

# Construal level and collaborative consumption: An exploratory approach

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## Abstract

What motivates the participation in collaborative consumption, a part of the economy that will move 300 billion dollars by 2025? The literature presents external factors to the consumer as a form of incentive or limitation, such as economic opportunity, search for a sustainable society or emergence of a marketplace with no regulations. A few quantitative articles focused on understanding this access phenomenon, by analyzing the consumer as the main subject of research. However, it is possible to analyze this behaviour in the light of a theory that has not yet being explored within the collaborative consumer literature: The Construal Level Theory (CLT). This article aims to demonstrate that CLT presents a plausible explanation for adoption and access to collaborative consumption. The CLT's main idea is that consumers develop their interpretations on two levels: a higher one, focused on more abstract and simple situations; and a lower one, where judgments are conducted more concretely and complexly. Studies on CLT have shown that attitudes are usually constructed at high levels of interpretation, while behaviour is interpreted within lower levels. We propose that collaborative consumption can be reflected by consumers' high or low levels and so defining the consumer's behaviour in this context.

## KEYWORDS

behaviour, construal level theory, dimensions, sharing economy

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Imagine the following scenario: you are on a journey scheduled for a 3-day congress in a distant country. You can choose to select a hotel with a daily rate of US\$300.00, or pick a room through the Airbnb platform, which connects individuals who seek and offer accommodations at a lower price, paying US\$100.00 per day. Still, in another setting: the cost of maintaining a popular car in Brazil ranges between approximately US\$187,50 and US\$230,00 (Silva, Couto, & Canese, 2015). Also, consider that a large amount of this expense is wasted on traffic jams, because drivers from a city like São Paulo spend more than 45 days a year in traffic (Estadão, 2016). Therefore, why would it be more attractive to have and maintain a car, rather than rent it on a platform like Zipcar, where cars are available for rental on demand?

Both examples mentioned above are part of the collaborative economy platforms (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016) and are progressively more present in today's business models. Matzler, Veider, and Kathan (2015) estimate that by 2025 the five largest sectors of collaborative consumption will account for a total of \$335 billion in

sales worldwide. The achieved growth suggests that this type of consumption poses a serious threat to traditional industries, reducing purchases. However, 'there is no clear perspective to trace the exact future of collaborative consumption. What we see now are remarkable features and tendencies that point toward on how this phenomenon is evolving' (Alem & Brotto, 2015, p. 41).

Sharing economy, also known as collaborative consumption of interchangeable form (Martin, 2016), is a contemporary movement that reflects an answer from society and organizations in the search for sustainable development. It brings infinity of challenges that need to be addressed. Such movement expresses itself in new forms and models of sharing and goods or services access.

Hamari et al. (2016) identify an important gap in the literature of sharing economy. The authors argue that there is a very high discrepancy between people's attitudes and opinions on sharing economy and their effective participation in it. In other words, people see the practices of collaborative consumption as positive, but do not participate in them. Martin (2016) states that there are forces limiting sharing economy to change from a niche project and start to access the existing

regime in social culture, as promoted by Geels' Multi-Level Perspective (Geels, 2005).

A possible explanation for this gap has not been explored in literature yet, either in consumer's behaviour or in sharing economy. The gap refers to the influence of everyone's mental interpretation levels on their decisions on consumption. This is the main core of Trope and Liberman's (2003) Construal Level Theory (CLT). It states the existence of psychological distances for humans, and that their reactions to both psychologically distant and close events have differences. For CLT, more distant events are interpreted at higher levels, where abstraction is more present. In the opposite way, for closer events or objects, the interpretation happens in a more concrete process and therefore in a lower level.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the CLT's premises are related to sharing economy dimensions, especially those identified by Lamberton and Rose (2012), Hamari et al., (2016), Mohlmann (2015) and Pizzol and Almeida (2015). We expect to increase the explanation about the low adoption rate. The present article contributes to the existent literature by connecting CLT aspects to sharing economy. We point out how this theory from psychology can assist in the explanation of acceptance or denial of collaborative consumption by mental high or low levels interpretations.

The article is divided into six sections. The first contain an introduction of the theme. In the following, an explanation of the concept of sharing economy is presented. In the third part, there is the development on aspects that lead toward or against the consumption of products within collaborative consumption. Subsequently, the CLT and its effects on consumer behaviour are presented in two sections. In the fifth section, the discussion and presentation of the arguments that support the central idea of this essay take place. In the last section, final considerations and recommendations for new research are presented.

