



Consumers' value co-creation in sharing economy: The role of social support, consumers' ethical perceptions and relationship quality



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ABSTRACT

The ancient phenomenon of 'sharing' has become mainstream, and transformed the traditional consumer behavior due to proliferation of online sharing economy platforms. Millions of people participate in popular sharing economy platforms (SEPs) such as Airbnb and Uber. Although sharing economy research has gained interest, yet a holistic model that explains the formation of consumer value co-creation intentions on such platforms remains absent. The purpose of this study is to develop a model of the antecedents of consumers value co-creation intentions at SEPs and evaluate it empirically. Building on social support theory, relationship quality theory, value co-creation and marketing ethics literature, we propose a theoretical model that explains the formation of consumers' value co-creation intentions. Empirical data was collected from $n = 342$ Generation Y consumers and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results reveal that social support influences ethical perceptions, which further influences value co-creation. Ethical perceptions also influence consumers' trust, satisfaction and commitment with the SEP. However, trust and commitment do not influence value co-creation intentions. Our study contributes to the literature on sharing economy by providing a holistic model of the antecedents of consumers' value co-creation intentions. We also offer important insights for SEP managers.

1. Introduction

The act of 'sharing' is not new and communal ways of life and bartering existed long ago (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Cheng et al., 2018; Ertz et al., 2016; Sundararajan, 2016). However, only recently has the term 'sharing economy' gained popularity in the form of a new culture of sharing based on fee payment through online platforms, which has now become mainstream (Bucher et al., 2016). Belk (2014) p.1597 defines sharing economy as the "acquisition or distribution of a source coordinated by people for a compensation or a certain fee". The sharing economy provides affordable and more convenient alternatives to the established industries (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2016). For instance, Airbnb (accommodation), Uber (transportation and ridesharing), Lendico (peer-to-peer lending), Taskrabbit (on demand labor, freelancing), GwynnieBee (used clothes) and machinerylink (farming equipment) are some of the popular sharing economy platforms (SEPs) used by millions of people (Zervas et al., 2017). The revenues of SEPs are expected to reach around 335 billion dollars by the year 2025 (PWC, 2015).

The essential actors in the sharing economy are the consumers who

continually co-create value with companies and other consumers. Value co-creation refers to a process in which different parties produce valued outcomes together (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Unlike in traditional online contexts, both the companies and consumers can operate as buyers and sellers via SEPs. Although the extensive amount of the extant literature well expands our understanding of value co-creation both in offline and online settings (see e.g. Brodie et al., 2013; Gronroos, 2008; Payne et al., 2008; Zwass et al., 2010) and recent research examines brand value co-creation in social commerce settings (Hajli et al., 2017; Tajvidi et al., 2017), there still is huge a paucity of knowledge with regards to our understanding of value co-creation in the context of a sharing economy. Specifically, less attention has been paid to the notion of why consumers engage and participate in value co-creation (Martinez-Canas et al., 2016; Nambisan and Baron, 2009) in general and via SEPs in particular. Several authors have drawn attention to the creation of new lines of inquiry in the domain of value co-creation in a sharing economy (Camilleri and Neulofer, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018), yet various researchers call for a model of the process of value co-creation that can be used in multiple settings

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(Hajli et al., 2017; Merz et al., 2009, 2018). Even though some researchers importantly explore consumers' motivations to participate in value co-creation, they recognize the importance to identify the precursors that lead to consumers' value co-creation intentions (Payne et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2014; Tajvidi et al., 2017). Consequently, it is vitally important that we examine what the antecedents are to consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

Current research recognizes two central antecedents to consumers' value co-creation intentions in online environments: social support from other participants (Ramaswamy and Oczan, 2016) and the relationship quality with online communities (Hajli et al., 2017; Kamboj et al., 2018; Tajvidi et al., 2018). However, research related to SEPs has revealed that specifically young adults, i.e. the so-called Generation Y (GenY) age cohort, have privacy concerns with regards to SEPs (Ranzini et al., 2017). It is widely recognized that concern about privacy is an important aspect of consumers' ethical perceptions in online environments (Agag et al., 2016; Cheng et al., 2014; Roman, 2007; Roman and Cuestas, 2008). Despite these important contributions, no research has thus far produced a holistic model of consumers' value co-creation intentions that also takes consumers' ethical perceptions into account in general or specifically in the context of SEPs.

The purpose of this study is to develop and test a holistic model that explains the formation of consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs. We specifically focus on the following question: What is the role of consumers' ethical perceptions in relation to social support and the relationship quality as an antecedent to consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs? We theoretically build on well-documented literature including social support theory, relationship quality theory, value co-creation literature, and the literature on marketing and business ethics and propose a theoretical model that explains the formation of consumers' value co-creation intentions. We empirically test the model using a structural equation modeling (SEM), with the data from 342 GenY consumers on a US based online platform. We focus on Gen Y because many researchers (e.g. Mittendorf, 2016; Ranzini et al., 2017) urge further exploration of this cohort in sharing economy settings. Additionally, the sharing economy is often strongly linked to GenY because of its nature, which originates on the principles of co-consumption and technological dependence (Belk, 2014; Godelnik, 2017; Ranzini et al., 2017): GenY is more tech savvy than older generations (Bolton et al., 2013), as they have lived through the emergence of SEPs, and their consumption habits significantly differ from those of older generations (see e.g. Klein and Smart, 2017; Nadeem et al., 2015; Ranzini et al., 2017). For instance, GenY is more likely to choose shared or public transportation instead of owning their own car (Klein and Smart, 2017) and is less likely to own a house, which is in contrast with previous generations (Xu et al., 2015). It is therefore vital to study this cohort more deeply in order to draw contemporary findings. In answer to our research question; our findings reveal that social support gives a basis for ethical perceptions, which then influences relationship quality constructs and value co-creation intentions. Our study contributes to the literature on SEPs by providing a holistic model of the antecedents of consumers' value co-creation intentions. We also offer insights for SEP managers.

The next section introduces the theoretical background of the study, followed by a research model. The empirical section describes our data, analyses, and results. The study concludes by discussing the results and offering theoretical and managerial contributions, along with limitations and further research ideas on the topic.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Understanding the concept of sharing economy

Although there is no agreement upon the definition of sharing economy among academics and practitioners (see e.g. Netter et al.,

2019), researchers recognize some similar characteristics regarding this phenomenon. According to Belk (2014), a sharing economy is the process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and the act of receiving and taking something from others for our use. Sundrarajan (2016) refers to sharing economy as crowd-based capitalism, as there is on-demand access through the transfer of ownership for a certain period of time. Further, Botsman and Rogers (2010) have also referred to the sharing economy as the phenomenon of collaborative consumption. Belk (2014) refers to collaborative consumption as the acquisition or distribution of a resource coordinated by people for a fee or compensation that can be conducted in the form of trading, swapping, and bartering. Eckhardt and Bardhi (2016) argue that the sharing economy is more like an access economy because the emphasis on sharing is secondary and guided by an intermediary firm. Moreover, Kumar et al. (2018) refer to sharing economy as monetization in the form of the short-term rental of underutilized assets by service providers, which can be individuals or firms. On the basis of these definitions, the current study takes a broad standpoint for the definition of sharing economy on the two principles that were common to all the aforementioned definitions, namely: capitalization of underutilized resources based on a compensation or a fee and emphasizing that SEP service providers can either be individuals or firms.

