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Collaborative Consumption or the Rise of the Two-Sided Consumer

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Abstract:

While considerable investigative work has focused on that process from a managerial standpoint, little academic research has sought to conceptualize collaborative consumption from a marketing viewpoint. This paper performs a review of empirical, managerial and theoretical research into the phenomenon. The authors draw upon past research to delineate the construct and then discuss its dimensionalities. Next, they develop a conceptual framework of collaborative consumption and then analyse the implications of the latter from the theoretical, practical and societal perspectives. By modelling the concept based on three key thrusts, namely the manner in which consumers partake in collaborative consumption, the transfer of ownership and use, and the channels used by consumers to engage in collaborative practices, and the intervention of the consumer as the key to collaboration, the analysis brings to the fore the multidimensional aspect of collaborative consumption and the centrality of a two-sided instead of a one-sided consumer role.

Keywords: Collaborative consumption, Peer economy, Sharing economy, Commercial sharing systems, Second hand marketplaces.

JEL classification: M30, M31

1. Introduction

The term ‘Collaborative Consumption’ (hereafter, CC) was first coined by Felson and Spaeth (1978), who drew on Hawley’s (1950) theory of human ecology to describe collaborative forms of consumption as sharing and considered consumption as a sustenance activity. Since then, the confluence of changes in technology, namely the Internet and mobility, the rise of e-commerce and online peer communities, the enhanced concern for the environment, and a stagnating world economy (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Koeneet al., 2012) have shaped new forms of trade practices. These participative, peer-oriented, relatively informal practices are tending to revitalize, augment and expand the original boundaries of CC into a booming phenomenon.

In 2014, a study conducted by Nielsen (2014) estimated the worldwide product service system (i.e. rental) market alone to be worth US \$25 billion. In 2015, it was worth US \$29.464 billion (PwC, 2015). This is a staggering 17.8% growth. Overall, 68% of some 30,000 Internet respondents from 60 countries indicated a willingness to pool their personal assets for financial gains, while a further 66% pointed to the likelihood of using or renting goods or services from others within a pooling community (Nielsen, 2014). The rise of what is colloquially called the ‘sharing economy’ consists of roughly 9,000 start-ups worldwide and leads businesses to rethink their operating models and marketing strategies (PwC, 2015). For example, BMW launched an online platform called Drivy to enable consumer-to-consumer BMW car rentals, and Patagonia has created a customer marketplace in conjunction with eBay to enable consumers to buy and sell pre-owned goods (Owyang et al., 2013). Topical literature in marketing and in other disciplines tries to keep pace with this rapidly changing business environment.

The marketing literature on the topic of CC may be divided into three research streams. The first, investigates specific forms of CC such as one or more specific online platforms or applications (Koene et al., 2012; Karrman, 2011; Albinsson and Perera, 2012; Arsel and Dobscha, 2011; Zhu et al. 2012; Piscicelliet al., 2015; Harvey et al., 2014). The second examines CC as a whole from an empirical perspective (Binninger et al., 2015; Hamari, et al., 2015; Ertz et al., 2016; Böckers and Meelen, 2016). The third, comprises studies which do not explicitly or intentionally study CC or an aspect of CC, but which investigate modes of exchange and alternative consumption forms which conflate de facto with CC such as gift-giving, second-hand purchases, online reselling or swapping (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Giesler, 2006; Chu and Liao, 2007; Sherry, 1990; Chapman, 1980; Dalli and Corciolani, 2008; Bardhi and Eckhardt,

2012; Bardhi and Arnould, 2005). A fourth stream started to emerge as an attempt to make sense of the three previous ones through the conceptualizing of CC. Yet, with the exception of a few studies (e.g. Belk, 2014; Arnould and Rose, 2016), this stream remains by far the most under-theorized field of research. This is remarkable, given the rapid pace at which streams one and two are expanding, yet without solid conceptual foundations on which to rely on except for some managerial nudges in the likes of Botsman and Rogers (2010), Gansky (2010) or Owyang *et al.* (2013).

This article seeks to provide a contribution to the fourth stream of research identified by the authors. It aims at equipping both empirical and conceptual researchers alike with more robust theoretical foundations regarding CC by conceptualizing that construct. This paper answers therefore the following research questions: 1) What is an appropriate definition of collaborative consumption from a marketing-based perspective? 2) What are the dimensions and components of collaborative consumption? and, 3) How does one go about modelling the collaborative consumption process? The authors will attempt to fill in the gap in the literature regarding the lack of adequate conceptual research into CC and will also attempt to reconcile conflicting definitions and views of the phenomenon.

2. Conceptualization of Collaborative Consumption

2.1. Existing definitions

CC has been first coined by Felson and Spaeth (1978) to theorize events requiring high spatio-temporal concurrence and which must be analyzed in terms of human coordination and human competition. From a consumer behaviour perspective, the unit of analysis is “people”, or “consumers”. Yet, this early conceptualization (see Table 1) is too broad as it could include such trivial activities as using a washing machine for family laundry or having beer with friends.

Authors (year)	Definition of collaborative consumption	Web-facilitated	Offline	Transfer of ownership	Free exchanges	Company-owned resources
Felson and Spaeth (1978)	“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” (p.614)		X		X	
Botsman and Rogers (2010)	“The rapid explosion in swapping, sharing, bartering, trading and renting being reinvented through the latest technologies and peer-to-peer marketplaces in ways and on a scale never possible before” (p.xv)	X	X	X	X	X
Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012)	“Access-based consumption as transactions that may be market mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place” (p. 881)	X	X		X	X
Belk (2014)	“people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation” (p.1597)	X				X
Hamari, Sjöklint and Ukkonen (2015)	“Peer-to-peer based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services” (p. 2)	X		X	X	

Table 1: Previous definitions of collaborative consumption

More recent definitions which characterize the current aspects of the CC phenomenon have therefore been developed. However, each tends to overemphasize one specific aspect of CC at the expense of others.

First, there is a common tendency to consider CC as being web-centered. Belk (2014), for example, considers CC ventures as “an Internet facilitated ability to help people find things” (p.1598). Harvey *et al.* (2014) conflate CC with a “computer-mediated economy”. Similarly, Hamari *et al.* (2015), conceive CC, primarily and even exclusively, as a technological phenomenon because Peer-to-Peer (P2P) collaboration finds its origins in open source programming, and file-sharing (Belk, 2014). Online cooperation and digital sharing formed, indeed, the basis of web-facilitated exchange platforms (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010; Air grain, 2012; Nissanoff, 2006). The technological terminology (e.g. start-ups) and metaphors (e.g. peer-to-peer, sourcing) employed in the discursive construction of CC, also refer explicitly to this close relationship between technology and CC (John, 2013). These various definitions characterize, at best, web-mediated CC, but not CC.

The Internet enabled to increase the scale and scope of practices that are not inherently new. Such practices have always existed before, but the difference is that they have been given a new impetus through web technologies (Ritzer, 2015). In other words, technology merely increased the scope of previously geographically-, socially-, culturally- or community-ascribed exchange systems. As an example, the semantic field surrounding “collaboration” has started to be used by Botsman and Rogers (2010) to designate strangers exchanging any type of resource from any part of the globe. Yet, the very same concept can be assigned to neighbors or members of a close-knit community joining for a garage sale. Actually, CC has accrued from offline-based informal exchanges, which should thus be regarded as founding practices of CC and fit within its conceptual delimitations.

