Engaging users in the sharing economy: Individual and collective psychological ownership as antecedents to actor engagement

Purpose – This conceptual study explicates the dynamic, interlinked relationship between two of the most popular theories in marketing today – psychological ownership (PO) and engagement. The study is set in the sharing economy (SE), where platform business success depends on high levels of engagement by users – both individuals and collectives. The study argues individual PO acts as the antecedent to engagement within a dyad of brand and user, and collective PO as the antecedent to collective engagement by communities of users.

Design/methodology/approach – This conceptual study synthesizes PO theory and engagement theory to produce a PO-Engagement Framework. We adopt a dual-level perspective encompassing individual- and group-level phenomena in the SE and employ examples from practice to illustrate our arguments.

Findings – PO acts as the antecedent to the positively valenced disposition and engagement activities of actors in the SE. Individual PO manifests as engagement within a dyad of brand and user. Outcomes include brand love and contributions to brand reputation and service offerings. Collective PO manifests as engagement within a community or collective. Outcomes include community-oriented peer-to-peer sharing for the benefit of others.

Originality/value – This study offers a dynamic framework of PO and engagement in the SE, the PO-Engagement Framework. We contribute to PO and engagement literatures in marketing by illustrating how a platform user's attachment to targets in the SE motivates emergence of PO, and how different types of engagement manifest from different types of PO.

Keywords – sharing economy, individual psychological ownership, collective psychological ownership, customer engagement, actor engagement, dyads, collective engagement, platform business

Paper Type: Conceptual paper

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Introduction

Two theories have become a major focus of marketing scholars over the last decade – 'engagement' (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2013; 2019; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014) and 'psychological ownership' (PO) (e.g., Jussila *et al.*, 2015; Pierce *et al.*, 2003). First, engagement theory explores the positively valenced cognitive, affective, and behavioural disposition and activities of an actor towards a brand or within a network (Brodie *et al.*, 2019). An engaged actor invests their own resources beyond those required for just a transaction, e.g., their knowledge, skills, labor, and time (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Verleye *et al.*, 2014). Consequences of engagement are as diverse as brand love, increased loyalty, trust and purchasing intent, contributions to product development (Brodie *et al.,* 2011; Pansari and Kumar, 2017), and enhanced corporate performance for the firm (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; 2019; Kumar and Pansari, 2016).

Second, PO theory asserts someone experiences individual PO (iPO) when they sense an object as 'theirs' ("It is MINE"), and groups of people experience 'collective PO' (cPO) when they sense an object as "OURS" (Pierce *et al.*, 2003; 2019). In consumption settings, a sense of PO has been shown to deliver outcomes such as heightened customer satisfaction and loyalty, and increased willingness to pay (Asatryan and Oh, 2008; Fuchs *et al.*, 2010; Morewedge *et al.*, 2021).

However, despite the parallels between these two popular theories, little attention has been given to understanding the relationship between them. Where engagement predominantly focuses on the consequences of an actor's positively valenced disposition and activities (e.g., Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Storbacka *et al.*, 2016), PO theory predominantly focuses on the causes of an actor's (motivational, attitudinal, and behavioural) disposition (e.g., Jussila *et*

al., 2015). Hence, this paper argues these theories intersect – where PO leaves off, engagement begins. Additionally, the latest developments of both theories (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2019; Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019; Pierce *et al.*, 2019) have introduced a dual-level perspective encompassing both individual- and group-level phenomena, thereby reflecting the social, networked, and collective nature of contemporary consumption contexts.

Hence, the purpose of this conceptual study is to *explicate the dynamic, interlinked relationship between individual and collective psychological ownership as antecedents to actor engagement*. Methodologically, we engage in a process of 'theory synthesis' (Jaakkola, 2020, p.21) by "offer[ing] a new or enhanced view of a concept or phenomenon [engagement] by linking previously unconnected or incompatible pieces [individual and collective PO] in a novel way." To do so, we summarize and integrate (MacInnis, 2011) PO theory from marketing and management (e.g., Jussila *et al.*, 2015; Pierce *et al.*, 2003, 2019; Pierce and Jussila, 2010) and the engagement literature (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2013, 2019; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014), including the emergent literature on collective engagement (Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019), to produce a dynamic PO-Engagement Framework.

To ground our study, we set it in the sharing economy (SE) as a contemporary consumption context that requires a multi-level perspective of individual- and group-level phenomena, where engagement has been demonstrated to be critical to platform success (Brodie *et al.*, 2019; Fritze *et al.*, 2020; Wirtz *et al.*, 2019). In the SE, consequences of engagement include generation of user content like reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and sharing of knowledge for the benefit of peers (Sheng, 2019). However, little agreement exists in the literature as to what comprise the antecedents to engagement in online contexts. A variety of factors have been asserted including satisfaction and emotion (Pansari and Kumar, 2017), technical and functional service quality (Islam *et al.*, 2019), and social contagion (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Rather *et al.*, 2019). We argue why and how these factors

operate as antecedents can be explained through a synthesis of PO and engagement theories. We posit these factors act as either motivators or causes of PO, and different types of PO manifest as different types of engagement in the SE – within dyads of platform users and brands, or within online communities. Moreover, despite the PO literature featuring a small number of studies on access-based consumption (e.g., Danckwerts and Kenning, 2019; Fritze *et al.*, 2020), little progress has been made exploring peer-to-peer (P2P) contexts. This is surprising given the importance a collective sense of 'ours' plays in driving platform business success (e.g., Cusumano, 2018).

This study contributes to marketing theory in the following ways. We offer a dynamic conceptual framework – the PO-Engagement Framework – for the interlinked and interdependent relationship between iPO and cPO as antecedents to actor engagement. The framework encompasses a dual-level perspective that includes 1) how engagement inspired by iPO manifests within a dyad of user and brand, and 2) how engagement inspired by cPO manifests within a collective, which generates community-oriented P2P interactions (Dawkins *et al.*, 2017). To do so, we categorize platform businesses according to the degree of control they take in mediating user interactions, and the optimal types of engagement required for platform success. Some platforms closely control user interactions, the service offering, and payments (e.g., Uber), and users are mostly asked to simply rank each other. For these platforms, dyadic engagement between platform and user is optimal. We argue this dyadic engagement is preceded by a sense of iPO in the user. Where a platform relies heavily on dynamic P2P interactions and user generated content for success, collective engagement within and amongst a community is optimal. This type of engagement is preceded by both a sense of iPO and cPO in platform users.

Further, by illustrating the emergence of both iPO and cPO in the SE context, we also identify the diversity of 'targets' to which individual or collective actors attach themselves,

including brands, service offerings, personal ratings, or 'our SE-community' (Kumar, 2019). Through its methodological approach, this study highlights the benefits that both PO and engagement theory can achieve through synthesis. For engagement, PO theory explains the antecedents that precede an actor's positively valenced disposition and activities, and for PO, engagement theory offers increased clarification of the consequences of iPO and cPO.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we offer a brief background to our research context, the SE. Second, developments in the engagement literature are summarized, including the evolution from customer, to actor, to collective engagement. Third, iPO and cPO are introduced, including identifying the human needs and causes that drive their emergence, and the nature of targets of PO in the SE. Fourth, these discussions enable us to introduce our dynamic PO-Engagement Framework before concluding with our theoretical contribution, managerial implications, and suggestions for future research.

The sharing economy (SE)

The SE construct encompasses a diverse range of platforms, business models, and exchange logics that have revolutionized consumption patterns and many traditional industries (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019; Fehrer *et al.*, 2018a). Due to the diversity of phenomena in the SE, emerging academic research lacks conceptual clarity (Gerwe and Silva, 2020) with a variety of expressions used to describe it, like collaborative consumption (Botsman and Rogers, 2010), access-based consumption (Fritze *et al.*, 2020), stranger sharing (Schor, 2014), P2P economy (Selloni, 2017), platform economy (Kenney and Zysman, 2016), and the gig economy (Wood *et al.*, 2019).

