

**Title: Uberization of Home Cooking:
Understanding Participants' Motivation of Meal Sharing**
(Paper #383)

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Abstract:

Digitized platforms for peer-to-peer (P2P) exchanges have spread to various sectors of the economy. Meal sharing is one of the latest trends of the sharing economy. Online meal sharing platforms provide to individuals, a social and culinary experience around a home-cooked meal, prepared by a host. Whilst several studies have outlined consumers' motivations for peer-to-peer accommodation (e.g., Airbnb) or car sharing (e.g., Uber), there is a research gap in the literature with regard to meal sharing users. This study tried to identify meal sharing users' motivations to engage in meal sharing activity by adopting a means-end theory approach.

Keywords: Meal Sharing, Peer to Peer Platform, Sharing Economy, Means-end Theory

1. Introduction

The sharing economy as digitized platforms for peer-to-peer (P2P) exchanges has spread to various sectors of the economy (Heo, 2016; Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016). Every day, new companies based on the sharing economy are created as people are more inclined to borrow and share goods and services instead of buying them. The sharing economy is now part of consumer's everyday lives with new disruptive innovations shaking our old habits. The European Parliament's Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection suggest that sharing practices could lead to a potential economic gain of €572 billion in annual consumption across Europe (Finck & Ranchordás, 2016).

Uber and Airbnb have built an empire and above most new business models that are followed by many new comers. Meal sharing is one of the latest trends of the sharing economy. Online meal sharing platforms provide to individuals, a social and culinary experience around a home-cooked meal, prepared by a host. Often called the "Airbnb for food", this phenomenon is growing in popularity with a total of 250,650 users only for the two main platforms, VizEat and EatWith. Meal sharing invites people to discover the home of a stranger over the course of a meal.

Whilst several studies have outlined consumers' motivations for peer-to-peer accommodation (e.g., Airbnb) or car sharing (e.g., Uber), there is a research gap in the literature with regard to meal sharing users. This paper thus seeks to identify meal sharing users' motivations to engage in such activity, applied to the case study of Surfing Dinner, a Swiss-based meal sharing platform.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Sharing economy and meal sharing*

Finding a clear definition of the sharing economy is a challenge as the term has been used in a variety of ways (Schor, 2014). Belk (2007) defined sharing as the action of distributing our possessions to others for their use and/or the action of taking or accepting something from others for our own usage. In the last decade, the word sharing has grown in popularity, being used in the context of the sharing economy, and is considered as "an alternative to the private ownership that emphasized both marketplace exchange and gift giving" (Belk 2007, p.127). In general, collaborative consumption, collaborative economy, access-based consumption, access-based economy, gig economy or peer-to-peer economy, are terms used by scholars to describe the sharing economy. Access-based economy or consumption is a term sometimes used to describe the sharing economy. Schaefers, Lawson and Kukar-Kinney (2015) define it as "market mediated transactions that provide customers with temporally access to goods in return for an access fee, while the legal ownership remains with the service provider" (p.3).

The academic literature on the sharing economy is rather broad and can be classified in different categories. The booming success of collaborative consumption raises legal and financial issues (Guttentag, 2015; Kassar & Orsi, 2012; Katz 2015; Ranchordás, 2015; Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2017). Others focus, on the rise of peer-to-peer rental accommodations and its impact on tourism (Cheng, 2016; Guttentag, 2015; Heo, 2016). Some scholars are studying the psychological aspect of sharing, studying motivations and likelihood to reuse sharing economy services (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2010, 2014; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015; Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010).

