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Thomas Lister
University of New South Wales Business School, thomas-lister@hotmail.com

Michael Cahalane
University of New South Wales Business School, m.cahalane@unsw.edu.au

Felix Ter Chian Tan
University of New South Wales Business School, f.tan@unsw.edu.au

Barney Tan
University of Sydney, B.Tan@econ.usyd.edu.au

Leo Saito
University of New South Wales Business School, leo.saito14@gmail.com

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Lister, Thomas, UNSW Business School, Sydney, Australia, thomas-lister@hotmail.com

Cahalane Michael, UNSW Business School, Sydney, Australia, m.cahalane@unsw.edu.au

Tan, Felix Ter Chian, UNSW Business School, Sydney, Australia, f.tan@unsw.edu.au

Tan, Barney, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia, b.tan@econ.usyd.edu.au

Saito, Leo, UNSW Business School, Sydney, Australia, leo.saito14@gmail.com

Abstract

In this paper, we present a model of how ambidextrous IS capabilities enact the development and management of collaborative consumption platforms. Collaborative consumption in an increasingly digital economy is emergent, and fosters hyper-connections among human actors, organizations, and processes in the negotiating and sharing of goods and services. Despite this, existing literature does not provide actionable process models, nor does it meaningfully engage with the role of IS in understanding how collaborative consumption platforms create value. We present a study of GoGet, a car-sharing platform, service and community that has experienced significant growth over the past decade. Based on preliminary findings and drawing on IS capabilities as theoretical lens, we reveal a four-stage process model − minimizing, attaining, extending and optimizing − central to achieving a balance between growth and control objectives in a collaborative consumption ecosystem. Our ongoing study, which seeks to reveal a roadmap as to how IS capabilities facilitate this new mode of consumption, has implications for both theory and practice.

Keywords: Collaborative Consumption Development, IS Capabilities, Case Study, Car-Sharing

1 Introduction

Collaborative consumption, the mode of consumption predicated on the negotiation and sharing of access to goods and services (Botsman and Rogers 2010), has grown exponentially since the proliferation of online communities and digital technologies (Hamari et al. 2015; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). It is part of a global phenomenon (Möhlmann 2015), a sharing economy estimated to be worth $335 USD billion by 2025 (pwc, 2016). However, among the numerous collaborative-consumption firms that have appeared over the past decade, there have been only a handful of success stories, such as those of Uber and Airbnb, have grown to become global services (Chan 2016; Möhlmann 2015). Firms are clearly unsure about how to take full advantage of this growing phenomenon (Cusumano 2015) as a lack of understanding exists in regard to the development process, and specifically the role of information technology (IT), in creating successful collaborative-consumption platforms (Hamari et al. 2015).

IT is unequivocally critical to all aspects of collaborative-consumption platforms (Trang et al, 2015; Hamari et al. 2015; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). Providing automation, information and transformation functions (Dehning et al. 2003), IS have unleashed the potential collaborative consumption worldwide and play major role in governing collaborative-consumption platforms (Wilkin and Chenhall 2010). Yet, research on collaborative consumption has begun to take note of the negative consequences of replacing human interaction with IS solutions, highlighting the

possible risk of decreasing the end-user's acceptance of service due to the introduction of technology (see Trang 2015). Moreover, the exponential growth rate of successful platforms means there is a wide scope for potential issues, resulting from a lack of regulatory measures (Malhorta and van Alstyne 2014). The results of improper IT governance are seen in recent legal battles being levelled against leading collaborative-consumption firms, such as Uber and Airbnb (Chan 2016; Bradford 2014). Every market-leading collaborative-consumption firm has its own ever-growing list of so-called 'horror stories', which hamper reputations and success (Lord 2014; Bradford 2014; Chan 2016), highlighting a need for quality IT implementation and governance within rapidly growing collaborative-consumption platforms.