Another reason explaining the close association between the Web and CC lies in the fact that the Web technology favoured the emergence of novel business models and exchange schemes (Giesler, 2006; Scaraboto, 2015). For example, the Napster file-sharing platform emphasized the impact of the Web in transforming previously discrete dyadic (on-to-one) exchanges into networks of

polyadic (one-to-many) and rhizomatic (many-to-many) exchanges (Giesler, 2006). Informal product exchanges, resource pooling or jobbing have always existed (Ritzer, 2015). However, online platforms and mobile applications have enhanced both the scope and the intensity of undeclared practices, which has also created many legal issues for public authorities. In essence, CC is not solely limited to technology-enabled exchanges. Yet, technological advances, especially Web 2.0, increased collaboration between individuals and thus the emergence of new consumer-initiated exchange types, which conflate de facto with CC.

Second, since most of CC models are based on leasing and rental schemes, CC has been related to what Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) termed ‘Access-Based Consumption’ (e.g. Belk, 2014, p.1597). Through access, it is the service that the good offers rather than the ownership of the good which is valuable (Watkins *et al.*, 2016; Ozanne and Ballantine, 2015). This approach to CC may be problematic, because focusing solely on access-based consumption, excludes a great variety of exchanges such as second-hand purchasing, reselling or swapping, which are no less collaborative than access (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). In fact, whether offline or computer-mediated, these exchange schemes have often been reported as entailing high levels of P2P cooperation and interaction (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Belk *et al.*, 1988; Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984; Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Sherry, 1990; Stone *et al.*, 1996; Gregson and Crewe, 2003). The literature that started to examine informal and alternative consumption practices, emphasized further that technology – especially the Internet – has favoured the withering of the distinction between prototypical exchange systems which were supposed to be clearly delineated, such as gift-giving, swapping, or commodity exchange (Arsel and Dobscha, 2011; Albinsson and Perera, 2012; Scaraboto, 2015; Harvey *et al.*, 2014; Dalli and Corciolani, 2008). Instead, there is a continuous interaction between different forms of resource circulation systems (Corciolani and Dalli, 2014; Scaraboto, 2015). In other terms, it makes little sense to refer to CC as being limited to temporary access to resources, since collaboration between consumers can be found in permanent acquisition and disposition as well. Besides, online collaborative platforms contribute strongly to blur the frontiers between exchange paradigms. A conceptualization of CC which leaves permanent disposition and acquisition aside would be incomplete, and possibly irrelevant, since it would miss out a substantive portion of CC.

Currently, the most comprehensive and accurate definition of CC is Botsman and Rogers’ (2010), mainly because they are the ones who initiated the re-use of that expression from Felson and Spaeth (1978). This is also why their definition of CC prevails in many studies, including academic ones (e.g. Koene *et al.*, 2012; Harvey *et al.*, 2014; Lamberton and Rose, 2012). While exhaustive, Botsman and Rogers’ (2010) definition is too broad, in that conventional consumption schemes are often conflated with CC. For example, many businesses which have been launched in the 2000s, such as Zipcar, Bixi or Car2Go, are conflated with CC, whereas as will be discussed later, are more accurately forms of conventional consumption.

The following part discusses in more details the conceptual foundations of CC and proposes a definition of the construct.

2.2. Conceptual Delineation of Collaborative Consumption

We propose a consumer-focused approach to collaboration, in which resource circulation systems which exclude consumer input either at, what we call, the “provision” and the “obtainment” level, do not entail CC. In other words, collaboration should not be merely conflated with P2P, or even online or access-based consumption systems, but rather with consumers’ capacity of being both “providers” and “obtainers” of resources, in a given “resource circulation system”. Drawing on Scaraboto’s (2015) theory on hybrid economies, this means that consumers are able to “switch roles, engage in embedded entrepreneurship and collaborate to produce and access resources” (p. 166). The “resource circulation system” equates the metaphor of a “supply chain”.

CC is therefore characterized by the fact that a consumer could be, if wanted, both an *obtainer* and a *provider* of a given resource. CC induces therefore a two-sided consumer role which goes beyond the notion of buyer or consumer. Companies have traditionally *sold* products and services to consumers, they now start *pulling* on their resources too (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Consumers were classically conceptualized in marketing as *buyers* whereas they have always been *pushers* too in the form of formally-recognized employees or workers supplying their workforce (Ritzer, 2015). Through CC, however, consumers invite themselves in the value creation process, not as formal workers, employees or suppliers, but as informal suppliers, in order to successfully reconcile their personal interests. In the meantime, organizations tap into the sphere of private assets and skills, as formal organizations and not as family, friends, or acquaintances, to make profits or reach other objectives. Table 2 details the two-sided consumer role in CC. A consumer is not only a “consumer” anymore but also an *obtainer* who may have the additional opportunity to endorse, if wanted, a *provider* role.

	Obtainer	Provider
Function	The consumer who seeks to obtain a resource or service that is provided directly by another consumer (i.e. the provider), or indirectly through the mediation of an organization known as the “mediator” (for profit or non-profit).	The consumer who provides a specific resource or service either directly, to a consumer (i.e. the obtainer) or, indirectly through a “mediator” (for-profit or non-profit).
Action	“Obtainment” entails second hand purchase, free receiving, swapping, accessing resources for free or for a compensation (excluding conventional consumption access), reconditioned / refurbished consumption, and to a lesser extent, recycled consumption;	“Provision” involves reselling, giving for free, swapping, providing access for free or in exchange of a compensation, recycling or trading in with an organization.

Table 2: Consumer two-sided roles

Given the multidimensional aspect of the CC construct (i.e. free-monetary, temporary access-permanent ownership, online-offline), CC may be better conceived of in a broader perspective of resource circulation systems incurring differential levels of collaborative

intensity shown in Table 3 as: (1) pure collaboration (C2C, or Consumer-to-Consumer); (2) sourcing collaboration (C2O, or Consumer-to-Organization); and (3) trading collaboration (O2C, or Organization-to-Consumer). The organization may be for-profit or not-for-profit. It is important to stress that this resource circulation system approach entails “medium” to “large social distances” (e.g. neighbors, colleagues, strangers) instead of “small social distances” (e.g. family, household) (Arnould and Rose, 2016).

	Pure collaboration	Sourcing collaboration	Trading collaboration
Process	Both the obtainer and the provider are consumers who exchange a resource	The provider provides a resource or service to the obtainer through a mediator	the obtainer obtains a resource or service from the provider through a mediator
Process example	The second hand purchase/sale of a pre-owned television set at a flea market	Resale of a pre-owned television set to a second hand electronics shop	The consumer who purchases the television set from the second hand electronics shop
Exchange type	C2C	C2O	O2C
Consumer role	Obtainer and provider	Provider	Obtainer
Presence of intermediates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Presence of mediator	No	Yes	Yes

Table 3: Collaborative intensity in a resource circulation system

Pure collaboration involves direct P2P exchanges, in which consumers directly exchange a specific resource or service. For example, on online platforms such as classified ads or auctions websites, consumers directly *provide* and *obtain* resources or services. Although these online platforms are intermediates they are not “mediators”, because consumers are free to devise the terms and conditions of distribution and consumption of the resource or service together, whereas mediators interfere in the devising. In sum, mediators are intermediates but not all intermediates are necessarily mediators. For example, the Canadian-based “ridesharing” website Amigo Express does not allow obtainers (carpooling obtainers) and providers (carpooling providers) to get into contact to arrange the terms of the ride. Rather, each agent needs to separately contact and pay a fee to the website in order to, respectively, obtain and provide the service. Amigo Express is therefore an intermediate that is a mediator. Conversely, using TheCarpoolingNetwork.ca enables consumers to arrange themselves the terms and conditions of the exchange and the website acts as a facilitator, not as a mediator. Most C2C websites are online platforms and operate on the freemium model, where the use of the website is free, but premium features must be paid for (e.g. Kijiji) (Scaraboto, 2015, p.164). Others have a donation ware mode of exchange, whereby website use is free but financial donations are requested or accepted to offset production and maintenance costs (e.g. The Khan Academy) (Scaraboto, 2015, p.164).

Sourcing collaboration New technologies have therefore sparked entrepreneurial creativity to develop new breeds of intermediates. They claim to challenge conventional business, and they do so, because they operate business differently, without delivering or producing anything by themselves, but by capitalizing on the logics of ‘crowd sourcing’ to do so. Sourcing collaboration therefore means that organizations do not provide a resource or deliver a service to consumers by themselves, but rely on providers (i.e. consumers) to perform any of both. They benefit from the Internet to mediate, at a cost and more efficiently, exchanges that would otherwise be authentically C2C exchanges. As an example, sourcing collaboration may refer to refurbished or reconditioned products, sold by conventional organizations, but *provided* by consumers (i.e. providers) who were, for some reason, dissatisfied with the products in question. Other examples include consumer provision of resources to antique dealers, consignment shops or Amazon’s Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) program. Similarly, online platforms which take a percentage off the transaction cost in supposedly C2C exchanges (e.g. Über, Instacart, Task Rabbit, Airbnb), actually outsource the fulfillment of specific tasks or jobs to consumer A in order to efficiently redistribute those to consumer B. Also, a tangible resource may circulate across multiple organizations (intermediates) from the provider to the obtainer. For example, a car sold by a consumer to a professional car dealer may then be sold and resold by several other car dealers, before being eventually resold to a consumer.

Trading collaboration is the symmetrical opposite of “sourcing collaboration”, in that it refers to the obtainer who enjoys a resource mediated by an organization but originally *provided* by another consumer (i.e. provider) via sourcing collaboration. The obtainer thus benefits from a resource that has been originally sourced by a provider to a mediator. The mediator, in turn, offers the providers’ resource to the obtainer, usually-but not exclusively- at a cost, which will be fully, partially or not at all returned to the original provider. In contrast to conventional consumption where the resource being enjoyed, even temporarily, originates from a company, trading collaboration presupposes that the resource enjoyed by the obtainer has originally been sourced by another consumer. For example, trading collaboration occurs when consumer B obtains a cheaper refurbished iPhone that has been traded in to Best Buy by consumer A. Or it occurs when consumer B enjoys the delivery of her groceries by consumer A, through the Instacart crowd sourcing application.

CC is therefore salient in a multiplicity of resource circulation systems in which the core characteristic is that consumers are able to switch sides. As obtainers, they perform trading collaboration with organizations or pure collaboration with providers; as providers, they engage in sourcing collaboration with organizations, or in pure collaboration with obtainers. In sum, CC can be defined as *the set of resource circulation systems which enable consumers to both obtain and provide, temporarily or permanently, valuable resources or services through direct interaction with other consumers or through an intermediate.*

3. Dimensions of Collaborative Consumption

3.1. Practices

CC entails both monetary and non-monetary exchanges. For some authors, the concept relates solely to commercial exchanges (e.g. Bixi) (Lamberton and Rose, 2013). To others, disinterested resource pooling (e.g. Couchsurfing) (Karrman, 2011), as well as demonetized transfer of goods (e.g. Really Really Free Markets) (Albinsson and Perera, 2012), constitute CC. Others still, view swapping-based exchange schemes as being collaborative (e.g. local exchange trading systems) (Bauwens, 2015; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). Actually, many of the commercial consumption schemes in the likes of Über or Airbnb, were patterned after not-for-profit car sharing organizations(CSOs) (Jonsson, 2006; Katsev, 2003; Meijkamp, 1998), which sprang up in the late 1980s in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland (Shaheen et al., 1999). In the late 1990s-early 2000s, technological developments gave later birth to a variety of not for profit platforms which aimed at connecting people together for the benefit of the many (e.g. Couchsurfing, book crossers, geo caching, carpooling networks) (Karrman, 2011). Simultaneously, profit ventures which survived the dotcom crisis burgeoned (e.g. eBay, Amazon) during the 2000-2006 period, and inspired a new breed of for-profit online platforms which saw an opportunity to make profits out of peer-based exchanges. This became especially more pronounced in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis with its devastating effects on the economy, and especially on employment, consumption and investment (Davis, 2013). Web giants Airbnb and Über, for example, were founded, respectively, in 2008 and 2009 and, since then, they have been offering a mean to earn an income for job seekers or save money for bargain seekers. In the meantime, peer re-selling or swapping through redistribution markets such as garage sales, flea markets, second hand marketplaces, auctions, antique fairs and other systems have thrived, especially thanks to the rise of classified ads and auctions websites (Chu and Liao, 2007). This is why, currently, the mist surrounding CC is characterized by the presence of collaborative exchange schemes which span from highly lucrative to proudly moneyless.

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) emphasized that collaborative exchanges vary along a “market-mediated” dimension, which comprises for-profit exchanges, on one extreme, and not-for-profit, on the other. Carpooling using Über, for example, is market-mediated (for-profit), whereas the disposition of goods on Free cycle is free (not-for-profit) (Arsel and Dobscha, 2011). Figure 1 summarizes the variety of practices encompassed within CC on a continuum and provides specific examples for each type. CC spans the full spectrum from free to paid exchanges, and encompasses all intermediate forms of trade. In addition to the free exchange or donation of goods, a consumer may exchange goods for points. Goods and access to goods may also be substituted for equivalent goods or access to goods through swapping or bartering. Services and skills may also be swapped through time banks and community currencies, for example (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013). Subscription and fee-based schemes commonly relate to access to goods. There is positive value when the consumer moves beyond the break-even point but negative value when the consumer underuses a subscription. Lastly, when a discrete asset or asset unit is sold for a price, the amount paid becomes proportional to the volume of assets or asset units consumed.

