

Clemens, Valentin; Sabel, Christopher Albert; Foege, Johann Nils; Nüesch, Stephan

Article

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System Design Choice in the Sharing Economy: How Different Institutional Logics Drive Consumer Perception and Consumers' Intention to Use Sharing Systems

Valentin Clemens · Christopher Albert Sabel  · Johann Nils Foegel · Stephan Nüesch

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Abstract The sharing economy provides consumers with temporary access to various products. As a growing business trend that continuously attracts new consumers, it motivates businesses to rapidly develop new system designs. In this study, we investigate how the system design choices of sharing systems for products affect consumers' perceptions of the system and consequently their intention to use a system. Building on institutional logics, we examine how the logics inherent in two system designs—the community logic in peer-to-peer (P2P) systems and the corporate logic in business-to-consumer (B2C) systems—affect consumer perceptions. We argue that consumers perceive P2P and B2C logics differently regarding logics' economic benefits, product scarcity, sustainability benefits, and social benefits. To test our theory, we conducted a scenario experiment with 1259 participants from the UK. Our findings suggest that consumers perceive P2P systems as yielding higher economic, sustainability, and social benefits than B2C systems, and that these benefits increase consumers' intention to use the system. However, we also find that P2P systems suffer from the risk of product scarcity, reducing consumers' intention to use such systems. In summary, our findings show that system design affects consumers' perceptions and that different designs attract consumer groups with different preferences.

Valentin Clemens · Christopher Albert Sabel (✉) · Stephan Nüesch
University of Muenster, Schlossplatz 3, 48143 Muenster, Germany
E-Mail: christopher.sabel@wiwi.uni-muenster.de

Valentin Clemens
E-Mail: valentin.clemens@t-online.de

Stephan Nüesch
E-Mail: stephan.nuesch@wiwi.uni-muenster.de

Johann Nils Foegel
Leibniz University Hannover, Königsworther Platz 1, 30167 Hannover, Germany
E-Mail: nils.foegel@wa.uni-hannover.de

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1 Introduction

Consumers increasingly perceive the sharing of goods as an attractive alternative to legal ownership (Belk 2007, 2014), elevating sharing economy systems from a niche idea to a business trend (Laamanen et al. 2016). There is no generally accepted definition of sharing systems (Belk 2014) or even of sharing itself (Belk 2010). Therefore, we follow the seminal work by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012, p. 881), who define sharing systems from the consumer perspective: “consumers want access to goods and prefer to pay for the experience of temporarily accessing them”. In other words, sharing systems provide consumers temporary access to products (e.g., cars, tools, and electronic devices) without transferring ownership (Benoit et al. 2017; Einav et al. 2016; Täuscher and Laudien 2018).¹ Studies show that consumers’ intention to use sharing systems or acquire ownership depends on their perceptions of multiple factors. These include economic benefits (Barnes and Mattsson 2016; Lawson et al. 2016), sustainability benefits (Botsman and Rogers 2010; Hartl et al. 2018), access to product variety (Akbar et al. 2016; Lawson et al. 2016), perceived social benefits (Böcker and Meelen 2017; Ozanne and Ballantine 2010), and personal enjoyment of sharing (Chen 2009; Hamari et al. 2016).

While numerous studies have examined general consumer intention to use sharing systems in relation to ownership, this literature has overlooked the different design choices available to system operators. Scholars generally distinguish between two sharing system types: peer-to-peer (P2P) and business-to-consumer (B2C) systems (Einav et al. 2016; Münzel et al. 2018). In B2C systems, there is a dyadic relationship between providers, who own the system as well as the product, and consumers, who gain temporary access to the product (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). In P2P systems, there is a triadic relationship between providers, who own the system, a third party, who owns the product, and consumers, who gain temporary access to the product (Hamari et al. 2016). Even though the P2P–B2C dichotomy is often employed in the literature (e.g., Hartl et al. 2018; Möhlmann 2015),² there is little research comparing consumers’ perceptions of the two sharing system types (Muñoz and Cohen 2017). Although access to consumer data and motivation-based market segmentation have become primary reasons for firms to engage in sharing systems (Guttentag et al. 2017; Wirtz et al. 2019), the influence of system type on consumer perceptions and the influence of consumer perceptions on intention to use a system remain unclear. In some cases, gaining access to consumers may even contradict the primary

¹ Both products and services are provided through such systems. We focus on products as the management and marketing of services through sharing systems is not comparable due to their intangibility (Milanova and Maas 2017).

² There are systems in which third-party firms offer products through P2P systems. We discuss them later.

targets of the system providers. For example, ShareNow, a rideshare subsidiary of carmakers Mercedes-Benz and BMW, is offering cars of its direct competitors Stellantis (Fiat) and Peugeot (Peugeot, Citroën) to increase the attractiveness of the sharing system at the expense of the penetration of its own products (SHARE NOW 2022). Similarly, the carmaker Mercedes-Benz introduced a brand-independent P2P ridesharing system called “Croove” (Croove 2022). Although not a full sharing system, the fashion company H&M is experimenting with a P2P system in which consumers can temporarily buy or rent clothes and exchange them with others (Onag 2021); another fashion company, Zalando, has created a P2P marketplace for used clothes (Zalando Zircle 2022).

Disentangling the relationships between design choice, consumer perceptions, and consumers’ intention to use sharing systems is important for two reasons. First, as scholars agree that design choices affect consumer perceptions, results from studies on P2P systems cannot be transferred to the B2C context and vice versa (Benoit et al. 2017; Hartl et al. 2018; Möhlmann 2015). For firms to choose the most suitable system, they must know which consumers they are likely to attract and whether these consumers’ intention to use a system are different across sharing systems. A firm’s specific goals—such as revenue generation, increased utilization of its products, or data collection from specific consumer groups—may also affect whether a P2P or B2C system is preferable (Subramaniam and Piskorski 2020). Second, understanding consumer perceptions about sharing systems helps explain consumers’ intention to use a system, which is key to implementing such systems successfully (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Möhlmann 2015; Schaefers et al. 2016). Costello and Reczek (2020) and Lehr et al. (2021) show that the type of marketing and communication design influences consumers’ behavior and attitudes toward carsharing systems and, in turn, consumers’ intention to use a system. However, this work does not address the type of sharing system, such as B2C vs P2P. From a managerial perspective, it is important to understand consumers’ expectations about sharing system types because mismatches between system design and outward perceptions may ultimately reduce demand for the system. For example, it may be necessary to price P2P systems below B2C systems if consumers expect them to be cheaper on average; likewise, managers of B2C systems may choose to address new segments by focusing on environmental sustainability if consumers perceive B2C systems to be less environmentally friendly than P2P.

Following prior work (Costello and Reczek 2020; Lehr et al. 2021), we employ an individual-level view to study the underlying processes (i.e., mediating effects) of how system design choices affect consumers’ perceptions and thus their intention to use a sharing system. Drawing on Thornton and Ocasio (1999) and Thornton et al. (2012), we investigate whether the *institutional logics* inherent in different system designs (B2C vs P2P) affect consumer perceptions and, in turn, consumers’ intentions to use a sharing system. Prior research has shown that institutional logics, such as corporate and community logic, lead to the creation of different business models in the sharing economy (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). We extend this view and hypothesize that these logics shape consumer perceptions toward sharing systems. Comparing community (P2P) and corporate (B2C) logics, we study whether facets of institutional logics affect consumer perceptions. Second, we test whether

these facets are related to consumers' intention to use a system. Finally, whereas prior studies often focus on vehicles, such as cars and scooters (Lehr et al. 2021; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018), we cannot assume that consumer perceptions are consistent across different product categories. Therefore, to create generalizability across products, we test our hypotheses on 1259 participants in a scenario experiment and follow a two (P2P and B2C) by four (cars, tools, electronic devices, and toys) design.

Our study makes two main contributions. First, we contribute to the literature on consumer perceptions and choices in the sharing economy (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Eckhardt et al. 2019; Hamari et al. 2016; Schaefers et al. 2016). By comparing consumers' perceptions of B2C and P2P systems, we extend recent work on consumers' intention to use a system and the mediating role of consumers' perceptions of marketing choices within the same system (Costello and Reczek 2020; Lehr et al. 2021). In doing so, we shift the focus from marketing and communication design choices *within* a sharing system to choices *between* possible sharing system designs. Through this approach, we demonstrate that consumer perceptions differ substantially between systems. Second, we advance the literature on the institutional logics of sharing systems by analyzing consumer behavior as a response to different institutional logics. Prior research on institutional logics in relation to sharing systems has focused on the logics' influence on firms' strategies (Grinevich et al. 2019) and business model innovation (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). We change the subject of analysis from processes within the firm to external consumers, showing that sharing systems' institutional logics also influence consumers' perceptions of and behavior toward sharing systems. This combines prior research on consumers' perceptions of sharing systems (e.g., Akbar et al. 2016; Möhlmann 2015; Schaefers et al. 2016) with research on such systems' institutional logics and their effects on stakeholder groups (Grinevich et al. 2019; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). In addition, we offer practical insights for firms that face design choices about sharing systems and show that different design elements attract consumers with different preferences. Finally, we close our study with a discussion of the managerial implications of these findings.