Collaborative consumption provides significant opportunities for expanding knowledge within the Information Systems (IS) field, with the collaborative-consumption phenomenon representing clear urgency and relevance, considering the burgeoning prevalence of mobile commerce, ubiquitous connectivity and digital platforms (Hagiu and Wright 2013; Tiwana et al. 2010). The lower cost of service often associated with collaborative consumption, coupled with the provision of free digital platforms, allows for a seemingly unlimited pool of potential users and the ability to provide real value to users (Belk 2014). The intrinsic link between social networks and collaborative consumption has seen the need for almost infinitely scalable information systems to be developed (Cohen and Kietzmann 2014), creating a much-needed balance between the growth and control of collaborative consumption platforms. This is particularly important for new businesses embracing collaborative consumption through the development of access-based consumption services, such as car-sharing.

While research has started examining the antecedents of participation (Matzner and Chasin 2015; Möhlmann 2015; Tussyadiah 2015) in such services, little has been studied regarding IT's role in facilitating successful collaborative-consumption initiatives. Specifically, current research neither explains how IT is critical in developing collaborative-consumption platforms nor offers any kind of process model for businesses to follow. Our research-in-progress study investigates the role that IT plays in cultivating collaborative-consumption ecosystems in a successful manner that balances growth and control for businesses. Our study, therefore, aims to answer two main questions: First, how can an organisation go about developing a collaborative-consumption platform? And second, how does IT influence the development of such platforms? Our selected case, GoGet Carshare, presents an example of a collaborative consumption platform that developed its business model from a local grassroots peer-to-peer initiative, to managing product-services for consumers, to eventually developing a networked ecosystem of collaborative consumption between businesses. Our work contributes to the IS fields understanding of how access-based collaborative consumption models develop, exploring their balance with technology implementation in creating successful services.

The remainder is structured as follows. We first provide a background on collaborative consumption, paying particular attention to role of technology in its success. Next, we present our theoretical framework, IS capabilities, as a means of interpreting the development of collaborative consumption platforms. We then outline our research design before presenting our preliminary findings.

2 Background

2.1 Overview of Collaborative Consumption

First described in 1978, collaborative consumption referred to any activity that involved the joint consumption of economic goods or services by a group of people, for example, having a drink with a friend (Felson and Spaeth 1978). However, following the advent of widespread digital devices, it has come to broadly mean the negotiating and sharing of access to goods and services through digital platforms (Botsman and Rogers 2010). In Botsman and Rogers (2010) authoritative work on collaborative consumption, they suggest that for identifying collaborative-consumption initiatives, four key elements must be present: 1) critical mass, 2) idling capacity, 3) belief in the commons, and 4) trust

between strangers. Collaborative consumption creates value by leveraging this mix of elements into an alternative mode of consumption (Ozanne and Ballantine 2011). Adding to their complexity, collaborative consumption systems are distinguished as being either consumer-to-consumer (C2C), Business-to-Consumer (B2C), or Business-to-Business (B2B) models (Leismann et al. 2013). Some organizations, as explored in our case study, may evolve from one model to another over time as they cultivate and grow their initiatives through advances in technologies.

The importance of IT in collaborative consumption is well documented within the literature, but the true nature of this relationship remains largely unexplored. Hamari et al. (2015) emphasise that collaborative consumption is a technological phenomenon first and foremost. They highlight the recent exponential growth of collaborative consumption that coincides with the proliferation of digital and mobile technologies (Hamari et al. 2015). Other papers similarly indicate that the recent improvements in the capabilities of smartphones and the Internet (Möhlmann 2015; Owyang et al. 2013), and by extension the creation of vast digital-social networks (Cusumano 2015), mean that collaborative consumption can be viewed as a corollary of Web 2.0 (Hamari et al. 2015; Belk 2014; Denning 2014). Other papers emphasise the importance of social (e.g., Cohen and Kietzmann 2014; Shaheen, Guzman, and Zhang 2010) and economic elements (e.g., Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012) in elucidating the drivers for user participation. On the other hand, IS research has begun to investigate concerns over the danger that accompanies an extensive integration of advanced technological solutions into the design of C2C collaborative consumption services (See Trang et al 2015). However, existing literature lacks quality research focusing on the contributions of IT to collaborative-consumption organisations. Swathes of collaborative-consumption literature describe how firms should respond to the emergence of collaborative consumption but fail to provide actionable process models for B2B and B2C initials on how to develop a collaborative-consumption platform. Two divergent styles of response are present in the literature: one emphasises using the existing resources and capabilities in conjunction with regulatory confusion to compete (e.g., Malhorta and van Alstyne 2014); the other suggests adopting elements of collaborative consumption to compete with a rapidly changing marketplace (e.g., Matzler et al. 2015). Reactionary firm responses highlight utilizing existing capabilities to emphasise the difference between traditional product offerings and those of collaborative-consumption firms (Cusumano 2015; Malhorta and van Alstyne 2014). Standardisation is considered a strength of traditional firms that offers consumers a reliable product (Belk 2014; Cusumano 2015). By contrast, adaptive firm responses attempt to engage in collaborative consumption to either enter new markets or remain competitive in existing ones (Matzler et al. 2015). This involves supporting resellers (Matzler et al. Kathan 2015; Owyang et al. 2013) and trying to leverage social-network effects (Cusumano 2015). However, among all of the literature proscribing strategic recommendations, none offer an actionable process model that would demonstrate how to develop a collaborative-consumption platform.