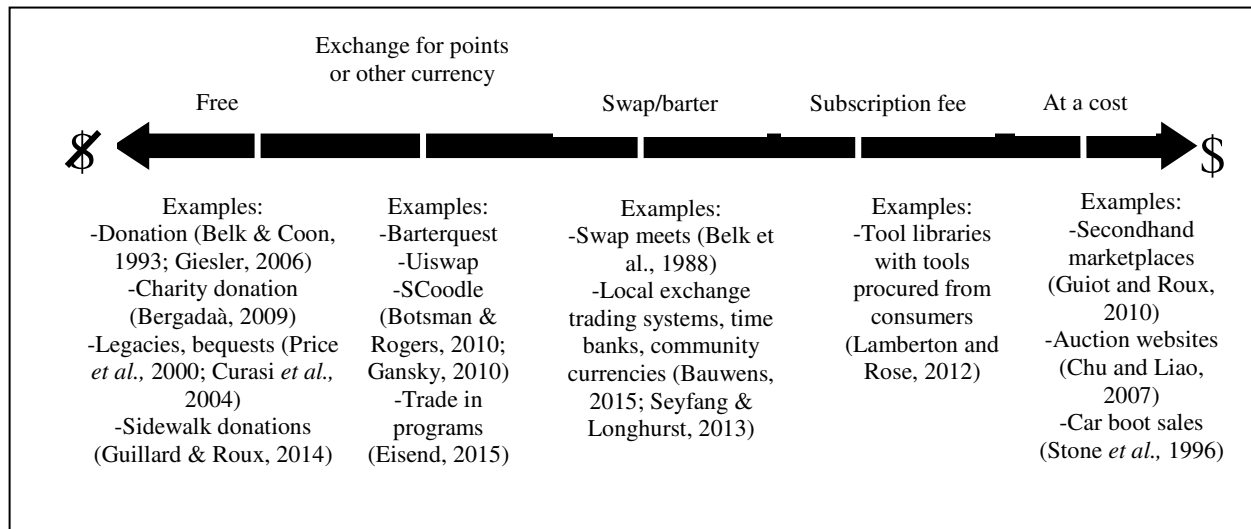


Figure 1: Practices included in collaborative consumption exchanges

3.2. Ownership and Usage Transfer

CC entails both the pooling of and the redistribution of resources and non-monetary exchanges. Pooling is the act of providing others with access to privately owned resources (Alchian and Demsetz, 1973, Alchian, 1965). No transfer of ownership occurs therefore under pooling systems. Conversely, redistribution is based upon used or pre-owned resources being passed on from someone who does not want them to someone who does want them (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Previous studies showed that redistribution systems remain the most popular form of CC especially given the controversies and legal issues surrounding business models based on pooling (e.g. Über) (Durif et al., 2015; Owyang et al., 2013), as well as consumers’ attachment to the normative framework of

ownership and possession (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Walsh, 2011). It therefore appears that, CC is deemed to include both pooling and redistribution systems.

Figure 2 summarizes the different forms of ownership and/or access involved in CC practices. First off, from the left hand-side onwards, we draw upon Arnould and Rose's (2016) concept of 'mutuality', as an alternative to the more generic concept of 'sharing' to characterize altruistic pooling processes, whereby consumers allow others to use their goods and are also allowed to use the goods of others at no specific cost, in a spirit of generalized reciprocity (Sahlins, 1972). This is a weak form of reciprocity because there is an absence of the obligation to reciprocate. The utilitarian aspect of the exchange is attenuated by the social side and the reckoning of debt is avoided so that a failure to reciprocate does not mean that the provider will cease to provide in the future (Arnould and Rose, 2016). Mutualism blurs and eventually neutralizes the distinction between owner and lender, so that the resources become commons readily accessible to pre-determined users (Polanyi, 1944/1957; Sahlins, 1972; Lévi-Strauss, 1961). People pool their resources, which they treat as belonging to a larger whole that transcends its individual members (Fiske, 1992). Normal or hierarchical social structure breaks down and selves are merged in *communitas* (Turner, 1969). Such exchanges correspond to the fundamental relational model of "communal sharing", which is more likely to be implemented between people who consider themselves of the same kind or kin (Fiske, 1992). Such social relations are thus more likely to happen within family, people with whom the consumer share close kinship ties or in stateless societies (Meeker *et al.*, 1986).

Since mutualism implies relationships of equivalence, mutualism occurs whenever consumers "see themselves as similar to the other participants, try to make themselves similar, try to act in unison, and feel it is right, good and natural to do so" (Fiske, 1992, p.700). More importantly, they are socially equivalent for the particular purpose or issue at hand (Fiske, 1992). Concretely, online platforms which encourage consumers to leave goods in public places for others (e.g. Bookcrossing.com) or give away digital files to others (e.g. Napster) are very near generalized reciprocity and thus mutualism (Corciolani and Dalli, 2014; Giesler, 2006).

Next, 'short-term access', refers to resources which remain owned or tied to a specific individual or entity but may be used by others for short temporary usage. This is especially relevant for services since these are typically used for short periods of time. For examples, consumers may use peer lodging services for holidays; carpooling applications for a car ride; or co-lunching platforms for a dinner. Besides, tangible products may also be rent out for short periods of time and the Web is now replete with online platforms and mobile applications enabling community members, neighbors or friends to lend (out) products to each other for days, or weeks (Piscicelli *et al.*, 2015).

Conversely, 'long-term access' is more readily applicable to tangible resources such as products or land which are temporarily used by consumers for months or even years, albeit proprietorship rights remain attached to the owner. Previous research emphasized that consumers may be more likely to experience a sense of perceived ownership, through a sense of de facto ownership, even though no transfer of ownership is involved (Belk, 1988, 2010; Peck and Shu, 2009). The longer and the more frequent consumers tend to use the same resource, the more likely they will feel proprietary toward those resources (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). According to Belk (2014), access to goods in addition to goods possession, may similarly well contribute to the construction of the self.

'Disposition after temporary acquisition' refers more specifically to tangible goods. It may be defined a consumer's acquisition of goods with the intention to dispose of those good at later timeframe (Chu and Liao, 2007). This behavior is facilitated and enhanced when CC systems are readily accessible to the consumer, so that CC contributes to create a more liquid relationship between consumers and their possessions (Chu and Liao, 2007; Bardhi *et al.*, 2012). If consumers dispose of the good via resell or temporary leasing, it brings them cash to recover the original purchase payment and re-purchase other desired goods more easily (Chu and Liao, 2007, 2010; Liao and Chu, 2013; Nissanoff, 2006). This facet of CC is also "a vector for multiple, constantly renewed consumption" (Binninger *et al.*, 2015, p.981), which may simultaneously democratize good ownership while fueling hyper-consumption.

The final category, known as 'redistribution' refers to the most common form of product disposition whereby consumers or organizations dispose of goods through second hand marketplaces, donations, legacies, bartering or swapping (Chu and Liao, 2007; Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984; Belk *et al.*, 1988; Gregson and Crewe, 2003; Stone *et al.*, 1996; Guiot and Roux, 2010). Contrarily to "disposition after temporary usage", no intention is made by the consumer as to the subsequent disposition of a resource prior to even acquiring it (Chu and Liao, 2007). After some period of usage, the product may then become idle and lapse into a period of inactivity. Product inactivity may be triggered by various factors and events such as when: the product inhibits developmental goals (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005), falls prey to disuse and neglect (Belk, 1988; Belk *et al.*, 1989) or fails to reflect an image of current or future self (Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005; Ogilvie, 1987; Pavia, 1993; Schultz-Kleine *et al.*, 1995). Distancing behaviour (Young and Wallendorf, 1989), critical events such as major life transitions (Cherrier, 2009; Desjeux *et al.*, 1998; McAlexander, 1991; Pavia, 1993) and ongoing product value and performance assessments (Young and Wallendorf, 1989) indicate that the consumer might intend to dispose of the product (Roster, 2001). The consumer then decides whether to engage in CC with other consumers or with organizations in order to redistribute the product.

