# DIGITAL PLATFORMS CULTURE IN SHARING ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY OF RENTAL GOALKEEPERS IN LENS OF ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

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## INTRODUCTION

Sharing economy (SE) is part of a society movement associated with the diffusion of new technologies, devices and practices of consumption and collaboration (Heinrichs, 2013). At the same time, SE promotes new business models that transcend traditional capitalism into a digital movement disseminated by communities and platforms (Ravenelle, 2017). The combination and diffusion of informational systems, devices and digital platforms integrate a new context related to customs and habits of consumption involving new values, practices, socio-technological and economic-social development (Bradley et al., 2017; Ravenelle, 2017). For Sundararajan (2016) there is a new institutional situation where the platforms with your features and process develop one new culture, he calls it that "Platform Culture".

This new culture created a new and relevant configuration how the exchange actions and interactions between consumer and providers with digital platforms where these digital technologies adapt the workforce and consumption (Sigala, 2019). However, SE studies still fail to determine in a transparent and didactic way what leads the consumer and the provider to connect, interact, share and engage with digital platform-based businesses (Sigala, 2019). Herrmann-Fankhaenek and Huesig (2016) support the idea of an interactive action of the technological interface of the digital platforms from its functionalities, contents, design and characteristics that leads the other actors to participate, relate and create meaning in sharing economy. In this way, digital platform and sharing economy can provide an effort to create alternatives and opportunities to solve job problems in new forms of entrepreneurship (Sundararajan, 2016; Ravenelle, 2017; Sigala, 2019).

Otherwise, sharing economy assumes a process occur that can be characterized by a dynamic of relations of interest and engagement, in which the actions of connections and inductions generated by the digital platforms act before the individuals involved in this transactional experience (Breidbach and Brodie, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). Consequently, digital platforms of bicycles, scooters and shared cars have changed our way of getting around. Platforms like Airbnb and doghero have changed our way of booking vacation or weekend stays for ourselves and our pets. In addition, some of these applications influence our behavior of requesting, connecting, booking, paying, renting and experiencing goods and services (Fraiberger and Sundararajan, 2015). Platform culture supports this community which consumers and providers based in three fundamental forces: i-Integration with digital information and features; ii-connection and relations decentralized; iii-engagement processes induced by hybrid dynamic power between peer-to-peer actions (Sundararajan, 2016). The facts and actions do not happen in isolation but are embedded in networks of relationships that are established with platforms features shape our behavior to rent or buy products and services and develop new kinds of jobs and business based in community or groups that spread this culture in new kinds of entrepreneurship and consumption (Ravenelle, 2017; Sigala, 2019).

In this way, mediation of digital platform in stands out assuming an intermediating and integrating position between human agents. For Lamine (2017) technological artifacts plays a mediator role in dynamic relationships and become a generator of meaning and integration, contemplating an associative debate among those involved in sociotechnical process. This confluence and dynamics can designate a network, which disclose a new event or origin of a narrative, which can explain this entangled manufactured by facts and versions generated by the matter of the object or sometimes manufactured by society (Law, 2004; Latour 2012). These movements can be translated by relations of exchanges and interactions mediated by actions built by a collective dynamic between technological tools and the motivations of individuals, both consumers and providers. This confluence and dynamics designate a network, followed

and fabricated by facts and routines generated by the matter of the object or platform, or hour manufactured by the individuals in a collective process (Czarniawska, 2006; Latour, 2012). "There is need to understand the social plot not only as an effect of human actions, but also through the intervention of other nonhuman agents" (Selgas, 2008, p.9).

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how this process and relationship building and structured by the parliament of things, a hybrid of humans and nonhumans, who together build facts, values and actions (Bussular et al., 2014). On this perspective disclosed the following question: How do happen assemblage of relationships between consumers and providers (humans) when mediated by digital platforms (nonhumans) in sharing economy? To answers this question this study aims to analyze how an assemblage of relationships of exchanges happen between consumers and service providers when mediated by digital platforms in SE.

Thus, one of the main assumptions is based on the attempt to explain that this relationship does not occur and does not exist in isolation from one or another social actor but is generated in conjunction and in a network. In this way things and objects become essential actors in the development of this new digital culture instituted by digital technologies.

The research seeks to contribute to understanding more the power of platform culture in business, entrepreneurship and consumption. For this based on a process of following the actors proposed by Latour (2012), was chosen a case study of Brazilian digital platform - "Rental Goalkeepers", to understand the agency of nonhumans in the assemblage of the relationships of exchanges between consumers and service providers, from the perspective of actor-network Theory. The main contribution is to better analyze the assemblage and relations of involvement the actors in the network, exploring the role of digital platforms in connection, induction, valorization, and mediation (Hamari, Sjöklinta and Ukkonen, 2016; Breidbach and Brodie, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). The mediation and translation processes (elements originating from ANT) will be the main theoretical support for understanding the phenomenon and thus, suggesting new ways to advance the sharing economy and digital platforms studies.

After the introduction, the article will have a brief theoretical review on sharing economy, digital platforms culture, presence of nonhumans in Actor-Network Theory; an explanation of the methodological path chosen, followed by a characterization of the field of research, its practices and the actors involved (human and nonhuman); the stories that emerged from this field and which support (or not) the chosen theory and, finally, the final considerations, the possible contributions and limitations of this research.