However, studies generally use the term SE as an umbrella construct that encompasses those entities that mobilize resources for efficient use via access, to users for a fee or free, where the users have no or limited asset ownership (Wirtz *et al.*, 2019). Hence, the SE is "a

scalable socio-economic system that employs technology-enabled platforms to provide users with temporary access to tangible and intangible resources that may be crowdsourced" (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019, p.7). Those resources are as diverse as accommodation (e.g., Airbnb or VRBO), high fashion (e.g., Rent the Runway or Tulerie), finance (e.g., Prosper or SoFi), personal services (e.g., Timebank, TaskRabbit, or Care.com), ridesharing (e.g., Uber or Gett), and numerous others.

Functional and psychological barriers can drive consumer avoidance of engaging with the SE. Barriers include the complexity of digital platforms and the inability of some platforms to build critical mass, the contamination and lack of ownership of shared assets, lack of control over service quality, high competition for idle resources, changes to the legal environment, incompatibility with consumer lifestyles, and lack of tangibility of experiential goods (Hazée *et al.*, 2020; Hofmann *et al.*, 2017; Morewedge *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, the building of trust and transparency acts as a major barrier to engagement with the SE, including negative interactions with undesirable consumers, the difficulty of establishing trust, and shortcomings of mechanisms for establishing trust. Hofmann *et al.* (2017) suggest in P2P contexts consumers have reason-based trust, where they search for metaphors of trust such as provider ratings. Hence, engagement with a brand and reviewing and rating others helps reduce uncertainty and risk, and enables trust.

Categorizing platforms

Given the broad array of organizations in the SE, it is necessary to first explain what type of platform business is included in this paper. There are four key features of the SE that are common to many studies (e.g., Gerwe and Silva, 2020, Eckhardt *et al.*, 2019). First is *platform mediation*, where the SE is organized around digital platforms that enable interactions between users (Breidbach and Brodie, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2015). Second, the SE facilitates *P2P*

exchanges so that versatile actors can engage with one another in a non-hierarchical manner (Fehrer *et al.*, 2018a; Perren and Kozinets, 2018). Third, the SE emphasizes *access to, rather than ownership of, resources*, as no transfer of ownership occurs (Fritze *et al.*, 2020). Hence, an online e-tailing platform like Amazon does not count as part of the sharing economy. Further, sometimes the resources accessed through a platform are owned by the platform (e.g., Zipcar owns the vehicles that are rented through its platforms), and sometimes by peers (e.g., a private car owned and operated by an Uber driver) (Wirtz *et al.*, 2019). For the purposes of this study, we see platforms that enable sharing of peer-owned resources as emblematic of the SE, which means if the resource is owned by the platform business, we exclude it from consideration. And fourth, the SE focusses on *using under-utilized capacity* such as physical assets, skills, or time to transmit economic value (Cusumano, 2018).

Additionally, as depicted in Figure 1, we argue there are two characteristics that distinguish between different types of platforms. First is the level of involvement a platform takes in mediating actor interactions, and second is the type of actor engagement that is desirable for the platform to achieve optimal success. At one extreme, some platforms take a central role in matching platform users, and closely control the distribution of peer-owned resources. For example, the lending platform Prosper (prosper.com) ranks borrowers according to their risk profile, marries lenders to those borrowers, and "handles all loan servicing on behalf of the matched borrowers and investors." In this case, users are simply expected to rank one another. For optimal success, a high level of actor engagement within the dyad of user and platform is desirable (e.g., a sense of love for the brand). The same phenomenon occurs with a platform like Uber (uber.com), where the software application matches driver and rider, plots the route and coordinates payment, and the users simply rank one another.

At the other extreme, some platforms do not closely control interactions but instead rely heavily on free-flowing, P2P collaboration and sharing (e.g., of specialized knowledge,

information, tips, reviews, and experiences) for the benefit of others. For example, the computer code swap site, Stackoverflow (stackoverflow.com), relies greatly on a vibrant community of highly engaged coders who collectively generate, share, rate, comment on, fix, vote up or down, and download code. Likewise, the P2P gardening platform GardenTags (gardentags.com) requires many highly engaged experienced gardeners willing to collectively share their knowledge and advice to a community of novice growers for the platform to be feasible. For optimal success, these types of P2P sites require multi-dimensional collective engagement by a community of actors who implicitly and/or explicitly have shared goals of relationship building and collaboration for the betterment of both themselves and the wider group.

Finally, many platforms reside between these two extremes. They take a moderate role in mediating user interactions as they rely on users to, not just rank one another, but also freely share reviews and recommendations. For example, the high-fashion lending platform Tulerie (tulerie.com) acts as the intermediary in the lending of clothes, however all users must also actively review and rank their experiences. That is to say, the clothing providers review and rate the borrowers and the clothing borrowers review and rate both the borrowed clothes and the clothing providers. Similarly, Airbnb (airbnb.com) requires engagement through fulsome rating and reviewing by both providers and guests, and users are required to have profiles with photos, location details, and a personal ranking. Optimal success of these types of platforms depends on users who are highly engaged with both brand and community.

In sum, for the sake of this study, a platform business in the SE always enables sharing of peer-owned resources. However, we additionally conceptualize platforms based on the degree of control they take over mediating the interactions of users, and by extension, the type of engagement they rely on for optimal success. These different types of platforms are 1) those that closely control user interactions but thrive on high levels of dyadic engagement between

them and their users, 2) those that take relatively low control over user interactions that rely on

the free-flowing sharing of a network of highly engaged, community-minded users, and 3)

those that moderately control user interactions and succeed when there is both high engagement

between brand and user and within the platform community. Engagement in dyads and

collectives is discussed in more detail, next, before we introduce the relationship between

different types of engagement and PO.

Figure 1: Mediating role of platform businesses in the SE, and the optimal type of engagement.
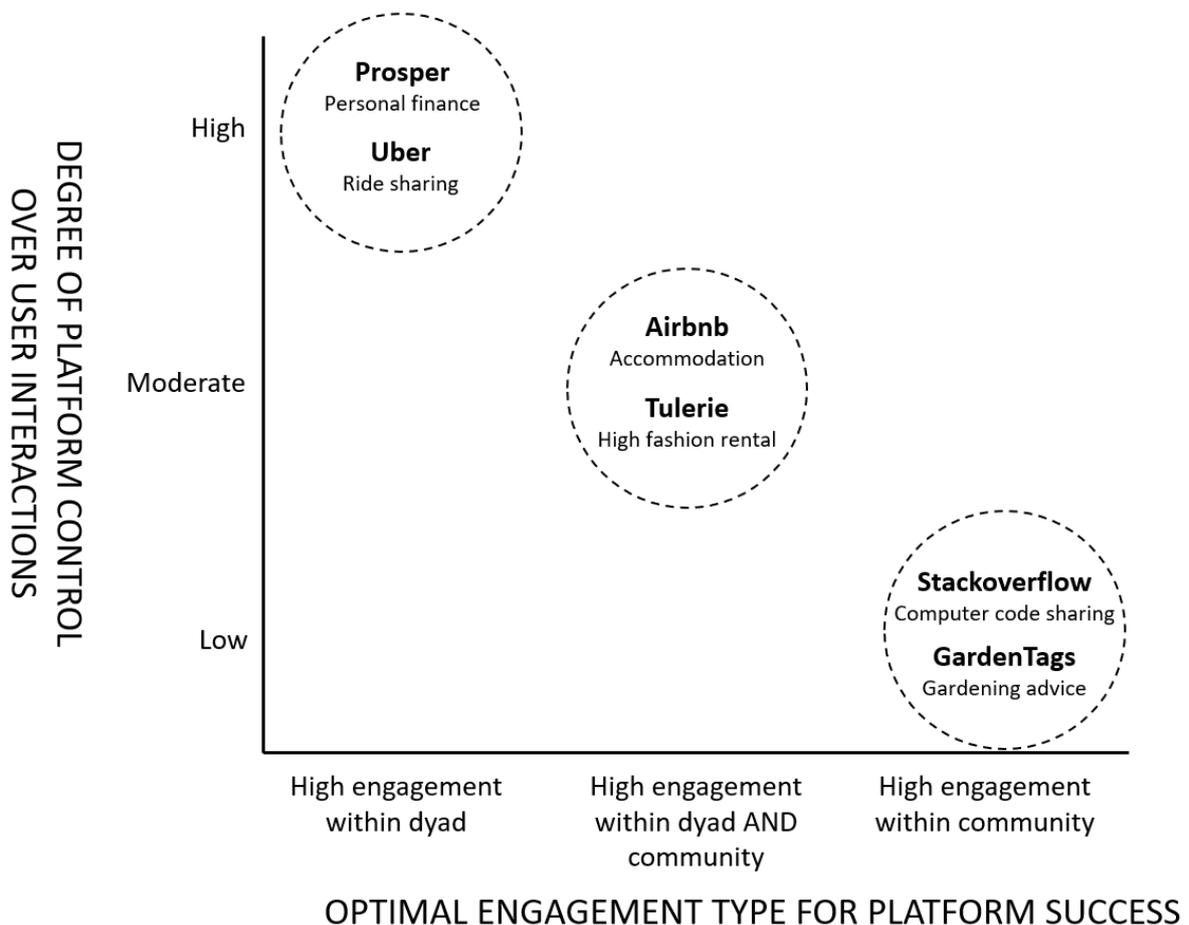
Engagement

Although the concept of engagement has been widely adopted in multiple disciplines (Brodie

et al., 2011) including psychology (Garczynski *et al.*, 2013), education (Reeve, 2012), and

organizational behaviour (e.g., Costa *et al.*, 2014), it has emerged as central to marketing research in the last decade (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2011; 2013; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Engagement is "a dynamic and iterative process that reflects actors' dispositions to invest resources in their interactions with other connected actors in a service system" (Brodie *et al.* 2019, p.173). The iterative nature of engagement is reflected in changing levels of engagement felt by an actor. Indeed, positive engagement outcomes can further drive the disposition for actors to engage (Brodie *et al.*, 2016; Fehrer *et al.*, 2018b; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). How the PO construct helps explain this phenomenon will be detailed later. First, we explain the different types of engagement – between dyads or within collectives. Then we conclude this section with a summary of the factors suggested as antecedents to engagement, before asserting our theorization that iPO and cPO explain how and why these factors act as antecedents.

Engagement within dyads

Engagement within the dyad of customer and firm – called customer engagement – was the initial focus of engagement research. Some authors emphasized the behavioural dimension of customer engagement (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). For example, Van Doorn *et al.* (2010, p.260) define customer engagement as "a customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers." Other scholars adopt a broader view of engagement as incorporating both behavioural manifestations and psychological states or dispositions (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). For example, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014, p.151) define engagement as "a consumer's positively valenced cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related activity during, or related to, specific consumer/brand interactions." We adopt this broadened perspective of customer engagement as represented by a customer's heightened cognitive, affective, and behavioural disposition towards a brand, and the activities

they engage in (Brodie *et al.*, 2011) that extend beyond just satisfaction (Kumar and Pansari, 2016) or the behaviours required to successfully navigate a purchase (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014).

For the firm, customer engagement delivers increased firm profitability (Brodie *et al.,* 2011; 2013; Kumar and Pansari, 2016), e.g., through reductions in marketing costs and increased sales. For the customer, the cognitive, affective, and behavioural consequences of engagement are as diverse as love for the brand, loyalty, trust, repeat and additional purchasing, contributions to product development, and generation of WOM (Brodie *et al.,* 2011; Pansari and Kumar, 2017; Vivek *et al.*, 2012). Engaged customers invest resources beyond those required for just a transaction, like knowledge, skills, labor, and time (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Verleye *et al.*, 2014), and in online environments, contributions like reviews, blogs, and especially, ratings and rankings.

As reflected in Figure 1, some platforms in the SE (e.g., Uber) play a significant role in mediating user interactions and benefit from a high degree of engagement between themselves and their individual users (riders and drivers). This dyadic relationship is reflected in the customer engagement concept. However, the dyadic focus of customer engagement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2019) does not allow fulsome understanding of engagement between actors beyond the brand, such as in multi-actor networks (Brodie *et al.*, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2017; Storbacka *et al.*, 2016). This shortcoming is especially amplified when considering those SE platforms where collective or community-oriented P2P interactions are required for platform success (e.g., Stackoverflow and GardenTags in Figure 1). Hence, to understand consequences of engagement that positively impact collectives of actors beyond (but including) the brand, the concepts of actor engagement and collective engagement are required.

Engagement by collectives within communities of generic actors

The actor engagement construct was proposed to explain engagement between, within, and amongst numerous generic actors in a network (including a firm and customer) (Brodie *et al.*, 2019). For example, in the SE, digital platforms encourage and support exchange and resource integration by and between multiple actors, providing interactive spaces (Breidbach *et al.*, 2014; Storbacka *et al.*, 2016) and virtual touch points for engagement processes (Breidbach and Brodie, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2017). Hence, actor engagement is "both the disposition of actors to engage, and the activity of engaging in an interactive process of resource integration" (Storbacka *et al.*, 2016, p.3009) within multi-actor contexts such as the SE.

Further development to actor engagement theory has come through the collective engagement concept. Collective engagement draws on multi-level and institutional perspectives to focus beyond just individual-level phenomena to recognize the social embeddedness of actors (Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019). Collective engagement involves "multiple actors' shared cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dispositions, as manifested in their interactive efforts devoted to a focal object" (Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019, p.12). Hence, collective engagement is related to actor engagement in that it considers generic actors, however, the positively valenced disposition and activities of the actors are shared. For example, collective engagement can unfold in both real and virtual environments (such as in co-located and geographically distributed work teams) and can occur between actors where no commercial exchange takes place (Storbacka, 2019), e.g., through voluntary P2P social interactions (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Collective actor engagement also manifests equally in B2B (Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019; Storbacka, 2019), B2C (Wilson, 2019), and online distributed P2P situations (Fehrer *et al.*, 2020).

In contrast to engagement within a dyad of customer and firm, consequences of collective engagement include voluntary P2P interactions aimed at benefiting not just the firm

or customer, but also the broader online community, e.g., by providing voluntary assistance and recommendations to others on alternative ways of using products or brands (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). For example, a Stackoverflow user who avidly shares code and suggestions to others on how to improve their code, does so not just for their own benefit and/or the benefit of the platform, but also for the benefit of others within the broader community. This user is demonstrating collective engagement with their coding community as well as the platform. In contrast, an Uber rider is hoping to get from point-to-point in a more efficient or cost-effective manner than offered by a traditional taxi. Likewise, an Uber driver is maybe hoping to earn more effectively, with less upfront cost, than if they were to drive a taxi. The users (drivers or riders) might demonstrate brand love towards Uber, moderate their behavior to protect their own ranking, rank others, or make suggestions to Uber to improve the service offering. However, these users have little or no interest in other similar users, hence, they demonstrate engagement within the dyad of them and the Uber platform.

Antecedents to engagement

Numerous assertions have been made about what act as antecedents to engagement. For example, scholars have proposed possible precursors include customer or actor behaviour, attitude (Kumar *et al.*, 2010), experience (Roberts and Alpert, 2010), involvement, participation (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Vivek *et al.*, 2012), and satisfaction (Bergel *et al.*, 2019). Others include the perceived quality of the service offering (Islam *et al.*, 2019), the brand's value, innovativeness, and responsiveness (Leventhal *et al.*, 2014), and social contagion amongst groups (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019). In online brand communities, antecedents to engagement include the functioning of the system, the degree of alignment between the values of the community members, the community and the brand, and

the rewards and recognition offered by the community (Chan *et al.,* 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015).

