Why Won’t You Share? Barriers to Participation in the Sharing Economy

Completed Research

Kai Spindeldreher
University of Cologne
spindeldreher@wiso.uni-koeln.de

Emre Ak
University of Cologne
akemre@hotmail.de

Jonas Fröhlich
University of Cologne
jroehl6@mail.uni-koeln.de

Daniel Schlagwein
University of Sydney
schlagwein@sydney.edu.au

Abstract

This paper presents a study of barriers to participation in the sharing economy. We study both, the barriers to participation as a provider, as well as the barriers to participation as a consumer in the sharing economy. We conducted semi-structured interviews and used grounded theory techniques to identify barriers that prevent participation in the sharing economy. Our findings suggest that nine barriers have a negative impact on participation in the sharing economy: Effort expectancy, exploitation, inflexibility, lack of trust, performance risk, physical risk, privacy risk, process risk, and undesired social interaction. We show how these barriers relate to three main elements of the sharing economy: The platform, the resource, and other peer participants.

Keywords

Sharing economy, participation, barriers, motivation, qualitative research.

Introduction

More and more businesses emerge that focus on “sharing” goods instead of selling goods (Belk 2014). These businesses are enabled by technological advancements (Botsman and Rogers 2010) and by shifts in consumer behavior towards collaborative consumption (Belk 2010). Many of these novel businesses are often subsumed under the umbrella term “sharing economy” (Hamari et al. 2015; Heinrichs 2013). In the sharing economy, transactions take place between individuals that can take the role of consumers and providers of a resource (Hamari et al. 2015). Such transactions are only made possible through digital platforms that connect participants and facilitate transactions among them (Puschmann and Alt 2016). The sharing economy has grown exponentially in the last decade (Andersson et al. 2013) and has the potential to substantially threaten and disrupt traditional companies through the exploitation of under-utilized resources and network effects (Cusumano 2015).

The central requirement for the success of such sharing economy businesses is mass participation (Matzner et al. 2015). Besides the necessity to recruit consumers (people that buy and consume goods), sharing economy businesses are also dependent on private individuals to provide the resources (Chasin et al. 2018). However, unlike the sharing economy giants of Airbnb and Uber, many ventures that have emerged in the sharing economy fail to develop successful platforms that reach a critical mass of consumers and providers (Täuscher and Kietzmann 2017). Especially, the lack of providers constitutes a focal reason for the failure of sharing economy businesses (Chasin et al. 2018). Thus, a central challenge for any sharing economy business is to attract a sufficient number of participants (we generally refer to both consumers and providers with the generic terms “participants”).
While several studies have been concerned with the question of what motivates individuals to participate in the sharing economy (e.g. Hamari et al. 2015; Kim et al. 2015; Möhlmann 2015), the literature on barriers to participation in the sharing economy is scarce. Some insights are available (e.g. Hawlitschek et al. 2016; Tussyadiah 2015). However, as we will show in the literature review section, the literature still lacks in-depth knowledge of barriers to participation in the sharing economy. To address this research gap, this study focuses on a comprehensive identification and understanding of barriers to participation in the sharing economy. Hence, we ask the research question: What barriers prevent individuals from participating as a consumer or provider in the sharing economy?

To answer the research question, we engaged in a qualitative empirical study. We conducted semi-structured interviews with individuals that considered but decided against participating (both as a consumer and a provider) in the sharing economy. We then used grounded theory techniques to analyze the data and identify common barriers that prevent participation in the sharing economy.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the sharing economy and the related literature. Section 3 presents the method applied in this study. Section 4 presents the findings. Section 5 discusses the implications of this study. The paper concludes with a short summary in section 6.

