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The many faces of sharing: A conceptual framework for collaborative consumption

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Collaborative consumption systems are on the rise - both their usage and transaction volume are growing at an accelerated pace. And yet research is lacking a clear understanding of these systems: access-based consumption, sharing economy, pseudo-sharing are only part of the terms academics and practitioners use to denote an emerging mode of consumption. This article theoretically sets the boundaries of collaborative consumption, structures its elements, and highlights the variables that influence how consumers interact with each other as members of a collaborative consumption system. As a result, we propose a three-level conceptual framework that describes the mechanics of collaborative consumption and the interrelations between the main involved parties: consumers as providers, consumers as beneficiaries, and intermediaries. The framework both reconciles contradictory findings and supports scholars and managers in the design and research of collaborative consumption systems. As important outcome to guide future research, five propositions consolidate the main insights of the framework and offer several directions for further exploration.