

**REGULAR ARTICLE**

WILEY

# Innovating the innovated: Business model innovation process in sharing economy companies

Cecilia Grieco 

Assistant Professor in Management, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

**Correspondence**Cecilia Grieco, Assistant Professor in Management, Sapienza University of Rome, Via Salaria, 113, 00198 Rome, Italy.  
Email: cecil.grieco@gmail.com

Business model innovation (BMI) allows firms to rethink the mechanisms of value creation and proposition and capture in order to adapt to the ever-changing environment and increase competitive advantage. Despite already innovative compared to the incumbents, sharing economy platforms also feel the need to continuously innovate their business model (BM) to ensure their survival. However, these platforms are often studied under a static perspective, focusing on the outcome of the innovation rather than on the process underlying it. The purpose of the paper is to unveil the process of BMI in the already innovative BM of sharing economy platforms, focusing on the different degrees this innovation can take place. In so doing, a mixed-methods was applied, clustering a sample of 72 sharing platforms, and completing the results with a qualitative analysis on a subsample of those. What this research demonstrates is that sharing economy platforms do feel the need to innovate their BM just as strongly as incumbents, giving rise to an innovation-in-the-innovation that fills the gap between the process- and the outcome-oriented interpretations of BMI. The four identified clusters shed light on the different forms of BMI that happen in sharing economy platforms.

**KEYWORDS**

business model, business model innovation, mixed-method, sharing economy

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Business model innovation (BMI) means doing things differently, and in such ever-changing conditions, it has become an imperative for firms in every economic sector. Firms need to find innovative ways to operate that go beyond mere changes in products, processes or markets. Rather, it is the ability to reshape the rationale behind the mechanisms of value creation, delivery and capture that is increasingly required to keep up with the evolution of the market. Interest in this topic has greatly increased in recent decades, with both scholars and business practitioners studying examples of hypercompetitive firms that owe their success to a more or less drastic redefinition of their

business models (BM). A case in point is of course the sharing economy. Indeed, although the sharing principle is anything but new, advances in technology in recent decades have led to the creation of this new economic paradigm, in which digital platforms match supply and demand, enabling users to gain access to assets and complementary services provided by other users (Mair & Reischauer, 2017).

The sharing economy phenomenon falls indeed within the wider concept of platform business, whose purpose is to facilitate the multi-party exchange of products and creating new value while allowing for value capture (Sorri, Seppänen, Still, & Valkokari, 2019). The platform configuration itself, gives companies new opportunities as it changes

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2021 The Author. *Creativity and Innovation Management* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

the rules that are proper of traditional businesses as well as the interactions among the involved actors (Sampere, 2016).

The term sharing economy is frequently heard nowadays, albeit often abused by firms seeking to exploit positive public sentiment towards it (Ranjbari, Morales-Alonso, & Carrasco-Gallego, 2018). Several definitions of the phenomenon have been put forward, but a general consensus on the subject has not yet been reached. In their review of the literature, Ranjbari, Morales-Alonso, and Carrasco-Gallego (2018, p. 13) describes the sharing economy as “an economic system, whose intermediary companies utilize online platforms to facilitate and lower the cost of the for-profit transactions giving temporary access to idle resources of consumers in the peer-to-peer networks that it has created, because of the trust built among its members, who may be individuals or businesses.”

Sharing platforms have largely been studied as examples of innovative BM, in contrast to the so-called “incumbents”: the established firms well placed in the market whose success is based on a traditional BM. While the formers are seen as enjoying the advantages of an innovative BM, for the latter the choice seems to be “share or die,” alternatives through which Mourillo et al. (2017) convey the urgent need for incumbents to find their own ways to reshape their BMs and cope with the sharing economy. Scant attention seems to have been paid to the process of innovation in new and highly innovative companies. Although their novelty is pivotal in gaining competitive advantage, this alone is not enough to ensure their continuing success and to prevent them from a high risk of failure (Bock & George, 2017; Hagiu, 2013). The environment in which platforms operates is indeed highly volatile because of the fast technological progress and the rapid changes of market conditions (Nambisan & Baron, 2013).

Sharing economy, as platforms, must continuously offer something new and of value if they want to maintain competitive advantage, enhance their performance, achieve better stakeholder lock-in and reduce customer switching; otherwise, they can easily be copied by sharing and nonsharing competitors (Amit & Zott, 2012; Moser & Gassmann, 2016; Smedlund & Faghankhani, 2015).

The idea behind this research stems from these considerations and aims to analyse the process of BMI within the already innovative BMs of sharing economy companies.

The contribution this research aims to have is to present sharing platforms as examples of innovation-in-the-innovation, where being able to shake up the established asset-dominant industries is not an end point, rather the starting point for further BMI. Platforms such as Uber and AirBnB are often brought into play for their ability to become some of the biggest players in the world in a short time span, challenging all those traditional “giants” that grew over a much longer period and now feel the need to renew themselves (Niemimaa, Järveläinen, Heikkilä, & Heikkilä, 2019). In this research, the perspectives that has usually been adopted to understand how these giants can keep up with innovative platforms are applied to the innovative platforms themselves, with the aim to unfold the dynamicity of BMI processes, and provide new insights in a field where the innovation is only described as an outcome.

The remainder of the paper is as follows: the next section highlights the relevant literature about sharing economy and BMI on which the research is based; the applied methods are then explained, focusing on the sample selection process and the two-step analysis which was conducted; results are then presented and discussed in the light of existing literature; concluding remarks close the paper.

## 2 | RELEVANT LITERATURE

### 2.1 | Sharing economy business model

The impressive surge of sharing-based BMs that has emerged in the last decade seems to have its roots in the global economic crisis and recession of 2008. Indeed, together with the growth of internet applications, globalization and urbanization, it determined a shift towards sustainable consumption practices as well as a need for frugal spending (Ranjbari, Morales-Alonso, & Carrasco-Gallego, 2018). Despite the difficulties in reaching a commonly agreed definition of this phenomenon, scholars do agree about the threats these platforms present for the established businesses, pinpointing at the specificities of their BM (Acquier, Carbone, & Massé, 2019; Hossain, 2020; Kathan, Matzler, & Veider, 2016; Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Ritter & Schanz, 2019), that, following Teece (2010), expresses the architecture of the way value is created, proposed and captured by an organization.

The process of value creation is largely defined by the kind of actors that are related to each other in creating/receiving value proposition (Ritter & Schanz, 2019). This aspect takes on a particular meaning when investigated in the sharing economy, where consumers, businesses and government actors can take demand and/or supply sides in any combination (Plewnia & Guenther, 2018). Value creation also involves the resources implemented. In the sharing economy, this becomes a fluid concept that could be managed by the platforms without the need of really own them (Kathan, Matzler, & Veider, 2016). Conversely from traditional business, in the sharing economy many of the key resources are provided by the customers themselves, narrowing the role of the platforms itself that has to ensure the proper connection between those that own and those that demand resources.