## 2 | SHARING ECONOMY AND COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION

Silveira, Petrini, and Santos (2016) highlight in an analysis of the literature on sharing economy and collaborative consumption the existence of broad definitions and without clear boundaries between both topics. Likewise, Martin (2016) states that the term sharing economy is also applied when discussing collaborative consumption, both expressions being used interchangeably. Given this context, this section focus on defining the thematic, presenting the main authors that developed it.

Botsman and Rogers (2011) name as sharing economy the commercial practices that make goods and services accessible by consumers, even if there are not necessarily purchases or exchanges of values between the involved parts. Another way of defining this phenomenon is supported by Dubois, Schor, and Carfagna (2014), who call it connected consumption, where product reuse practices and peer-to-peer connections eliminate mediators. This situation has enough power to modify the perception of people within organizations, creating new business models, focused on sharing (Gansky, 2010). Sharing represents the act of distributing what is ours for the use of others or the act of

receiving something from others for our own use (Belk, 2010). For Belk (2014), sharing economy would be a model between sharing and exchanging in the market, but with elements from both.

The advent of sharing economy seems to have its roots in three elements that occur together. The first one is the technological factor, since these connections between strangers take place on online platforms and require great developments of machines, hardware and software (Gansky, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Schor, 2014). The second one is the discussion of access over property (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Chen, 2009; Richins, 1994; Rifkin, 2010). Access and sharing, analyzed in the light of property, are similar since, in both concepts, the consumption does not involve transfer of ownership; however, they diverge in the perceived sense of ownership. This scenario leads to the idea that product ownership is no longer as advantageous as having the products, it is not necessary to enjoy the benefits they deliver, as well as to increase the variety of products and services options available (Wolcott, 2014). Finally, the third element is based on the transition to a more sustainable society, in which new ways of satisfying the consumers' demands are experienced, seeking less harm to the environment. Belk (2014) points out that issues such as global warming, rising fuel and raw material prices, and increased pollution also stimulate opportunities for sharing. In this meaning, and as a potential response to over-consumption, many consumers turn to alternative forms of sustainable consumption (Mohlmann, 2015; Schor, 2014).

Otherway to analyze sharing economy and its marketing system is addressed by Lamberton and Rose (2012). The authors comment that shared goods' offers are based on two situations: competition and exclusivity. Competition translates the level at which the use of the product by a consumer decreases the possibility of using the product for another. Then again, exclusivity is reflected in the level of access to the product, which can be controlled and restricted to a group of consumers, based on some criteria (Lamberton & Rose, 2012). From the combination of these two characteristics and levels (high and low) in which they may present themselves, the authors define four types of sharing systems. The products that fall under the low competition types are similar when exclusivity is weaker, like public goods such as roads and parks; On the other hand, when characterized high exclusivity, they resemble clubs of any kind, where a fee is paid to join.

The other two types, where competition is higher, define the types of more adjusted platforms to the sharing economy model that is desired to be established for this work. The third quadrant, which has high levels of competition and low levels of exclusivity, is characterized by the access to those who can pay a fee and the fact that, while each unit is used, it remains unusable for another consumer. An usual example is bicycles and cars sharing system. The final quadrant, which presents high levels of both characteristics, contains systems where the entry is hampered by several criteria and the consumption of one good also hinders the use of another consumer. The example for this point is cell phone plans with a determined number of minutes and mobile data that is consumed by business or family groups (Lamberton & Rose, 2012).

TABLE 1 Sharing economy platforms

Exchange model	Commercial activity	Monetary transaction	Market share	Example
Access instead of ownership	Renting	Yes	131 platforms	Renttherunway.com
	Lending	No	60 platforms	Couchsurfing.com
Property transfer	Exchanging	No	59 platforms	Swapstyle.com
	Donating	No	59 platforms	Freecycle.co.uk
	Purchasing Used Products	Yes	51 platforms	TheDup.com

Source. Adapted from Hamari et al. (2016).

Hamari et al. (2016) have identified the existence of 254 sharing economy platforms in their search; Table 1 presents these examples. The authors state that these platforms are divided from the business model they propose, being the midway of the exchange of ownership, or the provider of access to a good, or both models. Most platforms were classified as an access provider, before being an ownership provider of a good or service (191 platforms), either by loan or rent. As an example of this category, it is possible to mention Airbnb, peer-to-peer platform that promotes the lodging of people in different places of the world. Other platforms that seek to transfer ownership of goods and services do so by exchanging, donating and, of course, promoting the purchase of already used goods (169 platforms).

