Community and Connection: Exploring Non-monetary Aspects of the Collaborative Economy Through Recreation Vehicle Use

Anne Hardy

Abstract This chapter explores recreational vehicle users' (RVers) non-monetary transactions and tribal behaviour to broaden our understanding of collaborative consumption. The chapter uses a neo-tribal lens to study RVers and their alignment with the collaborative economy. Using an ethno-methodological approach, it argues that there are functional and affective dimensions that underpin non-monetary transactions. Functional dimensions relate to a desire to ensure that RV travellers are able to achieve their travel goals. The affectual dimensions give RVers a sense of belonging, fellowship within a group, and ultimately an opportunity to realise the freedom they seek to experience through RVing. The chapter suggests that the heavy emphasis given to the Internet as the conduit for the collaborative economy to occur may not always be relevant for all styles of travellers. Moreover, it adds depth to previous research into the collaborative economy by demonstrating that non-monetary collaborative transactions can build a sense of belonging, fellowship and shared sentiment.

Keywords Non-monetary Transactions • Recreational Vehicle Users • Neo-Tribes • Collaboration • Tourism • Sharing Economy

1 Introduction

This chapter contextualizes the collaborative and tribal nature of non-monetary transactions within the collaborative economy. It begins with a literature review of the collaborative economy, focussing on the historical and current role of non-monetary transactions. Following this, the chapter argues that recreational vehicle users (RVers) provide a context through which non-monetary transactions and tribal behaviours that occur within the collaborative economy may be explored. Using an ethno-methodological approach the chapter then analyses the non-monetary transactions of RVers and their alignment with the collaborative

A. Hardy (✉)
Tasmanian School of Business and Economics (TSBE), University of Tasmania, Private Bag 84, Hobart, TAS 7001, Australia
e-mail: anne.hardy@utas.edu.au

D. Dredge, S. Gyimóthy (eds.), *Collaborative Economy and Tourism*,
Tourism on the Verge, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-51799-5_15

economy. In doing so, it contextualises the collaborative nature of travelling within a cultural-historical lens. A significant contribution of this chapter is that it builds upon the positive outcomes of collaborative economy and in doing so, presents an alternative valuing of the non-monetary transactions that take place within the collaborative economy.

In the first chapter of this book it was established that the term collaborative consumption was first coined by Felson and Spaeth (1978, p. 614) as:

> . . .those events in which one or more persons consume economic goods or services in the process of engaging in joint activities with one or more others.

Since then, there has been a small yet highly influential body of work that has emerged in this space, much of which putting heavy emphasis on monetary transactions (e.g. Belk, 2007, 2014) as well as on transactional definitions of the collaborative economy involving sharing, bartering, trading and swapping. This chapter argues that an over-emphasis on the monetary aspects of the collaborative economy runs the risk of omitting the broader "sharing turn" characterised by collaborative communities and tribal behaviour.

The case of recreational vehicles users (RVers) will be used to demonstrate this issue. For the purposes of this chapter, RV use has been defined as:

> . . .a form of tourism where travellers take a camper trailer, van conversion, fifth wheel, slide-on camper, caravan or motorhome on holiday with them, and use the vehicle as their primary form of accommodation (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011, p. 194).

RVers have long been described as highly social, collaborative community builders (Counts & Counts, 2004; Mattingly, 2005). Their highly mobile, yet tribal behaviour is built upon notions of altruistic sharing and trust (Hardy & Robards, 2015) and has been conceptualized using neo-tribal theory. Neo-tribes were first defined by Maffesoli (1996: 98), then more recently conceptualised as:

> . . .networks of heterogeneous persons. . ..who are linked by a shared passion or emotion; a tribe is capable of collective action, its members are not simple consumers, they are also advocates (Cova and Cova, 2002, p. 602).

The characteristics of a neo-tribe have been defined as a grouping that is fluid and ephemeral and based on a state of mind and a lifestyle rather than long-standing involvement (Maffesoli, 1996). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 414) argued that:

> . . .they form, they disperse, they re-from as something else, reflecting the constant shifting identities of postmodern consumers.

Hardy, Wickham, and Gretzel (2013b) propose that neo-tribes can be identified as possessing two characteristics: symbolic and behavioural elements. Symbolic elements include a sense of sharing a lifestyle and being part of community of emotionally connected people. A communal ethic dominates along with a sense of fellowship. The behavioural aspects that define neo-tribes include a physical sharing of space, meeting and performative spaces (Hughson, 2007) and scenes (Bennett, 2011) where individuals group together because of a shared taste. Behavioural

characteristics of neo-tribes also include rituals (Hardy et al., 2013b) and signifiers such as goods which may be consumed (Cova and Cova, 2002).