**Literature Review: The Sharing Economy**

The sharing economy, also referred to by other terms such as “collaborative economy” (Botsman and Rogers 2010), “collaborative consumption” (Botsman and Rogers 2010), and “sharing services” (Andersson et al. 2013) enables peer-to-peer sharing of resources through the use of information technology (IT) (Täuscher and Kietzmann 2017). The sharing economy primarily constitutes a peer-to-peer phenomenon in which the resources are owned by private individuals (providers) that provide the resources to other private individuals (consumers) for usage (Hamari et al. 2015). Unlike in other e-commerce business models, a sharing activity in the sharing economy does not involve a permanent transfer of ownership (Mittendorf 2016). That is, the shared resource is only temporarily accessed and used, while the ownership does not change. While other definitions and understandings of the sharing economy exist (e.g., including business-to-customer transactions (Heinrichs 2013) or including a permanent transfer of ownership (Dillahunt and Malone 2015), in this paper, the sharing economy is understood as described above.

Several studies have been concerned with the question of what motivates individuals to participate in the sharing economy (e.g. Kim et al. 2015; Möhlmann 2015). The opportunity for an extra income was found to be an important motivational factor for participation (Hamari et al. 2015; Matzner et al. 2015). Furthermore, sociability (Hawlitschek et al. 2016; McArthur 2014) and sustainability (Chasin et al. 2017; Kathan et al. 2016) were found to be motivational factors for participation in the sharing economy. These studies have generally looked at motivating factors or drivers. However, positive, motivational factors are not the only determinants of participation. Negative, demotivational factors, or more generally “barriers”, can impede participation or in some cases even preclude participation. Often times, triggering positive motivational factors is not sufficient in order to counteract these barriers (cf. Herzberg et al. 1959). Thus, counteracting barriers specifically is a critical aspect to fostering participation.

The literature on barriers to participation in the sharing economy is scarce, however. Prior research, so far, found that high perceived effort as well as too much legal and economic risk deter people from participating in the sharing economy (Hawlitschek et al. 2016). Further, a fear that a desired resource might not be available at a given time was found to be a barrier to participation (Hawlitschek et al. 2016). The necessity to disclose personal data when engaging in the sharing economy can also prevent people from participating in the sharing economy (Hawlitschek et al. 2016). A lack of trust, lack of efficacy and lack of economic benefits were further found to deter participation in accommodation rental services (Tussyadiah 2015). However, comprehensive knowledge of which barriers to participation in the sharing economy exist is still lacking. Specifically, the literature lacks in-depth insights on the manifestations, effects and consequences of existing barriers. Some prior studies used quantitative research methods (i.e., surveys) to examine motivations and barriers for participation in the sharing economy (e.g. Hawlitschek et al. 2016; Tussyadiah 2015). While surveys can bring breadth to a study through the collection of data about different aspects of a phenomenon from many participants, they typically do not provide as deep insights on a phenomenon as qualitative methods do (Venkatesh et al. 2013). To understand people’s motivations, their reasons and their actions in a detailed and in-depth way, qualitative research is most suitable (Myers 2013). However,
qualitative research on barriers to participation in the sharing economy is scarce and has only considered specific types of sharing models (e.g. Dillahunt et al. 2017). That is, empirical qualitative research on barriers to participation in the sharing economy (in a holistic sense), has not been conducted to date.

**Research Method**

In this study, we follow a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory paradigm is especially suited for our study as the sharing economy is a novel and unique phenomenon and literature on barriers to participation is scarce. We chose not to propose specific hypotheses prior to our analysis as these could unnecessarily confine the identification of barriers to predefined concepts (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Grounded theory allows for an unbiased analysis, identification of patterns and development of theory (Myers 2013).

The data collection proceeded as follows. We interviewed (semi-structured interviews) twenty participants (six female and fourteen male) with an average age of 28 years (range 19-61). The participants of this study were recruited through word-of-mouth recruiting. We chose a purposive sampling strategy (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003) to examine a certain type of individual: The non-participant. All interviewees were aware of several sharing economy businesses (e.g., Airbnb, BlaBlaCar, Frents) but have not yet participated in the sharing economy in any way (neither as a consumer or as a provider). The interviews were conducted with the objective to understand what prevented the interviewees from participating as of yet. Interviews were conducted in German. We began the interviews with a short explanation of our research interest and the method. The semi-structured interview protocol involved an introduction of the sharing economy (as described above). Besides initial general questions about the interviewee's non-participation, we used different sharing economy examples with different resource types (e.g., accommodation, transport, consumer goods) to structure the interview and asked for reasons for the interviewee's non-participation. We used initial insights from earlier interviews to further refine and extend questions.

