

Title: Examining the Impact of Access-based Service (ABS) on Psychological Ownership in the Automotive Industry

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During the last decade, the consumption of access-based services (ABS) has increased in popularity as an alternative to conventional ownership (Fritze et al., 2020). Access-based services – in which consumers gain temporary access to goods or services in exchange for an access fee, are changing the relationship between modern consumers and their goods (Morewedge et al., 2021). There is a wide array of such access-based models varying from car or bike sharing programs (Cowheels) replacing private car ownership to online entertainment services (Netflix) replacing albums, and DVDs.

Therefore, current consumption patterns are changing consumer behavior and modifying consumers' perception of ownership, accordingly, disrupting psychological ownership of individual goods – the feeling that a thing is “MINE”. Once, psychological ownership is established over an object, we develop perceived control, invest resources in them, or know them intimately as well as associate key characteristics of our self-identity (Jussila et al., 2015). However, access-based services are impacting psychological ownership by replacing legal material ownership of goods with access-based goods or services in which material goods are being replaced by experiential goods (Morewedge et al., 2021). For instance, replacing material ownership with access-based ownership could disrupt psychological ownership through fractional ownership models, impermanence, collective consumption, more choice for consumers, and new mediums of self-expression whereas the experiential aspect of ABS is impacting psychological through intangibility, reduced evaluability, higher level of categories, and better self-identification (Morewedge et al., 2021). Thus, these changes are fracturing and reducing psychological ownership and the value it accompanies which can have a significant effect on both firms and consumers.

Especially car ownership has been a symbol of higher socio-economic status, and freedom, but the emergence and popularity of ride-hailing access-based services are shifting consumer behavior towards ownership of private cars. For instance, Personal car ownership declines when accessing is a feasible option (Mishra et al., 2015), possibly for those individuals who do not see car ownership as a central part of their identity (Belk, 2014). Despite these shifts in consumer behavior, relatively not much is known about how ABS impacts psychological ownership in the context of automotive industry. With the total value of access-based services predicted to increase by £261 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2022), the need to gain insights into how these potential disruptions in psychological ownership caused by ABS impact both consumers and firms in the automotive industry calls for further research and exploration. To contribute to this emerging area of research, this study aims to examine how access-based services impact psychological ownership in the context of the automotive industry. The research is quantitative and based on a scenario-based experimental approach.

Keywords: access-based services, psychological ownership

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