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Design Choices of Sharing Systems and Their Underlying Institutional Logics

There is no uniform design approach for sharing systems that target consumers seeking temporary access to products. Indeed, there are many design elements through which consumers can interact with businesses or other consumers (Subramaniam and Piskorski 2020). Nevertheless, scholars distinguish between two main types of systems: peer-to-peer (P2P) and business-to-consumer (B2C) systems (Einav et al. 2016; Hartl et al. 2018; Möhlmann 2015; Münzel et al. 2018).

In B2C systems, companies own both the system and the products and grant consumers temporary access to the products (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). Thus,

consumers temporarily use products provided by a company in a B2C sharing system, which involves a dyadic relationship and access-based consumption (Benoit et al. 2017; Gerwe and Silva 2020). In contrast, in P2P systems, third parties use a system provided by a system provider to grant other consumers temporary access to physical goods (Hamari et al. 2016). As a result, P2P sharing systems involve collaborative consumption through a more complex triadic relationship (Benoit et al. 2017). Therefore, while B2C sharing system providers are suppliers that need to stock assets and attract consumers (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012), P2P sharing system providers match individuals according to demand, facilitating their transactions as suppliers and consumers (Einav et al. 2016). In P2P systems, individuals can be either suppliers or consumers and determine both supply and prices in the system. This contrasts with mixed forms of sharing systems in which the system provider independently alters prices and thus affects supply and demand.

While there are other strategies in the sharing economy, such as combined sharing systems or system participation for data access (Subramaniam and Piskorski 2020), B2B2C relationships—in which a system provider connects both third-party owners and consumers through its proprietary system—are increasingly common. Importantly, multiple archetypical sharing systems can be operated by the same company simultaneously. The US company Uber provides a useful example (albeit of service-based sharing rather than product sharing). Uber is a system provider that rents its own cars to consumers through Uber Rentals, connects commercial taxi companies with consumers through Uber Premium, and offers consumers the opportunity to act as carsharing providers to other consumers through Uber X (formerly Uber Pop).

Institutional logics can help us understand how such archetypical sharing systems develop and to what extent they affect stakeholder perceptions. Institutional logics understood as socially constructed patterns of assumptions, values, and beliefs by which individuals provide meaning to their reality. They determine the patterns by which individuals categorize other individuals and organizations (Lounsbury et al. 2021; Thornton and Ocasio 1999). The concept of institutional logics draws on institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977), which posits that all organizations adhere to external expectations and thus gradually become similar (within comparable fields). Accordingly, institutional logics explain which activities companies' internal and external audiences perceive as legitimate and desirable; moreover, they describe how such perceptions guide identity, behavior, and strategy (Ocasio and Radoynovska 2016; Thornton and Ocasio 1999; Thornton et al. 2012; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). Thornton et al. (2012) identify seven ideal types of institutional logic: family, community, religion, state, market, profession, and corporation. As Vaskelainen and Münzel (2018, p. 277) aptly put it, “a large family firm could be committed to family logic through its ownership ties, to corporation logic through the management system of the company, and to market logic through its business.”

While firms are shaped by several institutional logics, a dominant logic usually prevails within a firm (Reay and Hinings 2005, 2009; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). Once multiple institutional logics in the same field prevail, firms create strategies that address stakeholder expectations, as failing to meet such expectations could threaten their survival (Battilana and Dorado 2010; Pache and Santos 2012). This means that

logics are not decided by a focal firm per se but co-created by its internal and external stakeholders, expressing the firm's legitimacy. Among other stakeholders, consumers are heavily involved in the process of developing and adapting institutional logics (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Martin and Schouten 2014; Vargo and Lusch 2004). For example, a sharing system cannot decide by itself which logic it follows; instead, it must act according to the expectations of internal and external stakeholders to achieve gradual recognition.

Markets in the sharing economy foster multiple institutional logics (Mair and Reischauer 2017). For example, Vaskelainen and Münzel (2018) demonstrate how multiple institutional logics are present in the German carsharing market. First, well-known corporate carsharing providers, such as BMW and Mercedes-Benz, operate sharing systems such as Share Now. In such systems, firms provide their own products to consumers for temporary use, aiming to increase the prospects of the firm (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). In our terms, these systems are B2C providers that seek to utilize their products in a proprietary system. These systems employ *corporate logics*, in which organizations conduct their activities to increase their own size, growth, and profit (Thornton et al. 2012).

Table 1 Comparison of Archetypical Sharing Systems and their Institutional Logics. (Own visualization based on Thornton et al. 2012)

Type	B2C	B2B2C	P2P
Dominant institutional logic	Corporate	Market	Community
Root metaphor	Corporation as hierarchy	Market transactions	Common group boundary
Logic description	System provider creates a channel that allows it to utilize otherwise under-utilized resources, thus increasing profitability	System provider offers a channel to consumers that allows access to products that would otherwise be more difficult or costly to obtain	System provider creates a channel for consumers to interact, with a focus on community-building and shared access to products
Key features for sharing systems	Focus on own corporate growth, product utilization, and company diversification	Focus on own profit by increasing quantity and quality of transactions for all system participants	Focus on economic and behavioral benefits for the community
Sharing description	Company provides sharing system and products to be shared with consumers	Company provides sharing system to connect consumers and third-party owners	Company provides sharing system to connect consumers that provide products to each other
Relationship	Dyadic	Triadic	Triadic
System & product ownership	Unified	Separated	Separated
Examples	System provider owns and provides own vehicles to consumers (e.g., Share Now)	Carsharing system provider connects third-party owners that provide vehicles to consumers (e.g., Fleetster)	Carsharing system provider connects consumers to provide vehicles to each other (e.g., Turo)

Second, carsharing software firms like Fleetster seek to combine their system for public carsharing and private providers, thus increasing the system's reach. These companies provide a sharing system to connect third-party product owners and consumers. In our terms, this corresponds to B2B2C providers that increase the scope of their system with both the total network size and service offering in mind. Such providers forego some value appropriation opportunities in favor of market value creation (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). This mirrors *market logics*, in which an organization conducts its activities to maximize its profitability by maximizing the quantity and quality of transactions, foregoing revenues in the process (Thornton et al. 2012). While this should be the main logic of most markets (as it maximizes the overall quality and quantity of market transactions), organizations often stray from this logic due to other institutional demands that favor their own organization over other actors (Ocasio and Radoynovska 2016).

Third, in the case of local carsharing providers, small or localized providers such as Turo typically focus on an ecological mission of decreasing private car usage rather than the goal of increasing profit or revenue (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). Such companies provide a sharing system to connect consumers that provide products to each other. In our terms, this corresponds to P2P providers whose goal is to create a channel for consumers to interact, with a focus on community-building and shared access to products. This mirrors *community logics*, in which an organization includes all participants in the group and focuses on the overall benefits for all group members (Thornton et al. 2012). For a summary of these characteristics, see Table 1.

2.2 Differences in Institutional Logics, Consumer Perceptions, and Intention to Use a System

Differences in institutional logics alter how external audiences in general (Thornton et al. 2012) and potential consumers in particular (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015) perceive companies. Grinevich et al. (2019) conducted a series of expert interviews on institutional logics in the sharing economy. They found that the most salient strategic considerations for system providers are the tangible benefits of economic factors and product availability/convenience and the intangible benefits of sustainability and social connections. This is in line with current findings suggesting that institutional logics that are connected to grand challenges, such as resource conservation and environmental sustainability, are integrating into topics of daily life, such as transportation, employment, and nutrition (Gümüşay et al. 2020). Therefore, environmental considerations are slowly becoming as important as economic and social factors, which have been found to impact attitudes toward sharing as opposed to owning (Grinevich et al. 2019; Hamari et al. 2016).

These tangible (i.e., economic benefits, product availability/convenience) and intangible benefits (i.e., sustainability, social benefits) are also regularly associated with institutional logics. For example, economic and sustainability benefits are commonly associated with community logics, which strive to provide benefits beyond the focal organization (Thornton et al. 2012; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). To extend this logic, we test whether consumer perception and corresponding intention to use a sharing system also vary due to differences in institutional logics.