### SHARING ECONOMY

Sharing Economy is a current and ongoing phenomenon in the studies on marketing, consumer behavior, organizations and information system. The phenomenon has gained popularity due to the global economic crisis of 2008 and the growing global concerns with the scarcity of natural and environmental resources. An annual amount of US\$26 billion is estimated in the generation of business, based on the technological platforms of sharing (Malhotra and Alstyne, 2014; Martin et al., 2017). This phenomenon has also been called collaborative, sharing or on demand economy, which is altering and influencing the dynamics and traditional paradigms of production, distribution, consumption and supply of products and services through technology-based 'peer-to-peer' firms that connect people in communities or groups to develop business adapting relationship of market and consumption in a more decentralized way (Ravenelle, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). Such changes, associated with the current market demands and the advancement of technologies through fixed and mobile digital technology platforms, has promoted new actions, reactions and social, cultural and economic behaviors. These changes are pushing organizations to seek new paths and processes to understand such events (Belk, 2013; Schor, 2014). In this context, SE is considered a socioeconomic system developed and supported by means of new business models and digital

technology platforms. Thus, organizations and individuals have the focus on transactions, interactions and peer-to-peer connections, which eliminate intermediaries in the process and encompass sharing of physical and human resources, thus providing a configuration of business models different from the traditional economy for a circular or shared (Botsman and Rogers, 2011; Schor, 2014; Bradley and Pargman, 2017).

Similarly, several concepts and terms are used in the literature to characterize the practice of sharing. For instance, some researchers worried about delineating the field and explaining the basilar concepts of SE, seeking to structure ontological elements for the phenomenon (Belk, 2013; Schor, 2014; Martin, 2016). On the other hand, Botsman and Rogers (2011) characterized the field as collaborative consumption or "sharing practices" and Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) simply affirm that consumption and SE are based on the concept of access. In addition, Richardson (2015), Cohen et al. (2014), Belk et al. (2014) and Hamari et al. (2016) sought to map the drivers of social and technical behaviors, which can be molded and mediated by the environment, social relations and technologies, helping better explain the reasons, advantages and disadvantages in SE. More specifically, Möhlmann (2015) justifies the need to understand the endogenous interrelationships and inter-dependencies of the consumption behavior mediated by digital platforms. At the same time, Ravenelle (2017) and Sigala (2019) consider SE with a phenomenon that is adapting consumption and entrepreneurship, through the promise that capitalism becomes more balanced and faired when we have direct access between peers through the digital platforms that assist in this process.

This concepts emphasized for these authors reinforces the idea that the advent of the dissemination of digital platforms supported by internet and mobile devices develop new and varied ways of expressing the identity, relations and personality of groups of individuals and organizations, even when they do not possess something effective, to share or access (Sundararajan, 2016). Thus, the concept and practice in SE lead to reflection on how are individuals communicate and transact associated with the insertion of digital platforms in their daily lives? These individuals become consumers and providers within a virtual-oriented universe, where they may be exposed to identities, lifestyles and more utilitarian or altruistic reasons economically and socially (Hartl et al., 2016; Pera et al., 2016; Sundararajan, 2016).

In this direction, digital platforms can provide an ongoing process that integrates actions, connections, inductions and mediations integrating new interactions, relationship and stimuli with the social or behavioral structures between consumers and providers (Ravenelle, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). These processes are a high impact in capital, technological and social context open new opportunities for everything market and consumption rather than centralized and decentralized institutions where individuals and digital platforms shape these environmental distributed business, services, things, labors, activities and money of the form peer-to-peer. (Sundararajan, 2016; Ravenelle, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018).

However, these sociotechnological experiences are not receiving an attention from academia when related to the understanding of nonhuman factors in SE, which can promote these new practices of consumption and production, for the distribution of products and services in market (De Rivera et al., 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). Thereby, an alternative to explain the advance SE may be related in understanding the relations of human and nonhuman actors within a context of a decentralized and networked society (Castells et al., 2002; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). Considering that we live in this hybrid world in which personalities, cultural perceptions, moral orders, governmentality strategies with objects and technologies can be mixed, to verify how the network of materiality's is constructed, developed and maintained becomes an interesting way to go (Law, 1992; Latour, 2012; Bussular et al., 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the role of technological artifacts in this tangle of actors, which surround and propagate sharing economy and develop this culture and new institutions.

### DIGITAL PLATFORMS CULTURE IN SHARING ECONOMY

Researches and studies the relationships and engagements of individuals and digital platforms with SE is an emerging theme (Bradley and Pargman, 2017; Breidbach and Brodie, 2017). In addition, current technologies are structured to deliver products and services in a more simple and transparent way, intensely and with a focus on experience, personalization, relevance and added value (Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). The innovations provided by these technologies are generating behavioral changes in society and business, developing a more balanced, collaborative and sustainable economy (Bajde et al., 2018). Thus, digital platforms develop and promote one parallel culture which on side there are consumerization of the digital and the other side the digitalization of the physical (Sundararajan, 2016). Additionally, SE digital platforms can create mediation and coordination at scale changing or adapting behavior of the traditional consumption through new business models that are structured by information system, and may involve a heterogeneous array of resources, interfaces, functionalities, algorithms and applications (Breidbach and Brodie, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018).