Arguably, RVers' highly mobile lifestyle and social practices represent a neo-tribe. They have been documented as having a strong sense of belonging, fellowship and sense of worth (Counts & Counts, 2004; Hardy, Hanson, & Gretzel, 2013a; Hardy et al., 2013b; Hardy & Robards, 2015). Moreover, and significantly for this study, the social practices of sharing suggest that RVers are a neo-tribe with non-monetary collaborative consumption at its core. Counts and Counts (2004) argued that RVers' sharing habits are often a necessity, as they allow them to maintain their independence, particularly when on the road for extended periods of time, or in remote regions with few services or facilities. Resources which are shared include information on campsites and sharing of information or physical tools in order to perform repairs while on the road. This non-monetary form of sharing differs from economic activities as it also includes sharing that has emotional outcomes; studies have illustrated that the social glue of this highly mobile neo-tribe give RVers a sense of belonging as well as safety (Hardy & Robards, 2015). Despite the location and nature of RVers' non-monetary sharing practices having undergone changes since the development of Web 2.0, there are still significant performative spaces where sharing has occurred for many years and continues to do so.

2 Exploring the Historical Drivers for the Collaborative Economy

There is a persuasive argument for the collaborative economy being a new and technologically facilitated consumption phenomenon. Its rapid and recent growth, particularly in an online context, has been articulated by Owyang (2013) as being the result of three contemporary drivers: (1) societal changes, such as increasing population density and a subsequent desire for sustainability; (2) economic drivers, such as a desire to make money from excess infrastructure or unused/idling assets that one may own, such as property; and (3) technology, such as the development of social media and networking which have largely been a result of the development of mobile Internet devices including tablets and smart phones. Importantly however, there are also other drivers, which include a desire to travel more sustainably and to reduce negative impacts on the environment (Tussyadiah, 2015), and a desire to feel a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded people (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Galbreth, Ghosh, & Shor, 2012; McArthur, 2015; Närvänen, Kartastenpää, & Kuusela, 2013; Tussyadiah, 2015). Dredge and Gyimóthy (2015) add that the rapid uptake of the collaborative economy is a consequence of the recognition of problems inherent in the traditional tourism industrial system. These include unused assets; barriers to investment; large amounts of regulation; high transaction costs; and the use of social media combined

with a desire for personalised and alternative forms of tourism and authentic experiences (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). The use of social media has recently received so much attention that the collaborative economy has been defined as denoting the:

> . . .use of Internet technologies in an effort to connect distributed groups of people to make better use of skills, goods and other useful things (Stokes, Clarence, & Rinne, 2014, p. 10).

Similarly, Belk (2014) also emphasised the importance of technology and argued that sharing and collaborative consumption have two aspects in common: (1) their use of temporary access non-ownership models of utilizing consumer goods and services and (2) their reliance on the Internet, particularly websites that allow users to communicate and share content with each other (Carroll & Romano, 2011). This heavy reliance on the Internet as a conduit through which the collaborative economy occurs has also been advocated by Hamari et al. (2015, p. 3), who defined collaborative economy as:

> . . .peer-to-peer activity of obtaining, giving, sharing or gaining access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services.

Indeed, Grassmuck (2012) argues that the Web 2.0 era has facilitated what may be defined as the 'sharing turn.'

However, while there is no doubt that the Internet has resulted in the formation of a variety of new ways of monetary based sharing, the Internet has also facilitated older forms of non-monetary sharing on a larger scale (Belk, 2014) such as bartering and the trading of information. These forms of sharing are evident in ancient guidebooks that make suggestions of the best places to visit and the practices of hosting guests in one's home. They do not involve the Internet or an exchange of money and as such may be considered significant antecedents to the modern collaborative economy. Importantly, these historical antecedents suggest that engagement is not just about money. More recently the sharing of photographs and experiences upon one's return from their vacation, serve not only as a tool for recounting adventures and activities, but also allow travellers to share their new-found knowledge of regions and traveller resources.

Non-monetary exchanges have also allowed travellers to actively avoid capitalist systems. The counter-cultural hippies in Amsterdam in 1970s have been documented as gathering in groups, so as to escape the norms of society, institutions and rules. These young travellers from different walks of life coalesced for short periods of time in Amsterdam to share their desire to escape from their routine life at home. Their exchanges of goods, where money was tight and drugs were highly valued, were recorded as being non-monetary and akin to being 'hunter-gatherer-like' (ten Have, 1974). Bartering and exchanges were recorded as well as social engagement (ten Have, 1974). Significantly, this early research concurs with research that reveals similar motivational factors for engaging in the collaborative economy, including economic motivations such as a desire to save money (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015) or to 'buck the capitalist system' (McArthur, 2015). Moreover, it appears that at the core of these

collaborative interactions was a desire to socialise, identify with like-minded travellers and experience a sense of belonging—all akin to the concept of the neo-tribe.

Recently, non-monetary exchanges within the collaborative economy have been explored by McArthur (2015) who argued that economic explanations for the growth of sharing behaviour are inadequate for explaining the success of platforms where no money changes hands. Similarly, Tussyadiah (2015) suggested that the collaborative economy is not just about money but rather people desiring a new mode of travel. However, what both authors demonstrate is an ahistoric view of collaborative consumption. The historical existence of non-monetary transactions within the tourism industry suggests that travellers have engaged in sharing and altruistic behaviour for many years. The neo-tribal lens, which suggests that neo-tribes have affective outcomes (Hardy & Robards, 2015) such as sense of fellowship, belonging and being part of a community of like-minded individuals, provides a cogent lens through which the reasons for engagement in the collaborative economy may be explored. The provision of a contextualised understanding of the collaborative economy will arguably provide rich socio-historical insights into its recent surge in popularity.

