

# Characteristics of platform providers in collaborative consumption: a derivation of archetypes

Collaborative  
consumption  
archetypes

3087

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to investigate different types of platform providers (PPs) to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and underlying logic of this group within collaborative consumption (CC). As CC occurs with three groups of actors (PP, peer service provider and customer) and is predominantly viewed from the customer perspective, this study offers insights from the under-researched PP perspective.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This research applies a multiple case study approach and analyzes descriptively and thematically 92 cases of CC PPs gathered through the Crunchbase database.

**Findings** – The authors derive four archetypes of CC PPs, namely, the hedonist, functionalist, environmentalist and connector, that differ in their offered values, dominating motives and activities across industries.

**Research limitations/implications** – The authors conceptualize CC by clearly describing the four archetypes and their characteristics. However, further research would benefit from including databases other than Crunchbase.

**Practical implications** – PPs need to understand their value offerings and customer preferences to develop convincing value propositions and offer engaging activities. PPs would benefit from a more active social media presence to build strong relations with customers and peer service providers to effectively communicate their values.

**Originality/value** – The paper is pioneering as it encompasses the perspective of CC PPs and operationalizes the concept of CC. The authors address the lack of research on CC by conducting an extensive case study.

**Keywords** Value, Collaborative consumption, Activities, Motive, Archetypes, Platform provider

**Paper type** Original article

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*Erratum:* It has come to the attention of the publisher that the article, Lange, F., Peters, A., Kanbach, D.K. and Kraus, S. (2023), “Characteristics of platform providers in collaborative consumption: a derivation of archetypes”, *Management Decision*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-04-2023-0653>, omitted the secondary affiliations of Dominik K. Kanbach and Sascha Kraus. This error was introduced during typesetting and has been corrected in the online version of the article. The publisher sincerely apologises for the error and for any inconvenience caused.



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## Introduction

The concept of sharing offers new forms of business models to solve the issue of resource scarcity (Belk, 2014; Ćinjurević *et al.*, 2019; Ertz *et al.*, 2019; Reuschl *et al.*, 2022). Collaborative consumption (CC) is access-based consumption that provides one party with resources offered by another through an online platform without the transfer of ownership rights over the specific resource (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Hamari *et al.*, 2015; Ertz *et al.*, 2019). For the purposes of the current study, CC implies three criteria: a triadic relationship among stakeholders, no transfer of ownership and the application of a market mechanism to the exchange of goods or services (Benoit *et al.*, 2017).

CC has recently gained attention from researchers and practitioners as it is associated with growth opportunities, new markets, digital disruption and answers to the challenges caused by Covid-19 (Anwar, 2022; Schiavone *et al.*, 2021). As a postmodernist concept (Davis, 2013), CC describes a state in which goods and services are shared rather than owned.

Economic, social, environmental and technological factors favor the dissemination and evolution of CC, in particular, the advancement of technologies (Barnes and Mattsson, 2017); indeed, some studies suggest that CC is only possible with the use of technology (Hamari *et al.*, 2015). Air BnB, Uber and Fiverr are prominent examples of the business model innovation of CC. Uber, disrupted the traditional taxi industry by revolutionizing transportation access via the use of technology, in this case an app through which customers book services conveniently. This example clarifies the triadic relationship of stakeholders in CC, namely, between the platform provider (PP) (Uber), peer service provider (Uber driver) and customer (Bhalla, 2021). As PP, Uber not only enables the connection between the peer service provider who refers to the party in the concept of cc providing a service to the customer for the exchange of monetary compensation (Benoit *et al.*, 2017) and customer, but also manages the assets of peer service providers who cater to transportation needs. The PP's role is crucial within CC as it enables the service provider and customer to connect and gives customers access to products and services.

Social factors, such customer preferences, especially the changing consumption patterns and lifestyles of consumers in the Western world, also require new forms of consumption (Rifkin, 2000; Chen, 2009; Intindola *et al.*, 2016). Covid-19 impacted consumer behavior (Bhalla, 2021) and challenged the development of business models (Seiferlein *et al.*, 2023; Clauss *et al.*, 2022; Kraus *et al.*, 2022a), promoting further discussion of CC. Among the challenges encountered by PPs, lack of awareness and acceptance (Laukkanen and Patala, 2014), technological and regulatory boundaries (Retamal, 2019) and uncertainty regarding cash flows and liquidity (Vezzoli *et al.*, 2015) pose significant obstacles.

An attitude-behavior gap in CC exists whereby consumers perceive CC as positive but do not engage actively in it (Hamari *et al.*, 2015; Bhalla, 2021). Thus, the customer's attitude impacts their behavior, that is, the execution of an action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991; Bhalla, 2021), which has a significant impact on PPs since businesses need to develop and build up a strong (brand) attitude to stimulate customer engagement (Bhalla, 2021). Several studies reveal that sustainability is not the most robust predictor of participation in CC (Hamari *et al.*, 2015; Bhalla, 2021); it may impact the customer's attitude, but this impact does not necessarily translate into action (Hamari *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, PPs must establish a strong attitude by effectively communicating the impactful values they provide to customers to persuade them to participate (Bhalla, 2021).

Since previous research has achieved the first milestones in the realm of customer participation in CC, our study shifts the focus toward PPs and how they incorporate and communicate values to incentivize customers and peer service providers to engage in CC. It remains unclear in the current literature whether PPs' offers effectively add value for customers and communicate such value efficiently.