The data analysis proceeded as follows. First, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. We then used open coding (cf. Myers 2013) to identify common barriers to participating in the sharing economy. The transcribed interviews were coded by three coders independently. We formed codes by reading through all transcripts sentence by sentence and identifying concepts. We assigned the sharing economy type (accommodation, transport, consumer goods, general) that was references in a quote in order to allow for an analysis across different sharing economy types. We constantly compared and contrasted the emerging codes to increase precision and avoid overlapping between codes. We refined the codes accordingly. We used related literature (e.g. Hawlitschek et al. 2016; Matzner et al. 2015; Tussyadiah 2015; Zhang et al. 2016) to inform the coding in a later stage and to name the themes in the data accordingly to existing theoretical concepts in the literature (after all three coders completed the initial open coding). During the analysis, we allocated the barriers to the applicable perspective (consumer & provider). After we completed the coding of the barriers, we further analyzed how the barriers relate to the main elements of the sharing economy. For this analysis, we used a coding scheme based on an understanding of the sharing economy as an interplay between an engagement platform, human actors, and resources that are exchanged between these actors (Breidbach and Brodie 2017). We translated relevant parts of the transcripts to English to allow for a presentation of quotes in this paper.

The data collection and data analysis were performed in several iterations. Our initial analysis was based on five interviews, after which we substantially revised our scheme. We then conducted 15 additional interviews and analyzed them until theoretical saturation was achieved (cf. Glaser and Strauss 1967). We inferred saturation at the point when the conduct of additional interviews and the subsequent analysis neither revealed any further barriers nor led to refinement of the identified barriers.

**Findings**

Our analysis of the data revealed nine barriers to participation in the sharing economy as consumer or provider. One barrier was only found to deter participation as a consumer. The remaining eight barriers were found to deter participation for both roles. Figure 1 shows the nine barriers and the roles that are affected by the respective barriers with regard to their participation.
As can be seen in Figure 1, our analysis revealed nine barriers that deter participation in the sharing economy: Effort expectancy, exploitation, inflexibility, lack of trust, performance risk, physical risk, privacy risk, process risk, and undesired social interaction (we will discuss these barriers in detail below).

Based on the data analysis, we identified how the nine barriers relate to the three main elements of the sharing economy. The first element is the platform. The platform refers to the intermediary and the online platform that connects peers and facilitates transactions. This element includes processes that participants go through when engaging on the platform (e.g., registration, searching, etc.). The second element is the resource. The resource refers to the resources or services that are provided by providers (e.g., apartment, car, ride, drilling machine). The third element is other peer participants. Other peer participants refers to other peers (consumers and providers) participating in the sharing economy that the focal consumer or provider might have interactions with when engaging in the sharing economy. Table 1 shows the three main elements of the sharing economy and the barriers that relate to these three elements from the consumer’s perspective and the provider’s perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective of Elements</th>
<th>Consumer</th>
<th>Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Platform                | - Effort Expectancy  
                          - Exploitation  
                          - Lack of Trust  
                          - Privacy Risk  
                          - Process Risk | |
| Resource                | - Inflexibility  
                          - Performance Risk  
                          - Physical Risk  
                          - Process Risk | - Effort Expectancy  
                          - Inflexibility  
                          - Process Risk |
| Other Peer Participants | - Lack of Trust  
                          - Physical Risk  
                          - Privacy Risk  
                          - Undesired Social Interaction | |

Table 1. Barriers Relating to Elements of the Sharing Economy

The first column of table 1 shows the three identified referent elements of the sharing economy. The first row shows the two roles from which’s perspective the barriers occur (i.e., viewing the barriers from the respective role’s perspective). The second row shows the barriers that relate to the platform, the third row
shows the barriers that relate to the resource and the fourth row shows the barriers that relate to the peer participants (the second column shows the respective barriers from the consumer’s perspective, the third column shows the respective barriers for the provider’s perspective). Notably, we found no difference between the consumer role and provider role in regard to barriers relating to the platform and the peer participants. Regarding the barriers relating to the resource, performance risk does not apply to the provider role, physical risk does only relate to the consumer role and effort expectancy does only relate to the provider role. The following sections will explain the barriers, their manifestations and their relation to the elements in in more detail.