Freitas, Petrini, and Silveira (2016) identify ten characteristics of collaborative consumer business models. Considering these characteristics, 72 collaborative consumer sites were analyzed considering four main features: platform type, financial transaction, sharing model and type of sharing. Two types of collaborative consumption were identified: New Economic Opportunities and Consumption of Ideological Intention, pointing out the possible existence of different motivators for the adoption of collaborative consumption, depending on the type in question.

The diversity of models and types that emerge under sharing economy or collaborative consumption theme is also reflected in the diversity of motivators that leads to their adoption. However, despite many reasons that enable and promote participation in sharing economy, there is still a gap between the attitude toward collaborative consumption and its adherence behaviour. People may have a positive attitude that does not necessarily translate into initiative (Hamari et al., 2016). The next topic explores the adoption of collaborative economy, trying to understand the reasons why this form of consumption may or may not be leveraged.

### 3 | WHAT MOTIVATES ACCESS TO SHARING ECONOMY

The motivations for the adoption of collaborative consumption have already been the focus of countless researches. Silveira et al. (2016) identified that 48% of the articles published about the theme have as their core problem the investigation of the directions that lead to collaborative consumption. Part of the literature focuses on more behavioural aspects, adopting the individual as a unit of analysis and pointing directions related to values, feelings and human beliefs as vectors to

embrace sharing economy and collaborative consumption. Another stream in the literature has the organizations as a unit of analysis, which are analyzed under theoretical sociotechnical lens.

To understand the role of sharing economy with a sociotechnical perspective, Martin (2016) adopts Geels's (2005) Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) in his research. The MLP model is composed of three levels: (1) landscape, which consists of a strongly established environment, bounded to culture, social values and consolidated economic paradigms; (2) regime, in it are sociotechnical systems that meet the needs of people, such as the production, consumption, digital communication and transport system; (3) niche, which characterizes a space capable of promoting the development of innovations. The transition occurs (or not) from the innovations borned in the niches and having potential to transform the structures present in the regime level and the landscape level.

To understand the requirements for the transition between levels, Martin (2016) seeks to identify elements of empowerment and resistance in the process of accepting sharing economy in the social context. The author identified three elements of empowerment and three of resistance. Under the empowerment side, sharing economy is seen as (1) an opportunity that aids economic growth, (2) a way of sustainable consumption and (3) economy decentralization, from a fairer vision for social environment. On the side of resistance and criticism, sharing economy is seen as a place of (1) deregulated markets, where taxes are avoided and high risks are brought to consumers, as well as (2) reinforcement of neoliberalism and (3) incoherent innovation, since it deals with confusing terminologies, with varied meanings and diverse impacts. In the end, the author launches a controversial issue regarding the essence of sharing economy and collaborative consumption, instigating a reflection on how far such movement is a potential path to sustainability or a form of reinvention of neoliberal capitalism. This possible dichotomy on the roots of sharing economy may work as a background for understanding the gap between attitudes toward collaborative consumption and the behaviour of adherence to it.

On the one hand, researches point to collective action, a sense of community, and the notion of 'mutual aid' to be considered simultaneously as influences and results from participation in collaborative consumption models (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Balnaves, 2012; Huang, 2012; Simone Guercini, Corciolani, & Dalli, 2014). Relational and social aspects of this potential new lifestyle contradict the neoliberal notion that emphasizes individual determination and concern centered on one's own well-being. In addition, Binninger, Ourahmoune, and Robert

(2015) state that the ideals of sustainability are present as motivators for collaborative consumption.

Also, by strengthening the possibility of sharing economy being a reinvention of neoliberalism, organizations whose origins are based in social innovation are being pressured to become more commercially oriented (Martin, Upham, & Budd, 2015) so that sharing economy may lead to masking new forms of inequality and property polarization (Richardson, 2015).

Still within the context of acceptance of collaborative consumption, there are quantitative researches pointing out key factors in the choice of an option for sharing models. Lamberton and Rose (2012) develop a model of tendency to use products in sharing economy. The model is settled as the basis for Pizzol and Almeida (2015) to develop their studies and scales on collaborative consumption. It is important to describe first the model of Lamberton and Rose (2012), which was developed from the utility model, by Hennig-Thurau, Henning, and Sattler (2007). The latter suggests that if ownership and sharing of products are perceived as providers of equivalent benefits, consumers are inclined to favour the sharing system.

Lamberton and Rose (2012) expand this model, by inserting in it the idea of perception over the risk of shortage, and pursued to measure how much this factor can influence the tendency to use sharing systems. Along with this item, the authors have also tested questions related to the predictive capacity of individuals and the use of these types of systems, showing that the lower the capacity, the more likely consumers would adopt sharing economy as a product provider system. The research, as highlighted several times by Lamberton and Rose (2012), is an extension to the utility model proposed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2007) and is positioned as one of the first to quantitatively test the behaviour of the consumer on sharing economy.

