new phenomenon that can be tested further and verified (e.g., Kozinets et al. 2010). Our method proceeded in two phases: The initial framework emerged organically from field observations anchoring the dimensions of our typology, followed by a systematic, in-depth examination of a sample of collaborative consumption businesses using multiple case analysis techniques.

In the first phase, in a highly iterative process, we relied on extant literature and participant observation to inform the dimensions of the typology, seeking a framework that

would adequately accommodate the diverse set of market configurations observed in the field. The first author engaged in prolonged participant observation with multiple platforms and monitored news and academic content over a two-year period, from November 2011 to November 2013. Content was tracked by setting up Google alerts that automatically generated a total of 664 e-mail notifications when new results matched keywords related to the collaborative consumption phenomenon; articles listed in the notifications were inspected for relevance, and suitable matches were read carefully. Insights gathered in the field were incorporated with theoretical insights from existing literature, yielding the two-dimensional framework as the basis of the typology. On the one hand, we draw from the service-dominant logic service ecosystem perspective to consider how the intermediary role of the firm differs in coordinating exchanges between peers. On the other hand, we draw from consumer culture theory to consider how interpersonal interactions between peers are enabled or constrained. We elaborate on the dimensions and resulting four-quadrant typology in the “Findings” section.

In the second phase, we pursued a systematic investigation of the four-quadrant typology that surfaced from the emergent framework. We created a directory with 193 websites identified as collaborative consumption platforms. To be included in the directory, a service firm needed to serve as an intermediary between peers by providing a technology-enabled platform in which ordinary people can coordinate the exchange of resources through service provision. Accordingly, intermediary firms that did not use network technologies in their platform (e.g., local flea market) or that served as an intermediary between traditional B2C enterprises and individuals (e.g., Angie’s List) were excluded from the directory.

To determine whether a firm served as an intermediary between peers or should be classified as a B2C business model, we scrutinized the core service offering. The criterion used

for inclusion in the directory was whether ordinary people were a key source of input into the core service offering for the benefit of a peer. For example, Zipcar, a car-sharing platform that provides its own fleet of vehicles, exemplifies the most borderline case between collaborative consumption business models and traditional B2C firms. We included Zipcar in the directory because we judged the service performed by peers in returning the vehicle to the correct location, fueled, clean, and in a timely manner, as vital to the service offering received by a beneficiary (the Zipcar fleet is merely an intermediary in the process). In contrast, we excluded Netflix, a subscription-based service often named as an example of collaborative consumption in business press, from the directory using this criteria because the indirect service provided by individual members is not crucial input to the service offering.

From the composed directory, we selected 20 cases for in-depth analysis and coding to develop the ideal types and research propositions. We purposefully selected this sample to reflect a variety of industries, maturity stages, and scope on each of the typology quadrants. The goal of this theoretical sampling was to choose cases likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory (Eisenhardt 1989). We selected five cases per quadrant to allow enough theoretical replication per quadrant (Yin 2009). Table 2 provides a description of the selected firms along with information on industry, scope, year founded, key metrics, and similarity to ideal type.

**Table 2. Cases Selected for Data Analysis**

Name	Description	Industry	Scope	Founded	Key Metrics*	Type Similarity
Craigslist	Classified advertisements website	Classified advertising	Global	1995	60 M users in the U.S. alone, 50 B page views per month, 700+ local sites in 70 countries	Forum
Facebook Groups	Online social networking service	Social networking	Global	2004	874 M active users of mobile products, generated \$1.8 B on advertising revenue in third quarter of 2013 alone	Forum
Freecycle	Grassroots nonprofit movement of people giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns	Merchandise	U.S.	2003	5119 groups with 6.6 M members around the world	Forum
CarpoolWorld	Matches commuters or other travelers according to their transportation needs	Transportation	Global	2000	225K+ registered users, nearly 20K active listings	Forum
Oodle	Provides consumers with a local marketplace to buy, sell, and trade	Classified advertising	U.S.	2005	15 M monthly unique users	Forum
eBay	Online marketplace for buyers and sellers	General Commerce	Global	1995	124 M active users globally, 500 M items listed	Enabler
Etsy	Online marketplace for handmade goods	General Commerce	Global	2005	30 M members, 20 M items listed, \$895 M in merchandise sales 2012	Enabler
Kickstarter	Funding platform for creative projects	Funding	Global	2009	5.2 M people have pledged \$889 M total dollars, funding 52,294 creative projects	Enabler
1000 Tools	Marketplace connecting tool owners and renters	Merchandise	MI, U.S.	2013	Not available	Enabler
Skillshare	Global community to learn real-world skills from peers	Education	Global	2012	Not available	Enabler
Airbnb	P2P accommodations booking	Hospitality	Global	2008	9 M guests, 500K listings worldwide, 34K cities, 192 countries, 600 castles listed	Matchmaker
Lyft	On-demand peer-driven rides	Transportation	10 cities in U.S.	2012	1 M+ rides, 95% rated 5 stars, 4 M miles, 66K rides in which drivers and passengers had mutual friends	Matchmaker
TaskRabbit	Outsource household errands and skilled tasks	Services & Labor	17 cities in U.S. and London	2008	15K background-checked taskrabbits, 1.25M new users in 2013 alone	Matchmaker
RelayRides	P2P car rental	Transportation	1600+ cities across U.S.	2010	Partnered with GM OnStar in 2012, \$250 average monthly income for RelayRide owners, 4.8/5.0 average renter experience rating	Matchmaker
DogVacay	Connecting dog owners with pet caregivers	Services & Labor	U.S.	2012	9K+ hosts, 80K nights, \$2M total host payouts, avg host rating 4.96/5.0, 15K bookings	Matchmaker
Rentback	College textbook rental	Education	U.S.	2007	On track for \$40M in sales for 2013	Hub
ThredUp	Clothing resale platform	Apparel	U.S.	2009	358K items were resold and clothing sellers earned \$800K in 2012, parents saved \$4M by buying used instead of new, 341K pounds of clothing were recycled.	Hub
Lending Club	P2P lending platform	Funding	U.S.	2007	Over \$3 B in total loans, \$268M paid to investors in interest, expected to go public in 2014	Hub
Quirky	Community of inventors developing unique products	Merchandise	U.S.	2009	403 products developed, 625 K community of inventors	Hub
Swap.com	Online consignment store for baby and children items	Merchandise	U.S.	2012	Not available	Hub

\* As of November 2013.



We conducted a netnography (Kozinets 2010) of the online platforms for the 20 firms selected for analysis. Netnography is a naturalistic and unobtrusive observational method adapted to the study of online communities (Kozinets 2002). We systematically examined every section of all 20 firm websites, collecting observations on key sections suitable for additional analysis. After careful inspection, we chose screenshots of selected website sections for further analysis, totaling 312 pages of printed materials. We sorted and classified all website printouts into individual firm files and categorized the files into each typology quadrant. Then, we coded the data into initial categories, conducted within- and cross-case analysis to reveal themes relevant to our investigation, and used the constant comparative method to generate insights (Creswell 2007; Kozinets et al. 2010). In an iterative process, we became intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity, allowing the unique patterns of each business model to emerge, and then worked to generalize patterns across cases classified into each quadrant of the typology, systematically comparing the emergent frame with the evidence from each case until theoretical saturation was reached (Eisenhardt 1989). Two investigators, trained in qualitative data analyses, reached convergence of observations, and all disagreements between the two researchers coding the data were resolved through discussion.

## **Findings**

In line with the service ecosystems perspective (Vargo and Akaka 2012; Vargo, Wieland, and Akaka 2015), we treat the peer–firm–peer triad as the basic unit of analysis at the micro level and examine systematic differences in service-flow provision across varying configurations. We find four ideal types: Forums, Enablers, Matchmakers, and Hubs. Ideal types do not provide rules for classifying organizations; instead, each ideal type represents a unique combination of

organizational attributes (Doty and Glick 1994) that determines how the firm cocreates value with peers. These four types are based on two dimensions, which we now develop.

Drawing from service-dominant logic, the first dimension of the typology comprises two distinct intermediary roles firms can adopt in coordinating exchanges between peers. First, some markets encounter minimal involvement from the platform-providing firm. In these communities, peers self-organize, self-monitor, and self-regulate as they coordinate exchanges with little to no support from the firm. Even when the firm provides tools that assist in mitigating certain risks (e.g., payment processing, peer reviews, ratings), peers remain in charge of service recovery when a service failure occurs. For example, when buying an item from Etsy or eBay, buyers are asked to contact the seller directly to work toward a solution. We label this type of firm role as *Facilitator*, anchoring one side of our dimension for the role of the firm.

Second, some collaborative consumption markets are sustained by the deep involvement of the platform-providing firms in coordinating the transactions between peers. These firms mediate the exchange between peers, are responsible for service recovery, and provide services beyond payment-processing tools and peer reviews to mitigate many of the risks involved in the exchange (e.g., identity verification, quality assurances, liability insurance, satisfaction guarantees). For example, Airbnb verifies the identity of the people using its platforms, offers a \$1 million insurance policy to cover any damage to the host, and provides 24/7 access to a customer support team that assists in resolving any issues between the peers. We label this type of firm role as *Exchange Broker*, anchoring the other side of our first dimension.

Inspired by consumer culture literature, the second dimension of the typology captures the extent to which interpersonal interactions between peers are enabled or constrained by the market platform. Electronic service platforms can usefully be divided into sociopetal and

sociofugal groups (Nicholls 2008). *Sociopetal* platforms bring people together and stimulate interaction between peers. We observe more extensive interactions in these market platforms as peers negotiate, coordinate, and make arrangements. For example, Lyft drivers and passengers interact extensively when sharing car rides. In contrast, *sociofugal* refers to platforms that tend to separate people and suppress communication, thus reducing or eliminating interaction between users. We observe platforms that facilitate transactions with little to no communication between the peers. For example, Lending Club enables people to invest in loans for peers with just a few clicks, providing no opportunity for interpersonal interaction.

The resulting two-dimensional structure yields four distinct market configurations. Figure 2 depicts a systems' view of the peer–firm–peer triad at the core of micro-level interactions in each of the collaborative consumption market types, illustrating the distinctive role of the firm and the extent to which interpersonal interactions between peers are enabled or constrained. Each market configuration produces a unique flow of service provision: *Forums* facilitate the service flow directly between peers (peer ↔ peer); *Enablers* assist providers in serving beneficiary peers (firm → peer → peer); *Matchmakers* mediate the service flow between providers and beneficiary peers (peer ← firm → peer); and *Hubs* integrate service provision, resulting in two discrete flows directly between firm and peers (peer ↔ firm ↔ peer), and mask indirect service between peers. Although other service flows exist among all actors in the service ecosystem, we portray only the service flow of the focal offering during a given transaction (e.g., purchase/sale of a product, hiring a driver) to maintain parsimony. Figure 3 also illustrates how the involvement of the firm in the exchange becomes more prevalent as value integration increases from Forums to Enablers to Matchmakers to Hubs (depicted in solid black arrows emanating from the firm). Likewise,

interpersonal interactions between peers are portrayed as ubiquitous in sociopetal but not sociofugal market platforms (depicted by solid vs. dashed arrows connecting peers).

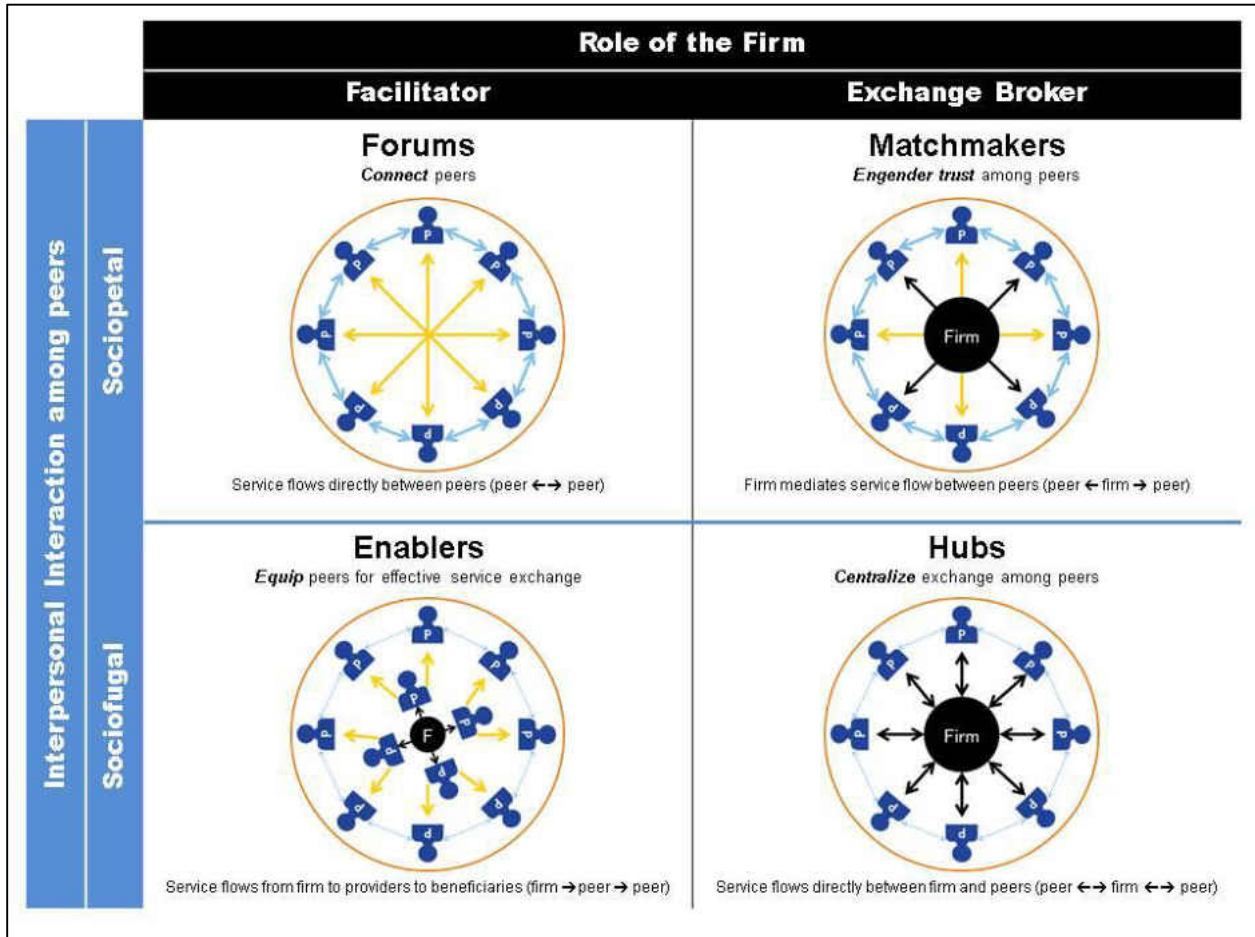


Figure 2. Typology of Collaborative Consumption Markets

### *Typological Constructs*

It is imperative to note that the four types presented here are Weberian ideal types and thus are useful simplifications of reality, intended to reduce the complexity of an emergent phenomenon sufficiently to appreciate the many nuances and subtle differences between the proposed types (Doty and Glick 1994). An ideal type is an analytical construct that serves as a measuring rod to ascertain both similarities and deviations in concrete cases (McKinney 1966). Accordingly, these ideal types embody organizational structures that *might* exist rather than existing organizations, meaning that actual firms may be more or less similar to an ideal type. The first set of propositions describes each ideal type of collaborative consumption market.

We develop our constructs by examining five key attributes of virtual communities, as varied combinations of these attributes have different critical success factors and associated outcomes (Porter 2004) for peers and the platform-providing firm. Thus, we identify a unique arrangement of the following organizational attributes exemplified by each ideal type: *place* defines the extent to which technology mediates the interaction, *purpose* entails the reasons users visit the intermediary platform, *platform* reflects the technical design of interaction, *population* describes the pattern of interactions among community members, and *profit* model reflects the way the platform provider generates revenues (Porter 2004). Table 3 provides a summary of these attributes for each ideal type of collaborative consumption market. We obtained facts used in the next section from the respective websites during the netnographic data collection.

**Table 3. Summary of Attributes of Ideal Types of Collaborative Consumption Markets**

	<b>Forums</b>	<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Matchmakers</b>	<b>Hubs</b>
<b>Definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platforms that enable peers to connect with other peers who are seeking and providing service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platforms that facilitate transactions between peers through deployment of efficient e-commerce tools that enable individual service providers to access many beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platforms that match the right service provider with the right beneficiary at the right time, mediating the exchange and mitigating risks by providing assurances and guarantees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platforms that broker the exchange between peers and provide a uniform service experience similar to a conventional marketplace</li> </ul>
<b>Place</b> (Extent of technology mediation of interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially online: peers connect online and exchange happens at a self-coordinated meetup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online: people complete the exchange completely online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially online: rely heavily on mobile technology and location-enabled applications to facilitate meetup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online: people complete the exchange in anonymity</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b> (Content of interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have alternative purpose, exchange activities are incidental to users visiting the website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General commerce</li> <li>• Strive to attract as many service beneficiaries as possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve niche markets with emphasis on recruiting the <i>right</i> users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve niche markets</li> <li>• Only distinction from conventional firms is that “input” is acquired from individuals</li> </ul>
<b>Platform</b> (Design of interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resembles most the purest form of P2P exchange</li> <li>• Basic design does not offer tools to mitigate risks.</li> <li>• Firms are not involved in governance of exchange activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer efficient e-commerce tools.</li> <li>• Provide tools such as content aggregation, search engines, payment processing, and peer reviews</li> <li>• Firms set rules of exchange but do not actively monitor individual activity</li> <li>• Firms act as referee and only become involved in service recovery under extreme situations</li> <li>• Need to train service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go beyond providing e-commerce tools to also conduct background checks, verify identities, supply liability insurance, and offer 24/7 customer support and satisfaction guarantees</li> <li>• Every user has a reputation to uphold.</li> <li>• Firms set the rules of exchange and remain in charge of service recovery</li> <li>• Need to train users on both sides of the transaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resembles most a traditional B2C enterprise</li> <li>• Firms remain in control of exchange process, providing privacy to people while ensuring quality, satisfaction, and a consistent user experience</li> <li>• Despite anonymity, firms ask users to remain mindful of the peer-sourced nature of service offering</li> </ul>
<b>Population</b> (Pattern of interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localized microcommunities</li> <li>• Large user base and highly frequented, popular websites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispersed global communities</li> <li>• Mixed markets of individuals and conventional enterprise</li> <li>• Large user base to achieve scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localized microcommunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispersed global communities</li> </ul>
<b>Profit Model</b> (Return on interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent of exchange activities such as advertising revenues</li> <li>• Permits for nonmonetary exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tied to exchange transactions: low listing fees and/or transaction fees to seller only (3%–10%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tied to exchange transactions: higher transaction fees that may be charged to both parties (15%–25%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of revenue models</li> <li>• Freedom to customize pricing structure to market needs</li> </ul>

*Forums.* These platforms empower people to connect with others who are seeking and providing service; peers connect online, but the actual exchange occurs during an in-person “meetup” and is not facilitated by the firm. As a facilitator, the firm assembling this market has minimal involvement. As a sociopetal platform, extensive interpersonal interaction is stimulated,

as peers are responsible for negotiating and coordinating exchange arrangements. The cases selected for this type of collaborative consumption market were Craigslist, Facebook groups, Freecycle, CarpoolWorld, and Oodle (for descriptions, see Table 2). Forums have alternative purposes of facilitating exchanges among peers, and exchange activities are incidental to users visiting the platform. For example, Craigslist and Oodle are classified advertisement websites with sections devoted to jobs, housing, and personals. Likewise, Facebook groups can be formed for many purposes other than to buy, sell, or swap items, and many users frequent Facebook for social media purposes rather than for exchange.

This market platform type resembles the purest form of peer exchange, with the firm completely uninvolved in the governance of exchange activities. Forum platforms have the most basic design, and the infrastructure lacks tools that peers can use to mitigate the risks involved in the exchange. Firms have little control over how their platforms are eventually used by peers. Ultimately, users are responsible for conducting due diligence with respect to any activities initiated in these forums and are subject to “buyer-beware” legal disclosures that release firms from liabilities regarding user content. Forums have massive user bases and are highly frequented, popular platforms; however, their population is organized in localized microcommunities. For example, Craigslist has more than 60 million users in the United States and more than 700 local sites in 70 countries. The firms in this market type derive revenues from advertising rather than transactions, which permits nonmonetary exchanges between peers as well as generalized exchange. In generalized exchange, benefits are indirectly given and received among three or more actors (Willer, Flynn, and Zak 2012). For example, people use Freecycle to give and get stuff for free in their own towns, and commuters in CarpoolWorld can alternate the provision of transportation with each other. Thus:

*P1a: To resemble a Forum, a business model configuration should partially mediate the interaction between peers, serve an alternative purpose, have a simple design with minimal governance, organize by localized communities, and generate revenues independent of exchange activities.*

*Enablers.* Platforms can be typed as Enablers when they facilitate transactions between peers through the deployment of efficient e-commerce tools that enable individual service providers to access many beneficiaries. As a facilitator, the firm assembling this market type remains minimally involved, delegating service recovery to the peers. As a sociofugal platform, peer interaction is minimal, and the exchange is completely processed online. The cases selected for this type of collaborative consumption community were eBay, Etsy, Kickstarter, 1000 Tools, and Skillshare (for descriptions, see Table 2). In this market type, the involvement of the intermediary firm becomes more ubiquitous, as peers need more complex technology to complete an exchange with marginal interpersonal interaction; however, we classify these firms as Facilitators because such involvement is limited to overseeing the marketplace as a whole, and peers are primarily charged with service recovery when a service failure occurs. Enablers' purpose is solely to facilitate exchange among members by enabling general commerce and trying to attract as many beneficiaries as possible for a community of providers.

Peers take responsibility for executing exchange in these platforms. Enablers set the rules of exchange and provide tools, such as content aggregation, search engines, payment processing, and provider reviews, but do not actively monitor individual activity. These firms may become involved only in extreme situations when attempts at service recovery by peers have failed. For example, eBay's money-back guarantee begins with a resolution attempt with the seller. Only after the seller fails to resolve the situation is the case escalated to the firm; a refund is only issued if the user has not received the item or the item is not as described, but eBay does not



provide assurances of timely delivery, quality, or satisfaction. These platforms do not offer any guarantees to peers and provide detailed liability disclosures in their membership agreements. For example, Kickstarter posts prominently on its website that each project is independently created and explains that users have “complete control over and responsibility for their projects”; it further clarifies its role as “a platform and a resource” and advises that it is not involved in the development of the projects themselves. In addition, with the provision of e-commerce tools, these platforms tend to offer instructions to providers, such as Skillshare, which shows aspiring teachers how to create a class, market to social networks with referral links, and engage students with feedback and event challenges.

With peer interactions online, Enabler platforms have global scope and massive user bases to achieve scale. The efficiency of the e-commerce tools developed by these firms is such that traditional firms employ these platforms to create mixed markets of peers and conventional enterprise. For example, since its introduction, eBay has evolved from individuals auctioning items to the world’s largest online marketplace dominated by entrepreneurs and businesses trying to liquidate excess inventory. Enablers generate revenues from a combination of listing fees and/or percentages of transaction value fees ranging from 3% to 10%. Enablers only charge fees to those selling goods or services because they want to attract as many buyers as possible. Thus:

*P<sub>1b</sub>: To resemble an Enabler, a business model configuration should fully mediate the interaction between peers, serve a general commerce purpose, provide e-commerce tools with minimal governance, organize a dispersed global community, and generate revenues through low transaction fees to providers.*

*Matchmakers.* These platforms match the right service provider with the right beneficiary at the right time. As with the other sociopetal platform in the typology, peers connect online, but the exchange is finalized in person. In contrast with Forums, however, the firm assembling this

market type brokers the exchange between peers and remains involved in the transaction to provide customer service. The cases selected for this type of collaborative consumption business model were Airbnb, Lyft, TaskRabbit, RelayRides, and DogVacay (for descriptions, see Table 2). The purpose of Matchmakers is to serve specific niche markets, placing high value on recruiting the “right” users who will provide good reviews and facilitate trust among peers. For example, Airbnb wants users to find the *right* space, and DogVacay helps users find an *awesome* dog sitter. This emphasis is also demonstrated by the prevalent use of peer ratings and reviews not only for the providers but also for the beneficiary peers, such as hosts rating travelers on Airbnb or drivers rating passengers on Lyft.