Effort Expectancy

Effort expectancy refers to the concern that participating in the sharing economy involves a lot of effort. The effort that accompanies engagement in sharing activities was perceived as undesirably high. For example, one interviewee noted his perception that: “[I expect that] it will end up being more work than you might think at the beginning”. This barrier affects both roles (provider and consumer). Effort expectancy is related to the sharing economy platform and the provided resources.

Regarding the platform, the process of registration on a sharing economy platform was often perceived as disproportionately high. One interviewee described: “The registration effort was too high. For example, I was on the homepage of BlaBlaCar a few times, but the effort to complete my registration seemed to high”. Others choose to not even visit the respective websites as they beforehand perceive the process as too demanding as they have “to make the effort to register and view everything”. The effort of initiating an actual sharing process was also often seen as too high for the cause. This includes the gathering of information about available resources on the platform, following through the process of a sharing arrangement and offering a resource on the platform. For example, one interviewee explained that she would not “submit offers of such things to the internet because it is too time intensive”. Regarding the provided resource, interviewees stated that they expect the preparation of a resource (e.g., cleaning a car or a flat) to be a lot of effort, when participating as a provider. One interviewee explained that this barrier is less severe if a resource (he exemplarily named a flat) is rented out for a longer period (six months) but thinks sharing the resource for a short period of time (weekend) is not worth it. Moreover, some non-participants expected a substantial effort as a consequence of having to deal with damaged resources or other unforeseen situations. One interviewee explained that “it does not matter whether you get something back from him. In the end, you have the work and effort to deal with the unexpected situation”.

Exploitation

Exploitation refers to the concern that engaging in the sharing economy supports exploitation of society and instead undermines a “traditional” perspective of sharing. The exploitation barrier affects participation as a consumer and as a provider and is solely related to the platform.

Some interviewee expressed concerns that the initial idea of sharing would be undermined for monetary reasons. For example, one interviewee explained: “The original idea of Airbnb was to share a room or a part of one’s apartment with tourists or guests. However, this system has now changed as most of the time, whole apartments are rented, meaning that often, there are no people permanently residing in these apartments or even that apartments are solely rented just for the purpose to permanently lend them and make money”. Besides the undermining of a “traditional” perspective on sharing, many people emphasized negative implications of such sharing economy models for society. For example, in the context of Airbnb, one interviewee explained: “Thus, living space is missing in the cities for people to permanently reside there”. She concluded her assessment and her unwillingness to participate by summarizing it as: “I don’t like this, and I don’t want to support this!”. In a similar fashion, another interviewee emphasized this aspect by highlighting the implications for popular metropolitan areas by explaining that: “especially in areas where living space is already scarce, but tourism is strong, such as in Berlin or Madrid, from a social perspective, I am critical of that”. Others emphasized that engaging in such sharing activities will lead to higher living costs for people who still want or have to live in such areas. For example, one interviewee stated: “as a consequence, the rent increases and people, such as students who have little income, take the beating, because they have to pay more per square meter of living space”.

Inflexibility

Inflexibility refers to the concern that sharing resources in the sharing economy can reduce flexibility and independence. Many interviewees chose not to participate as a temporary sharing of a resource would yield inflexibility, compared to permanent ownership of the resource. This barrier concerns both, consumer role and provider role and is solely related to the provided resource.