Subsequently, Pizzol and Almeida (2015) determined to create a scale to measure collaborative consumption, supported by the same situation identified by Lamberton and Rose (2012), of lack of quantitative articles in the field. The scale presented has six dimensions: cost savings, convenience, environmental awareness, social identity, reliability and risk. The items were mainly adapted from the studies of Hamari et al. (2016), Schaefers (2013) and Lamberton and Rose (2012). The validating indexes were satisfactory, but the test was made in only one segment of collaborative economy, the sharing of cars, being necessary to validate it in other

Mohlmann (2015) proposes choice determinants of a sharing option analyzing two models of collaborative consumption (Car2Go and Airbnb). The individuals' actions are based on moral reasoning, seeking to maximize utility and cost savings, or minimizing transaction costs. In this sense, individuals look for ways to collaborate with each other, obviously. Utility, reliability, cost savings and familiarity were found in both models, while the quality of service and sense of belonging to the community were identified exclusively in one of them.

Still, Pizzol and Almeida (2015) have identified that the sense of belonging to a community and the preference for accessibility are important predictors of collaborative consumption, as well as more rational and utilitarian aspects, such as cost savings. In fact, Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt (2010) suggest that consumers have a self-

oriented motivation. It is these internal factors that are strong determinants of attitude toward collaborative consumption. However, for a continuous consumption, the extrinsic reasons are the most important, as well as the use of the product to be consumed (Hamari et al. 2016). In addition, what Hamari et al. (2016) did not demonstrate was a strong bond between attitude and behaviour (adoption), as it is usually the case in studies of this nature. It is important to emphasize that Lamberton and Rose (2012), Hamari et al. (2016), Mohlmann (2015) and Pizzol and Almeida (2015) do not use the same nomenclature, nor the same number of constructs, but the ideas that form the dimensions in each of the models are similar. Lamberton and Rose (2012) developed a typology of shared goods, including the dimension of scarcity as a central determinant of sharing economy attractiveness. Hamari et al. (2016) has been dedicated to investigating the formation of attitudes and behaviours, Pizzol and Almeida (2015) have opted to analyze the construct itself and Mohlmann seeks determinants of satisfaction and the likelihood of using sharing economy. Despite the different objectives, our choice is because all of them contain the most recent researches that propose to use a scale to measure collaborative consumption. Table 2 shows these similarities under the label 'dimensions'.

The CLT, from Trope and Liberman (2003), may help explain this inconsistency between attitude and consumption. The next section explains what the CLT and its main concepts are.

## 4 | CLT AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

In short, it is clear that the choice for collaborative consumption turns out to be motivated by ideological, emotional, rational or utilitarian matters, demonstrating that there is a great challenge for acceptance and adoption of these new business models by the consumers. An explanation for this situation may lie in the mental interpretation levels of everyone that will be explained in the next two subsections.

### 4.1 | Construal level theory: Basics premises

The CLT is a theory from Social Psychology. It proposes that there is a psychological distance between an object, event or individual, and its mental representation (construal). This psychological distance is understood as the feeling that the analyzed point is far from the present experience and the ego (Trope & Liberman, 2010). The human being manages to construct these mental representations and through them reflects on the fact that he is temporal or spatially distant from objects, people or events. By constructing mental representations, the individual manages to overcome the psychological distance, which makes him feel closer to people of the past, situations of the future or distant places. These representations may be high-level, involving more abstract, less-detailed, or lower-level, concrete and more detailed considerations (Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010).

The CLT proposes that the same information is constructed at higher levels when it is related to psychologically distant events, as opposed to what happens in nearest events. The further the event, greater the possibility of the construction being made more abstractly

TABLE 2 Dimensions of collaborative consumption

Lamberton and Rose (2012)	Pizzol and Almeida (2015)	Hamari et al. (2016)	Mohlmann (2015)	Interpretation
-	Socio-environmental awareness	Sustainability	Environmental impact***	Participation in collaborative consumption is associated with high levels of concern for sustainability
-	Social Identity	Reputation	Belonging to the community**	Perceived gains on personal level about how others perceive the people who use collaborative consumption
Control over the shared product	Trust	-	Trust*	Trust in the shared economy system and in the people who participate in it.
Familiarity	Risks	-	Familiarity*	Fear of not being able to use a product due to its scarcity, lack of familiarity or lack of use conditions of the product.
Costs	Cost savings	Economic benefits	Cost savings*	Perception of monetary value savings in transactions within the shared economy.
Utility	Convenience	Pleasure	Utility*	Feelings associated with the appreciation of the benefits of the shared economy
Consumer use	-	-	-	-
	-	-	Internet capacity***	-
	-	-	Service quality**	-
	-	-	Smartphone capacity***	-
	-	-	Affinity with trends***	-

\*Represent dimensions identified as significant by Mohlmann (2015) in studies with B2C and C2C segments.