When compared to other online platforms, such as e-commerce platforms, through which firms provide offers to consumers (business-to-consumers i.e. B2C), SEPs place consumers at the core and the starting point of all interaction (consumer-to-consumer i.e. C2C). SEPs operate as intermediaries and thereby let consumers contribute to solutions that match each consumer's specific context and their purposes. SEPs enable consumers to come up with the solution rather steering it on their own, which, in turn, enhance consumers' participation in the form of finding support from other members and their peers (We-Economy, 2015). In other words, SEPs empower consumers to participate in a way that allows them to offer and specify solutions by themselves, which is an important aspect of value co-creation. The next chapter introduces the extant research on value co-creation by specifically focusing on SEPs.

2.2. Value co-creation

For the sake of remaining competitive in the markets, value-co-creation has recently emerged as a major strength for businesses (Merz et al., 2018; Zwass, 2010). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) refer to value-co-creation as a holistic management strategy or initiative that brings distinct agents/different parties together to produce valued outcomes. The value co-creation approach is harnessed by companies not only to gain a competitive advantage but also corporate reputation and brand value (Cova and Dall'i, 2009).

According to service dominant logic (SD-logic) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008; Williams and Aitken, 2011), consumers are at the forefront of co-creating value with companies. Furthermore, SD-logic asserts that services and not goods are the unit of exchange and that the mutual actions of consumers and service providers result in value co-creation. This understanding has led companies to give their consumers a more active role and, vice versa, companies increasingly engage consumers' processes in the development of their services and products (Flint, 2002; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Vargo et al. (2008) assert that value co-creation is basically a process of relying on the joint efforts of companies, consumers, and other agents in such a way that mutual dependence and reciprocity are crucial to defining the interdependent roles, which are consequently related to the production and service of value creation. In order to ensure efficient service delivery, tailored goods, and more personalized services, consumers must learn to use, maintain, repair, and adapt offerings to their own usage situations, unique needs, and behaviors (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008).

Another theoretical lens, post-modernism for value co-creation, leads to a view of companies offering consumers more tailored goods

and services in order to encourage them to participate more (Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). The view is aligned with an understanding of the nature of sharing economy being such that value is primarily created in networks. Accordingly, SEPs are based on the principle of consumer involvement and consumer participation. SEPs exist because of the social support they get through consumers and the relationship(s) they develop with consumers. In other words, SEPs will cease to exist if nobody participates in them. As SEP consumers are proactive, they are able to participate in service conceptualization, testing, designing, product/service marketing, and support specialization (Nambisan and Nambisan, 2008; O'Hern and Rindfleisch, 2010). Indeed, as so many consumers are seeking and providing information through SEPs, we may infer that brand value is facilitated by the tendencies and behaviors of online consumers (Naylor et al., 2012) and that value can be co-created by harnessing the support available through such platforms (Ramaswamy and Oczan, 2016). Subsequently, the support obtained via SEPs, the development of good relationships with consumers, and the creation of successful SEPs can be major challenges for SEP service providers.

Despite the substantial importance of SEPs, little consideration has been given to explaining consumers' intentions for co-creating value via SEPs. To create such a model, the current study continues by presenting the three approaches that offer the main concepts for our research model: social support theory, consumer's ethical perceptions, and relationship quality theory.

2.3. Social support theory

Social support theory can trace its roots to 1980s psychology literature (see e.g. Barrera, 1986). According to Gottlieb and Bergen (2010), social support refers to the perception individuals have of the available social resources, or those resources that are actually provided to them by other members in their network in the context of both formal support groups and informal helping connections and relationships. Several authors assert that social support examines how individuals experience the feeling of care in terms of responsiveness and the facilitation provided by other individuals in their networks or social groups (Cobb, 1976; House, 1983; Tajvidi et al., 2017). Along with psychology, social support has been given adequate attention by academics in sociology, healthcare, and even in literature on marketing (see e.g. Hajli et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2011; Tajvidi et al., 2018). However, with recent advances in technology and the emergence of SEPs, it has become more relevant than ever to understand this phenomenon more deeply.

In the context of a sharing economy, the role of social support is paramount, as consumers heavily rely on support from other members while making decisions. SEPs are based on the principle of sharing ideas, thoughts, connections, and experiences, and the starting point for all of this is carried out in an online environment. People may have different motivations regarding their participation in online platforms. For example, some people share their experiences and participate more freely when they perceive there will be an improvement in their reputation by doing so (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Moreover, participation in online environments and sharing experiences exert a great deal of influence on the shaping of other participants' thoughts and decision-making (Gruzd et al., 2011). For instance, a traveler is most likely to look at others member's comments when selecting a host through a sharing economy platform such as Airbnb or Homeaway.

Social support is typically considered as a multi-dimensional construct (Cohen and Hoberman, 1983; Langford et al., 1997; Xie, 2008). The aforementioned studies have revealed various dimensions of social support, including emotional support, informational support, belonging support, tangible support, instrumental support, and appraisal support. Emotional and informational support tend to be most relevant in online settings (Liang et al., 2011; Xie, 2008). Emotional support refers to the provision of messages or communication that involves emotional

concerns such as empathy, caring, and understanding. Informational support can be defined as the communication or provision of messages that involve informational concerns, such as advice, knowledge that can be helpful in solving problems, and recommendations (Liang et al., 2011). Given the nature of SEPs and the interactions that take place through them, we theorize that emotional support and informational support are essential dimensions of social support in relation to SEPs. When the emotional support exists in an SEP, it is likely that consumers feel that they are being cared for and understood. Furthermore, when informational support is enacted through the SEP, consumers may feel that they are able to acquire the relevant information. Each of these arrangements may encourage consumers to share information with others in such a platform and rely on the recommendations of others as support to their decisions, i.e. they co-create value through the SEP. However, because the extant research has recognized that consumers have privacy concerns with regards to the information they share through SEPs (Ranzini et al., 2017), we move on to introduce consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs next.

2.4. Consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs

As the above discussion shows, consumers may, on the one hand, perceive SEPs as convenient, enjoyable, and economical (Zach et al., 2018), while on the other hand, however, potentially perceiving SEPs as risky with regards to ethical lapses. Consumers are required to give their personal information, which at times makes them vulnerable in the sense of their information potentially being used for non-intended commercial activities (Dillahunt and Malone, 2015). Even the most historically respected and best-known companies have recently faced ethical failures. For instance, Facebook failed to ensure consumer privacy and data protection; Wells Fargo was accused of consumer deception; and Uber was found to have been cheating drivers by rounding off fees in its own favor (Newcomer, 2017). As research on SEPs has just begun to emerge, it is of paramount importance that we understand the ethical aspects of SEPs (Perren and Kozinets, 2018; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018).

Consumers' ethical perceptions in online settings refers to "perceptions of consumers about a company's responsibility and integrity (behind the online platform) in its attempt to deal with consumers in a secure, honest, fair and confidential manner that ultimately gives protection to the consumer's interests." (Roman 2007, p.34). Privacy and security have traditionally been the two main ethical concerns in online settings (Roman and Cuestas, 2008). In the context of a sharing economy, even these issues are underexplored (Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018) and other potentially important ethical marketing issues need to be considered. Roman (2007) added non-deception and fulfillment/reliability to the two concepts above in the context of online retailing. More recently, research on online retailing has not only confirmed these four dimensions but also added novel dimensions such as sales behavior (Cheng et al., 2014), service recovery (Agag et al. 2016; Cheng et al., 2014), and shared value (Agag et al. 2016).