For example, one interviewee explained that when sharing his car, he “would have to book my own times when I want to use the car myself. Then, you don’t have that flexibility anymore, that you usually have when owning a car”. This potential inaccessibility of an owned resource in case of a spontaneous event was frequently mentioned to deter participation. Furthermore, the necessity to meet period arrangements was perceived to reduce personal flexibility in comparison to owning the respective resource. One interviewee illustrated this aspect for the case of ride sharing: “I don’t want to arrange with others. [...] It might be that I need more or less time in the morning until I’m prepared, then I just want to drive to work and not have to wait for someone”. Dependence on others was also frequently mentioned from a consumer’s perspective. In that regard, another interviewee, referring to ride sharing, mentioned: “You are not so flexible anymore because you have to adhere to a place, similar to traveling by bus or train”. One interviewee explained the concern of losing flexibility very comprehensively in the context of participating in ride sharing as a consumer: The rides are most likely set on an agreed point of time. Then, I have to consider whether, exemplary, 11 o’clock works for me. However, if I then say that I would rather like to drive at 7am in the morning [...] I would probably not do it. Simply, because I want to maintain flexibility”.

Lack of Trust

Lack of trust refers to the concern of an individual to be vulnerable to the actions of others. Many interviewees expressed concerns about potentially harmful actions by others. This barrier concerns both, consumer and provider and is related to the platform and other peer participants. The cause of this barrier is generally based on scarce information availability on other peer participants.

Regarding the platform, the trustworthiness of online reviews and rating systems that are provided on the platform was often questioned. One interviewee simply explained that reviews of sharing economy accommodation could not be trusted as much as professional hotel reviews. Other non-participants gave more reasoning for their lack of trust by claiming: “people can fake profiles” and “other people have rated these persons; I have to get a picture of the person myself”. Consequently, many of the interviewees concluded that “the online profiles are not enough, you can never trust them 100%”. Much of the platform related lack of trust can be attributed to a lack of trust towards other peer participants of the sharing economy. Interviewees frequently perceived the thought of strangers using their resources as frightening. One interviewee summarized that “there is just no general trust”. Another interviewee explained in more detailed that “one can never know what kind of people they are and theoretically, they can do whatever they want”. The use of other person’s resources was also seen skeptically as many would not trust strangers when sharing resources simultaneously (e.g., ride sharing). Likewise, another interviewee mentioned a lack of trust towards strangers in the case of sharing her internet and Wi-Fi connection: “as I said, the security but also trust, that the person who is using my Wi-Fi acts responsively and does not do anything illegal”. Generally, our analysis showed that lack of trust is mainly based on low information availability. One interviewee summed this aspect up as: “I don’t know his/her past, his/her way of living, his/her attitude ... I would be too afraid”.

Performance Risk

Performance risk refers to the concern that the provided resource may not meet the expected level of performance or quality. This barrier only affects participation as a consumer and is only related to the provided resource.

Many interviewees were unsure if the shared resource would actually match the descriptions and expectations. One interviewee explained her doubts on whether an apartment would actually look as promised on Airbnb. Furthermore, this barrier was described as an uncertainty of what to expect. Interviewees claimed missing standards to be a reason for such uncertainty. One interviewee said that he would rather stay in hotels than in privately shared apartments by explaining: “You are used to certain standards regarding hotels. There are hotel chains. Regarding private apartments, you never know what
Barriers to Participation in the Sharing Economy

standards you have”. Performance risk also plays a role in sharing instances that comprise a service. Regarding ride sharing for instance, many people questioned the ability of the provider’s driving ability and fear that “it could end in whatever way, even in an accident!”. Again, missing quality standards are a main cause for in service comprising sharing activities. One interviewee explained in the context of ride sharing: “You do not know how he is driving […] you do not have to fulfil any criteria as a driver, everyone can drive everyone”.

Physical Risk

Physical risk refers to the concern that the use of sharing economy services is accompanied by a risk to one’s safety. This barrier affects participation as a consumer and a provider. Physical risk is related to the provided resource and other peer participants of the sharing economy.

Some saw missing security standards of accessed resources to be a potential threat to their health. Missing smoke detectors were thought of as one example that might harm personal health. One interviewee explained that “one does not want to risk one’s life, to exaggerate a little, because of a missing smoke detector”. Risk to one’s safety was also perceived through side-characteristics of recourses. For example, another interviewee used the surrounding neighborhood of a rented apartment as an example for such a potentially dangerous side-characteristic. She explained: “depending on the place I reside; I would not know the whether the environment is safe”. Providing resources to strangers was also seen as potentially harming personal health. Especially in the case of simultaneously sharing a resource, potential hazardous behavior of others was seen as the main source of physical risk. For example, one interviewee said that she would feel to compromise her safety when strangers are staying in her apartment. Another interviewee complemented this aspect in the context of ride sharing by explaining: “As an example, my parents told me in the past to be cautious about using BlaBlaCar und even recommended me to not drive with strangers”. Others compared this aspect to “security issues of hitch riding”.