Matchmaker platforms rely heavily on mobile technology and location-enabled applications to match, in real time, those with a need with those ready to fulfill it (e.g., Lyft matches a traveler needing a ride with a screened driver near his or her location). In brokering the transaction between peers, Matchmakers go beyond providing basic e-commerce tools to also conduct background checks, verify identities, supply liability insurance, and offer 24/7 customer support and satisfaction guarantees. Moreover, the platforms are designed so that every user has a reputation to uphold regardless of his or her side of the service exchange. For example, RelayRides promotes to owners its strict renter screener process and ability to control whether to move forward with a given car renter; similarly, the firm offers renters peace of mind through minimum car standards and reviews. Given that transactions are finalized in person, this kind of platform design is necessary to generate trust between peers.

Matchmakers set the rules of exchange and stay in control over how their platforms are used by peers. As evidenced by the prominent use of a “How it works” section on these platforms, peers need guidance to figure out how to participate in this type of market. This

market type is characterized by localized microcommunities; however, because of the extensive role of the firms in mediating the exchange, it is not as proliferous as Forums. Matchmakers' revenue structure relies on transaction fees, but given the greater involvement and added services (e.g., assurances, guarantees), the fees tend to be considerably higher than those of Enablers, ranging from 15% to 25% of the total transaction value. In addition, buyers often bear a portion of the transaction fee. For example, Airbnb charges guests 6%–12% and the hosts 3% of the transaction. In return, Airbnb offers a guest refund policy as well as a \$1 million Host Guarantee, covering the property for any loss or damage due to guest theft or vandalism. All the firms examined in this quadrant offered 24/7 customer support. These platforms have begun to enable mixed markets of peers and traditional enterprise, but with businesses taking on the beneficiary role instead of the service provider. For example, TaskRabbit serves companies looking to source temporary workers, and Airbnb serves companies with alternative travel programs. Thus:

*P<sub>1c</sub>: To resemble a Matchmaker, a business model configuration should partially mediate the interaction between peers, serve a niche market with emphasis on the right users, govern the exchange and service recovery with sophisticated technology, organize by localized communities, and generate revenues through sizable transaction fees.*

*Hubs.* Platforms that broker the exchange between peers, providing a uniform service experience similar to a conventional marketplace, can be typed as Hubs. Analogous to the other sociofugal platform (Enablers), peers have little to no interaction, and the exchange is completely processed online. The cases selected for this type of collaborative consumption marketplace were Rentback, ThredUp, Lending Club, Quirky, and Swap.com (for descriptions, see Table 2). The purpose of the Hub market type is to serve specific niche markets, such as resale clothing, inventions, personal loans, and textbook rentals. However, in contrast with the other exchange broker in the typology, Hubs do not need to provide public profiles or peer reviews to stimulate

trust between peers, as people interact with the firm rather than with the peer on the other side of the transaction. The Hub market platform most resembles a traditional B2C enterprise. Thus, these firms engage in activities associated with more conventional businesses, such as offering free shipping and free trials and engaging in promotional activities akin to those of traditional retailers. Indeed, the only difference between Hubs and conventional B2C firms is that the “input” to the service is acquired from an individual rather than a traditional business supplier.

Hubs remain in control of the exchange process, providing privacy to the peers, while ensuring quality, satisfaction, and a consistent user experience with the service. The firm sets the rules of exchange and remains in control of how the platform is used by peers. Consider ThredUp, a used clothing site in which professional buyers evaluate items received from individuals and determine their quality and resell value. ThredUp employees photograph the items and create standard listings. Buyers can then browse or search by brand, size, style, age, gender, and curated seasonal selections. In this process, the firm provides a third-party evaluation of the article condition, ensuring that the item meets its high-quality standards. Items ordered are then carefully folded, wrapped in tissue paper, attached with tags that read “Renewed with love,” packed into signature polka-dot boxes, and sealed by a sticker with the message “Enjoy!” As a result, ThredUp has redefined the experience of purchasing used clothing.

Yet, despite its similarities to B2C businesses, we observe that the firms assembling this market type take steps to ensure that peers remain mindful that the “input” is provided by people just like them. For example, although investors and borrowers never know each other’s identities, Lending Club prominently features borrowers’ profiles on its homepage, such as Dan from Jacksonville, Fla., who borrowed \$10,000 for a major purchase; on the site, he attests, “My loan was 100% funded within 12 hours, and I had funds in my account within 4 days. It was

ridiculously fast.” As with the other sociofugal platform in the typology, Hubs are nongeographically bound and have no need for localized groups. This market type also has the freedom to customize its pricing structure according to the particular needs of the market. We observed multiple revenue structures ranging from up-front payouts to elaborate payout schemes based on a person’s contribution to the service offering. Thus:

*P<sub>1a</sub>: To resemble a Hub, a business model configuration should fully mediate the interaction between peers, serve a niche market, govern the exchange and service recovery, organize a dispersed global community, and customize its revenue structure.*

### ***Typological Theory***

The central theoretical assertion of this typology is that the set of collaborative consumption market types identifies the configurations of place, purpose, platform, population, and profit models that maximize fit, resulting in higher value cocreation between firm and peers. That is, our theory explains value creation as a consequence of the similarity of a given firm to one of the ideal types. To illustrate our grand assertion, consider a firm brokering a transaction between peers using a platform that enables extensive interpersonal interaction between peers. According to the typology, this firm should aim to develop a business model that resembles a Matchmaker configuration as closely as possible. That is, we propose that such a firm will cocreate the highest value with peers when assembling a market platform that (1) partially mediates the interaction with mobile and location-based technology; (2) serves a niche need, with emphasis on the right users; (3) governs the exchange, providing an array of tools for verification and offering assurances, service recovery, and training aids to all users; (4) organizes by localized microcommunities; and (5) generates revenues through sizable transaction fees.

We contend that deviations from this configuration of attributes would result in lost value creation. For example, if the firm shifted focus to general commerce or alternative activities, it would not yield higher value unless accompanied by corresponding changes in other organizational attributes. Lower value creation would result because it would be difficult to deploy sophisticated platform systems for a wide variety of purposes and even more so to justify the associated transaction fees to cover the inherent higher costs of offering assurances. Subsequently, peers would cocreate less value with the platform because it would deliver unnecessary costly capacities; eventually, the firm would alienate users and lose revenues. In addition, localized microcommunities would make it impossible to compete against the scale of an Enabler platform with global scope, while the revenue structure would make it impractical to compete with Forums. Similarly, if the firm shifted to a full technology-mediated interaction, it would also need to change other attributes to resemble the Hubs to compete in that space, as there would be no need for localized communities, and interaction design would need to be modified to eliminate unnecessary peer verifications and deliver a uniform experience.

As shown, typological theories do not cover proposed relationships between the one-dimensional constructs (i.e., place, purpose, platform, population, or profit model) and a dependent variable (i.e., value) but rather explain why internally consistent patterns within an ideal type determine an outcome (Doty and Glick 1994). Consequently, the relationship between a given attribute of collaborative consumption markets and value creation may vary across types (e.g., dispersed population does not result in higher value creation for all types). This is perhaps the greatest advantage of typological theories in understanding complex phenomena; the holistic approach transcends linear relationships among constructs to reveal how a configuration of

attributes within an ideal type have a synergistic, rather than an additive, effect (Doty and Glick 1994). Thus, we submit the following proposition about configurational fit and value creation:

*P<sub>2</sub>: Greater similarity between a real firm and a collaborative consumption market ideal type results in higher value creation.*

Having described each ideal type of collaborative consumption market and offered a global proposition that generalizes to all firms participating in this space, we now turn to the culturally rich view of collaborative value creation afforded by consumer culture theory to develop the remainder of our research propositions. In line with the approach Akaka, Schau, and Vargo (2013) take, we use practice theory to integrate service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory, underscoring the central role of practices in value cocreation. In consumer culture literature, practices are considered a critical component of the cultural context that influences the determination of value, emphasizing how the enactment of practices is central to the formation of service ecosystems (Akaka, Schau, and Vargo 2013). Thus, we turn to practice theory as a compelling theoretical framework to examine the different ways collaborative consumption markets are being configured.

Doty and Glick (1994) argue that fully developed typologies should offer a set of middle-range theories formed by the causal arguments explaining the internal consistency of the underlying processes within each ideal type—namely, why are the organizational attributes configured in this way? Practice theory offers a valuable framework to theorize about variations in market forms as differences in the configuration of an interrelated set of market practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007). Each ideal type represents a dynamic value-cocreating configuration of resources, that is, a service ecosystem. Scholars highlight the distribution of competencies and value propositions among entities as crucial for understanding the nature of

such systems (Maglio and Spohrer 2008). In addition, Weil and Vitale (2001) suggest that online intermediaries can be of significant value to actors in a service ecosystem by offering two potential benefits: market making and lower transaction costs (i.e., search, decision, surveillance, and enforcement costs). Firms make collaborative consumption markets and lower transaction costs with the deployment of their intermediary platforms. Accordingly, we organize our empirical observations using a practice-based model of markets and submit that each ideal type requires a distinct distribution of competences between firms and peers, resulting in a unique value proposition. We now elaborate on these theories.

Market practices denote, in a specific and concrete sense, what actors do, making this model particularly powerful to produce theory that is tightly linked to data collected with observational techniques. Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006, 2007) practice-based model of markets addresses the temporal unfolding of exchange, normalizing, and representational practices as well as how these practices interlink to produce markets. Exchange practices entail activities that temporarily stabilize conditions to enable exchange transactions (e.g., parties to the exchange, exchange object, price, terms of exchange), which are guided by norms that equip actors with guidelines for how to act as well as images depicting how the market should work. Normalizing practices encompass the norms and rules of conduct that legitimize exchange practices and give credibility to market images. Representational practices bridge the abstract concept of a market to the concrete actions of actors through the production of market images that reflect established guidelines and how exchanges are carried out. The links among practices denote how notions are translated into norms, particular exchanges, and images of markets. This model serves as a heuristic tool to probe into variations in the ongoing constitution of collaborative consumption markets by examining "the relative intensity of three types of



practices, the links between them and the degree to which the involved actors overlap across activities” (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007, p. 151). Next, we address how these three practices intertwine in each of the collaborative consumption market configurations.

*Forums.* This market configuration is realized through extensive exchange practices. Exchange activities are carried out by peers with little to no involvement from the firm, leading to intense organizing efforts. Peers visit the platform to find a suitable match for the exchange transaction; however, the terms of exchange and service delivery are negotiated independent of the firm. Norms and rules of conduct are mostly implicit; the lack of firm governance of exchange activities means that peers are fully responsible for executing transactions, resulting in a high degree of overlap in peer involvement across exchange and normalizing practices. Representational practices are sparsely linked, rendering changes in norms and exchange activities less visible. Forums are portrayed as digital versions of garage sales, and their visitors are labeled without distinction to their role as service provider or beneficiary (e.g., users, members). This configuration of organizational attributes attracts peers who desire control of the exchange transaction to negotiate terms with other peers without the obstruction of a mediating firm. The business model of Forums lowers search costs peers incur trying to find each other in a broad and disorganized market. Consequently, the main appeal of a Forum platform is the large scale of its user base; these firms positively participate in value creation by creating nested and localized microcommunities that increase the likelihood of a successful match for exchange.

*P<sub>3a</sub>: The value proposition of Forums is to connect peers.*

*Enablers.* This market configuration comprises extensive exchange practices with stable links to normalizing practices, clearly distinguishing between roles of service beneficiary and service provider. On the one hand, beneficiaries access service offerings through online

platforms that aggregate content, facilitate search, process payments, and simplify evaluation of service providers through reputation systems. On the other hand, providers employ e-commerce tools to list, price, promote, negotiate, process, and deliver their service offering. The efficiency of the platform design allows exchange activities to be carried out with minimal interpersonal interaction between peers and negligible supervision of the firm, attracting conventional business and peer providers. Although limited firm governance makes implicit normative practices prevalent, some explicit norms and guidelines surface to guide exchange activities, strengthening the link between normalizing and exchange practices. In this configuration, the firm sets exchange guidelines but only intervenes in service recovery after resolution between peers has failed; the reputation systems are designed to assign the consequences of dissatisfaction to providers, thus visibly ascribing accountability for actions. Representational practices are less conspicuous. Enablers are depicted as online flea markets and their users described as buyers and sellers, reflecting the structure enacted by this configuration. In addition to lowering search costs for peers, the business model of Enablers lowers decision costs that beneficiaries incur in evaluating the terms and expected performance of the providers. This configuration attracts peers interested in expeditious exchange transactions for which they retain some control of execution. As a result, Enablers offer to contribute to value creation by constructing massive dispersed communities in which peers can apply e-commerce solutions for effective service provision.

*P<sub>3b</sub>: The value proposition of Enablers is to equip peers for effective service exchange.*

*Matchmakers.* In this configuration, exchange activities are brokered by the firm, providing assurances about the quality of the service offering and safety of the exchange. Providers and beneficiaries are screened through bilateral reputational systems and matched to

finalize exchange transactions in environments that foster extensive interpersonal interactions. In addition to e-commerce tools that aggregate content, facilitate search, and process payments, these platforms verify identities, supply liability insurance, offer customer support, and guarantee satisfaction. Normalizing practices are intense and explicit; considerable work is put into devising normative objectives for peers to legitimize exchange practices and give credibility to market images. These intense normalizing efforts arise from heavily contested rules of conduct by clashing interests. All three market practices are tightly linked, rendering changes in exchange and normalizing practices visible. These markets are portrayed as electronic agencies, reflecting the parallels between this structure and businesses in which agents negotiate deals for clients. Peers are labeled in ways that sustain a distinction between the two parties and characterize the nature of their work (e.g., hosts and guests, drivers and passengers, owners and renters). In addition to lowering search and decision costs, the business model of Matchmakers lowers surveillance costs that would arise from monitoring other peers. These platforms appeal to peers who seek novel solutions to satisfy their consumption needs yet desire the assurances of an exchange agent. Accordingly, Matchmakers propose to positively participate in value creation by inciting trust in others peers.

*P<sub>3c</sub>: The value proposition of Matchmakers is to engender trust among peers.*

*Hubs.* This market configuration yields exchange activities that resemble B2C exchanges, with peers exchanging directly with the firm, regardless of whether they are acting as a provider or beneficiary of the service offering. Hubs produce a consistent service offering by integrating value contributions from peer providers. The extensive value integration by the firm results in a high degree of overlap in its involvement across all three market practices. Normalizing practices are explicit, even though norms guiding peer actions in exchange activities could remain largely

implicit (given the similarity to traditional business models). Hubs take full responsibility for exchange execution, rendering the need for reputation systems unnecessary. Yet these firms put considerable work into maintaining awareness of the peer-sourced nature of the service offering and producing market images that depict exchanges as peer-to-peer. Despite these efforts, Hubs are widely portrayed as web stores, reflecting the resemblance to conventional business entities. Peers are generically labeled customers, further concealing distinctions between providers and beneficiaries. In addition to lowering search, decision, and surveillance costs, the business model of Hubs lowers enforcement costs that arise from ensuring that providers meet performance expectations. Thus, this market configuration attracts people wanting a hassle-free avenue to exchange with peers. Hubs contribute to value creation by centralizing the flow of service and providing a uniform experience to a dispersed global community.

*P<sub>3d</sub>: The value proposition of Hubs is to centralize exchange among peers.*

## **Discussion**

The main objective of this work is to develop a typological theory of collaborative consumption markets that explains how firms can configure business models for higher value creation. The proposed typology, which emerged organically from our data, represents a new way of thinking about collaborative consumption markets. This approach allows us to explore the theoretically complex and dynamic nature of value creation while offering pragmatic guidelines for firms wishing to participate in this space. A typological theory is valuable to advancing a holistic understanding of how firms can engage with these popular consumption practices because it permits examination of the synergistic effects resulting from a configuration of organizational attributes, thus revealing how firms can achieve higher value creation in distinct ways.

### *Theoretical Implications*

This research answers the call to produce new theory at the intersection of service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory (Arnould 2007), enriching understanding of collaborative consumption by examining these two dominant theoretical perspectives. The foundational propositions of service-dominant logic underpin the typology, while practice theory offers a compelling framework to develop theory about collaborative value creation. As a result, our research contributes in three key ways to extend service-dominant logic, advance consumer culture theory, and expand understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon.

First, the proposed typology extends service-dominant logic (Lusch and Vargo 2014; Vargo and Lusch 2004) by demonstrating how its perspective, terminology, and assumptions can be applied to build contemporary theory that transcends the micro–macro divide. The four ideal types uncovered link the micro-level interactions of actors to meso-level configurations of markets that yield the more stable macro-level structure constituting the phenomenon. The resulting framework allows for theoretical complexity and practical simplicity, answering the call for models that can simplify, in a meaningful way, the complexity of social and economic exchange without disregarding the richness of its interconnected nature (Wieland et al. 2012). In addition, we contribute to emergent literature in service science (e.g., Maglio and Spohrer 2008; Vargo and Akaka 2012; Vargo, Wieland, and Akaka 2015) by unpacking the relevance of the service ecosystem perspective as a holistic lens for understanding collaborative value creation. This vantage point revealed service flows between actors as a valuable distinguishing characteristic to examine distinct configurations of collaborative consumption business models.

Second, this research advances consumer culture theory by building on notions of market performativity and market practices (Araujo 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007) and

demonstrating the practical value of studying markets. We answer the call to identify and distinguish markets according to differences in practice and resources used for value creation (Akaka, Schau, and Vargo 2013). The middle-range theories developed show how a practice-based model can be used to recognize the value of performativity and multiplicity in the study of how markets are shaped, extending the work of consumer culture theorists. Building on the concepts Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006, 2007) present, our theory explains how different exchange, normalizing, and representational practices simultaneously perform different versions of collaborative consumption markets, allowing them to coexist. As a result, we can explain the plethora of business models in the collaborative consumption space as the outcome of competing efforts to shape peer exchange practices. Competition between different types of intermediaries prompts struggles about different ways to configure the service flow between providers and beneficiaries. Our typology identifies how firms can strengthen their position by configuring platforms to resemble one of the ideal types and prescribes unique value propositions that equip market actors to better handle the preferred exchange configuration.

Third, this work contributes to emergent literature explaining the collaborative consumption phenomenon by extending how the phenomenon is conceptualized, explaining prior findings, and clarifying how firms can succeed with divergent configurations. Specifically, we extend Belk's (2014) definition of collaborative consumption by explicitly incorporating two crucial elements that enable the proliferation of these markets: the role of networked technologies and platform-providing firms. These specifications further delineate distinctions between collaborative consumption and sharing practices that are often confounded in theory and practice. In addition, by incorporating contemporary social theories, we contribute to emerging

research that underscores the important role of institutions and social structures in creating and sustaining social order (e.g., Willer, Flynn, and Zak 2012).

With respect to explaining existing findings, our framework develops understanding of the phenomenon by clarifying discoveries previously unexplained by extant literature. For example, Arsel and Dobscha (2012) find that users of Freecycle often defy the rules on what is considered appropriate to list on the platform. Given the Freecycle platform's similarity to Forums, this finding is no longer surprising because the minimal governance of firms in this market type results in a lack of control over how members ultimately use their platforms. As users shape normalizing practices, the "misuse" of the platform becomes legitimized. Similarly, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) find a deterrence of brand communities among users of Zipcar, a car-sharing program resembling Hubs. Again, against the backdrop of our typology, we would not expect the markers of community to emerge in a sociofugal platform that inhibits interpersonal interaction among peers. Our theory would prescribe that Zipcar's efforts to foster a brand community among its members does not lead to higher value cocreation, given its current configuration. If managers deemed the presence of a brand community critical to their service offering, the firm's objectives and core competencies would need to be reevaluated to determine which of the configurations that promote interpersonal interactions would be most suitable. However, we note that our typological theory specifies how firms can reach the same desired end in distinct ways. Thus, we do not assume that the absence of brand community would preclude Enablers and Hubs from achieving high value creation. Zipcar could just forgo efforts to build a brand community and allocate those resources to sustain its value proposition of centralizing exchange among peers.

With respect to clarifying how firms succeed in this space with divergent configurations, our theory explains the evolution of business models observed in the field. For example, ThredUp began as an online swapping platform on which parents could trade boxes of used clothing directly with each other, resembling the ideal type of an Enabler. Yet, despite attracting 300,000 customers, the firm was unable to amass enough scale to be profitable (Godelnik 2013). The firm subsequently announced that it would refocus its service on becoming a signature concierge experience, thereby exhibiting characteristics of a Hub type. By all accounts, the move has succeeded; in the year that followed, the firm added 100,000 new users and secured an additional \$14.5 million in investor funding (Godelnik 2013). The success of ThredUp after reconfiguring its platforms corroborates our grand theoretical assertion and suggests that aligning the firm's competencies with the ideal type leads to higher value creation. Notably, we do not observe path dependency in the evolution of market models; firms evolve along both dimensions (e.g., from Enablers to Hubs) and across diagonally opposed quadrants (e.g., from Matchmakers to Enablers), confirming our contention that firms can achieve high value creation through distinct market configurations.

### ***Managerial Implications***

The proposed typology offers marketing practitioners a practical way to understand the plethora of business models in the field and a useful framework to develop marketing strategy. In organizing emerging business models, marketers can use this framework to map competitors' positioning and determine competitive advantages. For example, our framework suggests that reputation systems and transaction processing are not essential for success in all platform types and highlights Matchmakers and Hubs as configurations offering great opportunity for



innovation. Marketers can use these distinctions to develop more innovative service offerings and compelling value propositions to derive collaborative advantage.

Applying this framework to develop marketing strategy reveals how firms can participate in this space, clarifies which configurations are most appealing to certain types of firms, and elucidates opportunities for valuable business partnerships. First, the typology implies that marketers must address each configuration differently, revealing the various ways firms can participate in collaborative consumption. Thus, practitioners can use the ideal types identified to determine areas in which their core competencies can lead to higher value creation.

Second, the typology spotlights different collaborative practices performed by peers in each market configuration. Accordingly, each ideal market type appeals to different organizations. The ideal types can be matched to strategic objectives that inform how much value integration to pursue. At the lowest value integration, Forums would appeal to an organization with a large membership base (e.g., professional organizations) that wishes to participate in this space without making a sizable investment of resources. Because Forums can facilitate nonmonetary and generalized exchange, this strategy is well suited for nonprofit organizations striving to engage membership. Next in the continuum of value integration, Enablers' configuration would appeal to an organization that wants to leverage a large customer base and technology capabilities for value creation but desires to remain detached from transaction execution. This space is attractive to general commerce firms pursuing the commercial nature of peer exchanges. Toward the other end of the value integration continuum, Matchmakers involve a great deal of involvement and would attract firms aiming to innovate through their technological capabilities. This space is appealing for start-ups ready to invest significant resources and with a unique position to facilitate cashless in-person transactions

between peers. This configuration lends itself well to exchanges in which the social element of the exchange can enhance the experience. Last, at the highest value integration is Hubs. This configuration would appeal to firms that want to retain ownership of the customer relationship and service offering. This model serves as a gateway into collaborative consumption practices and appeals to firms uniquely positioned to source their core offering from individual people.

Finally, the framework presented in this work elucidates opportunities for valuable business partnerships. Given the limited involvement of the platform-providing firm, the two market types in the facilitator dimension are ripe for support industries to participate in value cocreation. For example, services such as pricing tools, custodians, payment processing, and shipping services would support exchanges in Forums and Enabler platforms. Established companies could also use this framework to identify potential partnerships. For example, Walgreens partnered with TaskRabbit to incorporate orders for cold and flu remedies directly from the taskrabbit app to be delivered to people's doors. Similarly, Marriott hotels partnered with LiquidSpace, a real-time marketplace that enables anyone to find and book work space by the hour or day. Therefore, brands also have a vital role in propagating the adoption of collaborative consumption by leveraging their reputation to engender trust among peers. For example, rather than fighting the changes to the hospitality industry, entrenched brands could participate as Matchmakers, offering "certifications" to hosts that ensure they meet their quality standards. In the transportation industry, acquisitions such as that of RelayRides (Matchmakers) by General Motors and of Zipcar (Hubs) by Avis have occurred, suggesting that big businesses are finding creative ways to participate in different market types. Similarly, Patagonia has established what it calls its "common threads partnership" (an Enabler-type market), which touts the good quality of its products to "help you find a new home for the Patagonia clothing you no

longer wear” (<http://www.patagonia.com/us/common-threads/>). There are good reasons for brands to become involved in collaborative consumption; these alternative market models can serve as avenues of product trials, extend relationships with customers, and create word of mouth through a community of users (Franz 2012). Moreover, collaborative consumption markets can increase demand for high-quality products that are durable and can endure multiple use.