Building on Roman's (2007) widely cited research, we include four dimensions in our approach to consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs; privacy, security, fulfillment/reliability, and non-deception. On online platforms, uncertainty embedded in the notion of loss and risk that consumers personal information might be exposed to unintended individuals or parties is referred to as *privacy* concern (Bart et al., 2005). Privacy concerns are related to consumers concerns about how they control and use their personal information. *Security* pertains to consumers perceptions of uncertainty in the form of incurring monetary losses while interacting on an online platform (Roman, 2007). Security concerns deal with data breaches in the form of losses with regards to financial, personal, and transactional information (see e.g. Cadwalladr and Graham-Harrison, 2018; Smith 2016). *Non-deception* relates to the concept of fraud (Roman, 2010) and has not received much attention, specifically in the domain of sharing economy

literature. Fraud committed through SEPs can comprise the purposeful misrepresentation of services/goods along with unreliable delivery of services/goods. Non-deception indicates that SEP service providers will not engage in practices that are deceptive, manipulative or fraudulent, and leading to consumers making a transaction or a purchase (Limbu et al., 2011). *Fulfillment/reliability* deals with the degree to which consumers believe they will be able to place an order as accurately as possible through the SEP (Parasurman et al., 2005; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003). Moreover, fulfillment/reliability necessitates an accurate display and description of the services/goods offered, for instance, and tracking and prompting a confirmation order. In addition, the goods/services have to be the same as they have been represented or displayed; e.g. an Airbnb room cannot look better in the picture than in reality, in order to avoid misrepresentations in the pictures.

The aforementioned aspects are essential influencers on consumers' relationship quality with an SEP. Thus, we introduce the concept of relationship quality next.

2.5. Relationship quality theory

Relationship quality comes under the umbrella term of relationship marketing. The main focus of relationship marketing is the formation of partnerships between the service providers and consumers (Tajvidi et al., 2017) and, thus, value creation for both sellers and buyers (Gummesson, 1987; Boulding et al., 2005). Consumers mainly enter into relationships with firms as they expect to receive positive value from their participation (Peterson, 1995). Relationship quality plays a crucial role in determining consumers' involvement and interests with products/services. Relationship quality is described as the intensity and tightness of a relationship (Henning-Thrau et al., 2002; Liang et al., 2011). In addition, Smith (1998) has described relationship quality as the overall strength of the relationship and the degree to which this relationship meets the expectations and needs of the parties involved. The vast majority of research related to relationship quality has been conducted in offline settings (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Rafiq et al., 2013; Vieria et al., 2008). Besides that, Walsh et al. (2010) reveal that relationship quality is equally important in the online and offline context for the sake of retaining consumers and the differences in the impact of relationship quality dimensions are very context specific. For instance, in online settings, consumers face several issues related to their vulnerability when making online transactions due to the high degree of uncertainty. Most consumers are now present online and, therefore, it is vital that we understand and study the concepts of relationship quality online, specifically in the context of sharing economy.

It has become paramount for SEPs to develop good relationships with their consumers. These days, consumers have so much to choose from and they can easily switch from one service provider to another if, for example, there are any issues with a specific SEP. The existing research on social commerce settings has shown that social support positively influences relationship quality, which in turn positively influences continuance intentions (Liang et al., 2011). More recently, Tajvidi et al. (2018) found in social commerce settings that social support has a positive association with consumers' perceived relationship quality and value co-creation is a direct outcome of relationship quality. Previous research has also shown that relationships are stronger when they are built with an individual person rather than with a selling firm (Palmatier et al., 2006). This is well in line with SEPs, where both firms and individuals can act as sellers.

The existing empirical research related to relationship quality has used the concept as an abstract and global construct, keeping in mind the fact, that although the components are different, consumers still may find it difficult to distinguish between them (Crosby et al., 1990). In general, researchers agree that relationship quality is a multi-dimensional construct (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Palmatier et al.,

2006). A meta-analysis conducted by Palmatier et al. (2006) revealed that the multi-dimensional constructs of relationship quality, i.e. *trust*, *satisfaction*, *commitment*, are foremost in influencing any businesses performance. *Trust* is defined as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner with whom a certain level of confidence has been built (Moorman et al., 1993). *Satisfaction* refers to the consumers' evaluation of the comprehensive performance of a product/service provider (Gustafsson et al., 2005). *Commitment* refers to the notion or desire to keep and maintain the relationship (Moorman et al., 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Although some researchers treat relationship quality as a global construct (Wulf et al., 2001; Kumar et al., 1995), researchers often disaggregate the construct and measure each of the sub-constructs individually (see, e.g. Rafiq et al., 2013). This enables researchers to draw an understanding and focus on the component that matters most, rather than focusing their efforts on all the components equally (Rafiq et al., 2013). We follow this line of thought in our research. In building on the above discussion, we now move on to present our research model and hypotheses.

3. Research model and hypotheses

3.1. Research model

We propose a general and encompassing theoretical model for the antecedents to consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs (Fig. 1). The model determines the effect of social support on consumers' ethical perceptions, which in turn leads to relationship quality constructs and value co-creation intentions.

The current study integrates various theoretical lenses when identifying the main constructs of the research model and in establishing the relationships between them. The main constructs are *social support*, which is rooted in social support theory (Barrera, 1986; Cobb, 1976; Gottlieb and Bergen, 2010); *consumers' ethical perceptions*, which is rooted in marketing and business ethics literature (Bush et al., 2000; Laczniak and Murphy, 2019; Roman, 2007; Roman and Cuestas, 2008); *relationship quality*, which is developed from the literature on relationship marketing and relationship quality theory (Henning-Thrau et al., 2002; Liang et al., 2011; Rafiq et al., 2013); and *value co-creation*, which is rooted in service dominant logic (SD-logic) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008; Vargo et al., 2008). Despite the construct *value co-creation*, all constructs are multidimensional. *Social support* is hypothesized to be a second-order construct comprising two sub-dimensions: emotional support and informational support. *Consumers' ethical perceptions* is treated as a second-order construct, too, consisting of four dimensions: privacy, security, non-deception, and fulfillment/reliability (Roman, 2007; Roman and Cuestas, 2008). Relationship quality consists of three disaggregated concepts: – trust, commitment and satisfaction – used to evaluate consumers' relationship quality.

The hypothesized relationships between the constructs are developed on the basis of well documented theoretical foundations provided by previous studies (Abela and Murphy, 2008; Hajli et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2011; Tajvidi et al., 2018; Williams and Aitken, 2011). It must be mentioned here that, although the integrations of the aforementioned theories are broadly studied in offline settings, other online settings, and social commerce settings; this kind of holistic model has neither previously been established in these settings nor tested in the context of sharing economy literature. Therefore, our study is one of the first to further explore these relationships and add to the existing body of knowledge. We discuss the hypotheses of the current study in the following section.

3.2. Hypotheses development

Social support theory is derived from social psychology literature that takes into account the notion of the experience of individuals present in a social network in which they feel helped, loved, respected,

