

Introduction to the Mini-Track “The Sharing Economy”

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Sharing is ingrained in the fabric of society and efficient access to goods and services constitutes a major force driving much of the economic activity today. With greater connectivity brought about by the proliferation of internetworking technologies, it has become much easier for individuals to circumvent spatial and temporal barriers during interactions, thereby giving rise to a novel Sharing Economy that is structured around the disintermediation of conventional channels of commerce in the exchange of both tangible and intangible resources. The sharing economy has gained notable attention within mainstream media as a new economic paradigm that leverages peer-to-peer technological platforms to facilitate exchange of resources among individuals who are joined via fluid relational networks. Almost overnight, numerous peer-to-peer platforms—in the likes of crowd-working (e.g., Airbnb, Uber, Amazon Mechanical Turk, E-Lance, Fiverr), co-innovation (e.g., Mindmixer, Social Innovator), crowd-funding (e.g., Kickstarter, Indiegogo), crowd-searching (e.g., Crowdfynd, CrowdSearching), and crowd-voting (e.g., California Report Card, Threadless) — have sprung up to facilitate both individuals and/or organizations to pool resources in resolving problems.

While there are many practitioners who have prophesized the sharing economy as a game-changer for how organizations and society function, there are also a number of detractors who questioned the uncertain and potentially disruptive future that is brought about by such peer-to-peer exchanges. Critics have painted a dismal picture of the sharing economy as a means for individuals and/or firms to dodge proper regulations and live beyond their means, which in turn contributes to doomsday scenarios of massive job displacements and spending habits detrimental to society. In light of the opportunities and challenges posed by the sharing economy, there is a clear urgency for a systematic and thorough scrutiny of how value creation and appropriation can take place within such economic environments while minimizing its negative impact to society.

The aim of this mini-track is to sensitize both academics and practitioners to the latest trends and developments in the sharing economy in order to determine how value can be created and appropriated within this novel economic environment powered primarily by technology. This year, four papers were selected for inclusion in the proceedings.

The first paper, titled “Cognitive Challenges on Digital Exchange Platforms: Exploring Misspecifications of Trust”, by Mareike Mohlmann and Sirkka L. Jarvenpaa, identifies four trust misspecifications in the context of digital exchange platform, Airbnb, and discusses how characteristics of digital exchange platforms may alleviate the misspecifications.

The second paper, titled “Impact of Perceived Value on Customer Satisfaction and Continuance Intention of Bicycle Sharing Service”, by Zhen Shao, Yanning Guo, and Chaoyi Ge, explores the value streams of bicycle sharing services. Drawing on the value creation theoretical framework, this paper develops a research model to examine the impact of four value streams on customer satisfaction with and continued intention to use bicycle sharing services. It also reports an online survey of users of a popular bicycle sharing service in China conducted to test the hypothesized relationships.

The third paper is titled “Of Money and Morals - The Contingent Effect of Monetary Incentives in Peer-to-Peer Volunteer Computing”, by Janick Edinger, Laura Marie Edinger-Schons, Dominik Schäfer, Aleksander Stelmazczyk, and Christian Becker. Focusing on resource providers in peer-to-peer computing resources sharing networks, this paper draws on Relational Models Theory and Motivation Crowding Theory to develop a research model that examines the three-way interaction between monetary incentives, and social relationships. The paper also reports an experiment conducted to validate the hypothesized relationships.

The last paper, titled “The Influence of Legitimacy on User Behavior in the Sharing Economy”, by Christine Auer, draws on literature on legitimacy to investigate the legitimacy of sharing services as perceived by consumers and how it shapes their behavior. The paper reports the results of an empirical study (characterized by an iteration of focus group studies and interviews), which revealed the pragmatic, moral, and cognitive antecedents for using the sharing services and those for not such services.

We thank the authors for submitting their work to the Sharing Economy minitrack. Their research endeavors help identify and address knowledge gaps in how emergent technologies are shaping the access and sharing of resources within online peer-to-peer communities. We hope you enjoy the papers and the authors’ presentations at the conference.