Following our review of the current state of the field of collaborative-consumption research, it becomes clear that there is a significant lack of rigorous empirical research into the role of information systems and their enabling impact on collaborative consumption (Hamari et al. 2015). Consequently, there is a distinct dearth of process models detailing actionable steps to achieving IT-enabled collaborative consumption.

2.2   IS Capabilities

Our research uses IS capabilities as a theoretical framework for studying collaborative consumption. Our theory originates from the resource-based view (RBV) field of business literature (Bharadwaj 2000). RBV asserts that 'firms possess resources, a subset of which enables them to achieve competitive advantage, and a further subset which leads to superior long-term performance' (Wade and Hulland 2004, p.108). RBV and, by extension, IS capabilities are concerned with IT resources that provide a sustained competitive advantage (SCA) (Barney 1991). A firm is said to have an SCA once it attains a superior position over its competitors and when it achieves superior long-term performance through an

efficient use of resources (Teece et al. 1997; Wade and Hulland 2004; Rivard et al. 2006). RBV claims that resources that are rare, valuable, imperfectly inimitable, and non-substitutable will provide an SCA (Barney 1991).

 IS capabilities are IT resources (Bharadwaj 2000) or IT-enabled resources (Nevo and Wade 2010) that provide a firm with an SCA. IT resources are unequivocally critical to modern organisations and firms (Bhatt and Grover 2005; Melville et al. 2006). The merging of capabilities creates competencies that allow a company to diversify and create value (Tippins and Sohi 2003). Much of the discussion in existing literature revolves around whether these resources can be mobilised to provide an SCA (e.g., Bharadwaj 2000), or if they can necessitate use in conjunction with other organisational resources (e.g., Ravichandran and Lertwongsatien 2005).

Our study adopts Wade and Hulland's (2004) IS-capability typology. They identify eight key capabilities drawn from previous literature. These capabilities are then organised into three categories based on Day's (1994) typology: outside-in capabilities, which are externally focused, inside-out capabilities, which are internally focused, and spanning capabilities, which are needed to coordinate both internal and external IS capabilities (Wade and Hulland 2004). The novelty and uniqueness of collaborative consumption, in turn, may allow for additions to Wade and Hulland's typology.

The justification for using IS capabilities as a framework are twofold. First, collaborative consumption presents a unique challenge for IT resources—it requires infinitely scalable IS support for its activities (Cohen and Kietzmann 2014). The insights provided by an IS-capabilities framework in tackling this core challenge will generate significant insight into IT-enabled collaborative consumption. Second, IS capabilities are a widely accepted and deployed framework within IS studies but have yet to be applied to collaborative consumption (Ravichandran and Lertwongsatien 2005; Nevo and Wade 2010). Consequently, insights gleaned from our application of this theory to collaborative consumption may yield extensions to established IS-capability typologies (Wade and Hulland 2004).

3   Research Design

Our research will centre on the phenomenon of collaborative consumption, which is currently gaining traction as an emerging topic within the IS domain. Because this concept comprises multiple facets, research utilising an objective approach may not highlight the complexity of collaborative consumption (Koch and Schultze, 2011). As such, it will be more appropriate to employ an exploratory approach, to gain insight into an effective application of collaborative consumption (Klein and Myers, 1999). For exploratory research, a case-study research methodology will appropriately highlight stakeholders' usage of the collaborative-consumption phenomenon (Walsham 2006; Walsham 1995). Applying a qualitative approach will permit an understanding of the 'how' aspect of our research question via investigating the processes enabling collaborative consumption (Walsham 2006; Walsham 1995). Currently, there is no theoretical model to demonstrate how IT enables the development of collaborative-consumption initiatives; hence, we will employ an interpretive approach towards our research (Klein and Myers, 1999).