### ***Limitations and Future Research Opportunities***

It is important to underscore that the ideal types presented herein are not to be taken as stable and permanent characterizations of collaborative consumption markets. We assume that the shaping of markets is a continuous process. Accordingly, we recognize our own role in shaping market images by identifying distinctions of how market practices are intertwined and remain cognizant that our theory performs collaborative consumption markets by translating these representations into prescriptions for future exchange practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). Thus, we present this typology with the intention to highlight variations in the ongoing construction of collaborative consumption markets.

The collaborative consumption phenomenon provides fertile ground for marketing research. First, researchers could use the procedures Doty and Glick (1994) outline to test the grand assertion of our typological theory. Doty and Glick propose that the resemblance of real organizations to one of the ideal types should be modeled as profile similarity, a technique that assesses deviations from the proposed configuration by calculating a fit index and using it to predict the dependent variable. In this case, value creation could be operationalized in multiple ways to account for benefits to the various actors; perhaps deviations from the ideal type affect value creation in distinct ways, revealing even more intricacies to the effects of business model configurations. Similarly, the perceived relevance of the proposed value propositions could be

measured and compared across a sample of firms in each quadrant to test the middle-range theories advanced herein.

Second, the two dimensions of the typology and each market ideal type have associated research questions that could form the foundation of systematic investigations. On the one hand, the differences between Facilitators and Exchange Brokers raise important questions about network effects. Specifically, Facilitators seem to benefit from network effects to a greater extent (i.e., the more the merrier) than Exchange Brokers; research could investigate whether network effects for the latter group are constrained to an optimal size at which point additional peers increase opportunistic behavior or overwhelm the capacities of the platform-providing firm. On the other hand, supporters of collaborative consumption argue for its potential to create community bonds (Botsman and Rogers 2010); however, further research is necessary to understand the antecedents of building markers of community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Researchers could use our proposed framework, which suggests that sociopetal market platforms (i.e., Forums and Matchmakers) are more likely to be fertile grounds for community building, to develop a more nuanced understanding of the social impact of the collaborative consumption phenomenon. For example, what antecedents and consequences of interpersonal interactions are prevalent in sociopetal but rare in sociofugal platforms?

Finally, the four ideal types reveal that peers adopt distinct coproduction practices in each of the market configurations, highlighting how the market structure affects the roles, protocols, policies, and social norms that guide the interaction between firms and peers. Consumer research could build on this framework to investigate how the different market structures can be used to differentiate the nature of consumer experiences in these communities. For example, Kozinets et al. (2010, p. 85) find that “the intrusion of commercial ‘hype’ presents a type of moral hazard

when it contains the inappropriate and unsanctioned mixing of dominant norms, such as sharing, caring or market exchange.” Thus, researchers could explore whether and how tensions arise in the different configurations proposed because of variations in the intermingling of the social and commercial nature of exchange between peers. In summary, the typological theory offered is simple and pragmatic enough for practitioners but valuable and novel enough for academic researchers wanting to understand the collaborative consumption phenomenon.

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## **CHAPTER THREE: POLITICS OF COLLABORATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW METAPHOR FOR RESOURCE CIRCULATION**

### **Abstract**

A heated debate has been brewing in the popular press regarding the nature of collaborative consumption practices that equip ordinary people to monetize their underutilized assets and skills through online platforms that facilitate exchange among peers. The main point of contention in this debate is whether the nascent collaborative consumption phenomenon is a manifestation of the empowered and entrepreneurial consumer or merely the latest form of contemporary capitalist exploitation. This dualism between individual voluntaristic action and constrained deterministic behavior has long been at the center of scholarly debate regarding the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior. Using Bourdieu's theory of social practice to forge a link between the structure-agency dualism, we investigate the meanings collaborative consumers assign to their lived experiences. We examine the metaphors that peers use to construe the field of collaborative consumption through the interpretive analysis of participant-generated images. Consistent with recent developments in social theories about resource circulation, metaphors of exchange and inclusion are adopted by peers to guide collaborative consumption practices. Yet, this research uncovers the emergence of a new metaphor of liberation that embraces the dialectical interplay between structure and agency. This new metaphor reveals a novel way of thinking about circulation of resources that affirms Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence.

Amidst the aftermath of the global financial crisis, a heated debate has been brewing over the nature of the so-called “sharing economy,” a popular term used to subsume collaborative consumption practices that allow ordinary people to monetize their idle assets and skills. In collaborative consumption markets, firms leverage their web platforms to facilitate coordination among people to acquire and distribute resources with other peers for a fee or other compensation (Belk 2014). As an evolving system of resource circulation among consumers (Arnould and Rose 2015), collaborative consumption epitomizes the vanishing distinction between “consumers” and “producers” observed by many academics in various branches of social science (e.g. Arvidsson 2008; Comor 2010; Cova and Dalli 2009; Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012). Peers coproduce and cocreate value for each other (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2007), actively participating and expanding the marketplace (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007). Consequently, market logics and social norms intermingle in collaborative consumption activities, blurring the distinction between what is social and what is business, as well as challenging entrenched notions of circulation and distribution of consumption resources.

The main point of contention in the emerging debate is whether this growing phenomenon is a manifestation of the newly empowered, entrepreneurial and liberated consumer or just the latest form of corporate capitalist exploitation, perpetuating inequalities and propagating the precariat freelancer who is living with short-term and part-time work and precarious living standards (Baker 2014; de Grave 2014; Kessler 2014). Much of the discourse carried-out in the popular press sprouts from deeply held ideological perspectives rather than empirical evidence of how peers experience collaborative consumption. Yet, given the novelty and recency of this phenomenon, rigorous scholarly research investigating the lived experiences of collaborative consumers remains scant. Thus, this paper explores how peers experience these

coproduction practices and negotiate key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation.

This dualism between individual voluntaristic action and constrained deterministic behavior has long been at the center of critical sociological and cultural discourse about the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior; accordingly, we construct an orienting conceptual framework rooted in the structure-agency dichotomy (Walsh 1998). This robust theoretical framework from both classical and contemporary sociological theory serves as a frame of reference to explore how peers experience the tension between structure and agency. While acknowledging the importance of the structure-agency duality, many consumer culture theorists tend to argue in favor of one position. In contrast, we approach this research problem pragmatically, applying the structure-agency dichotomy to enable us to establish equitable arguments from two strong and opposing positions to show the strength of the dualism in unraveling the lived experiences of peers in collaborative consumption markets. Consequently, we are driven by the following research questions: What meanings do peers assign to the nature of their collaborative consumption experiences? How do peers negotiate the tensions between exploited labor and empowered agency?

To address these research questions we apply Bourdieu's (1990) theory of social practice to forge a link between the structure-agency dualism and investigate the meanings collaborative consumers assign to their lived experiences. Using Bourdieu's notion of habitus, we examine the metaphors that peers use to act on the field of collaborative consumption through the interpretive analysis of participant-generated images. Consistent with recent developments in social theories about resource circulation, we find that to understand collaborative consumption activities peers adopt metaphors of exchange and inclusion. Yet, this research reveals the emergence of a new

metaphor of liberation that embraces the dialectical interplay between structure and agency. Structure and agency eventually give way to a newly formed amalgam of the two forces; the resulting metaphor reveals a novel way of thinking of circulation of resources that affirms Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence.

### **Conceptual Background**

The evolution of consumers from passive recipients of that produced by businesses to active participants working collaboratively with enterprise in the marketplace is underscored by the proliferation of literature in sociology, consumer culture and services marketing advocating its significance as well as criticizing its merits. The "prosumer," individuals acting both as producer and consumer of their consumption experiences, and "prosumption," acts involving a combination of production and consumption, have emerged to become central to sociological debate surrounding the growing role of this set of collaborative practices in shaping economic relations in contemporary capitalism (Comor 2010; Denegri-Knott and Zwick 2011; Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012). Similarly, consumer culture theorists have critically examined the marketing discourse and work-like activities carried out by consumers, particularly as facilitated by networked technologies and web 2.0 (Cova and Cova 2012; Dujarier 2014; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). Others have concentrated more on the social aspects of collaboration and collective production, such as consumer resistance (Giesler 2008; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Kozinets 2002) and how innovative, creative and productive consumer action enters the realm of entrepreneurship and reshapes the nature of our economic systems (Arvidsson 2008; Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007; Hemetsberger 2007; Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008).

It is at this inflection point – when consumer action becomes entrepreneurial - where collaborative consumption departs from prior conceptualizations of the participatory consumer. Peers are not merely partaking in the production of their own consumption experiences for the joy of self-expression or collective affiliation. Collaborative consumption refers to “people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of resources for a fee or other compensation” (Belk 2014, p. 1597). In other words, peers engage in entrepreneurial activities to coproduce market offerings for the benefit of other peers, and in the process are compensated for their work. These practices embody the central premise of service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2007) that all economic and social actors are resource integrators - regardless of whether they are business firms, nonprofit organizations or individuals – and share a common purpose to co-create value, thus rendering categories of “producer” and “consumer” irrelevant. However, if such category labels are rendered irrelevant, then how do peers confer the meanings of their collaborative activities? We submit that peers must negotiate the structure-agency tensions through a dialogical process (Murray 2002), a dialogue between the peers’ cultural discourses and institutional structures. It is this dialogical process that we will explore through the lens of our orienting conceptual framework, namely, the existential tensions that motivate the ontological question: is individual behavior determined by social structure or human agency?

### ***Structure-Agency Dualism in Sociology***

Social structure and human agency lie at the core of much sociological theory and debate. The structure-agency dualism (Walsh 1998) refers to the seemingly irresolvable positions about the nature of the patterns of social relationships that emerge and develop between members of society (i.e. social structure), and the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices (i.e. agency). On the one extreme, deterministic or structuralist sociology

argues that social structures and institutions constrain or enable individual action through a system that conditions how people are able to behave within it; at the other extreme, individualistic or action sociology stresses the capacity of individuals, as agents of their own actions, to produce, sustain and shape their social world to meet their own needs (Arnould 2007; Walsh 1998). The problem with this dualism is that advocates of either position are eventually forced to recognize the interdependencies between these extremes; hence, many scholars recognize that all societies have prevailing systems, but also that these systems are socially constructed by its members, which subsequently (and over time) become social structures (Murray 2002). Accordingly, structure-agency dualism “continues to remain a topic of contemporary sociological debate in the sense that every conception of social structure must ultimately reduce to what people do in society, yet society always consists of particular and institutionalized forms of the organization of these actions” (Walsh 1998, p. 33). Approaching the research problem of how peers interpret collaborative consumption practices from these maximally dichotomized positions offers a space to explore lived experiences from which ideological differences are encouraged to emerge and divergent viewpoints are less likely to be ignored.

### ***Structure: The Exploited Consumer***

The structuralist perspective views the creativity and competence of the empowered consumer as a rich resource with the potential to be exploited by business as these consumers surrender their intellectual property right and have their innovative creations appropriated and monetized by the capitalistic system (Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). Critical voices question the success of consumer activism and criticize the emancipating discourses of consumer power and agency, along with the premises of service-dominant logic that accompany them, on

the basis that such empowerment is only superficially liberating (Cova and Cova 2012; Shankar, Cherrier, and Canniford 2006). Likewise, other theorists argue that “as long as private property, contracts and exchange values are dominant mediators of our political economy, disparities and exploitative relationships will remain largely unchallenged” (Comor 2010, p. 323) and caution against underestimating capitalists’ desire “to maintain control over production and consumption, as well as over producers and consumers, by adapting its techniques of surveillance, legal definitions of private property and modes of value creation and appropriation” (Cova and Cova 2012, p. 163).

Similarly, Holt’s (2002) historical review shows discourses of resistance as prerequisite to what he calls the dialectics of consumer culture and branding; the latter author portrays creative consumer practices of empowered consumers as essential to reproducing a hegemonic market. For others, the empowered consumer is construed as a “specter” haunting contemporary marketers, and cocreation principles are regarded as one the most advanced strategies for capitalist accumulation based on the expropriation of free cultural, technological, social and affective labor of the consumer masses (Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008, p. 164). In sum, the exploited consumer is an inevitable outcome of the capitalist system in which it operates.

### ***Agency: The Empowered Consumer***

In contrast, the agentic view of consumers embraces the idea of a newly empowered and liberated consumer. From this perspective, theorists envision that liberation from the shackles of capitalist system requires a reflexively defiant consumer, one who is empowered to reflect on how marketing works as an institution and questions economic, political, and social structures (Ozanne and Murray 1995). Likewise, others describe empowered consumers’ emancipation from market domination as collective action or social drama, in which resistant consumers



struggle against attempts of appropriation which eventually results in a renewed interpretation of the marketplace (Giesler 2008; Kozinets and Handelman 2004).

In both practice and theory, consumers are increasingly acknowledged as creative agents and a source of competence as they actively participate in the coproduction of value in a new age of networked marketing (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008). Some argue the engagement of consumers and businesses in participative and collaborative practices that leverage the power of the crowds (e.g. crowdsourcing, crowdfunding and crowdcreation) demonstrates the rise of new democratized markets and business models (Hemetsberger 2012); while others highlight technology's evolutionary role as sources of power shift from marketers to consumers empowered by the internet and social media (Labrecque et al. 2013). In sum, empowered consumers, as agents of their own actions, can deploy competencies to liberate themselves from the constraints of the capitalist system and reshape their worlds.

### ***Forging Links between Structure and Agency: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice***

Despite the prevalence of dualisms in sociological thinking, some theorists take the position that favors neither structure nor agency suggesting consumer agency can co-exist within markets and institutions, and in fact argue that “successful, progressive practices of citizenship *should* take place through market-mediated forms in our culture because these are the templates for action and understanding available to most people” (Arnould 2007, p. 105). From this perspective then, peers are both influenced by capitalist markets, but also can act to influence market structures. Even critics of the “working” consumer add the caveat that when consumers are able to obtain the value of what they produce then they are not being exploited (Cova and Dall'Aglio 2009). Thus, in order to forge links between the agency-structure dualism, we rely on

Pierre Bourdieu's work, which seeks to link the analysis of social structures to that of social agency through the concept of habitus.

Bourdieu's theory of practice bridges traditional sociological dualisms by suggesting that the two orders are tied together through social practices. He links action and structure by introducing the notion of habitus, a set of dispositions that social actors assimilate as a result of social experiences that serves as guiding force to practices (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu explains practices by the complex interplay of his main concepts of field, habitus and capital: the habitus assures the collective belief in the rules of the social game and that social actors will perform in accordance with their position in the field, which depends on their relative amount and structure of economic, cultural and social capital. Bourdieu developed the concept of fields in order to describe social worlds with distinctive logic and norms (Layder 2006), thus the field of collaborative consumption deals with those norms and practices common to circulation of resources among peers.

The habitus is conceived as a mechanism linking individual action and the social structures within which future action is taken – it denotes a mental system of structures through which individuals produce thoughts and actions, which in turn creates external social structures (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). It is an embodied phenomenon that can operate unconsciously as it becomes 'modus operandi' overtaking conscious intentions (Bourdieu 1990). Importantly, the habitus constrains but does not determine thought and action. Accordingly, the habitus can be conceived as both durable but evolving, continually adjusted to the current context and reinforced by further experience, informative of the various logics of social action (Adams 2006). Thus, consumer practice is conditioned by external structures but also exerts influence back on these structures avoiding the determinism of classical structuralism as well as the

volunteerism of agentic perspectives. Bourdieu (1990) stresses the dialectic relationship between structure and agency that is manifested in the habitus.

The conceptual toolbox of Pierre Bourdieu is well suited to investigate the meanings collaborative consumers assign to their lived experiences because habitus can be similar within groups of people, and thus it can be seen as a collective phenomenon that reflects a shared cultural context (Adams 2006). Accordingly, by using Bourdieu's notion of habitus we can empirically inquire about shared cultural context by examining individuals' mental systems that guide consumer practice. Bourdieu (1990) identifies the habitus as a metaphor of the objective social relations that are produced and reproduced within particular fields. A metaphor is conceived as a collective orientation that individuals use to understand and make meanings of their experiences (Lakoff 1995). Thus, probing the guiding metaphors that participants use to represent the meanings of collaborative consumption is a powerful means of exploring how peers negotiate key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation.

## **Method**

We employed an image-based study to explore the dialectical interplay between agency and structure that is manifested in the habitus. To do so, we examined the metaphors conveyed by participant-generated images and descriptions. Metaphor elicitation techniques are founded on the notion that most communication is nonverbal and that thoughts naturally occur as images (Zaltman 1997). Thus, in order to explore mental images, our method explored metaphorical thinking; doing so enables participants to communicate nonverbally and removes the constraints imposed by standard questions used in methods such as surveys and focus groups. Images are a representational medium for bundles of related thoughts that embody extensive information and

defining attributes (Zaltman 1997). Projective techniques, such as metaphor elicitation, rely on indirect questioning and ambiguous stimuli to elicit theoretically limitless variations of data, making this method widely recognized for its ability to generate data that is relatively free from social desirability bias (Rook 2006). This concern is particularly important for our context of study given the strongly held beliefs and sentiments surrounding the tensions to be explored. This approach is recommended for exploring deeply held and widely shared cultural models founded in profound, embodied metaphors (Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014). The reason is that the method is based on the premise that thought is image-based not word-based, and that metaphor is central to thought and able to elicit hidden knowledge (Zaltman 1997). As a result, we may uncover beliefs that the informants could not have otherwise been able to articulate.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

We recruited active collaborative consumption participants from across the United States using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk). Data was collected with a self-directed online survey administered in March 2015. Half way through the questionnaire participants were presented with the following question:

*“Recent research on decision making shows that choices are affected by context. Differences in how people feel, their previous knowledge and experience, and their environment can affect choices. To help us understand how people make decisions, we are interested in information about you. Specifically, we are interested in whether you actually take the time to read the directions; if not, some results may not tell us very much about decision making in the real world. To show that you have read the instructions, please ignore the question below about how you are feeling and instead check the "none of the above" option as your answer. Please check all the words that describe how you are currently feeling:”*

Only those participants that successfully completed an attention filter by selecting “none of the above” were allowed to participate in the study and complete the image-generation task. In total,

295 submissions were received, however, the sample was reduced to a subset of submissions in which the participants reported adopting the role of the seller or service provider. We purposefully selected this sample to reflect our interest on peers performing entrepreneurial work through their collaborative consumption practices. Subsequently, usable data was collected from 152 participants that ranged in age from 19-58 (average of 34), 52% male, 81.5% Caucasian, and came from various educational backgrounds, incomes and occupations. The participants reported participating in 1-14 different collaborative consumption platforms (3.89 on average), and the majority (88.8%) reported using these platforms for more than two years.



The instructions on the questionnaire asked participants to take a moment to reflect on their thoughts and feelings about collaborative consumption by asking themselves what these experiences do for them and how it makes them feel. After the moment of reflection, participants advanced to the next screen and were asked to imagine that they had to express their thoughts and feelings about collaborative consumption without using words. The instructions read:

*“Now, imagine you had to express these thoughts and feelings without using words. With this in mind...we will ask you to collect an image that represents your thoughts and feelings about exchanging with other peers:*

***Be picky** about your picture and choose one that best symbolizes your thoughts and feelings.*

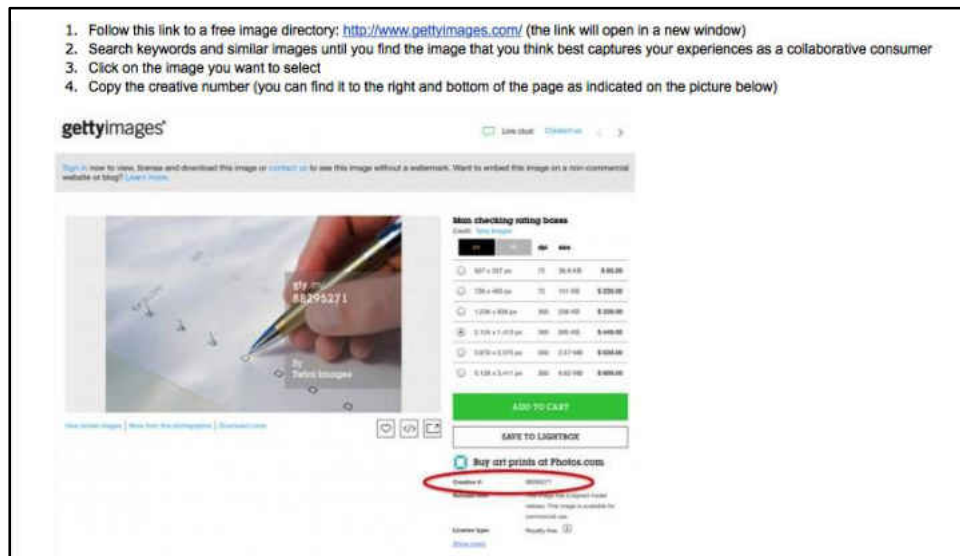
***Be creative.** Look for pictures that metaphorically capture your personal thoughts and feelings. Your pictures do not have to make sense to anyone but you, so I encourage you to think as imaginatively as you can.”*

To facilitate metaphorical thinking, participants were also given some examples of pictures used to capture representations of thoughts and feelings and asked to advance to the following page when ready (see Figure 3).

For example...	
	In an unrelated study about orange juice, one person used an image of fireworks to describe the excitement his taste buds experience when the zesty citrus hits his tongue.
	Another person used an image of an open field to represent the calming escape she experiences when drinking orange juice in the middle of a hectic workday.

**Figure 3. Examples of Metaphorical Thinking Given to Participants**

The next screen provided participants with instructions to collect an image that represented their “thoughts and feelings” about collaborative consumption. To locate an image they were asked to follow a link to a free image directory. As illustrated on Figure 4, the instructions outlined the steps to follow and asked participants to search for keywords or browse images until they found the image they thought best captured their impression of collaborative consumption. Getty Images, the free image directory used, is a supplier of stock images for business and consumers with an archive of 80 million still images. The link took participants to the home page, which allows them to easily search or browse images by their choice of keyword or categories producing limitless variations of data. This is an important consideration as participant-generated pictures are rich in meaning because what the eye perceives and encodes when viewing images is guided by mental models (Zaltman 1997), thus enabling us to tap into the habitus that guide these consumer practices.



**Figure 4. Instructions for Image Collection**

Once participants located an image, they were asked a series of open-ended questions. We used an interactive design feature to probe for elaboration on open-ended responses in online surveys. Once participants submitted their answer to the first question, a probe appeared showing their response and asking for more information. This procedure has been shown to improve response quality of open-ended answers in survey research (Dillman, Smuth, and Christian 2009). Further, the open-ended questions were designed to elicit metaphorical thinking and probe the visual metaphor represented by the image resulting in highly revealing stories (Zaltman 1997). Participants were asked:

1. *What story would this image tell?*
2. *How did you search for the image? (e.g. keywords, certain characteristics, thoughts elicited, etc.)*
3. *Why did you select this particular image?*
4. *Was there an image that you wanted to find but couldn't? Please describe what this image would have looked like. What story would that image have told? Please elaborate in your response.*

## *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the participant-generated images and corresponding open-ended responses (Creswell 2007). The visual data was analyzed using the method of interpretive engagement (Drew and Guillemin 2014). In this method, the images produced are the primary data source and part of an active process of seeking understanding. Building upon established critical visual methods, Drew and Guillemin (2014) developed the interpretive engagement framework to formalize the process of analysis used to generate meaning from participant-generated visual data. This framework underscores the methodological and theoretical expertise the researcher brings to the analytic process; it involves three interrelated stages of analysis, which pay particular attention to the analytic work of the researcher in their interaction with the images and participant.

In the first stage, the focus of analysis is on each of the participant's image, description and reflection on the image. This stage of analysis relates to meaning-making that is driven primarily by participants and engages explicitly with the “types of stories, experiences and representations that participants want the researcher to see, hear and consider” (Drew and Guillemin 2014, p. 59). We focused on the notions of internal and external narratives (Banks 2008). First, we focused on the story that the standalone image communicated. In this step we coded images with various themes that reflected the thoughts and feelings communicated by the images. For example, we coded image descriptions (e.g. handshake, handholding, jumping in the air), how many people were shown in the image and what emotions (if any) the image conveyed. Second, the answers provided by participants to the four open-ended questions were used to understand the context in which the image was generated. The internal narrative is linked but analytically separable from the external narrative. This analytical separation is important



because the story the image communicates can be remarkably different from the narrative the image-maker wished to communicate as image creation is embedded within the social context of the individual (Banks 2008). Consequently, we consciously and systematically interpreted the concepts that had been included and invoked, as well as what had been left out in the image-generation process (Drew and Guillemin 2014). Therefore, in this stage of analysis we developed an adequate understanding of the intentionality that underpins each of the participant-generated images.