Furthermore, another issue is related the nature of SE digital platforms is conceptualizing the tension between control and generativity that these technologies may bring about local market and consumption (Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). There are different ways for understanding this point, but few studies explain the real role and functions of the platforms in the connections, business generations with the most varied and different partners and customers (Möhlman, 2015; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). In this sense, can SE digital platforms manage a huge network of consumers and providers in a set of heterogeneous actions? How can this complex negotiation be carried out between a population of participants and the materialities of platform algorithms and policies? Is this digital culture being promoted only by the nonhuman actor or by the human and nonhuman whole?

Drawing on these questions and paths could provide a developed theoretical vocabulary for the ongoing debates surrounding the SE and technological mediation. For this reason, to understand the assembling, symbiosis and engaging between social consumption and technological components in sharing economy it becomes necessary to better understand the phenomenon and its set (Breidbach and Brodie, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). As a result, the SE digital platforms develop value of this common frame create one alternative assemble which the actions occur on centralized or decentralized form, and vice versa (Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018; Sigala, 2019).

Therefore, it appears that the role and strategy of organizations, which have invested in development of digital sharing platforms are combined in generating for individuals a context, where these artifacts can mediate and promote the relationship of simple and straightforward way. This experience is born from a hybrid dynamic culture where these consumers or providers do not feel the actions and mediations developed by the technological base (Scaraboto, 2016; Sundararajan, 2016; Breidbach and Brodie, 2017). Table 1 presents these concepts.

Author(s)	Definition	Main Features
Sutherland and	The agency of SE digital platform features,	SE, perspective of the
Jarrahi (2018,	functionalities, design, such as algorithms and	platforms of
p. 25)	rating systems, take in conducting transactions or	mediation, centralized
	sharing exchanges, versus the amount that is left to	or decentralized.
	participants (consumers and providers).	

**Table 1:** Definitions related to platforms in sharing economy

Breidbach and Brodie (2017, p. 764)	Platform merely represents an intermediary to orchestrate and facilitate the exchange of resources among other actors in sharing economy, rather than a distinguished service by itself.	SE, from the perspective of the platforms as engaging
De Rivera, Gordo, Cassidy and Apesteguía (2017, p. 15)	Online and sharing social interactions can be mediated, framed or entangled in technological contexts. Therefore, the structures and contents of the platforms can stimulate sharing economy.	From the perspective of the platforms as mediators.
Johnson and Neuhofer (2017, p. 2364)	Platforms and their operating resources provide an activity facilitated through an intangible "value proposition" that acts on the tangible resources of the individual operator-consumer or service provider.	Perspective of the platforms as value integrators.
Hamari, Sjöklinta and Ukkonen (2016, p. 2047)	The peer-to-peer activity based on obtaining, giving or sharing access to goods and services, coordinated through online services or digital platforms.	Perspective on individuals and platforms.
Cusumano (2015, p. 32)	Digital platforms connect individuals who have underutilized assets with people who want these assets in the short term.	Perspective of the platforms.
Cannon and Summers (2014, p. 1)	A business model where peers can offer and buy goods and services from each other through a platform [] That shares economy companies is true intermediaries, providing a platform for consumers instead of providing services directly.	Platforms and SE, from the perspective of intermediary.

Source: Created by author.

Considering these issues, it is necessary to amplify research about "the role and function of digital platforms in the creation of connections, engagement and orchestration for the generation of the most ample and diversified businesses, with partners and /or varied consumers" (Evans and Schmalensee, 2016, p. 2). In addition, current technologies are structured to deliver products and services in a more simple and transparent way, intensely and with a focus on experience, personalization, relevance and added value adapt consumption and relationship between consumers and providers (Abramova et al., 2015; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). The innovations provided by these technologies are generating behavioral changes in society and business, developing a capitalism balancing the triad: capital - work – purpose (Sundararajan, 2016). So, digital platforms culture diffused by the access and relationship of individuals with the technologies added decentralization of these actions can stimulate and solve through alternative groups and communities for income generation developing a more sustainable economy (Johnson et al., 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018; Sigala, 2019).

Consequently, it is necessary to understand the actions, functions and stimuli provided by these digital platforms to create engagement and decrease the sensation of uncertainties and risks in interaction and relationship between consumers and providers of services, goods and contents (Breidbach and Broide, 2017). In this context, over last decade many innovative new digital products like as smartphones, digital tables, laptops and new platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Uber, Airbnb, Blablacar adapted, shape and developed markets, consumption and business (Sundararajan, 2016; De Rivera et al., 2017). Indeed, the driving force in the IT industry is in create and promote digital products, platforms and solutions to consumers and providers need in mind (Sundararajan, 2016). Thus, these companies based on digital platforms rethink and reshape consumption and workforce models decentralizing and transforming business models where digital intelligence adapts, intermediates, and mediates this relationshipassemblage process. (Ravenelle, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018).