2.1 Conceptualising the Recreational Vehicle Market

Recreational vehicle users (RVers) have been defined as highly mobile travellers who are motivated by the desire to experience freedom from the routine of their home life (Counts & Counts, 2004; Fjelstul & Fyall, 2015; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Mings & McHugh, 1995; Onyx & Leonard, 2005). In Europe, Australia and the United States, RVers are stereotypically regarded as retirees, called Grey Nomads in Australia or Snowbirds in North America, who travel for extended periods of time (Counts & Counts, 2004; Onyx & Leonard, 2005). However, other groups also exist, including the family market, and those who travel in Caravan or RV club groups and stay only in free or low cost destinations (known as Boondockers in North America and Freedom Campers in Australia). What differentiates this form of travel from others is that the accommodation remains the same for the duration of the vacation and is pre-purchased when the RV is bought. This in itself differentiates the economic structure of this market from others. Consequently, once on the road the expenditure of RVers on 'accommodation' such as campsite fees, appears minimal in contrast to other tourism sectors. This is accentuated by the fact that RVs are now commonly equipped with toilets, showers, grey and black water storage. This facilitates traveller's ability to free camp in locations that have no campsite fee, such as roadside pullovers, national parks and public reserves. Consequently, the RV market is often mistakenly regarded as low income and given a low priority by many local, regional, state and even national tourist organisations. Perhaps for this reason information for these travellers is sparse,

particularly considering the size of the RV market. In the United States, it is estimated that 8.9 million households now own an RV and the industry is worth $37 billion (Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, 2014). Similarly in Australia, whose entire population is 23 million, there were 528,869 caravan and campervan registrations at January 2013 (BDO, 2014).

Fellowship that transcends societal status, along with an aspiration for a transformative journey, has been documented as being an essential affective outcome of RVing by researchers (Gretzel, Formica, & Fesenmaier, 2005; Hardy & Robards, 2015; Holloway, 2007; Onyx & Leonard, 2005; White & White, 2004; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Viallon, 2012). RVers as a collaborative neo-tribe has been examined in both North America and Australia, both in the pre- and post- Internet era (Counts & Counts, 2004; Guinn, 1980; Mattingly, 2005; Mings & McHugh, 1995; Onyx & Leonard, 2005; Wu & Pearce, 2014). RVers have been noted for their highly collaborative nature such as their daily practices of 'Happy Hour' around the campsite at approximately 5 p.m. and their attendance at rallies and social functions. Their desire to socialise and share experiences, their willingness to help those in need of assistance with their vehicle, and their reliance on sharing information regarding campsites has also been noted (Counts & Counts, 2004; Guinn, 1980; Mings & McHugh, 1995). Prior to the Internet and even at the time of writing, this was done through various channels such as word-of-mouth, different forms of radio including citizens band (CB), club magazines and publications. Word-of-mouth in this community is also paramount; the swapping of information is a social transaction that results in friendships and a spectrum of relational bonds being established but also has a practical role in terms of enhancing RVers safety while on the road (Counts & Counts, 2004; Hardy & Robards, 2015). To date however, it appears that RVing has not been explored as a form of collaborative consumption.

Arguably, the introduction of the Internet has resulted in the highly collaborative nature of RVing becoming far more visible to the outsider. The extent of Internet use by RVers is often misunderstood due to assumptions that Grey Nomads and Snowbirders are older, non-technologically savvy travellers (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011). The reality, however, is that Grey Nomads, Snowbirders and RV club members in particular, are highly connected via web based medium such as GeoWikis, Chat Forums and most recently, sharing platforms such as Park-Sleep, Camplify and My Caravan. Explorations of this market and its reliance on non-monetary transactions provide an opportunity to explore the value of non-monetary transactions that occur within this collaborative economy.

3 Methods

The empirical research that will be presented in this study is the result of four studies derived from ethno-methodological fieldwork that was carried out over the past 9 years (2007–2014) in Canada and Australia on the RV market. Consisting of

four major studies (two in Canada in 2006 and 2007 and two in Australia in 2012, 2013 and 2014), the data presented in this research was collated following 50 - in-depth interviews of RVers in Canada in 2007, 22 in 2006, 22 in Australia in 2011 and 50 in 2013. The Canadian data collection methods included 50 interviews of RVers at Dawson Creek in Northern British Columbia. This township marks the start of the famous Alaska Highway, which is a famous landmark for North American RVers. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and were carried out at three RV overnight stops, including two commercial RV parks and one free camping site.

