Cruising the Psychology of Peer-to-Peer(P2P) Carsharing Apps Referrals in China: Customer Satisfaction as the Link, Brand Experience Sharing as the Moderator

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ABSTRACT

This study combines the stimulus-organization-response (SOR) model and shared reality theory to explore the reasons behind the peer-to-peer (P2P) carsharing apps word of mouth recommendation in China. Examine the factors influencing customer satisfaction including brand experience sharing throughout the framework and price, product service, and quality service, as the antecedent reason for customer satisfaction. A survey of 382 respondents showed that car rental price, product quality, service quality, and convenience impact positively on consumer satisfaction. Meanwhile, brand experience sharing can positively mediate the relationship between customer satisfaction and P2P carsharing apps word of mouth recommendation. The results of this research also indicate that customer satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between consumers' peer-to-peer (P2P) carsharing apps word of mouth recommendation behavior and price, product quality, service quality, and convenience. Finally, this research provides relevant suggestions for car owners, companies, and governments from practical and management perspectives.

Keywords: SOR model, P2P, Car sharing, Shared reality theory, Word of mouth, Brand Experience sharing

INTRODUCTION

The sharing economy has been hailed as a worldwide revolution with the primary goal of creating value from underutilized resources (Auer, Nagler, Mazumdar, & Mukkamala, 2022). Being a part of the sharing economy, shared mobility is thought to be an economical, efficient, and eco-friendly mode of transportation for commuting (Auer et al., 2022; Burghard & Dütschke, 2019). For the past few years, the shared mobility has gained popularity with a market worth of over 60 billion US dollars and projected to increase by another 20% in the next years (McKinsey Center for Future Mobility, 2020).

In about 2010, peer-to-peer (P2P) carsharing emerged as an additional new organized carsharing model. Unlike traditional carsharing forms, P2P carsharing offers a platform that matches users and private car owners. Meanwhile, it offers other services such as insurance (Valor, 2020). In P2P model, individuals act as both car providers and clients (Prieto, Stan, & Baltas, 2022). P2P carsharing is a novel approach to the shared vehicle models, with car owners in the neighborhood renting out privately owned cars for as little as an hour or as long as they

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choose (Rotaris & Scorrano, 2023). In general, an intermediary company links renters and automobile owners in P2P carsharing. This arrangement relieves the corporation of the financial burden of covering the initial cost of new cars and continuous upkeep. In this situation, privacy car owners might not pay all car expenses to make lending their car worthwhile (Dill, McNeil, & Howland , 2019). Considering the above two points, P2P carsharing prices are lower than traditional carsharing. In addition, it is a value co-creation for car owners and renters. At the macroscopic level, P2P carsharing can mitigate some societal and environmental issues related to mobility to a certain extent (Vélez, 2023). Specifically, P2P carsharing reduces congestion and secures parking spaces while lowering emissions per household (Valor, 2020).

This article explores the motivating factors behind word of mouth recommendation of P2P car sharing in China. Expand from practical and research significance perspective, there are the following three reasons:

First, word of mouth recommendation for P2P carsharing platforms is critical. There will be 900 million P2P carsharing automobiles globally by 2025 (Frost & Sullivan, 2016). Besides, Kumar, Lahiri, and Dogan (2018) highlight the supply and demand balance must be achieved for P2P carsharing due to the malfunction of the P2P shared mobility platform that could result from this. At the current stage, the P2P carsharing platform service must expand its client base to continue developing (Mattia, Di Pietro, Principato, & Toni, 2022). According to a carsharing study in China, when it came to carsharing services, 62.1% of participants were willing to forgo purchasing new vehicles to meet their travel needs (Wang, Yan, Zhou, Xue, & Sun, 2017). The respondents to the survey, however, might not have even known about or been participants in carsharing (Hui, Wang, Sun, & Tang, 2019). This merely demonstrates that the publicity of carsharing in China is very lacking.