We build on prior work that conceptualizes sharing systems as a single institutional logic (Ocasio and Radoynovska 2016; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). To study whether different institutional logics affect consumer perceptions of sharing systems, we test diametrically opposed archetypical sharing systems. Therefore, we compare corporate-based logic (B2C) and community-based logic (P2P) in the following chapter. While more comparisons are possible (especially with the market-based B2B2C logic), there is a methodological tradeoff between the number of design choices and the number of product categories under study. We choose to study a general effect between two diametrically opposed system designs across four product categories as opposed to studying more design choices for fewer product categories. We study multiple product categories because it is important to determine whether our proposed mechanisms might be confounded by product-specific considerations. Thus, with our design, we offer general mechanisms that apply to several product categories. To increase the confidence in our results, we choose products that differ with respect to their features, the economic impact of sharing, and their potential importance for consumer groups.

2.3 Economic Benefits

A key difference between corporate and community logics is the distribution of economic benefits. While organizations with a corporate logic focus on their own growth and profitability, those with a community logic focus on distributing economic benefits among community members (Thornton et al. 2012). Moreover, while both B2C and P2P systems generate cost savings for consumers compared to traditional ownership (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Hamari et al. 2016), they distribute these savings differently. In B2C systems, economic benefits are divided between one supplier and the consumers. In contrast, P2P systems distribute the economic benefits between the system provider, consumers who supply goods, and consumers who use the goods for a lower price than they would pay for traditional ownership (Benoit et al. 2017).

As a result, corporate-focused B2C systems seek to maximize their own profits in each transaction, whereas P2P systems distribute economic gains more evenly among the participants. B2C systems must maximize corporate profits to compensate for the capital tied up in the products offered for rent. In contrast, P2P systems do not require the amortization of such bound capital because they utilize the idle capacity of products owned by consumers (Sundararajan 2017). While individual consumers may decide to buy products solely to act as providers in the P2P system, the community is generally unaware of individual decisions, and such decisions do not affect the distribution of profit within the community. The difference between the economic priorities of the B2C and P2P systems becomes further evident given prior work suggesting that individuals share their assets not only for profit but also for altruistic reasons, such as helping others and doing something meaningful (Bucher et al. 2016). As a result, we hypothesize that consumers perceive that they will benefit economically more from a P2P than a B2C system because they expect economic benefits to be more evenly distributed in P2P sharing systems.

H1a Consumers perceive that they will obtain greater economic benefits in P2P sharing systems than in B2C sharing systems.

Gaining economic benefits is a strong consumer motive for using sharing systems (Belk 2014; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Hamari et al. 2016). Thus, when consumers perceive that economic benefits are distributed more favorably toward them in P2P systems than in B2C systems, their intention to use P2P systems will be greater than their intention to use B2C systems.

H1b There is a positive indirect effect of P2P systems (vs. B2C systems) on consumers' intention to use a system, mediated by consumers' perception that they will obtain greater economic benefits.

2.4 Product Scarcity

A central feature of the corporate logic is the use of internal assets to sustain growth. In contrast, the community logic focuses on distributing benefits and costs among its members (Thornton et al. 2012). This can be seen in the perceived availability of sharing systems' products. While B2C sharing systems need large investments to build up stock, P2P systems can grow without tying up capital in assets. As a result, P2P sharing systems grow naturally with the number of providers and consumers (Sundararajan 2017). This growth is less predictable than the centrally managed corporate approach, as P2P sharing systems must attract two sides of a market, each of which is incentivized to join when there are many actors on the opposite side (Rochet and Tirole 2006). Indeed, before they reach a critical threshold, P2P sharing systems are unattractive to both consumers and providers (Botsman and Rogers 2010). In B2C sharing systems, the company is responsible for allocating assets (Cohen and Kietzmann 2014) and can react to market demand by increasing the number of products or redistributing them to high-demand areas (Regue and Recker 2014).

In contrast, P2P sharing systems can improve their coverage only by advertising to and incentivizing providers (Weber 2016). As a result, their limited ability to react to market demand might increase consumers' doubts about satisfactory coverage. We expect that consumers will perceive product scarcity to be higher in P2P than in B2C sharing systems, as consumers value the central role of a company and expect companies to efficiently distribute their product offerings. Compared to B2C systems, decentralized P2P communities can be expected to reallocate resources less efficiently.

H2a Consumers perceive that P2P sharing systems have higher product scarcity than B2C sharing systems.

Product availability is a motivator for consumers to use sharing systems. When consumers perceive that products will not be available, they are less likely to choose a sharing system because their main need—access to the product—is not met (Baumeister et al. 2015; Lamberton and Rose 2012).

H2b There is a negative indirect effect of P2P systems (vs. B2C systems) on consumers' intention to use a system, mediated by consumers' perception of higher product scarcity.

2.5 Sustainability

Vaskelainen and Münzel (2018) show that carsharing providers that focus on corporate logic use business models that are less sustainable than comparable providers with community business logics, which aim to reduce the overall distance traveled by vehicle. In general, traditional B2C providers employing a corporate institutional logic can be expected to co-opt the sharing economy by focusing more on profitability than sustainability (Martin 2016). For example, sustainability is seen as a side effect rather than a purpose of B2C business models in carsharing (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). In fact, corporations might even force more sustainability-oriented actors out of the market due to their greater market power and resource pools (Martin 2016). This may affect consumer perceptions of system designs, as the environmental sustainability of sharing systems is of growing importance for consumers (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Ozanne and Ballantine 2010). Stakeholders see the reduction of idle product capacity through sharing as sustainable, as it lowers the consumption of resources in the production of new products (Belk 2007; Botsman and Rogers 2010). However, consumers perceive the use of existing products as more sustainable than the use of products specifically built and used for sharing (Sundararajan 2017). Thus, when comparing P2P and B2C systems, consumers can be expected to perceive products that are privately owned as more sustainable than products that firms specifically dedicate to sharing systems.

H3a Consumers perceive P2P sharing systems to be more sustainable than B2C systems.

Scholars tend to agree that the goal of increasing sustainable consumption is a major reason why consumers use sharing systems (Cohen and Kietzmann 2014). However, the empirical evidence on this point is inconsistent. Although some studies on car and home rentals found no evidence that the goal of sustainable consumption influenced consumers' intentions to use sharing systems compared to ownership (e.g., Möhlmann 2015), other studies on cars and studies that did not specify a product found that increased sustainability perceptions influenced consumers' attitudes toward the system and, consequently, their intention to participate (Hamari et al. 2016; Hartl et al. 2018). We follow the latter, more recent evidence and hypothesize that the increased consumer perception of sustainable consumption in P2P systems positively affects consumers' intentions to use P2P sharing systems, compared to B2C systems.

H3b There is a positive indirect effect of P2P systems (vs. B2C systems) on consumers' intention to use a system, mediated by consumers' perception of higher sustainability.

2.6 Social Benefits

Organizations with corporate logics are focused on transactions with consumers, whereas those with community logics interact with their stakeholders, assess their needs, and engage in dialogue with their community (Thornton et al. 2012; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). In general, sharing goes beyond access to the physical product. Providers offer supplementary knowledge and skills, information about past experiences, and advice on how to use the product through personal interaction (Albinsson and Yasanthi Perera 2012). Perceptions of reciprocity make consumers more likely to have favorable opinions of sharing. Individuals expect a greater positive social return through the creation of reciprocal social bonds (Belk 2007). Reciprocity, and thus social returns, are perceived differently in corporate and community institutional logics. In the context of this study, in P2P systems, consumers interact with the system provider and other consumers, whereas consumers solely interact with the providing company in B2C sharing systems (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). We argue that reciprocity and social belonging are more prevalent in P2P than in B2C sharing systems, as they are more likely to emerge between individuals sharing an experience (Ozanne and Ballantine 2010). Studies of carsharing show that community logics and longer interactions lead to less anonymity and more personalized exchanges (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018).

H4a Consumers perceive that they will obtain greater social benefits in P2P sharing systems than in B2C systems.

Greater social returns increase the likelihood that consumers will use a sharing system (Belk 2007). Social belonging drives consumers' intentions to use a sharing system in multiple product markets of the sharing economy, such as the toy market (Ozanne and Ballantine 2010) and meal sharing (Böcker and Meelen 2017).

H4b There is a positive indirect effect of P2P systems (vs. B2C systems) on consumers' intention to use a system, mediated by consumers' perception of higher social benefits.