The Australian data set included semi structured interviews that were conducted at three RVing destinations on the East Coast of Tasmania, Australia. Like the Canadian research, differing campgrounds were selected as study sites to reflect the variety of overnight RV sites and styles. Thus, interviews were conducted at one of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service camping grounds, located within Freycinet National Park, a free camping site maintained by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, and a low cost overnight camping area comprising one sports field in a small town.

In addition to interviews, netnographic research (Kozinets, 2010) was conducted to gain further insights into the culture of RVing with pets. Using the principles outlined by Kozinets, two popular RVing forums used by RVers were selected for Canada and Australia: Good Sam's (http://www.goodsamclub.com/forums/) for Canada and the Caravaners Forum (http://caravanersforum.com/) for Australia. In Australia, the Caravan and Motorhome on Tour forum (http://www.candm.com.au/forum/) was used and explored RVers' discussions regarding the iconic outback road, called the Oodnadatta Track, in South Australia.

In all stages of research, the essence of collaborative consumption in the context of RVing was explored. In particular, the elements of sharing and distribution were given focus. While the notion of collaborative economy did not form the original reason for the data collection, the themes that emerged from the transcriptions and subsequent analysis through NVivo clearly demonstrated that RVing is a highly mobile form of tourism that has had a significant and long standing practice of non-monetary collaboration. It was this observation that formed the basis for the current chapter.

4 Findings

In order to explore the value of non-monetary transactions, the data analysis first explores the collaborative spaces and platforms (physical and virtual) where transactions occur and then discusses their value to RVers.

4.1 Performative Spaces for Collaboration

At the campgrounds in North America and Australia where the research was conducted, collaboration was clearly evident at certain times of the day. Most evident was around 5 p.m., when Happy Hour would begin. Happy Hour is a tradition amongst RVers that has been documented by numerous authors (Counts & Counts, 2004; Hardy & Robards, 2015). Around 5 p.m. RVers would assemble outside their RV and have a pre-dinner drink or snack. It is during this time that high levels of socialisation would occur within and between groups of travellers. RV specific language was evident during this time; terms such as *rigs* (the RV), *boondocking* (the name for free camping in North America), *sani dumps* (waste disposal stations) and *hook ups* (where RVs can source electrical power) could be heard. During this time, it was commonplace to hear RVers comparing and evaluating campsites, sharing their stories of different destinations, and recommending attractions to visit which have easy access for their RVs. Rituals of introduction were also evident; some participants in our research explained they used number plates as a point from which to start an introductory conversation.

Outside of Happy Hour, the sharing inherent within RVing was also evident at other locations throughout the campground. As RVers passed each other when walking to the amenities block, when cooking their barbecue on the common barbecues, or when meeting each other while filling their water or disposing of their waste, it was commonplace to witness socialising. These encounters provided the opportunity for collaborative exchanges to occur and acted as opportunities to consolidate relational ties.

> Motorhome User (Canada): I meet a lot of people at RV parks . . . Everywhere we go, I find somebody to talk to. Most of them are the same kind of people I am. We mostly chat—see where they are from, what occupation they have done in the past. We try to find some stuff in common—road, weather or fishing trip.

In addition to face-to-face collaboration, our research established the online environment as an additional site of collaborative performance. There are now countless websites, discussion boards, blogs and books that are dedicated to this activity (Caldicott, Scherrer, & Jenkins, 2014; Counts & Counts, 2004; Hardy et al., 2013a). In Australia this information was evident on the Oodanadatta Track Forum. This virtual space was a location where RVers could gather and share information that would assist in their planning. RVers would post to reflect back on their journey, or ask specific questions to assist in their planning.

In addition to face-to-face and online sharing, collaboration within the RVing community also takes place via radio. In Australia and North America, it was not unusual to find RVs that have CB radios. These radios were installed near the dashboard of the RV and could be operated at any time. CB radio utilises channels and RVers would commonly display the channel that they used on the back of their rig.

4.2 Why Non-monetary Collaboration Occurs

When exploring the different performative spaces of collaboration, it became evident that there were different reasons why non-monetary transactions occurred. One set of reasons was related to the function and the practicalities of RVing such as information exchange. The other reasons were related to affective needs, such as a desire to experience a sense of belonging. Thus, the results suggested that the collaborative RVing economy was driven by more than just utilitarian exchange. Moreover, it appeared that different platforms were used to satisfy the differing reasons for collaboration. These will now be explored.

Functional Reasons for Collaboration: Safety The desire of RVers to feel safe and care for their fellow RVers, was determined as an important reason for their collaborative behaviour and was evident at all three performative spaces. Prior to leaving on a new journey RVers relied heavily on the Internet. The Oodanadatta Track Forum (the Oodanadatta Track is an iconic RV route that follows unsealed roads) had many examples of RVers seeking information from fellow travellers in order to assist with their planning. The motivation for these discussions was often expressed as a desire to feel safe and secure in Outback Australia, and a desire to access basic facilities such as food and water.

> Caravanner (Internet Forum): We stayed at Leigh Creek (filled the water tanks there from their excellent dam water) and then overnighted at William Creek and then onto Kulgara (on the Sturt north of Marla). Had one of the best Porterhouse steaks ever at William Creek.