\*\*Represent dimensions identified as significant by Mohlmann (2015) in studies in only one of the segments.

\*\*\*Represent dimensions that were not significant by Mohlmann (2015) in studies with B2C and C2C segments, and therefore discarded for this analysis.

Source. The authors.

and in broader terms. The example of Trope and Liberman (2003) is that by constructing his mental interpretation at high levels, the individual imagines a great picture. From a low-level perspective, and therefore closer, the individual would look at the details of what he is seeing.

The higher levels, as already mentioned, bring more abstract considerations, without much detail, but based on the desire (desirability) of having the object in question (Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010). In addition, they are based on the end-features of the object, in what the subject will have, in a certain way, as 'reward' (or experience). It happens thanks to the focus on the primary characteristics of the object/event/person, which are linked to the essence. One way used in literature to access high levels of interpretation is to use 'why' questions, where respondents state the reasons for having a certain experience. In contrast, the lower levels, because they are richer in details and therefore more concrete, deal with 'how' questions and focus on the operationalization of an experience. In other words, it deals with the half-aspects, because it focuses on the feasibility that the individual will have (Tsai & McGill, 2011; Vallacher & Wegner, 1989; Yan & Sengupta, 2011).

## 4.2 | CLT's application in consumer behaviour research

According to Krakoviak (2013), some researches addressing the CLT and its impacts on consumer decisions have already been carried out,

involving, among other subjects: the moment of consumption, whether immediate or postponed; the introduction of alternatives into a set of analysis; the attributes emphasized in communication through advertisement; and the weight given to features in adopting new products.

In the temporal dimension of psychological distance, the points of interest for the CLT are in the behaviours of savings, investment in durable goods, purchase of goods for future uses and the taking of actions for objective usages, besides the issue of purchase regret. From the point of view of social dimension, it is observed how people advise others, choose for others and also how they buy gifts. Regarding the distance of space, finally, elements of online or offline shopping are discussed (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007).

However, some considerations are important to comment on. The values will not always be the same for distances. From the point of view of the social dimension, the closer, the more positively affected the consumer will be. For example, Zhao and Xie (2011) investigate how peer recommendations influence the decision-making. It is identified that there is a tendency that the advices for socially closest people to be followed, rather than those given by socially distant subjects. The same values are not seen in relation to time, since it is said that a person thinks more positively when the decision is associated with a distant future (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007). It is important that there is a correspondence of the two dimensions for a stronger consumer impact (Zhao & Xie, 2011), this situation allows us to understand that distances cannot be easily compared with each other.

The satisfaction subject is also investigated in the light of the CLT. Pizzi, Marzocchi, Orsingher, and Zammit (2015) discuss how satisfaction evaluations behave over time. The authors observed changes related to satisfaction and attributed this to different psychological mechanisms that are activated during the time between the service are taken and its evaluation. An interesting result, supporting the one described in the paragraph above, is that low-level of interpretation attributes (concrete) are important for immediate evaluations, but their values decrease over time, whereas the opposite is true with high-level attributes of interpretation (abstract). In addition, the results also showed that individuals do not retrieve their initial judgments from memory and do not use them for future evaluations, bringing a relationship between the interpretation of past events and the effects of memory retention.

Vilches-Montero and Spence (2015) also analyzed experiment evaluations. One of the main results of his research was to show that the abstract levels raise the memory of how the individual enjoyed the experience that has passed. This ends up being one of the main recommendations for future researches, since this information has not been much explored in literature. Another finding was that high levels of interpretation diminished the individual's confidence in their judgment, but positively affect future preferences, such as the repetition of experience.

From the decisions' point of view, Kim, Park, and Wyer (2009) identify that consumers place greater weight on feasibility characteristics when considering the immediate consumption of a product/service. What in fact makes the research interesting is that the authors have identified that when consumers need to re-evaluate the choice of an item, the path will not be the one just mentioned. If the consumer considers a product for future consumption based on the desirability aspects, he retains the same evaluation if he reconsiders that decision for immediate consumption. However, if a consumer decides to immediately consume, considering aspects of practicality, he is able to change that evaluation for future consumption.