Sharing platforms propose a unique value proposition—that is, the process through which companies respond to customers' needs with a successful offering. Kathan, Matzler, and Veider (2016) stated that sharing platforms are highly focused on understanding the jobs that customers want to be done and able to spot and meet their latent needs associated with the more obvious desires. Value proposition in the sharing economy is largely characterized by the access-over-ownership principle, with platforms allowing the increased use of underutilized assets (e.g., Acquier, Daudigeos, & Pinkse, 2017). According to Acquier, Carbone, and Massé (2019), this principle is translated into two different types of value proposition: peer-to-peer intermediation and centralized resource pooling. Ritter and Schanz (2019) identified three value propositions in the sharing

economy, according to the nature of the asset: product-oriented BMs, use oriented BMs and result-oriented BMs. Finally, in terms of value capture, sharing economy opens new ways to generate revenues charging a commission fee for the mediation between the actors, asking for a periodic submission fee or even allowing end users to join for free while charging the business side. Indeed, operating in a multisided market allows sharing economy platforms to benefit from more revenue streams that are complementary among each other. Ritter and Schanz (2019) defines sharing revenue streams as being direct or indirect as well as bounded or unbounded from utilities. Constantiou, Marton, and Tuunainen (2017) underline the different degree of market mechanisms that can be in place in sharing platforms: on the one hand, there are platform owners that price the service dynamically based on secret algorithms, while in other cases, the prices—if any—are based on compensating or sharing the costs of the supply side.

These specific configurations of sharing economy BMs have been widely addressed to unfold the disruptive approach that these innovative platforms might have on the incumbents. It resulted in the identification of different typologies that have been proposed by scholars that are summarized in Table 1.

## 2.2 | The process of BMI

Despite different in their outcomes, all of the aforementioned studies have in common the intent to seize the business logics behind value creation, proposition and capture mechanisms that could sort out the complexity of sharing economy. However, what they all lack is the ability to grasp the intrinsic dynamicity of the BM concept, consistently with the literature on the topic where authors have long underlined that components, relationships and structures continually evolve in order to provide enduring value (Amit & Zott, 2012; Sosna, Trevinyo-Rodríguez, & Velamuri, 2010). This dynamicity is well-expressed in the BMI phenomenon that has been described as the activities through which the core elements and the underpinning logic of a business are deliberately altered (Heikkilä, Bouwman, & Heikkilä, 2018; Lindgardt, Reeves, Stalk, & Deimler, 2009) in pursuit of higher performance and competitive advantage to exploit opportunities (Cucculelli & Bettinelli, 2015).

Scholars have so far approached BMI from two main points of view: *outcome-oriented* and *process-oriented* (Foss & Saebi, 2017; Taran, Boer, & Lindgren, 2015). The former refers to the description of new and innovative BMs that appear, often contextualized in specific industries or domains, or in comparison with the traditional approaches of the incumbents (Eggers & Park, 2018; Teece, 2018). In the latter, BMI is interpreted as the overall organizational change that enables a firm to successfully innovate its BM, focusing on the learning mechanisms applied, the capabilities needed, and the different stages required (Foss & Saebi, 2017). These perspectives are closely linked among each other, as innovative BMs (*outcome*) have the potential to disrupt the existing ones that are in turn urged to adapt to it through trial-and-error and experimentation (*process*) in order to better meet the renewed needs (Snihur, Thomas, & Burgelman, 2018).

**TABLE 1** Classification of sharing economy BMs

Author/s (year)	Classification variables	Sharing BM typologies
Munoz and Cohen (2017)	Platforms for collaboration; under-utilized resources; peer-to-peer interactions; collaborative governance; mission-driven; alternative funding; technology reliance	1) Crowd-base tech 2) Collaborative consumption 3) Business to crowd 4) Spaced-based low-tech sharing 5) Utopian sharing outlier
Constantiou, Marton, and Tuunainen (2017)	Rivalry between platform participants; control exerted by platform owner	1) Chaperones 2) Franchisers 3) Gardeners 4) Principals
Ritter and Schanz (2019)	Value creation and delivery (enable/employ); value capture (bound/unbound)	1) Singular-transaction models 2) Subscription-based models 3) Commission-based models 4) Unlimited platforms
Acquier, Carbone and Massè (2019)	Value creation mechanisms (peer-to-peer intermediation/centralized resource pooling); value capture and distribution mechanisms (economic/extended)	1) Commoners 2) Mission-driven platforms 3) Shared infrastructure providers 4) Matchmakers

Source: Author's elaboration.

Several contributions include the scope of the innovation among the main dimension of the BMI process (Heikkilä et al., 2018; Taran et al., 2015). Indeed, companies can implement a totally new-to-their-business BM or modify some of the building blocks of their existing system. The different opinions expressed range from those stating that innovating one building block is enough to be defined as BMI (Amit & Zott, 2012), to those according to which BMI implies an entirely new combination of both the BM components and the links between them (Yunus, Moingeon, & Lehmann-Ortega, 2010). Consistently, Clauss, Bouncken, Laudien, and Kraus (2019) elaborate the concept of BM reconfiguration, revealing the different nuances BMI may have, ranging from less radical to more pronounced reconfigurations of the BM. Their research lead to the identification of six typologies, supporting the hypothesis that firms approach innovation in very different ways.

Focusing on organizational learning, Berends, Smits, Reymen, and Podoyntsyna (2016) identify two patterns of BMI process: the

cognitive search (conceptualization and creation) where forward-looking process is used to create and select alternatives according to their consequences, and the experiential learning (adaptation and experimentation) where backward looking allows for past experiences to get encoded in routinized actions, retaining successful actions while abandoning failures. Interesting insights also come from Ciulli and Kolk (2019) that offer a typology of BMI that incumbents can follow to adapt their BM to the sharing phenomenon. In their framework the authors classify three modes of BMI process: internal development, partnerships and mergers and acquisitions.

In a similar way, Trabucchi and Buganza (2020) elaborate on the innovation strategies in digital platforms, and proposed two main directions: the ecosystem innovation that happens when the platform enlarges the entities that are part of the network; and the data-push innovation when the implemented mechanisms are the object of the enlargement. The authors also allow for both the directions to be followed and talk about multi-sided epiphany.

Merging the modular approach and the search for directions, Heikkilä et al. (2018) proposed three BMI paths (profitability seekers, growth seekers, start a new business) that are oriented by the final strategic goal organizations aim to achieve, and that foresee different configurations of the BMI process in terms of BM components involved.