The second stage involves a close and detailed comparative analysis of the complete collection of images from participants, as well as the researchers' reflections of the images and process of image production. This stage of analysis relates to meaning-making that is driven primarily by the researcher (Drew and Guillemin 2014). The process involves a close examination of the collection of images and accompanying participant explanations with the purpose of developing of a set of interrelated themes as patterns emerge. At this stage of analysis we grouped images in different ways to see links between them and generate patterns. This researcher-driven process emphasizes engagement with the details of each image to determine overarching elements of the image as a collection (Drew and Guillemin 2014). Following the latter author's guidelines, we integrated interpretive questions into our analytic framework:

- What is being shown on the image?
- Who is being shown on the image?
- What emotion is being captured by the image?
- How does the image convey meaning?
- What social signifiers or signs are linked to or embedded in the images?
- What is the most obvious reading of the image?
- Is there more than one possible interpretation of the image?

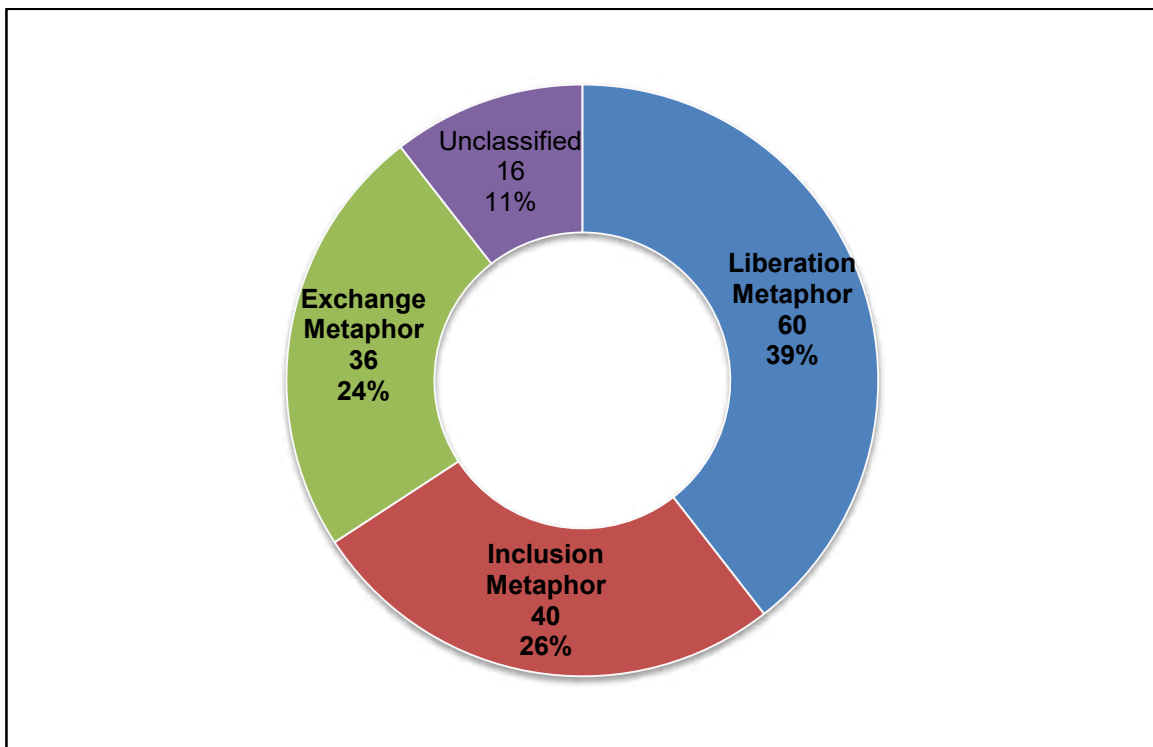
- How does the image reflect or depart from dominant cultural values?
- Is the image contradictory to the participant's explanation?

The final stage involves interpretation of the visual images within the broader social context, working theoretically and conceptually to reach a robust analytic explanation. This stage of analysis relates to meaning-making through recontextualisation (Drew and Guillemin 2014). In this case, it involved repositioning the interpretation of the images in the larger context of resource circulation and the dialectic of the structure-agency dualism. At this stage is where the themes were solidified into the three metaphors of resource circulation that we describe on the next section. Data analysis continued until theoretical saturation had been reached (Creswell and Miller 2000). That is, the metaphors were well developed and no new relevant information was emerging from examining additional images. In addition, two investigators, trained in qualitative data analyses, routinely met to share and discuss interpretations of the images and descriptions reaching convergence of observations. Drew and Guillemin's (2014) framework of interpretive engagement provides a rigorous and systematic process leading to rich, credible, and detailed interpretations of the images produced.

## **Findings**

The use of visual data in examining how peers experience the collaborative consumption phenomenon was helpful in understanding the meanings participants assign to their lived experiences. Together with the image descriptions, the participant-generated images reveal distinct mental models that peers use to engage in collaborative consumption practices and negotiate key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation. Through the interpretive analysis of images, we explored the dialectical interplay between

structure and agency that is manifested in the habitus. Because the habitus is a cognitive and motivating mechanism that incorporates the influence of social context, it provides a conduit between action and structure (Layder 2006). Thus, the metaphors elicited in this research serve as the key mechanism that interweaves the creativity of individuals with their involvement in the reproduction of structural resources. Using Bourdieu's notion of habitus, the analysis of our visual data reveals three key metaphors deployed by participants: exchange, inclusion and liberation. As illustrated in Figure 5, 136 of the images collected were classified into one of the three metaphors (89% of total images).



**Figure 5. Metaphorical Classification of Participant-generated Images**

The first two metaphors – exchange and inclusion – are consistent with recent theorizing about the nature of circulation and distribution of resources. Arnould and Rose (2015) argue that collaborative consumption activities are hybrid blends between two “pervasive cultural orientations or societal myths” (p. 6). These authors theorize that market logics (which they referred to as possessive individualism) and mutuality constitute two oppositional ideals of resource distribution that structure the narrative representations of resource circulation. Exchange is presented as the metaphor for possessive individualism driven by market logics, and inclusion is presented as the metaphor for mutuality or generalized exchange (Arnould and Rose 2015). However, the third metaphor that emerges in this study constitutes a new mental model for resource circulation that departs from the ideological continuum anchored by market logics and mutuality. The metaphor of liberation embraces the dialectical interplay between structure and agency and reveals novel meanings assigned to the process of resource circulation.

### ***Exchange Metaphor***

The exchange metaphor arises from market logics and is reflected in 24% of the images examined. This metaphor is characterized by business thinking and mirrors thoughts and actions regularly found in traditional market exchange. For example, in the following excerpt the participant explains the symbolic meaning of the image selected (Figure 6 image 1):

*“The basic foundation of a peer to peer exchange is a transaction between two parties. The image symbolically captures this aspect with a representation of the money changing hands with an electronic device (a smartphone in this case) serving as an intermediary.”*

# Exchange Metaphor



Figure 6. Representative Images for the Exchange Metaphor

The stories the images communicate are about business transactions depicted as fast and easy, anonymous and business-like. The images prevalently display dyads and are described as *“two people meeting together and exchanging ideas/monetary items.”* Consequently, the images portray handshakes, business people, money, and give-and-take actions as reflected on Figure 6. The market logic of peer exchange is emphasized in the desire for fast and easy transactions.

The following description was provided for image 6.2:

*“It was a fast deal. The picture shows two hands shaking along with... speed lines I guess you can call them? I am very impatient, so when I make a deal, I generally like to get it over with as quickly as possible.”*

Similarly, the participant describes image 6.7 as *“It shows how easy it is to get information and services to another person.”* There is a sense of anonymity, with most images displaying only the hands of individuals rather than their faces; the participant that selected image 6.4 underscores this observation: *“anonymous people exchanging items of equal value”*. Moreover, collaborative consumption practices are construed as regular business activity, not only by the images selected but also by the use of business-like language. For example, the following description is provided for image 6.3:

*“Its a handshake I view exchanges with other peers as a business interaction but am very respectful and appreciative of the business, so a handshake is a good representation of that”*

In line with traditional notions of market logics, participants that chose images to express exchange metaphors were also more likely to construe activities as competitive. For instance, one participant associates peer exchange with playing poker:

*“Exchanges on these networks are a bit like playing poker. You try to win by having the best hand possible. So you arrange stuff that's a win for you, without knowing what your opponent is trying to do so he can win. We're all kind of like dogs in that we arrange things for our own benefits first, and even though we try to keep some stuff secret, it's all over our faces.”*

This competitive notion of peer exchange is also reflected on the tug of war image (image 6.8), which the participant explains as follows:

*“I chose a game of tug-o-war because that is how it often is. I once sold my old iPad on Craigslist, and two weeks later, the guy tried to claim it stopped working. When I said let's meet in person to see what's wrong, he backed off. He just wanted to scam me for a discount.”*

Participants indicated searching for keywords such as exchange, trading, barter and easy money, portraying the transactional nature of the metaphor used to understand collaborative consumption. One variation on the anonymous dyadic exchange was images of piles of cash; yet, the participant descriptions were still consistent with an exchange metaphor. For example, one participant describes his search for image 6.6, as *“I wanted to find a picture of a money stack that showed that I have been selling stuff for extra cash.”* Another variation observed was the introduction of technology elements (e.g. images 6.1 and 6.7) recognizing the key role of networked technologies in facilitating seamless exchanges between peers. Another participant explains the selection of image 6.10 as *“I feel that peer networks are simply the new way of exchanging items.”*

Interestingly, despite the prevalence of market logics that should emphasize the pursue of self-interest, many participants made references to mutually beneficial exchanges and reflected on the fairness of the resource circulation. Participants indicated to view the exchange transactions as representing *“a partnership between two people”* (image 6.5) and also conveyed on picture 6.4 described by the participant as follows:

*“The image is a symbolic representation of an exchange of goods. It doesn't feature actual goods or products but instead is a more broad artistic model. The objects being exchanges are different from one another and therefore represent different expectations and rewards”*

Yet, even with an emphasis on mutually beneficial outcomes, this variation on the theme still retains much of the business language and imagery. For instance, in describing the search for image 6.9 the participant explains: *“I used the word handshake because I feel this is the best symbol of people making a win-win deal.”*

Thus, we conclude that the exchange metaphor denotes a mental model to approach collaborative consumption activities that resembles traditional economic exchange reflecting the influence of the social context that structures business activities. With this metaphor, peers assign transactional meanings to their collaborative consumption experiences. Even when mindful of a mutually beneficial exchange, this mental model isolates dyadic relationships in a transactional approach.

### ***Inclusion Metaphor***

The inclusion metaphor surfaces from mutuality, actions that assume the inclusivity of a shared social fabric among actors (Arnould and Rose 2015). This metaphor is reflected in 26% of the images analyzed, offering validity to claims that collaborative consumption operates as a resource circulation alternative concerned with sociality. While the images reflecting the exchange metaphor consisted mostly of dyads, the inclusion metaphor entails mostly images of collectives. As represented in Figure 7, the inclusion metaphor is characterized by images of groups of people coming together, entangled or embracing hands, and working as a team.



# Inclusion Metaphor

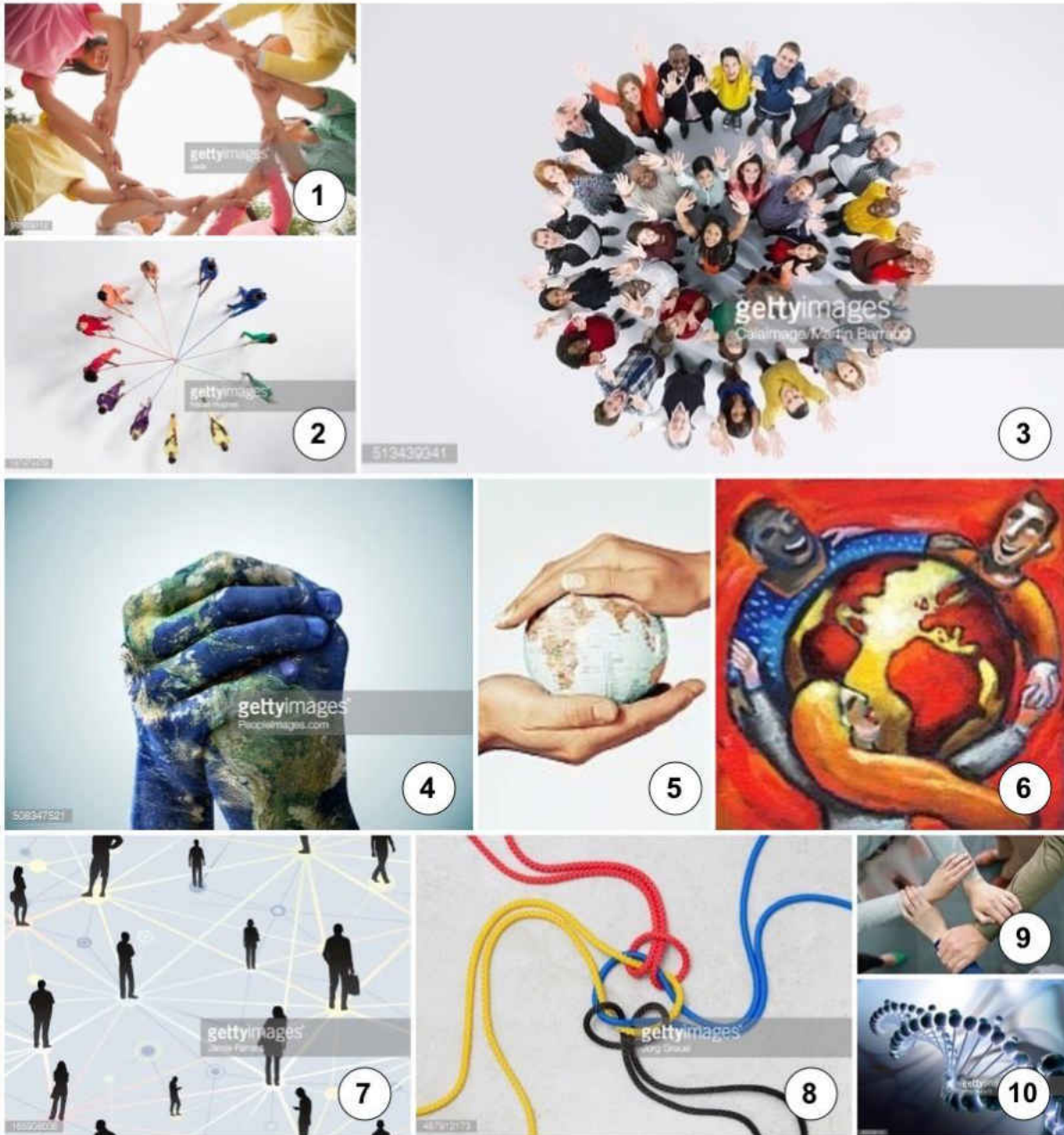


Figure 7. Representative Images for the Inclusion Metaphor

The emphasis on interrelated helpful collectives is reflected in descriptions like the following:

*“This image represents a group of friends who share common interests and have decided to share goods and resources as a means of solidifying their communal relationship and freeing up their economic resources to pursue more important things than just acquiring material possessions (especially ones they don't really need to own)”*

Mutuality is conceived as the “mechanism by which strangers are transformed into member of community” that is inscribed in a “logic of hedonic pleasure” (Arnould and Rose 2015, p. 16).

This notion of mutuality is captured on image 7.3, as the participant explains:

*“The photo tells a story of the woman pictured directly in the center with her hands outreached. I love the way it was portrayed. It was as if she was welcoming more and everyone around her was waiting to get in on the experience.”*

Participants convey mutuality through images that depict cooperation, teamwork and desire to help each other. For example, one participant explains that the image was found by searching for “people helping people” settling for image 7.1. The participant explains the selection as follows:

*“It showed people working in a cooperative fashion, all supporting someone that was able to then support someone else, a never-ending circle of grassroots consumerism”*

Cooperation emerges as a central theme that drives the meanings peers derive from their collaborative consumption experiences. Accordingly, participants describe feelings of happiness from helping others such as *“Sharing energy with others. This photo shows the warmth of giving and receiving at the same time.”* And *“The picture gives me a feel of comradeship and kinship.”*

Others underscore the desire to forge bonds, as the participant that selected image 7.4:

*“Two hands together painted like a globe. It means to me to have two random people cooperating and in turn making the world better, connected and to help it keep turning.”*

Both images and descriptions consistently reflect interconnection and cooperation between people with the goal to help each other. For instance, a participant describes image 7.2 as:

*“Everyone is pulling on his own rope that is connected at the center. Everyone obtains something from this mutual interaction.”*

Participants reported using keywords to search for images such as helpful, teamwork, friends, sharing and community. One variation on the main theme of interrelated cooperative collectives is the integration of a sense of global harmony and the awareness of how technology bridges the geographical gaps between communities. For example, the participant that selected image 7.5 explains, *“The image depicts the peer to peer exchanges wherever in the world,”* similarly, image 7.6 is described as follows:

*“People from all around the world connect with one another. We are brought closer together thanks to modern technology.”*

*This global citizenship awareness is prevalent on the use of this metaphor that embraces notions of diversity and interconnections. For example, in selecting image 7.8 the participant reports:*

*“These ropes show the diversity and connection of us all, especially when connected in peer-to-peer transactions. Our world is more connected than ever with the internet”*

*Further, diversity is leveraged to accomplish common goals. For instance, the participant that selected image 7.9 describes the following story told by the image:*

*“It tells how different people with different needs can come together and help each other.”*

Another participant describes a similar picture as *“People holding hands. It's simple and very symbolic. We all help each other for the benefit of all.”* The same sentiment is reflected on this comment:

*“I picked this image because in a way we are helping each other when using these platforms. One person has a need for something and the other provides a way to fill that need and vice versa. Both parties benefit. The picture is about helping each other reach our goals.”*

Another variation on the main theme of the inclusion metaphor is the explicit acknowledgement of how social actors are embedded in social networks. For example, one participant explains why an image portraying a DNA strand was selected (image 7.10):

*“We are all connected in predictable ways. In order to survive, we must maintain relationships with others. This image represents the urge to be collaborative we all have.”*

Likewise, another person describes the connected nature of peer networks depicted in image 7.7:

*“I think this is the perfect image. It clearly shows the connections that people make in a peer to peer network sharing situation, and the connections you are making to other individuals through networking.”*

This awareness of social networks in turn facilitates generalized exchange, which operates when all parties to the exchange are linked together in an integrated transaction in which reciprocations are indirect rather than mutual (Ekeh 1974). This notion is reflected on the following participant comment about image 7.3:

*“I think of a single entity that is reaching out to like-minded individuals and those individuals in return reaching back out to them and helping them...the image depicts a large group of people all reaching out in unison to one individual. I felt that the image really represents that thought of a large group of people just reaching out and helping a single entity.”*

In sum, the exchange metaphor expresses a mental model to approach collaborative consumption activities that reflects subversion to the traditional capitalist system. This metaphor supports anti-utilitarian approaches that challenge the typical reduction of consumer behavior to the constant pursuit of individual self-interest and adherence to market logics (Arnould and Rose 2015). With this metaphor, peers assign cooperative meanings to their

collaborative consumption experiences. This mental model underscores collective action with the potential to shape the social context under which consumption takes place.

### ***Liberation Metaphor***

The liberation metaphor constitutes a new mental model for resource circulation that departs from the ideological continuum anchored by market logics and mutuality. This metaphor is the most prevalent among the sample, reflected in 39% of the images analyzed. As shown in Figure 8, the liberation metaphor is characterized by images of individuals jumping up in the air, escaping into landscapes and language laden with feelings of excitement, escapism and celebration.

The narratives for the liberation metaphor reveal how participation in collaborative consumption frees individuals to consume the way they want. For example, one participant reports the following story:

*“This is the story of a smart guy. He is a savvy shopper and invests his money wisely. He doesn’t follow fads or the masses. He is both a consumer and a saver. Over the years he learned that he could get items he really wanted in as good as new condition and pay much less than other people do simply because the item is used. The money he saved is symbolized by the mountain...The mountain contains not only the money he saved over the years but also the numerous things he was able to purchase with that money and would not have been able to had he not saved the extra dollars. The mountain represents the great possibilities that open up when he buys used rather than new products and sells rather than throws away his used items.”*

# Liberation Metaphor

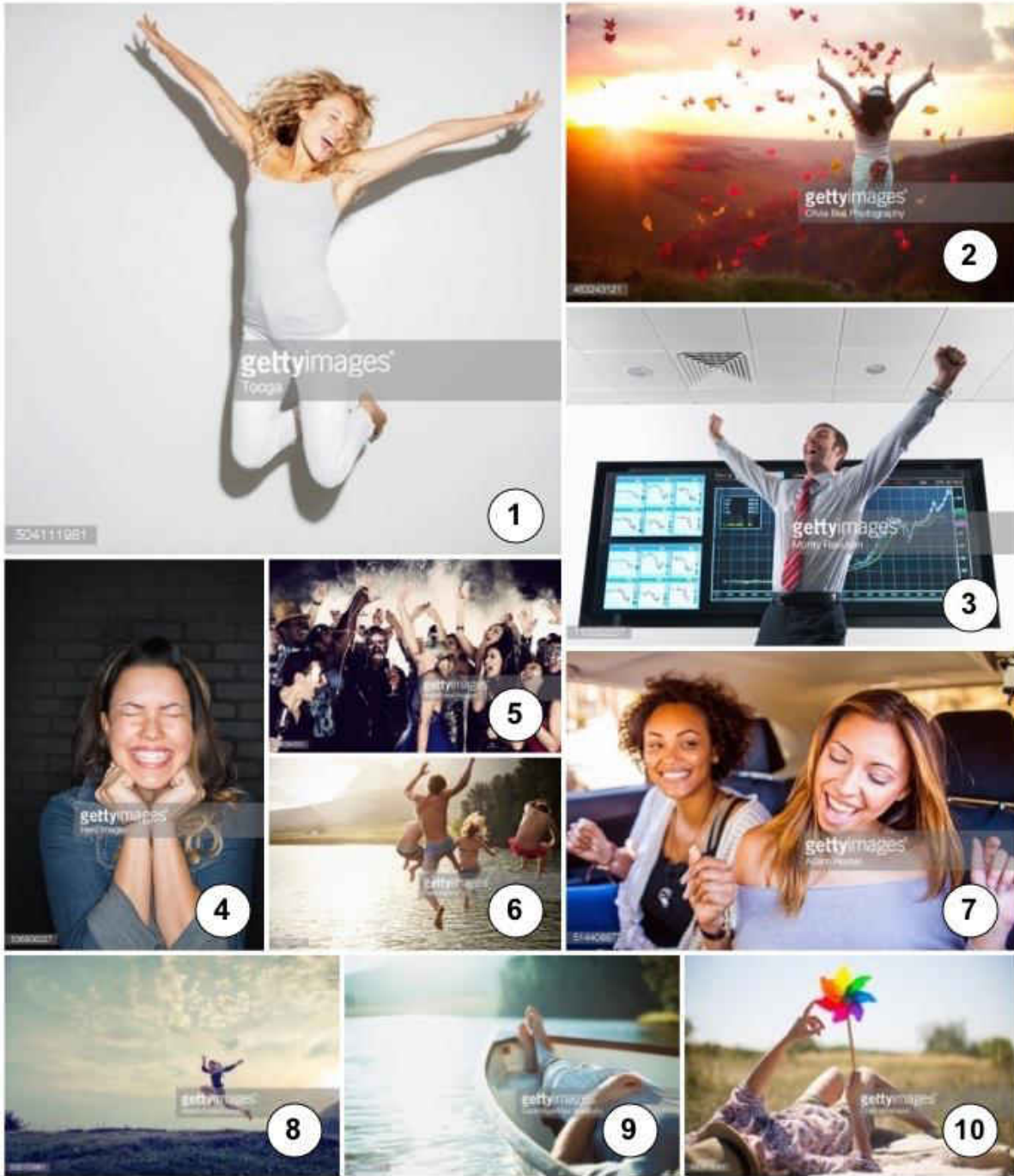


Figure 8. Representative Images for the Liberation Metaphor

The use of this metaphor associates collaborative consumption practices with images of joyful bliss. For example, the participant that selected image 8.1 describes the story of the image as follows:

*“It was a girl being very happy and jumping for joy. I thought it represented me when I make a sell and make money or buy an item and save money.”*

Further, many of the stories reflect a sense of gaining control over their consumption experiences. The participant describes why image 8.2 was selected:

*“I chose a photo of a woman leaping joyfully while rose petals floated around her. I selected this one because it's similar to how I felt when I unloaded all of those old toys and clothes. I felt happy and free and, more importantly, like a big weight had been lifted from my shoulders... Suddenly, my son's room was neat and organized and not overflowing with stuff!”*

This sentiment of elation from being freed from the shackles of consumption resonates across participant descriptions, as one participant proclaims in the response to why image 8.6 was selected: *“I think it is fun to do it. I find it exhilarating.”* Others communicate feelings of liberation from traditional work:

*“Life is short and there's a lot of things I want to see and do. I was wasting the best years of this life working all the time instead of getting out and living.”*

In contrast to the images representative of the inclusion and exchange metaphors, liberation images are predominantly about individuals. This focus on the self is prevalent in the narratives as participants reflect on what collaborative consumption helps them accomplish. For example, the participant that selected image 8.8 explains:

*“This images symbolizes how free I felt when owning my new running sneakers. I felt like I was ready to take on what ever comes my way.”*

The participant that selected image 8.3 also explains the elation of finding a good deal on a household appliance:

*“This man is obviously ecstatic about a transaction in which he just made a good deal. This is how I felt when I got a washing machine from a neighbor for a fifth of what it was worth in the store.”*

The same themes prevail on the responses to the open-ended questions. For example, one participant says:

*“This symbolizes something fun that requires little to no effort. It is a girl floating, holding a bundle of balloons. It symbolizes how free and fun selling on ebay feels to me.”*

In addition to a sense of self-achievement, the accounts reveal a positive outlook full of opportunities. For instance, one participant explains image 8.4 as follows:

*“I like the invigorating feeling I get when I use peer-to-peer exchanges. It's rejuvenating. I am stepping outside the box and trying something different. I've always loved the sunrise. The promise of something new. You can make life your own each and everyday.”*

Participants reported using keywords such as freedom, excitement, bliss, opportunity, happiness and celebration to locate their images. We find two variations on the main theme of elated and freed individuals: celebration and escape. The first variation on the main theme is liberation through celebration, as one participant (image 8.5) describes *“A big party for finding the best deal possible.”* This emphasis on celebration give rise to images that include more than one person, yet the image descriptions still indicate a focus on the individual. For example, the participant that selected image 8.7 elaborates on the excitement of her car sharing experience with a stranger as *“I am riding in a car with a friend and I am happy because of the service provided.”* In this case, there might have been two people captured in the image, but the mental model is still focused on the individual. In this variation there is a fascination and excitement in finding unique possessions:

*“This images will tell the story of the excitement and relief someone feels after searching for something for years and finally finding it.”*



The second variation on the main theme is liberation through escape. These images tell a story of escaping reality such as the one told by the participant that selected image 8.9:

*“This guy is relaxed. He has no worries, his life is easy right now”*

The stories of escapism still represent the individual’s ability to gain control over their consumption experiences and free themselves from the burdens of consumption. For example, the participant that selected image 8.10 explains:

*“Whether I’m receiving something I need, or am able to help others, I feel at bliss... it just completes the chaos in my life for a moment, giving me reason to be able to just sit back and kind of have an “ahhhh” moment.”*

Altogether, the metaphor of liberation embraces the dialectical interplay between structure and agency and reveals novel meanings assigned to the process of resource circulation. Participants find meaning by engaging in consumption behavior that aligns with self-achievement; yet, at the same time, this process of alignment is forged as much by what consumers are resisting as by the freedom they welcome. That is, peers only exert agency to free themselves from limits on their consumption behavior by yielding to the same social conditions that shape consumption activities. With this metaphor, peers assign emancipatory meanings to their collaborative consumption experiences. This mental account highlights freedom from consumption restrictions, but in doing so it affirms Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence, which we discuss on the next section.

## **Discussion**

This research employed the interpretive analysis of participant-generated images to explore the dialectical interplay between structure and agency. We relied on Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of habitus to inquire about a shared cultural context. Habitus is the pivot around which the

production and reproduction of society is accomplished, transcending the structure-agency dualism (Layder 2006). Probing into the guiding metaphors that participants use to understand and make meanings of their collaborative consumption experiences revealed three distinct collective orientations summarized in Table 4. These metaphors are important because the set of dispositions that encompass the habitus are presumed to act unconsciously, that is, consumers simply behave consistent with such dispositions without being aware of their influence.

**Table 4. Summary of Findings for Metaphors used in Collaborative Consumption**

<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Exchange</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Liberation</b>
Meanings	Transactional	Cooperative	Emancipatory
Core thematic images	Anonymous dyadic exchanges	Interrelated helpful collectives	Elated empowered individuals
Thematic Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global diversity</li> <li>• Networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebration</li> <li>• Escape</li> </ul>
Sample of keywords used by participants to search for images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange</li> <li>• Trade or barter</li> <li>• Easy money</li> <li>• Business transactions</li> <li>• Shaking hands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Helpful</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom</li> <li>• Excitement</li> <li>• Opportunity</li> <li>• Happiness</li> <li>• Celebration</li> </ul>

First, market logics give rise to a metaphor of exchange. We expected this metaphor to be more prevalent given that collaborative consumers have been found to be primarily driven by economic motives (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Lamberton and Rose 2012). Yet, the exchange metaphor was the least prevailing metaphor among the images analyzed. This suggests that the transactional meanings reflecting the influence of economic social structures may be stifled with the evolving nature of collaborative systems of circulation. Alternatively, the infrequency of the

exchange metaphor may be interpreted as an omen of symbolic power tacitly exerted by dominant cultural players.

Second, mutuality drives the emergence of a metaphor of inclusion. Although not laden with the activist notions of resistant consumer movements (Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Kozinets 2002), the inclusion metaphor reflects cooperative meanings that peers assign to their collaborative consumption experiences. Underscoring collective action and the networked nature of humanity, this mental model has the potential to shape the social context under which consumption takes place. For instance, recent research has found that if a critical mass of contributions to a generalized exchange system can be harnessed, then the solidarity that emerges can fuel a ‘virtuous cycle’ leading to the groups increased productivity and maintaining giving behaviors (Willer, Flynn, and Zak 2012). The prevalence of the inclusion metaphor then, would support the proliferation of circulation systems that rely on solidarity among members to realize large-scale benefits for individuals, the environment and society.

Third, the interplay of structure and agency reveals a metaphor of liberation. In this dialectic, structure and agency eventually give way to a newly formed amalgam of the two forces. At the surface, it may seem that this mental model with its ascribed emancipatory meanings affirms the agentic view of newly empowered and liberated consumer. However, upon closer inspection this metaphor more closely affirms the impalpable domination that everyday social habits maintain over a social actor, namely, what Pierre Bourdieu terms symbolic violence. Bourdieu (1990) uses the term symbolic violence as an analytical tool to examine various forms of social and cultural domination. It refers to the internalization and acceptance of dominating logics as natural and normal; this misrecognition allows symbolic violence to hide itself within dominant discourses so that individuals don’t act to resist it and therefore act in

ways that reproduce it (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). Subsequently, collaborative consumers act in complicity with the dominant capitalist system and continue to perpetuate the self-interested logics produced by economic exchange. Enamored by promises of possibilities, collaborative consumers adopting a liberation metaphor reproduce the continuous pursuit of self-interest and ubiquitous consumerism as part of normal social order.

Bourdieu's theory asserts that class reproduction is inevitable and therefore makes itself legitimate. Notably, the liberation metaphor not only represents a new mental model of resource circulation, but also was the prevailing metaphor among the images analyzed. Moreover, in support to his notion of symbolic violence, a larger percentage of those participants adopting a metaphor of liberation came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, a sign of lower cultural capital (37% reported income below \$30,000 per year in comparison to 18.2% of inclusion metaphor and 14.9% of exchange metaphor). Participants that chose images of liberation were also less likely to perceive participation as effortful (only 6.8 % reported participation to be high effort, compared to 14.5% for inclusion metaphor and 19% for exchange metaphor) and more likely to perceive uncertainty in collaborative consumption activities (19% reported a lot or a great deal of uncertainty compared to 9% for inclusion and 10% for exchange). Combined, these insights point to the most vulnerable consumers reproducing capitalist ideologies.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

This research contributes to academic literature in three key areas by contributing to the emergent research examining the circulation of consumption resources, applying a sociological perspective that pays attention to the contexts that condition consumption practices, and expanding the application of visual analysis techniques to reveal novel meanings to consumer

experiences. Altogether, the findings of this research offer a new perspective on the evolving nature of collaborative systems of resource circulation and distribution.

First, this research contributes to the emergent research examining the evolving nature of the circulation and distribution of consumption resources. We answer to Arnould and Rose's (2015) call to investigate the kinds of mental accounts that organize the hybrid modes of circulation in collaborative consumption. Our pragmatic approach complements research that has tended to examine these practices either from a romantic humanistic perspective (e.g., Botsman and Rogers 2010) or a critical structuralist perspective (e.g., Cova and Cova 2012; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). The three metaphors uncovered in this research can be useful analytic constructs to further examine alternative consumption avenues such as access-based consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012) and commercial sharing systems (Lamberton and Rose 2012).

Second, the use of critical theory in this research answers to recent calls for increased attention to the contexts that condition consumption practices (Askegaard and Linnet 2011). Applying Bourdieu's framework to understand the lived experiences of collaborative consumer allowed us to leverage the epistemology that supports concepts such as habitus, misrecognition and symbolic violence. Such approach safeguards from the "worst excesses of liberatory ideology and overly individualistic epistemologies" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011, p. 389). This perspective contributes to the application of critical social theory to consumer behavior and marketing problems (e.g., Brownlie 2006; Holt 1998), complementing more individually and experientially based perspectives on consumer culture.

Third, this research expands the application of visual analysis techniques to investigate meanings, feelings, and complex thoughts that drive consumer behavior. Our research

contributes to the use of imagery for meaning making in marketing (Drew and Guillemin 2014), revealing novel insights into how consumers think and feel about their collaborative consumption experiences. The visual analysis of images contributes to theory development using the power of metaphors to explain collective orientations that individuals use to understand their consumption experiences (e.g., Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014; Holt 1995).

### ***Future Research and Limitations***

While this research demonstrates the emergence of metaphors of exchange, inclusion and liberation as mental models adopted by active participants of collaborative consumption platforms, several important gaps remain. An important question raised by the findings of this research is whether the coexistence of these divergent mental models may lead to conflict due to the distinct “modus operandi” that various individuals bring to the table. Future research should investigate the outcome of conflicting metaphors adopted during peer exchanges. Building upon Bourdieu’s conceptual toolbox, researchers could examine how social, economic and cultural capital impact the metaphors adopted by peers and the impact the species of capital have on the successful implementation of collaborative systems of resource circulation. Another fruitful avenue for further research is to investigate additional nuances in the liberation metaphor. For instance, we noticed that some participants were more inclined to phrase liberation as escape from reality while others used themes of celebration and excitement. While this research did not delve into the various aspects of liberation, further research could investigate how these two perspectives may have differential impact on consumer wellbeing.

## ***Conclusion***

This research contributes to the discussion concerning entrepreneurial acts among consumer collectives actively involved in entering and expanding the marketplace (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007) and answers the call for marketing research to raise questions both about what is liberating but also disciplining about recent conceptualizations of the empowered consumer (Cova and Cova 2012). Using image and metaphor elicitation techniques, we examined the lived experiences of collaborative consumers through the lens of the structure-agency dichotomy, answering the call for interpretive research to embrace the dialectical interplay between autonomy and socialization in consumer studies (Murray 2002). The question of structure and agency then becomes whether the commitment of the peers to the contemporary capitalist system within which collaborative consumption operates is compulsory or volitional, and whether is possible for it to be both so that social structure can be both achieved by and constitutive of social action. The dialectic of collaborative consumption then becomes the process by which key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation are negotiated and where issues related to competing subject positions and identity politics are marked and experienced.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: PURITAN PEERS OR EGOISTIC ENTREPRENEURS? HOW COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION ERODES MORAL IDENTITY**

### **Abstract**

Despite proponents of collaborative consumption portraying peers as moral citizens of society altruistically motivated, recent findings suggest that egoistic motives drive collaborative consumption engagement. A salient moral identity motivates behaviors that show social sensitivity to others and is linked to cooperative actions. Given that platform-providing firms rely in users' cooperative behaviors to facilitate peer exchange, understanding how the intermingling of social and market logics affect moral identity can have important implications for the success of collaborative business models. This research applies a social cognitive framework to examine how the collaborative consumption environment impacts behaviors and personal factors in a recursive fashion. Across two studies, findings reveal that prolonged participation in collaborative consumption activities diminishes the self-importance of moral identity. The authors test a model that clarifies the differential determinants and consequences of the private and public dimensions of moral identity, establishing that keeping puritan peers moral has positive business outcomes. This research also discerns a boundary condition that determines when peers remain consistent with their moral compasses. Namely, when engagement is perceived as effortful, the behavior becomes informative input in the inference of one's moral disposition reinforcing moral identity. Marketing practitioners can use this research to design business models in ways that mitigate the erosion of moral identity.

*"A person's kindness, it seems, cannot be bought. For when it is, the seller ceases to perceive the action sold to be motivated by kindness" (Batson et al. 1978, p. 90)*

Collaborative consumption practices enabling ordinary people to monetize idle personal resources such as cars, homes, household gadgets and skills are being touted as a prosocial consumer movement that is good for individuals, businesses and society at large. These consumption practices are marketed as environmentally conscious and capable of fostering social connections among communities, while being an economically attractive avenue to save and earn money (Botsman and Rogers 2010). On the surface, it may seem that aligning benefits that are 'good for you' and 'good for others' should have an additive effect that makes such behavior more appealing than consumption practices that are solely concerned with benefits to either oneself or others. However, extant literature suggests that this commonly held win-win perspective may be a fallacy.

Consider a friendly request to assist a neighbor remove a couch from their home: social norms would motivate this behavior without the need of compensation, but if offered one dollar to reward your kindness, such action is unlikely to be perceived positively. That is, helping a neighbor plus getting one dollar is not better than just helping a neighbor as a favor; and most notably, once an economic mindset is prompted, you will likely need to be rewarded considerably more than a dollar for your effort and time spent moving a couch (Heyman and Ariely 2004). Consequently, as our opening quote implies, the intermingling of social and market logics can have a detrimental effect on altruistically motivated prosocial behavior. This raises the questions - will moral concerns endure the presence of self-serving benefits for collaborative consumers keeping these "puritan peers" pure? Or will the presence of financial gain transform peers into "egoistic entrepreneurs" in pursuit of market opportunities for their self-interest?

Collaborative consumption has gained increased popularity in recent years as a plethora of organizations have emerged to provide technological platforms for people to easily coordinate the acquisition and distribution of resources with other peers for a fee or other compensation (Belk 2014), challenging the status-quo of traditional enterprise and disrupting a wide variety of industries worldwide such as hospitality, transportation, retail and banking. Collaborative consumption activities monetize exchanges that otherwise might have occurred within social networks without compensation (e.g. letting a neighbor borrow a drill instead of renting it). Nonetheless, academic research submits an inherent conflict in mixing social and economic exchange that may result in the erosion of collective concern and the prevalence of self-interested behavior. Firms facilitating these exchanges rely on the cooperative actions of its users to sustain trust among a distributed network of individuals leveraged for peer exchange. A salient moral identity motivates behaviors that show social sensitivity to others and is linked to cooperative actions, thus, understanding how the intermingling of social and market logics affect moral identity is important for the success of these business models. The purpose of this research is to address this issue by scrutinizing when and how prolonged participation in collaborative consumption can decrease the self-importance of moral identity.

The risk of moral decay through market interaction has gained increased attention as many social scientists observe that with the increased ubiquity of technology-enabled economic exchange, markets continue to entrench further and farther into domains of social life (Falk and Szech 2013) as we see in collaborative consumption. For instance, researchers demonstrate that in a mixed market of social and economic norms, the mere mention of monetary payment was sufficient to switch the perceived relationship from the social domain to market exchange, resulting in performance effort comparable to a social exchange only when highly compensated

(Heyman and Ariely 2004). In a more extreme illustration, researchers show how market interaction changes people's willingness to accept severe negative consequences for a third party (killing a mouse), hence eroding moral values (Falk and Szech 2013). Further, ample literature documents that providing people with a self-serving reward for behavior that would have otherwise been altruistically motivated, leads them to interpret their motivation as egoistic (Batson 2010), and that mixing altruistic and egoistic appeals reduces likelihood of engaging in prosocial behaviors (Feiler, Tost, and Grant 2012). Therefore, we can conclude from extant literature that self-serving benefits can have profound influences on how behaviors are perceived and constructed especially when mixing social and economic exchange as it happens in collaborative consumption.

If platform-providing firms are to rely on moral actions to sustain their business models, then understanding when and how moral identity may be eroded is crucial. Moreover, a pervasive deterioration of collective concern could potentially impact altruistic behaviors outside of the collaborative consumption domain and may be detrimental to society and consumer well being, particularly if this shift occurs outside of conscious awareness as academic literature suggests. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to develop a model to explain what happens to consumer's moral identity as they engage in collaborative consumption. To accomplish this goal we rely on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which accounts for how personal factors such as identity, values and motives, interact with behavioral patterns and environment in a recursive fashion (Bandura 1989). Building upon Aquino et al.'s (2009) socio-cognitive model of moral behavior, we propose a theoretical framework that incorporates identity-based motivation and dynamic self-concept theory to explain the change in moral identity of collaborative consumers.

We submit that as the extent of participation in collaborative consumption increases, compensation for such activities will conflict with moral values to create internal tension that is resolved by shifting one's self-image to be more congruent with economic exchange. As a result, study 1 demonstrates that greater extent of participation in collaborative consumption will lessen the self-importance of moral identity, with the effect being most pronounced among those for which altruistic motives were the initial impetus for engagement. In study 2, we test a model that clarifies the differential determinants and consequences of the private and public dimensions of moral identity, establishing that keeping puritan peers moral has positive business outcomes. Further, this holistic view allows us to discern a boundary condition that can keep puritan peers pure by achieving moral consistency. Namely, when participation in collaborative consumption is perceived as effortful, such observed costliness will counterbalance self-serving benefits dismissing the potential conflict with moral values; as a consequence, the self-importance of moral identity is maintained achieving moral consistency.

### **Conceptual Background**

#### ***The Ideological Debate of Puritan Peers vs. Egoistic Entrepreneurs***

There is a growing debate as to whether collaborative consumption markets are a platform for consumers to enact their ideological interests. On the one hand, proponents of collaborative consumption as a consumer movement, argue that the peers coproducing these service offerings are engaged in political consumerism, using market action and consumer choice as a political tool (Parsons 2014). In the literature, such consumer activists are conceived as “modern day Puritans” who see themselves as moral citizens of society that question the social and environmental implications of their consumption choices (Kozinets and Handelman 2004, p.



701). Accordingly, puritan peers would oppose the constant pursuit of self-interest fostered by corporate capitalism (Kasser et al. 2007), rejecting notions of individualism and encouraging the embrace of a more communal and holistic ethos (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Supporters of this view characterize collaborative consumption practices as “sharing is caring” and assert that concerns for community, the environment and society are bringing back a belief in the commons resulting in a more altruistic world (Botsman and Rogers 2010). Hence, this account argues that peers engage in collaborative consumption in the pursuit of actions that demonstrate social responsiveness to the needs of others and are thought to be altruistically motivated (i.e. benefiting others or for the public good – such as concern for environment and society).

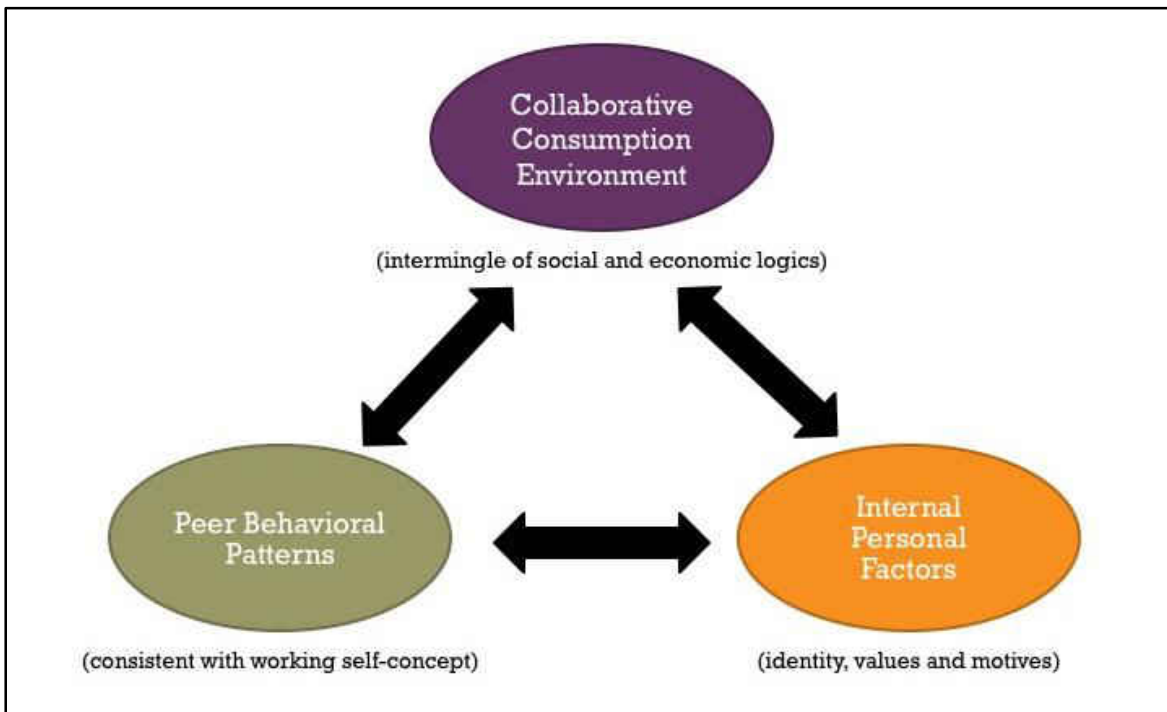
On the other hand, as portrayed in Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt’s (2010) “Myth of the Ethical Consumer,” many support the notion that economic concerns outweigh moral concerns in most consumption situations including collaborative consumption. Those on this side of the ideological debate view peers as egoistic entrepreneurs leveraging assets to pursue their own self-interest and to exploit market opportunities. For instance, although collaborative consumption is often referred to as the “sharing economy” in an effort to tap on the social aspect of collaboration among peers, the activities on these “faux sharing commercial ventures” have little in common with the uncompensated and nonreciprocal nature of sharing and can be more accurately characterized as short-term rentals and market exchange (Belk 2014, p. 1597). As such, this account argues that peers engaged in collaborative consumption practices are de facto entrepreneurs running micro-enterprises that monetize their available resources and thought to be egoistically motivated (i.e. benefiting the self – such as saving/making money).

Indeed, despite advocates of collaborative consumption as a prosocial consumer movement characterizing peers as moral citizens of society, at least to date, the few empirical

investigations into these consumption practices suggest that participants are not altruistically motivated (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012) and that moral utility does not predict propensity to participate (Lamberton and Rose 2012). Therefore, preliminary evidence seems to support that most collaborative consumption engagement is driven by self-interest. This research moves away from the ideological discourse behind collaborative consumers' motivations, and provides a pragmatic socio-cognitive explanation of how collaborative consumption practices erode moral identity that implies changes happen outside of conscious awareness and without systematic processing.

### ***Social Cognitive Framework and Dynamic Self-Concept Theory***

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) provides a unique framework in which to examine collaborative consumption practices because it urges researchers to consider the interdependency of personal, behavioral and environmental factors (Bandura 1989), providing an approach that incorporates a more dynamic and integrated perspective to address complex consumer well-being related issues (Phipps et al. 2013). As illustrated in Figure 9, SCT explains behavior as a dynamic interplay between individuals and their environment, in a triadic reciprocal causation, where “internal personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally” (Bandura 2001, p. 14). It is exactly these dynamic effects that we stipulate are behind erosion of moral identity in collaborative consumption practices.