In sum, CC transactions do not involve either a transfer of ownership alone or a transfer of usage alone. Rather, we are witness to a range of operations from mutualism among consumers to the redistribution of consumer privately-owned resources, with access, in-between.

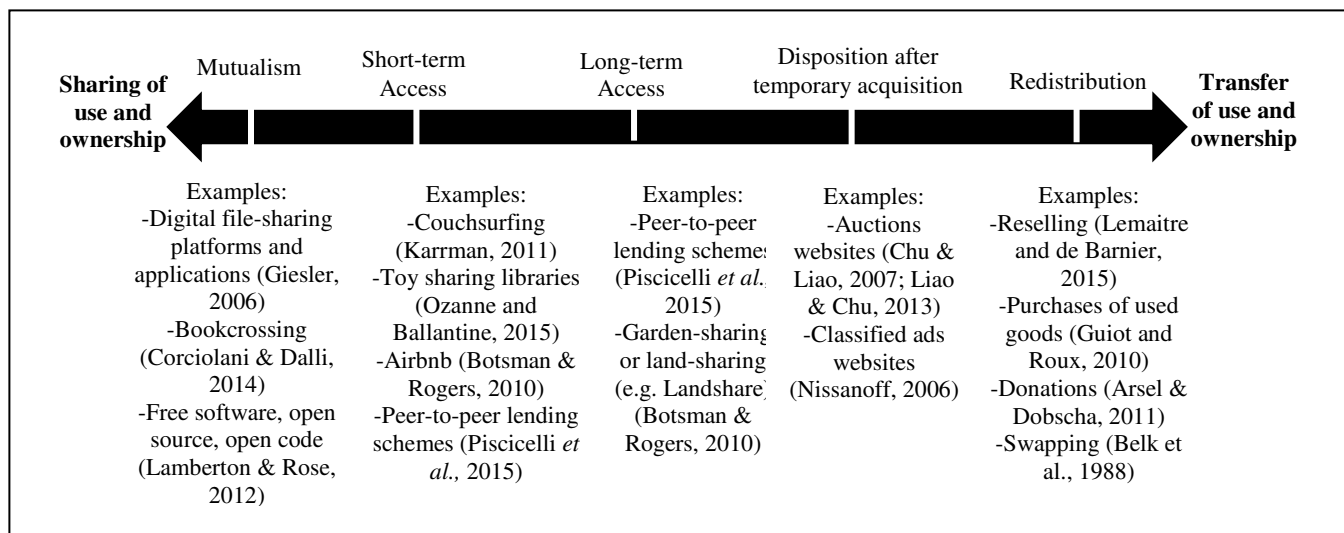


Figure 2: Transfer of use and ownership in collaborative consumption

3.3. Channels of Operation

CC extends on a continuum from purely online with Web-based exchanges (e.g. peer-to-peer file exchanges [Bittorent], peer-to-peer lending schemes [Lending Club] and marketplaces [eBay], or crowd funding) (Galbreth *et al.*, 2012; Gansky, 2010; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2007; Giesler, 2006); and, value co-creation or collaborative networks (Schau *et al.*, 2009); to purely offline with re-selling marketplaces (e.g. flea markets) (Guiot and Roux, 2010), donation systems (e.g. charities) (Bajde, 2013; Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Bergadaà, 2006; Godbout and Caillé, 1992); and bartering and swapping systems (e.g. swapping events organized by schools, churches and other institutions) (Appadurai, 1986; Humphrey and Hugh-Jones, 1992; Chapman, 1980).

Various nuances can be found along the aforementioned continuum. For example, eBay and Amazon both enable consumers to trade online used goods which must still be shipped to customers. So that both online (transactional) and offline (logistical) aspects, are combined. The same holds true for websites which allow free exchanges such as donations or paid monetary rental transactions (Albinsson and Perera, 2012; Chu and Liao, 2007). This paper acknowledges the prominence of Web-enabled CC systems situated midstream between purely online and purely offline systems, while recognizing various other more offline-or online-centric forms of exchange.

Figure 3 summarizes the delineation of channels of CC exchange along a continuum ranging from offline to online. With the rise of the Internet, it would appear that the lion's share of CC exchanges clearly entices a digital aspect (John, 2013; Kijiji, 2015; Owyang *et al.*, 2013; PwC, 2015). This contrasts sharply with conventional consumption and the linear consumption paradigm which remains essentially fueled by brick-and-mortar sales with only a tiny fraction (typically less than 7%) of total exchanges being conducted online (eMarketer, 2014). What this means, is that Web-powered trends such as CC, may reverse the tendency toward economic concentration, planned obsolescence, which propelled the acceptance of a linear consumption paradigm for the past two centuries, by ushering in an era of Web-powered localism and reuse (Davis, 2013), which may lead more practically and concretely to a circular consumption paradigm through everyday life praxis.

'Offline' refers to brick-and-mortar settings or offline events such as flea markets and garage sales (Gregson and Crewe, 2003; Stone *et al.*, 1996) but also trade-in programs offered by conventional retailers (Eisend, 2015).

When the Web platform represents only a minor component of a CC transaction (i.e. 'Online platform as minor component'), the latter is said to take place offline for the most part with the possibility of minor activities which may take place online. A website may be used to check the business hours of a second hand store or arrange for the picking up of items such as in the case of the Salute's Army. The Web platform may also facilitate the exchange or the functioning of CC practices (i.e. 'Online platform as facilitating component'). For example, Couch surfing, home swapping or car lending websites, enable consumers to contact the consumers who are offering the desired resource. In addition to facilitating contact and pairing demand, the Web platform may be used for payment purposes. However, consumption of the good or service takes place offline and may require some form of interaction between consumers.

Whenever the Web platform represents a major component of the process (i.e. 'Online platform as major component'), it will facilitate contact, provide for the pairing of supply and demand and be used for payment purposes. However, unlike in the previous case, consumers may not meet offline to finalize the CC transaction. The latter might be carried in entirety through the likes of Amazon's used book section or auction sites such as eBay where products are shipped using offline carriers. Buyers and sellers are not, however, required to meet. This also holds true for collaborative finance websites such as peer-to-peer lending schemes and crowd funding websites. Lenders and borrowers help each other out by means of the website but are not required to meet in person. This does not preclude offline meetings if desired by the parties. In principle, however, meetings are not necessary.

Lastly, 'online' refers to purely online exchanges whereby consumers may not necessarily interact with one another and where the goods involved are digital, such as codes, files or software. 'Online' exchanges occur between consumers or peers who connect or initiate interaction with one another as a result of a CC process.