Generally, researchers stress introducing new value propositions enhanced with a variety of features (Kraus *et al.*, 2022b). PPs' value propositions are heterogenous, implying that PPs can choose among different position options. A differentiated understanding of PP types is necessary to adequately understand how to engage the customer and peer service provider to participate in CC by communicating value (Benoit *et al.*, 2017). Firstly, as PP platforms deal with two types of stakeholders, a deeper understanding is needed of their communicated value propositions and business models (Benoit *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, we can gain insight by examining the various motives driving PPs' business models. Secondly, understanding the variety of PP types and their interactions with customers, as well as how they incorporate value propositions, is essential to foster positive customer attitudes, which is a success factor for PPs (Bhalla, 2021). Consequently, the current study introduces the following research question (RQ) to holistically address the research field:

*RQ.* What types of PPs exist in CC?

This article thus responds to the need for more qualitative studies in the research field (Lindblom *et al.*, 2018) and a deeper, more differentiated understanding (Ertz *et al.*, 2019), especially through the not-yet-researched lens of PPs, by comprehensively exploring the values and characteristics of PPs and thus operationalizing the concept of CC.

To appropriately address the RQ, this study took a multiple case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989) and analyzed 92 active CC startups worldwide. We configured four archetypes of CC PPs according to their offered values, dominating motives and activities across industries and make recommendations for practitioners for each archetype.

### **Theoretical background to collaborative consumption**

The advent of CC has stimulated changes in traditional practices and fostered innovative approaches that may shape the future of businesses (Barnes and Mattsson, 2017; Ertz *et al.*, 2019). Any investigation of CC must consider the sharing economy (SE), a widely discussed concept, since the two concepts refer to parallel and overlapping research streams (Sánchez-Pérez *et al.*, 2021). To some extent, SE and CC are used interchangeably in the literature (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Similarities exist between the ideas of sharing goods in a broader sense (Hamari *et al.*, 2015), but differences appear when definitions of the two are reviewed (Luri Minami *et al.*, 2021) and should not be disregarded. Firstly, the concepts mainly differ in terms of the underlying logic of monetary compensation. CC, unlike the SE, implies a monetary compensation for the exchange of goods and services. Secondly, doing business in the SE implies a transfer of ownership rights, whereas the opposite applies in CC. Thirdly, forms of SE usually take place locally, while CC can have a local or global focus. Fourthly, the stakeholder relation in CC is triadic, whereas SE predominantly focuses on two parties. Lastly, SE relies on a social mechanism and CC on a market mechanism as means of mediation (Luri Minami *et al.*, 2021). These significant differences underlie the use of CC as an autonomous concept in the current study, as elaborated below.

CC has attracted growing research attention in recent years due to changing customer preferences and lifestyle (Barnes and Mattsson, 2017; Anwar, 2022). The first study on CC dates to 1978 and, *inter alia*, proposed a first definition (Felson and Spaeth, 1978). Interestingly, the more recent papers by Benoit *et al.* (2017) and Ertz *et al.* (2019) appeared close together and both investigated CC from a conceptual perspective.

Table 1 summarizes the differences and commonalities in the various definitions of CC in the literature (e.g. Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Hamari *et al.*, 2015; Belk, 2014).

As shown in Table 1, Benoit *et al.* (2017) ascribe three characteristics to CC: "(1) the number and type of actors, (2), the nature of the exchange, and (3) the directness of exchange" (p. 220). The three actors are (1) the PP offering exchange, (2) the customer looking for access to assets and (3) the peer service provider enabling this access (Benoit *et al.*, 2017). The peer service

**Table 1.**  
Definition of CC in the  
literature following  
Ertz *et al.* (2019)

Reference	Definition of CC	Web-facilitated	Offline ownership	Transfer of ownership	Free exchanges	Comparison criteria		
						Company – owned resources	Market mechanism	Triadic stakeholder relationship
Felson and Spaeth (1978, p. 614)	“Those events in which one or more persons consume economic goods or services in the process engaging in joint activities with one or more others.”	X			X			
Botsman and Rogers (2010, p. xv)	“The rapid explosion in swapping, sharing, bartering, trading and renting being reinvented through the latest technologies and peer-to-peer marketplaces in ways and on a scale never possible before.”	X	X	X	X			X
Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012, p. 881)	“Access-based consumption as transactions that may be market mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place.”	X	X		X			
Belk (2014, p. 1597)	“People coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation.”	X				X	X	
Hamari <i>et al.</i> (2015, p. 2)	“Peer-to-peer based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services.”	X		X				X
European Parliament (2016, p. 11)	The use of digital platforms or portals to reduce the scale for viable hiring transactions or viable participation in consumer hiring markets [...] and thereby reduce the extent to which assets are under-utilised.”	X				X	X	X
Benoit <i>et al.</i> (2017, p. 220)	The researcher describes CC via three characteristics, precisely “(1) the number and type of actors, (2), the nature of the exchange, and the (3) directness of exchange.”	X		X			X	X

**Source(s):** Created by author

provider acts as facilitator, who distributes the products or services and allows the customer the consumption of the product or service (Ertz *et al.* 2019). The second characteristic, the *nature of exchange*, implies the transfer of property rights rather than of ownership. Basically, customers receive access to intangible or tangible resources through monetary compensation for goods and services (Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010; Haase and Kleinaltenkamp, 2011; Benoit *et al.*, 2017). Benoit *et al.* (2017) also researched the motives, activities and resources and capabilities of the three groups of actors to give a nuanced understanding of how each group engages and collaborates (Benoit *et al.*, 2017).

The current paper clusters the motives of PPs into the following sub-categories: economic gains, innovating and reacting to the market and building beneficial relationships. PPs' activities may become apparent through their presentation of their brand and value proposition, creating trust and reducing risk, shaping and communicating social norms and practices (between customer and peer service provider) and smoothing of resources. PPs possess resources such as market knowledge, the network of peer service provider and customers, the power to promote and protect CC and stakeholder relations (Benoit *et al.*, 2017).

