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Harshali Sadhya

Louisiana State University, hsadhy1@lsu.edu

Rudy Hirschheim

Louisiana State University, rudy@lsu.edu

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What is Yours is “Mine”! A Model to Examine Consumers’ Value Co-Creation in Accommodation Sharing

Emergent Research Forum (ERF)

Harshali Sadhya

Louisiana State University
hsadhy1@lsu.edu

Rudy Hirschheim

Louisiana State University
rudy@lsu.edu

Abstract

In this study, we conceptualize a research model in the context of accommodation sharing platforms to examine the antecedents of consumers (guests) value co-creation behaviors using the theoretical lens of psychological ownership (PO). We theorize that the mechanisms of perceived control, intimate knowledge and social interactions moderated by platform mediated communications can induce the development of PO towards target accommodations. We conceptualize the outcome of PO as positive value co-creation behaviors (feedback, advocacy, helping and tolerance) that can be valuable for sustaining participation in accommodation sharing. We plan to collect data from Airbnb users and use SEM to test our research model. Theoretically, our research has the potential to contribute to the emerging phenomenon of sharing economy and value co-creation enabled by online platforms. Also, practitioners can use the conceptual framework to leverage value co-creation behaviors for sustaining participation in accommodation sharing.

Keywords

Collaborative consumption, accommodation sharing, value co-creation, psychological ownership.

Introduction

Peer-to-peer collaborative consumption services (CCS) or “sharing economy” harnesses digital platforms and social networks to radically alter the consumption behavior of individuals. Airbnb, the accommodation sharing platform currently handles over 2 million stays per night on an average (Airbnb, 2020). Extant research has examined users’ participation behaviors and motivations to use different CCS platforms like Airbnb, Couchsurfing, HomeAway, VRBO, etc. Accommodation sharing has emerged as one of the most successful forms of CCS. However, despite the ever increasing volume of accommodation requests being administered by accommodation sharing platforms, research focusing on the sustainability of participation in this context is very limited. To address this gap, we leverage the concept of “psychological ownership” (PO, which originated in the management field) (Pierce et al. 2001), in the context of accommodation sharing and examine its influence on consumers’ value co-creation behavior. The perceived ownership of an accommodation and the feeling of “home away from home” can lead consumers to exhibit a range of positive behaviors which can provide supplementary value to the service providers and the CCS platforms as well. While research has shown that perceptions of psychological ownership is one of the reasons why consumers develop intentions to continue using accommodation sharing platforms (Sun et al. 2019); However, there is no research on the contextual mechanisms and the role of the online platform in the formation of PO and the effect of PO for service innovation. We reviewed the literature on PO to hypothesize the factors that can lead to the development of PO and further conceptualize its impact as positive value co-creation behaviors. Our study has the potential to develop a preliminary understanding of factors that can contribute to sustainable participation behaviors and advance the theoretical understanding of value co-creation behaviors for services mediated by online platform (Breidbach et al. 2014). In the following section we describe the theoretical background of psychological ownership, followed by the conceptual research model, hypotheses, plan of the study and we conclude with the expected contributions of our research.

Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership (PO) is the feeling of possession over a target which can be a physical object like a car or a home or a non-physical one like an idea, an artistic creation or a person (Pierce et al. 2001). PO is developed as a state of mind and it enables an individual to feel as if the potential target or a piece of it is theirs and cultivates feelings of ownership towards the target. An example of PO, as described by Pierce et al. (2001), is that of a gardener who by taking care of a lawn feels as though the garden belongs to him. The key literature on PO emerged in the management discipline. For instance, Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) examined the effect of PO on employees' attitudes towards organizations and their citizenship behaviors. But in Information Systems (IS) research, PO has been used very minimally, like in the areas of information security and privacy (Anderson and Agarwal 2010), virtual world (Lee and Chen 2011), social media (Karahanna et al. 2018), crowdfunding (Zheng et al. 2018) and IT in general (Barki et al. 2008).

Pierce et al. (2001) proposed three roots and routes for PO development. The roots or motivations for PO are efficacy and effectance, self-identity and having a place. Firstly, efficacy and effectance are innate human needs. Possession or ownership gives control over a target, while the ownership and the rights that come with it allow individuals to alter or interact with the environment which satisfies their need to be efficacious (Pierce et al. 2001). Feelings of self-efficacy can give rise to extrinsic satisfaction when there are desirable outcomes. Moreover, the desire to experience efficacy leads to the emergence of feelings of ownership (Pierce et al. 2001). Secondly, self-identity embodies individuals' expression of their sense of self which are expressed by their interactions with the target (Pierce et al. 2001). Lastly, having a place is the feeling of a sense of belonging and it fulfills the desire of individuals to have a place which is an important "need of the human soul" (Pierce et al. 2001). Feelings of ownership allows individuals to fulfill these basic human needs. Thus an individual can develop feelings of PO once any of these three roots are triggered by a potential target (Pierce and Jussila 2011). But the actual routes or paths towards PO follow three routes (Pierce et al. 2001); First is controlling the target, and it implies the ability of an individual to control and manipulate the target, thus leading to feelings of possession. The second mechanism is intimate knowing or familiarity with the target and it is formed by maintaining or by virtue of a close relationship with the target. The third mechanism is self-investment and it arises when individuals invest their physical and mental resources in the target. In this study, we propose a research model in which we conceptualize the "accommodation" being shared via accommodation sharing platforms as the target to explain how contextual mechanisms can enable development of PO among the consumers. We further hypothesize that PO leads to positive value co-creation behaviors in the context of accommodation sharing which in turn can induce sustainable participation which is essential for the sustenance of sharing economy.