Second, studying word of mouth recommendation of P2P carsharing app in the Chinese context can fill the research gap. There is still a shortage of empirical studies on P2P shared mobility (Prieto et al., 2022). Presently, China leads the world's largest carsharing region, with over eight million registered members and nearly 130,000 active vehicles (Ye, Wang, Li, Axhausen, & Jin, 2021). However, China's market penetration rate is relatively low for its population (China has 1.412 billion people living there in 2021, but only eight million of them are registered members, meaning that the penetration rate is only about 0.57%). Furthermore, compared to Europe and North America, where there are 150–200 automobiles per 100 households, China only has an average of 36 cars per 100. However, the number of people owning private vehicles is increasing at a 15% annual rate (Hui et al., 2019). Most carsharing research was done in Europe and North America, and car sharing is still in its infancy in China (Hui et al., 2019).

Third, the shared reality theory is frequently used in interpersonal interactions (Marocco & Talamo, 2022; Wilson, Kleshinski, & Matta, 2021) and education (Haraldsen et al., 2023) field. It is seldom used in business research. Thus, applied this theory in word-of-mouth recommendation behavior to fill the current gap. According to the shared reality theory definition, the term "reality" refers to people's subjective perceptions of actual objects, rather than the objects themselves (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009a) When people doubt the value of a goal or are uncertain about the possibility of its realization, they experience a large cognitive desire to clarify problems and a greater tendency to express their ideas in public and seek social approval from others. This theory is very suitable to explain the role of brand experience sharing on consumer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendation (Echterhoff

et al., 2009a; Su, Yang, & Huang, 2022). Besides, combining this theory with the SOR model is an innovation that provides more thinking for researchers.

The theoretical framework of this research adopted the S-O-R framework and shared reality theory to explore the motivating factors behind word of mouth recommendations for P2P car sharing in China from objective and subjective perspectives. There are two objectives for this study:

RO1. Can price, product quality, service quality and convenience have a positive impact on word of mouth recommendation behavior through the mediating role of customer satisfaction and which one impact most?

RO2. Does Brand experience sharing play a mediating role between customer satisfaction and Word of Mouth recommendation?

The remainder of this article is as follows. First, the conceptual framework and research hypotheses are presented in the next section. Then, section 3 elaborates on the study's methodology. After that, we carry out an empirical investigation and talk about the key findings. The final section is about the conclusion which offers an agenda for future research including theoretical and managerial implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

Initially, the SOR model was put out by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), and comprises three fundamental components: a stimulus, an organism, and a response. They are related in that stimuli from the environment (S) cause emotional reactions (O), which in turn encourage behavioral responses (R). The S-O-R paradigm explained behavioral variations from a variety of marketing stimuli and cognitive elements (Sultan, Wong, & Azam, 2021). What's more, the main advantage of the S O R model is its adaptability, that allows for examining a wide range of internal and external stimuli, both intangible and tangible, as well as non-experiential and experiential organisms. These include attitude, perception, emotion or feeling, belief, judgment, motivation, thinking, and several response factors as well as intention, behavior, avoidance, and so forth (Sultan et al., 2021).

To date, scholars have begun to utilize the S O-R framework to elucidate mobile buyers' behavior. Li, Dong, and Chen (2012) used the SOR model to clarify how emotions play a part in m-commerce consumers' experiences. Besides, Vazquez, Dennis and Zhang (2017) examined the impact of mobile instant messaging on consumers' electronic word of mouth toward an online store in China via the S-O-R paradigm. Chen, Chung, and Tsai (2019) scrutinize how customers use mobile payments, analyzing their emotional and cognitive reactions using the S-O-R model. This research chooses customer satisfaction as the organism part, and finally, usage intention is behavioral intention. Similarly, Chopdar and Balakrishnan (2020) build a framework using the SOR model, primarily to identify the elements that influence the desire to make repeat purchase intention and the satisfactory experience of customers in the background of mobile commerce.

Based on the above examples and theory fundament, it is very suitable to use the SOR framework to explain the consumer word of mouth recommendation behavior of carsharing apps in this research. From the viewpoint of car renters, this study takes the price, product quality, service quality, and convenience of car sharing as the external environment stimulation components. Meanwhile, it considers customer satisfaction as the organism. In fact, customer satisfaction can be regarded as an emotional state that presents an emotional evaluation of performance and expectations (Lim, Aggarwal, & Dandotiya, 2022). At the same time, it functions as a bridge that motivates the word of mouth recommendation behavior.