However, we argue why and how these factors act as antecedents to engagement can be explained by synthesizing the theory of PO with engagement. We posit before a positively valenced disposition can manifest, an actor must first experience a sense of PO over a target within the SE context. PO can be experienced at an individual level (iPO; "Here comes MY Uber") or collective level (cPO; "OUR Stackoverflow community help each other code better"). iPO leads to a user's positive disposition to engage within a dyad of user and brand. Similarly, cPO will manifest as collective engagement between, within, and amongst a community of users. In sum, PO theory explains why and how factors such as attitude, satisfaction, values, functionality, and social contagion act as antecedents to engagement by functioning as motivators or causes of PO.

Psychological ownership (PO)

iPO is "the state in which individuals feel as though a target of ownership or a piece of that target is 'theirs' (i.e., 'it is mine!')" (Pierce *et al.*, 2003, p.86). Foundational to the development of PO theory has been the 'extended self,' which asserts people appropriate objects to generate and maintain their sense of self-concept (Belk, 1988). While people often generate their extended self through tangible objects (e.g., personal belongings), they do also through intangible objects (e.g., an organization, skillset, idea, or plan) (Pierce *et al.*, 2003). These objects then act as targets of PO and "as important anchors for the individual who in turn develops possessive feelings towards the objects" (Fritze *et al.*, 2020, p.2). A person experiences both a cognitive and emotional relationship with any target of ownership (Dawkins *et al.*, 2017), e.g., "This is MY home," or, "That's MY idea."

A 'target' of iPO has unique meaning for each individual. This is reflected in the service research literature which highlights the phenomenological, uniquely personal interpretations people place on value (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). The importance people place on a target can fluctuate through time and context, e.g., as someone owns a good for longer (Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998). Also, iPO can develop whether someone has a legal claim to the target or not (Asatryan and Oh, 2008; Fuchs *et al.*, 2010), e.g., a sense of PO over a neighborhood (Verkuyten and Martinovic, 2017). Legal ownership may precede a sense of iPO, although it is not a guarantee of PO (Reb and Connolly, 2007), particularly when people have little control over the goods that are owned, e.g., company shares or mortgaged houses (Atasoy and Morewedge, 2018).

In digital environments, consumers' sense of possession over intangible objects such as avatars, photos, and online profiles is well established (e.g., Molesworth *et al.*, 2016). PO research into access-based services (where the shared resource is firm-owned not peer-owned) extends these findings. For example, Fritze *et al.* (2020) empirically show users of carsharing services may develop a sense of iPO and substitute for car ownership. Danckwerts and Kenning (2019) and Sinclair and Tinson (2017) show despite music streaming involving access to immaterial items, users can nevertheless develop PO over both the music and the brand. This can lead customers to switch from free to paid subscriptions (Danckwerts and Kenning, 2019). Hence, a lack of legal ownership of objects in digital and access-based contexts does not act as a barrier to PO (Weiss and Johar, 2013). However, while valuable contributions, these studies are based in access-based consumption contexts rather than in the P2P SE. Additionally, Morewedge *et al.* (2021) offer an extensive discussion of the impact on consumer PO due to the growing shift from ownership to access, and material to experiential goods. However, the relationship between PO and engagement by consumers is not discussed.

Further, extant literature explains iPO leads to motivational, attitudinal, and behavioural consequences (Jussila *et al.*, 2015), which we argue are akin to an engaged actor's positive disposition. For example, organization science research has found high levels of PO drive positive behaviours in employees such as improved job performance, increased tenure (Pierce and Jussila, 2010), and enhanced workplace citizenship (Pierce *et al.*, 2009), which we assert can be summarized as heightened employee engagement. In marketing, PO contributes to increased customer empowerment and satisfaction (Fuchs *et al.*, 2010), generation of WOM, increased willingness to pay, loyalty, and competitive resistance (Asatryan and Oh, 2008; Morewedge *et al.*, 2021). In sum, we argue these consequences of PO all reflect the positively valenced activities of an engaged actor.

Motivations and causes of iPO

There exist three motivations, or human needs, that explain the emergence of iPO (*sense of self-identity, s*ense *of self-efficacy and effectance,* and *sense of belongingne*ss; Dawkins *et al.*, 2017), and three interrelated causes (*investing the self into the target, intimately knowing the target* and *controlling the target of ownership*; Jussila *et al.*, 2015). Each of the motivators explain *why* people manifest a state of iPO, while each of the causes explains *how* iPO emerges and grows through interactions with a target (Pierce *et al.*, 2001, 2003). Together, these processes act as antecedents to engagement within a dyad of user and brand and explain how and why factors such as customer experience (Kumar *et al.*, 2010) and satisfaction (Bergel *et al.*, 2019), service quality (Islam *et al.*, 2019), and platform functionality (Chan *et al.,* 2014) have been asserted as antecedents to engagement in the extant literature.

Using the PO conceptual framework (Jussila *et al.*, 2015; Pierce *et al.*, 2001, 2003; cf. Danckwerts and Kenning, 2019; Sinclair and Tinson, 2017), we next draw on the SE literature to explicate 1) what needs drive people to engage with targets in the SE, 2) the causes of iPO

as users interact with a target and the causes of cPO as people become aware of others' shared PO, and 3) the different types of engagement that manifest from iPO and cPO. This dynamic process is reflected in our PO-Engagement Framework (Figure 2), which depicts the journey taken by a user within the SE. Different types of engagement manifest from different types of PO – engagement within a dyad of user and brand manifests from iPO, and community-oriented, collective engagement manifests from cPO. Further, as actors experience (dyadic or collective) engagement, the outcomes of their engagement activities (e.g., brand love, WOM, sharing of experiences) can further reinforce their sense of PO. Hence, engagement activities themselves can act as causes of iPO and cPO, explaining how engagement is an iterative, dynamic process (Brodie *et al.*, 2016; Fehrer *et al.*, 2018b).

Figure 2: PO-Engagement Framework depicting the journey taken by a user in the SE as they develop iPO and dyadic engagement, then cPO and collective engagement.
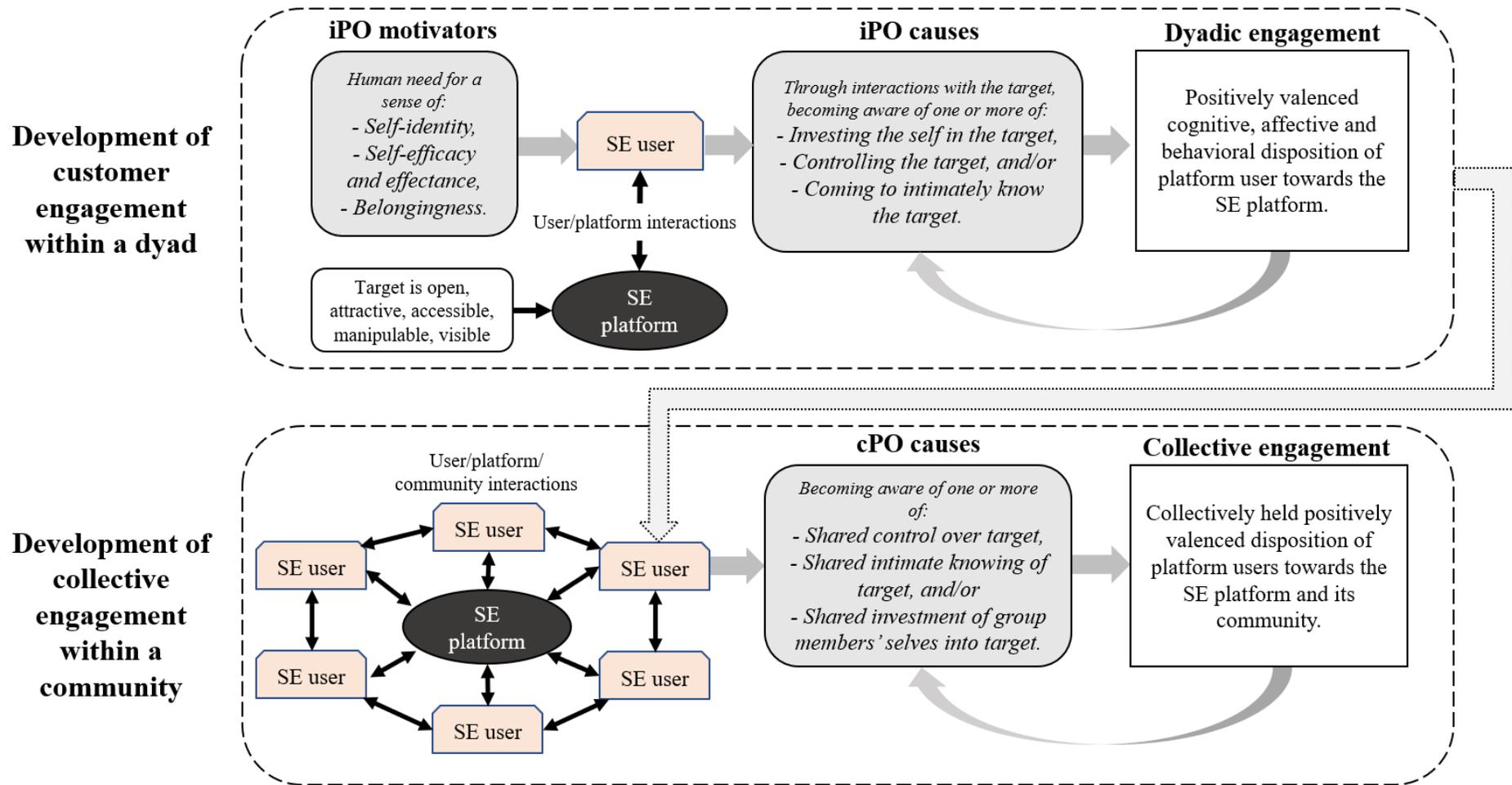
Motivations for the development of iPO

