

Why do consumers become providers? Self-determination in the sharing economy

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore why and how sharing economy users switch from consumer (e.g. Airbnb guest) to provider (e.g. Airbnb host), and how this helps enrich self-determination theory.

Design/methodology/approach

The authors conducted an exploratory study with users who had been consumers (i.e. Airbnb guests) and had switched to being providers (i.e. Airbnb hosts).

Findings

Consumers switch to being providers across four phases: “catalysts”, “enablers”, “drivers” and “glue”. The authors identify various extrinsic and intrinsic motivations unique to the switch and map these against motivators postulated by self-determination theory.

Research limitations/implications

The authors propose a four-phase process through which consumers become providers. The present study enriches self-determination theory by showing how users' psychosocial needs are addressed through a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that are unique to the role switch. The authors further show how the importance of the three key psychosocial self-determination needs varies through the switch process, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of users' drive for self-determination.

Practical implications

This study offers several recommendations to help sharing economy platforms improve their processes and communication to encourage a greater number of consumers to switch roles and become providers. These recommendations address two aspects: (1) encouraging consumers to switch roles and become providers (i.e. acquisition) and following this (2) encouraging providers to continue to perform that role (i.e. retention).

Originality/value

Much research has investigated why users become consumers (e.g. Airbnb guests) or providers (e.g. Airbnb hosts) in the sharing economy. However, research to date has not fully embraced the two-sided nature of the sharing economy. Therefore, this is the first paper to explore why and how consumers switch roles and become providers in the sharing economy, and how this helps enrich self-determination theory.

Introduction

The sharing economy has fundamentally transformed the role users' play in the marketplace. Specifically, in the sharing economy, users can act as “consumers” who utilise the resources of others (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015; Neunhoeffler and Teubner, 2018) or as “providers” who share their resources with others (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016; Schreiner *et al.*, 2018; Wilhelms *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, users can also perform as both providers and consumers and become “prosumers” (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Ertz *et al.*, 2018; Sung *et al.*, 2018) of which six distinct types have been identified (Lang *et al.*, 2020b). The ability of users to switch roles and act in multiple roles has given them greater scope for self-determination (Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Kumar *et al.*, 2018) when compared to their typically restricted role as consumers in traditional marketplace contexts.

Due to the increasing importance of the sharing economy (Sands *et al.*, 2020), users who act in roles other than consumers have attracted a considerable amount of recent attention in research (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Gerwe and Silva, 2020; Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Hossain, 2020). As a result, there is a growing body of knowledge about the sharing economy, particularly around the motives of user participation (Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Mittendorf *et al.*, 2019; Northey and Brodie, 2020; Sung *et al.*, 2018). For example, research has identified why users become either consumers (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015; Neunhoeffler and Teubner, 2018) or providers (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016; Schreiner *et al.*, 2018; Wilhelms *et al.*, 2017). To a lesser degree, research has also started to investigate why users may act as both providers and consumers and become prosumers (Chandler and Chen, 2015; Hellwig *et al.*, 2015; Lang *et al.*, 2020a). Despite this, there appears to be a distinct lack of research examining why consumers may change roles and become providers. Part of this might be explained by the fact that past research has failed to fully embrace the two-sided nature of the sharing economy (Mittendorf *et al.*, 2019; Sung *et al.*, 2018). For example, at present, we do not know what motivates (intrinsically or extrinsically) users to switch roles from consumer to provider in the sharing economy, such as an Airbnb guest deciding to become an Airbnb host. To explore this, we draw from self-determination theory, which focuses on how an individual's behaviour is self-motivated and self-determined (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Using this approach, understanding the motivations of such role switching behaviour is important for two reasons.

First, because self-determination in this context encompasses at least two fundamental behaviours by users: the decision to start an action (e.g. signing up to be an Airbnb host) and the decision to cease to perform a different behaviour (e.g. stopping to be an Airbnb guest) (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Ertz *et al.*, 2018; Kumar *et al.*, 2018). Second, switching roles can also be a preliminary step towards an advanced motivational state that requires even higher levels of self-determination: performing two roles and becoming a prosumer (e.g. a user who is an Airbnb guest and host). Given this, the lack of empirical research is surprising, considering that prosumers have been acknowledged as a critical feature of the sharing economy (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2019) and have been acknowledged in research spanning several decades (Kotler, 1986; Pitt *et al.*, 2006; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Toffler and Alvin, 1980; Zukin *et al.*, 2017). That said, it would appear the current research is the first empirical study investigating why users switch roles from consumer to provider within the sharing economy. As such, we utilise an exploratory approach and qualitative data to shed light on this crucial issue.

Exploring why users switch from consumer to provider allows us to make several contributions. First, it enriches our understanding of consumers' expanded role in the sharing economy (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019). Second, focusing on users' unique journey towards potentially becoming prosumers (i.e. both consumer and provider) offers users unusual prospects for self-determination in the sharing economy (Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Kumar *et al.*, 2018). This focus allows novel theoretical insights into consumer behaviour in general and will enable us to enrich self-determination theory in several ways. First, by showing that it can explain users' role switch from one role to another. Second, we enrich self-determination theory by demonstrating how self-determination, particularly the fundamental motivations of competence, autonomy and relatedness are evident at different points in time through our four-stage switch model. Third, we show that within the four stages varying degrees of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators influence consumers to change roles. Moreover, we find evidence the three innate needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness – as outlined within self-determination theory – have varying degrees of significance throughout the four-phase consumer journey outlined. Finally, this paper also contributes to our understanding of how users respond to opportunities afforded by digitally mediated environments, such as the sharing economy (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Ertz *et al.*, 2018).

In addition to these theoretical contributions, this paper also has distinct practical implications. First, a better understanding of why users switch roles allows platform operators (e.g. Airbnb) to engage with users to carefully balance both the supply and demand sides of any sharing economy platform. This is important because the sharing economy is highly unbalanced: there are approximately twice as many consumers (e.g. Airbnb guests) as there are providers (e.g. Airbnb hosts), which severely limits the growth of the sharing economy (Andreotti *et al.*, 2017). Second, knowing why users switch roles enables practitioners to design platforms and engage with users in ways that may lead to various favourable outcomes. For example, increasing users' commitment to the sharing economy, generating “platform citizenship”, improving service quality levels and facilitating other mutually beneficial behaviours between consumers, providers and platform operators (e.g. positive word-of-mouth, referral behaviour, bug reporting and beta testing). Finally, the research suggests further implications including enhanced communication with potential, current and lapsed users, and how these groups are incentivised.

In summary, the present paper is motivated by the call for more research on the sharing economy, customer-dominated domains, and the expanded consumer role within the sharing economy. Each of these areas has been highlighted as key research priorities for service researchers (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Heinonen *et al.*, 2018; Ranaweera and Sigala, 2015). More specifically, this paper aims to better understand why and how users switch from consumer to provider in the sharing economy. This paper begins with a review of the literature that builds the theoretical foundation for the research. It is followed by a section outlining the methodology and a detailed account of the analysis and key findings. The paper concludes with a general discussion that positions the findings against the existing literature, identifies the contributions to theory and offers managerial implications.