### 3 | MATERIAL AND METHODS

The purpose of this research was to shed light on the implementation of the BMI processes as developed in sharing economy platforms. In so doing, a two-step analysis has been performed, mixing quantitative and qualitative investigation to develop a better understanding of the defined research questions (Turner et al., 2017). Specifically, a quantitative survey-based cluster analysis was performed to produce a robust taxonomy, and qualitative interviews were then carried out to obtain a deeper understanding of each individual cluster (Angwin & Meadows, 2015; Austrian, 2000) (Figure 1).

The starting point was the Crunchbase community-based platform ([www.crunchbase.com](http://www.crunchbase.com)) that allows to identify 752 companies.

Other 66 were obtained from a snowballing search on managerial and academic articles.

A careful skimming process was undertaken involving a website analysis. In particular, following the definition given by Ranjbari, Morales-Alonso, and Carrasco-Gallego (2018), online platforms used to facilitate for-profit or non-profit transactions to increase the use of idle resources among individuals or firms were considered. Platforms that were not consistent with the purpose of the analysis were excluded, together with those whose website was not accessible. The remaining 390 platforms were contacted to check their availability to participate to the research. Out of the total, 129 answered the enquiry, with 7% stating they were not interested, 10% stating they had been acquired by other companies, 6% advising they had recently closed, and 56% declaring their interest and availability.

Data was collected through a self-completed questionnaire that consisted of three different sections. The first aims to understand the BM of the platforms. Following extant literature, the following areas were investigated: value proposition (Ritter & Schanz, 2019; Täuscher & Laudien, 2018), main activities of the platform (Plewnia & Guenther, 2018; Schor, 2017), type of relationships promoted (Plewnia & Guenther, 2018; Täuscher & Laudien, 2018) model behind the revenue streams (Ritter & Schanz, 2019; Täuscher & Laudien, 2018).

The second section was centred on the identification of BMI processes and was based on the framework identified by Clauss (2017). The author provided a synthesis of 120 potential BM components and group and validate them into 10 sub-constructs of value creation, value proposition and value capture innovation. These sub-constructs were used as items for the development of the questionnaire and measured through Likert scales.

For each of the components of the framework, respondents were asked to specify whether any innovation had been implemented or whether it was planned in the near future. The objective was to adopt an overall view of BMI, analyzing what had been done to date without disregarding what it was about to carry out.

The final section asked for background information about the platform.

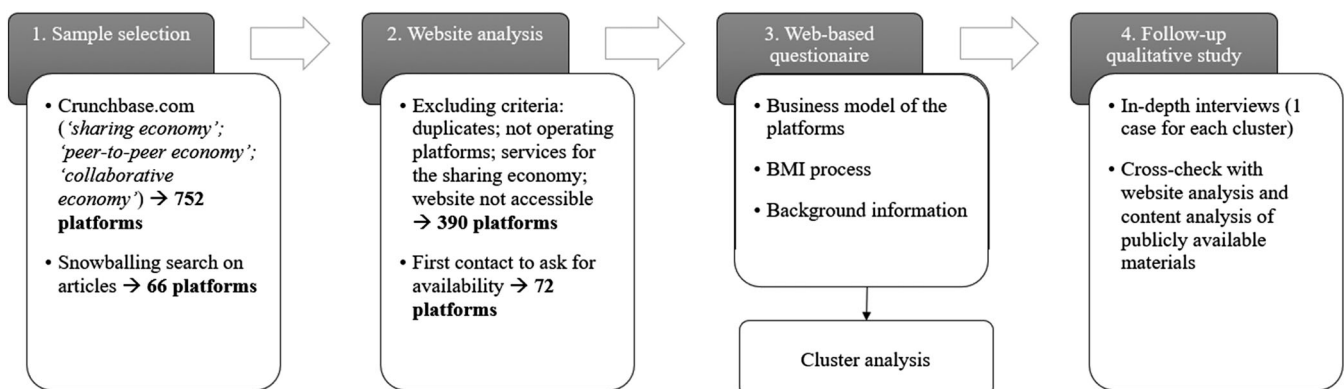


FIGURE 1 The methodological process. Author's elaboration

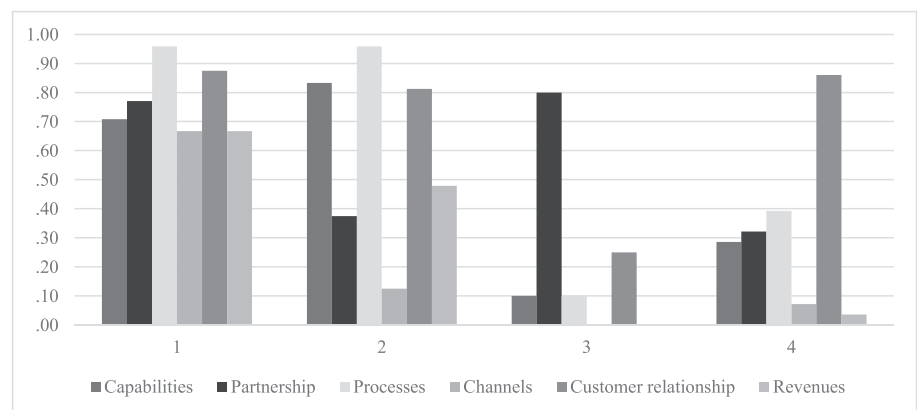
A cluster analysis was performed to identify similarities between the BMI processes undertaken by the platforms included in the sample. This approach is consistent with previous contributions, where this method was employed for a similar purpose (Clauss, Bouncken, Laudien, & Kraus, 2019; Täuscher & Laudien, 2018). Cluster analysis is intended to identify distribution patterns and representative types in a similar group of subjects (Ketchen & Shook, 1996). In particular, a non-hierarchical clustering process was applied, using the k-means method, where the  $n$  observations are partitioned into  $k$  clusters in which each observation belongs to the cluster with the nearest mean. The coefficient of agglomeration has been analysed to identify the amount of homogeneity that can be observed across the cluster solutions. This step revealed that from 3 to 6 clusters solutions can be adopted. Considering the number of observed variables, the four clusters solution was selected because it provides the best differentiation between the different types. This choice has been further confirmed looking at the iteration history, where no changes are made after three iterations. This indicates that with four clusters the clustering model is stable and strong. Also, this solution ensures a good distribution of cases across the clusters, with the smallest still including 10 cases (14% of the sample), and the largest 24 (33.3% of the sample).

In order to test the reliability and validity of the analysis, a one-way ANOVA was performed with a post-hoc test to check the multiple comparisons. Figure 2 sums up the variables that emerged as statistically significant in differentiating the four clusters.

In the second step, the clusters identified in the first phase were examined in depth through a qualitative tool to better explore those elements that characterize the different clusters. This is because, as stated by Austrian (2000), to increase the reliability of the identified clusters and make them useful in practice, both quantitative and qualitative methods are necessary. Qualitative investigation can indeed detect the richness and complexity of the phenomena.