3 Empirics

3.1 Study Design and Sample

The goal of our study is to empirically test whether consumers perceive P2P and B2C sharing systems differently and whether these differences in perception lead to differences in consumers' intention to use such systems. Following prior research (e.g., Mell et al. 2020; Morandi Stagni et al. 2020), we designed a scenario experiment focusing on four product categories. Within the experiment, we manipulated the system design and measured consumers' perceptions and intention to use a system. We created a binary variable to compare sharing systems with diametrically opposed institutional logics: corporate logic (B2C) and community logic (P2P). While more sharing system types could have been compared, we opted to compare more product

categories instead. As the main goal of the experiment was to capture underlying causal differences in consumer perceptions, providing generalizable findings across categories was more important than capturing differences across a broad set of system types. While there is no optimal number of scenarios for such an experiment (Mellewigt et al. 2017), we chose to limit the number of systems rather than the number of product categories.

Our scenario experiment comprised four product categories to increase the generalizability of our findings: cars, tools, electronic devices, and toys. This diversity of products is important because the product largely determines the variance when testing motivational factors within the sharing economy (Böcker and Meelen 2017; Möhlmann 2015). Most empirical studies either discuss sharing without reference to any particular product (e.g., Hamari et al. 2016; Roos and Hahn 2017, 2019); investigate a specific product, most often cars (e.g., Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Münzel et al. 2018; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018); or address the sharing of services (e.g., Bucher et al. 2018), which are fundamentally different from products (Milanova and Maas 2017). Using multiple product categories alleviates this empirical research gap.

We chose cars and tools in order to include products that are prominent in the sharing economy (Botsman and Rogers 2010), and we added electronic devices and toys because they have specific characteristics that produce greater variation in our results. As electronic devices are medium-priced goods subject to rapid technological development, consumers may postpone purchase decisions in favor of renting these products (Balcer and Lippman 1984). As toys are social products, they are more likely to encourage social interaction between consumers and providers during the sharing process (Ozanne and Ballantine 2010). Thus, our study follows a two (P2P and B2C sharing system) by four (cars, tools, electronic devices, and toys) design.

We recruited 1472 participants in the UK through the online research platform Prolific Academic. The only restriction on participation was UK citizenship. Following prior work (Fleischer et al. 2015; Mell et al. 2020; Oppenheimer et al. 2009), we included a comprehension check and a manipulation check in our study, asking who provided the product and which kind of product was available on the website. We excluded 14.5% of participants because they answered at least one of these questions incorrectly. The manipulation check ensured that “who provided the product” was clear, offering “a company” or “members” as choices. All valid responses classified the B2C offering as “company” and the P2P offering as “members,” demonstrating that the respondent understood the corporate and community logics. The resulting sample contains 1259 participants (53.1% female). The participants were 36.8 years old on average. Furthermore, our sample is representative and heterogeneous with regards to marital status (45% single, 40% married), education (58% undergraduate degree or higher), employment status (52% full-time, 20% part-time, 6% students), and income (40% £20,000–£39,999, 33% above £40,000).

3.2 Procedure

We created a website to inform the participants about Rondou, a fictional sharing company. The website provided information about the process of renting the product, explaining the following six steps: (1) sign up, (2) product search, (3) product

selection, (4) pick up, (5) use, and (6) return. We manipulated the information according to whether a company (B2C) or individuals (P2P) provided the product. For an example, see Figs. 3 and 4 in the Appendix. In addition, the website showed which of the four product categories were offered. All other information, such as the name Rondu, the search mask, where to rent, and when to rent, was held constant. We did not provide information about the product's quality or pricing in any scenario. Conclusions about these factors were left to the participants' perceptions based on the general setting. We encouraged participants to put themselves in the position of a consumer who wanted to rent the product.

We conducted a pretest with 200 participants to ensure that our constructs were valid and reliable and to verify that the participants understood the scenarios. While the pretest confirmed the validity and reliability of our constructs, it also showed that we needed to differentiate between the P2P and B2C scenarios more clearly. To do so, we added a visualization of the exchange relationship on each fictitious company's website (Figs. 3 and 4 in the Appendix).

For randomization, a random number between one and eight was generated for each participant at the beginning of the experiment. This number determined which system type (P2P or B2C) and product (cars, tools, electronic devices, or toys) the participant received. We used no pre-conditions for the assignment of the scenario.

3.3 Measures

Independent Variable The experimental setting formed the basis for our manipulated independent variable, *P2P design*. *P2P design* is a binary variable coded as one for participants presented with a P2P sharing system and as zero for participants presented with a B2C sharing system.

Mediators To measure consumer perceptions of economic benefit, scarcity, sustainability, and social benefits as mediators, we adapted measures previously used in the sharing economy literature. The items were displayed to the participants in a random order. The participants were asked to respond to all items on a Likert scale from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*. For the *economic benefit* mediator, we used well-known items first used by Bock et al. (2005) and later adapted by Hamari et al. (2016). Similarly, *sustainability* has been adapted from Hamari et al. (2016). We adapted *product scarcity* and *social benefits* from Hawlitschek et al. (2016), who themselves adopted the scales from Lamberton and Rose (2012) and Peterson et al. (2008), respectively. By using these previously tested measurements, we ensure a higher level of reliability and comparability to prior work.

Dependent Variable Our dependent variable is *consumers' intention to use* the sharing system. Participants were asked to respond on a Likert scale from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*. We adopted this variable from well-known studies by Hamari et al. (2016) and Bhattacharjee (2002), who measure the participation of consumers in the sharing economy and the use of online services, respectively. We alter the variable's wording slightly to account for consumers' intention to use

Table 2 Central Constructs and Measurements

Construct	Measures	Loading	AVE	α	Adapted from
<i>Dependent variable</i>					
Consumers’ intention to use	All things considered, I would expect to use Rondu often in the future	0.96	0.93	0.97	Bhattacharjee (2002); Hamari et al. (2016)
	I can see myself using Rondu more frequently in the future	0.97			
	I can see myself increasing my activities on Rondu if possible	0.96			
	It is likely that I would frequently use Rondu in the future	0.97			
<i>Mediators</i>					
Economic Benefits	I can save money when using Rondu	0.88	0.72	0.86	Bock et al. (2005); Hamari et al. (2016)
	Using Rondu benefits me financially	0.90			
	Using Rondu can improve my economic situation	0.87			
	Using Rondu saves me time	0.73			
Product Scarcity	There is a risk that I will not be able to get the [product] that I want at the time I want to use it	0.88	0.70	0.85	Hawlitshchek et al. (2016); Lamberton and Rose (2012)
	There is a high chance that the [product] I want will not be available when I want it	0.86			
	It is possible that when I need a [product], it won’t be available	0.86			
	[Products] are often unavailable when I want to use them	0.72			
Sustainability	Using Rondu helps to save natural resources	0.91	0.81	0.94	Hamari et al. (2016)
	Using Rondu enables a sustainable mode of consumption	0.88			
	Using Rondu is ecological	0.92			
	Using Rondu is efficient in terms of using energy	0.88			
Social Benefits	Using Rondu is environmentally friendly	0.91	0.85	0.94	Hawlitshchek et al. (2016); Peterson et al. (2008)
	Other users of Rondu and I somehow belong together	0.91			
	I feel connected with others on Rondu when I use it	0.93			
	I have a good bond with others in Rondu’s community	0.93			
	I feel like a member of a community when using Rondu	0.93			

AVE Average Variance Extracted, [product] replaced by: car, tool, electronic device, or toy

sharing systems; this is more in line with the original version in Bhattacharjee (2002), which measures the use of online services.

Control Variables We asked respondents about several other factors that have been shown to be important predictors of *consumers' intention to use* sharing systems and may also mediate the relationship between *P2P design* and *consumers' intention to use*. Perceived *product variety* has been found to influence *consumers' intention to use* sharing systems, as consumers prefer sharing systems with greater variety (Hawlitschek et al. 2016). Similarly, perceived differences in *liability risks* and *performance risks* affect *consumers' intention to use* sharing systems, as consumers prefer systems that are more reliable, have fewer issues, and with no risk of liability claims in case of product damage (DelVecchio and Smith 2005; Schaefer et al. 2016). In addition, we asked about individual attitudes toward the enjoyment of different sharing systems, as consumers attribute different levels of enjoyment and satisfaction to different design elements (Hamari et al. 2016; van der Heijden 2004). Furthermore, we asked participants about their familiarity with sharing systems, as experienced consumers are more likely to choose a sharing option (Möhlmann 2015); we also asked about general involvement with the product in order to control for product-specific interest or dislike (Mittal and Lee 1989). Finally, we collected participants' demographic information for *gender* (binary), *age* (continuous in years), *income* (13 categories), and *education* (six categories), which we included in the analyses.