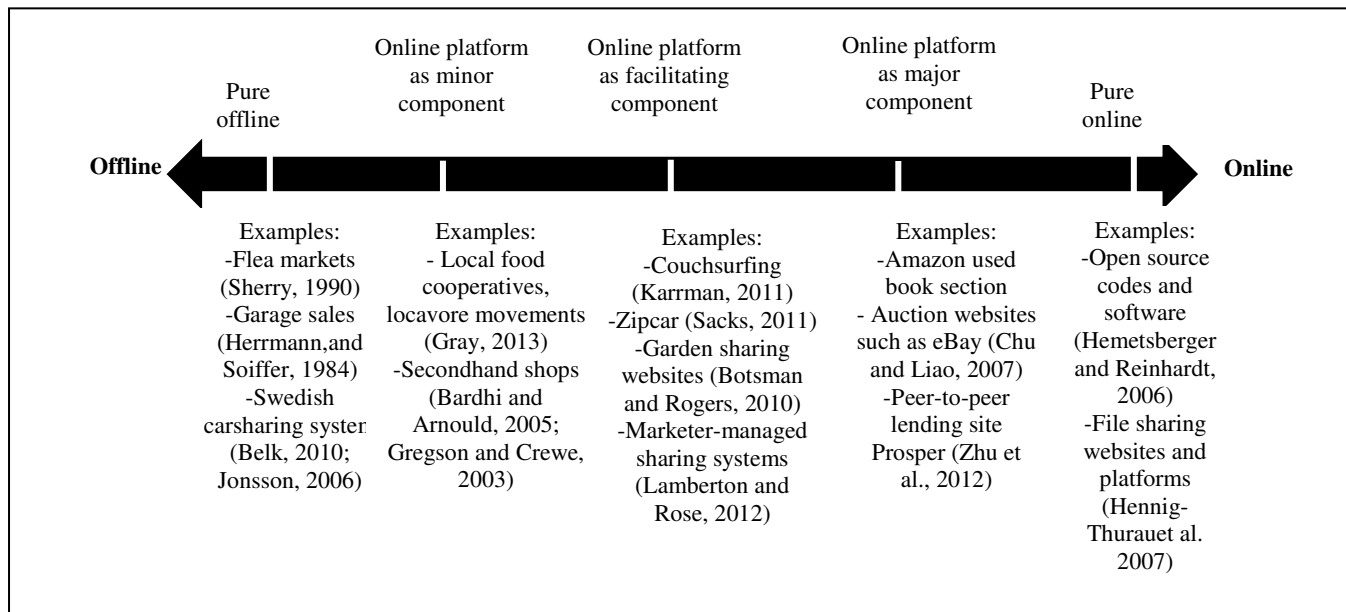


Figure 3: Channel of operation in collaborative consumption exchange

4. Type of Intermediaries

CC stakeholders can be categorized into several groups based on the level of intermediation (consumers vs intermediaries) (Paden and Stell, 2005), legal status (non-profit vs profit-based organizations) and infrastructure ownership. From topical literature, four types of CC stakeholders have been identified:

4.1. Consumers

Individuals exchange resources with one another through an intermediate entity or directly from peer to peer. The resources exchanged are their own (Lemaitre and de Barnier, 2015). They may be either obtainer or provider of any given resource type.

4.2. Third Parties with Platforms

This category refers to an intermediate entity which owns a digital exchange platform or marketplace. These third parties do not own offline assets (e.g. cars, bicycles, time share condos, workspace), but provide an online channel that allows consumers to engage into CC exchanges (Belk, 2010). Accordingly, the resources exchanged via these platforms belong to individual consumers but sometimes also to other third parties such as companies. Examples include Kijiji, eBay, Craigslist, Airbnb, garden sharing and home swapping websites (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Websites such as these are operated by for-profit or not-for-profit organizations.

4.3. Third Parties with Platforms and Infrastructure

These entities facilitate CC by providing not only an online platform but also an offline resource circulation system in the form of tangible assets such as cars, bicycles, warehouses, stores, houses, suits and other assets, operated by for-profit or not-for-profit organizations. Website-backed toy-lending libraries or The Salute's Army constitute relevant example within that category.

4.4. Traditional Companies

This category refers to existing companies originally uninvolved in any form of CC. They include retailers, distributors, manufacturers and producers operating in accordance with the dictates of the linear commercial system. Seizing upon the potential of the CC phenomenon, many such businesses have developed specific branches or product lines dedicated to CC. For example, Ikea enables consumers to trade-in their used goods and furniture.

In sum, CC involves a large variety of stakeholders which constitutes an additional reason as to why the CC phenomenon is of such great importance. The next section proposes a conceptual framework of the CC process.

5. Conceptual Framework of the Collaborative Consumption Process

CC is a multidimensional construct (Lamberton and Rose, 2012; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Lambert on and Rose (2012) focused solely on marketer-managed systems and articulated that construct on a bi-dimensional matrix (level of rivalry and level of exclusivity). CC encompasses practices ranging from free to monetized exchanges; CC also ranges from pooling through mutualism and access to redistribution thus from usage transfer to ownership transfer; CC enjoys online and offline declination. In addition, CC involves a multiplicity of stakeholders from lay consumers to multinational firms, and not-for profits in-between. These different dimensions may combine to form a variety of resource circulation systems which epitomize the broad

diversity of declinations that CC can take. Figure 4 provides an illustration of the conceptual framework of collaborative consumption in this regard.

On the right-hand side of the figure 4, a consumer may choose to offer a specific resource that stands idle, unexploited or under-exploited for a variety of reasons (Cherrier, 2009; McAlexander, 1991; Pavia, 1993; Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005; Young and Wallendorf, 1989; Roster, 2001; Coulter and Ligas, 2003). The consumer is therefore a resource *provider* who has the choice between providing the resource through several different exchange configurations in terms of channel (offline vs. online), transfer of ownership rights (temporary pooling vs. permanent redistribution) and practices (non-compensation-based vs. compensation-based). Collaboration may then take place at two levels from the provider's viewpoint. First, the provider may exchange a resource directly with an obtainer, who is a consumer in need of a resource. This is pure collaboration and may be facilitated by an intermediate, i.e. a facilitator (e.g. an online platform), that leaves room for consumers to devise for themselves the conditions of the exchange such as location, time, price, and so forth. The second level of collaboration refers to sourcing collaboration in which the provider supplies a given resource type (e.g. money, time, space, products, manpower) to a mediator, which then transmits or dispatches it according to obtainers' demands. Contrarily to the facilitator, the mediator takes an active role in handling the exchange, while often taking a commission on the money being exchanged between the obtainer and the provider. Dashed arrows represent the specific instance of a resource being returned to the provider after having been accessed temporarily by the obtainer.