A deductive approach was followed, as the goal was not to add new BMI types, but rather to gather richer data (Yin, 2014). As for the small size of the clusters, the platforms for the interviews were not chosen in order to represent within-clusters differences (e.g., Austrian, 2000), rather they have been purposefully selected (Patton, 2015) to represent the main features of the cluster they belong to, according to the variables that emerge as being statistically significant in the clustering process (see Figure 2). In so doing the goal was to have at least one case for each cluster, that will be referred to as cluster leader hereafter.

In-depth interviews were performed via Skype calls (January–February 2020). The plan for the interviews was drafted basing on the questionnaire, asking platforms to comment on the same BMI variables. The interviews were semi-structured, leaving respondents free to go in depth on each variable. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and content analysed formulating inductive categories out of the materials (Mayring, 2004). The data collected through the interviews allow to add meaning and interpretation to the achieved clusters (Table 2).



**FIGURE 2** Differences in BMI processes. Author's elaboration

**TABLE 2** Details of the interviews

Platform and sector	Description	Cluster	Position held by interviewee	Employees
Platform 1 Mobility	A platform to share cars with C2C and B2C functionalities.	1	Senior account manager	15–20
Platform 2 Social eating	An online platform to eat with locals all over the world.	2	Co-founder and CEO	<5
Platform 3 Mobility	A carpooling community connecting people wishing to travel long distances with drivers going the same way.	3	Country manager	>50
Platform 4 Recycling goods	An online marketplace trading free goods to promote sharing, reuse and recycling.	4	Co-founder and CEO	<5

Source: Author's elaboration.

## 4 | FINDINGS: THE TYPOLOGIES OF BMI PROCESS IN SHARING ECONOMY<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1 | Cluster 1: The dynamics

The first cluster covers one third of the overall sample, and together with Cluster 2 is the most populated (33.3%). Platforms in this cluster mostly present an economic value proposition (helping users to save or earn money), offered through the rental of durable assets. As for the revenue model these platforms apply, it is important to note that the transaction model is adopted in a large number of cases, irrespective of the cluster to which they belong. In Cluster 1, this is the source of revenue in 70% of cases, with the rest of the sample evenly distributed over the other options. A similar pattern is found for the type of relationship, where the majority of cases are C2C, as in all the clusters. These platforms are mostly very young, being founded between 2017 and 2019, and the industries in which they are most present are health and wellness, housing, food and sport.

Focusing on BMI, platforms in Cluster 1 doubtless present the highest level of innovation. Indeed, they answered positively to 15/33 items. The interview with the cluster leader stressed this aspect, revealing how innovation plays a pivotal role in managing the platform: “Being an entity based on innovation requires us to strive for constant change” (P.1).

Their approach to BMI emerges as being transversal to the value creation, proposition and capture. As for value creation innovation, platforms in Cluster 1 have largely focused on processes, carrying out both incremental and radical forms of innovation, improving internal processing, using innovative procedures in product manufacturing and developing regular assessments in order to intervene if needed. Moreover, value proposition innovation has been implemented, focusing on the channels adopted, customer relationships, and the offering and the markets addressed. The qualitative investigation shed light on the role of market analysis as the main driver of the changes made, indeed as reported from the interviewee: “Initially our business idea was a traditional P2P car sharing service in the airports of the big cities, exploiting the capabilities we can benefit from by being part of a well-structured business group. (...) However, analysis of the market allowed us to see that there was a need [for car rental services] even in the smallest villages of the region, where people are otherwise forced to reach the biggest cities if they need to rent a car” (P.1).

These platforms are clearly aware of their advantage over their direct competitors, and define themselves as providing products and services that are more innovative and more able to meet customer needs. It is interesting to note that these advantages are perceived in respect of both sharing and non-sharing competitors, against which the platforms need to differentiate their business model: “We don't have the budget or the offer variety of traditional car rental, but we are different because our offer also includes alternative models of car sourced from private users. (...) We are different from other car sharing platforms as we provide an external and accredited representative

which gives more security and makes users feel more confident than meeting a stranger on the street” (P.1).

Important innovations have also been made in the value capture process, focusing on both revenues and costs. As for the former, platforms in Cluster 1 attempted to find new revenue opportunities to integrate with existing ones, focusing on the long-term perspective through the offer of integrated services. Changes in the cost structure were aimed at saving costs and keeping up with market prices.

In line with this scenario, future BMI planned is mostly directed to value creation innovation, focusing on those capabilities that need to be acquired to adapt to changing market requirements, and to ensure that employees receive appropriate training. This short-term objective is confirmed by the perception these platforms have of being quite weak compared to their direct competitors in terms of up-to-date knowledge. In the interview, the cluster leader justifies this as a matter of inexperience due to the young age of the platform: “To create the latest release of the app and the showcase site, we had to rely on an external consultancy company that had already worked on other sharing mobility projects. We probably have been partially penalized by our inexperience in this particular sector in the initial phase” (P.1).

### 4.2 | Cluster 2: The graduals

The second cluster covers another third of the sample (24 platforms). Platforms in this cluster have an experiential value proposition, with the main activities being the rental of durable assets and the exchange of labor and services between users. The highest percentages of subscription model (31%) and donations (66%) are found in this cluster. The majority of platforms are B2C and multisided markets where both B2C and B2B models are merged. On average these platforms are 5–10 years old (2009–2014), and the industries in which they are mostly found are clothing, mobility, culture and business services.

Concerning BMI, what emerges is that these platforms have to date been through focused change, narrower than platforms in Cluster 1, which has led them to concentrate mostly on value creation innovation. Indeed, the things they have innovated the most relate to the capabilities needed to maintain an adequate pace of innovation and the continuous training that employees must undergo to ensure the development of new strategic competences. This is probably why these platforms express their confidence in being better than their direct competitors in terms of up-to-date knowledge and capabilities. For example, in the interview, the cluster leader explains that in their case the activity of sourcing good hosts is something they are very strong on. As it is pivotal in the accommodation sector this strength allows the platform being more competitive: “Our most important capability is that we are really good at sourcing hosts of good quality. This recruiting process is carried out in a way that allows us to be better than our competitors” (P.2).

Technological resources were also considered to be important to value creation innovation, mostly because the integration of technology in routine procedures is seen as a key capability able to

differentiate a platform. The interviewee explained how they managed technology innovation to gain competitive advantage: “We rely on technology and also a bit of the human touch. It is good to offer a personal solution, and also to integrate the use of technology and save time, for example, in the recruiting process, or to adopt new pricing strategies” (P.2).

Value proposition innovation appears to be completely missing. Similarly, there is little about value capture, with the partial exception of the revenue model, where one-time transaction revenues have been complemented or replaced with long-term recurring sources of income. This seems to be consistent with the fact that the platforms in this cluster are those with the highest percentage of subscription model.