Tsai and McGill (2011) investigate the relationship between fluency and levels of interpretation and how both affect the consumer's confidence in the choice. Fluency was understood as the ease (or difficulty) of individuals in access the information that they possessed to make a choice. The authors sustain that fluency can lead to opposite effects on consumer confidence, depending on the level of interpretation. Feelings of difficulty are interpreted as an effort made by the consumer, which would produce a confidence effect, in high-level construal. At low levels, the difficulty would lead to perceived obstacles in the choosing process, which would reduce confidence. In other words, the authors identified that fluency increases confidence at low levels and decreases it at high levels of interpretation.

The CLT was also used to make important associations with consumer perceptions of prices. Yan and Sengupta (2011) and Bornemann and Homburg (2011) investigate the price and quality relation and how the level of interpretation interacts in this relation. Bornemann and Homburg (2011) bring the idea of the two roles of price in transactions: quality and sacrifice. Quality, because the monetary value of the purchased item will often reflect (or should reflect in the consumer's head

the quality of the item. Sacrifice, for the amount spent to buy a product is understood as a loss of money. The authors conclude that, for distant situations, the relation between price and quality are more important than sacrifice. On the opposite, for closer situations, the perception of sacrifice becomes greater.

It becomes clear that the CLT is a possible explanation for many effects that affect consumers throughout the decision-making process of a purchase. Much has been researched on this effect in traditional acquisitions, which lead to the ownership of goods. However, little has been researched on the possible effect that the CLT will have on access, the basis of sharing economy. This issue is what the present article is proposing to do, in a theoretical and exploratory way.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

Access, before ownership, is considered one of the pillars of sharing economy (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Chen, 2009; Richins, 1994; Rifkin, 2010) and replaces an offer's acquisition with the generated usage experience. In the light of the CLT, access and purchase are related and both can be influenced by the level of an individual's mental construction. The examples portrayed in this section, such as (a) the influence of peers (Zhao & Xie, 2011), (b) the level of confidence in the choice (Tsai & McGill, 2011) or (c) satisfaction evaluation based on remembered information (Vilches-Montero & Spence, 2015) can facilitate the transposition of results founded in so-called 'traditional' consumption to the collaborative consumption.

With this idea, this section relates and discusses some dimensions in the field of sharing economy that affect attitudes and behaviours related to the adoption of collaborative consumption, and how the CLT provides explanations for the gap identified by Hamari et al. (2016) between the attitudes and the actions of collaborative consumers. The work of Hamari et al. (2016) suggests the existence of a gap between attitude and behaviour within collaborative consumption. That is, people perceive positively and say good things about sharing economy, but this does not necessarily is converted into action. It is what Arts, Frambach, and Bijmolt (2011), in an ironic way, comment be the effect of answers that survey respondents give because they think to be the best. The authors speak about a 'talk the talk' that does not become a 'walk the walk' when you are talking about adopting innovations.

In order to use the CLT's ideas to explain the adoption of sharing economy, the analysis will be introduced based on the dimensions of collaborative consumption from Lambertson and Rose (2012), Pizzol and Almeida (2015), Hamari et al. (2016) and Mohlmann (2015). After that, we will discuss these dimensions are related to CLT.

It is imagined that the choice to participate in sharing economy is explained in part by a greater attention to environmental and sustainability issues, minimizing the social, economic and environmental consequences of consumption, looking at present and future generations (Luchs et al., 2011). Among the articles devoted to linking the CLT to environmental situations are those of Rabinovich, Morton, Postmes, and Verplanken (2009), Spence, Poortinga, and Pidgeon (2012) and Van Dam and Van Trijp (2013). The latter also states that sustainable

choices usually refer to events far from mental interpretation. What the authors say is that high levels of interpretation tend to increase the status of arguments in favour of a desired action, while low levels raise the salience of elements opposed to that action (Eyal, Sagristano, Trope, Liberman, & Chaiken, 2009; Trope & Liberman, 2010). Therefore, since sustainable choices are constructed in terms of desirability (high levels), the consumer adoption of sharing economy would also be constructed at lower levels of interpretation. Associated with this point, the work of Hamari et al. (2016) identified that the *sustainability* dimension strongly affects the attitude toward collaborative consumption, but the behaviour not so much. Arts et al. (2011) have identified that when analyzing innovations, attitudes are built at higher levels, and behaviour is ultimately mentally constructed at lower levels. Consequently, the mental construction of the consumer against the adoption of the sharing economy would also be built at lower levels of interpretation.