Literature review

The sharing economy is a global phenomenon that commenced around 2008 (Robinson, 2019). We subscribe to Schlagwein's *et al.* (2020) systematically developed definition of the sharing economy as: “an IT-facilitated peer-to-peer model for commercial or non-commercial

sharing of underutilized goods and service capacity through an intermediary without a transfer of ownership” (p. 818). Examples of intermediaries in the sharing economy include companies such as Airbnb (accommodation) or Uber (transportation). These intermediaries connect “consumers” (who wish to access resources) with “providers” (who allow others to access resources they own) (Lim, 2020; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Schreiner *et al.*, 2018). We use the term “user” to refer to both consumers and providers.

Gaining a better understanding of the sharing economy is important because it is already sizable. In the US alone, there were more than 80 million estimated users in 2020 (Lock, 2019), while the EU sharing economy was estimated to be worth EUR 160–572 billion (European Commission, 2016). Furthermore, the sharing economy is growing rapidly. For example, the sharing economy is forecast to grow from around \$US15bn in 2013 to more than \$US335bn by 2025 in the US alone (Pricewaterhousecoopers, 2015). Furthermore, the sharing economy is expected to grow 40% per year in China (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). In short, the sharing economy is sizable, has a large number of participants and is growing rapidly across the globe. Notably, the opportunity to switch roles from consumer to provider has been highlighted as a driver of the sharing economy and two-sided platform businesses, such as Airbnb (Ertz *et al.*, 2018; Kumar *et al.*, 2018; Hoyer *et al.*, 2020).

Because of the magnitude of the sharing economy and its unique properties, it has attracted much research attention (Fernandes *et al.*, 2020; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Hossain, 2020; Sundararajan, 2013). As a result, there is greater understanding about the sharing economy's impact on society, markets and policy (Trabucchi *et al.*, 2019), its business and revenue models (Bellotti *et al.*, 2015; Edbring *et al.*, 2016; Kumar *et al.*, 2018), and users' motivations for participating in the sharing economy (Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Lang *et al.*, 2020a; Mittendorf *et al.*, 2019; Sung *et al.*, 2018; Trabucchi *et al.*, 2019). In addition, prior research has examined what motivates users to act as providers (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016; Schreiner *et al.*, 2018; Wilhelms *et al.*, 2017), while a second stream of research has investigated why users become consumers in the sharing economy (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015; Neunhoeffler and Teubner, 2018; Starr *et al.*, 2020). More recently, a third stream has emerged, shedding light onto why users may be performing both of these roles and thus become “prosumers” (Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Chandler and Chen, 2015; Lang *et al.*, 2020a).

A key insight from the three streams (Table 1) is that many motivations drive users to adopt the roles of consumer and provider (Bajaj *et al.*, 2020; Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Neunhoeffler and Teubner, 2018; Wilhelms *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, the importance of these motivations is partially determined by what type of sharing sector (e.g. accommodation, transport and task sharing) is being investigated (Böcker and Meelen, 2017). Some motivations tend to be recurring, regardless of the user's role (i.e. consumer or provider) or the sharing sector in which they operate. This suggests they are likely more central in the motivational network that drives users to participate in the sharing economy. Examples of motivations that fall into this category are economic benefits, social benefits and environmental motivations (Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Neunhoeffler and Teubner, 2018; Sung *et al.*, 2018). An important methodological insight gained from the literature (see Table 1) is that many studies have measured behavioural intentions to participate in the sharing economy rather than measuring actual user behaviour and their motivation for participating in the sharing economy (Bellotti *et al.*, 2015; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016). Another insight (Table 1) is that most studies have focused on descriptive research, employing quantitative approaches including online surveys rather than allowing for exploratory, in-depth insights to emerge

through the deductive analysis of qualitative data with current users of the sharing economy (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Although research has begun to consider the motivations of users, past research has not yet fully embraced some of the critical aspects of the sharing economy. This includes the two-sided nature of the sharing economy (Mittendorf *et al.*, 2019; Sung *et al.*, 2018; Reynolds-Pearson and Hyman, 2020), the expanded role of the consumer (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019) and the user's increased ability for self-determination in the sharing economy (Bellotti *et al.*, 2015; Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, research thus far has not investigated why users may switch from one role to the other. The unusual opportunity to switch roles has been acknowledged as a key feature of the sharing economy (Ertz *et al.*, 2018). For example, to date, research is silent on what motivates consumers (e.g. an Airbnb guest) to switch and become a provider (e.g. an Airbnb host). Furthermore, we also do not know how this switching process may help expand our theoretical understanding of the sharing economy. Answering these questions is the focus of this paper.

Theoretical approaches used in the sharing economy literature

Various theories have been used in the context of the sharing economy (Bellotti *et al.*, 2015; Hossain, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2018; Hoyer *et al.*, 2020). For example, researchers have used socio-technical theory to study the interaction between individuals and technology (Dabbous and Tarhini, 2019), transaction cost theory to explain the emergence of sharing platforms in various industries (Akbar and Tracogna, 2018; Henten and Windekilde, 2016) and trust theory to investigate dyadic and triadic relationships within the sharing economy (Hawlitshchek *et al.*, 2018; Lang *et al.*, 2020a). The present paper is the first paper to explore what motivates users to *switch* roles from consumer to provider in the sharing economy. The most appropriate theory to help explain this particular phenomenon is self-determination theory because it focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations related to individual behaviour (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory (SDT, hereafter) is a general theory of motivation and focuses on what factors can motivate new behaviour, and how it can be sustained (Ryan and Deci, 2000). SDT proposes that humans have three universal and basic needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). People assess the extent to which these needs are met, to form a sense of self-determination (Hsieh and Chang, 2016). Many studies have shown that motivation based on self-determination is a strong predictor of specific behaviour (Hagger, 2009; Ryan *et al.*, 2006; Webb *et al.*, 2013). Upon this, it appears relevant to aid our understanding of how a new behaviour (in this study, switching roles from consumer to provider) might be facilitated and sustained as a result of various motivations. In fact, sharing economy scholars have highlighted that self-motivation is a preliminary indicator of participation behaviour in the sharing economy (Yakin *et al.*, 2017).

SDT suggests individuals will have predispositions that are compatible with new experiences and behaviours (Engström and Elg, 2015). In the sharing economy context, these behaviours have been conceptualised based on motivations. For example, Hamari *et al.* (2016) propose sharing behaviour can be predicted by motivations for economic benefits and gaining reputation (extrinsic motivation), as well as enjoyment and sustainability (intrinsic motivations). This is consistent with prior research on SDT, which indicates both intrinsic

and extrinsic motivational factors are important for predicting behaviour (Zhao and Zhu, 2014). Extrinsicly motivated behaviours are generally defined as those which aim to seek a prize (e.g. monetary incentive) or avoid punishment (e.g. embarrassment in front of peers). Alternately, intrinsically motivated behaviours occur when people enjoy a behaviour and are generally interested in the action (White, 2015; Deci and Ryan, 1985). Studies in collaborative consumption communities have shown importance of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. For example, Bock *et al.* (2005) found extrinsic incentives such as cash prizes can enhance information sharing and participation behaviour, while Gatautis and Medziausiene (2014) showed gaining respect and a positive image can encourage social trade participation. Intrinsic motivators such as enjoyment (Shen, 2012), and sustainability and social benefits (Hamari *et al.*, 2016) also drive collaborative consumption.

We chose SDT to study switching roles in the sharing economy for two key reasons. First, SDT considers extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and behavioural change (Deci and Ryan, 1985). This is important as it provides a broad framework to understand the development of prosumerism (using and providing) in the sharing economy. Second, in the specific context of the sharing economy, previous studies have found various motivational factors influence consumers to participate in the sharing economy. These include extrinsic motivators such as economic benefit (Yakin *et al.*, 2017; Wu *et al.*, 2019), and intrinsic motivators such as sustainability, sense of belonging and trust (Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Wu *et al.*, 2019). To the best of our knowledge, studies have focused only on the possible motivations for joining the sharing economy. Little is known regarding the interplay of these intrinsic and extrinsic motivations regarding role switching within the sharing economy. Further, there is limited knowledge of how extrinsic and intrinsic motivations might influence individuals to maintain their roles in the sharing economy. This is important to understand, so firms can engage with users in a way that satisfies their extrinsic and intrinsic desires, hopefully contributing to their exclusive and ongoing use of a sharing economy platform.

Because the sharing economy affords users the ability to switch roles from consumer to provider (Ertz *et al.*, 2018; Kumar *et al.*, 2018), gaining a better understanding of why and how users switch is essential for several reasons. First, the ability to switch from consumer to provider affords users greater agency and allows us to draw upon and extend SDT. Second, the success of individual firms (e.g. Airbnb) “rests on the well-balanced acquisition, retention and win-back of profitable service providers and customers.” (Kumar *et al.*, 2018, p. 147). Thus, gaining a better understanding of this process may allow firms to engage users more sophisticatedly, thereby resulting in a well-balanced number of consumers and providers.

Methodology

The sharing economy encompasses a broad range of business models and sectors, ranging from accommodation (e.g. Airbnb and Couchsurfing), carparks (e.g. JustPark), storage (e.g. Stashbee), transportation (e.g. BlaBlaCar, Lyft and Uber), high-end household items (e.g. SnapGoods), pet care (e.g. DogVacay), completing tasks and providing services (e.g. Spotahome, TaskRabbit and Zaarly), to financial services (e.g. Harmoney and Lending Club) and many more. Because of this diversity of sectors and business models, it is important not to treat the sharing economy as one homogenous industry but to consider single sectors when conducting research (Fernandes *et al.*, 2020). Thus, in line with previous studies, the present study focuses on a single industry within the sharing economy (Guyader, 2018; Sung *et al.*, 2018). Research suggests that accommodation is one of the most widely used sectors within the sharing economy (Andreotti *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, this study focuses on the

accommodation sector of the sharing economy. Several different platforms operate in the accommodation sector. That said, Airbnb stands out because it was the original proponent of the sharing economy (Robinson, 2019) and is currently the largest accommodation provider in the market (Strong, 2014). As a result, Airbnb is described as both a “shining star” (Kumar, *et al.*, 2018, p. 147) and “poster child” (Yellen, 2020) of the sharing economy. Moreover, Airbnb has sustained interest from academics, which indicates its centrality to the sharing economy from an academic perspective (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016; Lang *et al.*, 2020a; So *et al.*, 2018). For these reasons, the present study focuses on Airbnb users.

Given the large number of quantitative studies in the sharing economy (Table 1) and the absence of relevant prior research regarding why users may switch roles in the sharing economy (Table 1), an exploratory, qualitative study was deemed most appropriate. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable data collection method because they are well-suited to uncovering participant motivations (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). Respondents were recruited through online and offline advertisements. Respondents had to fulfil three criteria to be included in this study. First, they needed to be at least 18 years old, and second, they had to either live within a 1-h radius of where the research was conducted or be open to an online interview. The third criteria ensured that participants were suitable for the present study. The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of why and how users switch from consumer to provider in the sharing economy. Therefore, to qualify participants had to have been Airbnb guests prior to becoming Airbnb hosts (e.g. they had switched roles). Interviews were conducted in Auckland, New Zealand at locations selected by participants and ranged from 25 to 60 min, with an average interview length of 45 min. Thematic saturation was utilised to determine how many interviews should be conducted (Green and Thorogood, 2018). Two researchers agreed that saturation occurred after ten interviews. Using ten interviews is in line with other qualitative studies and sample size suggestions for qualitative studies (Fournier and Yao, 1997; Sandelowski, 1995). Thus, qualitative data were gathered via ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a sample of Airbnb guests who had switched roles to Airbnb host.

The semi-structured interview guide covered sections on ethics, administrative matters (e.g. data recording), demographic questions and warm-up questions to establish rapport between the two interview parties. These introductory sections were followed by the three key sections about (1) participants' experience as consumers (e.g. Airbnb guests), (2) when and how they became a provider (e.g. Airbnb host) and (3) why they switched from consumer to provider. Questions were open-ended and non-leading. For example, questions were not designed to lead respondents to provide SDT-specific responses. During the interviews, we utilised a simplified visualisation of buyer-seller relationships (Ford, 1980; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). Although the sharing economy is often conceptualised as a triad (i.e. consumer, provider and platform), the most useful conceptualisation for the purpose of this paper was to focus on the two specific roles that users perform: consumer and provider. Therefore, we consulted the literature on buyer-seller relationships for this aspect of the paper. We used this visualisation to elicit responses for what may have been motivators at different points of the role switch from consumer (e.g. Airbnb guest) to provider (e.g. Airbnb host). The visual was useful in guiding participants through the switching process, allowing them to volunteer rationales for moving through the process of switching, without being forced to provide rationales for stages. In other words, responses from participants naturally emerged and were voluntary.