A person's individual need for a *sense of self-identity,* s*ense of self-efficacy and effectance,* and *sense of belongingne*ss motivate the development of iPO (Dawkins *et al.*, 2017). 'Self-identity' refers to people's need to express a sense of self (Belk, 1988; Pierce *et al.*, 2001); 'efficacy and effectance' relates to people's need to feel competent and efficacious within their environment (Danckwerts and Kenning, 2019); and 'belongingness' reflects people's need to feel they have a home, a familiar place (Pierce *et al.*, 2003) with psychic security (Porteus, 1976). Extant research into the SE offers clues as to what these human needs might be, and how users are drawn to different platforms.

Motivations for users to engage in the SE are primarily economic, ideological, environmental, or social (Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Tussyadiah, 2015). Like other areas of the economy, the SE features users who self-identify as budget-conscious or utility maximizers (Hwang and Griffiths, 2017). Others use the SE to express a certain ideological self-identity (Hawlitschek *et al.*, 2018), e.g., anti-capitalism, caring for the collective good (Bucher *et al.*, 2016), sustainability and environmentalism, living an asset-light lifestyle (Böcker and Meelen, 2017), or ethical and ecological citizenship (Schrader, 2007). These motivations reflect critical views of excessive consumption, growing environmental awareness, and values of universalism and benevolence (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Hawlitschek *et al.*, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2015). Additionally, younger consumers who self-identify as technologically-savvy are sometimes drawn to modern consumption mechanisms so they can enjoy 'bragging' rights among their peers (Chen *et al.*, 2020).

In the SE, users driven by cost-savings and increased utilitarian value (Hwang and Griffiths, 2017) will sense belongingness with targets (e.g., brands, platforms, services) that enable them a sense of effectance over the outlay of resources like time and money. Those users who want to feel like they are 'green' or eco-friendly (Schor, 2014) will be drawn to

targets that enable them to sense effectance over reductions in demand for new products (Schor, 2014) or natural resources (Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2015); and those who identify as pro-social (Möhlmann, 2015) may feel belongingness and effectance with community platforms (Hamari *et al.*, 2015) like toy libraries (Ozanne and Ozanne, 2011). Regarding the engagement literature, motivations for the development of iPO are satisfied through factors such as alignment in values (Chan *et al.*, 2014), attitude (Kumar *et al.*, 2010) and brand value (Leventhal *et al.*, 2014).

Causes of iPO

While the motivators for iPO explain why iPO develops, there are also three interrelated causes (Jussila *et al.*, 2015) or 'routes' (Pierce *et al.*, 2001) that explain how iPO develops – *controlling the target, coming to intimately know the target*, and *investing the self in the target* (Pierce *et al.*, 2001, 2003). These causes come about from interactions with, or usage of, the target (Jussila *et al.*, 2015). 'Controlling the target' and having a sense of command and possession reflects a user's ability to exert control, enabling people to experience pleasure through a feeling of "being the cause" for change (Pierce *et al.*, 2003, p.89). 'Coming to intimately know the target' derives from an individual's ongoing association with, and growing knowledge of, the target (Pierce *et al.*, 2001). Finally, because people feel they own what they produce, create, or labour over, 'investing the self in the target' involves people investing their attention, time, and effort into their interactions (Jussila *et al.*, 2015).

Boundary conditions for what can become a target of iPO play a part in these interactions. As established earlier, targets may be either tangible or intangible in nature (Danckwerts and Kenning, 2019; Fritze *et al.*, 2020; Pierce *et al.*, 2003). Hence, platforms or brands, services offered, or personal reputations and ratings are all potential targets of iPO (e.g., Fritze *et al.*, 2020). A target's attributes like its availability, accessibility, visibility,

attractiveness, openness, and manipulability are also critical for users' development of iPO (Pierce and Jussila, 2011, p.68).

In the extant engagement literature, these target attributes are reflected in the various factors that have been asserted as antecedents. By integrating PO theory, we argue factors like customer satisfaction, service quality, system functionality, and brand innovativeness all provide users an opportunity to control the target (e.g., through feedback or rating mechanisms), invest themselves, and come to intimately know the target (e.g., through the ability to be able to customize a personal profile). For example, trust building mechanisms (e.g., ranking systems; Brown *et al.*, 2014) offer avenues for users to invest themselves and control the target. Accountability for what happens to a user's rating has implications for what happens to themselves. For example, Uber riders and drivers may moderate their behavior to maintain a favorable rating (such as drivers who provide free candy). Hence, platform functionality and effectiveness (both browser-based and app-based), service offering, user interface, and ranking systems are all potential targets of iPO.

In short, the human needs that drive iPO in the SE include economic, environmental, social, and ideological motivations (Böcker and Meelen, 2017; Schor, 2014; Tussyadiah, 2015). The need for self-identity (e.g., pro-social, environmentalist), self-efficacy (e.g., access to otherwise inaccessible experiences), and belongingness (e.g., sites for the eco-friendly) drive iPO to emerge over a myriad of targets including brands, service offerings (Fritze *et al.*, 2020), rankings, and service outcomes (Pierce and Jussila, 2010). iPO surfaces during interactions with the target and reflect a user's ability to control, intimately know, and invest themselves into the target.

Extant literature tells us the consequences of iPO are motivational, attitudinal and behavioural (Jussila *et al.*, 2015; Pierce and Jussila, 2011). Motivational consequences include an intrinsic desire to nurture and protect the target. Attitudinal consequences include

satisfaction (Jussila and Tuominen, 2010) and commitment (Pierce *et al.*, 2009), and behavioral consequences include competitive resistance and increased willingness to pay (Fuchs *et al.*, 2010). However, in the same way the antecedents to engagement are better explained with the lens of PO, we argue these PO consequences reflect an actor's positive engagement disposition and activities.

Further, as iPO reflects an individual's sense of ownership, engagement within a dyad of brand and user manifests. Consequences might include brand love, loyalty, protecting one's personal ranking, contributing to improving a service offering, or demonstrating personal knowledge or expertise through posts. This type of engagement is desirable for those platforms that control user interactions closely and rely on high engagement from individuals (e.g., Uber or Prosper in Figure 1). However, if a platform relies (solely or additionally) on collective engagement by a community of users, cPO must first emerge, explained next.