Psychological Ownership and Value Co-Creation Behaviors in CCS

In the case of accommodation sharing platforms like Airbnb, the accommodations offered are unique because they are personal houses or apartments (not owned by businesses). This makes them very different from the commercial accommodations offered by the traditional hospitality industry (hotels). Guests or consumers of accommodation sharing experience the presence of "home-like" amenities like washer-dryer, personal kitchen, cooking amenities, living with pets, playing area for children, garden, etc. (Sun et al. 2019). Guests can also experience control over the accommodation depending upon the degree of autonomy permitted by the hosts. The personal and unique attributes of these accommodations can stimulate feelings of "a home away from home". They can also satisfy one or more innate human needs (like self-efficacy, having a place and self-identity) which in turn can induce feelings of PO. Thus accommodation sharing may induce the development of PO among the consumers as they stimulate feelings of perceived or temporary ownership or belongingness (the accommodation belongs to the guest temporarily). We propose that consumers or guests of accommodation sharing can potentially develop feelings of PO as they feel like they own the place to themselves temporarily (satisfying their need of "having a place") and they have substantial control over it fulfilling their needs of self-efficacy. We reviewed the literature on PO and CCS to propose the key mechanisms leading to the formation of PO in this context. Furthermore, research has shown that PO can induce several desirable behaviors or intentions (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004). Therefore, we propose that the perception of PO can lead to positive value co-creation behaviors like providing good or positive feedback, recommending the accommodation to friends and family as well as other citizenship behaviors. We argue that such value co-creation behaviors are desirable for sustainable participation in the CCS phenomenon. In the next section, we describe the key constructs and develop the hypotheses.

Research Model Development

Perceived Control: The feeling of having control over a target object is a key mechanism that induces feelings of PO and it is particularly relevant to the accommodation sharing context. PO indicates that when individuals perceive that objects can be controlled; they tend to believe that they have the ability to use and control over the use of the objects to suit their needs and in doing so the objects become a part of their selves. While on the contrary, if they cannot perceive the objects to be in their control, they do not become a part of their selves and do not induce feelings of PO (Pierce et al. 2001). In the accommodation sharing context, the hosts control the degree of freedom experienced by the guests, as the hosts decide the different amenities of an accommodation that the guests will have access to and the extent to which they can utilize those as well. Thus guests who are granted greater autonomy over the accommodation are more likely to feel in control over the accommodation and the different amenities offered. Moreover, one of the primary motivations of the guests is to experience unique stays which have a personal touch and provide home-like amenities (Kim et al. 2015). Also, accommodation sharing platforms offer diverse affordances that enable the guests to select the most appropriate accommodation as per their individual needs and tastes and thereby they have complete control over their stay. Overall, such feelings of being in control in the accommodation sharing phenomenon is likely to induce positive emotions and feelings of ownership towards the target (Asatryan 2008). Therefore we hypothesize that:

H1: The degree of perceived control experienced by a guest is positively associated with the development of PO towards a target accommodation.

Intimate Knowledge: When an individual is closely associated with an object, he/she is more likely to develop feelings of ownership towards that object (Sartre 1969). On the other hand, intimate knowledge of the object can bring about a fusion of an individual's self with that object. Therefore, individuals develop feeling of ownership by being closely associated or familiar with an object (Beaglehole 1932). Also, more information and greater knowledge about the object, deepens the relation between the individual's self and the object (Pierce et al. 2001). In organizational context, employees tend to develop PO when they feel they know their organization extensively (Pierce et al. 2001). Thus in the accommodation sharing context, guests who have more information about an accommodation will be more likely to develop feelings of PO towards it. Accommodation sharing platforms provide images, textual descriptions and detailed feedback of previous consumers in the form of reviews and ratings. All these information assist the consumers in their decision making. Furthermore, the consumers/guests may also obtain additional information about the accommodation by interacting with the hosts and previous guests. We hypothesize that the more information a guest has or acquires about an accommodation, the more likely he/she will feel more associated or attached to the place and that can induce feelings of PO. Therefore we propose:

H2: Intimate knowledge about an accommodation is positively associated with the development of PO towards a target accommodation.