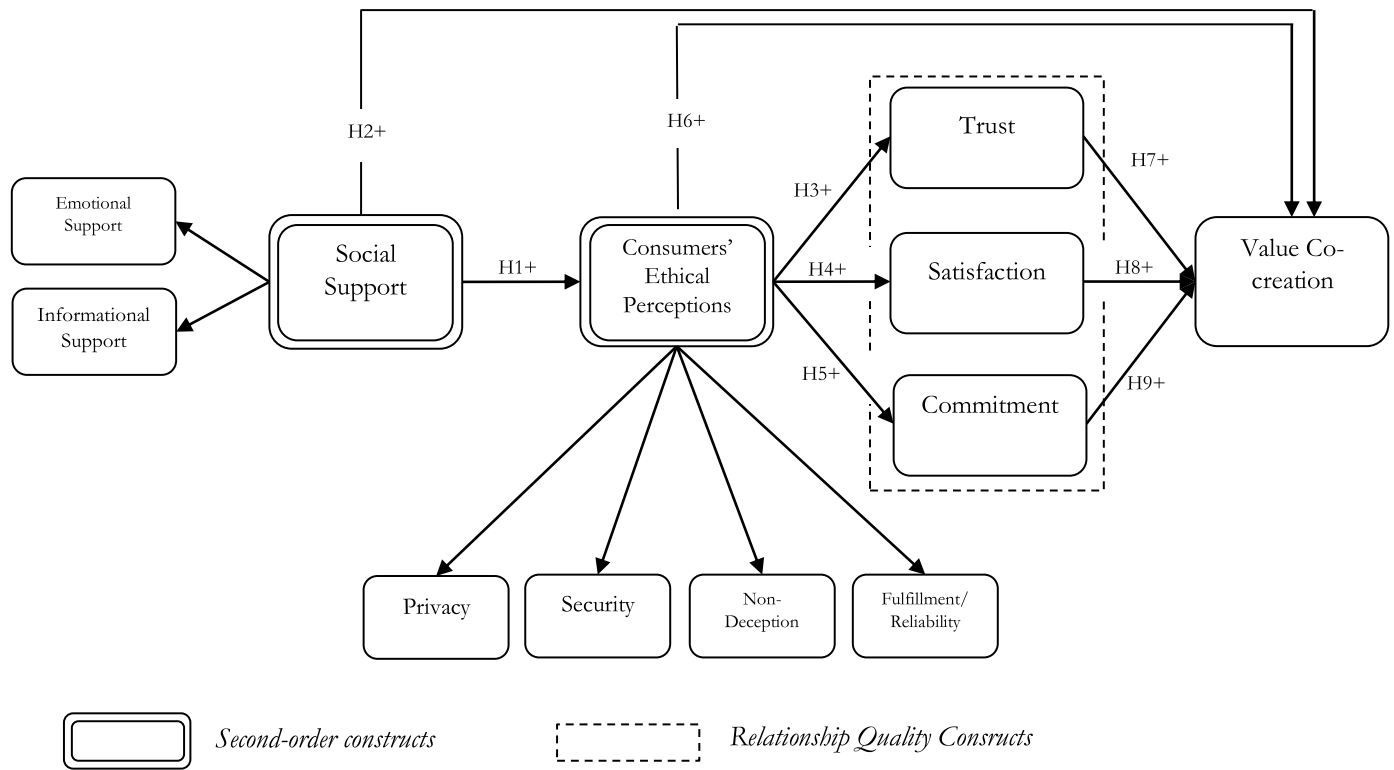


Fig. 1. Research model.

and cared for by other members (Barrera, 1986; Cobb 1976; Hajli, 2018). Once this type of support system is developed in an online platform, more people are attracted to join such networks. In addition, when consumers find support from other members when, for example, they encounter a problem or issue, it is more likely that they develop positive feelings towards the platform and make better decisions in addressing the problem or issue (Hajli, 2018). In the context of SEPs, consumers can find informational support, as the platforms enable their users to give recommendations, reviews, chat on their forums, and complete profile information for the sake of making informed and better decisions. Similarly, consumers can draw emotional support if they encounter a problem and other consumers present in the platform help resolve that problem (Hajli, 2018). Thus, we treat social support as a multi-dimensional construct comprising emotional support and informational support.

Previous research has revealed that the relationships between consumers on online platforms and the social support available can lead to not only satisfaction (Obst and Stafurik, 2010) but also trust of the consumers on online platforms (Crocker and Canevello, 2008). Building on the aforementioned theoretical discussion and empirical findings on social support, as well as recognizing the characteristics of SEPs, it is reasonable to assume that social support operates as an antecedent to the consumers' perceptions of the ethical aspects related to the SEP in question. Hence, it is hypothesized:

H1+. Social support on SEPs positively affects consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs.

Renowned companies have long been harnessing the idea of brand value co-creation online. For instance, Ikea is a typical example of this phenomenon, having introduced the notion of 'co-create Ikea' by allowing fans and customers to develop new products online. The support in the form of incentives and rewards available on the digital platform provided by Ikea allows customers to come up with product ideas and suggestions. Ikea received thousands of suggestions in this regard and this co-creation enables them to put crowd wisdom to work in

developing better designs and products and eventually benefitting the company and its existing and potential customers (Ikea, 2019). Prior research on social media environments has asserted that value co-creation can be fostered by online social support (Ramasmwamy and Oczan, 2016). Therefore, in consideration of the previous research, it can be posited that social support received on SEPs can enable value co-creation intentions. Hence it is postulated:

H2+. Social support on SEPs increases consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

According to Rotter (1971), consumer trust is developed when the consumer feels that the seller (e.g. sharing economy service provider) is fair, benevolent, responsible, and honest. Moreover, Crosby et al. (1990) argue that trust develops when consumers believe their interests would be served by the seller. Previous research has shown that there is a positive effect of ethical construct of privacy on trust (Bart et al., 2005). Robertson and Anderson (1993) revealed that consumers' trust is highly dependent on the ethical practices of the industrial salespeople with regards to product, price, promotion, and placement. Even in offline settings, the role of ethical sales practices has been found to be positive in relation to trust (Roman, 2003). More recently, in e-retail settings, Elbeltagi and Agag (2016) have revealed the positive effect of ethical dimensions on consumers trust. Theoretically, consumer behavior theory suggests that the marketing activities act as a stimulus (drawing consumers' ethical perceptions) to evoke certain responses, and one of those responses can be trust (Elbeltagi and Agag, 2016). In keeping the traditional e-retail perspective at the fore, it is plausible that ethical perceptions can affect consumers' trust within the sharing economy context. Based on the aforementioned studies, we hypothesize:

H3+. Consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs increase consumers' trust in SEPs.

When consumers feel content with the experience of their previous purchase, they are referred to as satisfied consumers (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003; Roman, 2007). The relationship between a higher

order construct of consumers' ethical perceptions has been confirmed before in online retail settings (Roman, 2007). From a theoretical standpoint, the notion of consumer satisfaction is embedded in the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm (Burke et al., 1988; Roman, 2007). According to this paradigm, consumers make a comparison between their expectations of a product or service and its performance, which leads to either confirmation or disconfirmation. Negative disconfirmation occurs when the expectations do not meet the performances. Conversely, positive disconfirmation occurs when the product/service performance surpasses the initial expectation and, hence, satisfaction is an outcome of positive disconfirmation or confirmation (Roman, 2007). In the sharing economy context, if accurate information is provided through SEPs and SEPs adhere to high ethical standards, leading to realistic expectations of products/services, then it is likely that consumers will be more inclined towards the positive disconfirmation or confirmation side. This eventually leads to consumer satisfaction. As prior research in e-retail settings has also revealed the positive effect of ethics on satisfaction (Cheng, 2011; Elbeltagi and Agag, 2016; Kurt and Hacıoglu, 2010; Roman, 2007), it is of high importance that this relationship be studied in the sharing economy context; in terms of whether or not consumer satisfaction is fostered by consumers' ethical perceptions. Thus, we hypothesize:

H4 +. Consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs increase consumers' satisfaction with SEPs.

According to Moorman et al. (1993), relationship commitment is the enduring desire to keep, maintain, and continue the valued relationship. If consumers have positive ethical perceptions of sharing economy service providers, this reduces their uncertainty (Hwanga and Leec, 2012) and the risks associated with online platforms (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). This eventually leads to relationship commitment (Gundlach et al., 1995). If consumers do not feel comfortable in their use of SEPs due to ethical issues (related to privacy, security, deception, fulfillment), then it is likely that they might not want to continue the relationship with the SEP in question. Studies in the e-retail context have shed light on the positive association between consumers' ethical perceptions and commitment (Collier and Esteban, 2007; Elbeltagi and Agag, 2016). More recently, Elbeltagi and Agag (2016) have shown that consumers' ethical perceptions can be treated as the precursor of consumer commitment. In the sharing economy context, the relationship between consumers' ethical perceptions and commitment is understudied. To ascertain this we hypothesize:

H5 +. Consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs increase consumers' commitment with SEPs.