Privacy Risk

Privacy risk refers to the concern that engaging in the sharing economy results in a loss of privacy. Many non-participants perceive sharing to constitute a loss of privacy through the exposure of personal data and private items. This barrier affects participation as a consumer and provider and is related to the platform and other peer participants.

Regarding the platform, many interviewees expressed their concern of disclosing too much personal information through registering on a sharing economy platform. As on interviewee noted: “I would not register myself... I do not want other organizations to know everything about me. It is enough that Facebook and Google know everything!”. Regarding other peer participants, many non-participants perceived the use of other participant’s resources as an unpleasant invasion of other participant’s privacy. One interviewee described it as “disconcerting to sleep in a bed or on a sofa that one does not own and does not relate to”. Likewise, most interviewees said not to be willing to share their resources as that would lead to strangers invading their privacy. Another interviewee explained this aspect concisely: “my private environment is something that I want to keep private”. The thought of strangers seeing personal photos, sleeping in the provider’s bed or having access to confidential documents was frequently perceived as discomforting.

Process Risk

Process risk refers to the concern that engaging in sharing economy activities involves economic or legal risks. This barrier affects participation as a consumer and as a provider. Process risk is related to the platform and the provided resource.

Regarding the platform, most non-participants were unsure whether the owner of a resource or the consumer of a resource carries liability in the case of a damage event and more so important, whether the intermediary platform would resolve any dispute in an agreeable way. One interviewee expressed his concern that “the platforms evade their responsibility”. Consequently, many non-participants are wondering “who is liable?” in the case of a dispute with another peer participant. This uncertainty deterred participation for many interviewees. For example, one interviewee concluded that he “would never share his Wi-Fi solely due to legal concerns”. Consequently, potential problems with personal insurance were frequently raised. Interviewees had concerns to be held liable when providing a resource as well as when
undesirable social interactions. This barrier affects participation as a consumer and as a provider. The barrier is solely related to other peer participants of the sharing economy.

Some interviewees chose not to engage in sharing economy activities to avoid potential social interactions. Others were not generally reluctant towards social interactions; however, they saw pleasure in such interactions as depending on the personality type of the peer participant they are interacting with. Hence, as the peer participant is unknown prior to the sharing activity, some did not want to take the risk and refrained from participating. Considering participation in ride-sharing, one interviewee explained: “I believe that when I would drive somewhere for about an hour and I would have to constantly talk so a stranger, I don’t know if that would be so cool, depending on the character of the person”. Regarding ride sharing, another interviewee noted: “I would not like to share a car during the ride ... BlaBlaCar makes it so that you usually drive with strangers. I would not like that”. Further, he explained “it is a social aspect, because I prefer driving alone or with people I know. I don’t want him/her to talk. I don’t want him/her to talk to me and I don’t want him/her to sit next to me and not talk. So, I drive with friends or alone!”.

