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The study of multidimensional collaborative consumption utility*

Badanie wielowymiarowości użyteczności konsumpcji kolaboratywnej

Abstract

The limited amount of research on collaborative consumption and its' different results suggest that the individual motivations for consumers' engagement are likely to be more complex and quite dissimilar to the motivation for participation in other social sharing initiatives. Except few studies on local community or environmental benefits, key motivators generating perceived utility for participants engaging in collaborative consumption were mostly connected with intrinsic benefits. In fact, researchers suggest that drivers for collaborative consumption seem to be broad and wide-ranging, from individual to social or even political ones. This study is a quantitative research on the influence of foregoing factors as components of perceived utility on collaborative consumption propensity.

Keywords

collaborative consumption, sharing economy, utility

Streszczenie

Ograniczona liczba opracowań na temat konsumpcji kolaboratywnej, a także odmienne wyniki badań sugerują, że motywacja indywidualna uczestnictwa w zjawisku może być bardziej skomplikowana i różna od motywacji uczestnictwa w innych przejawach współdzielenia. Poza kilkoma badaniami odnoszącymi się do korzyści lokalnych społeczności i korzyści środowiskowych główne motywy postrzeganej użyteczności zjawiska dotyczyły przede wszystkim korzyści indywidualnych. Tym niemniej dostępne opracowania sugerują, że uwarunkowania uczestnictwa w konsumpcji kolaboratywnej mogą przyjmować znacznie szerszy zasięg, obejmując czynniki indywidualne, społeczne, a nawet polityczne. W niniejszym artykule autorzy, w oparciu o badania ilościowe, podejmują próbę określenia zależności pomiędzy tymi czynnikami a postrzeganą użytecznością konsumpcji kolaboratywnej.

Słowa kluczowe

konsumpcja kolaboratywna, gospodarka dzielenia się, użyteczność

JEL: M31, D16, E21

Introduction

Collaborative consumption is not a niche trend anymore. The perception of the phenomenon resulting from the idea of sustainable consumption and efficient use of resources, supported by global economic crisis' consequences, seems to be well-grounded in the literature. The long-term nature of changes in consumers' behaviour towards attitudes conducive to participation has been also confirmed by scholars (Bardhi & Eckhard, 2012; Bainbridge, 2013).

However, most studies on the collaborative consumption have examined the influence of its utility on participation from an individual angle (including economic, hedonic factors, *etc.*), whereas not many have been focused on its wider perspective. At the same time, rapidly growing markets in tourism or transportation have provided an example of how the phenomenon changes the dynamics of service offerings, interrupts existing market arrangements and creates a new wave of

micro-entrepreneurs. The aim of this paper is to fill this gap by examining how much the option to help others or shape the market influences consumers' participation in collaborative consumption.

Collaborative consumption — defining the subject of research

Collaborative consumption, variously referred to as 'sharing economy' (e.g. Cohen, Kietzmann, 2014), 'collaborative economy' (e.g. Martin, 2016), 'peer-to-peer economy' (e.g. Tussyadiah, 2016), 'the mesh' (e.g. Gansky, 2010), 'access-based consumption' (e.g. Bardhi, Eckhardt, 2012), is one of the less empirically explored phenomenon and, at the same time, one of the fastest developing one in consumer behaviour. In the literature, it is most often perceived as a consumption model leading to an increase in a society's living standard, based on cooperation and shared access to goods (Gansky, 2012; Belk, 2007).

Theoretical definitions of collaborative consumption phenomenon historically evolved. Felson and Spaeth (1978) understood collaborative consumption as 'those events in which one or more persons consume economic goods or services in the process of engaging in joint activities with one or more others'. Botsman and Rogers (2011) upgraded the definition by pointing out the maximum use of resources using 'traditional sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping'. Finally, existing definitions tried to highlight only some aspects of the phenomenon, such as the

functioning of collaborative consumption through the lens of network usage, defining collaborative consumption as a phenomenon of using online technologies and social networks to facilitate the sharing of resources (such as space, money, goods, skills and services) among entities that can be both: suppliers and consumers (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016). Table 1 presents the diversity in perception of the range of manifestations of the phenomenon, taking into account the characteristics of selected authors' own definitions.

