

Chapter 3

Mapping the Collaborative Platform Economy Business Practice: A Typological Study

Shouheng Sun

University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, Canada

Dafei Yang

Beijing Institute of Petrochemical Technology, China

Xue Yan

University of Science and Technology, China

ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a typological configuration that characterizes the full spectrum of collaborative platform economy business practice in the real world. The analysis is conducted on the basis of a large-scale data set which contains information on 1,335 representative platforms in more than 60 countries on five continents, covering almost all collaborative platform economy business practices mentioned in academic journals and public media. Leveraging the k-means clustering method, an empirical typology comprising seven categories of collaborative platform economy business practice is proposed: collaborative support platform, resource supply platform, authentic C2C platform, C2C mutualized mobility platform, hybrid service platform, B2C service platforms, collaborative finance platform. In addition, with the help of operating status data of the collaborative platform economy, a cross-comparative analysis was also carried out on the category differences and geographic differences.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital information technology and network technology has given consumers more power than ever before, resulting in the emergence of profound reconfiguration of market exchange in various forms (Ertz et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). One of the most striking is the collaborative platform economy which has brought revolutionary changes to the conceptualization of market exchange and made noticeable achievements over the last decade. Many collaborative platforms have risen rapidly across various well-established fields and have significantly affected all aspects of people's lives.

The collaborative platform economy is a subset of the sharing economy and collaborative consumption, which is commonly connected to the temporary and collaborative use of goods and services, mainly through the medium of digital platforms (Boily, 2022). The same nature of sharing economy and collaborative consumption also emphasizes the access-based consumption of goods and services rather than the traditional ownership-oriented consumption mode. Although the rise of the collaborative platform economy has attracted wide attention in business, government, and academia (De Vaujany et al., 2020; Ertz and Leblanc-Proulx, 2018; Frenken and Schor, 2017; Plzáková and Studnička, 2021; Sánchez-Pérez et al., 2021; Xu and Gursoy, 2021), there is a lack of empirical research regarding the increasing diversity of collaborative platform economy business practices and organization model (Zhu and Liu, 2021; Klarin and Suseno, 2021).

Business models represent a set of strategic decisions, which describe how an organization creates, transfers, and obtains value through internal activities and partnerships with stakeholders (e.g., suppliers and customers) (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Teece, 2010). Business model analysis can provide simple and powerful insight into the organizational structure and value creation process of an enterprise (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Teece, 2010; Reuschl et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be used as an effective tool to analyze and understand the inner complexity of the collaborative platform economy and elaborate on the diversity of business model types of collaborative platform economy business practices.

Currently, the business model of the collaborative platform economy has been studied by scholars in various fields from multiple angles (Acquier et al., 2017, 2019; Cohen and Munoz, 2016; Muñoz and Cohen, 2017; Plewnia and Guenther 2018; Schwanholz and Leipold, 2020; Gerwe and Silva, 2020; Reuschl et al., 2021). However, although scholars have conducted extensive and in-depth research on this topic, there are still some deficiencies. First, different studies follow different definitions and concepts of the collaborative platform economy business practice, so the scope of sharing economy business practice and specific cases selected in the analysis process is different, and the corresponding conclusions are also diverse. Second, the existing research on collaborative platform economy business models mainly concentrates on transportation, accommodation, goods, and life services and does not cover the full spectrum of business practice. Third, with the rapid development and evolution of the collaborative platform economy, the business practice of the collaborative platform economy has penetrated more and more industries and business scopes, making the business model of the collaborative platform economy more complicated. Therefore, it is very worthwhile to analyze business models of platforms based on extensive actual business practices in order to explore a more comprehensive typology of the collaborative platform economy. In addition, although these frameworks and typologies discuss and compare the differences in business models within the collaborative platform economy from different perspectives and levels, there is little research focus on the operating status of the collaborative platform, such as the size, number of active users, and funds raised in the market, which are critical to the sustainable development of the platform itself and even the entire emerging collaborative platform economy market.

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