

# Chapter 7

## An Investigation of Collaborative Consumption Engagement and the Interaction With Self-Identity

Youngkeun Choi

*Sangmyung University, South Korea*

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between motivation factors and collaborative consumption engagement and explore the moderating effect of self-identity on that relationship. For this, the present study collected data from 228 college students in South Korean through a survey method. In the results, first, the more sustainability or economic benefits participants perceive in collaborative consumption platforms, the more they are engaged in collaborative consumption. Second, a positive relationship between perceived sustainability and collaborative consumption engagement is stronger for participants in collaborative consumption platforms high rather than low in interdependent self-view. However, interdependent self-view was found to have no significance in the relationship between perceived economic benefits and collaborative consumption engagement.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, consumer attitudes have changed, and concerns have risen over ecological, social, and developmental impacts (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Hosta & Zabkar, 2020). Indeed, public awareness of the environmental and ethical implications of mass consumption contributed to the emergence of the sustainable consumption concept around the beginning of the new millennium (OCSC, 2000). The Oxford Commission for Sustainable Consumption (OCSC) defines the concept as, consumption that supports the ability of current and future generations to meet their material and other needs, without causing irreversible damage to the environment or loss of function in natural systems. In pursuit of this ideal, diverse stakeholders (e.g., businesses, government agencies, and consumer advocates) have begun

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to develop initiatives to produce consumer goods that lower environmental impacts and, subsequently, provide positive social impacts (Cho, Gupta & Kim, 2015). Among the evolving examples of initiatives to promote sustainable consumption, collaborative consumption (CC) has emerged as a promising initiative for reducing consumer waste among diverse product categories. Collaborative consumption represents a range of business models that are fundamentally based on deviations from the concept of traditional ownership, including examples such as renting, lending, bartering and swapping products and services (Johnson, Mun & Chae, 2016).

One outcome of recent hyper-connectivity, in concert with the higher levels of efficiency and trust, has been people willing to engage in all kinds of social and economic exchange with members of their extended digital networks. Technology, and the applications that come with it, has changed the nature of activities ranging from dating (Tinder) to referencing (Wikipedia) to traveling (Airbnb); our connectedness is changing how humans interact. In particular, more people are open to sharing. Whether it is photos or statuses or breaking news, people are offering up more to their networks than ever before.

Despite growing practical importance, there is a lack of quantitative studies on motivational factors that affect participants' attitudes and intentions towards CC. This article explores people's motivations to participate in CC. For this, the article is structured as follows. The next section presents the theoretical framework and background for the hypotheses. This study adopts the lens of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in attitude formation and uses intentions related to CC (Lindenberg, 2001). The context is of especially great interest since participation in CC communities and services is generally characterized as driven by obligation to do good for other people and for the environment, such as sharing, helping others, and engaging in sustainable behavior (Prothero et al., 2011). However, CC may also provide economic benefits (saving money, facilitating access to resources, and free-riding), which constitute more individualistic reasons for participating. For these reasons, there exists a real practical problem of how CC could become more widespread. In particular, the possible discrepancy between motivations and their effect on attitudes and behavior warrants an exciting context for research (Bray et al., 2011). The relevant studies on self-identity have suggested that the sharing of an object is associated with closer perceived social distances (Belk, 1988). Belk's (1988) work on the extended self-established idea that people expand their concept of who they are to include their possessions and objects they consume. This study applies ideas on the extended self to P2P collaborative consumption. It proposes that by sharing a personal object of consumption, perceived social distances would be closer, vis-à-vis B2C exchange. And, the subsequent section then outlines data and methods, followed by the results. The article concludes with a discussion on implications and avenues for future research.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 Collaborative Consumption**

A collaborative economy is defined as a network of distributed groups of people that come together to use products, skills, etc. via internet technologies. That is, individuals share items and skills among a group instead of solely owning them. For instance, in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, an average car is used only eight percent of its lifetime (Sacks, 2011). Further, in the US, an average woman does not wear sixty percent of her closet, and the retail value of the unworn clothes in the closet accounts for about 220 billion US dollars (ThredUP, 2017). Hence, sharing such products could be

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