Collective Psychological Ownership (cPO) and actor engagement behaviours

cPO is defined as "the collectively held sense (feeling) that this target of ownership (or a piece of that target) is collectively 'ours'" (Pierce and Jussila, 2010, p.812). cPO is socially constructed through group processes and transcends individual cognition and affect through collective "acquisition, storage, transmission, manipulation, and use of information" (Gibson, 2001, p.122). cPO is particularly important in those SE platforms that do not closely control interactions and rely on user generated content and group-level phenomena (Arnould *et al.*, 2006), e.g., Stackoverflow and GardenTags (Figure 1). cPO results in shared (i.e., common) feelings, knowledge, and beliefs about the target of ownership, and both individual and collective rights (e.g., use and control) and responsibilities (e.g., protection) towards the target.

cPO emerges through three stages (Pierce and Jussila, 2010). First, iPO must first manifest over the target as individuals gain a sense that 'this is mine' and the target becomes

part of their extended self (Pierce *et al.*, 2018). Two important variables influence this stage. If an individual actor tends to value collectivism over individualism, they tend toward a sense of belongingness so are more likely to develop cPO (Pierce and Jussila, 2010). Social identity motives play a part in an individual's need to identify with a particular community; if the collective identity is appealing to them, cPO will be more likely to emerge. However, not all actors who experience iPO will necessarily also experience cPO.

Second, the individual recognizes others also have iPO over the target, thereby generating a sense that the target 'is ours.' Two or more individuals need to shift their reference from the self to the collective for cPO to emerge (Pierce and Jussila, 2010; Pierce *et al.*, 2018). Collective realization of 'our-ness' is the key difference between iPO and cPO (Kumar, 2019; Pierce and Jussila, 2010), and generates the sense that a group of individuals is bounded, interdependent, and has some purpose larger than the individual (Pierce *et al.*, 2018). Third, agreement emerges amongst collective members of a shared cognitive and affective state over the target of cPO, hence the target becomes "part of the group's 'extended sense of 'us''" (Pierce and Jussila, 2010, p.813). Through this transition, a sense of group-level phenomenon emerges as individuals acquire, store, transmit, manipulate, and use information. The 'ours' helps in exercising control over the target of ownership, resulting in part from the group portraying its social identity as a collective to others (Kumar, 2019).

Causes of cPO

Beside the stages of emergence of cPO described above, like iPO, a combination of causes enables the emergence of cPO. These causes are collective or shared versions of the causes of iPO, namely: *collective recognition of shared control over the target; collective recognition of shared intimate knowing of the target;* and/or *collective recognition of the shared investment of different group members' selves into the target of ownership* (Dawkins *et al.*, 2017; Pierce

and Jussila, 2010, Pierce *et al.*, 2019). The comparative strength of the collective state of cPO is influenced by the degree to which each member of the group has travelled down one or more causes of ownership and the degree to which there is a collective understanding that 'we' have travelled down these causes together.

Collective recognition of shared investment is possible through platform functions that enable direct interactions between peers, and a sense of shared collective control and agency. For example, Fitzmaurice *et al.* (2020) found the TaskRabbit platform helps users build reliable social networks comprising people they would otherwise have never met. In the 'talking together time bank' (a knowledge-based time bank where SE users share their knowledge of the English language), the shared sense of belonging to the community, the critical mass of social influence, and the functionality of the platform empowers the group. In the engagement literature, causes of cPO would include factors like rewards and recognition offered to community members (Chan *et al.,* 2014) and platform functionality that allows interaction, sharing, and social contagion (Bowden *et al.*, 2017; Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2019). SE literature demonstrates role fluidity in P2P networks also increases the propensity for positive peer engagement behaviours (Lin *et al.*, 2019), e.g., someone who rents out their spare room through Airbnb who also sometimes rents someone else's spare room through Airbnb. Through role fluidity, actors experience a sense of shared intimate knowing and investment, by 'walking in the others' shoes.' Additionally, peers who proactively and creatively engage with one another go beyond what is expected or required, e.g., the Airbnb host who provides complimentary wine and tourist advice.

Targets of cPO have unique attributes (Pierce and Jussila, 2010). Where targets of iPO reflect a person-object relationship, targets of cPO additionally enable person-to-person interactions (Pierce and Jussila, 2010). In the engagement literature, platforms that enable P2P socializing (Grönroos and Voima, 2013) enable the development of community norms,

attitudes, a shared lexicon (Longmore, 1998) and voluntary assistance of others (Breidbach *et al.*, 2014; Brodie *et al.*, 2011). Drawing on cPO theory, these platforms arouse and satisfy (both individual and collective) needs for social identity, and permit collective controlling and empowerment (Jussila *et al.*, 2015) through the integration of combined resources (Brodie *et al.*, 2019).

Hence, targets of cPO in the SE must 1) be accessible and capable of being influenced by all peers, 2) offer some sort of social esteem to satisfy people's need to express their self-identity, 3) be manipulable to enable direct P2P interactions and socializing, and 4) be hospitable and open enough to enable a sense of shared belongingness.

Examples of iPO and cPO as antecedents to engagement in the SE

We now provide three brief examples to illustrate our dynamic PO-Engagement Framework (Figure 2). These examples reflect the three major types of platforms depicted in Figure 1: those that rely on dyadic engagement for optimal success; those that rely heavily on collective engagement; and those that require both dyadic and collective engagement.

First, imagine someone who does not own a car, prefers not to rely solely on public transport, and likes to self-identify as an efficiency-seeking, technologically savvy individual. In response, she installs the Uber app on her smartphone due to the platform's value proposition of affordable, efficient micro-transport solutions. In her interactions with Uber, she invests herself and comes to intimately know the app and service – its map functions, payment options, rating system, etc. She gains a sense of iPO over her reputation, the app and the platform, and engagement behaviors begin to manifest (e.g., brand love – "I love Uber"). However, she does not desire, nor gain, a sense of community with other users – either drivers or fellow riders. The app prevents sharing of reviews or experiences beyond a simple rating of each ride. Through time, she becomes proud of her high rating and her engagement iteratively grows

further. She loyally only chooses Uber and shares positive WOM with her friends. Nevertheless, she remains focused on her own individual outcomes of using Uber and what it does for her (e.g., "I am always polite to the driver because I want to protect MY ranking"). Hence, no sense of cPO emerges.

In contrast, second, imagine a person who starts to surf the GardenTags platform (gardentags.com). The platform offers "free plant advice, inspiration and tasks" from experienced gardeners. The needs that initially draw her to the platform are her self-identity as a keen but novice gardener, wish to take control over learning about gardening, and need for a home for this learning. In short, she signs up for the site due to the strong correlation between her needs and the site's promise. Through her early interactions with the platform, she grows to appreciate its functionality and develops iPO over some targets (e.g., "I can personalize MY profile," "This site feeds MY passion for gardening," "GardenTags is really helping ME develop MY gardening skills"). Her positive engagement disposition and activities within the dyad of her and the platform manifest. Her engagement continues to grow from just reading and 'liking' others' posts, to starting threads and actively posting photos and questions. As her level of engagement grows, she experiences brand love ("I love GardenTags") and a high degree of trust ("I always get a reliable answer to my problems from GardenTags") towards the brand.

As other users (gardeners) more actively interact with our novice gardener, she becomes aware these others share her self-identity ("WE are all gardeners"), share control over interactions ("WE start new, interesting threads"), and jointly intimately know the platform ("This is where WE go to find answers for questions"). P2P socializing is enabled through the site's functionality and users experience cPO over the collective 'target' (i.e., "OUR GardenTags community"). Both individual and shared values are satisfied, and the community collectively gains access to a mass of shared resources. Collective engagement activities

manifest as group-level processes that benefit individuals, the community, and the platform.