In addition to heat, a great concern to RVers was the possibility of rain, which can result in slippery treacherous, driving conditions. As a consequence, the Oodanadatta Track forum users were regularly seen to be giving advice such as this:

> Tent Trailer User (Australia): Avoid it if wet or chance of rain as sections of it can become very slippery. Recently graded corrugations are not too bad and many sections are quite good gravel road. Just before you travel give a few of the local spots a call to check latest conditions e.g. Maree, William Creek pubs.

During their travels, RVers used CB Radio channels to share information that would enhance safety. In some instances collaboration would extend beyond RVers, to drivers of other types of large vehicles such as trucks:

> Caravanner (Australia): We have a CB radio to communicate with trucks and other travellers as a safety feature.

The function of these radios was to share information about road conditions, weather and other aspects that may affect the RVing experience.

The campground also acted as a performance space where the sharing of important information related to safety, such as weather, road conditions or other aspects affected by seasonality would occur. This performative space allowed RVers to share tips on places they had recently travelled to and those that they considered should be avoided if they recently had become unsafe.

Functional Reasons for Collaboration: Equipment Maintenance and Repair Like safety, collaboration was evident amongst RVers through their sharing of information regarding RV equipment, ongoing maintenance, and on the road-repairs. These functional interactions appeared to be driven by a deeper need to consolidate and build their sense of being a part of the neo-tribe. RVers would discuss how to plan for on the road repairs which may be necessary during travel and what equipment to take on particular journeys. Discussions would regularly centre on the necessary equipment that was required to undertake demanding routes, such as tyres, suspension and even appropriate RV types for differing routes:

> Caravaner (Australia): I am wanting your thoughts. We are thinking of towing our 20 ft Heritage Jayco van with our 100 series 1999 Landcruiser down the Oodnadatta Track next year, and would like to hear from anyone who might have done it and survived, or not survived. Also open to your thoughts. I drive for pleasure no rip doodoo and bust driving, as we enjoy travelling this great country. Awaiting your replies.

> And a reply from a fellow Caravaner, Australia: I noted that you had a Jayco Heritage and would suggest that you invert the axles (put the axles under the springs) if you have not already done so to give you better ground clearance, have good quality A/T light truck tyres and have a dust vent in your roof of the van to stop the dust getting in.

> And a further reply from a Caravaner (Australia): We recently fitted Kumho AT tyres and have just done the Strzeleki, Birdsville and Oodnadatta tracks—all road conditions plus a bit of sand work without the van on. The tyres are great: good grip, quiet, no chipping on rough stone roads. I got them for $300 each in Sydney, fitted and balanced (17 inch rims). This was $100–200 lower cost than MT, BFG etc.

At the campsite, we noted collaboration related to equipment, maintenance and repair. RVers would share information on the different gear they had purchased. Non-monetary transactions and trading was also evident if something went wrong. It was not uncommon to see one RVer assisting another whose vehicle or equipment was faulty. And bartering, trading and the practice of 'paying it forward' were also evident amongst RVers:

> Motorhome User (Canada): Last night we met three couples, two from Canada and one from Florida. We started talking and another couple stopped by. Eight of us pulled out chairs and sat around fire and it got late before we even realized it. I asked a guy what he was doing while he was fixing the RV and we learned something. You can learn a lot of things from people. Sharing on the road is an everyday thing. I learned some time ago how to unhook the car and a few days ago I passed that knowledge on to some other RVer. Last night we were from four different corners of our continent. We keep in touch. We visited a lady we met earlier. There'll be a lot more Christmas cards this year.

This research established that the CB radio was commonly mentioned as a performative space where collaboration regarding equipment maintenance and repair occurred. Again, this fora enhanced a sense of tribal belonging amongst this highly mobile group of travellers.

Functional Reasons for Collaboration: Sharing Travel Information This research established that the three major performative spaces provided

opportunities for collaboration, albeit for different reasons. The online forum played a significant role for RVers to share information on their experiences and assist others with their planning in order to ensure they felt safe. RVers would post questions and these would be answered. It was an asymmetric relationship as some RVers appeared to answer many more questions than they asked themselves. However, once on the road, a more reciprocal exchange was evident, where up to date information on roads, campsites and facilities was shared amongst RVers at Happy Hour and around the campsite.

> Caravanner, Canada: You meet a lot of people from all over the place—pleasant friendly people. We chat about road conditions or traffic. You talk about places that they've been and you haven't. They tell you about road conditions and things like that.

Additionally, while on the road, CB radio allowed real time information to be traded on current road conditions and weather events with fellow RVers or truck drivers.

Functional Reasons for Collaboration: To Save Money and Live and Alternative Lifestyle In recent years, motorhomes and caravans have grown in size and are increasingly self-contained, such that they can store their own water and waste. For large motorhomes, flat ground, wide access and room for turning circles, plus the ability for RVs to avoid having to reverse are common requirements. Access to this information is not always readily available, so the 'bush telegraph' or face-to-face sharing of information was found to be functionally important for these travellers. It also allowed them to share information on free or low cost campsites, that were often not promoted by local visitor information centre.

