The role of values in collaborative consumption: insights from a product-service system for lending and borrowing in the UK

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Why did we select this research?

The uptake of product service systems that enable collaborative consumption on the market is still limited. Also, research suggests that a number of start-ups have collapsed and many others are encountering serious difficulties in establishing themselves due to a lack of resources to scale-up (e.g. consumer base, money, trusted brand). This research examines which values cause inadequate acceptance and prevent such alternative forms of consuming from becoming mainstream.

Key findings

The paper examines values empirically through a case study of Ecomodo, a UK-based online marketplace where people can lend and borrow each other's objects, spaces and skills. The case study suggests that this product service system is appealing only to a (still) limited number of consumers sharing a certain, distinct, value orientation. Individual values may be considered partly responsible for a failure in wider acceptance, adoption and diffusion. The following values are highlighted as barriers:

- Tradition (i.e. maintaining and preserving cultural, family, or religious traditions) seems to play against collaborative consumption insofar as the sharing economy and product service systems that enable these alternative business models are intrinsically disruptive of the status quo. The innovative solutions they propose often radically challenge mainstream conventions, displacing ingrained habits and well-established courses of actions.
- Security (i.e. safety in one's immediate environment and stability in the wider

society) suggests the relevance of concepts such as reliability and trust in other people to collaborative consumption. By their own nature, collaborative consumption models rely on social connections and interactions between strangers. Hence building trust is essential for the sharing economy to thrive and, perhaps, serve as an engine for rediscovering neighbourhoods and local communities.

- Power (i.e. power through control of material and social resources) brings out issues of private ownership of material possessions. In many cases collaborative consumption involves individuals sharing their idle or underused possessions with each other. If a prerequisite for the existence of a number of these models is an end to exclusivity of use, this form of material attachment represents a real barrier to the acceptance of potentially sustainable product service systems such as Ecomodo.

Reference

Piscicelli, L., Cooper, T., & Fisher, T. (2015). *The role of values in collaborative consumption: insights from a product-service system for lending and borrowing in the UK*. Journal of Cleaner Production, 97, 21-29. Retrieved from: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652614007409