Through applying an IT-capability perspective towards our research, which functions to perceive the world from a particular angle (Klein and Myers, 1999), our study will enable us to not only apply existing theories to our data, but also discover new, unforeseen and in-depth findings from our data not evident at the commencement of our research. For the case-study selection, certain criteria were applied. First, the organisation must be widely recognized as a prominent and successful example of the phenomenon under study, in that it has a well-established platform and a customer base that actively engages with its collaborative-consumption initiative. Second, the organisation must have deployed a technology-driven platform that has been used to facilitate the organisation's resource-sharing process. GoGet was selected as the case-study organisation for this research because it is one of the largest and most successful collaborative-consumption platforms for car sharing in Australia.

GoGet began as a local car-sharing service within Sydney during 2003. Sydney is the most populated and developed city; however, its transport network is known to be fragmented and chaotic. A report from PwC (2012) noted that Sydney ranked fourth to last for transport and infrastructure among 27 cities worldwide, highlighting the growing need to alleviate congestion within the city. As a partial solution to this wide-reaching problem, an alternative transportation method was pioneered within the collaborative-consumption movement in the form of car-sharing services. GoGet began as an eco-friendly and car-sharing initiative that would contribute to sustainable environmental and economic travel behaviours, as well as to connections within the community. Since its founding, it has expanded its operations to cover over 2,000 vehicles across Australia and is now the most successful and widely available car-sharing service in Australia. Customers can reserve the usage of GoGet cars within the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide via its online platform.

3.1 Data Collection & Analysis

Currently, we are in the process of data collection with GoGet and have conducted 14 face-to-face interviews with various stakeholders. The majority of these stakeholders are employers of GoGet currently situated within senior and manager positions, including the CEO, CFO, Communications Manager, Product Manager, Fleet Manager and Operations Manager. Our research design intentionally focuses on stakeholders with such credentials; doing so enables us to leverage their expertise and depth of knowledge of their IT and leadership experiences (Bassellier et al. 2003; Cooper and Ellram 1993).

Data collection consists of face-to-face interviews because they allow for greater depth of interview aspects (Oppenheim 1992; Walsham 1995), follow-up questions (Oppenheim 1992), and interpretations of participants' behaviours (Walsham, 1995). We adopted a semi-structured interview approach, which enables ideas and issues to be clarified throughout the interview (Taylor and Bogdan 1998; Walsham 1995). Based on the literature review above, our interviews will focus primarily on three main factors: 1) the collaborative-consumption ecosystem that surrounds GoGet, 2) the digitally enabled platforms that GoGet employs to serve its collaborative-consumption ecosystem, and 3) the co-creation of value between customers and GoGet, through its collaborative-consumption platform and ecosystem.

Furthermore, the research will incorporate secondary data sources gathered from books, newspaper articles and the GoGet website (GoGet.com), to support the data analysis and enrich our understanding of the data obtained from the interviews. Our secondary data collection will also involve performing open, axial and selective coding (Eisenhardt 1989) on translated documents and notes. Furthermore, these secondary data sources will be corroborated with GoGet's documentation and archives accessed through online public domains (Neuman 2005). During the period of data collection, we will perform data analyses to improve nimbleness of our case study (Eisenhardt 1989).

During the analysis phase, we will contrast the preliminary findings against our four criteria of collaborative-consumption initiatives, to attain confidence in our theoretical notion (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). As we conduct our research, additional interviews will be performed at a later date to provide further support to our findings by our empirical data (Walsham 2006). Juxtaposing the discrepancies among the empirical data, our theoretical lens, and our literature review (Eisenhardt, 1989) potentially permits us to identify new themes in the data, which can then be related to GoGet's responses to produce supplementary evidence for our theory. For our data-analysis phase and to effectively organise our empirical data, we will incorporate temporal bracketing, as well as narrative- and visual-mapping strategies (Langley 1999; Langley 2009). Further corroboration will be performed with GoGet informants on the history of GoGet and diagrams representing our theoretical notions. To correspond with our theoretical lens, the case-data collected will be mapped to GoGet's ecosystem, digital platforms and value co-creation processes that occur during each phase of GoGet's development. This empirical mapping will clarify our theoretical notion of this phenomenon and will assist in developing a process model that should satisfy our research questions.