The sample consisted of seven males and three females. It was diverse in terms of nationality (New Zealand, Europe, India, China and Russia), age (ranging from 25 to over 50 years old), occupation (unemployed, self-employed, employees and retired) and experience as an Airbnb host (ranging from less than one year to more than three years). Moreover, participants lived in both urban and rural settings. They included hosts who shared their accommodation with Airbnb guests as well as hosts who supplied stand-alone accommodation for guests.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to aid analysis. Transcriptions were thematically coded using open and axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). NVivo 12 Pro was used to analyse the data with hand-drawn mind maps used as aids. We utilised open coding to organise the data into broad categories and axial coding to revisit and re-organise the data back together by making relevant connections between categories (Kendall, 1999). More specifically, we first familiarised ourselves with the data (reading and note taking) and then coded iteratively, where codes were created or modified throughout the analytical and reflective process. In this way, an initial coding template was created through analysing a subset of the data and then applied to the rest of the data, with revisions to the template where necessary (King, 2012). When no large sections of un-coded data remained data saturation was reached and data analysis is complete (Guest *et al.*, 2006). We then clustered the like codes into themes. At this point, the phases (Figure 1) started to emerge. We then reflected on the codes and themes and mapped these against motivators postulated by self-determination theory. Thus, the mapping is based on a natural process and connections are emergent rather than constructed. We did not explicitly ask participants about any of the psychosocial needs postulated by SDT. Qualitative research is interpretive, and most people are unable to identify and directly answer questions which are specifically linked to the theory because of complex terminology (e.g. relatedness).

Findings

Pre-empting the move to a provider, all participants were consumers of the sharing economy. This demonstrates that participants experienced the sharing economy as a consumer, liked it and switched to being a provider.

While I was travelling as a guest I do not think I thought about it at all, I just thought about my experience as a guest ... and mostly I was not doing share accommodation, I was doing ... more a studio, or a house, or something like that. But because I had such a good experience, and some of the places I stayed were just so nice, you know. They were close to amenities, they were in a local community, they were off the beaten track, not in tourist traps, coz I did not want to stay anywhere like that. That when I came home, I guess, particularly after I bought this house, it's quite big, and I thought well would not it be cool for someone else to have a similar type of experience. (Participant 6)

So I was a guest probably about five times before I wanted to be a host. I also knew quite a lot about Airbnb because I worked with a client in the Duck Shoot Holding houses. And so we do a full project with them online, a web development project, and so I knew quite a lot about Airbnb already because I'm in the web industry, so I know all about the technology, so yeah (Participant 7)

Subsequently, we utilise SDT to inform the creation of our themes to explore the motivators and enablers for switching from consumer to provider. The qualitative findings are presented

below as four key phases, which emerged through the interviews and subsequent analysis as key themes. Each of these phases represents a step in the switching process, from consumer to provider in the sharing economy. The phases follow the switch in chronological order, including (1) the initial circumstances for switching from a consumer to a provider (catalysts), (2) the characteristics/attributes of the provider which enable switching (enablers), (3) the key motivators for switching (drivers) and finally, (4) the factors that compel users to remain a provider (the “glue”). Various extrinsic and intrinsic SDT motivations are identified through the journey, influencing consumers to move through the phases. Figure 1 illustrates the four phases and which SDT motivators appear in each phase.

Phase 1: catalysts for switching

Our findings indicate a range of circumstances that initially motivate or trigger consumers to consider switching their role from consumer to provider within the sharing economy. Such circumstances included some hosts going through “double transition” (in transition in their lives and transitioning from consumer to provider) (Ozanne and Ozanne, 2020). Further, two participants outlined seeing a demand for their service. For some participants, the circumstances relate to significant changes in their lives, such as family members leaving home and a couple getting married. These significant “life changes” meant individuals were transitioning into their own lives, encouraging them to transition into a service provider. Linked to SDT, individuals may have been pushed or encouraged (autonomy – self-organise their actions) to adopt a prosumer lifestyle. In light of these circumstances, participants identified that Airbnb was a better alternative than leasing or getting a flatmate due to having a spare room. For example;

I bought my house that I'm currently in about August last year and when you're, when you're my age and been through a marriage dissolution you have a huge mortgage. So I was looking for ways to supplement my income to try and get rid of the mortgage as soon as possible. (Participant 6)

I quit the job in China, in Expedia, I came here last year, September. So I was looking for job, I'm still now ... So for the meantime, I do not know, it's for full-time or part-time, I think it's part-time. It only occupies a small amount of my time because after you build the structure online. (Participant 1)

A key attraction to becoming a provider was the idea of flexibility, allowing those in the transition not to be daunted by the prospect of something “new”. The provision of flexibility in the way their “work” (e.g. renting a spare room) is afforded by the sharing economy platform. In this case, Airbnb, may fulfil individuals' need for autonomy.

... we do not do that full-time, it's really nice to have this control and I think you need to take break, you know, away. It's not our business, it's not our full-time job, it's a nice thing we can offer from time to time (Participant 2)

In addition to offering flexibility, switching to become a provider affords an “excuse” to invest in property and upgrade their room(s).

There's people that want to stay, so we're going to invest in that place as well and then make it pretty and nice (Participant 2)

Further, another circumstance which created a motivation to become a host was the identification of new opportunities. In the case of two participants, this was a demand in the market;

And looking at the existing supply on the site and looking at what was potential was the benefit of doing it. There was a decent, you know, there was a not large number of properties across, sort of, the region that I'm in, and pricing was sort of all over the place. So, I said, and yeah, you could see the ones that were higher price, there was less reviews, you know, less demand, so okay, so I can sort of approximate what a good price point could be, based on what I know about my property. (Participant 4)

These key circumstances can be summarised as situations within which the participants found themselves ready, linked to autonomy (can freely pursue their activities) and competence (feel they have the ability to perform activities), to participate in the sharing economy and establish a new role as provider. Notably, the circumstances alone are not enough to facilitate behaviour (i.e. the switch from consumer to provider within the sharing economy). Our findings also indicate that specific enablers (phase 2) are required for the switch towards becoming a provider to continue, as outlined in the following section.

Phase 2: enablers for switching

Sharing economy platforms, such as Airbnb, play a critical role in facilitating user protection and transparency. The findings indicate platform operators can act as enablers, facilitating the switch from consumer to provider. More specifically, participants indicated the platform provider aided the decision to become an Airbnb host in two ways. First, there are low barriers to entry and low perceived complexity of signing up. These two key factors are likely to increase a consumer's perceived competence related to adopting a new role as a provider. Using Airbnb as an example, the branded digital app and related processes are seen as simple, straightforward and convenient, and the expected benefits are clear. The ease of use and ability for a smooth switch is an essential factor for Airbnb guests to switch roles and become an Airbnb host. Moreover, it allows them to feel competent in performing tasks and activities related to hosting.