As to the innovations these platforms are about to implement, Cluster 2 is undoubtedly the one presenting the highest level of planned changes. Indeed, when asked about the items they intended to change in the short-term, the number of elements listed was the highest of all the clusters (12/33). Specifically, the main planned innovation was completion of revenue model innovation, developing new revenue opportunities and offering integrated services to realize long-term financial returns. Indeed, in the cluster leader's view: “Revenue models such as subscription make it possible to avoid several weaknesses of the transaction fee, including the risk that users might decide to bypass the platform and interact directly so as not to pay any commission” (P.2).

Even more importantly, their planned innovations suggest that platforms in Cluster 2 are aware of the gap in value proposition innovation, which they aim to fill by focusing on innovating the offer itself, the approach to the market, the channels adopted and customer relationship actions.

### 4.3 | Cluster 3: The outsourcers

The third cluster is the smallest, consisting of 10 platforms (14% of the sample). This cluster is made up of platforms whose main offer is providing users with a virtual space where they can contact other people with similar interests and nurturing a sense of community among them. The activities these platforms mostly engage in revolve around the exchange of labor and services between users (e.g., time banks) and revenues mostly come from a freemium model. Interestingly, the types of relationships include C2B exchange, which is rare or absent in the other clusters. These platforms range from 3 to 5 years old, and the industries most covered are goods and services for individuals.

What emerges concerning BMI is very limited innovation which has been highly focused on value creation and, in particular, on partnerships. Platforms in this cluster describe themselves as particularly active in constant search of new collaboration partners who could add benefits to their offering, and in the evaluation of outsourcing opportunities through which they could improve their performance. As stated from the cluster leader: “We have got different kinds of partners which complement our offer, for example, an insurance partner

to cover the arrival at the destination. then we have partners when it comes to marketing and communication, and very often co-branding partnership to bind our offer to other products and other services” (P.3).

Interestingly, what emerges is that the partners do not have a key role in driving BMI, but rather act as enablers for the implementation of these processes: “Innovation is not driven by our partners, rather, we exploit their assets to add on features to our core business” (P.3).

What they perceive when comparing themselves with competitors is that their offering is not particularly innovative, nor able to solve customer needs better. What emerged from the interview is that a good strategy to gain competitive advantage has been that of turning to a niche. Indeed, talking about the mobility industry the cluster leader explains: “The deregulation of the market for travel by coach meant we went from being the only low-cost travel option to dealing with a highly competitive scenario. This implied a repositioning of our offer to focus on a niche market that is more strategic for us to serve” (P.3).

Value proposition innovation does not emerge as being considered, whether as regards innovation carried out to date, or in future plans. Instead, value capture innovation is the main object of innovations planned, in particular focusing on the cost structure. Indeed, what emerges in this cluster is that future changes will involve the identification of opportunities to save manufacturing costs and control operating costs in response to market prices. This aspect has been further confirmed in the interview: “We are carrying out several initiatives to optimize costs as for us the investment phase is over and we are profitable and it is essential to maintain a low-cost structure. (...) For example, many activities have been outsourced and are carried out remotely, with people working from all over Europe” (P.3).

### 4.4 | Cluster 4: The quiet

The fourth and last cluster is made up of 14 cases (19% of the sample). The BM of these platforms is characterized by an economic value proposition, and the main activities carried out are the recirculation of unused goods through resale or gifting, and the exchange of labor and services between users. It is worth noticing that this is the only cluster in which the revenue model is based on advertising: no fees are charged to users on the supply or demand side, and the sale of advertising spaces is the main source of revenue. A significant percentage of platforms adopt a subscription model (29%). This cluster includes the oldest platforms, founded before and up to 2009, and they operate most frequently in the learning and tourism industries.

In this cluster, BMI processes are extremely limited and uncoordinated. Indeed, the only items platforms declare they have changed are customer relationship and business partnerships. However, in both these areas there has not been a systematic approach: what emerges is some limited attempt to strengthen relationships with customers and to seek the support of external actors to develop

the BM, although other measures related to new customer relationships and new partnerships covered in the questionnaire have been little considered in recent times. What emerged from the interview to the cluster leader is that this might be a matter of seniority, that could lead managers being less motivated to deal with BMI: “I believe it's easy for older platforms to get stuck in their ways and they don't always adapt or grow in the most beneficial ways. (...) I've been doing the same thing for over a decade and while it has worked well, I think my platform could provide a lot more value to people if I branched out into different areas. But I don't think it's always necessary to innovate the business model” (P.4).

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that these platforms see themselves as possessing capabilities that are more up-to-date compared to those of their direct competitors.

A more focused approach can instead be detected in the future innovations these platforms have planned in the short-term. These changes are particularly directed towards innovation of the internal processes and structures (value creation innovation), that relate to the systems that link their existing activities. Platforms in Cluster 4 express their willingness to make significant improvements, to adopt innovative procedures in the manufacturing of products, and to implement changes that constant and regular assessments might show are necessary. This aspect has been further confirmed in the interview, with cluster leader stating: “I try to automate internal processes as much as possible to avoid previous mistakes and save myself the time of doing the same thing over and over” (P.4).

Table 3 sums up an overview of the identified clusters.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

The research reveals the BMI processes adopted by sharing economy platforms, highlighting both the fact that their innovative BM does not avoid the need to further innovate their value creation, proposition and capture mechanisms, and the existence of a variety of degrees of innovation; the same picture as seen in the so-called incumbents.

A first consideration concerns the BMI approaches emerged in each of the clusters, that might stem from platforms' background and features of their BM. For example, platforms in *Cluster 1—the dynamics*, are highly aware of the need for constant innovation to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage. The profile of their BM is largely aligned with what the extant literature defines as the core of the sharing economy: driven by the potential to save expenses, focused on the rental of durable assets and built on C2C interactions. A different approach is seen in *Cluster 2—the graduals*, where the focus is on capabilities as a key element in the design and operation of the BM and vital to its refinement, implementation and transformation (Teece, 2018). Moreover, the attention to the long-term growth evidenced by the planned innovation of the revenue model, confirmed a wider trend towards the so-called recurring-revenues that could support platforms avoiding some risks of failure, such as low customer lock-in and the transaction-centred nature, very common in sharing economy platforms (Täuscher & Kietzmann, 2017). In *Cluster 3—the outsourcers*, the acquisition of the necessary capabilities is replaced by the search for strategic partners which would allow the elements of