Some authors refer only to some aspects that allow defining the phenomenon. Harvey *et al.* (2017) combine collaborative consumption with 'the computer-mediated economy'. The technological terminology and metaphors used (e.g. peer-to-peer, sourcing), indicate that researchers clearly refer to the close relationship between technology and collaborative consumption (*i.a.* John, 2013).

In the literature examining informal and alternative consumer practices, it is emphasized that technology development is conducive to weakening the distinction between prototype sharing systems, which were previously clearly defined, such as gift giving or exchange (Arsel & Dobscha, 2011; Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Scaraboto, 2015; Harvey *et al.*, 2017; Dalli & Corciolani, 2008). Instead, it promotes continuous interaction between different resource circulation systems (Corciolani & Dalli, 2014; Scaraboto, 2015).

The authors also perceive the issue of transfer of ownership and access to goods owned by enterprises differently. Analysing the phenomenon, Botsman and Rogers (2010) included both private

Table 1. Evolution of collaborative consumption as a theoretical concept

| Author | Type of entities involved | Form of gratification | Use of online technology | Transfer of ownership |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Felson, Spaeth (1978) | Consumers individually sharing their resources | Unplanned | None | Absent |
| Botsman, Rogers (2011) | Consumers using connecting platforms, individually sharing their resources or using enterprise resources | Financial or non-financial | Possible | Possible |
| Belk (2014) | Consumers using connecting platforms, individually sharing their resources or using enterprise resources | Financial or non-financial | Possible | Absent |
| Perren, Grauerholz (2015) | Consumers individually sharing their resources or using connecting platforms | Financial | Possible | Possible |
| Hamari <i>et al.</i> (2015) | Consumers using connecting platforms to share their resources | Financial or non-financial, but not obligatory | Necessarily | Possible |
| Benoit <i>et al.</i> (2017) | Consumers using connecting platforms to share their resources | Financial | Necessarily | Absent |

and commercial rental properties, as well as the possibility of transferring ownership between participants (sale of goods, exchange). Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) defined the phenomenon through transactions that can be regulated by the market, but do not involve any transfer of ownership. Finally, Hamari, Sjöklint and Ukkonen (2016) analysed access to resources made available only by other consumers (also from the viewpoint of ownership transfer).

To better understand the conceptual scope of the phenomenon analysed, it is worth referring to previous studies on the subject of collaboration. A Polish dictionary posits the concept of collaboration as a synonym for cooperation. Cooperation is 'work performed together with someone, with others, joint work, jointly conducted activities' (Szymczak, 2002, p. 715). The concept defined this way may refer to various areas of socio-economic life, *e.g.* economic, political, legal, regional cooperation, *etc.* The literature emphasizes that a high degree of cooperation is what distinguishes the human species from other living species and is an important condition of their existence and development (*i.a.* Buczyński, 2013).

In some studies, collaboration is considered as the most developed form of cooperation, occurring when we deal with the integration of cooperating people, joint planning and implementation of certain tasks (Bogacz-Wojtanowska, 2013). Collaboration is characterized by the most developed bonds and is often associated with the formation of new relationships (Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001).

Synonyms of the concept indicate that collaboration is associated with joint undertaking of activities by various entities. Such entities can be individuals, groups or organizations. Collaboration is a form of cooperation between them in a situation where independent approach towards goals is not satisfactory or there is a chance to achieve better results. The relationships between entities may be of a different nature and type, in particular: (1.) they may relate to the achievement of a common goal, *e.g.* joint purchase and use of a product by residents of one housing estate; or (2.) support in achieving mutual goals, *e.g.* free use of someone's flat during a holiday trip, in exchange for looking after it.

Access to the Internet is characterized mostly by the developing manifestations of the phenomenon through the network, rather than specifying its areas. Thereby, analysing the phenomenon of collaborative consumption, the authors will refer to all manifestations of the phenomenon taking into account various forms of both financial and non-financial gratification, occurring both: in the online and traditional environment, and directly related to the act of consumption.