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis for our experiment items to ensure the reliability of our measures. Following Nunnally (1978), we checked our measures' construct reliability, which is acceptable for all constructs ($\alpha \geq 0.7$). Additionally, we assured convergent reliability between our constructs with average variances extracted (AVEs) above 0.5 (Hair et al. 2017). We verified discriminant validity with the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which posits that the square roots of all AVEs should be above all the corresponding cross-correlations (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Table 2 presents the survey items' reliability measures and the sources for the items of our central constructs, and Table 3 contains the constructs' descriptive statistics and correlations.

Our independent variable is determined by the allocation of a random number to each participant, which is a different source than all the other variables; therefore, it is unaffected by common method bias. As the other variables in our model reflect individual perceptions, we applied Harman's single-factor test. One factor explains 32.24% of the total variance of all mediators and of the dependent variable. We also conducted an unmeasured latent variable test (Podsakoff et al. 2003, 2012) and found no common method bias. Both our study design and the analyses imply that no remedies for common method bias are necessary (Chang et al. 2010). Table 2 provides a summary of the central constructs, the questions asked of participants, the reliability statistics, and the constructs' corresponding sources. Table 6 in the Appendix contains the same for the control variables constructed from the participant responses. Table 3 contains the full descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, and average variance extracted.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Matrix, and Average Variance Extracted of Experimental Constructs

#	Variable	Mean	Sd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Consumers' intention to use	3.51	1.61	0.90	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	P2P design	0.51	0.50	–0.07	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	Economic benefit	4.44	1.29	0.54	0.12	0.85	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	Product scarcity	4.54	1.05	–0.18	0.12	–0.10	0.83	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
5	Sustainability	4.75	1.32	0.38	0.10	0.51	0.03	0.90	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
6	Social benefit	3.61	1.44	0.47	0.23	0.49	–0.04	0.41	0.92	–	–	–	–	–	–
7	Product variety	4.98	1.07	0.35	0.08	0.48	–0.03	0.43	0.40	0.90	–	–	–	–	–
8	Enjoyment	4.47	1.25	0.58	–0.02	0.55	–0.11	0.44	0.54	0.49	0.90	–	–	–	–
9	Liability risk	4.63	1.39	–0.38	0.20	–0.23	0.36	–0.12	–0.15	–0.15	–0.29	0.89	–	–	–
10	Performance risk	4.57	1.16	–0.20	0.15	–0.11	0.35	–0.06	–0.04	–0.02	–0.19	0.60	0.81	–	–
11	Product involvement	4.19	1.74	0.33	–0.04	0.13	0.00	0.09	0.19	0.14	0.27	–0.02	0.03	0.92	–
12	Familiarity	3.46	1.52	0.28	–0.05	0.13	–0.07	0.13	0.14	0.06	0.14	–0.17	–0.13	0.17	0.89

Correlations in italics are at least significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

The diagonal elements represent the square root of the average variance extracted

3.4 Analysis

We aimed to test whether consumers perceive P2P and B2C sharing systems differently across four dimensions and whether these perceived differences lead to differences in *consumers' intention to use* the systems. To do so, we conduct our analysis in three steps. First, we show the differences in means aggregated across all product categories, then conduct ANCOVA tests to determine whether the differences across groups are meaningful (while controlling for the above-mentioned covariates). Second, we specify a partial mediation model using ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to test the indirect effects of *P2P design* on *consumers' intention to use* the sharing systems through our mediators: *economic benefit*, *product scarcity*, *sustainability*, and *social benefit*. We test the mediators simultaneously by using Hayes's (2017) process tool to bootstrap 10,000 subsamples to calculate the confidence intervals. We follow the products of coefficients approach, in which the effect of an independent variable (X) on a dependent variable (Y) is mediated by a mediator (M). We calculate this effect by multiplying β (X)—derived from regressions with M as the dependent variable and X as the independent variable—by β (M)—derived from regressions with Y as the dependent and X and M as the independent variables (Preacher and Hayes 2008; Sauermann 2018; Zijlstra et al. 2022). For clarity, we individually show all four first-stage regressions which regress *P2P design* on the four mediators. Third, we show the differences between product categories when they deviate from the overall results by comparing individual means with ANCOVAs.

4 Results

First, we analyze the full sample across all product categories. The ANCOVAs reveal that consumers perceive P2P and B2C systems differently for all four consumer perception dimensions. *Economic benefit* is perceived as significantly higher for P2P sharing systems than B2C systems ($F(1, 1251) = 20.99; p < 0.01$), which supports H1a. Similarly, *product scarcity* is perceived as significantly higher for P2P than for B2C sharing systems ($F(1, 1251) = 18.47; p < 0.01$), providing evidence for H2a. Taken together, these results show that consumers perceive P2P and B2C sharing systems differently with respect to tangible factors. *Sustainability* is perceived as significantly higher for P2P than for B2C systems ($F(1, 1251) = 16.34; p < 0.01$), providing evidence for H3a. Finally, *social benefit* is perceived as significantly higher for P2P than for B2C systems ($F(1, 1251) = 85.65; p < 0.01$), supporting H4a. Therefore, consumers also perceive intangible factors differently between the two systems. Regarding the dependent variable, *consumers' intention to use*, the ANCOVA does not show a significant difference between the two groups ($F(1, 1251) = 2.62; p = 0.11$). Fig. 1 depicts these results graphically.

Table 4 contains all the regression models for the mediators and the dependent variable. Models 1–4 comprise the regressions of the independent variable *P2P design* on the mediators. All four models are significant and positive, providing further evidence for Hypotheses 1a–4a; P2P systems are perceived to provide greater *economic benefit* (Model 1: $\beta = 0.33; p < 0.01$), *product scarcity* (Model 2: $\beta = 0.25$;

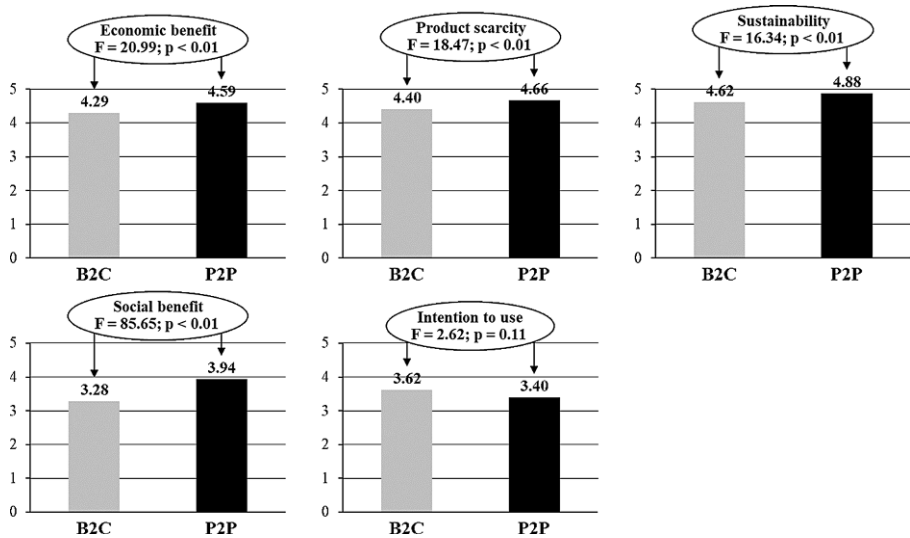


Fig. 1 Comparison of Sample Means B2C vs P2P

$p < 0.01$), *sustainability* (Model 3: $\beta = 0.30$; $p < 0.01$), and *social benefit* (Model 4: $\beta = 0.71$; $p < 0.01$). Model 5 includes only the control variables for the regressions on the dependent variable *consumers' intention to use*, whereas Model 6 includes the independent variable *P2P design*. Model 6 shows that *P2P design* alone is negative but insignificant ($\beta = -0.14$; $p = 0.11$). This indicates that *P2P design* has no strong direct effect on *consumers' intention to use* without accounting for the mediators.

Model 7 includes the full mediation models with additional mediators as controls to provide further evidence for Hypotheses 1b–4b. We find that *economic benefit* is positively related to *consumers' intention to use* ($\beta = 0.31$; $p < 0.01$), meaning that consumers' perception that P2P systems are affordable positively contributes to their intention to use them. Furthermore, *product scarcity* is negatively related to *consumers' intention to use* ($\beta = -0.08$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that consumers' perception of product scarcity in P2P systems makes them less likely to use them. *Sustainability* is positively related to *consumers' intention to use* ($\beta = 0.07$; $p < 0.05$), which indicates that consumers' perception of P2P as environmentally friendly also increases their inclination to use such systems. Finally, as *social benefit* is positively related to *consumers' intention to use* ($\beta = 0.17$; $p < 0.01$), consumers are more likely to use P2P systems because they perceive them as more socially beneficial. We also find a negative direct effect of *P2P design* on *consumers' intention to use* ($\beta = -0.25$; $p < 0.01$), meaning that consumers seem to be less inclined to use P2P systems on average.