Ertz *et al.* (2019) provided a comprehensive perspective on CC by supplying a conceptual framework, several aspects of which are applicable even within the broader view taken by the current study. The first dimension identified by Ertz *et al.* (2019) was pricing regimes, which range from free to at a cost, while the second dimension, channels, ranges from pure offline to pure online.

After describing the theoretical pillars of the concept of CC, we now briefly outline the theoretical field of values for CC. Within the triadic stakeholder relationship, much research has focused on the motivations, intentions and attitudes of customers to engage in CC (e.g. McArthur, 2015; Möhlmann, 2015; Böcker and Meelen, 2017). A customer value proposition allows the PP to communicate how it aims to provide value to customers as well as peer service providers (Anderson *et al.*, 2006; Payne *et al.*, 2017) with *value* understood to comprise the relation of what is given and what is received based on the assessment of a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988). Studies have explored how perceived values influence the customer's motivation to participate in CC (Hamari *et al.*, 2015; Ćinjurević *et al.*, 2019). Since the value proposition of a PP in CC needs to address two stakeholder groups, it is of particular interest to understand the different types of PPs based on their communicated value.

## Methodology

### *Research setting*

To answer our RQ, we followed an inductive and explorative research approach based on multiple case studies to achieve generalizable results (Yin, 2018). The multiple case study design is a well-established qualitative research method that allows for a rich and detailed examination and enables researchers to understand the real-life dynamics of a phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989), gain a deeper understanding of a situation and identify commonalities across different cases (Yin, 2018). The approach enabled us to perform a detailed analysis of types of PP in CC and their different business components. The lack of comprehensive research on the landscape of CC PP and limited understanding of patterns between motives, values, activities and resources made a qualitative approach ideal as such an approach enables the building of theories about a relatively unknown underlying phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### *Data collection*

Our sample consists of 92 case studies selected via a structured approach, which, to our knowledge, makes our study one of the most comprehensive in the CC literature, especially from the PP perspective.

We used Crunchbase, a comprehensive database delivering best-in-class live data for start-ups, to gather actual data of CC PP (Crunchbase, 2023) having defined the following

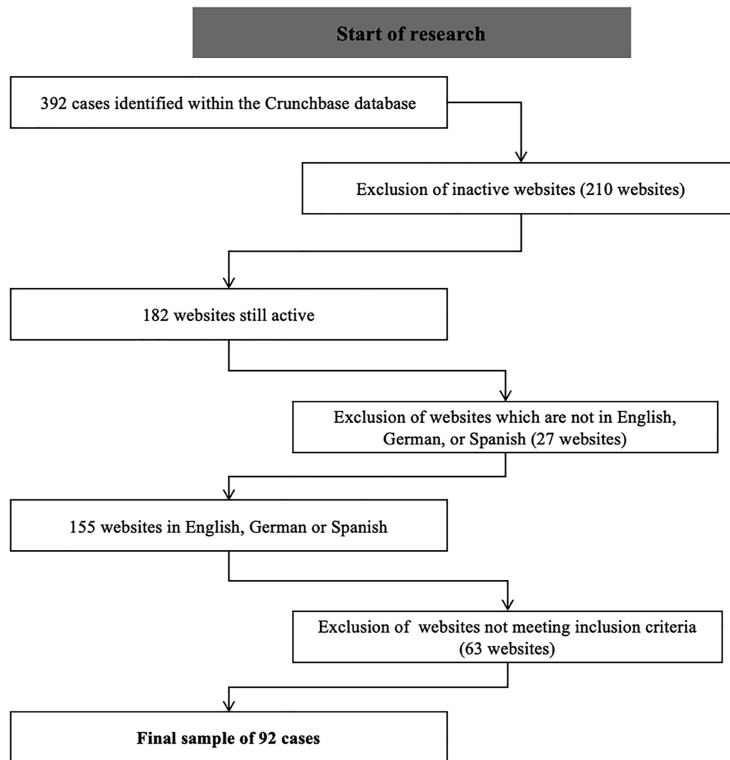
inclusion criteria for PPs based on the literature: (1) be of a triadic nature, (2) imply a market mechanism and (3) have a type of exchange that does not include transfer of ownership rights (Benoit *et al.*, 2017). PPs meeting all three criteria were included. Furthermore, only websites in English, German, or Spanish were considered.

A total sample of 392 CC providers was identified from Crunchbase. After review, we assumed that 210 were websites of companies that no longer existed, reducing our sample to 182 cases of which 27 were further excluded due to language barriers and 63 for not meeting our inclusion criteria, shrinking the final sample to 92 cases. We incorporated websites into our analysis that exhibit a triadic relationship among the stakeholders involved. Furthermore, we encompassed websites wherein the transfer of ownership of products and services was not executed. Lastly, we considered websites that employ a market mechanism. The data collection process is shown in Figure 1.

Overall, we triangulated our findings with five semi-structured interviews with CC experts that also broadened our overall understanding of the field. Semi-structured interviews enable a rich portrayal of the motives and value propositions of decision makers, enabling researchers to gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009).

#### *Data analysis*

The analysis of this research comprises two parts. Firstly, a descriptive analysis was conducted to gain an overview of the overall developments of PP in CC. Secondly, a thematic analysis was



**Figure 1.**  
Data collection process

Source(s): Created by author

performed, including an analysis of PPs by collecting information from their websites, social media and relevant news articles. Thereafter, the authors discussed their findings until a consensus was reached. The authors considered the following aspects: (1) year of foundation, (2) country of foundation, (3) industry in which active, (4) type of exchange, (5) pricing strategy, (6) channel, (7) type of business, (8) social media presence, (9) motives driving the business model, (10) overarching activities realizing the business model and (11) resources offered for the customer. In the next step, the researchers identified *values* paired with the features of the PP.