In addition, this research also revealed that a motivator for collaboration may also be a desire to live an alternative lifestyle. With RVers, this manifested as a desire to escape the norms of society and expectations to retire and leave a routine life. Previously recognised by Counts and Counts (2004) and Hardy and Gretzel (2011), this was evident in the interviews:

> Motorhomer (Canada): I mean we work. So, we typically do that for 20–30 years. We don't move much. . . . I want to experience the people and I want to experience the life outside of my comfort zone if you will and everything I have there.

> Motorhome (Australia): I hate regulation, love freedom.

The desire of these RVers to "buck the system" has synergies with the collaborative economy literature that details participants' desire to live alternative lifestyles and experience alternative, less consumerist experiences (McArthur, 2015). The sharing that they engaged in, either online, in person or via CB radio, allowed them to realise their desire.

The research was conducted prior to the introduction in 2014 and 2015 of sharing communities for RVers, such as Camplify.com and MyCaravan.com. However it did identify a small cohort of travellers in campsites who collaborated

to co-purchase a RV in order to be able to afford to purchase an RV and make it more economically feasible and to avoid the idling of assets.

> Caravaner (Australia): We own this [van] in partnership with some friends.

The rationale for these families engagement into an informal collaborative economy was clearly to save money. This has synergies with motivations for engaging in the collaborative economy, as articulated by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012), Möhlmann (2015) and Tussyadiah (2015).

Affective Reasons for Collaboration: To Experience a Sense of Freedom and Self Actualisation Non-monetary collaboration was found to not only assist in achieving functional outcomes, but it also assisted RVers in achieving affective outcomes. Through all forms of our research, a reoccurring theme was RVers' motivation to experience a sense of freedom through RVing. Sharing and collaboration was seen by them as necessary as it helped RVers to be as independent as possible and escape what many regarded as the shackles of everyday life and routine, and to realise their goals to travel and leave their daily lives behind.

> Caravanner (Australia): Free and easy is me.

> Motorhome (Canada): Freedom, it is my turf. I want to go where I want and when I want.

For RVers, socialisation and the sharing that came with this interaction provided them with the opportunity to meet likeminded people from different walks of life and affirmed their sense of belonging.

Affective Outcomes from Non-Monetary Collaboration: A Sense of Belonging and Being Amongst like Minded People This research concurred with that of others, that RVers derive a great sense of belonging to a large group of like-minded people when on the road (Hardy & Robards, 2015). A reoccurring theme was that RVing was perceived as an activity that resulted in travellers feeling a sense of freedom.

> Caravan owner (Canada): When I travel in my RV I feel free-spirited, alive and excited.

RVers were aware that they shared sentiment and derived a sense of from being with like-minded people. They were both aware and proud of their tribe and its inclusive membership.

> Motorhome (Canada): I think the biggest thing I like is, when you pull into a Walmart, or any campground and you stay, you meet people and you all have the same likes. So, everybody is friends. Automatically you have friends.

The sense of belonging that was so strong amongst many RVers concurs with arguments that the desire to feel a sense of belonging is a central motivator for those who engaging in the collaborative economy (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Galbreth et al., 2012; McArthur, 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013; Tussyadiah, 2015). This aspect is entirely non-monetary and demonstrates the importance of affective outcomes for participants within the broader collaborative economy.

5 Discussion

This chapter has argued that those who engage in the collaborative economy do so in forms that stretch beyond monetary exchanges. Recently, literature on the collaborative economy has focused on the economic and technological aspects of this rapidly growing phenomena (Botsman & Rogers, 2014; Hamari et al., 2015). However, using the example of Recreational Vehicle Users (RVers) this chapter posits that non-monetary collaboration is highly significant and may be categorised as having both functional and affective dimensions. Functionally, RVs are now commonly equipped with toilets, showers and grey and black water storage. Consequently, they demonstrate a high propensity to free camp and as such, often spend relatively little on accommodation. For these travellers, non-monetary collaboration is of significant value because it allows them to share travel tips, source desirable and cost efficient campsites, enhance their sense of safety, and share ideas on equipment, maintenance and repairs, which are necessary when travelling in remote and regional environments. These non-monetary collaborative exchanges present an opportunity to undertake alternative transactions to those that exist in capitalist systems, none of which can be quantitatively measured.

In addition to non-monetary transactions having an important functional value, this research revealed that non-monetary transactions have affective dimensions such as giving participants a sense of belonging, fellowship within a group, and ultimately an opportunity to realise the freedom they seek to experience through RVing. RVers have been documented as neo-tribes (Hardy & Robards, 2015) and this has synergies with Botsman and Rogers' (2010) claim that trust is a key determinant for active participation in the collaborative economy: RVers in this study were found to place great value upon the sense of trust, meaning making, reciprocity and belonging that they gained from being in a large mobile community.

