

We Cannot Leave Aside the Collaborative Consumption

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Abstract

The current waste production around the world is huge. Collaborative consumption (CC) is a practice of sharing products and services and has economic and cultural implications, which can have potential to change this scenario. CC reinvents the way we are consuming, making possible share stuff that we are not using anymore. The benefits range from improving communication and network, save money, space and time, and even ecological and business benefits. There are many tools available, such as websites and apps to practice collaborative consumption and incorporate it into our everyday life. Also, some people who are adept at collaborative consumption can inspire us with their positive testimonials. We cannot just let down the opportunity of collaborative consumption; especially in the current world plunged into an environmental, economic and social crisis.

Keywords: Resources; Share; Trust; Waste

Introduction

The world population has been increasing steadily over time. Accordingly, demand for the products that humankind use daily also increase enormously. In addition, we have the globalization influencing the consumption [1]. There is a common scenario in which supply generally exceeds demand, leading to the development of seductive and misleading marketing strategies to induce consumption. Moreover, products are made not to be durable or to become obsolete only in a long time. This situation favors the famous cycle of "programmed obsolescence." In this context, the waste production is so huge that we are unable to manage it [2]. This is why strategies aiming at sustainable consumption and mitigation of environmental impacts have attracted attention.

The consumption habits have been shifting dramatically, and this raised the concern over ecological and social issues by consumers [3]. The so-called "share economy" is growing from commercial and consumer-related practices based on share. The emergency of this new economic model is related to environmental concerns added to technologies increment such as the use of social networks. A diffusion of different strands of shared economy is related to numerous for-profit and non-profit companies' recruitment [3]. It is a way to use technology to makes business. Collaborative Consumption (CC) is one such a case that reinvents the way of consumption. The possibility of reusing all kind of products has inspired people to create ways to share things. CC returns the former way of exchanges in villages but in a large scale and more natural [2]. CC involves people organizing and distributing resources in exchange for a fee or other compensation, covering various sectors [4,5].

The idea is such brilliant, changing the way we are consuming, making possible to share something that you not use anymore or is not in use at this moment. Doing this, you prevent someone from buying something to use only once. A classic example is the power drills, which will be utilized for about 12 to 13 minutes throughout their lifetime [6,7]. We are experiencing trade that has enormous commercial and cultural implications. Technology tools allow these exchanges, being a great supporter to CC by helping to increase participation and to create online platforms [2-6]. It is an economic model based on trust, and this is mainly due to feedback systems that allow others to feel more secure; it is the "reputation system". We are connecting our world to share, and this is creating an economy of "what is mine is yours" [6].

Collaborative consumption is built on top of three systems: redistribution markets, cooperative lifestyles, and product services [6]. Redistribution markets enable to take a product from where it is not needed and take it to where it is. This attitude prolongs the life cycle of the product and consequently decreases the waste production. This is called the five R's policy: "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair and Redistribute". In the co-operative lifestyles system, resources such as money, skills and time are shared. The product services system practices the payment just for the benefit of the product. Therefore, it is more important what the product provides than its ownership. All these systems working together, allow people to share resources, without losing lifestyle or their personal freedom. This is collaborative consumption [6].

Within collaborative consumption, people are returning to communicate much more and trust each other. About the social issue, more than connecting people, CC has the potential to be a path to an altruistic and social equality model. Collaborative consumption can give access to certain goods from which some people were previously excluded, and then promote solidarity [8]. Besides network purposes, CC allows people to save money, space and time [2,9]. Moreover, CC provides significant ecological advantages by rising efficiency of use, decreasing waste and inspiring better products development [2,10].

Nowadays there is a growing concern about the overconsumption pressures on environment [9]. Indeed, sharing goods and services tends to result in less environmental impact compared to non-sharing models. Consequently, CC can be considered as a manifestation of sustainable behavior [9], because may reduce waste, excessive energy use and greenhouse gas emissions [11,12]. Collaborative Consumption also benefits traders, encouraging negotiations more efficient, flexible, innovative and profitable [4,5]. Then, the motivations to seek CC are practical, social, environmental, financial, curiosity, networks

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and social media [13]. More than that, consumers want to be more independent and active in consumption process, and CC can give it to them [8].

Studies showed that people were more satisfied when choosing a share option [14]. Some keys to this choice are utility, trust, cost savings, and familiarity on CC option. However, we agree that CC and sharing options are not without problems [4]. Some challenges are the complexity of technology system, those unable consumers to participate [9]. Besides, recent studies indicate that trust affects the choice to join to CC. A solution to this are tools, such as online rating system – reputation – that provide more confidence [6,14,15]. Some research has shown that people want to participate in CC [11]. For this, public policy and researchers should join forces aiming to develop sustainable behaviors, such as reuse, and share [12]. Local governments can also facilitate community sharing, by providing events, projects and places with this aim [11]. A good way to change this is investing on collectivity and leaving aside individuality.

Web sites or mobile apps offer different categories of exchange: new or second-hand purchase, rentals, donations, sharing, exchange, and loan. Examples are Airbnb, Zipcar, Facebook, Freecycle, and Twitter. You just need to find the better option in your country. An interesting website and app are the “Bliive” [16], which propose time-sharing and share your knowledge and to explore activities of your interest. Another important thing is the “DIY: Do it yourself”. So many videos on YouTube can help you to find a way to produce something that you need with simple things you already have at home and can reuse. Starting to do things at home drives the cycle of refusing, reducing, reusing, recycling and composting [17].

Also, there are many projects and people to get inspired. An outstanding series is “The Story of Stuff”. In the official video, you can see all the cycle of production and consumption. Then, you can also find other videos about cosmetics and electronics, but more important than that are the videos for change and solutions [18]. Lauren Singer is an excellent example of this lifestyle. She documents her routine without producing trash in “Trash is for Tossers”. It is possible to find some steps to reduce our daily waste, also how to make own products, with no harmful substances. Lauren Singer founded her own company when she realized that companies that say to produce natural products, also use some toxic compounds [19].

Change consumption habits mean reevaluate our desires and consumption needs. It is knowledge that we need to reduce the rhythm that we are consuming. Exchange and share can supply needs for objects and services leading to a “life with less stuff style” [17]. Even in scientific papers, the CC has been cited, highlighting behaviors of social animals that have a high degree of organization and cooperation, such as ants and bees [2]. That is the case of this discussion: not let down the breaking of the regular consumption. We cannot let the idea fall asleep, requiring more participation and dissemination by people, including in academia. Collaborative Consumption has an enormous potential to enter universities doors’ and laboratories, ending up with individual work and maintain knowledge as a secret, encouraging partnerships and publications [4].

In this sense, we cannot just let down the concepts of CC but try to integrate it into our daily routines. Collaborative Consumption has an enormous potential to change the current pattern of consumption and reduce waste production. It may consequently diminish human

pressures on environment, such as pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and use of raw material.

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