The use of a pattern logic allowed us to structure and decomplexify the analysis process. Following [Amshoff et al.'s \(2015\)](#) definition, patterns were considered to be combinations of configuration options or recurring themes observed across cases. Therefore, a pattern logic was applied to identify recurring themes and develop four archetypes based on the interrelation between motives, activities and values.

During the thematic analysis, 26 values were identified as communicated by PPs and categorized into overarching categories, namely, economic, functional, social, hedonic and symbolic values. These findings were then matched with the identified motives and industries to uncover recurring patterns.

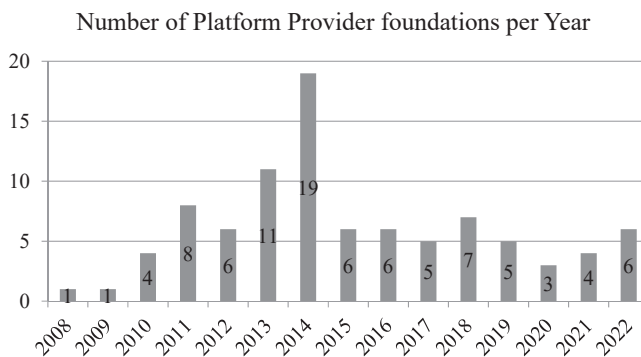
In a first step, we assigned each case to a related industry. To identify patterns, our objective was to analyze the occurrence of recurring values within each industry and map these values to the previously defined overarching categories. Additionally, we consolidated the motives and activities associated with each case. [Appendixes 1 and 2](#) simulate the overall data analysis process by detailing the occurrence of motives, activities and resources in all 92 cases.

## Findings

### *Findings of descriptive analysis*

The descriptive analysis illustrated the landscape of CC and thus provided the context for the thematic analysis. This section presents insights about the year and location of foundation of CC PPs, category to which they belong, type and channel of exchange, pricing strategy, type of business and, finally, presence on social media.

The peak year for foundations was 2014 (19 foundations), after which the number dropped. After 2021 a slight increase was recorded, corresponding with the Covid-19 outbreak and its accompanying challenges for businesses ([Clauss et al., 2022](#)). The development of foundations is summarized in [Figure 2](#).



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**Figure 2.**  
PP and their year of  
foundations

The distribution of locations can be found in [Appendix 3](#). Our sample reveals that most CC PPs originate from Western regions such as the USA, the UK and Spain. In terms of exchange, PPs primarily offer services rather than products: only five of 92 cases involve a combination of physical products and services.

End consumers are the main target group for PPs: of the 92 cases, 63 focus on business-to-consumer (B2C) models, while 29 concentrate on business-to-business (B2B) models. Pricing conditions can be categorized into subscription models, single payments and free versions. The prevalent form is a one-time payment for using the services or products. Services/products are provided purely online or as a combination of online and offline, with the latter being dominant in the CC landscape.

To assess a PP's presence on social media, we analyzed its activity on Tik Tok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn. A PP active on more than three of these channels was considered strongly active on social media. Only one third of all PPs were identified as strongly active, while 16 of 92 PPs have no social media presence at all.

[Table 2](#) shows the type of exchange, business type, pricing scheme and social media presence.

Based on the initial Crunchbase data and a second scanning of the PPs, the study identified ten industries: professional services, mobility, real estate, lifestyle, education, travel and tourism, information technology, transportation, commerce and fashion. Most of the PPs are categorized into professional services, followed by mobility (see [Figure 3](#)).

Considering the study's inclusion criteria for CC, most of the PPs offer services that are purchased online and executed offline and lack a sufficient presence on social media channels to create customers attention which leads to engagement. Personal services, mobility, real estate and lifestyle industries dominate the CC domain.

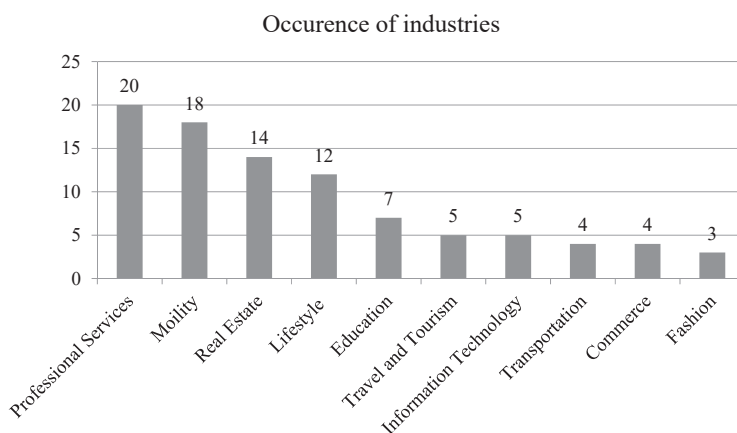
#### *Findings of thematic analysis*

The thematic analysis aimed to identify patterns in the PPs' motives and activities, in particular, by analyzing the 92 cases in detail. Within our thematic analysis, we considered

Comparison criteria business component of PP		
Type of exchange	Product	Both
Service		
78	9	5
84.7%	9.8%	5.5%
<i>Business type</i>		
B2B		B2C
29		63
32%		68%
<i>Pricing scheme (multiple options can occur)</i>		
Subscription	One-time payment	Free
17	75	2
18.4%	81.5%	2.1%
<i>Social media presence</i>		
Presence on 4–6 channels	Presence on 1–3 channels	Presence on no channel
31	45	16
33.7%	48.9%	17.4%

**Source(s):** Created by author

**Table 2.**  
Comparison criteria of  
PP for the descriptive  
analysis



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**Figure 3.**  
Industry distribution  
of collaborative  
consumption platform  
provider

*motives* driving the PP to engage in CC, *activities* implied by the PP and, lastly, *values* communicated by the PP. The data did not allow us to identify the specific *resources* a PP offers; therefore, resources were not included in our thematic analysis.