While these findings provide initial support to Hypotheses 1b–4b, we further quantify the indirect effects of the mediation model (Table 5). First, we find a significant and positive indirect effect from *P2P design* (X) through *economic benefit* (M) on *consumers' intention to use* (Y; $\beta = 0.10$, SE = 0.03, 95% CI = 0.057, 0.151), providing support for H1b. Second, we find a significant and negative indi-

Table 4 Main Regression Results

Dependent variables	(1) Economic benefit			(2) Product scarcity			(3) Sustainability			(4) Social benefit			(5) Consumers' intention to use			(6) Consumers' intention to use			(7) Consumers' intention to use		
	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p
Product	0.88	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.44	0.61	0.02	0.00	0.16	0.02	0.00	0.28	0.02	0.00	0.28	0.02	0.00	0.17	0.02	0.00
in-																					
volve-																					
ment																					
Familiarity	0.11	0.02	0.00	-0.04	0.02	0.04	0.12	0.03	0.00	0.12	0.03	0.00	0.26	0.03	0.00	0.25	0.03	0.00	0.14	0.02	0.00
Female	0.04	0.07	0.59	0.08	0.06	0.18	0.24	0.07	0.00	0.15	0.08	0.06	0.23	0.09	0.01	0.22	0.08	0.01	0.12	0.06	0.06
Age	0.00	0.00	0.83	0.01	0.00	0.03	-0.00	0.00	0.68	-0.00	0.00	0.54	-0.00	0.00	0.71	-0.00	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.71
Income	-0.01	0.01	0.57	-0.01	0.01	0.45	-0.02	0.02	0.17	-0.01	0.02	0.55	-0.01	0.02	0.8	-0.01	0.02	0.42	-0.01	0.01	0.67
Education	-0.07	0.04	0.06	0.01	0.03	0.83	0.01	0.04	0.71	-0.05	0.04	0.24	-0.06	0.04	-0.06	0.04	0.14	0.14	-0.02	0.03	0.59
Product variety	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.03	0.04	0.35
Enjoyment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.29	0.04	0.00
Liability risk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.23	0.03	0.00
Performance risk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.06	0.04	0.11
P2P design	0.33	0.07	0.00	0.25	0.06	0.00	0.30	0.07	0.00	0.71	0.08	0.00	-	-	-	-0.14	0.08	0.11	-0.25	0.07	0.00
Economic benefit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.31	0.03	0.00
Product scarcity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.08	0.03	0.02

Table 4 (Continued)

Dependent vari- ables	(1) Economic bene- fit			(2) Product scarcity			(3) Sustainability			(4) Social benefit			(5) Consumers' intention to use			(6) Consumers' intention to use			(7) Consumers' intention to use		
	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p	β	Se	p
<i>Sustain- ability</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.07	0.03	0.03
<i>Social benefit</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.17	0.03	0.00
Constant	3.77	0.21	0.00	4.27	0.18	0.00	3.91	0.22	0.00	2.38	0.23	0.00	1.68	0.25	0.00	1.76	0.25	0.00	0.16	0.31	0.61
F	9.23	–	0.00	4.72	–	0.00	7.94	–	0.00	22.73	–	0.00	41.66	–	0.00	36.13	–	0.00	92.2	–	0.00
R-squared	0.22	–	–	0.16	–	–	0.21	–	–	0.34	–	–	0.41	–	–	0.41	–	–	0.73	–	–
N	1259	–	–	1259	–	–	1259	–	–	1259	–	–	1259	–	–	1259	–	–	1259	–	–

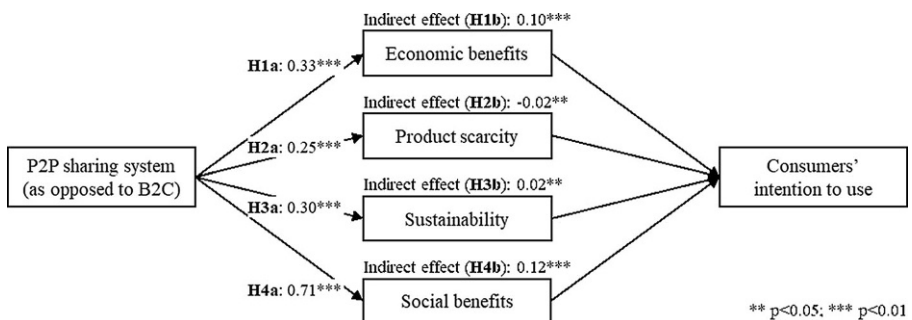
Table 5 Direct and Indirect Effects of System Design Choice on Consumers' Intention to Use

DV: Consumers' intention to use											
Variables	Direct	SE	P	X-M	SE	M-Y	SE	Indirect	SE	95% CI	
X: P2P design	-0.25	0.07	0.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
M: Economic benefit	-	-	-	0.33	0.07	0.31	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.057	0.151
M: Product scarcity	-	-	-	0.25	0.06	-0.08	0.03	-0.02	0.01	-0.039	-0.005
M: Sustainability	-	-	-	0.30	0.07	0.07	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.003	0.044
M: Social benefit	-	-	-	0.71	0.08	0.17	0.03	0.12	0.03	0.074	0.174

Confidence intervals (CIs) of indirect effects are retrieved using 10,000 bootstrap samples

rect effect through *product scarcity* (M) on *consumers' intention to use* (Y; $\beta = -0.02$, SE = 0.01, 95% CI = -0.039, -0.005), providing further support for H2b. Third, we identify a significant and positive indirect effect through *sustainability* (M) on *consumers' intention to use* (Y; $\beta = 0.02$, SE = 0.01, 95% CI = 0.003, 0.044), supporting H3b. Fourth, we find a significant and positive indirect effect through *social benefit* (M) on *consumers' intention to use* (Y; $\beta = 0.12$, SE = 0.03, 95% CI = 0.074, 0.174), providing support for H4b. Taken together, these results confirm our hypotheses. A summary of the hypotheses and results can be seen in Fig. 2.

Finally, we highlight differences between the product categories and map our findings' boundary conditions. To examine product differences, we included dummy variables as indicators for the product category, with cars as the reference group. First, we examined our manipulation checks; these indicated no bias, as we excluded a similar number of participants in each product category (cars: 59; tools: 56; electronic devices: 44; toys: 54). Second, we included the dummy variables as moderator variables in the regression analyses. Product categories had no moderating effect on the direct effect between *system choice* and *consumers' intention to use* (**tools** × system design: $\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.54$; **electronic devices** × system design: $\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.48$; **toys** × system design: $\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.52$). Neither the perception of

**Fig. 2** Summary of Hypotheses

the mediators nor the mediators' effect on *consumers' intention to use* varied significantly except for the effects of *P2P design on product scarcity*. *Product scarcity* was not perceived to be as severe for tools and toys when compared to cars (**tools** × system design: $\beta = -0.29$, $p < 0.10$; **electronic devices** × system design: $\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.37$; **toys** × system design: $\beta = -0.44$, $p < 0.01$). In summary, the differences between product categories do not vary greatly with regards to consumers' perceptions and their intention to use a sharing system. This is important, as it shows that consumers have preconceived notions about the nature of a system rather than about specific product categories.

5 Discussion

Studying institutional logics in the sharing economy helps explain why certain sharing systems succeed while others fail (Mair and Reischauer 2017). While prior research has focused on differences in institutional logics and their effects on internal organizing principles and business models (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018), we turned our attention to how the institutional logics inherent to design choices affect consumers' perceptions and usage intentions. Although institutional logics' effects on consumer perception have been studied in other industries (e.g., Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Slimane et al. 2019), to our knowledge, this is the first study to compare different logics of sharing systems experimentally. It is important to examine how providers' organizational choices allow them to gain institutional legitimacy with a broad array of stakeholders, such as governments, suppliers, and consumers (Laamanen et al. 2018). Indeed, legitimacy is a critical factor for the survival of sharing systems. We confirm that system design choices change the perceptions of consumers, as each design is associated with perceptions of its specific characteristics. Firms seeking the most appropriate design will have to match the system design to their consumers (Subramaniam and Piskorski 2020).