The exploration of the value of non-monetary transactions within the collaborative economy revealed that collaboration occurs in a number of different fora, including RV campgrounds, online sites and also on CB Radio. Interestingly, these transactions take place in the public sphere, away from visitor information centres, or government funded websites. Particularly when planning their trips, this chapter demonstrated that RVers are heavy users of the Internet. In the case of remote and potentially dangerous routes, such as the Oodnadatta Track in Australia, forums and websites devoted to sharing information play a vitally important function, particularly in the planning phases of RVers' travel. This concurred with literature that the Internet plays a highly important role within the collaborative economy (Belk, 2014; Carroll & Romano, 2011; Hamari et al., 2015).

However, the Internet was not the only significant forum for non-monetary collaborative transactions. Face-to-face communication was found to play an equally important role in the collaborative economy of RVers. The use of word-of-mouth communication was evident in campsites, meetings places such as petrol stations and roadside stops. Communication during this time provided RVers with

information on campsites, road conditions and destinations, as well as reassured them that they belonged to a neo-tribe of like-minded people.

While driving on the highway, a third mode of non-monetary collaborative transactions were found to be of great importance to RVers. Despite the rise of the Internet, CB radio remains a common method of communication where information on road conditions and campsites is often shared. The reasons for this continued use of this communication method is likely to be related to a lack of Internet access in remote areas and RVers desire to feel safe and reduce their risks where possible.

The findings pertaining to collaboration suggest that the heavy emphasis given to the Internet as the conduit for the collaborative economy to occur (Belk, 2014; Carroll & Romano, 2011; Hamari et al., 2015) may not always be relevant for all styles of travellers. Significantly, the use of CB radio and face-to-face communication at campsites and meeting places challenges Grassmuck's (2012) proposition that the Web 2.0 era has facilitated a 'sharing turn', as it demonstrates that sharing has existed amongst travellers for many years prior to and following the Web 2.0 era.

Moreover, the research adds depth to the work of Dredge and Gyimóthy (2015) by demonstrating that non-monetary collaborative transactions can build a sense of belonging, fellowship and shared sentiment. These are some of the potentially positive aspects of the collaborative economy that previously have been overlooked.

While writing this chapter, several new sharing websites have opened for RVers, using similar models to platforms such as Airbnb. RVers who are not using their rig are encouraged to rent them out. Other sites advertise areas suitable for RVers to camp at with minimal cost and have been developed for owners to utilise their unused assets. The implications of this are that RVers can now converge and collaborate on multiple online platforms, which may affect their social and tribal dynamics in the future. Further research is now needed to decipher whether these sites have reinforced, enhanced or changed the nature of non-monetary collaborations.

To conclude, this chapter has broadened the discussion of collaborative economy by exploring of the character of non-monetary and non-digital collaborative transactions. It argues that non-monetary transactions play important roles within the collaborative economy and may even lie at the very heart of this phenomenon. Moreover, neo-tribal formations may adopt these collaborative platforms, thus reinforcing the already strong bonds that exist their community.

References

Albinsson, P. A., & Perera, B. Y. (2012). Alternative marketplaces in the 21st century: Building community through sharing events. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 11*(4), 303–315.

Bardhi, F., & Eckhardt, G. (2012). Access based consumption: The case of car sharing. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 881–898.

BDO. (2014). *Caravan and campervan data report: August 2014*. Unpublished report produced for the Caravan, Industry Association of Australia. Stafford Heights, Queensland: Caravan Industry Association of Australia.

Belk, E. (2007). Sharing. *Journal of Consumer Research, 30*(5), 715–734.

Belk, E. (2014). You are what you can access: Sharing and collaborative consumption line. *Journal of Business Research, 67*, 1595–1600.

Bennett, A. (2011). The post-subcultural turn: Some reflections 10 years on. *Journal of Youth Studies, 14*(5), 493–506.

Botsman, R., & Rogers, R. (2010). *What's mine is yours: How collaborative consumption is changing the way we live*. New York: Collins.

Botsman, R., & Rogers, R. (2014). You are what you can access: Sharing and collaborative consumption online. *Journal of Business Research, 67*, 1595–1600.

Caldicott, R., Scherrer, P., & Jenkins, J. (2014). Freedom camping in Australia: current status, key stakeholders and political debate. *Annals of Leisure Research, 17*(4), 417–442.

Carroll, E., & Romano, J. (2011). *Your digital afterlife: When Facebook, Flickr and Twitter are your estate, what's your legacy?* Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

Counts, D. A., & Counts, D. R. (2004). *Over the next hill: An ethnography of RVing seniors in North America* (2nd ed.). Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2002). Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing, 36*(5/6), 595–620.

Dredge, D., & Gyimóthy, S. (2015). Tourism and the collaborative economy: Critical perspectives, questionable claims and silent voices. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *40*(3), 286–302.

Felson, M., & Spaeth, J. (1978). Community structure and collaborative consumption: A routine activity approach. *The American behavioural Scientist, 21*(4), 614–624.