### *Motives*

In relation to the theory, we categorized the motives generally in five dimensions: economic gain, innovating and reacting to the market, building beneficial relationships, adventure and sustainability. Interestingly, the motive economic gain was identified for every PP and implies the PP's goal to gain financial profit by matchmaking the customer with the peer service provider. The other four motives appeared equally and partly in combination with each other. When sustainability is the driving motive, the PP is reacting to a request made by the customer and peer service provider for sustainable forms of product and services and strives for innovative ways of offering sustainability. If adventure is the driving motive, the PP's objective focuses on the provision of excitement when customers use the services/products and emphasizes the execution of the service/product itself as an adventure. [Appendix 1](#) provides an overview of motives in the 92 cases considered.

### *Activities*

The study examined the distribution and appearance of PPs' activities, using theory and new insights. Analysis of 92 cases identified matchmaking, presenting the brand and its value, reducing trust and risk, shaping social norms, aligning practices and resource smoothing. Altruistic behavior and creating excitement are newly identified activities. Altruistic behavior addresses social and ecological interests, while creating excitement fulfills the PP's motive for adventure.

Matchmaking was present in all 92 cases, highlighting the importance of connecting peer service providers and customers. None of the cases involved presenting the brand and its values. Resource smoothing and strengthening altruistic behavior were less common activities among PPs. Many PPs offered online bookings and offline service realization, incorporating trust-building and risk reduction activities into their business models. A differentiated understanding of activity distribution is given in [Appendix 2](#).

*Values*

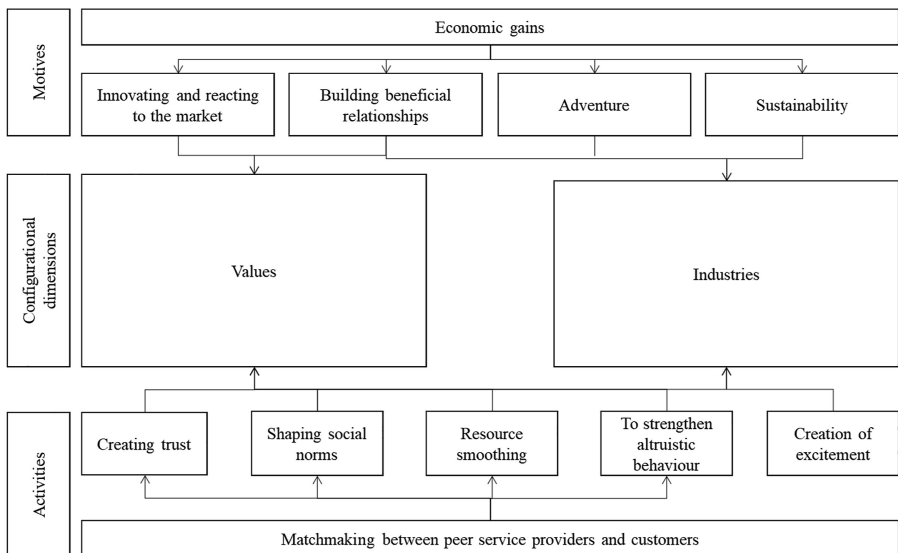
An in-depth understanding of motives, activities and resources fostered a concrete identification of values. By analyzing 92 cases, we derived a total of 26 values corresponding to and addressing the different needs of customers and peer service providers. To comprehensively understand the proposed values, we also analyzed the features of the PPs, that is, the different functions they offer on their websites and discussed and aligned iteratively each value to ensure scientific rigor. On average, each PP communicates six values. The 26 values, as shown in Table 3, were then clustered into five overarching categories. Availability and affordability can be identified in all 92 cases. Appendix 4 offers a description of each value to better understand their specific meaning in the context of CC.

From our descriptive and thematic analysis of the 92 CC PPs, we thus derived a complementary set of results: first, insights about motives and activities of PPs regarding their distribution, appearance and relevance for the CC domain, and second, the 26 values offered by PPs. With this complementary understanding, we enrich the understanding of the CC concept by further operationalizing it (Lindblom *et al.*, 2018), as synthesized in Figure 4.

Values of CC platform provider				
Economic values	Functional values	Social values	Hedonic values	Symbolic values
Affordability	Availability	Aid	Creativity	Environmentalism
Efficiency	Comfort	Cultural exchange	Discovery	New work
Safety (payment)	Data protection	Expertise	Exclusivity	Trust
	Flexibility	Self-development	Experience	Quality
	Locality	Self-belonging	Joy	
	Simplicity		Individuality	
	Transparency		Uniqueness	

**Table 3.**  
Identification of 26 values of CC platform provider

**Source(s):** Created by author



**Figure 4.**  
Conceptualization of platform provider in collaborative consumption

**Source(s):** Created by author

This figure shows how the different dimension are interconnected with each other supporting us in developing our archetypes.

As we iteratively and holistically analyzed the findings and placed them into context, we were able to observe patterns, particularly in motives and values, that differ across industries and identify the four archetypes presented in the next section.