Social Interaction: However, intimate knowledge by itself may not be sufficient to induce feelings of PO (Pierce et al. 2001). The intensity of association influences the sense of ownership and more accessible and easily available information cultivates intimate knowledge. Therefore, greater number of interactions involving the target furnishes more information and may lead to perceptions of knowing the target better which may induce a sense of PO (Pierce et al. 2001). Additionally, researchers have identified social benefits as one of the factors leading to intentions to use accommodation sharing and customer satisfaction as well (Tussyadiah 2016). By interacting with the hosts, guests can get tips and recommendations about the local areas and fulfill their needs to experience unique stays. These interactions with the hosts and other members of the CCS community, strengthens the guests' associations with the target and they also provide social value for the guests. Also, the hosts willingness to participate in such communications can lead consumers to feel more in control of the target as they can readily reach out to the hosts in case of any concerns. Moreover, such interactions can lead to the development of social ties with the hosts, enriching the overall experience. Hence, we propose that guests who experience social interactions feel emotionally attached with the host and it influences the development of PO towards the target. Thus we hypothesize:

H3: Social interactions can induce the development of PO towards a target accommodation.

Moderating Effect of Platform Mediated Communication (PMC)

In addition to the three routes described above, we hypothesize that platform mediated communication (PMC) will moderate the development of PO induced by social interactions and intimate knowledge. In the virtual world context, Suh et al. (2011) demonstrated that the use of computer mediated communication can be beneficial for exchanging task related information. We adopt this conceptualization of computer mediated communications for our study. Guests can use the functionalities offered by accommodation sharing platforms like instant messaging, forums, chats to exchange information with the hosts and other users, acquire information about the accommodation or contact customer service in a timely and efficient manner. The service providers or the hosts can distantly communicate and address the needs of their guests using these communication features as well. PMC can moderate the amount of information furnished to the guests and thus their intimate knowledge about the target accommodations and the development of PO in the process. Also, the level of interactivity afforded by a platform determines the quantity and quality of interactions and perceptions of the hosts' commitment. Therefore, we propose that the effects of social interaction and intimate knowledge on PO are moderated by PMC. Thus we hypothesize:

H4a: PMC moderates the relationship between intimate knowledge and PO.

H4b: PMC moderates the relationship between social interaction and PO.

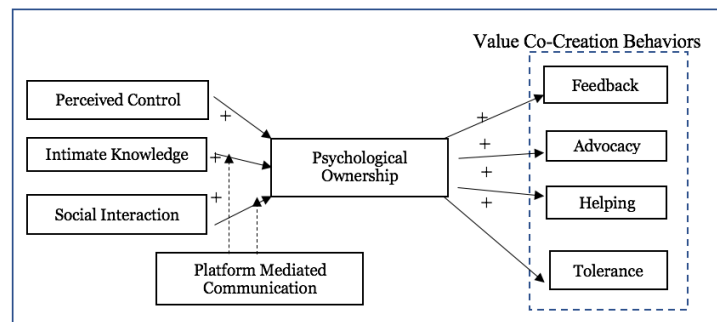


Figure 1. Research Model

Outcome of PO as Value Co-Creation Behaviors

We propose that due to the perception of PO, consumers will exhibit positive behaviors of value co-creation which can be beneficial for both the guests and hosts of accommodation sharing. Specifically, we propose that as consumers experience a feeling of “home away from home” and develop PO towards an accommodation, they are more likely to demonstrate value co-creation behaviors. We conceptualize value co-creation as consumers' citizenship behavior adopting the co-creation scale developed by Yi and Gong (2013) that uses participation and citizenship behaviors (using the constructs feedback, advocacy, helping and tolerance) to measure consumers' value co-creation. In this study, we focus on guests' citizenship behaviors (GCB) as in the context of accommodation sharing platforms, GCB can offer supplementary value to the service providers and the online platform as well. Thus we propose that the development of PO will lead to value co-creation behaviors by the consumers of accommodation sharing platforms:

H5a: The development of PO towards a target accommodation positively affects guests' feedback, advocacy (H5b), helping (H5c), and tolerance behaviors (H5d).

Data and Method

We have designed and developed a research instrument to measure the constructs described in the research model. To measure value co-creation we will use a revised version of the customer citizenship behavior (CCB) scale (Yi and Gong 2013). For the other constructs, we referred to the established scales from previous research and rephrased them to suit the accommodation sharing context. We are in the process of conducting a pre-test of the instrument. Further, we plan to administer the survey and collect data from users of the accommodation sharing platform, Airbnb. Our target respondents will be from US to maintain a uniformity in user demographics and usage behavior of Airbnb. We plan to control for age, gender,

income, type of accommodation and some other relevant contextual variables. The model will be analyzed and tested using the SEM procedure as our goal is to test a theory.

Conclusion and Expected Contributions

This study aims to contribute to the topic of sustainable participation in the accommodation sharing phenomenon. Moreover, our study has the potential to uncover unique patterns of consumer behavior in the context of CCS shaped by peer-to-peer online platforms. We propose a conceptual model to trace out the mechanisms that induce the development of consumers' PO in the accommodation sharing context. Our study advances the understanding of participation motives and investigates the causes that can lead to value co-creation behaviors which are desirable for all the stakeholders of the CCS community, the service providers, consumers and the online platforms for improving the service quality overall. We apply the underutilized lens of psychological ownership in the context of CCS and hope to encourage academics to explore this theoretical foundation in other IS contexts in the future. Furthermore, our work can provide guidance to CCS platform administrators by bringing to light the specific factors that affect value co-creation by the stakeholders which may help them encourage sustainable participation.

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