**TABLE 3** Overview of the clusters

Cluster name	Business model	Focus of the developed actions	Focus of the planned intervention	Overall approach to BMI
<b>Cluster 1—the dynamics</b>	<b>Value proposition:</b> Economic <b>Activities:</b> Rental of durable assets <b>Relation:</b> C2C <b>Revenue model:</b> Transaction fee	Value creation, value proposition, value capture	Value creation ( <i>capabilities and knowledge</i> )	Dynamic and transversal
<b>Cluster 2—the graduals</b>	<b>Value proposition:</b> Experience <b>Activities:</b> Exchange of labor and services <b>Relation:</b> B2C and multi-sided platforms <b>Revenue model:</b> Transaction fee, subscription fee, donations	Value creation ( <i>capabilities, technology</i> ) Value capture ( <i>revenue model</i> )	Value creation, value proposition, value capture	Gradual, focused on capabilities and on recurring revenues
<b>Cluster 3—the outsourcers</b>	<b>Value proposition:</b> Social <b>Activities:</b> Exchange of labor and services <b>Relation:</b> C2C and C2B <b>Revenue model:</b> Transaction fee and freemium	Value creation ( <i>partnership</i> )	Value capture ( <i>costs</i> )	Enabled by partners and aimed at cutting costs
<b>Cluster 4—the quiets</b>	<b>Value proposition:</b> Economic <b>Activities:</b> Recirculation of unused goods <b>Relation:</b> C2C <b>Revenue model:</b> Transaction fee and advertising	Value creation ( <i>business partners</i> ) Value proposition ( <i>customer relationship</i> )	Value creation ( <i>processes and structures</i> )	Scant, focused on internal processes

Source: Author's elaboration.



the BM to be innovated. This does not only refer to partnering with other businesses, but also to the high level of involvement of members able to participate informally in creating value, exploiting what Constantiou, Marton, and Tuunainen (2017) call “boundary fluidity”. According to the authors, this ability also enables the platforms to offer cheaper services as the more production is decentralized and external actors are involved, the more capital expenditure is reduced. Finally, *Cluster 4—the quiet* includes platforms demonstrating an attitude to BMI which is the opposite of that seen in Cluster 1: the approach is not dynamic, and the platforms are the oldest of the sample. Similarly, the two groups have opposite views on capabilities; platforms in Cluster 1 suffer from a lack of the necessary capabilities because of their youth, whilst platforms in Cluster 4 feel confident about their capabilities to the point that they hardly feel the need to innovate. It can be said that in these platforms the approach is more geared to exploitative innovation, that builds on existing knowledge and reinforces existing processes (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2006). Although this is not an irrelevant approach, it is worth noting that, in such an increasingly complex and fast-moving environment, these platforms could be considered as new incumbents when compared to the newcomers.

A second consideration concerns some elements from the process-oriented BMI literature that can be outlined in the emerged clusters. For example, focusing on the BMI patterns identified by Berends, Smits, Reymen, and Podoynitsyna (2016), the experiential approach appears as being the main one in the identified typologies. Platforms in Cluster 1 owe their dynamism to the introduction of processes that are then validated through subsequent assessment. In this cluster, despite market analysis has been described as the principal engine of BMI, the experiential approach is also confirmed by their need for acquiring the proper knowledge and capabilities to purposefully drive the process, moving from an “adaptation” perspective to a more cognitive one. A same trend is evincible in Clusters 3 and 4. The former especially because in search for effective ways to cut fixed costs, where different solutions are tested in a trial-and-error logic. As for Cluster 4, the lack of a systematic approach led to the exclusion of a cognitive search for carrying out BMI, rather, even here a sort of adaptation to what proved to be successful.

A different scenario is evincible in Cluster 2—the *graduals*. In these cases, the focused approach to BMI emerges as being due to a more accurate planning of the changes the platforms aim to carry out. In fact, consistently with the cognitive search described by Berends, Smits, Reymen, and Podoynitsyna (2016), Cluster 2 pinpoints on the importance of acquiring the proper capabilities and the up-to-date knowledge first, as they are essential to develop more reasoned changes in the BM. The conceptualization mechanism is evincible concerning the revenue model innovation platforms in Cluster 2 seem to be on the road to apply, that is being reinterpreted in order to ensure a longer-term source of benefits.

As for the modes of BMI, following Ciulli and Kolk (2019), the most adopted option is the internal development, while only *Cluster 3—the outsourcers*, turns to partners and none of the clusters innovate the BM basing on mergers and acquisitions. The commitment of the

managers thus emerges as being the main driver for BMI. A partial exception can be made for platforms in *Cluster 4—the quiet*, where the mimicry seems to be the main pressure for BMI. This sort of technique is described by the authors as not necessarily effective in reaching successful BMI, while leading to instrumentally and only superficially adaptation. Despite the authors refer the concept to the sustainability-driven BMI, a same discourse can be made here, where the adjustments made to the BM meet the need to deal with external pressures or to raise additional profits, instead of following a strong commitment. On the other hand, platforms belonging to Cluster 3 distinguish themselves for their largely relying on partners' assets. In this case, partnership is used as a mean to complement the BM, benefiting from external resources the platform does not need to own. This is also consistent with what Trabucchi and Buganza (2020) call ecosystem innovation, as the direction followed is that of innovating the BM including new entities in the value creation-proposition-capture network.

Focusing on the steps, a structured path towards the strategic goals identified by Heikkilä, Bouwman, and Heikkilä (2018) was evincible only in *Cluster 1—the dynamics*. Despite their approach has been defined as transversal to value creation, proposition and capture processes, the qualitative follow up shed light on the focus on extensive market analysis to gauge unmet customer needs. A better knowledge about customers allowed the platform to improve the desirability of the offering, strengthening the customer relationship with the target and consistently finding new channels to reach them. This path reflects the one the authors called Growth seeker, that is highly focused on the customer side.

A last consideration about the emerged clusters concerns the similarities with those identified by Clauss, Bouncken, Laudien, and Kraus (2019), who used the same items to measure BMI in small and medium firms from the electronics industry. Interestingly, despite the differences in the analysed sample, some traits of the BM reconfiguration typologies identified by the authors can be traced also in these findings. *Cluster 1—the dynamics* share the features of Clauss's *business models innovators*, where the changes are evincible in each component. Consistently with business models innovators, platforms in cluster 1 live a turbulent environment that could be the leading factor pushing them towards the innovation of the BM. Indeed, as it has been stated in the interview, their competitive advantage must be defended from sharing and nonsharing competitors, finding effective ways to differentiate their offer from both. Platforms in *Cluster 2—the graduals* are very similar with what Clauss calls *classic innovators*, where the focus of BMI is on the elements of value creation process and in particular on technology advancements and new capabilities. *Cluster 3—the outsourcers* shares with Clauss's *networkers* the limited amount of BMI that is mainly focused on partnerships. The networkers experience a stable environment that can be consistent with the niche market in which platforms in cluster 3 actually perform their business. Finally, *Cluster 4—the quiet* appears as having the same approach of Clauss's *rigid firms*, that, probably because of the low turbulence in their environment, show the lowest level of BMI in each of its three dimensions.