### *Configuration of archetypes in CC*

Our analysis identified four archetypes of CC PPs: the functionalist, connector, hedonist and environmentalist. Each archetype consists of the most dominant motive, the most dominant values within the industry representing the overarching theme of values and the most dominant activity.

*Functionalist. Motive:* Besides the common motive *economic gain*, the functionalist focuses on attracting customers by providing innovative products and service and reacting to a call from the market for task-related and flexibly accessible solutions.

*Values:* This archetype communicates values of a functional nature for its products and services. As the customer rents used products, values such as trust and safety (for payment options) are important, especially in the commerce category. Although products are often in used condition, the PP predominantly outlines their quality as well as their affordability and availability.

*Industries:* In the commerce industry, the PP emphasizes affordability and fast availability as the main selling points. Trust, safety and quality are important in the mobility category to ensure a safe and convenient service. Quality is also relevant in information technology, professional services and mobility, as these categories mainly offer services such as exchanges.

Overall, the functionalist archetype offers flexible and customizable services with easy online booking options to cater to customer preferences. The functionalist does not prioritize social aspects, and this is the main differentiator from the other archetypes.

*Activities:* The archetype's main activity is to align its practices according to the need to reduce risks and build trust. This is done by safe payment options and feedback channels for past customers.

*Example: Rentything* is an example of a functionalist peer-to-peer rental marketplace enabling anybody to rent anything from and to anyone. The PP advertises the easy and comfortable use of its services (simplicity and comfort) by covering safe payment (safety) methods in a way that stimulates the customer's trust and conveys quality.

*Connector. Motive:* The *connector* is driven by building beneficial relationships (motive) between the customer and peer service provider; thus, this archetype underlines the social and emotional values of its products/services.

*Industries:* The connector often appears in the fields of education, real estate and lifestyle and gives its customer the feeling of experience across the different types of services. In the real estate category, the PP emphasizes hedonic values, such as experiencing the atmosphere of the offered spaces, as well as the social value of "social belonging" to friends and family. Within education, the PP's expertise in the service is of relevance, as is the quality of the offered services. In professional services, the aspect of expertise is also important in exchange for monetary compensation. Thereby, it becomes clear that the connector needs to ensure a certain extent of functional values since high quality as a value appears in different examples of this archetype.

Within the lifestyle field, companies stress the social components of belonging and emphasize their social component within their business model.

*Values:* Self-development was identified as an often-appearing social aspect in all industries whereas social belonging predominantly appears in the lifestyle category.

*Activities:* The PP concentrates on creating and building beneficial relationships either with the peer service provider and the customer or among different users, creating a social endeavor together.

*Example:* *Tabl* is a social media website that focuses on food and offers anything from recipes to dining experiences. The example demonstrates the relevance of the social aspect in the PP's value proposition.

*Hedonist. Motive:* The main motive driving the *hedonist's* offerings is adventure with the underlying value of perceiving experience. The hedonist's focus lies in the transfer of emotional aspects grounded on the initial enjoyment of customers when using its products/services.

*Values:* Following the pattern logic, we identified joy, uniqueness, discovery, individuality, experience and comfort as the main values within the fashion, lifestyle, travel and tourism and real estate industries. The *hedonist* aims to grant its customer a unique experience through its products and services. Moreover, experiencing a special adventure seems to be the center of attention. Functional values, such as quality, affordability and availability, can be viewed as subordinate since communicating these is secondary.

*Industry:* Fashion plays an interesting role since the affordability of products/services is indispensable, but so is expressing individuality. Lifestyle as an industry emphasizes new experiences and joy while also communicating the social aspect of enjoying leisure time with others. For the travel and tourism industry, the aspect of experience, together with that of individuality and exploring new locations and having fun, is central.

*Activity:* The PP creates excitement especially for the involved customer transferring joy, experience and uniqueness.

*Examples:* *La Mas Mona* is an Airbnb for fashion: women can rent designer dresses and accessories via this online marketplace. Its value proposition expresses individuality as enjoyment and seems a stronger selling point than only the mentioned quality of the products.

*Environmentalism. Motive:* The strongest driver for the *environmentalist* is the newly identified motive of sustainability.

*Values:* The environmentalist communicates social and functional values and prioritizes values such as environmentalism, affordability, availability, trust and safety, simplicity and quality. By emphasizing simplicity and availability, paired with environmentalism, the PP tries to persuade customers and peer service providers to engage in CC. The environmentalist's value proposition has a bipolar aspect: on the one hand, its services/products are sustainable and on the other, its services/products are offered at affordable prices. Environmentalists were mostly found in the fashion, transportation and mobility industries.

*Industries:* The environment theme plays a crucial role in the mobility, fashion and transportation industries, where PPs claim their services contribute to lower emissions and material savings.

*Activity:* Besides the newly identified activity of sustainability, the environmentalist acts as a matchmaker between the peer service provider and customer. Environmentalists encourage their customers to engage in sustainable endeavors. Although social or functional values may also be communicated, the environmentalist emphasizes their environmental activities in their operations.

*Examples:* *Heetch* is a car-sharing platform outlining sustainability through its claim to commitment to a fairer mobility, with the lowest commission on the market, because of the quality of their vans.