Following this context, a key issue to answer this gap in the mediation of digital platforms on individuals, may be in understanding the natures, functions, actions, inductions and consequences that are delivered and supported by the digital platforms of multiple sides combined with human needs (Evans and Schmalensee, 2016). This behavior can be considered a hybrid or assemblage action, where "objects and individuals" share and generate new actions, connections, situations and senses within a social, market, consumption, economic or political phenomenon (Scaraboto, 2016; Breidbach and Broide 2017; Ravenelle, 2017).

From this perspective, both human (consumers and providers) and nonhuman (digital platforms and organizations) actors have agency in the situations that happen (Law, 2004; Latour, 2012). Therefore, it does not exist in the conception of actor theory outside the network, because the elements are agents acting even nonhuman, interacting with the environment or with humans inspiring and generating new behaviors and associations (Canniford and Bajde, 2016). Thus, to a more in-depth understanding of the existing relationships between these actors (human and nonhuman) it becomes necessary to describe the elements of agency, mediation and translation proposed by ANT (Law, 2004; Czarniawska, 2006; Latour, 2012).

# ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY IN SHARING ECONOMY

Understanding the evidences of assemblage between consumers, providers, objects, subjects and technologies can provide and emerge new ways to explain sharing economy (Canniford and Bajde, 2016; Scaraboto, 2016). Thus, it is verified the field can be studied and deepened as a set of practices, which go through a tangle or hybrid movement integrated and interlaced by a set of actions and functions in movement (Bajde et al., 2018). In this line of reasoning, the collective and ensemble consists of human and nonhuman actors, which are represented by individuals (consumers and providers) and digital platforms (applications and devices), which constantly mold and act in a flow in motion of a single network (Czarniawska, 2006; Latour, 2012). This way, mediation refers to the idea of medium, since it is a mid-point in which the action of locating and globalizing concentrates and disperses the interactions, giving symmetry to humans and nonhumans. Mediation is an event that is defined neither by the inputs, nor by the outputs, nor by the causes, nor by the consequences. Thus, to mediate is to interfere, is to make a difference in the production of an effect, not being an exclusive action of humans (Latour, 2015).

Consequently, analyzing this context which SE are combined with the actions and practices of individuals and digital platforms, is still far from being a consolidated field of study in the organizational, marketing and information systems studies (Breidbach and Broide, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). Maybe, this specific field can be studied and deepened as a set of practices, which go through a tangle or hybrid movement integrated and interlaced by a set of actions and functions in motion (Bussular et al., 2014; Scaraboto, 2016). These relationships and practices are shaped according to which the process changes and is propagated by the network of actors, which are part of a collectivity (Latour, 1997; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2016). In this line of reasoning, Law and Singleton (2013) reinforce that the network can be treated as "network of relationships", "network actor", "rhizome", "mesh", "choreography" or another term that represents an arrangement or combination where the actors act as mediators. In this view, the relations act directly proportional in the definition and temporary characterization or not between the actors involved in the flow of the network or fact generating the phenomenon.

Following this logic, for Tonelli (2016) there is a symmetry between human and nonhuman agents, and researchers who ignore this important fact are denying the roles of the actants, who can change and better portray the events from analyses about the reality of everyday life. For Lamine (2017, p. 626) "Networks are systems of action, including humans

and nonhuman entities with the same level of importance given to subjects and objects." However, what can associate, combine or gather ideas, attitudes and actions of individuals (consumers and providers) with the objects (digital platforms), are actions aimed at this combination or association of actors-networks or hybrid actors. These actors interconnected by configurations and mediations of material elements with temporary properties and actions leave to open space to individual actions, in a single format through the dynamics established between them, creating an engagement between both (Bussular et al., 2014; Canniford and Bajde, 2016; Breidbach and Broide, 2017). The objects or nonhumans assume in this proposal a behavior of "intermediaries", that is, mediators, which occasionally act sometimes more meaningful than humans themselves. In this sense, nonhumans have an ability to act and interfere, in the general course of events mediating an action or even the behavior of the human (Latour, 2015; De Camillis and Antonello, 2016). Thus, can one argue that these elements are in a two-dimensional network, with social and material dimensions, which need to be analyzed in a single and collective way in one assemblage (Canniford and Bajde, 2016; Lamine, 2017).

In this direction, actions from ANT perspective, are not totally controlled by human consciousness. Therefore, the agency is defined as a property of associated entities, considering the role played by human and nonhuman actors. Any entity has the potential to act, relate, and action is the result of a continuous two-dimensional process of translation generating hybrid action and mediation between artifacts and people within a single context (Latour, 2005; 2015). Thus, "translating interests means, at the same time, offering new interpretations of those interests and channeling people to different directions ... the results of such translations are a slow move from one place to another" (Latour, 2005, p. 194). Another important aspect is to define the mediators of these relationships. Mediators are entities that transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or elements that are supposed to carry a fact, process, or relationship, that is, there is no possibility of moving something without itself being transformed (Latour, 2015; De Camillis and Antonello, 2016; Tonelli, 2016; Lamine, 2017).

However, ANT can also be a search method. Thus, the theory cannot be characterized only as a closed structure of analysis with a unique focus on the elements observed and followed in the empirical field (Camillis et al., 2013). Thus, this assemblage and collective practice in the presence of human and nonhuman actions can represent more reliably what happens in our social environment (Canniford and Bajde, 2016). Currently, we are impacted indiscriminately by organizational and technological structures that are interested in adapting and shaping our consumer behavior and relationship with new products and service (Sigala, 2019). In this way, actor-network theory assumes his ontological relativistic purpose to explain and reveal the collective practices between the social and the material, but rather than relativistic, Actor-Network Theory should be considered relational, because it is concerned with the relations established in a heterogeneous network of actors (Latour, 2005; Bussular et al., 2014). For Law and Moll (1995, p.274) such explanation is in "when we look one social behavior, we are also looking at the production of materialities. And when we look at the materials, we are witnessing the production of one social behavior". This explanation about materiality can be perceived in experiments carried out by scientists or researchers who are involved in laboratories or research institutes with other team members, rules, norms, clothing, information, objects, equipment and software in which such ensemble action assumes an intermediate position, fixed or temporary (Low and Moll, 1995; Bussular et al., 2014). Thus, this relational materiality assumes its role in this sociotechnical approach, mediate and shape social behavior (Law and Singleton, 2013; Latour, 2015; Lamine, 2017).

Thus, the network ceases to be understood as a unique thing and is understood as a phenomenon that is in motion leading to "things, objects, materials, techniques and people" to another social level (Law and Singleton, 2013, p. 500). In this specific case, digital platforms may be mediating and providing connections and engagements from their characteristics by

assembling together with consumers and providers these business and consumption behaviors (Breidbach and Broide, 2017). For, Canniford and Shankar (2016) there is a hybrid relational dynamic supported by the mediation of technological artifacts that generate behavior such as cyborg or hybrid between men and machines. In this way, an interrelationship between humans and nonhumans is assumed, setting a collective character bringing to the social symmetry or dynamic. The mediators (nonhuman), even remaining silent, are considered and recognized in many of the analyses as intermediaries in the action, "What enters them never defines exactly what comes out" (Latour, 2012, p. 65). The actant or agent described by the actor-network theory and analyzed in the research methodology is one that alters, transforms, creates conflicts and problems generating differences and producing new relationships and or associations. (Latour, 2012; Lamine, 2017).

In this way, materiality gains another definition, since it ceases to be just a given, a thing or a fact allocated in a given situation and becomes matters of concern, by its more dynamic and active attributes (Bussular et al., 2014; Latour, 2015). This materiality of the relations between men and machines ceases to be just an isolated act of one or another and becomes a set assembled from their interactions making a unique behavior (Latour, 2015; Lamine, 2017). In other words, this materiality of relationship it is conceptualized that "materials are interactively constituted. Out of their interactions they have no existence; has no reality. machines, people, the natural world, the divine - are all effects or product" (Law and Moll, 1995, p.277). Thus, this relationship can be explained through processes and mediations generated by the characteristics, functions, data, colors or information of the artifacts or digital platforms, which provide a strong influence on the human behavior related to consumption and sharing practices (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2016; Breidbach and Broide, 2017; Sigala, 2019).

Considering these reflections, appears that digital technology platforms can create meaning and exert a strong influence on the decision to use and spread the share by consumers and providers, from their mediation that induces and connects the actors through its characteristics, features, functionalities, systems, algorithms and routines (Lamine, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). For Harvey et al. (2017), there is a ritual where digital technologies and platforms assist in the mediation of individual behavior of the consumer, but this does not explain in detail how the process and the dynamics happen, leaving here a gap to be studied. Thus, is plausible to consider ANT as theoretical and methodological support to investigate the sociotechnical phenomena in processes or relationships developed and which include contradictions and/or maintenance of networks formed by human and nonhuman agents (Latour, 2005; Lamine, 2017). With this in mind, is necessary study this assembly (social, platforms and organizations) seeking to understand in an explanatory way the movement and the ecosystem of sharing economy and not in a categorical way (Ravenelle, 2017). Understood that the theoretical and methodological bases of ANT can help in the understanding this issue, given the complexity of the action of the individuals, mediated by the action of digital platforms, and given the ability of the researcher to understand how this relationship is assembled in its collectivity situation.

Then, after explaining the method used to conduct this research, is presented what is the Rental Goalkeeper platform, as this practice happens, as well as discuss the central role that materiality plays in this relationship between consumers, digital platforms and providers.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The theoretical proposal invites a reflection on the concepts and relations that exist in sharing economy phenomenon through imperatives of the human agency, represented by consumers and providers, and the nonhuman agency of technological artifacts. Thus, ANT adds to this proposal, with the objective of assisting in the broader understanding of the collective action of the actors involved and the mediation, which occurs in this relation dynamics. Actor Network Theory can go beyond providing elements of analysis for the understanding of organizational phenomena, as it provides methodological reflections for researchers in the field (Bussular et.al, 2014). In this sense, Latour (2005, p.12) proposes that "social scientist needs to closely monitor all the actions and practices of the actors involved and what associations are established." it is a matter of following the artifacts or things through the networks in which they are transposed and set out to describe them in their entanglements and symmetry (Latour, 2005; Bussular et.al, 2014; Bajde et al., 2018)

Thus, the exercise performed in this research was to observe and question the associations and relationships developed between humans (consumers and providers) and nonhumans (digital platform), following the actors and preserving, symmetrically, the actions carried out by the social, natural and material world in the descriptions. This posture sought to be maintained by the precursors of Actor-Network Theory, who have a tradition of research in the areas of science and technology (Callon, 2008; Latour, 2005, 2012; Law, 1992, 2004; Law and Moll, 1995; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2016; Lamine, 2017). In this way, becomes important to observe this imbrication and social agency and things (Scaraboto, 2016; Canniford and Bajde, 2016). These particularities can be described mainly by the existence of a power mechanics, between actors and intermediaries, who can coordinate and control the experience, the sense, the usability, the engagement and the existing relationship within a collectivity (Law, 1992; Tonelli, 2016; Lamine, 2017; Bajde et al., 2018).

Consequently, De Camillis et al. (2016, p. 18) reinforce "the need to amplify the discussion and the vision of how human and nonhuman elements are seen and perceived not separately and dichotomized, but through their approximation and relationship". Besides, is important following the actors, being attentive to the movements of the field to describe the assemblage of relations that happen, be they realized by human or nonhuman elements in this network. This was the posture and decision methodological chosen for this study.

The research field was conducted from November 2018 to March 2019 through participant and non-participant observation, interviews and follow-ups of online communities. Data collection through non-participant observation consisted of monitoring the daily life of the group, observing the progress of the actions that occurred there, but not performing the same activities that the group does. Thus, the two non-participant observations happened in Porto Alegre. While the participant observation consisted of participating in an activity as a debater and mediator at an event in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It was established a systematic of registering in field notebooks, the observations occurred. These notebooks were later transcribed to compose the analyzes of this paper. For Latour (2012) the researcher who studies the assembly and association of social and material groups needs to have a notebook to record and document all facts and transformations that are going on throughout the research. Latour (2005) reinforces that:

"It may be disappointing to the reader when he realizes that the big questions about group formation, agency, metaphysics, and ontology that I have reviewed so far have been met with a not-so-grandiose feature; small notebooks kept throughout the field procedure and simple interviews (Latour, 2005, p.135)"

This case was chosen because football has one cultural relevance in Brazil. It involves sharing of emotion, pleasure, sports practices and incomes generation. The participant observation collection took place through the participation of the researcher as a listener, mediator and debater in a workshop called "Digital Transformation of Companies. How to stay in the future market!" held as part of the agenda of the congress ColaborAmerica occurred in Rio de Janeiro on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018. In this workshop, one rent goalkeeper residing in Rio presented Rental Goalkeeper digital platform, was reporting his own personal and professional experience with the platform and the contracting teams.

Then, the other data collections of non-participant observations consisted of following two scheduled games, in Porto Alegre on February and March 2019, in order to better understand the daily life and the development of relationships and activities in this sharing consumption. In this case, the researcher did not become a member of the group of goalkeepers or contracting teams, not entering or participating in the actions and relationships carried out by the respondents. In this field of research, the observations were recorded in notes, photos and videos, which were later transcribed to compose the analyzes of this study.

Moreover, in order to follow and understand the facts that occurred unstructured interviews were conducted with 18 actors (5 company employees, 8 goalkeepers, and 5 football team contractors) involved with the digital platform. The interviews were carried out with an open script with 8 questions, complementing methodologically the observations. Thus, with support Carioca's rent goalkeeper, obtained the contact information of the founder of Startup. The first contact occurred at the end of February, first by email and then by two video conferences using Skype tool. In these conversations, it was discovered that the founder of the company was the first rental goalkeeper and the second is currently his partner or co-founder who met him in a soccer game scheduled by the social media Facebook 3 years ago. In this direction, the co-founder of the company was interviewed, who indicated a third partner (IT developer), who indicated other product and marketing professionals. Using the technique of snowball was also asked the contact of goalkeepers divided by states and matches made. As a result, we interviewed 08 goalkeepers who indicated the captains of the 5 soccer teams that were also interviewed. In addition, 05 online communities of this digital platform have been mapped and analyzed (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Linked in and YouTube).

Finally, in attention to the methodological approach ANT to describe the materiality existing in the practices and relations between human and nonhuman actors composed of this collective studied, was given a greater distinction in non-participant observations plus interviews and finally the analysis of online communities. Due to the complexity and richness of the details involved in this set assembled among goalkeepers, football team contractors, digital platform utilized the feature of mapping the existing images and videos. Moreover, were capture images to facilitate of these stories from the field through iconographic view.

# CASE STUDY: RENTAL GOALKEEPERS First half of match

First of all, this study case was chosen due to the relevance of football to Brazilians. Football for Brazilian and European, Soccer to North Americans is a popular sport which involves passion, emotion and culture (Soares, 2003; Brandão et. al, 2013). Besides, Football nowadays is a global sport with high investments of and in brands, companies and teams generating revenues for many actors involved (Brandão et. al, 2013). The football landed in Brazil together with the British military whose escorted Portuguese royal family in 1880. The sport was consolidated with a mass phenomenon in the country from the foundation of the first football clubs in the early 1900s and spread throughout the national territory and population from the richest to the poorest joining classes, traditions and ideologies (Soares, 2003; Brandão et. al, 2013). The sport of crowds is characterized as a Brazilian national wealth, making dollars, euros and real generating foreign exchange and revenues for players, businessmen, teams, companies and society. It is protected by Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 as a cultural and national heritage of Brazilian people (Brandão et. al, 2013).

This way, Brazilian loves football to support teams and to practice this sport in football fields, but with their creativity they created other forms like sand football to play on the beach and of hall to play in sportive gymnasium among friends (Soares, 2003). In this direction, in August 2015 digital platform Rental Goalkeeper was born with proposal to gather, connect, engage and reward amateur soccer players (goalkeepers) through the provision of their services

focusing on culture and passion national - football. Thus, with first initiative of founder was creation of a fan page on Facebook where himself offered as a goalkeeper for rent, in the first month were made 13 matches and billed R\$ 390 reais. He created this service because loves this sport and play as goalkeeper position in indoor soccer or "futsal" with as Brazilians say. Moreover, after some experiences and matches this founder understood that there really was one demand, and everything was just ball forward, literally. Besides that, generating an extra income for those who enjoy the most popular sport in the country he guaranteed fun and one less concern for who hired goalkeepers because "*almost nobody wants to play in that position*" (in the founder words). For Rental Goalkeeper Founder and Co-Founder this kind of business create a unique experience and provides fun, new friendships, satisfaction and incomes for their and the almost 30,000 goalkeepers registered on the digital platform recently. Bellow the first poster that illustrate how the Rental Goalkeeper started through an advertisement from the founder on his personal Facebook page and communities of futsal teams in Curitiba city.

Figure 1 – First post on Facebook by personal page of founder



Following this context, this kind of personal initiative combined with social online communities and after with digital platforms may be adapting, modeling, decentralizing and developing markets, consumption, jobs and new business models (Evans and Schmalensee, 2016; Sundararajan, 2016; Ravenelle, 2018; Sigala, 2019). In fact, these digitals movements can be rethink and reshape consumer behavior and workforce models, besides that create one hybrid or engaged action, where "objects and individuals" share and generate new process and relationship such as in one cultural assemblage (Scaraboto, 2016; Canniford and Bajde, 2016). *Half time of match* 

# In face of this demand and great opportunity, this man with his passion for football, goalkeeper position and innovation entrepreneurship who verified the need to expand his business and developed an online website and several actions in indoor soccer places in the city of Curitiba in Paraná state, south region in Brazil. He personally publicized his platform and online community and his services spreading his idea and regimenting 900 goalkeepers in a single WhatsApp group in the first year of operation. For the founder "*This growth was only possible due to the interaction and the online tools that supported him to propagate and disseminate the idea, through its functionalities*". At that time due to WhatsApp group he met his partner and co-founder of Rental Goalkeepers, who had an operational and administrative experience that added his skills. Together, they developed the first mobile application and participated in TV show - Shark Tank Brazil 2017, where they were selected by companies Polishop and Topper which they received an investment of 300 thousand reais.

In this sense, and with technological support from another partner with information system expertise, who joined the team before participating in Shark Tank TV Show, Rental Goalkeeper platform began its expansion process. With this financial and technological contribution, functionalities and algorithms for gamification, geolocation, segmentation and rewards have been developed that have provided the platform to reach 30 thousand registered goalkeepers (service providers) in more than 1.000 games for their customers (contracted soccer teams).

Figure 2 - Video Shark Tank Brazil – May 2017 by YouTube



Consequently, there is a decentralized movement to generate consumption and business, but that does not happen in isolation from the action of another social actor, but rather generated in conjunction with technological artifacts and their functions (Sundararajan, 2016; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). In doing so, it may be interesting to observe the objects and their interactions, explaining the complexity that surrounds them in the assembly of relations with other social actors, sometimes fluid and mutable (Law and Singleton, 2010; Lamine, 2017). *Second half of match* 

Afterwards, using the method of following actors' humans and nonhumans (Latour, 2012) involved in Rental Goalkeeper startup we sought to understand and translate materiality and mediation present through this collectively assembled relation. For Latour (2012) and Callow (2008) the construction of these relations and facts do not occur in isolation, but in a joint way with the equipment, materials, clothing and technology that surround us in social and professional daily life. Thus, after listened and debate with one provider (goalkeeper) about her experiences and interactions with digital platform in ColaborAmerica 2018, digital platform actions were observed by the online communities and two non-participating observations were made in scheduled matches in Porto Alegre. In addition, through the snowball technique, unstructured interviews were conducted to accompany the human actors participating in this digital platform. This materiality and mediation are revealed for technological artifacts in service delivery and consumption behaviors. In this way, Rio de Janeiro, goalkeeper explained this assemblage relationship process with actions and communications that involved videos, photos, posters, flyers and interactions among the actors described previously.

"The interaction with platform in the beginning was very simple by Facebook and WhatsApp, after with website and mobile application we received more support some as me are ambassadors, which receive uniforms and flyer to spread and engage new customers (teams) and providers (goalkeepers) in my city".

Further, these kind of companies based in digital platform culture use their power to connect, engage, mediate and adapt processes and relationships through online communications and actions, which in turn use algorithms and other digital features to assemble this hybrid behavior (Scaraboto, 2016; Breidbach and Broide, 2017; Ravenelle, 2017). In order to characterize this statement, the following figures demonstrate this imbricated relationship between human and nonhuman actors distributed online by this platform and communities.

Figure 3 - Online posters in social media communities (Facebook and Instagram).



In this way, in non-participant observation in Porto Alegre a friendly and professional relationship was perceived among those involved, in the words of a contracting team leader.

"This platform is providing us with playing football without stress, before we had to combine who would play as a goalkeeper, now just open the application, choose and call a qualified goalkeeper making football matches almost professional".

This mediation of the platform is also detailed by two goalkeepers interviewed by phone "In the beginning all was very simple by Facebook and all interactions and communications happened through WhatsApp, then we were invited to register on website and today the mobile application has several tools of evaluation, control and even a ranking...Everyone wants to be in elite group of goalkeepers to receive more calls, earn more incomes, prizes and benefits" (Goalkeeper from Porto Alegre).

"Rental Goalkeeper through their features like chat, geolocation and gamification have improved my life in everything, through its I play football, receive a remuneration and besides I am invited to barbecue or parties after the matches without extra cost for me". (Goalkeeper from Curitiba).

Therefore, from the analysis of observations, interviews and online communities, a decentralized action and a hybrid relationship between human and nonhuman actors is perceived (Latour, 2012; Scaraboto, 2016; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). This relationship is assembled collectively supported by digital resources, online and offline communications and uniforms providing a unique experience with entertainment, sports practice, friendship relationships and extra income. The production of this sports practice that generates service for consumption and income for goalkeepers might not happen if we did not consider the agency of the social media platforms, online messages tools, mobile application features, posters, flyers and uniforms made available by Rental Goalkeeper. This assembly only takes place in ongoing practices, being constantly produced and negotiated by both human and nonhuman actors (Bussular et al., 2014; Lamine, 2017; Bajde et al., 2018).

# **CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

This research attempted directly to answer the request of Matzner et al. (2015) and Breidbach and Broide (2017) to advance the knowledge about the interactions and mediations existing among the multiple actors in sharing economy context. Besides that, analyze how digital platforms rethink, reshape and readapt consumption behavior and workforce models (Ravenelle, 2017; Sigala, 2019). These hybrid processes of relationships between humans (customers and providers) with nonhumans (digital platforms and their features, resources and algorithms) may be decentralizing and transforming business models where digital intelligence involvement with actors in network assemble and explore connections, inductions, engages and mediations (Scaraboto, 2016; Breidbach and Broide, 2017; Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018).

In this perspective, this study sought answers on how do happen assemblage of relationships between consumers and providers (humans) when mediated by digital platforms (nonhumans) in sharing economy? To answer this question the aim was to analyze how an assemblage of relationships of exchanges happen between consumers and service providers when mediated by digital platforms in SE.

In this sense, one main assumptions was attempt to explain that this relationship does not occur and does not exist in isolation from one or another social actor but is generated and assemblage and in a network, assemble e intermediated per humans and things (Latour, 2012; Basular et al., 2014). Thus, to translate this existence of materiality was necessary to leave the field speak to bring subsidies for such an argument. For this, using the premises of ANT following the actors (Latour, 2012), which considers the symmetry between human and

nonhuman (Basular et. al, 2014) was decided to take an open position to narrate the facts and action of mediation of this materiality in the sports practice of goalkeepers and teams.

In view of this, research had been complex, since its first contact, observations and interviews. The hybrid action and process between the actors involved materialized leaving traces, paths, transformations and alliances. This narrative of the case and search for traces from the observations and interviews presented a set of facts, situations and things interconnected in a heterogeneous network of actors. The intermediation and mediation of the materiality this platform and its features about the actions of goalkeepers and teams has been shown as a "messy objects" (Law and Singleton, 2010, p.333), which may have different approaches and meanings depending on the perspective of analysis (Basular et. al, 2014, p. 14; Bajde et al., 2018).

Thus, a mediation assemblage process was noted which features, interfaces, design resources, communication, and data functionalities, and algorithms proposed and disseminated by this digital platform. This mediation occurs through a hybrid flow with the consumption and production behaviors of the businesses, which are inserted in the SE context. Therefore, the ANT as a theoretical contribution presents the existence of a symmetrical and hybrid process between the human and nonhuman actors that is assembled and mediated by their relations. In this relationship between human and nonhuman actors, there is interference assembled by everyone in the network, but the process of mediation is materialized leaving traces when it connects, induces and valorization services through the functionalities, features and technological tools of the digital platforms.

In practical implications, these findings can help managers and entrepreneurs understand how these processes between consumers, service providers, and digital platforms happen and are assembled. The results show evidence and synergy between subjects and objects in this assemblage of relationship. This relationship is assembled collectively supported by digital resources, online and offline communications providing a unique experience and friendly relations between consumers and service providers. This actor-network movement promotes and disseminates a new digital culture whose main goal is valorization of service assemblage through the development of solutions, learning and collective resources that can support the strategy of this kind of business.

However, one recognizes the existence of other broader issues that need to be considered in the scope of this work. Specifically, deepen issues related to the limitations of using only one case study with specific business proposals. As a suggestion of future studies, one can expand the discussion with multiple cases seeking to understand and apply the model in different situations and natures comparing the services and motivations generated by both actors.

Finally, the main argument this research was to contribute to understanding more the power of digital platforms in shaping our behavior in business, entrepreneurship, and consumption.

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