**Figure 9. Application of SCT Framework to Collaborative Consumption**

In line with SCT, we use a socio-cognitive model of moral behavior presented by Aquino et.al (2009) as the foundation for our theoretical framework. Recognizing that the environment surrounding one’s consumption decision can often be decisive in determining the direction toward which ones’ moral compass turns, the latter authors propose a model that explains how situational factors influence actions that demonstrate social responsiveness to the needs and interests of others. This approach relies on premises of identity theory and the self-concept, an established research stream which has provided clear evidence that identity is a powerful driver of behavior (Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012).

SCT’s dynamic process of reciprocal determination among personal, behavioral and environmental factors is ubiquitous in everyday life. Identity refers to “any category label to which a consumer self-associates that is amenable to a clear picture of what the person in the category looks like, thinks, feels and does” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 310). People assume many roles

such as scholar, friend, colleague, parent or spouse and follow different behavioral scripts across situations; accordingly, different facets of identity can become more or less salient in an individual's self-concept (Aquino et al. 2009). The self-concept is a malleable and multifaceted collection of self-representations or identities, with different aspects of an identity surfacing in different situations; individuals have numerous identities but not all are constantly salient, rather identity salience fluctuates in response to situational cues (Markus and Wurf 1987). Dynamic self-concept theory identifies the subset of these representations that can be held in consciousness at any given time as the working self-concept (Markus and Wurf 1987). The latter authors propose that the working self-concept mediates most significant intrapersonal processes and interpersonal behaviors. Alternate self-concepts can be activated in socially appropriate situations, and consequently, when a situation renders an applicable self relevant, people adopt the values and motives of the momentarily salient identity (LeBoeuf, Shafir, and Bayuk 2010).

Oyserman (2009) argues that consumer choices are often motivated by their identity but this linkage is not obvious because although identities are often experienced as stable, in actuality they are highly malleable, sensitive to situational factors and likely to impact behavior outside of conscious awareness and without systematic processing. This identity-based motivation model proposes that people are motivated to act in identity-congruent ways and make sense of the world using identity-congruent mindsets, yet identities are situated (Oyserman 2009). Which identity drives behavior is a dynamic product of both chronic and situational factors that render a given identity active in the working self-concept. Further, identity-based motivation works not as a fixed list of traits associated with a given identity that consumers consciously invoke to model behavior, but rather as a general readiness to act and think in identity-congruent terms based on norms, motives and values associated with such identity

(Oyserman 2009). Once an identity becomes central to the working self-concept, many secondary associations also gain prominence to structurally define the normative beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviors that delineate what that type of person is likely to think, feel and do (Aquino et al. 2009). Consequently, internal factors (e.g. identity, motives and values) are tightly intertwined in driving and inhibiting behavioral patterns consistent with the working self-concept, which in turn are situated by the environmental factors in a recursive fashion.

### ***Moral Identity Centrality to the Self-Concept***

In line with the social cognitive perspective, we conceptualize moral identity as a self-conception organized around a set of moral traits (e.g. caring, helpful, kind) and responsive to a distinct mental image of what a moral person is likely to think, feel and do (Aquino and Reed 2002). It is important to note that moral identity and behavior as used here is not concerned with the goodness or badness of human character or the principles of right and wrong behavior, rather, consistent with prior scholars, moral behavior refers to “actions that demonstrate social responsiveness to the needs and interests of others” (Aquino et al. 2009, p. 124).

Collaborative consumption platforms rely on peers’ cooperative actions to enable their business models. Given that individuals act in identity-congruent ways, it is important to understand how collaborative consumption practices impact moral identity. Across a number of domains, a person’s moral identity has been linked to cooperative actions and prosocial behaviors (Aquino and Reed 2002; Aquino et al. 2009; Choi and Winterich 2013; Reed, Aquino, and Levy 2007). In addition, research shows that high moral identity reduces the likelihood of enacting antisocial and unethical behaviors (Shao, Aquino, and Freeman 2008), as well as mitigates the corruptive effect of power resulting in reduced self-interested behavior (DeCelles et al. 2012). In the collaborative consumption context, Herzenstein, Sonenshein and Dholakia

(2011) find that those who claim a moral identity in peer-to-peer loan requests are more likely to pay on-time, suggesting that lenders should favor borrowers who claim to be moral.

Yet, situational cues activate or deactivate the moral self-concept. From a socio-cognitive perspective, the centrality of the moral self-schema to the working self-concept differs both across individuals and situations. Further, moral identity exerts a stronger influence on cognitive processes and behaviors than other aspects of identity when it occupies greater centrality within the working self-concept (Aquino et al. 2009). In contrast, when a different aspect of identity is accessible, individuals should be motivated to act and think in ways that are consistent with the values and motives associated with that identity.

### ***Impact of Collaborative Consumption on Moral Identity***

Collaborative consumption practices blend social and economic domains as peers engage in exchange activities that blur the line between what is social and what is business. Drawing from Schwartz's circumplex model of human values, Aquino et al. (2009) framework specifies when moral identity will be active or inactive within the working self-concept. Schwartz's theory posits that values reflecting self-enhancement (i.e. achievement and power) are inherently antagonistic to values reflecting self-transcendence (i.e. universalism and benevolence), consequently, behaviors that express a given value have conflict with the pursuit of other values (Schwartz 2010). Since values are central to the self-concept, mixing social logics associated with moral values and market logics associated with self-interest values will yield the concurrent activation of incompatible facets of identity within the working self-concept causing a dissonant psychological state (Aquino et al. 2009; Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). We submit that the intermingling of social and market logics in collaborative consumption practices produces the

simultaneous activation of moral identity and a self-interested facet of identity within an individual's working self-concept.

Aquino et.al (2009) propose that to alleviate the aversive state produced when moral identity and a self-interested facet of identity are activated; individuals must deactivate one of the incompatible facets of identity within the working self-concept. Further, they argue that when one identity is activated by a situational factor while the other is chronically accessible within the working self-concept, we would expect the "situation-activated aspect of identity to 'win out' most of the time because of its recency of activation and continual reinforcement" (Aquino et al. 2009, p. 126). Accordingly, these authors show that the presence of a financial incentive (i.e. self-interest promoting situational factor) decreased the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept, which in turn increased intentions to behave in a selfish manner and decreased prosocial and cooperative behaviors. These findings suggest that when people focus on financial benefits they are more likely to think and act in ways that advance their own interest, even at the expense of others and even when they were initially altruistically inclined.

At first glance, it would seem that the ease of malleability of self-interested behavior proposed here contradicts an extensive body of research that conceptualizes moral identity as enduring and stable. However, Aquino et al (2009) reconcile these seemingly paradoxical findings by pointing out that people do not regularly encounter self-interest-promoting and moral-promoting situational cues simultaneously. Collaborative consumption activities are somewhat unique in its inherent duality of benefits for the self and benefits for others. Most consumption situations are consistent with the salient identity that motivated a given behavior. As a result, consumption activities generally reinforce the identity-based motivations that attracted consumers maintaining identity consistency.

For example, when consumers volunteer at a nonprofit organization, the contextual and social cues surrounding volunteering activities continually activate and reinforce their moral identity within the working self-concept thereby maintaining the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept (Aquino et al. 2009; Shao, Aquino, and Freeman 2008). Correspondingly, when individuals go shopping at a mall, the contextual and social cues surrounding the shopping experience continually activate and reinforce a self-interest aspect of their identity. In contrast, consider an individual that may decide to participate in a collaborative consumption scheme such as ride sharing for altruistic reasons (e.g. benefiting the environment); yet, as he or she engages in ride sharing activities, the financial benefits activate self-interest aspects of his or her identity creating a dissonant psychological state that would be resolved through a reduction in the current accessibility of moral identity.

Once an identity is prompted in one situation, it is more likely to be used again in another situation (Oyserman 2009). Consequently, over time, situationally-prompted identities can become integrated within the self (Amiot et al. 2007) and produce chronic and predictable differences in a consumer's self-definition (Reed 2004). In this dynamic perspective, over time, consumers are thus producers of behaviors but also the product of their environment and past behaviors. Nevertheless, given that collaborative consumers are faced with both self-interest-promoting and moral-promoting situational cues, the question remains, why would self-interest continually prevail?

The notion that appeals to self-interest can backfire by undermining concern for others is not new. As our opening quote illustrates, scholars have long established that providing money or other incentives for altruistically motivated behaviors may lead people to interpret their motivation as self-interested even when it is not – consequently kindness cannot be bought (Batson



et al. 1978). In fact, research aimed at examining how the mere presence of money and business related concepts impact behavior illustrates the incompatibility between social and market logics. For example, researchers show that reminding people of money leads to self-sufficient behavior, reducing helpfulness towards others and producing independent but socially insensitive actions (Vohs, Mead, and Goode 2006). Likewise, reminding people of material objects common to the domain of business (e.g. briefcase) led people to behave less cooperatively and to interpret ambiguous social interactions as competitive (Kay et al. 2004). Analogously, others argue for the hidden costs of rewards, such as undermining of internal motivation in the presence of an external incentive due to reduced feelings of self-determination (Ryan and Deci 2000) or when a person's own interest in the behavior is discounted when given an extrinsic reason for doing something they would have done anyway (Thøgersen 2003).

Overall, a large body of research suggests that the presence of self-interested factors consistently undermines altruistic motives creating a self-perpetuating norm of self-interest (Batson 2010). This trajectory from collective concern to self-interest is echoed in the narratives of Ebay users captured in a study that concludes that although initially “users clearly embody the spirit of social production and collective consumption”, over time, they become more interested in exploiting the efficiencies of the selling and buying process for personal gain (Denegri-Knott and Zwick 2011, p. 453). Accordingly, we submit that over time and extent of participation, the recurrent decline in accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept and the repeated self-interested behaviors that follow, will decrease the self-importance of moral identity. More formally,

*H<sub>1</sub>: Extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities has a negative effect on moral identity centrality*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept mediates the effect of extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities on moral identity centrality*

The theoretical model presented here argues that as a self-interested aspect of identity becomes situationally-activated, the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept is reduced to alleviate psychological tension, thereby weakening its influence on subsequent behavior and over prolonged engagement diminishing the self-importance of moral identity. However, consistent with Aquino et al. (2009)'s model, we submit that the self-importance of the moral self-schema should be an interactive function of the extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities (i.e. exposure to self-interest-promoting situational factors) and initial motives for participation. That is, we argue that the activation of a self-interested facet of identity will result in greater psychological tension if moral identity is also very active within the working self-concept, thus, the effect of self-interest-promoting factors should be attenuated for those who initially were motivated by self-interest.

*H<sub>3</sub>: Initial egoistic motives moderate the effect of extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities on moral identity centrality. Specifically, the negative effect of prolonged participation on moral identity is attenuated (most pronounced) for those with high (low) initial egoistic motives.*

### **Study 1: Testing the effects of extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities on moral identity**

The purpose of study 1 was to test hypothesized effects of extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities on moral identity. According to our hypotheses, greater extent of participation will have a negative impact in moral identity centrality by decreasing the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept. However, the effect of extent of participation should not be uniform for all participants. Rather, it should have a weak impact on those that initially were motivated by self-serving benefits.

### ***Sample and Procedure***

The sample consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory marketing course at a large southeastern public university who participated for course extra credit. The online survey was administered in a controlled environment. Participants were first asked to read a description of collaborative consumption activities and given examples of these platforms. Then, they were asked whether they had participated in an exchange with another individual using peer-to-peer platforms as the ones described. Only those that selected “yes” proceeded to complete the measures in the study (76.5 %). Preliminary analysis resulted in a reduced sample as questionnaires were eliminated from the study for incompleteness or failing to properly answer a quality check question. Usable data were collected from 172 collaborative consumption participants ranging in age from 18 to 55 years ( $M = 22.30$ ,  $SD = 5.35$ ). Among those reporting additional demographic information, 53.9% identified themselves as male, 46.1% as female, and 43.5% reported their ethnicity as Caucasian.

### ***Measures***

To capture the extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities, participants were asked to complete two items measuring (a) duration and (b) type of participation. The hypothesized deterioration of moral identity is posited to occur over time, thus, we measure duration by asking participants how long they have been using collaborative consumption platforms (1 = less than a month, 5 = more than five years). Second, peers can take on the role of a buyer or a seller in these exchange transactions. We conjecture that those that consistently take on the role of a seller will experience a greater decrease in accessibility of moral identity because of its close association with market logics (i.e. businesses are usually the sellers in traditional business exchange). Consequently, we measure the type of participation by asking

participants to indicate which statement best describes the nature of their participation in peer-to-peer exchanges: 1 = I have participated only as a buyer, 2 = I have participated mostly as a buyer, but I have sold at least once, 3 = I have participated both as a buyer and a seller about equally, 4 = I have participated mostly as a seller, but I have bought at least once, 5 = I have participated only as a seller.

To capture the extent to which participants were initially egoistically motivated to engage in collaborative consumption activities we used a ranking procedure that included a variety of motives identified in prior literature. Prior research has identified that individuals are motivated to use collaborative consumption platforms to be environmentally responsible, belong to a community, helping others, convenience, as well as saving or earning money (Botsman and Rogers 2010; Piscicelli, Cooper, and Fisher n.d.). The item of interest was “I wanted to save/make money” which can be characterized as the most self-interested and one that would create the most psychological dissonance with moral identity. For ease of interpretation, rankings of this option (from 1-6) were recoded such that higher values indicate greater initial egoistic motives. The order of items presented was randomized to avoid order effects in the ranking choice.

To assess the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept we used a procedure devised by Aquino et al. (2009) so that the measure would not in itself affect the degree to which participant’s moral identities were activated. After completing several questions asking them to recall and describe the most recent collaborative consumption exchange, participants were asked to rank five items in terms of “who you are at the present moment” (1 = most reflects how you see yourself to 5 = least reflect how you see yourself). The moral identity option was “a moral person” and the four additional identities were “a successful person,” “a

family member,” “an independent person,” and “a student.” Aquino et al (2009) devised these alternative identities to be relevant to the student population but also to avoid conceptual overlap with moral identity centrality, our main dependent variable. The order of item presentation was randomized as to avoid order effects in the ranking selection. We recoded the ranking of “a moral person”, our identity of primary interest, such that higher scores (from 1-5) indicate greater accessibility of the moral self-schema within the working self-concept in order to make interpretation easier.

Our main concern is to demonstrate that duration and type of participation in collaborative consumption activities diminishes the centrality of moral identity to an individual’s self-conception. However, it is important to control for a variety of other mechanisms that may be related to moral identity centrality. For instance, religiosity has been shown to be strongly related to moral identity (Aquino and Reed 2002) and other studies of collaborative consumption platforms suggest that environmental concern and political conservatism could be related to our dependent variable (Willer, Flynn, and Zak 2012). Accordingly, in addition to demographic information, we assessed our three control items with 5-point bipolar scales asking participants to indicate their concern about protecting the environment (1 = not at all concerned to 5 = extremely concerned), to report their political opinion (1 = extremely liberal to 5 = extremely conservative), and to report how religious they were (1 = not religious at all to 5 = extremely religious).

To assess moral identity, we used the internalization subscale of Aquino and Reed’s (2002) moral identity measure. This measure of centrality of moral identity has been shown to tap into the relatively enduring association between an individual’s sense of self and his or her moral identity (Aquino and Reed 2002; Reed 2004), and be a significant predictor of moral

behavior. For example, participants who score higher on the internalization measure of moral identity were more likely to donate to a food drive (Aquino and Reed 2002) and a charitable organization that benefits an outgroup (Reed and Aquino 2003). After completing a filler task, participants were asked to read a list of nine characteristics that might describe a person and to visualize the kind of person who has these characteristics and imagine how that person would think, feel and act. Then, after thinking about someone who possesses these moral traits (i.e., caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest and kind), participants were presented with five items and asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements in a 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Aquino and Reed’s (2002) showed these nine traits reliably invoke a moral identity by capturing lay construal of a moral prototype. Notably, the word “moral” is not used in the scale, an important consideration to avoid any leftover influence from the prior measure of accessibility. The Cronbach’s alpha for the five item scale was .884 and composite reliability of .915 indicating good internal consistency reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) is .683 indicating convergent validity. Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for the focal latent variables in study 1.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Study 1**

Variables	Mean (SD) n=172	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1) Duration of Participation	3.82 (1.096)	1				
2) Type of Participation	2.12 (.948)	.082	1			
3) Accessibility of Moral Identity	3.39 (1.357)	-.153*	-.045	1		
4) Moral Identity Centrality	4.62 (.526)	-.132*	-.253**	.270**	1	
5) Initial Egoistic Motives	5.06 (1.336)	-0.005	-.001	.045	.008	1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

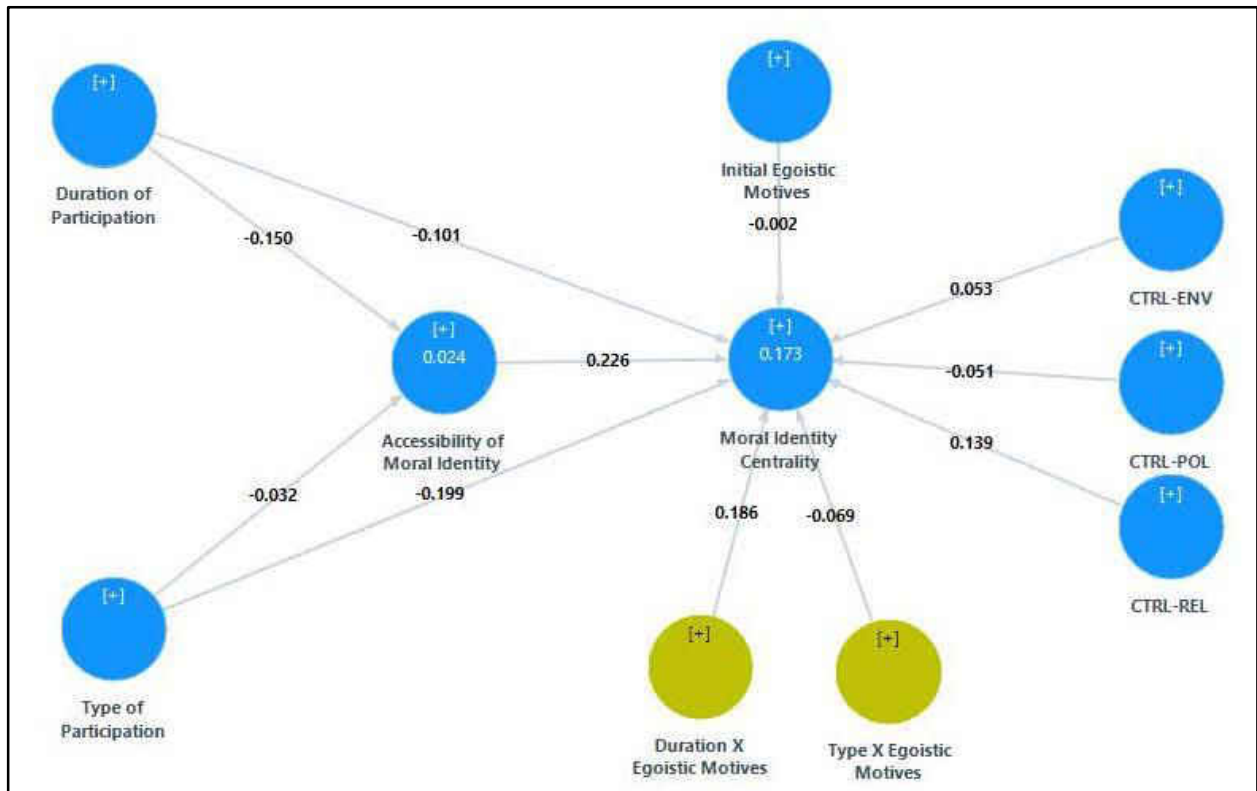
## *Analysis and Results*

Partial Least Squares (PLS –SEM) was used to test the model (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2014). PLS-SEM was selected for four primary reasons. First, the objective of PLS is predictive and focused on maximizing variance of the endogenous variables explained by the exogenous variables (Hair et al. 2014), therefore appropriate for the objective of the current work. Second, the method is useful with sample sizes under  $n = 200$  (Reinartz, Haenlein, and Henseler 2009), which is also appropriate for the sample used in the current study. Third, PLS does not require meeting the assumptions of normality for the data distributions (Hair et al. 2012). Given that the some data distributions are skewed and some are leptokurtic, PLS-SEM is an appropriate method because results are not adversely affected by the nature of the data. Finally, PLS is preferred for testing interactions because it does not inflate measurement error (Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted 2003).

The interaction terms were created using a two-stage approach as recommended for models aimed at detecting whether interaction effects deliver a significant additional explanation of the endogenous variable (Henseler and Chin 2010). The two-stage approach in SmartPLS 3 uses the scores of the latent predictor and latent moderator variables from the main effects model. The latent variable scores are saved on the first stage and then used on the second stage to calculate the product indicator for the model path analysis that involves the interaction term in addition to the predictor and moderator variable (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2014). Using the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion we established discriminant validity among the latent variables as none of the HTMT correlations violate the .85 threshold and all the confidence intervals for HTMT constructed in the bootstrapping routine are well below 1 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015). Collinearity issues were assessed by inspecting the VIF values of the inner

and outer model, which were all well below the threshold value of 5 (Hair et al. 2014). Thus, we conclude that collinearity is not an issue for the estimation of the PLS path model.

To assess the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships we proceeded in two steps. First, we ran the PLS-SEM algorithm and obtained path coefficients for the structural model relationships and  $R^2$  values for the endogenous variables as illustrated in Figure 10. Second, to determine whether the coefficients were significant, we obtained the standard error by means of a bootstrapping routine with 5,000 subsamples (Hair et al. 2014). Table 6 lists the standardized path coefficients for the hypothesized relationships along with respective t-values and level of significance.



**Figure 10. Model Results for Study 1**



**Table 6. Significance Testing Results of the Structural Model for Study 1**

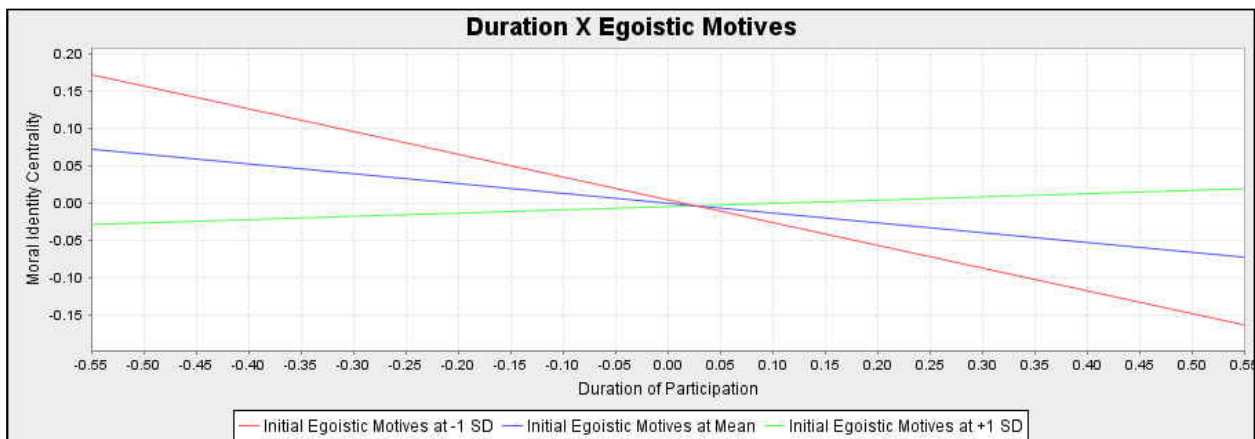
	Path Coefficients	P Values
Duration of Participation -> Accessibility of Moral Identity*	-.150	0.018
Accessibility of Moral Identity -> Moral Identity Centrality*	.226	0.005
Type of Participation -> Moral Identity Centrality*	-.199	0.001
Duration X Egoistic Motives -> Moral Identity Centrality*	.186	0.012
Duration of Participation -> Moral Identity Centrality	-.101	0.098
Initial Egoistic Motives -> Moral Identity Centrality	-.002	0.490
Type X Egoistic Motives -> Moral Identity Centrality	-.069	0.218
Type of Participation -> Accessibility of Moral Identity	-.032	0.339
CTRL-ENV -> Moral Identity Centrality	.053	0.233
CTRL-POL -> Moral Identity Centrality	-.051	0.283
CTRL-REL -> Moral Identity Centrality*	.139	0.051

\* Significant 1-tailed  $p < .05$

The hypothesized mediated relationship between duration of participation and moral identity centrality via accessibility of moral identity in the working self-concept is supported ( $H_{1a}$  and  $H_{2a}$ ). To test mediation, we adopted the method presented by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010), as outlined by Hair et al. (2014). Specifically, the direct relationship between duration of participation and moral identity centrality is negative and significant in the absence of the mediator ( $\beta = -.131$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $H_1$  is supported). When the mediator is included, duration of participation negatively and significantly impacts the accessibility of moral identity ( $\beta = -.150$ ;  $p < .05$ ), in turn, accessibility of moral identity positively and significantly impact moral identity centrality ( $\beta = .226$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and the direct relationship between duration of participation and moral identity centrality is not significant ( $\beta = -.101$ ;  $p = .098$ ;  $H_2$  is supported). The variance accounted for (VAF) by the indirect effect is .252, indicating that 25.2% of the effect of duration of participation on moral identity centrality is explained by accessibility of moral identity (partial mediation). Although we do not find support

for the hypothesized mediated relationship between type of participation and moral identity centrality via accessibility of moral identity, we do find that the direct relationship between type of participation and moral identity centrality is negative and significant ( $\beta = -.199$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $H_{1b}$  is supported).