To that end, we study the effects of system design choice on consumers' intention to use sharing systems and examine how this effect is mediated through consumer perceptions of the systems' tangible and intangible components. We conducted a scenario experiment with four product categories and compare the design choices of P2P and B2C systems. We find that P2P and B2C systems are perceived differently with respect to their economic benefit, product scarcity, sustainability, and social benefit. More specifically, consumers perceive P2P systems as economically beneficial, which positively affects their intention to use sharing systems. They also perceive that products are scarcer in P2P systems; this translates negatively to consumers' intention to use a sharing system, as they perceive scarcity as important.

Moreover, consumers perceive P2P systems to be more sustainable than B2C systems, which is in line with prior work (Hartl et al. 2018). We extend this finding and observe that a favorable view of sustainability also increases consumers' intention to use a sharing system. However, individuals are increasingly purchasing products in order to participate in the sharing economy as providers (e.g., buying a cheap car to drive or rent it). If this trend persists, consumers might become wary of P2P systems as a sustainable alternative to B2C, reducing their intention to use sharing

systems. Therefore, future studies could investigate how prevalent such trends are, as empirical evidence is lacking.

Finally, we compare the two systems according to their perceived social benefits for consumers. We find that consumers perceive a greater sense of social belonging from P2P than B2C sharing systems. Not surprisingly, this is also associated with increased intention to use a sharing system, as consumers perceive social benefits to be the most important factor (of the four examined in this study) when deciding on a sharing system. Comparing the four product categories—cars, toys, tools, and electronic devices—we find that most attributes are homogeneous across products. Only product scarcity is perceived to be more pronounced for cars and electronic devices. With tools and toys, consumers can accept lower performance and higher scarcity. We conclude that the more important a product is for daily tasks, the more consumers will seek professionalism, which they find in B2C sharing. This point is in line with the results of Hartl et al. (2018), who observed a preference for trustworthy, less risky B2C sharing systems over P2P systems for cars. Nevertheless, toys and tools are much broader product categories with more varied purposes than, for example, cars. Therefore, consumers may seek products in these categories for different uses of varying importance, and their assessment of scarcity risk may vary depending on the specific tool or toy.

Despite consumers' favorable perceptions of P2P systems, we find no consistent intention to use one system type over the other; we discuss why this may be the case in the managerial implications section below.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

Our study makes two main contributions. First, we contribute to the literature on consumer perceptions and choices in the sharing economy (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Eckhardt et al. 2019; Hamari et al. 2016; Schaefers et al. 2016). We extend recent studies on the mediating effect of consumer perceptions in the relationship between system design choices and consumers' intention to use sharing systems (e.g., Costello and Reczek 2020; Lehr et al. 2021). In particular, we examine B2C and P2P systems across the same consumer perception dimensions. As a result, we focus on design choices between sharing systems rather than marketing and communication design choices within the same system. We show that consumer perceptions differ substantially between systems. Earlier studies have focused mostly on marketing and communication elements within the same system type. Lehr et al. (2021) made important advances in this regard, showing that the type of communication design around carsharing influences consumers' behavior and attitudes toward the platform and, in turn, consumers' intention to use a system. Similarly, Costello and Reczek (2020) studied whether differences in the design of consumer marketing for P2P platforms (provider vs. platform focus) affect consumer perceptions and, in turn, consumer purchase likelihood. While both studies found that the design of platform marketing affects consumer perceptions and use or purchase intentions, neither addresses sharing platform type. Therefore, we expand our understanding of the relationship between different sharing systems and consumers' perceptions, increasing the generalizability of prior findings. By showing that consumers perceive

systems differently depending on who provides the product (i.e., system design), we extend the previous literature by addressing a more general level of design choice.

Second, we advance the literature on the institutional logics of sharing systems by analyzing consumer behavior in response to different institutional logics. Prior research on institutional logics in relation to sharing systems has focused on logics' influence on firm strategies (Grinevich et al. 2019) and business model innovation (Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). We change the subject of analysis from firm-internal to external consumers and show that institutional logics also influence consumers' perceptions of and behavior toward sharing systems. This combines prior research on consumers' perceptions of sharing systems (e.g., Akbar et al. 2016; Möhlmann 2015; Schaefers et al. 2016) with research on such systems' institutional logics and their effects on stakeholder groups (Grinevich et al. 2019; Vaskelainen and Münzel 2018). Thus, we provide a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationships between system design, consumer perceptions, and consumer behavior. It is especially important to note that consumer perceptions about tangible (i.e., economic benefit and product scarcity) and intangible (i.e., sustainability and social benefit) differences between sharing systems both affect their intentions to use a system (Grinevich et al. 2019). This means that while tangible and intangible aspects of the systems differ in importance, studies cannot neglect either category. Indeed, narrowly focused studies of either tangible or intangible factors may misinterpret the underlying mechanisms they observe. While every experimental study must balance the inclusion of theoretical constructs against the requirements of experimental validity and reliability, we advocate for including perceptions about tangible *and* intangible characteristics of sharing systems.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Our findings have important implications for businesses. Customer segmentation and appropriate communication and marketing have become increasingly important in the sharing economy, as they affect consumers' intentions to use sharing systems (Costello and Reczek 2020; Lehr et al. 2021). Businesses can have various goals when they establish sharing systems, such as revenue generation, increased utilization of the firm's products, or data collection from specific consumer groups; these goals may influence whether a P2P or B2C system is preferable (Subramaniam and Piskorski 2020). However, to implement these goals successfully, firms must know which group of consumers they are targeting. Our results suggest that consumers have higher expectations of social orientation and sustainability for P2P systems, affecting their intention to use them. However, consumers may be less likely to use P2P systems if these expectations are not met. If the company's goal is to gather data on socially and sustainability-oriented consumers or to increase consumers' awareness of specific products, a company-supported P2P design may be more beneficial than a B2C design. However, this might not be the best choice for companies seeking to optimize the utilization of their own product portfolio.

This is also important for companies that seek to use several systems at the same time (e.g., Uber, with Uber Rentals, Uber Premium, and Uber X) because each may attract different consumer groups with unique needs and perceptions. As

a result, mixed marketing may become unclear and unfocused, limiting its impact on consumers. Creating different visible identities for different sharing systems may avoid detrimental effects from mixed messages in multi-system firms. For example, Airbnb presents its hotel booking service, HotelTonight, as a separate entity, and Uber uses different applications for its Uber and UberEats offerings.

Similarly, if mature companies or startups wish to enter a product market with a sharing system, prior work shows that they must combine different logics of economics, availability and convenience, sustainability, and social benefits (Grinevich et al. 2019). Consistently with prior literature (e.g., Reay and Hinings 2009; Vaske-lainen and Münzel 2018), our work shows that stakeholders typically attribute one logic to a sharing system. Thus, it may be difficult to portray a single system as employing multiple logics simultaneously. Therefore, market entrants may have to choose which type of sharing provider they want consumers to perceive them as; this decision will reflect their capabilities and target customers. Consumers seem to perceive that B2C systems are less affordable but provide higher product availability. Therefore, it may be best for novel B2C entrants to compete primarily on service quality rather than affordability, as consumers might not believe their claims about the latter. Conversely, P2P entrants may want to stress market perceptions such as social belonging and sustainability. In their recommendations to managers, Lehr et al. (2021) suggest that having a clear business concept in line with the firm's capabilities is essential to gaining consumer interest in the sharing economy. They also note that false claims about sharing systems' attributes can lead to consumer backlash and reduce interest.

Lastly, we would like to emphasize that despite consumers' positive perceptions of P2P systems, their intention to use them is not higher than for B2C systems. While this may be consumer-specific, results of this study and of prior work indicate that consumers perceive P2P systems as less reliable (Laamanen et al. 2018). Whereas traditional companies develop and train personnel and introduce standards (Cohen and Pfeffer 1986), companies in the sharing economy often cannot conduct such tasks and manage their offerings through ratings (Laamanen et al. 2018). This means that firms that want to offer a product perceived as premium should consider putting additional quality controls in place. While it is relatively easy for single firms to control B2C systems, P2P systems—even those intended for the high-quality segment—might be considerably harder to manage and maintain.

5.3 Limitations and Future Avenues for Research

Our study faces several limitations. First, while our experimental design has high internal validity, we encourage additional studies to test the external validity of our results with regards to systems for sharing services rather than products, such as Airbnb. Prior work found that services require different management and marketing strategies because there are more frequent and diverse touchpoints with consumers, which often lead to stronger consumer–provider relationships (Milanova and Maas 2017). Therefore, service-sharing systems with constant interaction during consumption (Täuscher and Laudien 2018) might produce different perceptions and preferences in consumers. While we still expect consumers to perceive differ-

ences between the corporate and community logics inherent in B2C and P2P sharing systems, we do not know whether a service-based interaction between consumers and providers would affect these perceptions. Thus, we encourage future studies to replicate our research design in service-based contexts.