**TABLE 4** BMI process in the clusters

Cluster name	Approach to BMI	Learning mechanism	Mode of BMI	Path of BMI	BMI typologies
<i>Cluster 1—the dynamics</i>	Dynamic and transversal	Experiential	Internal development	Growth seeker	BMI innovators
<i>Cluster 2—the graduals</i>	Gradual, focused on capabilities and on recurring revenues	Cognitive	Internal development	-	Classic innovators
<i>Cluster 3—the outsourcers</i>	Enabled by partners and aimed at cutting costs	Experiential	Partnership	-	Networkers
<i>Cluster 4—the quiets</i>	Scant, focused on internal processes	Experiential	Internal development	-	Rigid firms

Source: Author's elaboration.

Table 4 sums up the BMI process as emerging in the identified clusters.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the process of BMI which takes place in sharing economy platforms, to understand how platforms, which are already innovative, feel the need to innovate their value creation, proposition and capture even further, and the differences that can be detected in the way they do it. The starting point was the polarized nature of the extant BMI literature in which sharing economy platforms have been studied in a static way as the outcome of BMI, whilst the process which leads to change in BMs is analysed by focusing on the incumbents, for whom BMI is seen as an unavoidable necessity. What this research aims to show is that sharing economy platforms do feel the need to innovate their BMs just as strongly as incumbents, giving rise to an innovation-in-the-innovation that fills the gap between the process and the outcome-oriented interpretations of BMI. The four clusters identified reveal the different forms of BMI processes that occur in sharing economy platforms, confirming that it can be undertaken in varying degrees and in different ways.

The main academic implication lies in the fact that this research merges the discourses about the sharing economy and BMI, and so it enriches both. As regards the sharing economy, it provides an analysis of the BMI as a process, a perspective that has been underdeveloped so far. In so doing, the research also responds to Trabucchi, Muzellec, and Ronteau (2019) who, in their review of sharing economy literature, identify the need for studies that could advance knowledge about this phenomenon by focusing on the BM behind sharing platforms and the different patterns of innovation these platforms go through. Also, in so doing, this research proposes a new classification of sharing economy platforms, that is not based on the features of their BMs as in existing contributions, rather it shifts the focus on the dynamic process of BMI and on the different typologies it can take in the sharing economy context.

As for the BMI literature, this research applies concepts and tools taken from BM studies to sharing platforms, and also considers BMI

process in the sharing economy, bridging the gap between the two perspectives. This aspect contributes to answer the call from Foss and Saebi (2017) that in their literature review underline the separation between the process- and outcome-oriented view of BMI. Furthermore, it offers new insights into the concept of degrees of innovation, which has recently received much attention from scholars in this field.

Managerial implications arise from the identification of the clusters, which highlight different approaches to BMI that managers can apply to their platforms, identifying what category they fall into and therefore the most appropriate strategy to implement. The definition of the typologies of BMI processes that have been implemented by sharing economy platforms can support practitioners identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each configuration and drive them defining or re-defining their BMI strategies consistently.

Despite the originality of the study, some limitations must be mentioned. Firstly, the analysis considers a specific dataset of sharing platforms, which was not intended to be statistically representative. Furthermore, collecting information through a self-administered questionnaire may have resulted in bias arising from (mis)interpretation by individual respondents. On this point, adopting a mixed-method approach was seen as a way of addressing these possible shortcomings.

A second limitation concerns the fact that the research does not provide evidence about the relationship between the type of BMI and the performance of a firm, which would be an interesting perspective given that successful platforms are the exception and not the rule. Further, the research does not focus on the timing of the changes described, and it would be extremely interesting to identify the paths of BMI and detect the order (if any) in which BM components have been innovated. These would definitely be promising avenues for future research to reveal the innovation of the innovated.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request due to privacy/ethical restrictions

### ORCID

Cecilia Grieco  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4463-1202>

## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Please see Appendix A for details about background information and platforms' BM distribution.