The hypothesized interaction effects were partially supported. The interaction between duration of participation and initial egoistic motives results in a positive and significant effect on moral identity centrality ( $\beta = .186$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $H_3$  is partially supported). However, initial egoistic motives do not moderate the relationship between type of participation and moral identity centrality ( $p > .05$ ). The supported interaction effects are illustrated in Figure 11 with a simple slope analysis. As hypothesized, for those individuals for whom initial egoistic motives are low (-1 SD from the mean), greater duration of participation is associated with lower moral identity centrality. In contrast, when initial egoistic motives are high (+1 SD from the mean), duration of participation does not have a negative impact on moral identity centrality.



**Figure 11. Simple Slope Analysis of Interaction Effect for Study 1**

### ***Study 1 Discussion***

The results of study 1 generally confirm our hypotheses that greater extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities (duration and type) deteriorates moral identity centrality. Overall, the results of the structural model tests support the proposed model, explaining 17.3% of the variance in moral identity centrality. Findings show that the negative effect of duration on moral identity is driven by a decrease in the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept. Yet, the influence of duration is not uniform across participants. The results suggest that those altruistically motivated will face the strongest negative effects of duration on moral identity centrality. Although type of participation has a direct negative impact on moral identity centrality, our results suggest that these effects are driven by a different mechanism than accessibility of moral identity.

### ***Impact of Prolonged Participation on Moral Identity Dimensions***

Given study 1 findings that duration and type of participation impact moral identity through distinct mechanisms, a more in-depth investigation of the moral identity construct is warranted. Drawing on Erickson's (1964) theoretical perspective of an identity having both private and public dimensions, Aquino and Reed (2002) propose that two dimensions tap into the self-importance of moral identity: internalization and symbolization. Internalization reflects the degree to which moral characteristics are deeply rooted in the self-concept, while symbolization reflects the degree to which these moral characteristics manifest publicly. Prior findings show that Aquino and Reed's (2002) explicit measure of moral identity taps these two dimensions of self-importance, yet, in tests of nomological validity, each has been found to have differential effects. Our social cognitive framework is theorized to operate over time, hence, a natural avenue

of inquiry is to explore the impact of prolonged participation on the private and public dimensions of moral identity.

Considering antecedents to moral identity, scholars posit that participation in moral actions and institutional contexts can play an important role in the formation of moral identity, underscoring that “many models of moral identity construction focus specifically on the importance of interactions with peers” (Shao, Aquino, and Freeman 2008, p. 524). Accordingly, we theorize about how behaviors and context can drive the differential determinants of internalization and symbolization dimensions. Since people draw inferences about themselves based on their behavior, we submit that just as participation in moral actions reinforces moral identity, participation in self-interested actions bolsters self-interested facets of identity within the working self-concept. Thus, we would expect that the longer that peers participate in collaborative consumption, the sustained conflict in the working self-concept would reduce internalization of moral identity as shown in study 1. However, given that this internalized effect occurs without systematic processing, it should only impact the private dimension of moral identity.

*H4: Duration of participation has an indirect negative effect on the internalization dimension of moral identity that is mediated by accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept.*

In contrast, the public dimension of moral identity accounts for an individual’s desire to express his or her moral character to others. Accordingly, the symbolization dimension has been linked to measures of impression management, suggesting its potential sensitivity to self-presentational concerns (Aquino and Reed 2002). Recent research propose social reinforcement as a mechanism underlying the symbolization dimension, establishing that recognition enhances charitable behavior among consumers that are high in symbolization and low in internalization of

moral identity (Winterich, Mittal, and Aquino 2013). Hence, given that interactions between peers take place in social settings, we expect that prolonged participation should have a direct negative impact on the symbolization dimension of moral identity. That is, longer duration of participation in collaborative consumption practices negatively impacts the self-presentation of an individual's moral identity.

*H5: Duration of participation has a direct negative effect on the symbolization dimension of moral identity.*

### ***Probing Differential Outcomes of Moral Identity Dimensions***

Prior research has established the predictive validity of the self-importance of moral identity for various important outcomes related to moral and prosocial behavior. Although Aquino and Reed's (2002) findings support that both dimensions predicted the emergence of a moral spontaneous self-concept and self-reported volunteering, these dimensions also were associated with different consequences. The internalization dimension was strongly related to moral reasoning, donation behavior (measured unobtrusively) and an implicit measure that assess the strength of association between moral traits and the self-concept; whereas the symbolization dimension was more strongly related to outcomes and measures that had a self-presentational or public dimension such as religiosity and impression management (Aquino and Reed 2002). Hence, we expect a similar pattern emerge where internalization dimensions will enhance private outcomes while the symbolization dimension will enhance public outcomes. To probe into the differential consequences of the moral identity dimensions we examine two important outcomes for collaborative consumption firms: prosocial orientation and satisfaction.

Collaborative consumption platforms rely on cooperative behaviors from its users to facilitate peer exchange. Social value orientations refer to a three-category typology of stable

preferences about how outcomes are distributed between self and others; prosocials have been found to exhibit clear tendencies toward cooperation and helping behavior, while individualists and competitors exhibit greater tendencies toward maximizing their own gain (Van Lange et al. 1997). Prosocial orientation is linked to altruism, or the motivation to increase the welfare of others (Simpson and Willer 2008), suggesting that this construct operates both at the public level as outcome distributions locate the person within a recognized social context, and the private level as altruistic motivation occurs internally. Thus, we propose that both dimensions of moral identity will have a positive impact on prosocial orientation.

*H<sub>6</sub>: The internalization and symbolization dimensions of moral identity have a positive effect on prosocial orientation.*

In contrast, satisfaction is a customer outcome that operates at the private level. Whether peers feel satisfied with their collaborative consumption experience occurs privately in their thoughts and feelings. High morality is associated with positive feelings (Shao, Aquino, and Freeman 2008) and moral satisfaction is said to have a “warm glow” produced by internal gratification (Winterich and Barone 2011; Winterich, Mittal, and Aquino 2013). Accordingly, we theorize that the positive feelings arisen by morality produce greater satisfaction with collaborative consumption experiences. Yet, as an internalized process, we submit that only the internalization dimension of moral identity will have a positive impact on perceptions of satisfaction.

*H<sub>7</sub>: The internalization dimension of moral identity has a positive effect on satisfaction, but not the symbolization dimension.*

### ***Linking Prolonged Participation to Customer Outcomes***

Our first study established a negative relationship between duration of participation and moral identity. We have argued that over time the conflict between social and market logics

experienced in collaborative consumption activities lessens the centrality of moral identity and diminishes the public expression of morality. Further, moral identity in turn positively impacts prosocial orientation and satisfaction. Subsequently, through this indirect chain of effects we theorize that prolonged participation has an indirect negative effect on both prosocial orientation and satisfaction. In addition, we argue that the continued intermingling of social and market logics not only lowers moral self-conceptions, but also diminishes a person's tendencies for cooperative behavior. Accordingly, we submit that prolonged participation has a direct negative impact on prosocial orientation. More formally,

*H<sub>8</sub>: Duration of Participation in collaborative consumption activities negatively impacts prosocial orientation both directly and indirectly through the deterioration of moral identity.*

*H<sub>9</sub>: Duration of Participation in collaborative consumption activities indirectly and negatively impact satisfaction through the deterioration of moral identity.*

### ***Achieving Moral Identity Consistency***

Although we have specified the process by which participation in collaborative consumption erodes the self-importance of moral identity, we have also proposed that the consequences of such inconsistency could be problematic, as it will reduce cooperative behavior and negatively impact important customer outcomes. Thus, one may remain interested on how to keep puritan peers consistent with their moral compasses. Gneezy et al. (2012) identify a crucial factor for moral consistency to emerge - whether behavior is perceived as costly. These authors theorize that such perceived costliness serves as a signal to the "self" regarding one's identity. In an investigation of the issue of moral licensing (when past moral behavior makes people likely to act immorally subsequently), a series of experiments show that costly prosocial behavior subsequently leads to moral consistency (Gneezy et al. 2012). These authors define costly

prosocial behavior as actions aimed at benefiting others that involve some cost to the agent; although costliness is operationalized in their studies only in monetary terms, they acknowledge that costs can come in many forms, including time, effort and reputational costs (Gneezy et al. 2012). Accordingly, the latter authors theorize that any actions that are perceived as costly by the actor are more likely to produce moral consistency.

Therefore, by integrating recent findings in moral licensing literature with Aquino et al (2009)'s socio-cognitive model of moral behavior, we discern a boundary condition that determines when prolonged participation in collaborative consumption may lead to moral consistency. We argue that when participation in collaborative consumption is perceived as effortful, such observed costliness becomes an internal signal to the individual about their moral identity. Consequently, when participation is perceived as effortful the accessibility of moral identity is no longer informative; essentially, high perceived effort breaks the chain of effects that link prolonged participation to the private dimension of moral identity:

*H<sub>10</sub>: Perceived effort moderates the relationship accessibility of moral identity and internalization of moral identity, such that the impact of accessibility of moral identity on the internal dimension is mitigated for those that perceive collaborative consumption activities to be effortful.*

Moreover, we theorize that the amount of effort peers perceive to incur in collaborative consumption activities has a direct effect on the symbolization dimension of moral identity. Moral behavior is considered to be effortful, because helping others or even thinking of others' perspective requires additional thought and action that one wouldn't engage in if solely concerned with ourselves (Gailliot 2010). Thus, we propose that peers will interpret their perceived effort as a signal that expresses their moral selves publicly. However, we do not expect these self-presentational effects to impact the internalization dimension.



*H<sub>11</sub>: Perceived effort has a direct positive effect on the symbolization dimension of moral identity*

## **Study 2: Testing an Extended Model of Moral Identity Determinants and Outcomes**

The purpose of Study 2 was three-fold. First, the goal was to replicate the main findings of the first study (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>) with a different population to enhance generalizability. Second, this study was designed to build upon the findings of study 1 and explore additional aspects of moral identity. Specifically, Aquino and Reed (2002) conceptualized the self-importance of moral identity as two-dimensional: a private and a public dimension. Whereas the internalization dimension directly taps into the centrality of moral characteristics to an individuals' self-concept (measure used in study1), the symbolization dimension taps a more general sensitivity to the moral self as a social object that conveys moral characteristics (Aquino and Reed 2002). Hence, the goal was to extend our findings by examining the impact of duration of participation on the two dimensions of moral identity, exploring differential outcomes of those dimensions, and assessing the impact of prolonged participation on prosocial behaviors and satisfaction. Third, study 2 was designed to test the hypothesized boundary condition to the deterioration of moral identity over time.

### ***Sample and Procedure***

We recruited active collaborative consumption participants from across the United States using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk). The recruitment conditions specified that respondents must "have participated in exchange with other peers through the use of online platforms (for example: Airbnb, Taskrabbit, Uber, Lyft, etc.)." In addition, we followed the same procedure as in study 1 where respondents were asked if they had participated in collaborative consumption after reading a description of collaborative consumption activities and

given several examples of these platforms. Only those that selected “yes” proceeded to complete the measures in the study. The online survey also included a quality check question and only those respondents that successfully passed the question were allowed to proceed. Usable data were collected from 295 collaborative consumption participants (57.3% male, 80% Caucasian) ranging in age from 18 to 66 ( $M = 32.97$ ,  $SD = 9.37$ ).

### ***Measures***

Duration of participation was measured in the same way as in Study 1. Likewise, accessibility of moral identity followed the same ranking procedure as in study 1; however, the four other identity options were modified to be more relevant to the sample population. The four additional options were “a polite person,” “a creative person,” “a clever person,” and “a pragmatic person.” As in study 1, Aquino et al. (2009) devised these alternative identities to avoid conceptual overlap with moral identity centrality. Perceived effort was measured by asking participants to report on a scale from 0-10 the degree to which participating in collaborative consumption activities involves effort (0 = no effort at all to 10 = very high effort). In addition to the control variables from study 1, we included an item to measure of social desirability bias “I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable” (Greenwald and Satow 1970).

We used Aquino and Reed’s (2002) ten-item measure (two subscales) to assess the two dimensions of the self-importance of moral identity. Participants answered the ten questions on 5-point Likert-type items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Following the guidelines by Hair et al. (2014) for evaluating reflective measurement models for PLS analysis, we removed two items from the internalization scale and one item from the symbolization scale for which the indicator outer loadings were below the .708 threshold. Removing these items from the scale led to an increase in the composite reliability and the average variance extracted

above the recommended thresholds while retaining content validity. Table 7 shows the scale items retained for analysis. The Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for internalization and symbolization subscales were .847 and .889 respectively. Composite Reliability was .907 for internalization and .923 for symbolization indicating good internal consistency, while average variance extracted (AVE) was .766 for internalization and .751 for symbolization indicating convergent validity. Discriminant validity between the two dimensions was established using the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion. The HTMT correlation between the two latent variables was well below the .85 threshold and the confidence intervals for HTMT constructed in the bootstrapping routine was below 1 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015).

### **Table 7. Moral Identity Measure**

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Listed below are some characteristics that might describe a person:

#### **Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Helpful, Hardworking, Honest, Kind**

The person with these characteristics could be you or it could be someone else. For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics. Imagine how that person would think, feel and act.

When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- 
- 1) It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics. (I)
  - 2) Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am. (I)
  - 3) The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g. hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics. (S)
  - 4) The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics. (S)
  - 5) The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations. (S)
  - 6) I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics. (S)
  - 7) I strongly desire to have these characteristics. (I)

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Notes: I = internalization, S = symbolization

To test consequences of the moral identity construct, we included a measure of prosocial value orientation, as well as a measure of satisfaction. To measure prosocial orientation we used the “triple dominance” measure of social value orientation (Van Lange et al. 1997). The

measure presents participants with a series of decomposed games to indicate which of three distributions of points between themselves and a hypothetical other they most prefer: individualist choices maximize payoff to self, competitive choices maximizes the difference between payoff to self and other (at the expense of a worse outcome), and prosocial choices maximize the aggregate payoff to self and other. In line with other studies, we measured social orientation as the number of times respondents chose the prosocial option on the six scenarios presented (e.g. Willer, Flynn, and Zak 2012). To measure satisfaction, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point bipolar scale their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their collaborative consumption experiences from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Table 8 presents descriptive statistic for study 2.

**Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Study 2**

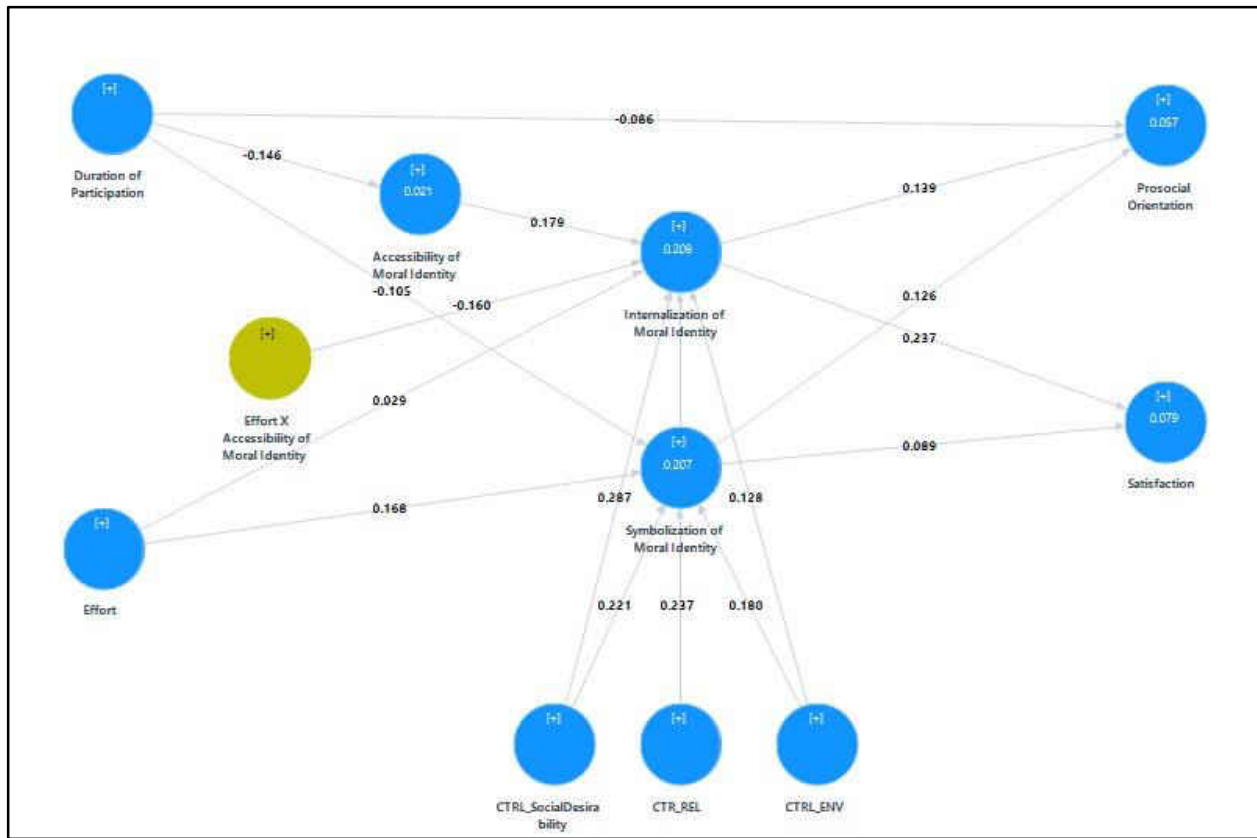
Variables	Mean (SD) n = 295	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1) Duration of Participation	4.11 (1.01)	1						
2) Perceived Effort	5.37 (2.11)	.098*	1					
3) Accessibility of Moral Identity	3.17 (1.44)	-.146**	.051	1				
4) Internalization of Moral Identity	4.25 (0.75)	-.022*	.042	.243**	1			
5) Symbolization of Moral Identity	3.25 (0.97)	-.102*	.180**	.170**	.345**	1		
6) Prosocial Choices	3.39 (2.72)	-.098*	-.037	.169**	.182**	.194**	1	
7) Satisfaction	4.37 (0.63)	0.046	-.077	.580	.268**	.176**	.142**	1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

### ***Analysis and Results***

As with study 1, we used PLS –SEM (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2014) to test the hypothesized relationships. Figure 12 illustrates the complete model and shows the path coefficients for the structural model relationships and R<sup>2</sup> values for the endogenous variables. The interaction term was again created using a two-stage approach (Henseler and Chin 2010).

We established discriminant validity among the latent variables using the HTMT criterion with all HTMT correlations below the .85 threshold and all the confidence intervals for HTMT constructed in the bootstrapping routine below 1 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015). We concluded collinearity was not an issue as the VIF values of the inner and outer model were all well below the threshold value of 5 (Hair et al. 2014).



**Figure 12. Model Results for Study 2**

To assess the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships we first ran the PLS-SEM algorithm and after obtaining the path coefficients and  $R^2$  values for the endogenous variables we obtained the standard error by means of a bootstrapping routine with 5,000 subsamples (Hair et al. 2014). The model was initially run with additional control variables for demographics and political views; however, since the path coefficients were not

significant those variables were removed to maintain a parsimonious model. Table 9 lists the standardized path coefficients for the hypothesized relationships along with respective t-values and level of significance.

**Table 9. Significance Testing Results of the Path Coefficients for Study 2**

	Path Coefficients	P Values
Accessibility of Moral Identity -> Internalization of Moral Identity*	0.179	0.000
Duration of Participation -> Accessibility of Moral Identity*	-0.146	0.003
Duration of Participation -> Prosocial Orientation*	-0.086	0.041
Duration of Participation -> Symbolization of Moral Identity*	-0.105	0.024
Effort -> Internalization of Moral Identity	0.029	0.209
Effort -> Symbolization of Moral Identity*	0.168	0.001
Effort X Accessibility of Moral Identity -> Internalization of Moral Identity*	-0.160	0.001
Internalization of Moral Identity -> Prosocial Orientation*	0.139	0.009
Internalization of Moral Identity -> Satisfaction*	0.237	0.000
Symbolization of Moral Identity -> Prosocial Orientation*	0.126	0.019
Symbolization of Moral Identity -> Satisfaction	0.089	0.083
CTR_REL -> Internalization of Moral Identity*	0.144	0.005
CTR_REL -> Symbolization of Moral Identity*	0.237	0.000
CTRL_ENV -> Internalization of Moral Identity*	0.128	0.017
CTRL_ENV -> Symbolization of Moral Identity*	0.180	0.001
CTRL_SocialDesirability -> Internalization of Moral Identity*	0.287	0.000
CTRL_SocialDesirability -> Symbolization of Moral Identity*	0.221	0.000

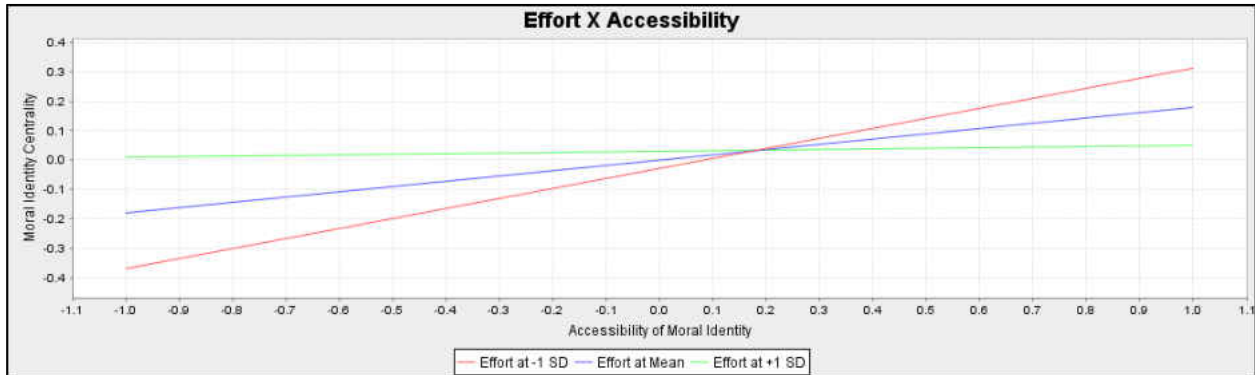
\* Significant 1-tailed  $p < .05$

The main findings of study 1 are replicated in this new sample. Duration of participation in collaborative consumption activities has a significant negative impact on the accessibility of moral identity ( $\beta = -.146$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In turn, accessibility of moral identity has a significant positive impact on internalization of moral identity ( $\beta = .179$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Moreover, the indirect effect of duration of participation on internalization of moral identity is negative and significant ( $\beta = -.026$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $H_4$  is supported). Duration of participation also has a significant negative effect on the symbolization dimension of moral identity ( $\beta = -.105$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $H_5$  is supported).