Second, in our experiment, we manipulated the sharing system design through the information we gave about who was providing the product. While this information made the differences between P2P and B2C sharing systems very clear in our experiment, the boundaries between such systems may be blurred in practice. For example, B2B2C systems offer more complex relationships; in such cases, it is not immediately apparent to consumers with which firms they are interacting (Subramaniam and Piskorski 2020). Professional providers may offer their products on P2P sharing systems (e.g., toy libraries that receive donations from firms for product placement), and firms endorse individuals in B2C sharing systems, such as in MyWheels (Gerwe and Silva 2020; Habibi et al. 2016). Similarly, sharing systems are also increasing the diversity of accepted forms of payment. For example, cloud computing P2P systems (e.g., Subutai.io) do not expect payment but a later exchange of a different product. We believe that our initial study of clearly opposed institutional logics opens the door to future investigations of more nuanced systems, as we now know that consumers perceive system types differently.

Furthermore, we see the inconsistent differences between consumers' intention to use P2P or B2C systems as a starting point for future research on different price segments for P2P and B2C. As mentioned before, consumers may perceive P2P systems as less reliable (Laamanen et al. 2018) and therefore prefer B2C for high-quality offerings in a given product segment. Future work could disentangle the thresholds of price, reliability, or quality for such products and their associated consumer segments, which would help companies to understand different consumer segments and their expectations in more detail.

Finally, as we randomly assigned the sharing systems to the participants, we cannot evaluate systematic differences in the personalities of the consumers of B2C and P2P sharing systems. In practice, consumers with different preferences and levels of risk aversion self-select into different sharing systems and belong to certain clusters (Hartl et al. 2018; Lawson et al. 2016; Lutz and Newlands 2018). We encourage future field studies to compare the consumers who use B2C and P2P sharing systems and, in particular, to consider the possibility that consumers who are also providers might evaluate benefits and risks differently (Wang et al. 2020). Finally, we did not investigate the channels through which consumers build their perceptions and whether these channels (e.g., media, usage, and word of mouth) influence perceptions and intentions to use systems. Future work could shed light on how perceptions are built.

5.4 Conclusion

This study shows that consumers perceive P2P and B2C sharing systems quite differently with regards to their economic benefits, product scarcity, sustainability, and social benefits. In particular, consumers perceive that P2P systems are the more economically friendly, sustainable, and socially beneficial alternative but also that they

suffer more from product scarcity. We also find that these dimensions of consumer perceptions are related to consumers' intention to use sharing systems. Given that entrants' and incumbents' motivations for offering product sharing systems are heterogeneous (e.g., data generation, product utilization, and competition), they may very well need to know these differences in consumer perceptions to segment and target the market effectively. Considering the increasing heterogeneity in the sharing economy, we hope to set the stage for further sharing system comparisons that will increase our understanding of this emerging form of economic exchange.

6 Appendix

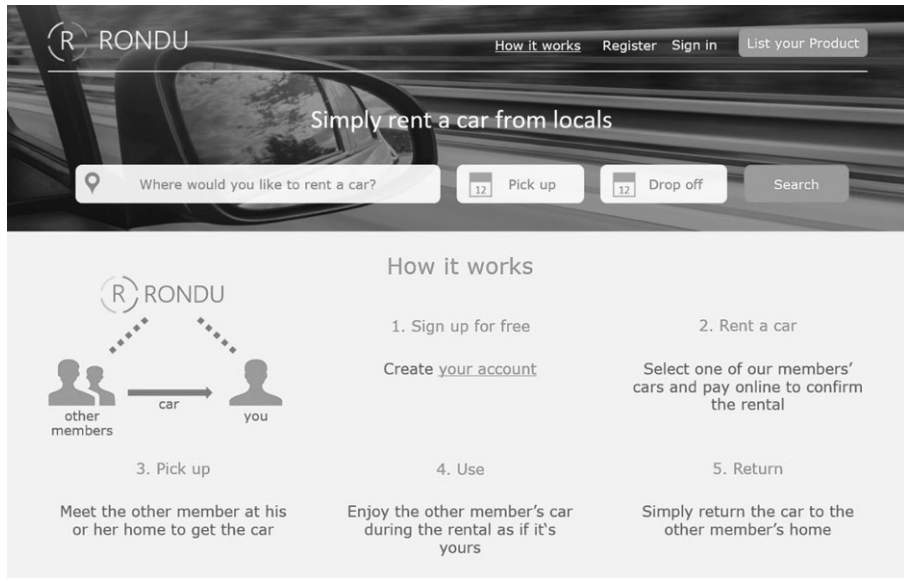


Fig. 3 Fictional Website in with P2P System for Cars

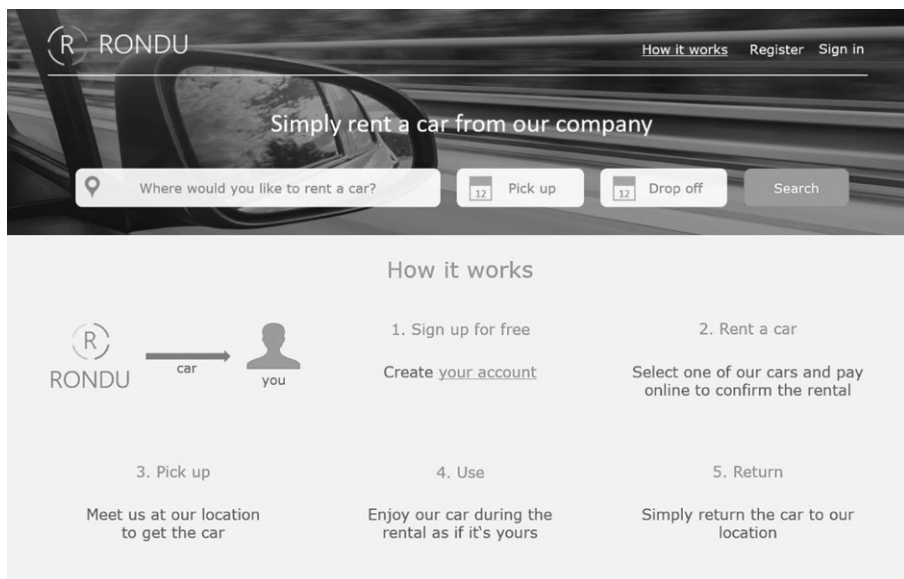


Fig. 4 Fictional Website in with B2C System for Cars

Table 6 Constructs and Measurements for Experimentally Designed Control Variables

Construct	Measures	Loading	AVE	α	Adapted from
<i>Control variables</i>					
Product variety	Rondu allows me to access a diverse range of offers	0.89	0.81	0.94	Hawlitshchek et al. (2016)
	Rondu enables me to use a broad variety of [products]	0.90			
	Rondu offers a large spectrum of [products]	0.91			
	Rondu offers me a great diversity of [products]	0.92			
	Rondu allows me to use a varied range of offers	0.88			
Enjoyment	I think using Rondu is enjoyable	0.93	0.82	0.94	Hamari et al. (2016); van der Heijden (2004)
	I think using Rondu is exciting	0.91			
	I think using Rondu is fun	0.92			
	I think using Rondu is interesting	0.87			
	I think using Rondu is pleasant	0.89			
Liability	Considering the liability involved, renting a [product] would be risky	0.92	0.79	0.93	DelVecchio and Smith (2005); Schaeffers et al. (2016)
	Given the liability associated with renting a [product] there is substantial financial risk	0.87			
	I would worry about the liability while renting a [product]	0.88			
	Given the liability, I may regret renting a [product]	0.91			
	Due to the liability risk, I am unlikely to rent a [product]	0.89			
Performance	You are likely to have problems with the performance of a shared [product]	0.82	0.66	0.75	DelVecchio and Smith (2005); Schaeffers et al. (2016)
	If a shared [product] malfunctions, the consequences can be fairly severe	0.77			
	You need to be careful when renting a [product] since a lot can go wrong when you use it	0.84			
Product involvement	I have a strong interest in [products]	0.95	0.85	0.92	Mittal and Lee (1989)
	[Products] are very important to me	0.96			
	For me, [products] do not matter	0.86			
Familiarity	I am familiar with sharing systems	0.94	0.79	0.86	Lamberton and Rose (2012)
	I have experience with sharing systems	0.90			
	I don't know much about how a sharing system works	0.81			

AVE Average Variance Extracted, [product] replaced by: car, tool, electronic device, or toy

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Conflict of interest V. Clemens, C.A. Sabel, J.N. Foege and S. Nüesch declare that they have no competing interests.

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