Shared Reality Theory

Sharing one's thoughts, beliefs and feelings with others is innately driven by human nature (Higgins, 2019; Higgins, Rossignac-Milon, & Echterhoff, 2021). During people's interactions, they try to establish a sensation of shared reality: the perceived commonality idea of beliefs or feelings on a target referent—such as an item, an event, or another individual—are shared (Higgins et al., 2021). In the past, social psychologists, sociologists, and psychologists have recognized the significance of the want to share one's feelings from the heart to outside world (Higgins et al., 2021). Currently, shared reality theory is widely used in the study of interpersonal relationships. Haraldsen et al. (2023) investigates the teacher-student reciprocity within women's ballet preschool education under the shared reality theory. Besides, Bebermeier, Echterhoff, Bohner and Hellmann (2015) applied this theory in the evaluation of the impact of communication of the targets. Yang, Hansen, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons (2013) use the shared reality theory to forecast the ways in which the potential salespeople's various affiliation motives impact their own self-stereotyping. In fact, the shared reality theory is rather seldom applied in the marketing sharing domain.

From the marketing perspective, epistemic motivation and relation motivation are the two main factors that drive customers' sharing of reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). On the one hand, the term "epistemic motivation" describes people's psychological propensity to consistently know about the world and determine what is the fact (Echterhoff, Lang, Krämerand, & Higgins, 2009b). According to the shared reality theory, people have an epistemic urge to increase their comprehension and knowledge of the outside world. Thus, epistemic motivation matches the "reality" of the phrase "shared reality". In fact, the term "reality" refers to people's subjective perceptions of actual objects rather than the items themselves (Echterhoff et al., 2009a). For instance, when people suspicion the worth of an objective or are unsure of its likelihood of being accomplished, they will experience a greater epistemic desire to clarify the issue and become more inclined to voice their thoughts in opening occasions and look to others for social approval (Su et al., 2022). On the other hand, the relational motive is about the need for people to interact with and feel the motive of being connected to others (Echterhoff et al., 2009a). Taking tourism consumption, for instance, the uncertainty in these activities is frequently higher than in everyday life (Ioannou, Tussyadiah, & Miller, 2021; Su, Cheng, & Huang, 2021). When travellers make travel plans, they don't know if their expectations will be fulfilled. Engaging in social media conversations with friends and acquaintances about their travel aspirations and getting their opinions and recommendations is a method to reduce the uncertainty emotion before travel (Su et al., 2021). Therefore, appropriate sharing embodies cognitive motivations while also highlighting relational motivations.

From the background of this study, when consumer satisfaction is high, it means that they are in a relatively high-quality experience, and brand experience sharing allows them to further

express their inner personal feelings and want to share car sharing app experience. Meanwhile, it is appropriate to use this theory to analyze the role of the moderator variable in this research. In addition, the shared reality theory currently is widely used in the fields of interpersonal interaction and education field (Haraldsen et al., 2023; Solstad, Granerud, Haraldsen, Gustafsson, & Knight, 2022). Some literature uses it to explain sharing behavior. For instance, Su et al. (2022) applies shared reality theory to explore the Tourists' goal-directed activities, while Singh and Sharma (2022) utilize it to examine weight-loss image-sharing behaviour. However, no literature has combined the SOR model with it to explore sharing behavior. Therefore, this research combined these two theories can be a good extension of the SOR model and fill the research gap.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Price

According to Xu (2020), price significantly influences customers' buying decisions from online retailers. For customers, price means sacrifice to obtain the product or what is given up (Zeithaml, 1988). Besides, Pasharibu, Paramita, and Febrianto (2018) characterize price as a factor that can persuade a customer to purchase a desired good or service. Therefore, price is a significant antecedent of customer satisfaction since consumers are price-sensitive (Kaura, Prasad, & Sharma, 2015). In other words, consumers' purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by their price sensitivity since they typically refuse to pay excessive costs for goods and services. From a corporate or commercial standpoint, they aim to reach a larger consumer base, satisfy their needs, and ultimately deliver customer satisfaction by making accurate and appealing pricing decision (Amoako, 2022). In general, a competitive price can satisfy a consumer, but an unsuitable price can cause customer dissatisfaction (Pasharibu et al., 2018). Thus, achieving price satisfaction is crucial for retaining and attracting current and potential clients, as it increases their desire to pay, leading to profitability and long-term business success (Homburg, Koschate, & Hoyer, 2005; Srinuan, Srinuan, & Bohlin, 2013). Considering the link between price and customer satisfaction with the aforementioned studies, we put up the following hypothesis:

H1: *Price impact positively on Customer satisfaction.*

Product Quality

Product quality is defined by the International Organization for Standardization as "the ability to satisfy the market and customer" (Lakhal & Pasin, 2008). Besides, the perceived quality of the product is essential because it also presupposes customer trust (Zhang, 2020). Product quality includes a variety of aspects, such as the physical state, functionality, and nature of a product, which satisfies consumer expectations (Rachmawati & Santika, 2022).