Conversely, on the left hand-side of Figure 4, a consumer may need (more of) a specific resource for a variety of reasons (Lamberton and Rose, 2012; Chu and Liao, 2007; Guiot and Roux, 2010). The consumer is however not a simple consumer as has been commonly conceptualized in seminal consumer behavior literature (Engel et al., 1978; Hawkins et al., 1998). In fact, both the EBK and the HBC consumer decision-making model entail a fourth phase called "purchase/choice decision", which is implicitly narrowed to the purchase of new products in conventional retailing settings. Yet, from a collaborative perspective, conventional purchases are excluded from CC, because they do not allow a two-sided consumer role, except for reconditioned or refurbished purchases. Through trade-in programs, consumer trade-in a pre-owned resource to a for profit (or not for profit) retail organization in exchange for cash, money off the next purchase, store/club points, a donation to charity, gift cards or vouchers (Eisend, 2015). This lack of symmetry in many conventional retailing schemes undermines their collaborative nature. In sum, the choice stage is actually one in which the obtainer may obtain the needed resource through all kinds of exchange types (e.g. second hand purchase, swapping, reception of donation, access, reconditioned/refurbished products), excluding the purchase or temporary access of new products. This excludes a great variety of firms and online platforms which are commonly depicted as being part of the "sharing economy" while being actually short-term conventional rental businesses (e.g. Car2Go, Zipcar, Bixi).

Therefore, collaboration may take place at two levels from the obtainer's viewpoint. First, through pure collaboration, the obtainer partners with the provider, with or without a facilitator, as explained previously. The dashed line indicates the presence or possibly the absence of the facilitator. Second, through trading collaboration, the obtainer does not arrange the details of the exchange with the provider. Rather, she relies on a third-party called the mediator to that end. For example, an obtainer may borrow toys from a toy-lending library, which were originally sourced by a consumer provider, in addition to private or institutional suppliers. The Salute's Army is a not-for-profit which sells at a cost to obtainers some tangible resources that were initially donated by providers for free. Eventually, private collections may be temporarily rented out to musea for exhibit visits by providers and accessed for free or at a cost by obtainers (Chen, 2009).

The different modalities of CC are represented with the tri-dimensional format which signals that the core generic process depicted in the Figure may be declined on a variety of combinations of practice (breadth), ownership transfer (height) and channels (depth).

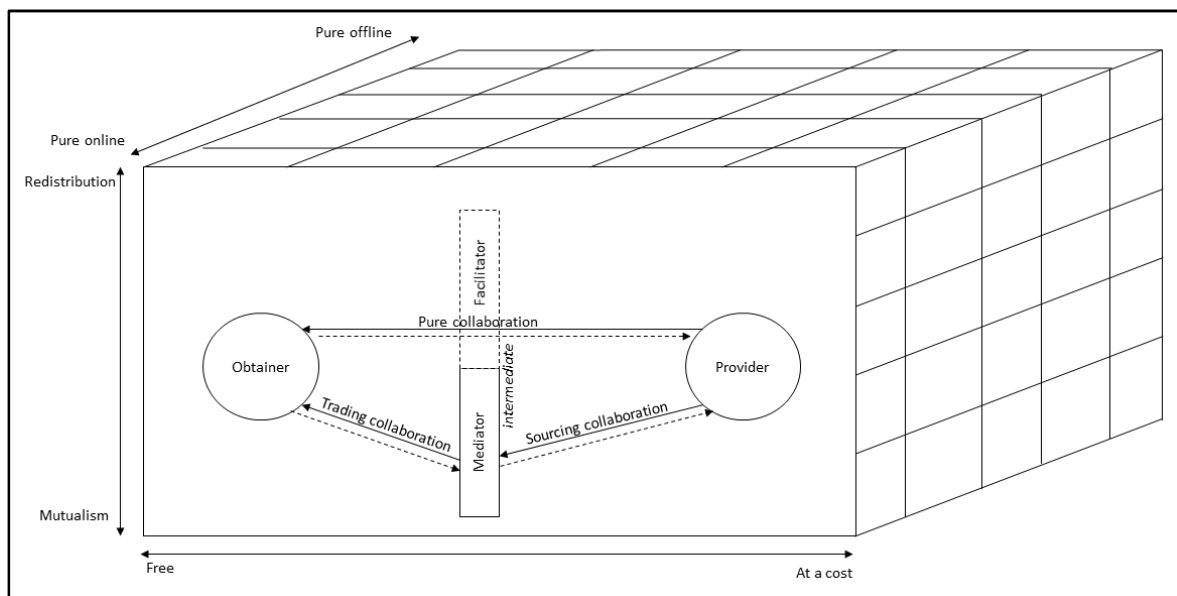


Figure 4: Conceptual framework of collaborative consumption process

6. Theoretical Implications

The two-sided consumer role, or prosumer, is not new, but fairly old since it has pretty much always existed (Ritzer, 2014, Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Woermann, 2012). Since the 1980s, Philip Kotler and Alvin Toffler (1980) warned about the rising challenges that would be posed by prosumers for marketers, although their discussion as well as Ritzer's (2014, 2015) or Vargo and Lusch's (2004), or Lusch and Vargo's (2006), refers more to challenges for conventional consumption and has a much wider scope, from cooking one's own food to using a machine to order a meal at McDonald's. No doubt, however, that the Web-powered resurgence of CC makes these challenges especially more salient today.

Actually, CC is not disruptive from a practical point of view. It is conceptually, because the various disciplines of business have been built on paradigmatic foundations which make a clear modernist distinction between production and consumption; producer and consumer; selling and purchasing (Arnould and Rose, 2016; Scaraboto, 2015; Perret, 2014). The world of business in which established branded agents actively produce and distribute resources is clearly separated from the passive and receptive consumers (Perret, 2014), even though History and continuous informal collaborative practices testify to the contrary (Ritzer, 2014). Business in general, as well as marketing and consumer behavior, in particular, chose to deny and dismiss these alternative marketplaces considering them as epiphenomenal, marginal, second-order activities, operating at the fringes of the market and constituting a mere folkloric kitsch. In fact, the marketing discipline remains intrinsically a scientific discipline aimed at finding markets and ways to sell massive quantities of standardized goods produced industrially by manufacturers (Wilkie and Moore, 2003; Gundlach, 2007). Therefore, with the exception of a few quantitative empiricists (e.g. Jacoby *et al.*, 1979) or naturalistic enquiries (e.g. Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984; Belk *et al.*, 1988; Sherry, 1990), the marketing discipline remained relatively deaf to the rich discussions by other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology about alternative forms of exchange and what they teach us about the real nature of economies, markets and resource circulation systems.

Recent technological developments, the emergence of new business models and the thrive of alternative economies in a recession-prone economic climate forced many marketing empiricists and theorists to reshape their views of the consumer, of production and of the overall economy. This explains the increased interest for collaborative modes of consumption which provide consumers with a more active role in resource distribution processes, although such a role has always existed, except to a lesser extent (Ritzer, 2014). Importantly, this piece of research highlights the paradigmatic shift brought about by a reconsideration of collaboration in markets and in the economy. It also contributes to the paradigmatic reshaping by providing a conceptualization of CC which re-positions organizations, as intermediaries in wider networks of polymorphous resource circulation systems. More specifically, instead of a plain linear process starting with the active company pushing resources to consumers, CC alludes to a more consumer-centric perspective in which individuals are simultaneously able to push and to pull resources along redistribution or pooling systems within which organizations are, at least, facilitators, and, at most, mediators.