Utility of collaborative consumption

Consumption is defined as a specific activity aimed at satisfying human needs through any commodity or service. Consumption can be defined as a direct act, *e.g.* eating a dinner, reading a newspaper, taking medicine; or an indirect act, *e.g.* preparing a meal, which is then subject to consumption in the form of a direct act; both occurring only one time.

Consumer actions are aimed at achieving a specific goal, which is to maximize the utility derived from the consumption of goods and services. Say (1803, p. 51, as cited in Arena, 2000), defined consumption as destruction of utility, which he regarded as the basis of the value of things and the source of demand: 'just as production is not the production of matter, but the production of utility, consumption is not the destruction of matter, but destruction of usability.' The basic principles of the theory of utility and the concept of utility as subjective pleasure or satisfaction resulting from the consumption of goods were formulated in the nineteenth century (Gossen, 1854, as cited in Marciniak, 2013, p. 256).

A particular good is useful if it has the capacity to satisfy needs. Utility is subjective — satisfaction associated with consumption of a given good by individual consumers varies, which results, among others, from psychological and sociological determinants and the value system adopted. These conditions cause differences in satisfaction associated with consumption of a given good, hence utility is subjective.

By accepting various forms of market interaction, we assume that each party will be motivated by their self-interest (Rubin, 2009). In the literature on participation in collaborative consumption, perceived utility as an individual dimension concerns such issues as: lower costs of participation in collaborative consumption compared to traditionally available solutions and economic motivation (Barnes & Mattsson, 2016), creating social bonds (Habibi *et al.*, 2016, Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011), hedonic value (Lawson *et al.*, 2016), getting rid of the inconvenience of ownership and product liability (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014).

The study by Hwang and Griffiths (2017) showed a positive relationship between utilitarian and hedonistic values seen in participation in collaborative consumption, and the attitude towards websites connecting consumers interested in this form of consumption. A similar relationship was observed in the studies of Hamari, Sjöklint, Ukkonen (2016) on the relationship between the perceived joy of participation in collaborative consumption, the perceived external reward (in the form of saved funds or time), and collaborative consumption intention. The assessment of usability

largely depends on the reference point that the consumer chooses, *e.g.* to which extent a given way of consumption satisfies his/her needs in relation to other solutions available on the market, whether the effort put in is not excessive in relation to the results obtained, *etc.*

The need to share resources through collaborative consumption may also result from the need to create new social bonds, a social support network at the level of various interrelationships (Belk, 2009). It may also result, as in the case of related phenomena, from the desire to signal your well-being to the environment (Jaeggi & Gurven, 2013) or to reduce the costs of protecting the resources held (Lamberton, 2016). Barbarossa and De Pelsmacker (2016) pay attention to taking certain actions out of the sense of moral duty, *i.e.* where otherwise the individual would feel bad, regardless of whether there were external consequences of these actions.

Persons participating in collaborative consumption, apart from individual utility, may also be driven by the desire to help others. Not all consumers' actions aim at maximizing their own utility. In some cases the social context, altruism or trust are of significant importance for the decisions made by the consumer (Glimcher *et al.*, 2009). The issue of the existence of altruistic motivation to engage in collaborative consumption was raised in several studies (*e.g.* Lamberton, 2015; Piscicelli, *et al.*, 2015; Bucher, Fieseler & Lutz, 2016; Ertz, Lecompte & Durif, 2017; Roos & Hahn, 2017).

Malecka's research (2019) suggests that the spectrum of motives and conditions that guide people to share their goods is much broader than it might appear just from the need to share. These may include the desire to share costs, temporarily transfer the responsibility for the good owned, or the inability to deny others the use of the resources owned due to poor assertiveness (*i.a.* Hawlitschek *et al.*, 2018; Lindblom & Lindblom, 2018).