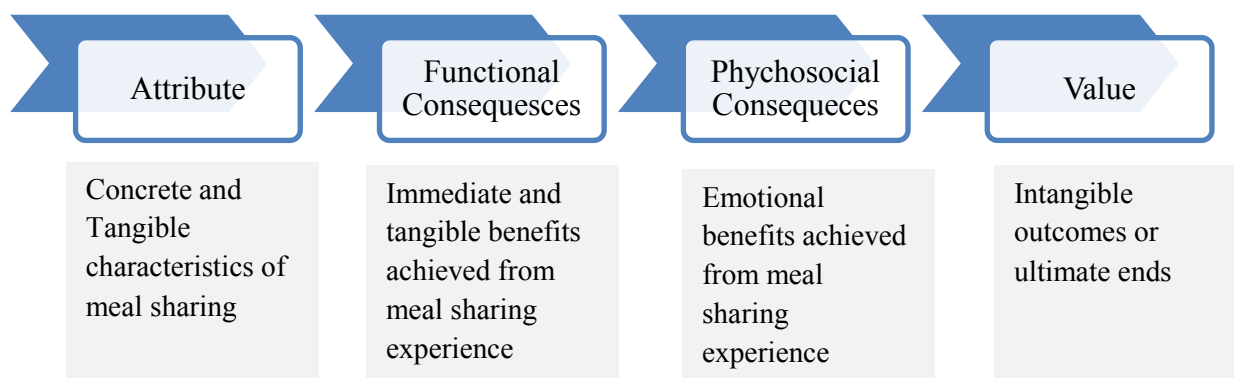
Despite the extensive academic literature on the sharing economy, meal sharing has not yet been explored except Ketter's (2017) paper on EatWith tourism-sharing economy consumers. Meal sharing is a phenomenon in development and therefore is still in its early stages. This explains the knowledge gap on meal sharing in general and on users' motivations to engage in such activity. This study tried to identify meal sharing users' motivations to engage in meal sharing activity by adopting a means-end theory approach.

2.2. Means-end chain theory

Means-end chain theory helps to understand cognitive positioning of consumers towards products or services. Means-end chain theory is a hierarchical representation of the way that consumers relate service attributes into consequences and into their own personal values (Dibley & Baker, 2001; Grunert, Sorensen, Johansen, & Nielsen, 1995; Reynolds & Gutman, 1984; Valette-Florence & Rapacchi, 1991).

In the literature, the means-end theory has been applied in several studies examining consumers' consumption behavior and motivations. This method is particularly effective to link the attributes of a product or a service to consumers' needs (Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002). Bagozzi and Dabholkar (1994) applied means-end chain theory and its information gathering techniques called laddering method to understand consumers' recycling goals and their effect on decisions to recycle. In tourism studies, means-end chain theory has been integrated into examining tourists motivation and tourist behaviors (Jiang, Scott, & Ding, 2015; Klenosky, 2002; McIntosh & Thyne, 2005; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009; Pike, 2012).

Figure 1. Conceptual model based on Means-end chain theory



Previous literature confirmed that this method fits particularly well for studies fulfilling the characteristics of few participants and exploratory research. Therefore, the use of the means-end chain model was selected to gain a deeper understanding of respondents' motivational factors. The conceptual model based on means-end chain theory is presented in Figure 1.

3. Methodology

Data collection to apply means-end chain theory can be carried out in two ways; with "hard" or "soft laddering" (Botschen & Thelen, 1998; Grunert & Grunert, 1995). Hard laddering refers to the technique where subjects have to generate ladders and to verify associations one by one with an increasing level of abstraction. This type of laddering is preferred for large samples, but can force produce connections and to determine only a certain vision of the motivations. Soft laddering consists of an interview where the flow of speech is natural and unrestricted allowing more freedom to interviewees to explain why a particular attribute is relevant to them (Grunert & Grunert, 1995). The connections between attributes, consequences, and values are made during the analysis.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the qualitative investigation was applied following a means-end theory approach with soft laddering technique. The laddering interviews were carried out exclusively on a group of 13 users of meal sharing platform. In order to be selected, all interviewees had to be active members meaning having participated or hosted at least once since their subscription to the platform. 55% of respondents were women and 45% were men. Their age was situated between 21 and 46 and with the most dominant age group being 30-39 (55%), followed by 20-29 (27%) and 40-49 (18%). Out of 13 respondents, 4 had the Swiss nationality and 9 were from European countries. The sample origin was diversified with respondent coming from South America, Asia, Middle East, Europe and Eastern Europe.