Our results reveal that indeed the two dimensions of moral identity have differential effects on outcomes of interest to marketers of platform-providing firms. Although both dimensions positively and significantly impact prosocial orientation ( $\beta = .139$ ;  $p < .05$  for internalization and  $\beta = .126$ ;  $p < .01$  for symbolization,  $H_6$  is supported), only the internalization dimension has a significant effect on satisfaction ( $\beta = .237$ ;  $p < .01$ ) supporting  $H_7$ . In addition, the results demonstrate that duration of participation negatively impacts prosocial orientation both directly ( $\beta = -.086$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and indirectly ( $\beta = -.017$ ;  $p < .05$ ) supporting  $H_8$ . The total effect of prolonged participation on prosocial orientation is negative and significant ( $\beta = -.103$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Lastly, prolonged participation also has a significant negative indirect effect on satisfaction ( $\beta = -.015$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $H_9$  is supported).

Our findings show that perceived effort is a determinant of the self-importance of moral identity in differential ways. The results show that the interaction between effort and accessibility of moral identity results in a negative and significant effect on the internalization dimension ( $\beta = -.160$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $H_{10}$  is supported). As hypothesized, perceived effort represents a boundary condition for the effect of prolonged participation in collaborative consumption activities by breaking the link from accessibility of moral identity to the internalization of moral identity. As illustrated in Figure 13 with a simple slope analysis, for individuals that perceive low effort (-1 SD from the mean), accessibility has a positive relationship with internalization of moral identity so that lower accessibility leads to lower internalization. In contrast, for individuals that perceive high effort (+1 SD from the mean), there is no association between accessibility and internalization of moral identity. Moreover, perceived effort also mitigates the negative effects of duration by positively impacting the symbolization dimension of moral identity. While perceived effort does not have a significant direct effect on the internalization

dimension, it has a direct and positive effect on the symbolization dimension ( $\beta = .168; p < .05$ ,  $H_{11}$  is supported). Effort not only sustains moral identity but also has positive total effect in prosocial orientation ( $\beta = .025; p < .05$ ).



**Figure 13. Simple Slope Analysis of Interaction Effect for Study 2**

### *Study 2 Discussion*

Study 2 builds on the prior study by replicating the main findings with a nonstudent population, exploring the differential determinants and outcomes of the private and public dimensions of moral identity, and testing a boundary condition to the decay of moral identity. Overall, the results of the structural model tests support the proposed model, explaining 20.9% of the variance in the internalization dimension and 20.7% of the variance in the symbolization dimension. The results bolster our main argument that over time the self-serving benefits obtained through participation in collaborative consumption activities will conflict with self-transcendent values associated with moral identity and in order to alleviate this tension, a self-interested facet of identity will be activated within the working self-concept lowering the accessibility of moral identity. As a result, prolonged participation in collaborative consumption will lessen the centrality of moral identity to an individual's self-concept. In addition, the results show that prolonged participation negatively impacts the public dimension of moral identity.



Yet, this negative effect is not driven by the accessibility of moral identity within the working-self concept. It suggests, that consistent with the self-presentational notions associated with the symbolization dimension, participating in collaborative consumption exchanges locates the person within a recognized social context that is associated with more self-interest facets of their self-concept.

In support of our theorizing, Study 2 sheds light on the differential outcomes of the moral identity dimensions. Although both dimensions predict prosocial orientation to relatively the same extent (similar magnitude of path coefficients), only the internalization dimension is associated with higher satisfaction. These findings suggest that maintaining higher moral identity centrality in peers is not just good for society but also for business. This study also establishes that prolonged participation not only deteriorates moral identity but also diminishes cooperative behaviors. Moreover, the decaying effect on moral identity indirectly and negatively impacts satisfaction. Thus, platform-proving firms should aim to mitigate the negative impact of prolonged participation in collaborative consumption activities.

Lastly, perceived effort emerges as means to keep peers consistent with their moral compass via two different paths. First, when individuals perceive their participation in collaborative consumption activities to be effortful, duration no longer has a negative impact on moral identity centrality because high perceived effort breaks the chain of effects that link decreased accessibility to lower internalization of moral identity. We argue this occurs because this perceived costliness of participation serves as an internal signal that one must be moral rendering accessibility uninformative. Moreover, perceived effort also has a direct positive impact on the symbolization dimension suggesting that such perceived costliness also signals that effortful collaborative consumption activities will convey publicly one's moral character. In

the next section, we discuss the implications of the findings for both practitioners and scholars. The work closes with a discussion of the limitations, and the research opportunities they represent, and concluding thoughts regarding the research implications.

### **General Discussion**

This research provides a pragmatic account for the prevalence of self-interested behaviors and motivations in recent investigations of the collaborative consumption phenomenon. Moving away from ideological discourses, we provide a socio-cognitive explanation of how collaborative consumption activities erode moral identity outside conscious awareness and without systematic processing. We deploy a social cognitive framework that recognizes the dynamic and interconnected nature of personal, behavioral and environmental factors in determining the direction to which an individual's moral compass turns. Across two studies, we find supporting evidence that the intermingling of social and market logics in collaborative consumption activities has a detrimental effect on the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual's identity. Since people are motivated to act and think in identity-congruent ways, platform-providing firms have a vested interest in peers that show social sensitivity to others and act in cooperative ways.

The results show that greater extent of participation in collaborative consumption negatively impacts the self-importance of moral identity. Evidence from both studies support that prolonged participation has a negative effect on accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept, which in turn impacts the centrality of moral identity to an individual's self-concept. We theorize that this occurs because over time the conflict between social and market logics creates a dissonant psychological state due to the inherent incompatibility between

self-serving and moral values. Consistent with prior literature, we submit that to alleviate this psychological tension a self-interested facet of an individual's identity becomes situationally-activated, lowering the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept.

Interestingly, this deterioration effect is most pronounced for those that are initially more altruistically motivated, as they will experience greater psychological tension. Table 10 provides a summary of all the hypotheses tested in this research.

**Table 10. Summary of Hypothesized Relationships**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	
H1: Extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities has a negative effect on moral identity centrality. a) Duration of Participation b) Type of Participation	Supported
H2: Accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept mediates the effect of extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities on moral identity centrality.	Supported (for duration only)
H3: Initial egoistic motives moderate the effect of extent of participation in collaborative consumption activities on moral identity centrality. Specifically, the negative effect of prolonged participation on moral identity is attenuated (most pronounced) for those with high (low) initial egoistic motives.	Supported
H4: Duration of participation has an indirect negative effect on the internalization dimension of moral identity that is mediated by accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept.	Supported
H5: Duration of participation has a direct negative effect on the symbolization dimension of moral identity.	Supported
H6: The internalization and symbolization dimensions of moral identity have a positive effect on prosocial orientation.	Supported
H7: The internalization dimension of moral identity has a positive effect on satisfaction, but not the symbolization dimension.	Supported
H8: Duration of Participation in collaborative consumption activities negatively impacts prosocial orientation both directly and indirectly through the deterioration of moral identity.	Supported
H9: Duration of Participation in collaborative consumption activities indirectly and negatively impact satisfaction through the deterioration of moral identity.	Supported
H10: Perceived effort moderates the relationship accessibility of moral identity and internalization of moral identity, such that the impact of accessibility of moral identity on the internal dimension is mitigated for those that perceive collaborative consumption activities to be effortful.	Supported
H11: Perceived effort has a direct positive effect on the symbolization dimension of moral identity	Supported

### ***Theoretical Implications***

This research contributes to extant literature in three key areas by integrating Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and dynamic self-concept theory, extending the socio-cognitive model

of moral behavior, and expanding understanding of the moral identity dimensions. In doing so, we reveal counter-intuitive effects of how a seemingly prosocial phenomenon can diminish collective concern and enhance a self-perpetuating norm of self-interest.

First, we integrate SCT's dynamic process of reciprocal determination among personal, behavioral and environmental factors (Bandura 2001) with the dynamic self-concept theory assertion that the working self-concept mediates most significant intrapersonal processes and interpersonal behaviors (Markus and Wurf 1987). Consequently, internal factors (e.g. identity, motives and values) are conceived as tightly intertwined in driving and inhibiting behavioral patterns consistent with the working self-concept, which in turn are situated by the environmental factors in a recursive fashion. These insights revealed how over time, continuous mixing of social and market logics in collaborative consumption can activate alternate self-concepts. We submit that these dynamic effects are behind the negative impact of collaborative consumption activities on moral identity.

Second, we extend Aquino et al.'s (2009) socio-cognitive model of moral behavior by testing the theory in an applied context and incorporating the effect of time and cumulative environmental exposure. We answer the call by Shao et al. (2008) for research aimed at determining situational factors that have the potential to decrease the accessibility of moral identity in business context. In addition, we provide evidence that over time, situationally-prompted identities can become integrated within the self (Amiot et al. 2007) and produce chronic and predictable differences in a consumer's self-definition (Reed 2004) advancing understanding of how cumulative experience affects moral identification.

Third, we expand the understanding of the private and public dimensions of moral identity proposed by Aquino and Reed (2002) by investigating differential determinants and

outcomes. We show how duration of participation impacts the internalization of moral identity without conscious, deliberate and effortful reflection. Duration of participation in collaborative consumption activities also impacts the self-presentation of an individual's moral identity therefore affecting the public dimension. By integrating recent findings from moral licensing literature (Gneezy et al. 2012), we discover effort to be an important determinant of moral identity. We show how effortful behavior positively impacts the symbolization dimension of moral identity, theorizing that it serves as a signal that expresses the moral selves publicly. Moreover, perceived effort also serves as an internal signal of costliness to the self that produces moral consistency. Lastly, we provide additional evidence that the two dimensions of moral identity can be linked to distinct consequences that reflect the private-public distinction of its conceptualization. Our results show that while both dimensions have a similar impact in prosocial orientation, only internalization impact introspective customer outcomes such as satisfaction.

### ***Managerial Implications***

Our research has important practical implications. Recent business press has covered unfortunate incidents of how collaborative consumption exchanges have led to devastating outcomes for peers, prompting platform-providing firms to offer insurance of up to \$1 million dollars to repair damaged property (Tanz 2014). Our research suggests that the longer peers engage in collaborative consumption practices they will exhibit greater tendencies toward self-interest and maximizing their own gain, which could have detrimental financial and operational consequences for the firms facilitating peer exchanges. Given that collaborative consumption firms rely on the cooperative and helping behaviors of its users to facilitate peer exchanges, sustaining and enhancing moral identity would prove beneficial to sustain their business models.

Moral individuals have been shown to be more likely to act in cooperative ways, be concerned with the welfare of others and less likely to be unethical or lie in negotiations (Shao, Aquino, and Freeman 2008). Moreover, higher self-importance of moral identity was also linked to higher satisfaction and likelihood of using collaborative consumption platforms in the future, suggesting keeping puritan peers moral is not just good for society but also for business.

Thus, marketers of collaborative consumption firms can use our findings to intervene in ways that sustain moral identity. Our findings reveal perceived effort as one avenue to maintain moral consistency. Although it may seem counterintuitive to emphasize effort for peers, our research supports the notion that effortful behavior serves both as an internal and symbolic signal of morality that results in enhanced predisposition for cooperative behavior as well as satisfaction. Thus, firms could use marketing communications to maintain awareness of the effort involved in peer exchange. In addition, scholars have proposed other mechanisms that may situationally-activate the moral self-schema such as witnessing the morally exemplary actions of others (Aquino et al. 2009) and continually reinforcing a commitment to moral action (Shao, Aquino, and Freeman 2008). Accordingly, collaborative consumption firms could design their platforms and communications to highlight the moral actions of its users (e.g. feature stories of inspiration) and continually reinforce a commitment to the welfare of others (e.g. remind users about community service mission or ongoing projects).

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

Our research is not without limitations, suggesting promising directions for future research. First, both studies use a cross-sectional research design for a dynamic model, providing a conservative test of our theory. Thus, future research will benefit from investigating this research problem with a longitudinal approach, which may reveal stronger effects and a more

nuanced understanding of the dynamics in Social Cognitive Theory's recursive determination process. Second, our research approach relied on self-reported measures, many of which were single items. Even though the decision to use single items was driven by concerns about high inter-correlations among multi-item measures and reducing respondent fatigue, further research should consider employing multi-item measures or alternative methods to investigate whether these provide stronger tests and greater insight into our research questions. Third, we have inferred from theory the causal relationships between our constructs, however, with a cross-sectional survey we are unable to establish causality and temporal precedence. In addition, we rely on extant theory to support our assertion that the mixing of social and market logics create a dissonant psychological state, but we do not explicitly measure or test whether peers experience any psychological tensions. To build on our findings, future research should use additional methods to establish causality and to assess directly the aroused psychological tensions resulting from the mix of social and economic norms in collaborative consumption.

Our findings thus present both opportunities and challenges for research. Collaborative consumption practices have quickly gained popularity disrupting industries all across the world. These practices rely peers trusting each other to hop on strangers' cars, drop off their beloved pets with others and welcome guests into their homes (Tanz 2014). Consequently, a deterioration of moral identity associated with these activities could have detrimental effects for embracing the collaborative consumption phenomenon. As the phenomenon matures from a fringe movement into a legitimate economic force, understanding how to sustain cooperative behaviors becomes a critical concern for academics and practitioners alike.

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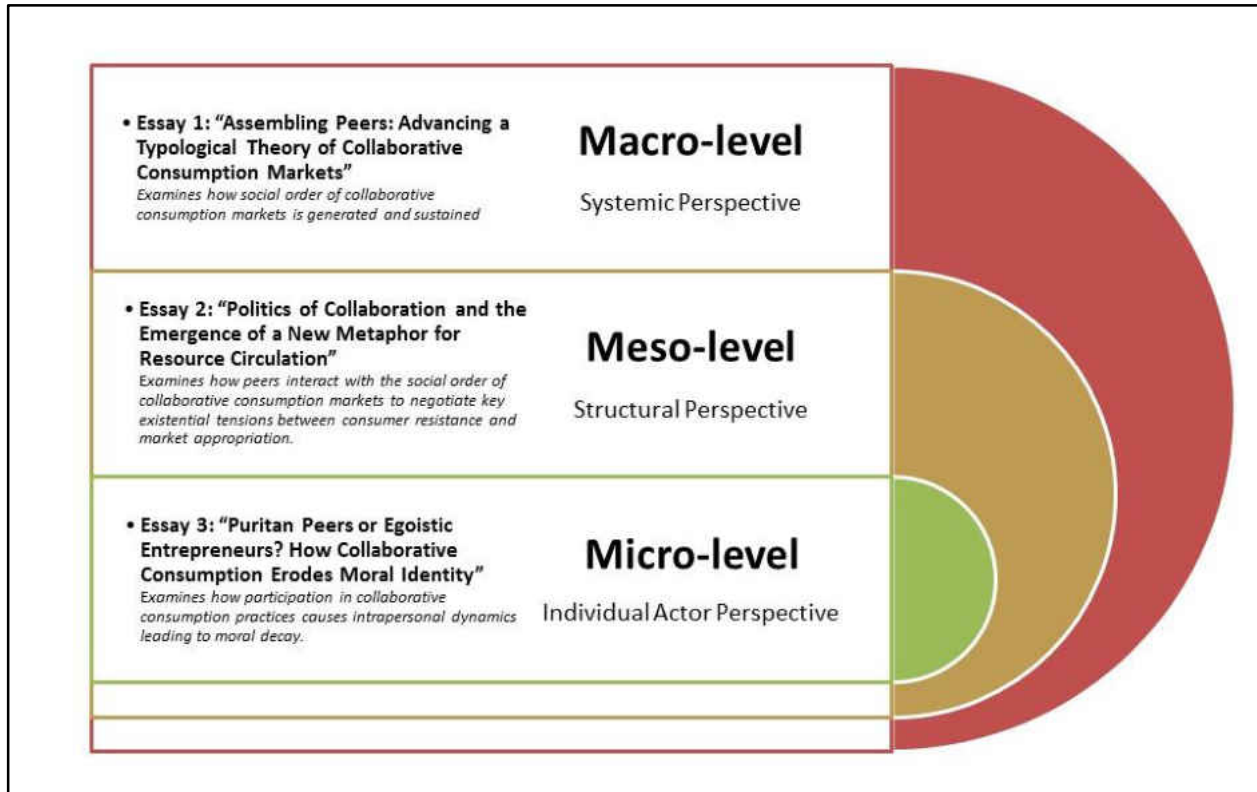
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## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of this dissertation was to examine the theoretical and practical implications of the collaborative consumption phenomenon for individuals, businesses and society. To accomplish this goal, we adopted a holistic research approach that includes different level of analysis - at the macro, meso, and micro level of the phenomenon. This multilevel analysis was used to assess how social structures, market institutions and consumer practices interact to generate, maintain and enforce a social order that combines the social domain of peers with the economic domain of market exchange. The three essays contained in this dissertation are independent research papers, however, as illustrated in Figure 14, each examines a unique perspective within the larger context of the phenomenon of interest. As a whole, these systemic, structural and individual actor perspectives provide a deeper understanding of how the emergence of the collaborative consumption phenomenon will shape social order.

The first essay of the dissertation approaches this objective from a macro level to examine how social order is generated and sustained through the systemic interaction of service firms and peers in value co-creation. Building on past work in service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory, this work presents a new way of thinking about collaborative consumption markets. This research provides a framework to understand the emergent business models and explains how platforms can be configured for higher value creation. The typology, which emerged organically from netnographic data, distinguishes four ideal types of collaborative consumption markets—Forums, Enablers, Matchmakers, and Hubs. Each represents a unique combination of attributes that determines the distinct ways an organization cocreates value with peers. This typological theory allows us to explore the theoretically complex and dynamic nature of value creation while offering pragmatic guidelines for firms

wishing to participate in this space. Accordingly, this systemic perspective advances a holistic understanding of how firms can engage with these popular consumption practices.



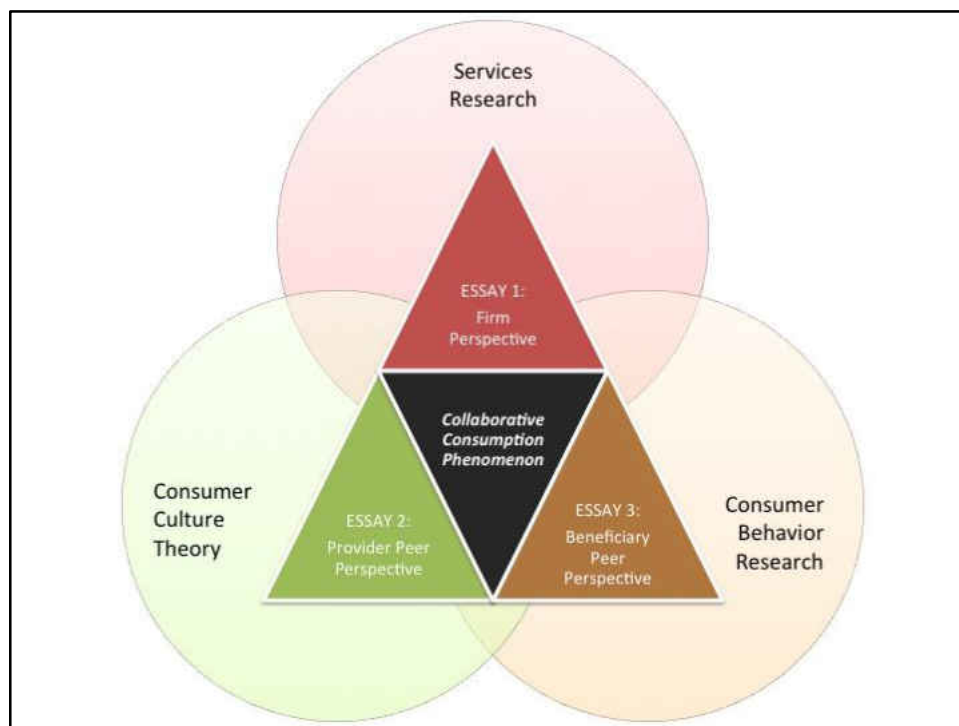
**Figure 14. Holistic Research Approach to Collaborative Consumption**

The second essay approaches our understanding of the phenomenon from a meso level of analysis to examine how peers interact with the social order of collaborative consumption markets to negotiate key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation. Amidst the aftermath of the global financial crisis, a heated debate has been brewing in the popular press about the nature of collaborative consumption practices, questioning whether the so-called “sharing economy” is a manifestation of the empowered and entrepreneurial consumer or just the latest form of contemporary capitalist exploitation. The dualism between individual voluntaristic action and constrained deterministic behavior echoed in this contemporary discourse has long been at the center of scholarly debate regarding the

primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior. This essay explores the metaphors that peers use to construe the field of collaborative consumption. We use Bourdieu's theory of social practice to forge a link between the structure-agency dualism and examine the meanings collaborative consumers assign to their lived experiences. Through the interpretive analysis of participant-generated images, this research uncovers the prevailing use of a liberation metaphor that reveals a new way of thinking about resource circulation. This metaphor embraces the dialectical interplay between structure and agency and reveals a novel way of thinking about circulation of resources that affirms Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence. This structural perspective elucidates the process by which key existential tensions between consumer resistance and market appropriation are negotiated.

Lastly, the third essay employs a micro level of analysis to examine how participation in collaborative consumption practices provokes intrapersonal dynamics leading to moral decay. By relying on a social cognitive framework that considers how behaviors impact personal and environmental factors in a recursive fashion, this essay scrutinizes when and how prolonged participation can erode moral identity and negatively impact prosocial behaviors and satisfaction. This research provides a pragmatic account for the prevalence of self-interested behaviors and motivations in recent investigations of the collaborative consumption phenomenon. Moving away from ideological discourses, we provide a socio-cognitive explanation of how collaborative consumption activities erode moral identity. Across two studies, we find supporting evidence that the intermingling of social and market logics in collaborative consumption activities has a detrimental effect on the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual's identity. This individual actor perspective reveals a more nuanced understanding of peers' social sensitivity to others and ways to sustain cooperative behaviors.

As we peer into the future of collaborative consumption, the contribution of this dissertation work can inform the multiple stakeholders shaping the nature of these practices. We have sustained that collaborative consumption firms bring together distributed networks of individuals, acting as intermediaries between peers. This interrelated triad of a platform-providing firm, a beneficiary peer and a provider peer can also serve as the basis for triangulating our findings and advancing a cohesive body of knowledge that contributes to academic scholarship in services, transformative consumer research and consumer culture theory. As illustrated in Figure 15, the collaborative consumption phenomenon lies at the intersection of these three literature streams. Each essay investigates the phenomenon from a respective position in the triad and correspondingly draws from and contributes to all three different research areas to varying extent.



**Figure 15. Triangulating Findings and Positioning Dissertation Research**



First, our typological theory is developed from the firm's perspective. This research answers the call to produce new theory at the intersection of service research and consumer culture theory. The foundational propositions of service-dominant logic underpin the typology, while consumer culture theory provides a compelling perspective from which to develop theory about collaborative value creation. As a result, our research contributes in key ways to extend service-dominant logic, advance consumer culture theory, and expand understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon. Second, the examination of metaphors is approached from the provider peer perspective. This research contributes to emergent research in consumer culture theory examining the circulation of consumption resources, applying a sociological perspective that pays attention to the contexts that condition consumption practices, and expanding the application of visual analysis techniques to reveal novel meanings to consumer experiences. Third, our investigation of moral decay as a consequence of collaborative consumption participation relates most to the beneficiary peer perspective. This research contributes to consumer behavior research by integrating Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and dynamic self-concept theory, extending the socio-cognitive model of moral behavior, and expanding understanding of the moral identity dimensions. In doing so, we reveal counter-intuitive effects of how a seemingly prosocial phenomenon can diminish collective concern and enhance a self-perpetuating norm of self-interest. Together, this holistic approach advances our theoretical understanding of the collaborative consumption phenomenon and provides practical implications for managerial practice and public policy.

## **APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTERS**



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### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Rebeca P. Perren**

Date: **November 03, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/3/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Addendum/Modification Request Form  
Modification Type: Protocol changed to modify compensation  
Project Title: Understanding Motivations of Collaborative Consumption  
Investigator: Rebeca P. Perren  
IRB Number: SBE-11-07909  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewska, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 11/03/2011 12:40:28 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator



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### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
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To: **Rebeca P. Dellegrazie-Perren**

Date: **January 27, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 01/27/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Antecedents and Outcomes of Collaborative Consumption Practices  
Investigator: Rebeca P. Dellegrazie-Perren  
IRB Number: SBE-14-10759  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

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In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#)

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patria Davis".

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