Fjelstyl, J., & Fyall, A. (2015). Sustainable drive tourism: A catalyst for change. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 19*(5), 460–470. doi:10.1002/jtr.2013.

Galbreth, M. R., Ghosh, B., & Shor, M. (2012). Social sharing of information goods: Implications for pricing and profits. *Marketing Science, 31*(4), 603–620.

Grassmuck, V. (2012). The sharing turn: Why we are generally nice and have a good chance to cooperate our way out of the mess we have gotten ourselves into. In W. Sützl, F. Stalder, R. Maier, & T. Hug (Eds.), *Cultures and ethics of sharing*. Inssbruck: Innsbruck University Press.

Gretzel, U., Formica, S., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2005). Tribal marketing for destination websites: A case study of RV enthusiasts. In *Proceedings of the 36th Annual Travel and Tourism Research Association Conference*. Boise, Idaho: Tourism and Travel Research Association.

Guinn, R. (1980). Elderly recreational vehicle tourists: Motivations for Leisure. *Journal of Travel Research, 19*(9), 9–13.

Hamari, J., Sjoklint, M., & Ukkonen, A. (2015, July). The sharing economy: Why people participate in collaborative consumption. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*. doi:10.1002/asi.23552.

Hardy, A., & Gretzel, U. (2011). Why we travel this way: An exploration into the motivations of recreational vehicle users. In D. Carson & B. Prideaux (Eds.), *Drive tourism: Trends and emerging markets* (pp. 194–223). London: Routledge.

Hardy, A., & Robards, B. (2015). The ties that bind: Exploring neo-tribal theory's relevance to tourism. *Tourism Analysis, 20*(4), 443–454.

Hardy, A., Hanson, D., & Gretzel, U. (2013a). Travelling neo-tribes: Conceptualising recreational vehicle users. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, 11*(1–2), 48–60.

Hardy, A., Wickham, M., & Gretzel, U. (2013b). Neglected stakeholder groups: The pitfalls of tourism policy development. *Journal of Corporate Ownership and Control, 11*(1), 348–359.

Holloway, D. (2007). See Australia and die: Shifting discourses about gray nomads. *Tourism, Culture and Communication, 7*, 161–168.

Hughson, J. (2007). A tale of two tribes: Expressive fandom in Australian Soccer's A-league. *Culture, Sport, Society, 2*(3), 10–30.
Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. London: Sage.
Maffesoli, M. (1996). *The time of the tribes*. London: Sage.
Mattingly, G. A. (2005). *Individualistic roamers or community builders? Differences and boundaries among RVers*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Mississippi State University.
McArthur, E. (2015). Many-to-many exchange without money: Why people share their resources. *Consumption, Markets & Culture, 18*(3), 239–256.
Mings, R., & McHugh, K. (1995). Wintering in American sunbelt: Linking place and behaviour. *The Journal of Tourism Studies, 6*(2), 56–61.
Möhlmann, M. (2015). Collaborative consumption: Determinants of satisfaction and the likelihood of using a sharing economy option again. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 14*(3), 193–207. doi:10.1002/cb.1512.
Muniz, A., & O'Guinn, T. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research, 27*(4), 412–432.
Närvänen, E., Kartastenpää, E., & Kuusela, H. (2013). Online lifestyle consumption community dynamics: A practice-based analysis. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 12*(5), 358–369.
Onyx, J., & Leonard, R. (2005). Australian grey nomads and American snowbirds: Similarities and differences. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 16*(1), 61–68.
Owyang, J. (2013). *The collaborative economy: Products, services and market relationships have changed as sharing startups impact business models. A Market Definition Report.* Altimeter. Retrieved August 31, 2016, from http://www.slideshare.net/Altimeter/the-collaborative-economy
Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA). (2014). *RVIA news release: New RVIA research shows record level of RV ownership*. Retrieved August 31, 2015, from http://www.rvia.org/?esid=trends
Stokes, K., Clarence, E., & Rinne, A. (2014). *Making sense of the UK collaborative economy.* Retrieved August 31, 2016, from http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/making-sense-uk-collaborative-economy
ten Have, P. (1974). The counter culture on the move: A field study of youth tourists in Amsterdam. *Mensch en Maatschappi, 49*, 297–315 http://rjh.ub.rug.nl/MenM/article/viewFile/13341/10840.
Tussyadiah, I. (2015). An exploratory study on drivers and deterrents of collaborative consumption in travel. In I. Tussyadiah & A. Inversini (Eds.), *Information and communication technologies in tourism, Proceedings of the international conference in lugano, Switzerland* (pp. 817–830). Legano: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-14343-9_59.
Viallon, P. (2012). Retiree snowbirds. *Annals of Tourism Research, 39*(4), 2073–2091.
White, N. R., & White, P. B. (2004). Travel as transition: Identity and place. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31*, 200–218.
Wu, M., & Pearce, P. (2014). Chinese recreational vehicle users in Australia: A netnographic study of tourist motivation. *Tourism Management, 14*(10), 22–35.