According to Zach et al. (2018), SEPs have become popular because consumers perceive participation in SEPs as more convenient, economical, and enjoyable. Conversely, consumers also have risks associated with such platforms and these risks can be related to privacy, security, fulfillment/reliability and non-deception. SEPs operate on the principle of information sharing and data input from the members, and this involves the risk of information being used for un-wanted commercial activities (Dillahunt and Mallone, 2015). There have been cases of such practice; for instance Uber rounded up the fee to the nearest dollar in its favor, by cheating the drivers (see e.g. The Guardian, 2018; Newcomer, 2017). Such practices deter the consumers from participating freely in SEPs. Therefore, we argue that if consumers' ethical perceptions are taken care of by the SEPs, it is likely that they will participate freely, share information, and co-create value. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H6 +. Consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs increase consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

Chen and Myagmarsuren, 2011 asserted that relationship quality is one of the major factors affecting consumers' decisions to build, withdraw, keep, and maintain the relationship. Advances in technology have led to consumers developing interactive relationships on online

platforms by being anonymous and impersonal (Wang and Emurian, 2005). In the sharing economy context, the quality of the relationship between consumers and service providers can be determined when any previous interaction has generated positive outcomes and future interactions and transactions are expected between consumers and service providers.

Through SEPs, service providers share information on their products and services as an input mechanism for value co-creation. From the consumers' point of view, they freely interact and share their experiences and information with other consumers and, therefore, contribute to value co-creation with the SEP. From the point of view of SEPs, the platform they provide allows consumers to post their opinions freely, and based on comments, reviews and suggestions from the consumers, SEPs devise their marketing and product strategies to better serve the needs of the consumers (see e.g. We-Economy, 2015). It can be surmised that SEPs allow and encourage consumers to not only participate but also co-create value. This process stems from the relationship quality. Several authors have argued that trust, satisfaction, and commitment tend to be the main components of relationship quality (Hajli et al., 2017; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2002). In this regard, consumers will tend to gain more trust, satisfaction, and a sense of commitment with SEPs.

Previous studies in social commerce settings have confirmed the relationships between the constructs of relationship quality, i.e. trust, satisfaction, and commitment, with value co-creation intentions (see e.g. Hajli et al., 2017; Kamboj et al., 2018; Tajvidi et al., 2018). With regards to trust, Guenzi and Pelloni (2004) argue that trust is essential in online environments for the sake of commercial and interpersonal relationships. According to Pavlou (2003), trust is crucial in most social and economic transactions, and also has been studied in social commerce settings (Nadeem et al., 2017a) influencing behavioral outcomes. Therefore, we expect trust to be an important component of relationship quality, impacting on value co-creation intentions in sharing economy settings. Thus, we hypothesize:

H7 +. Consumers' trust in SEPs increases consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

Satisfaction represents the overall performance evaluation a consumer carries out in relation to a product or service after consumption (Gustafsson et al., 2005). Satisfaction stems from consumers developing positive attitudes towards the experience of products or services (Boulding et al., 1993). It can be assumed that if consumers are satisfied with SEPs, they will co-create value with the SEPs. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H8 +. Consumers' satisfaction with SEPs increases consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

In recent research, commitment has been measured by the willingness of consumers to participate in online platforms (see e.g. Hajli et al., 2017). For the sake of developing successful, productive, and long-term relationships, commitment becomes a fundamental component of relationship quality (Dwyer et al., 1987; Hsu et al., 2010). In sharing economy contexts, customers with high levels of commitment are more inclined to like SEPs, which then fosters long-term relationship stability with the brand (Fournier, 1998). Moreover, commitment enhances value co-creation in the form of consumer involvement and participation with the social commerce platforms (Hajli et al., 2017). This implies that strong commitment with SEPs leads consumers to participate and engage with SEPs, and thereby co-create value with the SEPs. Following this logic, we examine the impact of commitment on value co-creation intentions. Hence, it is hypothesized:

H9 +. Consumers' commitment with SEPs increases consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

4. Data collection

An online survey was conducted with consumers who rely on sharing economy platforms. The list was inspired by the popular sharing economy platforms including 1) Uber, 2) Lyft, 3) Airbnb 4) Indiegogo, 5) Homeaway, 6) Kickstarter, and 7) Zipcar. We obtained almost 500 responses at a cost of 0.5\$ each through an online US-based website, Amazon's MTurk. Researchers have previously shown MTurk results to be comparable in quality in relation to comparisons with data collected from other offline and online domains (see e.g. Buhrmester et al., 2011; Mason and Suri, 2012). Accordingly, our data is much more reliable than, for instance, student samples, which have often been criticized due to their inherent limitations (see e.g. Peterson and Merunka, 2014).

We specifically focused on Generation Y (GenY) consumers who were born between 1981 and 1999 (Bolton et al., 2013), irrespective of other characteristics. This is because the co-consumption and technological dependence that are typical to the sharing economy are often strongly linked to GenY (Belk, 2014; Godelnik, 2017; Ranzini et al., 2017), and because the consumption patterns of GenY markedly differ from those of other generations. A total of 342 responses fulfilled the criteria of GenY respondents. The sample profile is provided in Table 1.

4.1. Measurement

The current study adapts all measures from previous literature. Moreover, a seven-point Likert scale was used (ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 7 = "Strongly agree"). The measurement items were further reworded to a small extent to fit in the research context of SEPs. The independent variable – social support – was further measured by two sub-variables – emotional support and informational support – and the items for variables were adapted from Tajvidi et al. (2017). Moreover, the items for four sub-variables (privacy, security, fulfillment/reliability, non-deception) of consumer's ethical perceptions of SEPs were adapted from the studies by Roman (2007) and Roman and Cuestas (2008). The constructs of relationship quality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction were adapted from Liang et al. (2011). The items used for value co-creation intentions

Table 1
Sample profiles.

Variable	Percentage
Gender	
Male	52.3%
Female	47.7%
Age	
GenY (19–37 years)	100%
(Frequency) How often do you use SEPs?	
Daily	6.4%
Weekly	34.8%
Monthly	37.1%
Quarterly	15.5%
Once in six months	5.0%
Once in a year	1.2%
(Experience) How long have you been using the SEPs?	
1 year	7.3%
2 years	20.5%
3 years	28.9%
4 years	23.7%
5 years	10.8%
6 years	8.8%
What is your favorite/preferred SEP?	
Uber	60.17%
Airbnb	15.53%
Lyft	12.88%
KickStarter	4.07%
^a Others	7.35%

^a Others include Zipcar, Homeaway, Patreon, Snapgoods etc.

at sharing economy platforms were obtained from Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016), Schau et al. (2009); and Tajvidi et al. (2017).

4.2. Measurement validation

The first step involved screening of the data and checking for the unengaged responses as evidenced by giving the exact same response for every single question. We retained $n = 342$ responses that met the criteria of falling in the cohort of GenY and useable responses. As the evidence of normal distribution, all the values were below +3 and –3, indicating no non-normal distribution issues.