4   Preliminary Case Findings

Our preliminary findings reveal that the development of collaborative-consumption platforms may traverse across four progressive stages, each corresponding to the development of a particular focal competence. Each focal competence, in turn, enables a different configuration of value co-creation (that becomes increasingly optimal in each successive stage) and requires an ambidextrous application of two types of IS capabilities: Growth IS capabilities and Control IS capabilities. Growth IS capabilities are the bundling of IT assets and business objectives (Sirmon et al. 2008) to facilitate the acquisition of platform members and lower the barriers of participation (Gawer and Cusumano 2008). Control IS capabilities are the bundling of IT assets and business objectives (Sirmon et al. 2008) to delineate and fortify the boundaries of the platform, as well as strengthen its collective identity (Tan et al. 2015). The following sections will discuss each of the four progressive stages in turn.

4.1   Stage 1: Developing GoGet's Minimal Structure

At its inception GoGet aimed to develop a focal competence that would present a 'minimal structure' (Eisenberg 1990, p.153), and this aim represents the fundamental conditions needed for collaborative consumption to occur (Kamoche et al. 2003). Towards the development of this structure, sustaining an equilibrium between growth and control was needed, requiring the introduction of two outside-in IS capabilities (Wade and Hulland 2004): Generate Awareness and Restrict Membership. Generate Awareness is a Growth IS capability that seeks to leverage communication tools, such as text messaging and email systems, to create exposure for GoGet's fledgling business and to attract its initial members. A product owner at GoGet said, 'In the first few years of operation, that community was important. It was important for our users to feel engaged and part of the organization. So we would have events with our members where you could come [participate] as stakeholders'. Restrict Membership is a Control IS capability that seeks to leverage the same communication tools to nurture a tight-knit community by constraining membership to locals living in the suburb in which GoGet was initially operating. The Business Improvement and Optimisation Manager of GoGet described the objective of this capability: 'I guess growth has been limited, and I think it was intentionally so. When you speak to [the founders], they didn't want it to grow without it being able to control the growth'. Through the ambidextrous application of these IS capabilities, GoGet enabled value co-creation within a *'localised community'*.

4.2   Stage 2: Attaining Critical Mass

Following the development of the minimal structure, GoGet's next priority was to acquire a focal competence related to attainment of critical mass, so that its platform would become self-sustaining and financially viable (Gawer and Cusumano 2008). Towards the attainment of critical mass, a delicate balance between growth and control was again required, which necessitated the application of two inside-out capabilities: Expand Market and Minimise Resource Misuse.

Expand Market is a Growth IS capability that seeks to extend the operations and customer base of GoGet beyond its initial local markets. This was achieved via the introduction of an online booking system to enable self-service, which permitted a greater distribution of member access to service the growing demand. The GM of GoGet explained the workings of this IS capability: 'The sign-up process at GoGet is all online, and once you've had your membership approved and you've been issued your card, then there's no more paperwork to fill out'. However, with an expanding network of users, the need to establish ground rules arose as the influx of new members diluted the established rules and norms within GoGet's community. Consequently, Minimise Resource Misuse—a Control IS capability enabled by a swipe-card system that controlled access to GoGet's cars—was introduced to monitor and track the behaviours of members. This capability deterred members from misusing GoGet's vehicles, thereby maintaining the culture of consideration and reciprocity that was cultivated in the initial phase. A Product Manager at GoGet said, 'If someone leaves their rubbish in the car or without any petrol in it, we can track them down and talk to them about responsibility and fine them or kick them out of the

service if they are a repeat offender'. By expanding its membership beyond the boundaries of the initial local market and by preventing the misuse of its vehicles through these IS capabilities, GoGet was able to develop an 'Organised crowd' (Pater 2009) to accelerate value co-creation.