For me it's a really, there's three really strong things about Airbnb, they are ease of use of the app, and communication's so fantastic. You can change things whenever you want, you can rearrange your photos. I like that it gives you those stats which say you could earn x amount a month. You could, or we recommend that you put it at this price point based on everyone else in your area. (Participant 6)

Yeah, the platform continues to make it easier, and in theory, ensures that I'm going to get as good a return from the activity that I'm putting in. So, that's a reason why I would not look for an alternative (Participant 4)

The platform provider can also facilitate the switch from consumer to provider by ensuring control and transparency. Many participants discussed the idea of “opening up your house” to strangers and sought reassurance and aspects of control, to satisfy their concerns about protection. Maintaining a sense of control and transparency again relates to fulfilling consumers' intrinsic need of autonomy. That is, experiencing their own behaviour as

voluntary and having control over what they do. This is particularly necessary to reduce risk and compensate for the “unknown” aspects of hosting – which the digital app was able to provide.

cos that's the key thing you've got to think about, because Airbnb, you do not know your person has been booking, and the same as you do not know in a hotel. They just book the room, they pay and they come. They could be rowdy, they could be trashing your place, all sorts of things happen, so, you know, it's a case of you have to be discretionary as to what you want to do with your room.
(Participant 3)

Yeah, it's a safety net there right and not just from the cool, we've got the insurance, there's that additional insurance cover. But there's the visibility of all the conversations should be tracked through the platform, and if something did go wrong that did not require insurance you've got feedback channels (Participant 4)

Two participants specifically mentioned more formalised enablers offered by the platform provider. In the case of Airbnb, they made specific reference to the liability and insurance protection offered, which they appreciated for its security and monetary coverage. The app and Airbnb processes also allow the host to feel separated but confident in the monetary exchange and cancellation process. Credibility was also emphasised in the ability to see verified photos of the room as well as reviews; this allowed transparency and risk reduction. In this case, the global status of the brand seems to provide an abstract sense of reassurance and thus, a feeling of both control and agency (autonomy).

Apart from the catalysts that influence changes in users' behaviour, the platform also enables role switching through various mechanisms. These enablers involve both a need for competence in handling the role of Airbnb host and control through processes which involve risk reduction (autonomy). Our findings also demonstrate that key motivators or drivers are critical for switching to occur. Phase 3 outlines these key drivers.

Phase 3: key drivers for switching

Powerful extrinsic motives such as the need for supplementary income and the ability to “be your own boss” urged participants to become providers. Both these motivations relate to flexibility, allowing providers to be flexible how and when they choose to work. This flexibility allowed greater autonomy over workloads and decisions about financial returns. All participants were at least partially motivated by the “bonus” monetary gains associated with becoming an Airbnb host. When discussing the motivation of monetary gain, participants refer to a supplementary rather than primary income. As such, this income is viewed as a top-up, a bonus, an extra and a “plus”.

It's for money. You know, it's really nice to have that, a little plus (Participant 2)

Further, participants discuss that this supplementary income can be made “out of nothing”. For example, hosts already have the infrastructure (a room available). The ability to be “your own boss” and in control, mean hosts see this as a primary step towards becoming an entrepreneur, and “breaking out” of normal work life, proving one could “make” their own money. This control allowed greater autonomy over their assets (i.e. room) and work schedule.

I had spare space, and if someone was willing to pay me to use space that I was not going to use, and was not going to get in the way (Participant 4)

I think also I wanted to prove that it could work for us for some reason. So I think there was doubt, especially well even in my own mind, but especially in my wife that this was going to work (Participant 7).

Yet, for a few participants, the Airbnb platform was simply another source of bookings (i.e. they are already using *booking.com* or *bookabach*), and they saw hosting, through whichever platform, as their primary source of income. Here, participants are financially motivated, but it also allows them the freedom not to work as they do not classify Airbnb as “work” and is instead an additional channel through which they can earn money.

I mean I've got a good property which I need to rent out and this was another, was another online way to promote your company, so more promotional. (Participant 8)

Being a service provider in the sharing economy allows people to become “the boss”, allowing Airbnb hosts the ability to break out of traditional work. The key element to being the boss is control (autonomy), which enables flexibility and work-life balance. Our findings suggest that there are three levels of control, which included (1) how much work one should do (e.g. in a month), (2) when the work should be done (e.g. this week, next week, etc.) and (3) who should be accepted as a guest (“who comes and who does not”). In other words, there is control over money, time and people which is enabled by the platform provider.

And the control is mine, I decide who comes and who does not (Participant 6)

Flexibility was good. For example, if we were going out tomorrow night and someone came in today on an email and said I want to stay tonight, we'd just say no (Participant 3)

And so at the moment I have a place but it's not on, it's off, because we just want to have nice family time and I do not want to be cleaning or changing the bed (Participant 2)

Moreover, the flexibility and the ability to feel in control allow hosts to feel like hosting is not a significant intrusion on their life. Even beyond traditional business, most owners are not able to say “no” to a customer or client. Airbnb, on the other hand, enables the capacity to cope with being a service provider (“How much more hosting do we want to do/are we capable of this month?”) through the use of technology that provides precise levels of control over people, time, service levels (e.g. cleaning and pick up) and space.

While the first three phases demonstrate the foundations for a consumer becoming a provider in the sharing economy (catalysts, enablers and drivers), it remains important to consider the necessary conditions which facilitate a provider continuing in their role. In the next section, we introduce the fourth and final phase, which outlines the factors related to why participants stayed in their provider role.

Phase 4: reasons for staying (the “glue”)

The findings show several important factors act as “the glue” that make people continue as providers. These factors include (1) social growth, (2) personal growth, (3) fulfilling the need to be a caretaker and (4) the importance of developing/maintaining self-esteem. Most of these factors relate to the need for relatedness (feeling included and affiliated with others) with the need for personal growth linked to competence (gaining new skills).

No initially it all started for monetary gains but then, you know the experience was so, was really good, so that's what kept me going. And yeah it's pretty much going to keep on going the same way. (Participant 10)

The reasons why social interaction was appreciated included a variety of benefits linked to relatedness in SDT including the ability to connect with like-minded individuals, experience diverse cultures and to build friendships. Hosts could expand their social network with like-minded people in a low-stake context (i.e. short-term accommodation) but with the option to develop a long-term relationship. In this sense, a few participants mentioned the ability to connect to people who had similar interests, hobbies or jobs as them.

And we sort of conversed quite a lot beforehand because he was interested in business opportunities in New Zealand and that sort of tied in with my other sort of career interests as well. (Participant 3)

As a result of the interaction, a few participants mentioned the friendships that were created through their Airbnb experiences. These friendships resulted in continued contact, visitations and repeated patronage, through which this host derived a sense of relatedness and connectedness.

Someone stayed for one month and he really became a good friend. (Participant 2)

And we, like there are a few guests who are like family now, where we call them over and we just have a cup of coffee, or even dine together at times (Participant 10)

Such friendships resulted in the ability to experience diverse cultures, where they would stay with their guests overseas or even ask them to house sit in one case. Participants noted the novelty of the interaction with a diverse range of people, from different cultures. Moreover, two participants referred to the ability to live vicariously through others, to experience their travel journeys.