**Table 4** summarizes the four archetypes and their specific values, motives, activities and industries. The motive of economic gain, the activity of matchmaking between peer service

	Functionalist	Connector	Hedonist	Environmentalism
Motives	Innovating and reacting to the market	Beneficial relationships	Adventure	Sustainability
Dominant values	Affordability Trust/safety Comfort Simplicity Quality Availability	Social belonging Quality Self-development Expertism New Work Experience	Joy Uniqueness Individuality Experience Comfort Discovery	Environmentalism Affordability Trust/safety Availability Simplicity Quality
Industries	Commerce	Professional services	Fashion	Mobility
	Mobility Transportation	Lifestyle Education	Lifestyle Travel and tourism	Transportation Fashion
Activities	Professional services Information Technology Creating trust and reducing risks	Real estate Building beneficial relationships	Create excitement	Resource smoothing To strengthen altruistic behaviour

**Table 4.**  
Specifications of the  
four archetypes of  
platform provider  
in CC

Source(s): Created by author

provider and customer and the resource network of peer service provider and customers appear in each of the archetypes.

## Discussion

We now discuss our findings and contextualize them within the current CC literature.

Our descriptive analysis reveals that CC PPs are found predominantly in the regions of North America and Western Europe due to the changing consumption patterns and lifestyles in these regions (Anwar, 2022) and that most CC PPs sell service-oriented offerings. This finding is in line with Retamal (2019) and underlines the fact that service-oriented CC PPs have strong prospects due to future digital developments. It is expected that artificial intelligence (AI) will have a major impact on the development of PPs and their business models as AI can be used to improve customer experience and predict preferences, contributing to the more impactful communication of values and improved matchmaking (Chen *et al.*, 2021).

Technological advances dominantly influence social media platforms. Surprisingly, many CC PPs rarely communicate values via social media channels or do not use social media at all as communication tools. Social media thus offer huge potential to strengthen the relationship of all stakeholders involved in CC (Bhalla, 2021). Integrating the newest technologies into a social media presence can intensify a PP's market positioning as well as stimulating new product or service offerings.

Economic benefits play a significant role for customers engaging in CC but do not lead solely to a change of attitude but, rather, to a shift in behavior (Hamari *et al.*, 2015). For this reason, CC PPs should include more than economic benefits since they act as a hygiene value.

Utilitarian or functional values refer to the task-related benefits gained from consuming products or services (Hwang and Griffiths, 2017). Here, we highlight that the value of availability is found in each archetype and can thus be considered as a prerequisite to engage in CC to access flexible services or products. Trust was also identified within each archetype as strongly influencing attitude and engagement in CC (Bhalla, 2021). According to Ćinjurević *et al.* (2019), hedonic values are a strong predictor for engagement in CC. In our research, solely

the hedonist transfers hedonic values. The research does not draw a clear picture of the influence of social values for engaging with CC (Mayasari and Chrisharyanto, 2018; Ćinjarević *et al.*, 2019). Interestingly, we were able to develop one archetype (connector) that focused predominantly on the communication of social values. According to Ćinjarević *et al.* (2019), the symbolic value seems to be the strongest driver for customers to engage with CC, but we could not identify an archetype corresponding strongly with the symbolic value of customers.

## Conclusion

### *Theoretical and practical implications*

We answer our RQ by undertaking a multiple case study and building on the largest sample (92 cases) within the CC literature. We identify four archetypes of CC PPs answering the question of what types of PPs exist in CC. The hedonist, functionalist, environmentalist and connector differ in terms of motives, values and activities across industries and offer the customer different kinds of benefits, which is crucial for success (Richter *et al.*, 2017). We provide an example for each archetype. Additionally, we identify 26 values that were differently applied within the four archetypes. These values are structured into five categories, precisely economic, functional, social, hedonic and symbolic values. Overall, we compose a holistic picture about the different types of PP being active in CC.

From a theoretical perspective, we operationalize the understanding of CC PPs and thus answer several calls for research (Lindblom *et al.*, 2018; Ertz *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, we draft a clear picture of the four different types of PPs in CC through an extensive descriptive and thematic analysis. Therefore, we characterize the archetypes and better comprehend the interaction between the different stakeholders in digital networks (Schiafone *et al.*, 2021; Muldoon *et al.*, 2022). Our study benefits the understanding of values communicated by the PP as well as their offered value proposition. So far, this perspective is under-researched allowing us to comprehend how the various archetypes communicate differently with their stakeholders, especially with customers. In addition, the investigation on motives and activities stimulating the PP allows to better comprehend their engagement in CC. By identifying motives, activities and values of PP, we shed new light on this type of businesses being an elemental stakeholder of CC.

From a managerial point of view, our study has several implications for the founders, managers and policy-makers of CC. Firstly, understanding on the realized motives of the PP allows to define or redefine a vision for the business communicated via the customer value proposition. Moreover, the PP should conduct a variance analysis to determine which values are already incorporated and communicated and where gaps exist along the lines of our archetypes. Secondly, to better understand the customer and peer service provider site, the PP should constantly conduct surveys investigating their needs, preferences and recommendations. Lastly, as CC is enabled by technology, founders as well as managers of CC benefit from constantly scanning technology advancements and making technological adjustments in their business. Overall, PP need to intensify their presence on social media as a tool to communicate with different stakeholders as well as integrate different marketing activities to connect effectively with various stakeholders. As of now, PP in CC do not fully exploit their marketing potential.

### *Limitations*

By offering managerial and theoretical implications, our study is not without limitations. Firstly, the researchers are prone to biases since the qualitative analysis of 92 cases leaves room for interpretation. However, the researchers undertook several cycles while analyzing the data, discussed interim results and found alignment, this procedure ensures an almost

unbiased elaboration of the data. The absence of internal data and various interviews limits an in-depth understanding of the cases, and more perspectives could have been included in the analysis. The study counteracts this appearing shortcoming by including information from the PPs' websites as well as, newspaper articles and existing material allowing a broad perspective on each of the 92 cases. Given that other studies in the field of CC have adopted a qualitative research approach (Mayasari and Chrisharyanto, 2018), this method appears well-suited for investigating the phenomenon and developing new theory.