4.3   Stage 3: Extending GoGet's Ecosystem

Following the attainment of critical mass, GoGet's attention shifted to the focal competence of extending its business ecosystem to improve the overall customer experience for its members. To this end, GoGet had to maintain its trajectory of controlled growth, which required the development of two spanning IS capabilities (Wade and Hulland 2004): Attract Complementors and Qualify Customer Needs.

Attract Complementors is a Growth IS capability that seeks to establish value-adding strategic partnerships with a variety of complementary businesses, requiring the adaptation of GoGet's existing information systems to integrate with its new partners. One of those partnerships formed during this stage was GoGet's alliance with IKEA, which allowed GoGet to tap into a new customer segment that was originally associated with IKEA's business ecosystem. The Communications Manager of GoGet described the rationale behind this partnership: 'People would join us because they've gone to IKEA... and ended up with a sofa or a couch and had to find a way to get it home… membership on the spot and... [they] can drive off with the van'. Qualify Customer Needs is a Control IS capability based on establishing an online customer-support system and analytics of online customer reviews to delineate the most profitable customer segments and to develop targeted services to address customers' specific needs. The Product Manager of GoGet said, 'We want to appeal to different groups of users who have not used GoGet yet… A minute-by-minute booking model would be attractive for businesses... bridging the gap with people who love the flexibility of private car ownership and the kind of fixed end-date that the GoGet model has'. The intricate interdependencies between GoGet and the members of its ecosystem (established with the ambidextrous application of these Growth and Control IS capabilities) resulted in a 'Cooperative Collective', allowing partners to identify unforeseen opportunities to enrich value co-creation in collaborative consumption with untapped market segments.

4.4   Stage 4: Optimising GoGet's Ecosystem

After extending its ecosystem to include a wider variety of members, GoGet then developed a focal competence centred on optimising its strategic potential. Towards the development of this competence, a balance between growth and control was once again needed, which required the introduction of two further spanning IS capabilities (Wade and Hulland 2004): Unify Service Channels and Determine Ecosystem Synergies.

Unify Service Channels is a Growth IS capability that seeks to develop and utilise a platform-agnostic system to bring together customers that are currently engaging with GoGet's partners via a variety of service channels. For instance, Brisbane Development (2012) reported that 'GoGet has integrated its system to allow Go Card access…[Residents] can use their existing [Go Card] with a modified patch allowing access to the GoGet vehicle fleet'. By creating a system that recognises the Go Card issued by Translink (the public-transport authority of the state of Queensland), GoGet has made it easier for existing Go Card holders to join its platform. Determine Ecosystem Synergies is a Control IS capability that seeks to acquire and leverage business and IT-literate employees to deepen relationships and generate mutual benefits with new ecosystem members. Through this capability, the collective resources of GoGet's new ecosystem members are pooled together to deliver even more value-adding services to its customers. For example, in an article published in the Australian Financial Review, GoGet's collaboration with Frasers Property (Tan 2014) on their development in the Sydney Park precinct resulted in 'the nation's largest fleet of GoGet share vehicles, with 60 percent parking spaces set aside for residents'. (Bleby 2016). Through the application of these IS capabilities, a 'united

coalition' (Pater 2009) was formed that maximises value co-creation on GoGet's collaborative consumption platform.

5 Discussion & Future Work

Our preliminary process model provides a glimpse of the potential answers to our research questions, which aim at addressing the two gaps highlighted in our literature review. More specifically, it suggests that the development of a collaborative consumption platform is a four-stage process that requires the focal competences of 1) developing a minimal structure, 2) attaining critical mass, 3) extending the ecosystem and 4) optimising the ecosystem in turn. Our model also suggests that the role of IT in enabling the development of a collaborative consumption platform is ambidextrous in nature, requiring a delicate balance—a Yin and Yang—between facilitating the growth and control of the platform, which is driven by a variety of IS capabilities across the four stages. Our future research will develop the preliminary model further with an emphasis on integrating more empirical data from GoGet's customers and strategic partners, including IKEA and TransLink. The implications of our model will also be analysed in greater depth through an ongoing literature review and more case analyses. By collecting and incorporating more data, as well as subjecting the data to a more in-depth analysis, we hope to refine our process model further to gain a more holistic understanding of how collaborative-consumption platforms develop and how IT facilitates their growth.

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