What I completely love about it is that people come from around the world and because I am not from New Zealand as well it makes me feel closer to, I love having people from overseas come in because it's that exchange that we do not get very easily in New Zealand,... and you see people in Europe, so you ask them how it's going there. I mean I have really interesting conversations from people from the States (Participant 2)

A sense of community between hosts and guests, as well as with other hosts, was mentioned by some participants. The difference between these two types of relationships is that those between hosts may be easier to maintain because of the geographic proximity and greater

homophily based on factors, such as living in New Zealand, being an Airbnb host and being open enough to join the social circle.

I think Airbnb is more kind of like a group, you belong to one big group, Airbnb society. Community, yeah, people feel more safe. (Participant 1)

The social interaction also resulted in learning experiences and opportunities for growth. This included specific skills for both personal and business growth, gaining competence in areas such as languages. For example, a few participants mentioned language skills either learning a new language or the ability to practice another language.

You know I learnt a bunch of Chinese sayings that I never would have learnt if I had not had a Chinese family staying with me (Participant 6)

An aspect to this relationship formation was both personal and economic. Divergences occurred as to why they felt the need to be responsible hosts, with some identifying that was just who they were (personal reasons). Others discussed the need for good reviews (economic reasons but also linked to self-esteem).

A social obligation was particularly pronounced in one participant, who felt a personal need to help two young girls. Other participants felt a duty to “not let others down” and create an excellent experience for their guests.

I chose to change my day around a little bit so that I could make sure that I'd go home on the ferry that was gonna accommodate them (Participant 6).

Feedback from reviews was appreciated to allow for personal growth and thus contributing to increased competence, while others saw this as helpful for improving their future reviews. Hosts were proud to have received highly positive reviews, particularly when they mention their name because such reviews are accessible worldwide for a prolonged period of time. Feedback is also actively welcomed by some participants, to enable them to learn, grow and become better hosts and thus increasing their competence in Airbnb hosting.

Yeah, yeah, I think it's important because it's part of who I am, you know, wanting to ensure that that is correctly portrayed on my values and things, and looking after people, caring for people (Participant 7)

So that's how my business is gonna grow, so my customer satisfaction is more important for my business to grow You have managed to satisfy that guest who repeatedly keeps coming here, so there's that self-satisfaction as well. (Participant 10)

Similarly, the need for social approval was articulated by most participants. There were a variety of ways that participants communicated their need for customer satisfaction. Some participants enjoyed helping guests, such as through helpful advice about where to go and what to do. Here, hosts sought accomplishment or fulfilment by providing enjoyment for others; hosts enjoyed being caretakers.

For others, the idea of good customer reviews was another explicit reason why hosts went above and beyond what might initially be expected of a host. This explicit, written feedback

helped to improve self-esteem through external mechanisms. In some participants' view, such reviews could provide ongoing business (economic reasons) as well as giving them the ability to be a “superhost” for example.

So, I think reviews seem to be quite a big part of the interaction between the host and guest experience. And just in the same way like I was saying your profile has to look good, it's that reinforcing that's happening ... So I'm a super host, and yeah it definitely is an incentive to be one. I just want, you know, it was like oh look, I can be a super host. (Participant 7)

Overall, phase four highlights the importance of relatedness and competence in keeping users in their provider roles.

Discussion

The current research investigated the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that compel users to change roles – from consumer to provider – within the sharing economy. The results of a qualitative study, using semi-structured depth interviews, show consumers move through four phases where they become aware of the alternative role, identify platform mechanics that enable a role switch, build the requisite confidence to change roles and finally, develop a wealth of experience in the new role that encourages role maintenance.

To date, much has been written about the motivation for individuals to participate as consumers or providers in the sharing economy (Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Lang *et al.*, 2020a; Mittendorf *et al.*, 2019; Sung *et al.*, 2018; Trabucchi *et al.*, 2019). Despite that, there appears to be an absence of research examining how or why consumers switch roles from consumer to provider. The findings from this study show this switch occurs across four phases. In each stage, there are a number of important components – catalysts, enablers, drivers and glue – that facilitate movement from one stage to the next. Our findings show that the use of SDT can extend beyond predicting motivations for joining the sharing economy, as established in the previous literature (Yakin *et al.*, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2016). As such, it helps explain the predominant SDT psychosocial needs, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations evident within four key phases of role switching in the sharing economy (as presented in Figure 1).

In phase 1, a range of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations act as catalysts for a user to consider a role in the sharing economy other than as a simple consumer. Intrinsic motivations might include the desire for increased work flexibility and the prospect of a new challenge. Extrinsic motivations might include being made aware of increased demand in the sector or a change in life circumstances. These opportunities offer users an enhanced income, allowing investment in property. Such extrinsic incentives align with findings of previous studies (Gatautis and Medziausiene, 2014; Bock *et al.*, 2005) that predict participation in the sharing economy and collaborative sharing communities. In the catalyst stage, the critical moment is when individuals identify the potential opportunity before them and realise moving to a provider role is an option. The catalyst stage relates to competence (dealing with the environment) associated with a feeling of mastery and efficacy in one's activities. This feeling of mastery can give sharing economy members a sense of enjoyment, a key intrinsically motivated factor previously established to predict sharing and participation behaviour (Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Shen *et al.*, 2012). In addition, the provision of flexibility in the way providers “work” contributes to fulfilling individuals' need for autonomy. Prior research (Zuckerman *et al.*, 1978) has shown increasing one's choice and flexibility

contributes to perceived autonomy, which increases one's intrinsic motivation. As such, it can be highly predictive of behaviour change. However, on their own, the catalysts in phase 1 are not enough to cause a role switch from consumer to provider. Instead, consumers must also encounter enablers.

In the second “enabling” phase, individuals – already aware of the possibility to become a provider – come to learn of the various “enablers” that might facilitate this role shift. In such situations, they see low barriers to entry and a relatively low level of complexity in the market as positive extrinsic motivations. At the same time, partnering with an existing sharing economy platform gives them a degree of certainty and security to explore a change in roles. This process allows consumers to reduce their social and psychological risk. Maintaining a sense of control and transparency relates to fulfilling consumers' need for autonomy. That is, experiencing their own behaviour as voluntary, and having control over what they do (Ryan and Deci, 2000). It can also be suggested that having used the system as a consumer prior to their role transition provides a “view from the other side”, possibly resulting in increased reassurance. Importantly, these enablers (positive experiences, transparency and technology ease of use) do not result in a switch to a provider alone as there must also be key motivators in place. Thus, to this point, individuals have identified the potential to move from being a consumer to a provider and are made aware of the different systems and processes in place that could facilitate such a shift.