Another example that helps in understanding why the idea supported above is plausible lies in the observation of the *social identity* dimension (Pizzol & Almeida, 2015) and reputation dimension (Hamari et al., 2016). Eyal et al. (2009) says that people think about themselves and their actions, values, ideologies and principles in an abstract way. The authors' experiments showed that values are best predicted when analyzed from a distant perspective rather than a closer one. Indeed, by constructing their values at higher levels of interpretation, individuals would only act if the planning of that action was built on a higher level of interpretation as well. As the dimensions of social identity and reputation correspond to the vision of himself that an individual has from his values, these would be a construction at the highest level. For example, an individual access sharing economy platforms to 'show to world' that himself is a person with strong values about the society and its consumerism. Therefore, this act was constructed in his mind in a high-level way.

The *confidence* dimension is present in the researches of Pizzol and Almeida (2015), Mohlmann (2015) and Lamberton and Rose (2012). People, usually, fear participating in sharing economy by not having confidence in the other parties. By analyzing Botsman and Rogers' (2011) premises – critical mass, idle capacity, belief in common good and trust between strangers – we see that this element is essential for collaborative consumption. From the CLT's point of view, it is established that people less familiar or less similar are socially considered more distant (Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Trope & Liberman, 2003; Trope, Liberman, and Wakslak, 2007). Liviatan, Trope, and Liberman, (2008) show, through four experiments, that people analyze the actions of others to be more similar in more subordinate terms, emphasizing secondary aspects, as described by Trope and Liberman (2003) in the seminal article that identifies the CLT. Belk (2010) distinguishes between sharing in and sharing out. Sharing out involves dividing a resource among discrete economic interests, preserves the self and does not involve expanding the sphere of aggregate extended self beyond the family. But sharing in expands the sphere of extended self by expanding the domain of common property. Sharing in as seen is closer to the prototype of sharing within the family adding to greater confidence among people. Therefore, the fact that people do not

engage so closely with their attitudes toward collaborative consumption can be justified by the psychological distance that exists in building trust from peers sharing something. Likewise, if the consumer does not feel confidence in the peer connection (low-level association) provided by the collaborative consumption platform, he (or she) will not participate in that consumption experience.

Another important dimension, which is not included in the Hamari et al. (2016) model, is the one associated with *risks*. Lamberton and Rose (2012) had already associates risks with uncertainty and scarcity and how both relate to the sharing economy. Mueller, Wakslak, and Krishnan (2014) comment that the exposure to new and unfamiliar incentives tends to trigger abstract processing in individuals, since a broader perspective ultimately prepares better for the understanding of information (Förster, Liberman, & Shapira, 2009; Förster, Marguc, & Gillebaart, 2010). Throwback to the AirBnb initial period: renting one's residence for a 'stranger' did not sound good. The risks involved in this action were considered immense. However, today this practice is usual for a large part of the world. Furthermore, people at closer interpretation levels are at a stage where familiarity with the product under analysis is important. People, when facing ideas that are more familiar, can understand them in a more relevant matter and take this as basis for their decision-making. Pizzol and Almeida (2015) brought the idea of familiarity in their measurement of the construct of collaborative consumption, as brought by Mohlmann (2015), but both did not bring this explanation considering the CLT as an alternative, a situation to which the present article attends.

An important and present aspect in quantitative studies of Lamberton and Rose (2012), Hamari et al. (2016), Pizzol and Almeida (2015) and Mohlmann (2015) refers to *cost savings*. Hamari et al. (2016) put this financial element significantly related to behaviour: to adopt collaborative consumption, the price variable is important. Having already defined that behaviour is usually constructed in low level of interpretation (Arts et al., 2011), it is necessary to emphasize that the price issue can be understood as a variable of low level of interpretation, with great influence in the psychologically closer consumers' judgments (Liberman & Trope, 2016). The scenarios in beginning of this article (Zipcar and Airbnb) are a good example of this explanation. Sharing economy platforms offer in some situations a monetary compensation for their use. This price-perception relation, on its turn, activates the low-level construal of the price information.

Finally, it is relevant to comment on an important point of sharing economy, usually mentioned as vital to its adoption and which seemed neglected in the analyzed models: the role of the property within collaborative consumption. The feelings of ownership attachment are considered by Belk (2010) as limiting factors of sharing, as they affect the will to share, since there is a strong emotional connection between owner and product. The Irmak, Wakslak, and Trope (2013) study shows that people owning a product built their judgments at higher levels of interpretation, which explains one of the main barriers described by the academics (Belk, 2010; Pizzol & Almeida, 2015) for sharing economy due to the mental construction of the individuals who own the product. To create the behaviour of usage, a change in the mental interpretation is necessary, going from a high-level construction to a lower level. It