Third and finally, someone wants to make some extra money and has a spare bedroom they would like to let short-term. She has a need for self-efficacy and belongingness, so wants to carefully control who might stay. She is drawn to Airbnb due to its goals of connection and belonging, prioritizing hosts, and building a community (Airbnb.com). She registers with the site, creates an authenticated profile, and curates attractive images and a compelling description of her spare bedroom and neighbourhood. Through her interactions with the platform, she is impressed with its functionality, service quality, and trust-building measures. Causes of iPO include her ability to control the target through closely monitoring and investigating prospective guests, and creating the image she wants of herself and her accommodation. In response, her positive engagement disposition and activities targeted towards Airbnb emerge including brand love and trust and loyalty towards Airbnb, to the degree that she also chooses to stay in Airbnb accommodation when she travels. Her interactions with others, both guests and other hosts, makes her aware of the community of travellers, their shared identity and investment towards one another. The functionality of the site enables more than simple ranking, and her reviews of places she stays move beyond short descriptions to fulsome recommendations of what she thinks others would enjoy, like certain local restaurants and attractions. As a host, she voluntarily messages her previous guests to wish them well.

These three examples illustrate how platform users are initially drawn to a platform that satisfies their needs. Through their interactions they become aware of investing themselves, controlling, and coming to know the target of their iPO, reflected in factors like the quality or outcome of the service offering, the brand meaning, or the platform's functionality. A user then manifests positive engagement towards the brand. If that engagement reinforces iPO causes further, their engagement disposition and activities increase further again. If the platform functionality enables it, the user may become aware of the community of users on the platform

with shared identity, knowing, and self-investment. cPO emerges and with it, collective engagement. As a result, the user engages in activities intended to benefit the collective as well as the platform and themselves. We now conclude with the contribution and implications of the study, and a broad set of avenues for future research that synthesizes PO and engagement.

Conclusion

Theoretical Contribution

This study makes four main contributions. First, we offer a dynamic PO-Engagement Framework (Figure 2) that reflects the interlinked relationship between iPO and cPO as antecedents to dyadic and collective engagement in the SE. Despite the popularity of the PO and engagement theories amongst marketing scholars, little attention has been given to understanding their relationship. Through theory synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020), this study brings clarity to how and why factors such as attitude, experience (Kumar *et al.*, 2010; Roberts and Alpert, 2010), satisfaction (Bergel *et al.*, 2019), service quality (Islam *et al.*, 2019), brand innovativeness (Leventhal *et al.*, 2014), and alignment in platform and personal values (Chan *et al.,* 2014) act as antecedents to engagement. We assert these factors either satisfy human needs for self-identity, self-efficacy and belongingness, or act as causes for the development of a user's iPO over a target of ownership (Pierce *et al.*, 2003). iPO manifests as a user's positive engagement disposition and activities towards a brand, within a dyad of user and platform. Moreover, engagement can iteratively grow as engagement activities act as causes for further growth in iPO.

Engagement within a dyad emerges as activities like brand love, loyalty, co-developing service offerings, and increased purchasing intentions. In the SE, dyadic engagement relationships are beneficial to those platforms that closely control user interactions (e.g., Uber) and have relatively little reliance on P2P socializing and community-oriented sharing. In

contrast, through their interactions with others a user may become aware of shared control, intimate knowing of, and investment in, the target, leading to cPO. A group of users experiencing cPO (in addition to iPO) feels a target is collectively 'OURS' (Pierce *et al.*, 2019). Synthesizing the cPO and collective engagement perspectives explains why and how factors such as platform functionality (Chan *et al.,* 2014) that enables person-to-person interactions (Grönroos and Voima, 2013) act as antecedents to collective engagement. A user experiencing collective engagement enacts behaviors that aim to benefit not just themselves and the platform but also the broader user community, e.g., through community-oriented sharing of recommendations, reviews, assistance, expertise, and knowledge.

By extension, our second theoretical contribution is a fresh conceptualization of how different types of SE platforms can be categorized. This categorization depends on the type of user engagement that is optimal for a platform, and the degree of control the platform takes over peer interactions. Platforms that closely control peer interactions, the service offering, and functions such as membership and payments, generally thrive with high degrees of engagement within a dyad of user and platform. In contrast, for a platform that assumes relatively little control over P2P interactions, collective engagement is particularly beneficial, reflected in engagement activities like generation of user content and P2P socializing. Between these two extremes, some platforms (like Airbnb) need a mix of both types of engagement to perform optimally.

Third, this study offers increased clarity of what targets of PO potentially serve as gateways to engagement. The engagement literature predominantly conceptualizes brands as engagement foci. However, we highlight tangible and intangible objects serve as targets of iPO (e.g., personal ratings, the service offering itself, the impact of the service offering, etc.). Hence, while a focal brand may be the beneficiary of an actor's positively valenced disposition and engagement activities, we argue a user first experiences iPO over a target which may not

be the brand itself but instead be associated with the brand. By extension, dyadic engagement manifests from iPO, caused by a user's ability to invest themselves and control and come to intimately know the target. Collective engagement manifests from cPO, where multiple users develop collective recognition of shared investment, control and knowing of the target (Pierce *et al.*, 2019). Hence, the nature, functionality, and characteristics of targets of ownership contribute directly to the emergence of PO and subsequent manifestations of engagement.

Fourth, for PO theory in marketing, this study offers a dual-level (individual and collective) perspective of PO in the SE. Extant studies are restricted to access-based consumption (e.g., Danckwerts and Kenning, 2019; Sinclair and Tinson, 2017) and (implicitly) adopt an iPO conceptualization. In contrast, this study explores P2P contexts and cPO, which is critical for driving P2P socializing and sharing. We particularly highlight the dual person-object and person-to-person nature of targets of cPO (Pierce and Jussila, 2010) that enable a shared sense of identity, effectance and belongingness.

Managerial implications

This study presents some important implications for managers and others within the SE. First, managers should understand that targets of iPO attract people based on their human needs for self-identity, self-efficacy, and/or belongingness. Satisfying one or more of these needs and driving users to invest themselves and come to control and know the target (Pierce *et al.*, 2001) is the basis of all subsequent engagement by users. Users in the SE can self-identify in numerous ways such as being budget conscious (Hwang and Griffiths, 2017), caring for the collective good (Bucher *et al.*, 2016), or being ethically or ecologically minded (Schrader, 2007). Hence, understanding user goals, values, and motivations is critical to understanding what might emerge as a target of PO. This should be reflected in value propositions and business models. For example, a user who self-identifies with an asset-light lifestyle will also

have a need for self-efficacy and/or belongingness associated with reducing consumerism. Indeed, the PO-Engagement Framework could be used to map user experience. Further, based on our categorization of platforms in Figure 1, each type implies different priorities, resource requirements, business model implications, and profit generating potential. Therefore, managers need to define carefully what kind of platform they want.

Once users are drawn to a platform, managers must carefully consider technical functionality in terms of generating iPO. This observation also applies to managers or marketers for other types of businesses, especially those wanting to drive repeat purchasing and loyalty on e-commerce sites, managers of online brand communities, and managers of review platforms like TripAdvisor. Platforms and their technical functions (as targets) must be manipulable (Pierce and Jussila, 2010) so a user can gain a sense of control, e.g., through personalizable profiles, the ability to vote content up or down, or make recommendations to others. Users have considerable control if they can co-create and co-design offerings (Fehrer *et al.*, 2018a; Möhlmann, 2015), and investing the self in the target will be generated through gamification like rewards, recognition, points systems, etc. Additionally, targets must be socially desirable to satisfy a user's self-identity, to experience belongingness, and for a sense of community to emerge into cPO. Hence, understanding the causes of what leads to a sense of 'mine' (iPO) or 'ours' (cPO) is an important consideration for managers.

As targets of cPO enable both person-object and person-to-person interactions, P2P socializing must be easy to achieve, and provide positive user experiences so a sense of collective identity, effectance, and belongingness can be stimulated. This approach is especially important where platform managers are trying to attract users with a strong sense of collectivism, e.g., community-oriented platforms such as toy libraries. However, free communication is desirable on the proviso that users can achieve a sense of shared control and psychic safety through functions like abuse reporting. Again, gamification involving earned

access rights may assist here, while also generating an individual and shared sense of control over the target.

Finally, the PO-Engagement framework has implications for others in the SE. Specifically, those operating in the gig economy are advised to be mindful of how they curate themselves and their offering. In the same way that platforms must be cognizant of being responsive and carefully aligning values with others, those operating in the gig economy must do the same within the confines of their listing and profile, e.g., offering recognition for repeat users.

Suggestions for future research

Finally, we conclude with an extensive set of suggestions for future PO-Engagement research (Table 1) that we assert offers many fruitful avenues for scholars. As this paper is conceptual, empirical research is needed to validate, extend, contradict, and re-contextualize the PO-Engagement Framework. We present a suggested future research agenda in six broad areas, and provide numerous potential research questions. These broad areas reach beyond the SE to include both other online contexts (e.g., brand communities and e-commerce sites) and offline contexts.

First, online platform user characteristics offer compelling research opportunities including the traits, demographic and cultural elements, emotional state, and phenomenological interpretations of ownership and/or value that influence PO-Engagement development. The role of emotions and cultural differences (e.g., collectivist versus individualistic societies) would be especially interesting to explore. Additionally, do online 'lurkers' not develop PO, and what are the benefits that those experiencing cPO realize?

Second, the characteristics of the platforms themselves need attention, especially regarding target attributes and platform functionality that enhance or drive PO-Engagement

development. For example, interesting avenues include what technological functions act as targets for individual versus collective PO, in e-commerce, on SE platforms, and what attributes might prevent 'lurking,' switching, or disengagement by online users? Importantly, does ownership or geographical scope impact the development of PO-Engagement? For example, is a site that is considered local rather than global more likely to engender PO, or is a platform owned by a global brand like Amazon or Google more or less likely to prevent PO-Engagement?

Third, empirical research is needed into the influence factors have on the process of PO-Engagement development, such as use patterns, time, and place dimensions. Conversely, is there such a thing as development of disassociative PO-Engagement where a platform is "NOT for ME" or "NOT for US"? More broadly, how PO-Engagement might be encouraged or realized in off-line or blended contexts is worthy of investigation. For example, is it possible to lift engagement by students in universities through triggering a sense of iPO and cPO through Learning Management Systems and in the classroom?

Fourth, what are the consequences of PO-Engagement, such as different types of engagement in dyads or different types in collectives, and on platform users and their social networks and lives? What is the role of interactions in getting others to experience PO-Engagement, and the impact on communication from those that do or do not?

Fifth, are there downsides to PO-Engagement, such as when users become territorial over platforms that they consider to be 'theirs,' and the impact this has on the (potential for) development of PO-Engagement in others? And what is the role of data security in creating a sense of psychic security in online users? Sixth and finally, what are the dynamics of PO-Engagement? How does it unfold in offline contexts and different online contexts, e.g., brand communities, offline toy libraries or community gardens? Can PO-Engagement be used to improve sustainability outcomes in communities or societies? Additionally, is there a life cycle

of PO-Engagement, are the stages of PO-Engagement marked or always iterative and overlapping, and what factors influence – strengthen or weaken – these processes?

Table 1: PO-Engagement future research agenda

Phenomenon or research area	Potential research questions
Online platform user characteristics	• What kind of users/buyers are more/less disposed to developing PO-Engagement? Can patterns of cognitive, affective and behavioural dispositions be found in different actor groups and different online platform types? • What is the role of user demographics (age group, personality, self-identity, experience, life values) and capabilities in development of PO-Engagement dispositions? • Do online 'lurkers' not develop iPO? If so, why; and how could this be overcome? • Are there users who exhibit PO-Engagement in multiple platforms simultaneously? What are the user characteristics, e.g., what is the role or importance of needs for self-identity, self-efficacy and effectance, and belongingness? • What is the role of emotions (e.g., pride, happiness, excitement, fear, anger, sadness) in the development/avoidance of PO-Engagement? How does the intensity of emotions affect PO-Engagement? • What is the role of cross-cultural differences between users, e.g., individualist vs. collectivist cultures? • What are the benefits/value that online SE community members perceive from others' engagement?
Online platform characteristics	• What is the role of platform/service offering characteristics (open, attractive, accessible, manipulative, visible) in the development of PO-Engagement? Is one characteristic more important than others? • How best do SE platforms and online brand communities foster dyadic engagement and/or collective engagement – separately/together? • How do technological/mobile features enable and affect PO-Engagement, e.g., are online elements that evoke emotional reactions (such as audio and visual elements, personalised and interactive content, etc.) useful for strengthening PO-Engagement? In what ways and under what conditions does this occur? What e-commerce features might drive/strengthen PO-Engagement? • How does PO-Engagement develop in SE platforms where shared resources are firm-owned? • What factors can be used to maintain/enhance PO-Engagement, to prevent switching/disengagement, to drive acceptance of platforms new to markets, etc.? How can PO-Engagement be used to mitigate/manage online service failures? • Does platform scope affect PO-Engagement development, e.g., global brands vs. smaller/national/local providers vs. small/large communities vs. open/closed communities? Does ownership of platforms impact PO-Engagement development, e.g., when a smaller brand is owned by a global brand?
PO-Engagement development	• How does PO-Engagement development align with platform usage, i.e., volume, frequency, actual service usage, etc.? What are reasons for alignment and/or misalignment? • What are the time and place dimensions to PO-Engagement development? • Is there such a thing as "dissociative PO-Engagement" on individual and/or collective levels in the SE, i.e., "This platform is NOT for ME," or "NOT for US"? What drives such a phenomenon? • What is the interplay between iPO and cPO on the platform and outside it, i.e., what critical incidents offline might have a significant effect on the development of PO-Engagement, e.g., a bad experience with an Airbnb? How can platforms control for this? • How do SE platform administrators or brand community managers best manage/enhance PO-Engagement development? • How does/could PO-Engagement develop in offline contexts; is PO-Engagement universal to different consumption contexts?

Consequences of PO-Engagement	• Are there different types of dyadic and/or collective engagement on different platforms? How do they correlate with degrees/types of PO? • What are the consequences of PO-Engagement in a SE platform setting? How do they manifest for individual user, online community, online platform, platform or e-commerce business model, etc.? • What are the consequences of PO-Engagement outside online settings, e.g., how do actors communicate with others (e.g., family, friends, strangers) and attract others to their online and offline communities?
Downsides of PO-Engagement in online environments	• What are downsides of PO-Engagement in the SE? How do they manifest for individual users, SE community, SE platform, SE platform business model, community/society, etc., e.g., negative emotions, uncivil or territorial online behaviour, quitting the platform, infringement responses, and diffusion of responsibility? • Are there conditions under which PO-Engagement can backfire, be counter-productive? What are these? Can these situations be forecast, managed, how and by whom? • How important are data security and privacy concerns in the SE for PO-Engagement; can they prevent/inhibit development of PO-Engagement? What can be done to mitigate risks of this occurring?
Dynamism	• What engagement activities feedback on, reinforce, or act as causes of, PO development? How can ongoing growth in PO-Engagement be achieved? • How do different elements of PO-Engagement change over time, in different life situations, e.g., online, offline? Why and in what ways? • What factors strengthen or accelerate development of individual PO-Engagement or influence different stages of development? What other factors beyond investing the self, controlling and coming to know the target influence PO-Engagement development? • What factors strengthen or accelerate the development of collective PO-Engagement or influence different stages of development? What other factors beyond shared control, shared intimate knowing, and shared investment of group members' selves are there? • What factors weaken or delay the development of PO-Engagement? • Is there a lifecycle of PO-Engagement (initiation, growth, decline, ending)? What are other patterns might develop over time, e.g., cycles, ups and downs, etc.?

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