**Discussion**

This study empirically examines the barriers to participation in the sharing economy. We consider participation as a provider of a resource and as a consumer of a resource, as participation of both roles is a necessity for the success of sharing economy businesses (Matzner et al. 2015). Our findings show the existence of nine barriers to participation in the sharing economy. Barriers decrease the likelihood of participation or even preclude participation in many cases. Thus, fostering certain motivational factors will not be sufficient for a substantial increase in participation if existing barriers are not counteracted (cf. Herzberg et al. 1959). Counteracting barriers can therefore be a prerequisite before positive motivational factors can cause an increase in participation. Compared to previous studies (Hawlitschek et al. 2016; Tussyadiah 2015), we found two additional barriers to participation in the sharing economy, namely exploitation and undesired social interaction. These barriers have not been identified in extant literature. Interestingly, social interaction was found to be a barrier for many people despite often being regarded as a positive motivator towards participation (e.g. Hawlitschek et al. 2016). This indicates that at least some factors are not to be regarded as a sole motivator respectively barrier for all (potential) participants in the sharing economy. Through our qualitative research approach, this study extends our knowledge of existing barriers to participation in the sharing economy by providing a more comprehensive set of relevant barriers and by providing in-depth insights of these barriers. We further show how the nine barriers relate to three main elements of the sharing economy and thereby refine the conceptualizations of barriers. For example, privacy has previously been conceptualized as the disclosure of personal data online, relating to the platform (e.g. Hawlitschek et al. 2016; Zhang et al. 2016). Our findings however show, that this barrier does not only relate to the platform but also to the resource. Non-participants have been shown to be highly concerned about other people invading their privacy through the disclosure of private resources (e.g., pictures, documents, bed).

This study has several implications for research. Prior research has mainly examined participation in the sharing economy from the perspective of positive motivation, focusing on drivers. However, barriers can have a strong effect on an individual's decision to participate. We provide a model for barriers to participation in the sharing economy. The model considers to which roles (consumer or provider) the barriers apply and to which element of the sharing economy the barriers relate to. We extend the literature by identifying an exhaustive set of barriers and by providing in-depth insights on these barriers. Our model
Barriers to Participation in the Sharing Economy

This study has several implications for practice. The identification and qualitative analysis of nine barriers to participation can help practitioners to design platforms and processes that counteract these barriers and allow to effectively foster participation. We suggest practitioners to consider the elements of the sharing economy that the barriers relate to. Practitioners should not only focus on designing their online platforms but also focus on the underlying processes of the whole sharing activity. That is, our findings provide an orientation for practitioners to purposefully design platforms and processes that take the elements of the sharing economy and the corresponding barriers into account. For example, a streamlined registration process of the online platform could counteract the high effort expectancy of potential participants in regard to the platform. More comprehensive information on the quality and performance conditions of provided resources could counteract the performance risk that non-participants currently perceive in regard to the provided resources. More comprehensive information about other peer participants could counteract the severe lack of trust of non-participants in regard to other peer participants. Further, the comprehensive understanding of barriers can aid practitioners in effective advertisements and customer communication. The findings of this study support emerging sharing economy businesses that focus on generating the indispensable initial user base. Attracting a critical mass of users is often considered the biggest challenges for emerging sharing economy businesses (Chasin et al. 2018).

There are some limitations to this study. Based on our purposive sampling strategy, we only conducted interviews with individuals that have not or not yet participated in the sharing economy. This sample might be considered as consisting of the “extreme cases”, in that at least one barrier exists for each individual that completely precludes his/her participation, regardless of any motivational factors. While this sample is important to study, it does not cover all relevant groups that are affected by barriers. Future research might consider a different sample. For example, individuals that participate as a consumer but not as a provider. Further, some people might be participating in ride-sharing but are unwilling to participate in accommodation-based sharing activities. Thus, future research could examine the role of the resource type with regards to the barriers. Likewise, our sample makes it difficult to study the decision-making process of participants that weigh motivational factors and barriers against each other. However, our study provides a basis for such analyses by providing a comprehensive set of barriers and in-depth insights that future studies may use.

Conclusion

This paper provides an identification and analysis of barriers to participation in the sharing economy. We conducted semi-structured interviews and used grounded theory techniques to identify and analyze barriers that prevent individuals from participating in the sharing economy either as a consumer or as a provider. We so found nine barriers that were found to prevent individuals from participating: Effort Expectancy, Exploitation, Inflexibility, Lack of Trust, Performance Risk, Physical Risk, Privacy Risk, Process Risk, and Undesired Social Interaction. We further examined to what element of the sharing economy (platform, resource, peer participants) these barriers relate to.

REFERENCES


Hawlitschek, F., Teubner, T., and Gimpel, H. 2016. "Understanding the Sharing Economy -- Drivers and Impediments for Participation in Peer-to-Peer Rental," *Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)*.