TABLE 3 Discussion summary table

Dimension	Authors	Level of interpretation	Impact	Justification	Authors
Sustainable consumption	Pizzol and Almeida (2015) Hamari et al (2016)	High level	Attitude	Sustainable choices often relate to events far from mental interpretation.	Rabinovich et al. (2009); Spence et al. (2012); Van Dam and Van Trijp (2013).
Social Identity	Pizzol and Almeida (2015) Hamari et al. (2016) Mohlmann (2015)	High level	Attitude	Feelings about oneself can be developed at higher and lower levels of psychological distance.	Eyal et al. (2009); Yan and Sengupta (2011); Trope and Liberman (2003, 2010).
Confidence	Lamberton and Rose (2012) Pizzol and Almeida (2015) Mohlmann (2015)	Low level	Behaviour	Feelings about other people are built on high levels of interpretation.	Trope and Liberman (2003); Trope et al. (2007).
Risks	Lamberton and Rose (2012) Pizzol and Almeida (2015) Mohlmann (2015)	High level	Attitude	Exposure to new and unfamiliar incentives tends to trigger abstract processing.	Förster et al., (2009); Förster et al. (2010); Mueller et al. (2014).
Cost Savings	Lamberton and Rose (2012) Pizzol and Almeida (2015) Hamari et al. (2016) Mohlmann (2015)	Low level	Behaviour	Price can be understood as a low-level variable of interpretation, with great influence on judgments at closer distances.	Liberman and Trope (2016).
Utility	Lamberton and Rose (2012) Pizzol and Almeida (2015) Hamari et al. (2016) Mohlmann (2015)	Low level	Behaviour	The utility of shared economy is based on the absence of property, which is built at a high level.	Irmak et al. (2013).

Source. The authors.

can be done focusing on more concrete points, such as the ease and familiarity of use, cost savings and confidence. The ownership issue helps to understand the reasons for the *utility* dimension of Lamberton and Rose (2012) and Mohlmann (2015) – which is strongly related to the dimensions of convenience from Pizzol and Almeida (2015) and pleasure from Hamari et al. (2016). Utility dimension is built on a low level of interpretation because it is strongly related to the behaviour that will be adopted when participating in collaborative consumption. The meaning of these similar dimensions is to enrich the benefits of sharing economy. Considering the absence of property over a product as one of the central elements of collaborative consumption, it is possible to speculate that property stimulates higher levels (Irmak et al., 2013) and utility lead to lower levels of mental interpretation.

The results discussed in this section are summarized in Table 3, relating the four analyzed quantitative articles' dimensions with the level of interpretation with which is constructed in the consumer's mind.

## 6 | FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

First, we will quote Belk (2010) 'only by recognizing and challenging the encroachment of the perspective that all the world is a market and everything and everyone within it is an exchangeable commodity can we begin to appreciate the critical role of sharing in consumer behaviour'. Therefore, the purpose of this essay was to promote an alternative theoretical explanation for the attitude-behaviour gap in sharing economy. Such divergence was identified by Hamari et al. (2016) and demonstrated that individuals felt positive attitudes toward collaborative consumption, but that this did not translate into actions. In a way, this result is like that of Arts et al. (2011), who analyzed the level of innovation adoption by consumers.

The alternative explanation lies in the levels of mental interpretation that individuals build in their judgments. The relationship between the CLT of Trope and Liberman (2003) with the dimensions of collaborative consumption (Hamari et al., 2016; Lamberton & Rose, 2012;



Pizzol & Almeida, 2015) was approached, identifying which dimensions would be constructed in high or low level of interpretation and how this might have an impact on consumer behaviour.

The discussion, compiled in Table 3, allows us to understand the reasons that lead to the gap between attitude and behaviour in sharing economy. Of the six analyzed dimensions in the present study, three are constructed at a high level and three at a low level of interpretation. Among the latter, and one of the most relevant, the Utility dimension stands against one of the great barriers of sharing economy: property, which is built at a higher level (Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Pizzol & Almeida, 2015). This identical number of levels of mental interpretation contributes to the failure of consumers to evolve from a positive attitude toward a behaviour within collaborative consumption, since high-level dimensions only affect attitude.

This study contributes to the literature of both CLT and sharing economy, for pioneering in the approach of the theory of mental constructs as an explanation for an individual's behaviour related to the innovations of sharing economy. Simultaneously, it is a potential source for future research directions, since it is possible to quantitatively test the ideas produced in this essay. In a way, this converges with what Lamberton and Rose (2012) and Hamari et al. (2016) state, despite their practical relevance, there is a lack of quantitative researches on the motivational factors that affect attitudes, intentions and behaviours of consumers on collaborative consumption.

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