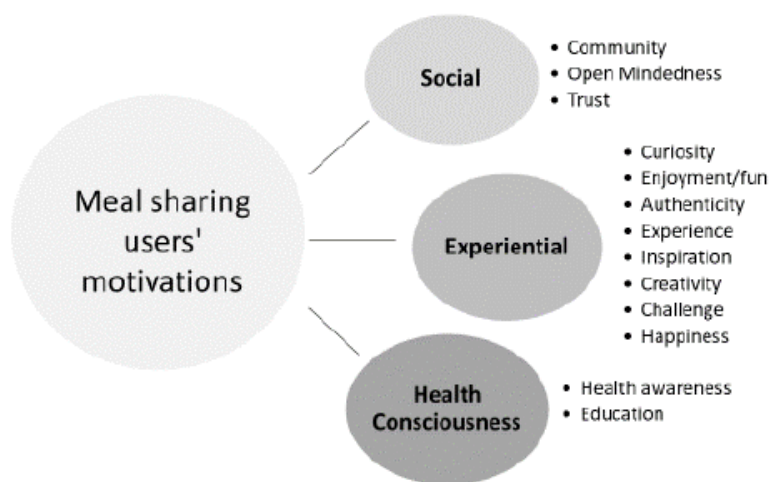
4. Results

The main goal of this paper is to find an empirical analysis on the motivations of meal sharing users' to participate in such activities. Figure 2 summarized the findings of this research. According to Ketter (2017) and Tussyadiah (2015), participation in sharing economy is usually driven by 3 main motivations: economic, environmental and social. Some similarities can be found between the findings and the literature review on P2P accommodation, car sharing and other sectors of collaborative consumption. For example, meal sharing users regarded it as a meaningful way to interact and connect with people, outside of their usual acquaintances. Moreover, the relatively small size of event allows participants and hosts to get to know each other, creating a stronger feeling of community. Regarding environmental motivations, there was no mention of sustainability as a factor influencing participation during interviews. The respondents mentioned the use of local ingredients to cook, however, this was not a factor influencing their engagement.

Figure 2. Attributes, consequences and values chain for participant

Attribute	Functional/Pychosocial Consequences	Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambience • Food quality/home cooked • Socializing • Food from around the world • Vegan / vegetarian / allergies • New people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal that you can't find in a restaurant • Understand new cultures • Meet people from different background • Make friends • Connect with locals • Meet new people • Travel through food • Discover new food • Learn about other cultures • Satisfy demand for vegan food • Adapted to dietary restriction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyment/ fun • Authenticity • Happiness • Community • Open-mindedness • Experience • Inspiration • Curiosity • Health awareness • Sense of belongings

Figure 3. Meal sharing users' motivations



On the other hand, cost saving or economic benefit, the main motivational factor for P2P accommodation sharing, was not important for meal sharing participants. Hosts do not intent to earn a lot of money from meal sharing as the prices generally cover costs of ingredients and convenience costs, such as the time spent to cook. For participants, the cost of meal sharing is similar or slightly cheaper compared to a 3-course menu at a restaurant. In fact, meal sharing is seen as less convenient, with set times, rather than going to a restaurant with time flexibility, but some participants mentioned that “meal sharing is not just eating foods but special experience” In addition, Health conscious motivation has not been tackled

in previous research regarding the sharing economy, but is an important driver of meal sharing participation. Meal sharing is perceived as an alternative to restaurants for health conscious users.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

These days, P2P sharing is becoming trendy and new businesses are launched in the P2P ecosystem every day. This study focused on meal sharing users' motivations and found that meal sharing is shaped by values that differ from other sharing economy sectors such as accommodation and transportation. Experiential motivation and health consciousness were found to be unique drivers for meal sharing users. In particular, health conscious motivation has not been tackled in previous research regarding the sharing economy, but is an important driver of meal sharing participation. Indeed, for hosts, meal sharing represents an interesting platform to share their culinary knowledge and to educate participants on the complex relationship between health and food. Hosts are motivated to show diverse types of cuisine and particularly menus tailored towards individuals with dietary restrictions (e.g., vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, raw foodism etc.).

In addition, the experience in itself, is the characteristic that shapes the uniqueness of meal sharing compared to other P2P sharing economy activities. Airbnb users' end goal is to rent out a room to sleep in, whereas BlaBlaCar participants wish to get from a point A to a point B. However, meal sharing users are strongly driven by experiential motivations such as the need for sensory stimulation, or the enjoyment of new experiences. The desire of belonging to a community is another of the main drivers of participation in meal sharing, as found previously for the sharing economy (e.g., Bellotti, et al., 2015; Galbreth, et al., 2012; Hamari, et al., 2016; Nelson & Rademacher, 2009; Walsh, 2011). Based on our findings we encourage future researchers apply a quantitative research method with different variables affecting users' decisions, such as risk avoidance, variety seeking tendencies or on variables affecting the popularity of different locations by comparing income, unemployment rate, GDP of the region or Gini index.

We can identify several limitations of the current study. One of the main limitations of this study is that only one platform, Surfing Dinner was used for the data collection. By using a local meal sharing platform, this study is only focusing on Switzerland and more precisely the Vaud region which does not represent meal sharing users globally. The study was made in a European context and therefore, results might not apply to different cultures. North Americans users may be driven by other motivational factors, such as convenience, or users in Asia might perceive the higher hygiene risk as a negative demotivation influencing participation.

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