Laamanen, Wahlen and Campana (2015) suggest that when conceptualizing collaborative consumption it is particularly important to pay attention to two issues: the emphasis on collective action and (partial) renunciation from traditional markets. The waiver of the traditional market has been considered so far, among others as a commitment to anti-consumption (*i.a.* Ozanne, Ballantine, 2010) and a move away from ownership (*i.a.* Lindblom & Lindblom, 2018), which is a sign of escape from the market. Collaborative consumption considers consumption practices as acts of collective resistance, creating connections between the private/individual and public/collective aspects of consumption.

Guiot and Roux (2010) indicate, however, that these actions can also take the form of a struggle, a desire to strengthen the consumer position on the market towards enterprises. This applies primarily

to issues such as the awareness that by participating in collaborative consumption, consumers influence companies' decisions, change their strategy, business models, *etc.* (*i.a.* Grégoire, Laufer & Tripp, 2010), as well as the overall shape of the market (*i.a.* Helm, Moulard & Richins, 2015). The perceived utility of participation in collaborative consumption will be a different phenomenon than the individual utility and collective utility described above.

Methodology and description of own research

The aim of this research was to find an answer to the question whether there is a relationship between different dimensions of perceived utility of collaborative consumption and the tendency to involve consumers in such a form of consumption. The survey was conducted in 2019 on a sample of 1,200 respondents participating in different manifestations of the phenomenon studied, both consumers making products available to others and those using the resources provided.

Ride-sharing was facilitated by 42.2% of respondents surveyed and 49.9% of respondents made use of that. An own house or apartment was provided to others by 24.4% of the respondents, and 40.5% of respondents benefited from that. 29.1% of respondents used other goods shared by other people, and 29% gave access to other goods. Shared rental and use as well as shared purchase and use of goods were characterised by 25.3% and 32.5% of respondents respectively. 72.2% of respondents participated in more than one of the forms indicated.

People between 26–35 years of age dominate this survey sample, accounting for 42.9% of all respondents. People in the 36–45 age group account for 20% of respondents surveyed, followed by those in 21–25 years segment (16.4% of the survey), and those between 46–55 years of age (9.4%). Approximately 5% of the sample are younger and older respondents (under 21 and over 55, respectively). The majority of the sample are women, constituting 68.8% of all respondents. More than a half of those surveyed declared higher education (50.9% of respondents), while average and vocational education were declared by 41.8%. In terms of the size of the place of residence, the survey respondents in the highest proportion come from a town with up to 10,000 inhabitants (22%), followed by cities from 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants (21.5%) and finally those with more than 500,000 inhabitants (21%).

The survey questionnaire started by an introduction explaining the case and examples of

collaborative consumption, with the indication that the questions (scales) refer to the so-called collaborative consumption. Multiple filter questions (*i.a.* Watt, 1997) were also used to eliminate the situation of confusing collaborative consumption with related phenomena.

The measurement of attitudes towards selected claims was carried out using a 7-level Likert's progressive scale (from '1 — I strongly disagree' to '7 — I strongly agree'). The measurement of the propensity for collaborative consumption in the future was carried out using scales adopted from Ozanne and Ballantine (2010). However, since that study looked into a different context (toy rental) and abstracted from product ownership, four scales relating to ownership were newly developed, also to highlight the non-family nature of collaborative consumption. The content of the scales was as follows:

CC1 I will try to share the use of various goods with other people.

CC2 I intend to share products with other people as much as possible.

CC3 I think about renting or purchasing products together with other people so we could later share the same.

CC4 In the future, instead of buying and own the product, I intend to first search (e.g. on the Internet) for potential sharing options.

The measurement of the level of perceived individual utility was achieved using scales taken from studies by Hsu and Lin (2008), and Möhlmann (2015). A perceived group usability was measured using scales adopted from the study by Reeb and others (2010). The level of usability understood as 'the effectiveness of influencing other entities on the market' was measured by using scales adopted from Guiot and Roux (2010) and Helm, Moulard and Richins (2015). According to the sources identified in the literature, all scales came from studies previously carried out, however they were adapted to the context of our research (participation in collaborative consumption) and to specificities of the Polish language.