When data is collected from the same population at the same time, the problem of common method bias may occur and influence the validity of the study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In order to address this issue, we applied Harman's single factor test. More specifically, we ran an unrotated exploratory factor analysis by constraining the number of factors to be 1 (one). Results of this test reveal that the maximum variance explained by a single factor is 35.599. Therefore, it can be asserted that the current dataset does not suffer from the common method bias issue, as the variance explained by a single factor is approximately 36%, which is less than the threshold value of 50%. This means that no single factor surpassed the threshold value of 50%. Furthermore, Pavlou et al. (2007) have suggested that no correlations among the constructs should be above 0.9. If there is an issue of common method bias, then the correlations among the constructs would be significantly higher ($r > 0.90$). Consequently, the common method bias is not a concern in this study.

5. Data analysis and results

5.1. Factor analyses

Amos version.24 was employed to analyze the data. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis tests were conducted in order to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). After careful analysis of the items contributing to the poor fit of the model, factors with cross loadings and small loadings were deleted accordingly. In addition, values were assessed through standardized residual covariance and the items contributing to the poor fit of the model were deleted accordingly. Moreover, modification indices were also assessed and treated accordingly. This led us to remove one item from informational support factor; three items from privacy factor; three items from security factor; two items from fulfillment factor; three items from trust factor; one item from commitment factor; and one item from satisfaction factor. Therefore, in total, 27 items were retained out of 41 items for the purpose of further analysis. We also deleted the sub-construct of non-deception as it came out to be negative and non-significant in the measurement model. It is pertinent to mention here that the main aim of the authors was to retain as many items as possible; however, upon applying all possible solutions, the retained number of items was 27, indicating a good statistical fit for the model. The final items retained are presented in Table 2.

The assessment of each measurement scale turned out to be reliable. For instance, the Cronbach's alphas ranged higher than the 0.70 threshold suggested by Nunnally (1978). Furthermore, the goodness of fit statistics of the measurement model revealed an acceptable fit see e.g. (Browne and Cudeck, 1993; Doll et al., 1994; Hair et al., 2009; Kenny, 2014; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003) (Table 3).

5.2. Validity and reliability

We conducted comprehensive reliability and validity tests and, as the evidence of convergent validity, all the loadings were above 0.7. In addition, as the evidence of discriminant validity (Hu and Bentler, 1999), there were no strong cross loadings in exploratory factor

Table 2
Constructs and measurement items table.

Constructs and measurement items	Standardized loading (t-value)	Mean	SD	CA
Social support				
Emotional support				0.929
When faced with difficulties, some people on my favorite SEP take my side	0.815(19.42)	4.49	1.669	
When faced with difficulties, some people on my favorite SEP comforted and encouraged me	0.908(23.86)	4.43	1.688	
When faced with difficulties, some people on my favorite SEP listened to me talking about my private feelings	0.869(.std)	4.27	1.792	
When face with difficulties, some people on my favorite SEP expressed interest in and concern about my well-being	0.914(24.11)	4.40	1.741	
Informational support				0.871
On my favorite SEP, some people would offer suggestions when I needed help	0.836(19.10)	4.72	1.587	
When faced with difficulties, some people on my favorite SEP would help me discover the cause and provide me with suggestions	0.923(.std)	4.69	1.601	
Consumer's ethical perceptions of sharing economy platforms				
Privacy				0.868
This SEP clearly explains how information provided by consumers is used	0.804(.std)	5.04	1.543	
This SEP will not use personal information for purposes other than for the original transactions without the consent of consumers	0.791(15.73)	5.01	1.459	
This SEP guarantees that the personal information of consumers will be handled in accordance with a third party's privacy-protection regulations and has acquired authentication knowledge	0.793(15.80)	5.01	1.416	
This SEP will not apply special technology to collect and analyze the internet behavior and shopping habits of consumers without their consent	0.768(15.18)	4.74	1.571	
Security				0.808
This SEP guarantees that the transmission of transactional data will be protected without any unauthorized modification or sabotage	0.756(.std)	5.33	1.361	
This SEP has a transactional security policy that consumers can understand easily	0.806(14.91)	5.15	1.448	
This SEP guides consumers to correct and safe payment steps	0.726(13.34)	5.44	1.327	
Fulfillment/Reliability				0.861
Consumers receive the correct products/service items and their quantities ordered online	0.765(.std)	5.45	1.287	
Consumers receive products/services that are ordered online, matching the description on this SEP	0.832(15.40)	5.43	1.313	
This SEP guarantees that products/services ordered online are authentic and not imitations	0.785(14.51)	5.42	1.407	
The products/services pricing on this SEP are consistent with the bill	0.745(13.72)	5.37	1.397	
Relationship quality				
Trust				0.873
I would characterize the SEP as honest	0.882(20.04)	5.32	1.427	
The SEP is trustworthy	0.879(19.94)	5.35	1.397	
Commitment				0.877
I feel a sense of belonging with the SEP	0.834(18.38)	4.96	1.657	
I care about the long-term success of the SEP	0.870(19.63)	5.29	1.465	
I am a loyal patron of the SEP	0.820(17.92)	5.35	1.393	
Satisfaction				0.802
Overall, I am satisfied with the SEP	0.872(18.46)	5.81	1.145	
The last time I used the SEP, it fulfilled my expectation	0.770(15.77)	5.79	1.248	
Value co-creation intentions				0.865
I am willing to provide my experiences and suggestions when my friends on my favorite SEP want my advice on buying something from a sharing economy platform	0.793(16.86)	5.29	1.427	
I am willing to buy the products/services of an SEP recommended by my friends through my favorite sharing economy platform	0.817(17.60)	5.19	1.454	
I consider the buying experiences of my friends through my favorite SEP when I want to go for a service in a sharing economy platform	0.870(19.31)	5.25	1.415	

^a Note: Scales adapted from the mentioned authors and altered in the context of sharing economy platforms SD = Standard Deviation; CA = Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 3
Goodness of fit indices of the measurement model.

SRMR	NFI	CFI	TLI	PClose	Chi-Square	df	P-value	RMSEA
0.055	0.908	0.950	0.941	0.025	645.085	304.00	0.000	0.057

SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; NFI= Normed Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; Df= Degrees of Freedom; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

analysis. We have two higher order factors in the measurement model; i.e. social support and consumers' ethical perceptions of SEPs. Moreover, there were no loadings greater than 0.7 in the factor correlation matrix and all AVE values were above 0.5 (Table 4).

5.3. Hypotheses testing and structural model with results

Structural equation modeling (SEM) through Amos version 24 was utilized to estimate the hypothesized relationships. The analyses provided acceptable fit indices for the structural model (Table 5) (see e.g.

Hair et al., 2009). We even checked the model by removing the two non-significant paths and the goodness of fit indices remained the same. Social support was found to contribute positively and significantly to consumer's ethical perceptions of a sharing economy platform ($\beta = 0.624, p < 0.01$) supporting H1+ (Table 6). Moreover, social support positively influences value co-creation intentions ($\beta = 0.287, p < 0.01$), thus H2+ is supported. Furthermore, consumers' ethical perceptions of sharing economy platforms positively and significantly contribute to trust ($\beta = 0.915, p < 0.01$), satisfaction ($\beta = 0.796, p < 0.01$), and commitment ($\beta = 0.805, p < 0.01$) in sharing economy platforms. Hence, the hypotheses H3+, H4+ and H5+ are also supported. Consumers' ethical perceptions also positively and significantly influence consumers' value co-creation intentions ($\beta = 0.680, p < 0.01$), supporting H6+. Moreover, commitment and trust in SEPs do not translate into value co-creation intentions, whereas satisfaction does ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$). Therefore, H7+ and H9+ are not supported and H8+ is supported. The R² values denote the percentage of variance explained for the dependent variables. These values also indicate the predictive power of the exogenous constructs on endogenous variables.