Secondly, the data sample is affected by the fact that the Crunchbase database is prominently used by companies in the Western hemisphere and may exclude startups active in other regions (Crunchbase, 2023). However, this does not affect the overall quality of the study since Crunchbase is the most complete data base for startups covering relevant cases in specific areas.

Thirdly, our inclusion criteria for PP by definition omit businesses that would have been defined as CC startups in other studies. However, this distinction is especially necessary to clearly differentiate between startups active in CC or SE. By considering the inclusion criteria, the study concentrates on a harmonized theoretical base.

#### *Avenues for further research*

The findings of our study and identified limitations offer a valuable stream for further research, and the use of our typology may serve as an indicator to further investigate each archetype's specific performance. Further research could measure the effect of specific values on the performance of the archetypes. Further research should include various databases to capture startups in all regions (Retamal, 2019). A quantitative study would shed further light on the interrelations between the archetypes and their customers. Therefore, studies could investigate in these interrelations to produce more generalizable insights by testing hypotheses based on the values of customers and PP. The same approach can be applied to discover the interrelations between the PP and the peer service provider. Moreover, research would benefit from measuring the effect of a changing value proposition of the PP, especially with a longitudinal study.

More research is therefore needed to better comprehend the peer service providers that grant access to specific resources especially by exploring their activities, motives and values. Therefore, it would be of interest to investigate the network and relationship building of different stakeholders in CC, since the latter is a triadic concept.

Ultimately, we shed light within the research field of CC, a concept that may overcome some of the hurdles in today's world and that of tomorrow.

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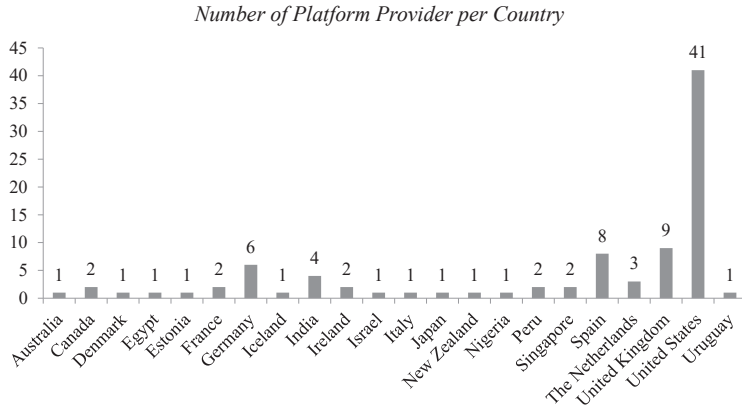
**Appendix 1**

Motives	Economic gains	Innovating and reacting to the market	Build beneficial relationships	Sustainability	Adventure
<b>Table A1.</b> Identified motives across the 92 cases	92 100%	16 17%	25 27%	19 21%	13 14%

Activity	Matchmaking	Presenting the brand and its value	Creating trust and reducing risk	Shaping and communicating social norms and aligning practices	Resource smoothing	To strengthen altruistic behavior	To create excitement
Occurrence (Multiple choices possible)	92 100%	0 0%	16 17%	15 16%	5 5%	1 1%	13 14%

**Table A2.**  
Identified activities  
across the 92 cases

3106



**Figure A1.**  
Number of PP per country

Appendix 4

Value	Description of value
1	Affordability The PP offers a reasonable and justified price-performance-ratio
2	Aid The PP puts social support in the focus of its purpose and presence
3	Availability The PP ensures that the service/product can be accessed at (almost) any time and (almost) at any place
4	Comfort The PP makes the use of its products/services easy and convenient
5	Creativity The PP stimulates inherent kinds of customer's creativity
6	Cultural exchange The PP offers a space where the stakeholders benefit from mutual exchange and enter new cultures
7	Data protection The PP ensures to apply data regulations since the involvement of technology implies gathering data
8	Discovery The PP incentivizes the customer to find new forms and ways of previously unknown
9	Efficiency The PP ensures that the job of the customer is done in a conducive manner of time
10	Environmentalism The PP offers its services/products to create a more friendly and sustainable environment
11	Exclusivity The products/services offered by the PP are characterized through a high degree of quality or even luxury
12	Experience Especially by the provision of a service, the PP puts the customer in the focus of the happening stressing new impressions
13	Expertism The PP presents expert in the specific topic and offers unique knowledge about this topic
14	Flexibility The PP enables the customers to adjust and customize product/services to their own needs
15	Individuality The PP encourages customer's the self-worth and underlines their non-conformity
16	Joy The PP encourages the customer to engage in its product/services since it brings good and positive feelings for the customer

**Table A3.**  
Description of 26 identified values

(continued)

Value	Description of value
17	Locality The PP has a regional focus on its offerings and underlines the importance of a specific area
18	New work The PP emphasis ways to realize new work methods and generates a new working culture
19	Quality The PP ensures a certain (good) condition of the service/quality to the customer
20	Safety The PP provides safe methods (especially regarding payment) to connect the customer and the peer service provider
21	Self-development The PP underlines the importance of self-advancements and offering ways to develop the customer themselves
22	Simplicity The PP ensures an easy use of its services/products without high efforts for the customer
23	Social belonging The PP acts as basis to build up a community integrating all users of the service/product
24	Transparency The PP informs about the processes of products/services to align the customer's understanding and usability
25	Trust The PP takes over responsibilities and assurances to some extent the customer
26	Uniqueness Only via the use of the PP, the customer can get access to the service/platform, there exist no other form of consumption

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