In the third “driver” stage, individuals rely on further intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to build on their existing awareness and “drive” them to make the move from consumer to provider. As they consider moving into the provider role, individuals start considering the prospect of revenue generation and increased income. In line with the previous literature, we position the notion of gaining revenue generation and income as an extrinsically motivated behaviour (White, 2015; Deci and Ryan, 1985). Not only are these powerful extrinsic motivations but they act as future, ongoing operant rewards that give rise to a number of strong intrinsic motivations. Put simply, the extrinsic motivations influence the achievement of intrinsically motivated behaviours (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Receiving economic benefits in the form of money is consistent with the application of the SDT lens within the sharing economy empirical literature, mostly from a user perspective (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Hamari *et al.*, 2016). These also include the possibility for increased work flexibility and control over one's financial destiny, as well as the notion the individual could become their own boss. In this regard, autonomy and flexibility are embedded through controlling how and when extra money is earned and being one's own boss. In turn, “flexible” working hours are connected to individual discretion and autonomy (i.e. flexibility) (Costa *et al.*, 2006) which result in job satisfaction and improved mental health (Gregory and Milner, 2009).

Having adopted the role of provider, findings suggest individuals enter phase 4, the “glue” stage. This is where a number of intrinsic motivations act as the “glue” to keep them willingly engaged in the service provider role. In this regard, we posit that sharing economy behaviour becomes predominantly self-determined. That is, it is intrinsically driven and done for enjoyment, interest and inherent satisfaction for the action itself (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Given the self-determined nature of this phase, participants are most likely to remain a provider. This is likely because the social interactions and growth provide positive reinforcement (intrinsic motivation), making them feel like a valuable caretaker within the sharing economy ecosystem. Such social benefits are in line with previous empirical and conceptual research from many disciplines in the context of the sharing economy (Bardhi and

Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015; Hawlitschek *et al.*, 2018; Yang *et al.*, 2017; Ozanne and Ballantine, 2010). At a deeper level, the social interaction afforded by becoming a provider might fulfil a need for relatedness, our innate desire to interact with, be connected to and experience caring for others. Previous research has also shown that providers are motivated by helping others, supporting idealistic and altruistic narratives of the sharing economy (Wilhelms *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, we show that, related to SDT, relatedness (sense of caring relationships) and beneficence (sense of making a positive contribution) are the factors which ensure providers continue to perform in their chosen role.

Implications for theory

This research adds to the sharing economy literature in several ways.

First, the findings demonstrate some consumers are willing to switch roles and become providers. Importantly, this “role switch” is a process sharing economy companies are keen to encourage (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Ertz *et al.*, 2018) because it provides a stream of willing providers in the sharing economy ecosystem. While there is much research about joining the sharing economy as either a consumer or provider, it would appear little, if any research to date has examined what users do beyond the initial sign up. Based on the findings from this research, we propose some consumers move through a four-phase process during which they switch roles from consumer to provider. Here, we highlight the need not only for initial catalysts for switching and the need to facilitate protection and transparency (enablers), the critical importance of main motivators, such as being your own boss and earning money (drivers) but also the factors which *keep* providers, namely social factors, and personal growth, such as fulfilling the need to be a caretaker and building self-esteem. The findings allow us to address Eckhardt and Bardhi's (2016) call for future research to assess the role of social versus economic motivations in terms of the ephemeral value that users seek. We achieve this through our application of SDT where we can explore both intrinsic (e.g. social) and extrinsic (e.g. economic) motivations of sharing economy users, and how these predict behaviour change, in the form of role switching. We highlight the need for both social and economic motivations for the switch from consumer to provider and keep them in that role. We also importantly highlight that beyond the extrinsic and intrinsic benefits (Kumar *et al.*, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2019), there lies a need for both to be present when switching roles from consumer to provider. For example, while economic incentives may attract providers, it is mostly intrinsic motivations and outcomes (e.g. connect with like-minded individuals, experience diverse cultures and to build friendships) that keep providers. According to SDT, intrinsic motivations are generally of higher motivational quality than extrinsic motivations such as making money (Stone *et al.*, 2009). This helps explain why intrinsic motivations act as the “glue” that keep providers in their role.

Second, we highlight the importance of autonomy and flexibility. While previous research has found sharing economy providers to be motivated primarily by economic and social motives (Bellotti *et al.*, 2015; Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016; Sung *et al.*, 2018; Wilhelms *et al.*, 2017) as well as sustainability (Sung *et al.*, 2018), no research has found or focused on their need for control, autonomy and flexibility. As such, our findings demonstrate the importance of flexibility offered by being a provider in the sharing economy which serves users' need for autonomy. The element of control is discussed by Ravenelle (2019) and Shapiro (2018) in the gig economy (i.e. TaskRabbit), who both demonstrate that platform providers and the apps they use limit the flexibility and control usually touted by the sharing economy. For example, if all Uber drivers want to work

between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., but the demand is greater during peak commuting hours, the “flexible” model quickly collapses (Ravenelle, 2019). As such, platforms use algorithms and gamification techniques to push workers to work certain times (Ravenelle, 2019). Our findings indicate this perception of the sharing economy as flexible and allowing one to “be in control” is a key (perceived) asset which motivates individuals to switch roles and become providers.

The findings also provide greater understanding of SDT in the sharing economy. Deci and Ryan (1985) found choice and opportunities for self-direction enhance intrinsic motivation because they allow people a greater feeling of autonomy. The present study also highlights that autonomy and competence are key factors to facilitating the role switch from consumer to provider, with flexibility fundamental to autonomy. For example, in phase 1, when individuals have major life transitions, they need to be flexible, while in phase 3 having additional income and being one's own boss are underscored by the ability to be flexible about how (e.g. type of sharing, minimum duration), when (e.g. month, day) and for whom (e.g. guest selection), which specific work (e.g. service levels) is initiated. We show under which conditions autonomy is particularly important (i.e. when you have choice). Here, we provide a more nuanced understanding of “choice” by showing choice is one of two levels of flexibility: option flexibility (choice) and cognitive flexibility (the mental aptitude to consider these options). Both of these facets of flexibility are important and highlight the importance of matching extrinsic (i.e. flexibility of options) and intrinsic (i.e. flexibility of mind) motivation. Thus, we provide a more nuanced perspective of autonomy by showing that the two facets of flexibility are a necessary condition for autonomy to become meaningful.

Implications for practice

Overall, these findings inform the communication, processes and policies of sharing economy platforms, who wish to facilitate consumers' role switch to (1) become providers (e.g. highlight the flexibility) and, once they have switched, to (2) remain as providers (e.g. highlight social growth and benefits).

There are several initiatives which would facilitate the role switch from consumer to provider. The first step to attract providers (who were users) is to allow targeted communication to consumers who are potential providers, highlighting some of the intrinsic and extrinsic role switch motivators outlined in phases 1 to 3 (Figure 1), such as flexibility, low barriers to entry and the benefit of being your own boss. To enable such targeted communication, at user sign up, platform operators could capture whether a new user is focused on being one-sided (i.e. provider or consumer), or whether there is migration potential for the user to switch or even take up both roles simultaneously and become a prosumer (i.e. consumer *and* provider).