Table 4
Validity and reliability of measures.

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	COCRE	SUPP	ETHIC	TRUS	SATS	COMT
COCRE	0.867	0.684	0.469	0.872	0.827					
SUPP	0.887	0.797	0.508	0.888	0.614	0.893				
ETHIC	0.914	0.781	0.558	0.994	0.665	0.509	0.884			
TRUS	0.873	0.775	0.679	0.873	0.653	0.584	0.747	0.881		
SATS	0.807	0.677	0.642	0.822	0.685	0.380	0.676	0.801	0.823	
COMT	0.879	0.708	0.679	0.882	0.612	0.713	0.639	0.824	0.611	0.842

CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; MSV = Maximum Shared Variance; MaxR(H) = Maximal Reliability; ETHIC = Consumers Ethical Perceptions of SEPs; COMT = Commitment; SATS = Satisfaction; TRUS = TRUST; COCRE = Value co-creation intentions; SUPP = Social Support.

Table 5
Goodness of fit indices of causal model.

SRMR	NFI	CFI	TLI	Chi-Square	df	p-value	RMSEA
0.072	0.886	0.926	0.916	803.586	310.000	0.000	0.068

SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; Df = Degrees of Freedom; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

For instance, 39% of the variance is explained in consumer's ethical perceptions of sharing economy platforms (Fig. 2). Moreover, 84%, 63%, and 65% of the variance is explained in trust, satisfaction, and commitment, respectively.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to create and test a holistic model that explains the formation of consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs. Building on various bodies of literature, such as social support theory, relationship quality theory, value co-creation literature and the literature on marketing and business ethics we proposed a theoretical model which explains the formation of consumers' value co-creation intentions. We analyzed the empirical data collected from 342 Generation Y consumers on a US-based online platform using structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmed the majority of the hypothesized relationships.

In terms of the holistic model, the results reveal that social support influences ethical perceptions, which further influences value co-creation intentions through satisfaction. Ethical perceptions also influence trust and commitment, but we were unable to confirm their influence on value co-creation intentions. Moreover, social support also has a direct influence on value co-creation intentions. Our findings are in line with existing research in many respects, although our model and context are novel. In essence, the relationship between social support and value co-creation is in line with Hajli (2014), who revealed that social support is an antecedent of social commerce intention on Facebook. Our findings are also in line with research demonstrating that the social support available online can lead to satisfaction (Hajli 2014; Obst and

Stafurik, 2010), commitment, and trust (Hajli 2014). The findings are in line with previous studies in which several researchers have found the positive effect of ethics on satisfaction (Cheng, 2011; Elbeltagi and Agag, 2016; Kurt and Hacioglu, 2010; Roman, 2007) and in which, for instance Williams and Aitken (2011) have proposed that when businesses behave in accordance with values that motivate consumers, such as ethics, consumers' participation in co-creation activities increases. Furthermore, our finding of the relationship between satisfaction and co-creation intentions is partly in line with Hajli (2014), who revealed that relationship quality, including satisfaction, trust, and commitment, influences social commerce intentions. We were, however, unable to confirm the relationships between trust and commitment and value co-creation intentions. This may be due to our target respondents feeling that SEPs are rather new, leading them to enthusiastically try many different SEPs, yet not exerting a strong commitment to any of them. Even if consumers potentially rely on a certain SEP, this does not necessarily mean that they will write good reviews and give feedback or recommendations that can be further utilized by other consumers present there, as well as by the SEPs service providers themselves. The second potential explanation could be that the consumers' ethical perceptions lead them to trust the SEPs without this trust necessarily translating into sharing their experiences further or giving advice to their peers. The target respondents showed a preference for using the SEPs without necessarily contributing to the user community around them and, as such, can be termed as so called 'lurkers'. This is an interesting finding as it expresses the role of individualism rather than the more socially active role played by consumers in today's socially-focused and connected world fueled by technology advances. Only when consumers are satisfied with SEPs are they likely to co-create value with the SEP.

In terms of constructs, we confirmed that social support is a multi-dimensional second-order construct comprising emotional support and informational support. The result is in line with previous research recognizing the importance of both emotional and informational support (Hajli, 2014, 2018) in online settings. Additionally, we confirmed that ethical perceptions can be considered as a second-order construct consisting of three dimensions: privacy, security, and fulfillment/reliability. This construct is partly similar to the construct suggested by

Table 6
Path estimates.

Relationships	Hypotheses	Std. estimates(t-value)	P- value	Results
SUPP → ETHIC	H1 +	0.624(9.066)	0.000	Supported
SUPP → COCRE	H2 +	0.287(4.561)	0.000	Supported
ETHIC → TRUS	H3 +	0.915(12.257)	0.000	Supported
ETHIC → SATS	H4 +	0.796(10.077)	0.000	Supported
ETHIC → COMT	H5 +	0.805(11.019)	0.000	Supported
ETHIC → COCRE	H6 +	0.680(2.313)	0.018	Supported
TRUS → COCRE	H7 +	-0.341(-1.707)	0.088	Not-Supported
SATS → COCRE	H8 +	0.309(3.144)	0.000	Supported
COMT → COCRE	H9 +	-0.049(-0.516)	0.616	Not-Supported

SUPP = Social Support; ETHIC = Consumer's ethical perceptions of sharing economy platforms; COMT = Commitment; TRUS = Trust; SATS = Satisfaction; COCRE = Value co-creation intentions.

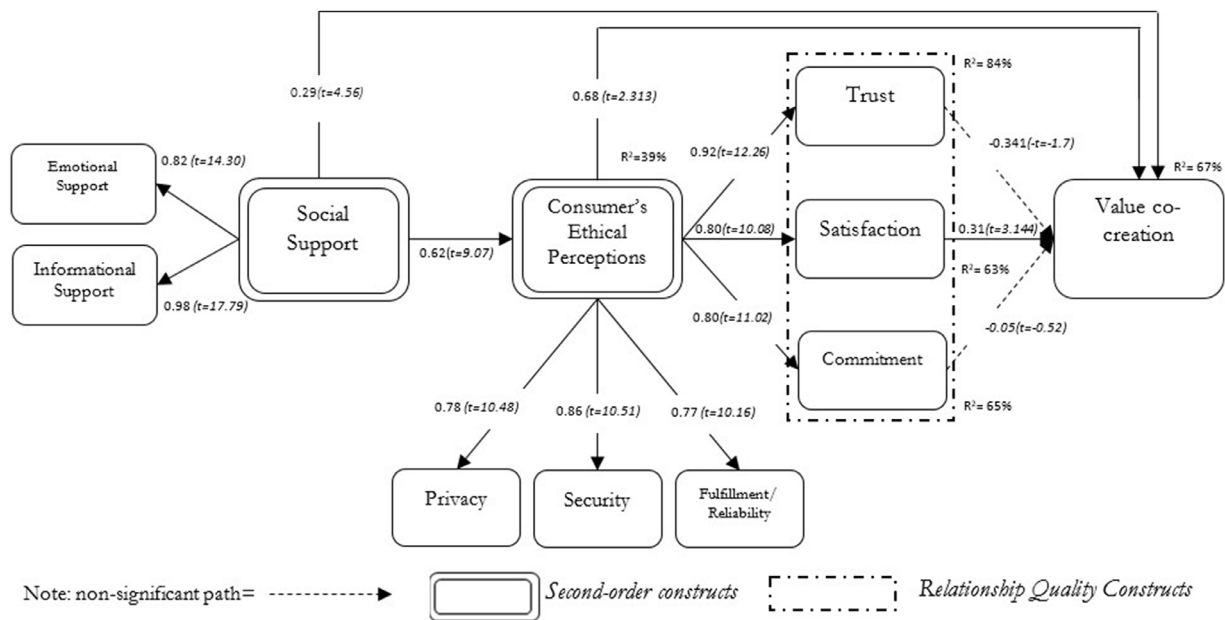


Fig. 2. Structural model with results.

