Determinants of Online Collaborative Consumption Behavior: The Application of the Theory of Reasoned Action in the Context of Apparel

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Recently, collaborative consumption (CC) or the sharing economy, defined as “[T]he peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services (Belk, 2010 as cited in Hamari, Sjöklint, and Ukkonen, 2016) is impacting the fashion industry with emerging companies such as Rent the Runway and ThredUp. As such, various mainstream retailers (e.g., Patagonia, Ann Taylor) are beginning to change the way they do business in order to account for the growing popularity of collaborate consumption (CC). Keyes (2018) reported that growth in the resale market is expected to increase 15% between 2017 and 2022, which is notably higher than the 2% expected growth for total retail in same period. PricewaterCooper (PwC) reported that revenues from the CC industry are expected to reach $15 billion by the year 2015. Researchers have contended that the dialectical perspective of shopping (provisional and experiential orientations) may help explain the growing consumer interest in collaborative consumption (Bardhi and Arnold, 2005). In addition, considerable literature suggests the predictive utility of consumers’ motivations on their online shopping behaviors. Given the aforementioned trends, the current study employs the theory of reasoned action (TRA) as a theoretical underpinning to explore the impact of consumers’ collaborative consumption motivations on their intentions to engage in online collaborative consumption for apparel products. This understanding is particularly relevant because it can help both conventional and CC retailers to attract and maintain customers in this lucrative market.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Ertz, Durif, and Arcand (2016) describe CC as “the set of resource circulation systems which enable consumers to both obtain and provide valuable resources or services, temporarily or permanently, through direct interaction with other consumers or through a mediator” (p. 7) and a mediator in this context includes websites, companies, or organizations that can act as a third party between consumers that are participating in CC exchange. CC includes two methods of exchange; access over ownership and transfer of ownership (Hamari et al., 2015). Researchers also have examined consumer motivations to participate in CC and found that utilitarian, experiential, protester (i.e., anti-commerciality), and spiritual (i.e., ethics and morality) motivations are determinants of consumer CC behaviors (Ertz et al., 2016; Hwang & Griffith, 2017). According to the TRA, a person’s volitional behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform such behavior and that intention is in turn a function of his/her attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Volition is the act of making a choice or decision and subjective norms are perceived behavioral expectations we believe those who are
important to us think that we should or should not perform such behavior. In general individuals characteristically have a motivation to comply with these real or imaged pressures by matching their actual behavior with the perceived expectations. In addition, based on TRA, a person’s attitude can change over time; thus, if attitude changes, so will the behavioral intent. We proposed that individuals’ CC motivations are expected to influence their attitudes towards CC which in turn influence their intentions to engage in CC. As such, we propose that:

H1: Consumers’ CC motivations will significantly affect their attitudes towards CC.
H2: Consumers’ attitudes towards CC will significantly affect their intention to engage in online CC.
H3: Subjective norms will significantly affect their intention to engage in online CC.

Methodology and Results

An online survey was administered via Qualtrics to participants being voluntary, resulting in 162 valid responses. Of these, 65% were female and approximately 80% were aged between 18 to 30 years old. In addition, 40% reported their annual household income of more than $80,000. All measures were adapted from the existing scales (e.g., Ertz, Durif, & Arcand, 2016; Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann, 2003) and were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale. A two-step structural-equation approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was performed to establish measurement and structural model. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on all seven 26-item constructs based on the covariance matrix of the items, with the LISREL 9.30 maximum likelihood estimation. In addition, for a single-item scale (i.e., subjective norm), we followed Jöreskog and Sörbom’s (1993) recommendation to establish a conservative error variance for each single-item scale. Results showed that the standardized factor loading values of the indicators for each construct were all statistically significant. This demonstrates that each factor has convergent validity. Discriminant validity was also supported in that the squared correlation of each construct was less than the corresponding AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Considering the evidence of reliability and validity, it was concluded that the measurement model is reliable and valid. After the measurement model was confirmed, structural equation model (SEM) was executed to assess the conceptualized model and proposed hypotheses. According to SEM results, the chi-square value for the conceptual model was $\chi^2 = 666.01$ (df = 284, p < .001) with a $\chi^2$/df = 2.35, CFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.077, IFI = 0.91, and TLI = 0.90, suggesting that the hypothesized structural relationships fit the data satisfactory.

Each proposed relationship was examined based on path significance. In testing H1, it is evident that consumers’ collaborative consumption motivations related to experiential, protestor, and spiritual motivations had a significant, positive effect on their attitudes towards collaborative consumption ($\gamma_{12} = 0.26$, t = 3.01**; $\gamma_{13} = 0.20$, t = 2.49*; $\gamma_{14} = 0.21$, t = 2.70*; respectively). Thus, H1 was partially supported. In testing H2, results revealed that consumers’ attitudes towards collaborative consumption had a significant, positive effect on their intention to engage in online collaborative consumption ($\beta_{21} = 0.36$, t = 5.38***), supporting H2. Lastly, results showed that subjective norms also had a significant, positive effect on their intention to engage in online collaborative consumption ($\gamma_{15} = 0.45$, t = 6.68***). Thus, H3 was also supported.

Discussion and Conclusions
The study’s results provide interesting insights into the relationships among consumers’ CC motivations, attitudes toward CC, subjective norms, and intentions to engage in online CC. The TRA proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was successfully applied to the context of the study. Our results showed that experiential, protester, and spiritual motivations positively influenced attitudes towards CC, which in turn positively influenced their intentions to engage in online CC. Results further revealed that subjective norms positively influenced intentions to engage in online CC as well. The study’s results not only contribute to existing CC and TRA literature but also offers practical implications to both CC retailers and conventional retailers in that both types of retailers could use this information to help identify gaps or areas within their retail models that should be changed in order to appeal to online apparel buyers that are motivated by experiential, protester, and spiritual motivations. This research recognizes a few limitations to our study (e.g., small sample size). Cross-cultural studies are encouraged with a broader range of participants. Examining the differences between participating in CC online vs. buying and selling previously owned fashion items at local second-hand stores is suggested.
References:


