



Master Thesis

An Empirical Investigation of Service Differentiation in Shared Mobility

The mobility sector has seen a fundamental transformation in recent years. Numerous novel business models, including ride-hailing and vehicle sharing services, have proliferated. Providers of shared mobility services face a range of hurdles, including operational (How should I distribute my fleet across the city? How should I design the service area?) and marketing-related (What is the right price point? How do I retain customers?) challenges. This thesis seeks to provide empirical insights on a specific important topic: service differentiation. Should a car-sharing provider offer a differentiated fleet of both budget and premium cars, or do shared mobility users always prefer the cheapest option and do not care about higher quality? Germany's second largest car-sharing provider Free2move (formerly ShareNow) is operating a fleet consisting mainly of Opel cars. In the beginning of 2024, however, the company expanded its fleet in Vienna by launching more premium models from DS Automobiles and Alfa Romeo. This thesis seeks to understand the effects of service differentiation using data from Free2move's fleet expansion in Vienna.

Key tasks and objectives of the thesis

- Getting to know the literature on product and service attributes and differentiation in the sharing economy
- Deciding on and arguing for a suitable methodology to study the phenomenon given the provided data
- Implementing the empirical analyses and evaluating their robustness
- Deriving theoretical and practical implications

Introductory Literature (exemplary)

- Fleura Bardhi, Giana M. Eckhardt, Access-Based Consumption: The Case of Car Sharing, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Volume 39, Issue 4, 1 December 2012, Pages 881–898, <https://doi.org/10.1086/666376>
- Eckhardt, G. M., Houston, M. B., Jiang, B., Lamberton, C., Rindfleisch, A., & Zervas, G. (2019). Marketing in the Sharing Economy. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(5), 5-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919861929>
- Paundra, J., Rook, L., van Dalen, J., & Ketter, W. (2017). Preferences for car sharing services: Effects of instrumental attributes and psychological ownership. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 53, 121–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2017.07.003>

Topics



- Sharing economy
- Service differentiation
- Car-sharing

Methods



- Econometric methods, such as discrete choice modelling, matching, or event studies

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