Roman (2007) and clearly supports the role of the two traditional main ethical concerns in online settings; namely privacy and security (Roman and Cuestas, 2008). This construct has, however, fewer factors than the five-factor construct of Cheng et al. (2014), as we intentionally excluded service recovery from our research model due to it being beyond the scope of this study. Our construct also differs from previous research by conducted by Agag (2019), who has proposed more individual factors that relate to consumers ethical perceptions.

Interestingly, although non-deception proved to be one of the sub-factors of the second-order construct in Roman's (2007) work, it provided an insignificant relationship with ethical perceptions when we included the second-order construct of ethical perceptions in our measurement model. We propose two potential explanations for this. Firstly, even in such a novel context as the use of SEPs, consumers have recognized that SEPs behave in an ethical way without making any false statements about their competitors or blaming other organizations and, thus, the meaning of potential deception becomes insignificant in its totality. Secondly, our respondents represent a heterogeneous cohort, consisting both of those for whom non-deception is significant and those for whom it is insignificant. As we conducted our analyses using SEM, we were unable to reveal this potential heterogeneity.

7. Theoretical implications

Our study contributes to literature on SEPs in several ways. Firstly, we provide a holistic model of the antecedents to consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs. Although SEPs have gained research interest, a holistic model explaining the formation of consumer value co-creation intentions in such platforms has remained absent from the existing research. To specify this further, although previous research (Hajli, 2014) has shown that both relationship quality including satisfaction, trust, and commitment and that social support consisting of emotional and informational support are antecedents to social commerce intention, ethical perceptions have been absent in the models used thus far. Our study closes this gap by highlighting the role of ethics, responsibility, and sustainable behavior in the context of SEPs. Although Hajli (2014) focused on social commerce by using Facebook data, no research has examined these aspects in the context of SEPs. Our study is first to do so.

Additionally, we confirmed the influence of ethical perceptions not only on trust, satisfaction, and commitment, which are central

constructs in relationship quality theory, but also on consumers' value co-creation intentions at SEPs. Although the underlying relationship between social support and social commerce intentions is recognized in the extant research (Hajli 2014), no research has considered how value co-creation is fostered by consumers' ethical perceptions. Additionally, although research has shown that the GenY cohort has privacy concerns with regards to SEPs (Ranzini et al., 2017), our study is among the first to establish the role of ethical perceptions in relation to their value co-creation intention through SEPs.

Furthermore, our study is the first to confirm that social support is an antecedent to value co-creation through SEPs. Although it is widely acknowledged by researchers that the social support available online can lead to satisfaction (Hajli 2014; Obst and Stafurik, 2010), commitment, and trust (Hajli 2014), as well as the recognition that ethical practice and values have a positive effect on satisfaction (Cheng, 2011; Elbeltagi and Agag, 2016; Kurt and Hacıoglu, 2010; Roman, 2007), these studies have mainly been conducted in e-retail or social commerce settings. Thus, our study adds to these studies by confirming the relationship in the context of SEPs.

In addition, we confirmed that social support is a multi-dimensional second-order construct comprising emotional support and informational support. Although previous research has confirmed the construct in social commerce settings (Liang et al., 2011), our study is the first to do so in relation to the sharing economy. Our study also shows that consumers' ethical perceptions also constitutes a multi-dimensional construct comprising privacy, security, and fulfillment/reliability. Even though various researchers have examined this construct and its sub-concepts in traditional online settings (Agag 2019; Cheng et al., 2014; Roman, 2007; Roman and Cuestas, 2008), the current study is pioneering in its confirmation of the construct in relation to SEPs, specifically from the viewpoint of GenY cohort. Although our findings related to the role of non-deception, which turned out to be non-significant, differ from the existing literature in online contexts (Roman, 2007), our study offers an important platform on which our understanding of the ethical perceptions related to SEP can be advanced.

Finally, even though the GenY cohort is tech savvy (Bolton et al., 2013) and closely connected to the sharing economy (Belk, 2014; Godelnik, 2017; Ranzini et al., 2017), they have been understudied in the sharing economy context. Our study not only answers the call by Ranzini et al. (2017) to explore this cohort more in sharing economy

settings and provide a significant contribution to the relevant literature, but also advances the field by drawing on actual consumer survey data from this cohort.

8. Managerial implications

We offer three suggestions for SEP managers. Firstly, it is essential that SEP managers ensure consumers feel they gain social support both in a form of emotional and informational support while engaging with SEPs. GenY is tech savvy and SEPs are easy to use, which means that they probably consider technological aspects as self-evident and their focus while using SEPs changes to include entertainment and experiential aspects. This means that consumers are not only purchasing consumption experiences of shared products or services but also engaged in experiential mechanisms throughout the purchasing process with the SEP. If they confront difficulties during this experiential process, it is essential they feel that someone at the SEP lives this experience with them: they need to feel that someone is interested in them, they are heard, and their problems will be solved. This not only ensures consumers successfully experience the SEP but also influences how they perceive ethical aspects and create relationships with the SEP.

Secondly, it is also crucial to recognize the essential role of ethical perceptions of consumers while they are using SEPs. At the bare minimum, this means that consumers need to feel that the SEP takes care of the privacy and security aspects and operates reliably. These aspects are essential, as together they influence how willing consumers are to participate in co-creating value with others through the SEP, and they also influence consumers trust and satisfaction for and commitment to the SEP.

Thirdly, it is important to remember that even though consumers say they trust the SEP and are committed to it, neither of these increases their intention of participating in value co-creation through the platform. Only their satisfaction with and ethical perceptions of the SEP, preceded by social support, are meaningful antecedents in explaining their value co-creation intentions at SEPs.

9. Limitations and future research

As for research in general, our study also has its limitations. Firstly, we focused on Generation Y consumers only. Although it is essential for researchers to understand the buying and consumption behavior of this age cohort, focusing on them gives a partial view of the whole SEP landscape. It is important to acknowledge that the data from other consumer segments (see e.g. Nadeem et al., 2017b) such as middle-aged or elderly people might offer more diverse results. Additionally, our data was from the US only. This means that the study offers quite a narrow perspective on the global phenomenon of SEPs as it lacks, for instance, international, cross-cultural, and global viewpoints. All these limit the global generalization of the results. In addition, we managed to confirm ethical perceptions as a second-order construct consisting of three factors only. The extant research has recognized a variety of other factors that may offer novel insights to ethical perceptions in online environment.

We encourage researchers to further examine the role of ethical perceptions in terms of social commerce in general and amongst SEPs particularly. For instance, because we revealed that ethical perceptions influence trust, satisfaction, and commitment, but were able to confirm the relationships between trust and commitment and value co-creation intentions, more research is needed to examine the importance of these relationships in general and in relation to ethical perceptions particularly in the context of social commerce. Additionally, because we considered ethical perceptions as a second-order construct consisting of three factors only, more research is needed to test if the construct can include more factors. Specifically, the role of non-deception requires further research attention: non-deception provided a significant relationship with ethical perceptions in e-retail settings before (see e.g.

Roman, 2007) but it provided a non-significant relationship with ethical perceptions when ethical perceptions were considered as part of a measurement model in our context of the sharing economy. We call for further research to close these gaps, along with novel ideas to further examine the role of ethics, responsibility, and sustainability in sharing economy research.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Supplementary materials

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