7. Practical Implications

Conventional companies are by no means to disappear because of CC. Quite the contrary, CC is an opportunity for them to reconfigure their business models into creative ways and re-create growth opportunities (Owyang *et al.*, 2013). This research offers some guidelines to do so. It suggests that, within the framework of CC, organizations are intermediaries in broader societal systems. As such, in addition to (or, instead of) a microscopic view focused on marketing management, short-term goals of profitability and organizational welfare, organizations need also to take a macroscopic view focused on societal phenomena, long-term goals of sustainability and societal welfare (Schultz, 2007; Lusch, 2007; Bartels, 1983).

From a more practical viewpoint, manufacturers may potentially benefit instead of lose from partnering directly with consumers through reverse logistics schemes to commercialize reconditioned, refurbished, or recycled goods (Stahel, 1982); designing and commercializing products with longer lifespans, with recycling, repair, or reuse possibilities in line with the principle of the circular economy (McDonough and Braungart, 2010); designing with reused building components (e.g. eco-design, eco-packaging) (Gorgolewski and Morettin, 2009). In fact, this is something consumers actually long for since they dislike discarding perfectly functional resources (Chu and Liao, 2007; Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984; Jacoby *et al.*, 1977; Harrell and McConocha, 1992), and think of hoarding as culturally reprehensible (Belk, 2010). Redistribution and pooling opportunities could therefore be integrated into business models to spur the re-introduction of long-lasting resources into society.

Such initiatives may improve consumer brand equity, involvement, attachment, trust and loyalty toward the organization. Branding is very likely to remain a key marketing focus and consumers will continue to relate to brands, symbols and meanings associated with organizations and their offerings. Coupling the brand with attributes of CC such as participation, redistribution, pooling or reuse, to name but the most neutral of them, could therefore tremendously enhance organizational brands with very little upfront costs.

Similarly, to the multichannel trend which began with the emergence of tele-purchasing, led to e-commerce (Hoffmann and Novak, 1996) and recently matured into mobile commerce (i.e. m-commerce), marketers may ensure that their businesses enable multiple CC exchanges, which consumers view as valuable, desirable and through which they may effectively obtain or provide sources in ways they would have never thought of before. The shift could even form part of a firm's branding strategy.

Finally, and related to the previous point, organizations may not lose sight of potential spill-over effects given that CC practices of one sort could lead to practices of another kind, but also to conventional consumption (Ertz *et al.*, 2015; Tomasello, 2009; Botsman and Rogers, 2010). A website dedicated to the selling of second hand goods through classified ads could grow traffic and advertising revenue through the organizing of one-time swapping events or free markets gatherings between websites users. Requiring only minimal upfront investment, such an upgrade could be positively marketed through corporate communications as pleasant venues to

re-create social links, interactions between individuals, and environmental preservation. CC exchanges may further prompt conventional purchases such as tools or material to renovate damaged or dysfunctional pre-owned goods.

8. Social Implications

From a societal perspective, CC practices have frequently depicted as means to reignite social connections (Botsman and Rogers, 2010), circumvent conventional retailing channels (Guiot and Roux, 2010), support the local economy (Davis, 2013), protect the environment, save money (Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984), and decrease over- or hyper-consumption (Fiske, 1973; Forrester, 1971; Lipovetsky, 2003). These are interesting effects but which remain highly hypothetical because they are typically hard to track and to monitor, although recent attempts, such as the 2015 Kijiji Second hand Economy Index (Kijiji, 2015), have been made to assess quantitatively the effects of product redistribution systems (i.e. second hand marketplaces, donations, swapping and access systems). Albeit traditional economic indicators such as gross national product or gross domestic product are well adapted to economies functioning under the linear economic model and focused on conventional consumption, they are less relevant in collaborative economies. Indicators which capture the magnitude of CC practices and average product lifetimes may be of higher interest. Similarly, from a marketing perspective, marketing (e.g. market share) and financial metrics (e.g. Tobin's q) which are commonly used to gauge the impact of business activities will still be useful — especially if companies engage in promoting or hosting CC practices — but need to be complemented by additional indicators of sustainability regarding product lifecycles and, more generally, impact on the environment, social welfare and community support. In turn, these indicators may prove of interest in the marketing and promotion of companies and their goods and services. New tools and methodologies need to be developed if we are to better understand these new practices from the consumer and macroeconomic perspectives.

9. Outlook and Avenues for Future Research

Since this paper focuses primarily on the conceptualization of CC, it provides a number of research avenues. First, future research could draw upon recent works (e.g. Piscicelli *et al.*, 2015) to investigate the role of intra-psycho constructs such as motivations, values, beliefs, norms or attitudes which prompt consumers to engage into CC. Demographic variables (e.g. age, urbanity) may also constitute interesting predictors of CC, especially web-powered CC. In a similar vein, cross-cultural studies may be of critical interest in determining whether cultural orientations impact consumers' engagement into CC and in which particular types of CC. The literature often evoked the community-building capacity of certain forms of CC, an interesting avenue for future research could be to investigate when collaborations are discrete exchanges or when they work to build communities of exchange.

Second, the previous point suggested to focus on individual factors influencing CC behavior. However, human behavior does not exclusively depend on intra-psycho factors alone. Many different contextual factors may facilitate or constrain CC and influence consumers' motivations (Steg and Vlek, 2009). Contextual factors may operate in four different ways (Steg and Vlek, 2009): first, they may directly affect the behavior. For example, one cannot purchase second hand products without the availability of second hand stores, classified ads websites, garage sales or flea markets, while an increase in such outlets and events may increase second hand purchases. Second, intra-psycho factors may actually mediate the relationship between contextual factors and behaviour. For example, the introduction of tax deductions for consumers who donate goods at donations centers may result in more positive attitudes toward donation because it yields a positive reinforcement, and positive attitudes could potentially increase donations and other CC practices. Third, contextual factors may also moderate the relationship between intra-psycho factors and CC behavior. For example, sourcing collaboration through trade-in or reverse logistics may only result in increased consumer participation when easy and convenient alternatives are available. Fourth, according to goal-framing theory, contextual factors may well determine which type of motivations (and therefore which goal-frame) most strongly affects behaviour. As an example, normative or utilitarian goals may be strongly related to increased collaboration intensity when facilities or platforms are available, while autotelic or hedonic goals may be prominent if collaborative facilities or platforms are poor.

Third, as should be clear by now, CC covers a wide range of resource circulation systems with very different characteristics and specificities. One of the main challenges for future empirical studies relates to the operationalization of the CC construct and its measure. It is very likely that the concept will be broken into smaller sub-parts that are more directional and straightforward. Recent research in the topical literature tends to follow that approach too, with a special focus on pooling systems such as Product Service Systems (e.g. Piscicelli *et al.*, 2015) or Collaborative Lifestyles (e.g. Karrman, 2011), as well as redistribution systems such as redistribution markets (Albinsson and Perera, 2012).

Lastly, the influence of access rivalry and resource scarcity variables empirically investigated by Lambert on and Rose (2012), has neither been fully considered nor fully developed in this research. It could, nonetheless, be integrated into further studies on CC.

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