Properly Defining the Sharing Economy

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

To completely understand a phenomenon we must first define it; unfortunately, there is not one agreed upon definition of “Sharing Economy.” In addition, there are at least 17 different terms referring to the Sharing Economy (Dredge and Gymóthy 2015), while a preliminary literature review uncovered 48 different definitions of “sharing economy” alone. The dictionary definition of sharing economy is “economic activity that involves individuals buying or selling usually temporary access to goods or services especially as arranged through an online company or organization” (“Sharing Economy | Definition of Sharing Economy by Merriam-Webster” 2017). Sundararajan (2016) prefers use “Access Economy,” describing it as “the value in taking underutilized assets and making them accessible to a community, leading to a reduced need for ownership of those assets” (Sundararajan 2016, p. 30). Some prefer “Collaborative Consumption,” defined as “the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services” (Hamari 2013, p. 3). Less used, is the term “Access-Based Consumption,” defined as “people coordinating the acquisition or distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation” (Barnes and Mattsson 2017, p. 282). An even simpler definition is given to the term “Access Economy,” defined as “provides temporary access to consumption resources for a fee or for free without transfer of ownership” (Eckhardt and Bardhi 2016, p. 210). With so many terms and definitions of the same phenomenon, there is an opportunity to develop one that is all-encompassing, which would help develop proper boundaries for the phenomenon. We propose to do this using textual analysis on the definitions in the most cited publications and books.

References