The empirical data collected first went through reliability and validity analyses. We used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with the principal component analysis and Varimax rotation of factors, which allowed the extraction of the so-called latent indicators of the investigated phenomenon, as well as the intention to collaborative consumption itself. As a result of factor analysis, all scales with too low factor loadings at the intended design (<0.6) or those that referred to more than one cross loadings (level more than 0.3) were rejected. This analysis provided us with a relatively clear picture of

extracted constructs. All variables created by factor analysis achieved satisfactory results in the level of measurement reliability (CRONBACH ALPHA >0.7 ; AVE >0.5).

The relationship between variables was then analysed using the Rho-Spearman coefficient. The analysis showed that there is a general statistically significant relationship between perceived utility of collaborative consumption and the tendency to participate in such a manifestation of consumerism.

Next, we wanted to verify how these dependencies are formed in the individual subgroups, depending on the type of manifestation of the phenomenon and respondents' participation (see Table 2). This split of the sample is well discussed in the literature as the results of the studies so far show that people's willingness to use goods made available by others is different (higher) than making their own goods available to consumers (*e.g.* PricewaterhouseCoopers AG WPG, 2015).

Despite a number of common motives for shared participation in collaborative consumption, some of the motives are unique to each party, *e.g.* avoiding liabilities arising from ownership among consumers using the goods available (insurance purchase, need to keep clean, maintenance) (Zimmermann, 2016), and certain determinants and barriers of the development of collaborative consumption may differ in the case of different industries (Pawlicz, 2019).

Since collaborative consumption's rate of growth is fastest in such areas as tourism or transport, the first two groups were respondents participating only in such manifestations. Another group were respondents using other goods. The last group list respondents who purchased or rented some products together and then shared their use. This specification was carried out in order to reduce an asymmetry resulting from the concentration of previous studies on access-based consumption determinants (Bardhi & Eckhardt 2012; Catulli *et al.*, 2013).

Discussion of study results

For most forms of collaborative consumption, the relationship between perceived usability and the tendency to participate in the phenomenon under consideration has been statistically significant. In most cases, the relationship between perceived individual utility and the tendency to collaborative consumption was higher than the dependencies of the perceived possibility of helping others and that tendency. This confirms the observations of other researchers that the main motive for collaborating in consumption lies in the

Table 2. Correlation values between the tendency to collaborative consumption and different dimensions of perceived utility of the phenomenon

| Form of participation | | Individual utility | Social utility | Market-shape utility |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Sharing an apartment/home with people outside the family | Correlation value N | .616** 21 | .546** 21 | .660** 21 |
| Using an apartment/home by people outside the family | Correlation value N | .647** 38 | .535** 38 | .490** 38 |
| Sharing rides in one car with people outside the family | Correlation value N | .577** 42 | .382** 42 | .346* 42 |
| Using rides made available by others | Correlation value N | .774** 51 | .560** 51 | .601** 51 |
| Sharing goods with others | Correlation value N | .748** 14 | .827** 14 | .704** 14 |
| Using goods made available by others | Correlation value N | .489* 14 | .456* 14 | .784** 14 |
| Shared rental of goods and use with others | Correlation value N | .882* 6 | .574 6 | .940** 6 |
| Shared purchase of goods and use with others | Correlation value N | .335 15 | .426 15 | .550* 15 |

** . Correlation is relevant at 0.01 (unilaterally).

* . Correlation is relevant at 0.05 (unilaterally).

possibility of improving participant's own situation (Balck & Cracau, 2015; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016; Roos & Hahn, 2017).