Apart from communication, another fruitful strategy through which to facilitate the switch from consumer to provider is to incentivise switching roles or taking up both roles simultaneously (i.e. becoming a prosumer). Incentives could include decreased transaction costs or added value offers, such as free premium promotion on site, platform subsidies, partner offers or access to other free or price-reduced services (e.g. facilitates cleaning or key pick up and return).

After encouraging consumers to switch roles, sharing economy platforms must consider how to retain providers. To achieve this, our study highlights that sharing economy platforms must

also emphasise the intrinsic role switch motivators outlined in phase 4 (Figure 1), such as social connections and networking. Our findings demonstrate the importance of connectedness and the feelings of relatedness (i.e. caring relationships), and beneficence (i.e. making a positive contribution). There are a number of ways in which these can be achieved. For example, having special review categories (e.g. “Guest and host”, “Driver and passenger”) and ways to highlight exemplary service provision by switched providers would build trust and satisfy the need for social growth and enhance their self-esteem. Another way to achieve these goals is for platforms to offer “rewards” or “tokens” which guests can award their hosts (i.e. guests can be offered a \$10 discount on their next trip or instead give a \$10 tip to their host, or once a year guests are offered an opportunity to “gift” a reward to their favourite hosts) or even offer annual competitions for the best hosts. Such tactics would also tap into the important extrinsic motivator of “incentive”, which is likely to be an important tool to ensure consumers who have switched to being a provider remain in that role for longer.

Figure 1

Four-phase switch from consumer to provider

	Phase 1 – Catalysts	Phase 2 – Enablers	Phase 3 – Drivers	Phase 4 – Glue
	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that are catalysts for the switch. <i>Identification of the opportunity to become a provider.</i>	Extrinsic motivators that enable the role switch. <i>Deeper consideration of becoming a provider.</i>	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that drive the role switch. <i>Becoming a provider.</i>	Intrinsic motivators that extend the new role. <i>Remaining a provider.</i>
Role switch motivators	Intrinsic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking flexibility to try something new Extrinsic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life changes Identification of demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low barriers to entry Low perceived complexity Security from transparency, credibility of the platform Protection via insurance and liability policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be your own boss Control through flexibility of how and when to 'work' Bonus, supplementary income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social growth and interaction Fulfilling a need to be a caretaker Developing and maintaining self-esteem
Predominant SDT psychosocial needs	Autonomy Competence	Autonomy Competence	Autonomy	Competence Relatedness

Table 1

Key studies investigating users' motivations for participating in the sharing economy

Study	User focus	Key finding	Method	Key measure
Lang <i>et al.</i> (2020a)	Consumers and providers (separate samples)	Found that trust and gratitude were both drivers of wanting to take up the second role (for consumers to also become providers and for providers to also become consumers). Trust was more important than gratitude for consumers and conversely, gratitude was more important than trust for providers	Online survey	Behavioural intention
Sung <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Consumers and providers (separate samples)	For consumers, enjoyment and network affect their attitude and intention to use sharing economy. For providers, economic benefit, sustainability, social relationship and network effect affect their attitude and intention to use	Online survey	Attitude towards being a user in the sharing economy and behavioural intention
Böcker and Meelen (2017)	Consumers and providers (mostly separate samples)	Investigated the importance of economic, social and environmental motivators. Motivations differed markedly between sectors of the sharing economy and less between socio-demographic groups. Economic motivation appears more important to consumers than to providers	Online survey	Behavioural intention
Bellotti <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Consumers and providers (separate samples)	Found that instrumental motivations (access to the product/service, better value and getting payment) and social relationships were important for both consumers and providers	Interviews	Actual behaviour
Neunhoeffer and Teubner (2018)	Consumers	Found that a wide range of motivations drives consumers to participate in the sharing economy: Financial benefits, uniqueness, variety and ubiquitous availability, sense of belonging and social experience, trust in others, independence of ownership, ecological sustainability and anti-capitalism,	Online survey	Attitude towards being a user in the sharing economy

Study	User focus	Key finding	Method	Key measure
Möhlmann (2015)	Consumers	modern lifestyle and social influence Investigated consumers' determinants of satisfaction and why they chose a particular sharing option. Found that utility, trust, cost savings, familiarity, service quality and community belonging were determinants of their choice	Online survey	Behavioural intention
Billows and Mcneill (2018)	Consumers	Investigated the impact of six motivational determinants on attitude towards collaborative consumption and intention toward participating in the sharing economy. Found a strong relationship between perceptions of ownership and risk reduction with consumers' preferring models that protect a "primary" user and allow for flexibility. Used shared car parking as a context	Online survey	Behavioural intention
Hawlitschek <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Consumers	Found the five most important drivers of sharing economy usage intentions are financial benefits, trust in other users, modern lifestyle, effort expectancy, and ecological sustainability	Online survey	Attitude towards being a user in the sharing economy
Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Consumers	Investigated motivations to engage in the sharing economy. Found that consumers were motivated to access products because of the practical value of sharing seldom used products, economic reasons, environmental reasons and access to a community	Interviews and online survey	Used furniture and home products. Difficult to share
So <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Consumers	Found that attitude towards Airbnb was driven by price value, enjoyment, and home benefits. In turn, attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms (e.g. social influence and trend affinity) predict behavioural intentions	Focus groups and online survey	Attitude towards intention of using Airbnb

Study	User focus	Key finding	Method	Key measure
Hamari <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Consumers	Investigated users' motivations to participate in the sharing economy. Found that participation in the sharing economy is motivated by many factors such as its sustainability, enjoyment of the activity, as well as economic gains	Online survey	Attitude towards being a user in the sharing economy
Lee <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Consumers	Results suggest that perceived risks, perceived benefits, trust in the platform, and perceived platform qualities were significant drivers of consumers' intention to use Uber	Online survey	Behavioural intention of using Uber
Guttentag <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Consumers	Investigate tourists' motivations for using Airbnb. Consumers were most motivated to use Airbnb by practical attributes and less so by its experiential attributes. In particular, the following motivations appeared key to using Airbnb: interaction, home benefits, novelty, sharing economy ethos and local authenticity	Online survey	Actual behaviour
Wilhelms <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Providers	Investigated providers' drivers to offer peer-to-peer car sharing. Found four overarching motivational dimensions: economic interest (“earn”), quality of life (“enjoy”), helping others (“enrich”) and sustainability (“enhance”)	Telephone interviews	Actual behaviour
Karlsson and Dolnicar (2016)	Providers	Investigated what drives the supply-side of peer-to-peer accommodation networks. Found that three high-level categories are the main drivers: income, social interaction and sharing. None of the three is dominant	Online survey	Actual behaviour
Schreiner <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Providers	Investigated variables that influence the willingness to share in nonmonetary sharing situations. Found that low social distance and product involvement are predictors of providers' willingness to share	Lab experiment	Behavioural intention

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