## REFERENCES

- Acquier, A., Carbone, V., & Massé, D. (2019). How to create value (s) in the sharing economy: Business models, scalability, and sustainability. *Technology Innovation Management Review*, 9(2), 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.22215/timreview/1215>
- Acquier, A., Daudigeos, T., & Pinkse, J. (2017). Promises and paradoxes of the sharing economy: An organizing framework. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 125(C), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.07.006>
- Amit, R., & Zott, C. (2012). Creating value through business model innovation. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 53(3), 41–49.
- Angwin, D. N., & Meadows, M. (2015). New integration strategies for post-acquisition management. *Long Range Planning*, 48(4), 235–251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2014.04.001>
- Austrian, Z. (2000). Cluster case studies: The marriage of quantitative and qualitative information for action. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 14(1), 97–110.
- Berends, H., Smits, A., Reymen, I., & Podoynitsyna, K. (2016). Learning while (re) configuring: Business model innovation processes in established firms. *Strategic Organization*, 14(3), 181–219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127016632758>
- Bock, A. J., & George, G. (2017). *The business model book: Design, build and adapt business ideas that drive business growth*. UK: Pearson.
- Ciulli, F., & Kolk, A. (2019). Incumbents and business model innovation for the sharing economy: Implications for sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 214, 995–1010. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.12.295>
- Clauss, T. (2017). Measuring business model innovation: conceptualization, scale development, and proof of performance. *R&D Management*, 47(3), 385–403. <https://doi.org/10.1111/radm.12186>
- Clauss, T., Bouncken, R. B., Laudien, S., & Kraus, S. (2019). Business model reconfiguration and innovation in SMEs: a mixed-method analysis from the electronics industry. *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 24(9).
- Constantiou, I., Marton, A., & Tuunainen, V. K. (2017). Four models of sharing economy platforms. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, 16(4).
- Cucculelli, M., & Bettinelli, C. (2015). Business models, intangibles and firm performance: Evidence on corporate entrepreneurship from Italian manufacturing SMEs. *Small Business Economics*, 45(2), 329–350. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-015-9631-7>
- Eggers, J. P., & Park, K. F. (2018). Incumbent adaptation to technological change: The past, present, and future of research on heterogeneous incumbent response. *Academy of Management Annals*, 12(1), 357–389. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0051>
- Foss, N. J., & Saebi, T. (2017). Fifteen years of research on business model innovation: How far have we come, and where should we go? *Journal of Management*, 43(1), 200–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316675927>
- Hagiu, A. (2013). Strategic decisions for multisided platforms. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 53(3), 4–13.
- Heikkilä, M., Bouwman, H., & Heikkilä, J. (2018). From strategic goals to business model innovation paths: An exploratory study. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 25(1), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-03-2017-0097>
- Hossain, M. (2020). Sharing economy: A comprehensive literature review. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 87, 102470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102470>
- Jansen, J. J., Van Den Bosch, F. A., & Volberda, H. W. (2006). Exploratory innovation, exploitative innovation, and performance: Effects of organizational antecedents and environmental moderators. *Management Science*, 52(11), 1661–1674. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1060.0576>
- Kathan, W., Matzler, K., & Veider, V. (2016). The sharing economy: Your business model's friend or foe? *Business Horizons*, 59(6), 663–672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2016.06.006>
- Ketchen, D. J., & Shook, C. L. (1996). The application of cluster analysis in strategic management research: An analysis and critique. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(6), 441–458. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199606\)17:6%3C441::AID-SMJ819%3E3.0.CO;2-G](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199606)17:6%3C441::AID-SMJ819%3E3.0.CO;2-G)
- Lindgardt, Z., Reeves, M., Stalk, G., & Deimler, M. S. (2009). Business model innovation. In *When the Game Gets Tough, Change the Game*. Boston, MA: The Boston Consulting Group.
- Mair, J., & Reischauer, G. (2017). Capturing the dynamics of the sharing economy: Institutional research on the plural forms and practices of sharing economy organizations. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 125, 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.05.023>
- Mayring, P. (2004). Qualitative content analysis. *A companion to qualitative research*, 1(2), 159–176.
- Moser, D., & Gassmann, O. (2016). Innovating platform business models, XXVII ISPIM Innovation Conference—Blending Tomorrow's Innovation Vintage, Porto, Portugal on 19–22 June 2016.
- Muñoz, P., & Cohen, B. (2018). A compass for navigating sharing economy business models. *California Management Review*, 61(1), 114–147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125618795490>
- Nambisan, S., & Baron, R. a. (2013). Entrepreneurship in innovation ecosystems: Entrepreneurs' self-regulatory processes and their implications for new venture success. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 37(5), 1071–1097. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2012.00519.x>
- Niemimaa, M., Järveläinen, J., Heikkilä, M., & Heikkilä, J. (2019). Business continuity of business models: Evaluating the resilience of business models for contingencies. *International Journal of Information Management*, 49, 208–216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.04.010>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Plewnia, F., & Guenther, E. (2018). Mapping the sharing economy for sustainability research. *Management Decision*, 56(3), 570–583. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-11-2016-0766>
- Ranjbari, M., Morales-Alonso, G., & Carrasco-Gallego, R. (2018). Conceptualizing the sharing economy through presenting a comprehensive framework. *Sustainability*, 10(7), 2336. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072336>
- Ritter, M., & Schanz, H. (2019). The sharing economy: A comprehensive business model framework. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 213, 320–331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.12.154>
- Sampere, J. V. (2016). Why platform disruption is so much bigger than product disruption. *Harvard Business Review*, 4(08).
- Schor, J. B. (2017). Does the sharing economy increase inequality within the eighty percent?: findings from a qualitative study of platform providers. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 10(2), 263–279. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsw047>
- Smedlund, A., & Faghankhani, H. (2015). Platform orchestration for efficiency, development, and innovation. In 2015 48th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (pp. 1380–1388). IEEE.
- Snihur, Y., Thomas, L. D., & Burgelman, R. A. (2018). An ecosystem-level process model of business model disruption: The disruptor's gambit. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55(7), 1278–1316. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12343>
- Sorri, K., Seppänen, M., Still, K., & Valkokari, K. (2019). Business model innovation with platform canvas. *Journal of Business Models*, 7(2), 1–13.
- Sosna, M., Treviño-Rodríguez, R. N., & Velamuri, S. R. (2010). Business model innovation through trial-and-error learning: The Naturhouse

- case. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 383–407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2010.02.003>
- Taran, Y., Boer, H., & Lindgren, P. (2015). A business model innovation typology. *Decision Sciences*, 46(2), 301–331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dec.12128>
- Täuscher, K., & Kietzmann, J. (2017). Learning from failures in the sharing economy. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, 16(4), 253–264.
- Täuscher, K., & Laudien, S. M. (2018). Understanding platform business models: A mixed methods study of marketplaces. *European Management Journal*, 36(3), 319–329. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2017.06.005>
- Teece, D. J. (2010). Business models, business strategy and innovation. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 172–194. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.07.003>
- Teece, D. J. (2018). Business models and dynamic capabilities. *Long Range Planning*, 51(1), 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2017.06.007>
- Trabucchi, D., & Buganza, T. (2020). Fostering digital platform innovation: From two to multi-sided platforms. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 29(2), 345–358. <https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12320>
- Trabucchi, D., Muzellec, L., & Ronteau, S. (2019). Sharing economy: Seeing through the fog. *Internet Research*, 29(5), 996–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-03-2018-0113>
- Turner, S. F., Cardinal, L. B., & Burton, R. M. (2017). Research design for mixed methods: A triangulation-based framework and roadmap. *Organizational Research Methods*, 20(2), 243–267.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yunus, M., Moingeon, B., & Lehmann-Ortega, L. (2010). Building social business models: Lessons from the Grameen experience. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 308–325. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.12.005>

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Cecilia Grieco** is Assistant Professor in Management at the Department of Communication and Social Research at Sapienza University of Rome. Her research interests include business models innovation, sharing economy and social impact. She teaches market-driven management and strategic marketing at Sapienza University of Rome.

**How to cite this article:** Grieco, C. (2021). Innovating the innovated: Business model innovation process in sharing economy companies. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12457>

## APPENDIX A

### FEATURES OF THE SAMPLE

**TABLE A1** Background information

Year of foundation		Size (no. employees)	
From 2017 to 2019	13.9%	From 1 to 15	56.9%
From 2014 to 2016	38.9%	From 16 to 25	6.9%
From 2009 to 2013	38.9%	From 26 to 50	5.6%
Before 2009	8.3%	More than 50	11.1%
Industry			
Clothing	1.4%	Culture	8.3%
Mobility	13.9%	Learning	4.2%
Tourism	15.3%	Goods	12.5%
Health and wellness	1.4%	Service for firms	5.6%
Housing	6.9%	Services for individuals	20.8%
Food	5.6%	Sport	4.2%
Headquarters location			
Australia	5.6%	India	2.8%
Austria	2.8%	Ireland	1.4%
Belgium	4.2%	Israel	1.4%
Brazil	1.4%	Italy	25%
Denmark	1.4%	Russia	1.4%
Finland	1.4%	Spain	13.9%
France	8.3%	Sweden	1.4%
Germany	1.4%	UK	6.9%
Iceland	1.4%	US	18.1%

**TABLE A2** The business models of the platforms

Value proposition		Activity	
Social	26.4%	Recirculation of goods	15.3%
Experience	22.2%	Labor and services	45.8%
Economic	51.4%	Rental of durable assets	38.9%
Relation		Revenue model	
C2B	6.9%	Freemium	8.3%
C2C	41.7%	Donations	4.2%
B2B	12.5%	Advertising	13.9%
B2C	20.8%	Transaction fee	51.4%
B2B e B2C	18.1%	Subscription fee	22.2%

Source: Author's elaboration.