In case of house or apartment sharing, the perceived utility on an individual basis was higher for respondents using the resources provided to them, and the perceived utility resulting from the assistance to others was higher in case of respondents providing resources. The results go in line with several previous findings in this area, where both individual benefits and social component affect the propensity to collaborative consumption (e.g. Tussyadiah, 2014). Also the correlation between perceived possibility of market-shaping and the tendency to participate in the collaborative consumption has been statistically significant, and higher for supply-side participants. They are perceived as a new wave of micro-entrepreneurs, who influence consumers' behaviour, shape markets, and the labor force. Among demand-side participants the perceived utility connected with the possibility to shape the market is lower. In fact, Pesonen and Tussyadiah (2017) identify two user profiles. Idealistic profile, as opposed to pragmatic one, corresponds to consumers' motivation for using P2P accommodation services, where market-shaping possibility (e.g. not supporting hotel enterprises, supporting local residents, local economy) was

among drivers of their pro-social behavior. We believe future research based on different user profiles could uncover additional psychographic and behavioral traits of diverse collaborative consumption users.

For respondents participating in ride-sharing, the relationship between perceived assistance to others and the tendency to consume collaboratively is higher among respondents using rides made available by others than among respondents who made their own journeys available to other people. Perhaps the reasons for this should be seen in the fact that services connecting consumers in ride-sharing very often suggest the price range of the ride for passengers, and the consumers using it equally contribute to costs, thereby they feel that they contribute to mutual goal. Previous theoretical studies (i.a. Belk, 2014) and empirical studies (i.a. Willer *et al.*, 2012; Hartl, Hofmann & Kirchler, 2016) have highlighted a role of the platform connecting consumers in affecting users' motives.

Among those who share other than the above-mentioned resources, respondents with the highest perceived social utility were the most likely to consume collaboratively. The reasons for this can be seen in the fact that perhaps the products that respondents made available were less valuable and therefore the utility on an individual basis, understood as the possibility of recovering part of

the funds, was less important. Behind a number of motives related to helping others, there may also be quasi-selfish motives, such as a need to build new relationships or, on the contrary, respondents participated in the phenomenon not geared towards material benefits or even completely freely, thereby seeing utility in the social dimension.

Summary

This research has shown an overall relationship between perceived usability and the tendency to collaborative consumption. The novelty of this study is the approach to determine the relationship between the perceived market-forming opportunity and the tendency to participate in collaborative consumption. Until now, researchers have admittedly referred to issues related to the departure from the traditional market through, for example, participation in de-consumption (Lindblom & Lindblom, 2018) or anti-consumption (Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010). However, these studies did not address many of the issues taken in the development of issues, e.g. perceived market-shaping possibility.

Despite its unique contribution to understanding collaborative consumption phenomenon, this study possesses a few limitations. Firstly, in the study, women prevailed in the study sample. Studies up until this date have indicated that women's intention to participate in collaborative consumption may be higher than the intention of men (Owyang *et al.*, 2014; Lindblom & Lindblom, 2018). Women tend to be more altruistic, empathetic, and moral than men, however, within a social media context, emotions related to altruism, empathy toward the cause, and socially oriented

moral identity are factors more closely predictive of males' inclinations to engage in activities to support others (Paulin, Ferguson, Schattke & Jost, 2014). It is possible that the relationship between the different dimensions of utility for men would be different. In addition, the majority of respondents taking part in the survey participated in many manifestations of the phenomenon. Meanwhile, in the literature of the subject there is usually a distinction between different forms of sharing of resources based on the role of direct and indirect reciprocity in a given sharing model, the role of money (forms of settlement: cash and cashless, non-payment economy, the possibility of profit or recovery of part of the costs), *etc.* (Roos & Hahn, 2017; Trenz, Frey & Veit, 2018). It seems cognitively interesting to explore the potential differences of perceived usability among the above forms.

This study refers to important sociological threads. People who use resources shared within a given community (such as tools, books, *etc.*) in addition to the possibility of improving their own situation and the situation of a widely defined community, may face the need to choose between improving situation of a given community and the deterioration of their own situation. Similarly, they might need to choose to improve their own situation at the expense of others. This creates the need to study many additional factors to understand the above-mentioned interdependence. We may argue that factors in addition to perceived social utility may be taken into account to take collaborative actions: social identification with a particular group, a sense of belonging to the community, perceived injustice (Reeb, Folger, Langsner, Ryan & Crouse, 2010). Conducting research taking into account these variables will allow us to understand the collaborative consumption phenomenon better.

Notes/Przypisy

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