In marketing, customer satisfaction and quality are regarded as highly connected notions (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994; Seyedaliakbar, Zaripour, Zangeneh, & Sadeghi, 2016). A plethora of studies indicate that quality relates to satisfaction with transaction-specific exchanges (Chang, 2006; Dabholkar, Shepherd, & Thorpe, 2000; Olsen, 2002; Tsiotsou, 2006). As a result, the "quality led to satisfaction" school of thinking is the product of this research stream. Suppose the product for customer use is of high quality; they will be more satisfied with it (Kartikasari & Albari, 2019). According to Etemad-Sajadi and Rizzuto (2013), customer satisfaction is positively impacted by product quality. Similarly, research by Hamzah and Shamsudin (2020)

demonstrates that Customer satisfaction and product quality were significantly correlated. Based on Taufik, Santoso, Fahmi, Restuanto, and Yamin (2022) creating high-quality goods is essential to achieving customer satisfaction. Consumers' perceived suitability for product quality is due to that they favor the appropriate product from what they require or desire. According to the above points, considering that product quality is also one of the factors that should not be ignored in the sharing economy, this study believes there is a similar positive correlation between the quality of car rental products and customer satisfaction. As a result, hypothesis 2 is put forth as follows.

H2: *Product quality is positively correlated to Customer satisfaction.*

Service Quality

Service quality has been widely described as the discrepancy between consumers' expectations and their views of the service presentation, as Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) stated. No matter in traditional and online settings, service quality is a key factor in a company's ability to compete and win over customers (Zuo, Zhu, Chen, & He, 2019). According to early research, people suppose "consumer satisfaction" and "service quality" were very similar. Nevertheless, it has been determined that these two concepts are currently two distinct structures (Sun & Pan, 2023). For example, Zeithaml and others contend that consumer satisfaction relates to a particular transaction evaluation. In this situation, the judgment of customer satisfaction is predicated on consumers' past expectations, and prior experience is necessary as a foundation. However, service quality can be felt without direct experience (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). In the research of Parasuraman et al. (1985), it shows a link between customer satisfaction and service quality as the first research. A few years later, Hurley and Estelarni (1998) suggest a causal relationship exists between satisfaction and quality of service. In the view of the service, customer satisfaction is defined as a net positive experience that results from consumers' assessments of a service provider's actual offerings in comparison to their expectations for the service (Marinkovic & Kalinic, 2017). In essence, it refers to "a customer's attitude, feeling, or eagerness towards a service/product after it has been used" (Yi, Yeo, Amenuvor, & Boateng, 2021). Up to now, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction has been explored in various fields such as finance, travel, marketing, etc. Certain studies in the banking industry substantiate the correlation between customer satisfaction and service quality (Marcos & Coelho, 2022). Furthermore, Ladhari (2008) found that service quality impacts customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Analogously to the aviation sector, prior research has also demonstrated affirmative correlations between customer satisfaction and service quality (Law, Zhang, & Gow, 2022). The research of Blut (2016) and Omar, Mohsen, Tsimonis, Oozeerally, and Hsu (2021) shows that service quality is a key component of consumer-centered business enterprises. Similarly, according to Kim (2021), Service quality is a dynamic component of the customer satisfaction model. Some studies indicate service quality as one of the essential elements influencing users' intention to continue using bicycle-sharing (Morton, 2018; Shao & Ge, 2018). Since car sharing and bike sharing have comparable research backgrounds, it is vital to consider service quality as a predicate of customer satisfaction. Based on the above, hypothesis three is proposed.

H3: *Service quality is positively affecting Customer satisfaction.*

Convenience

The word "convenience" can be applied to every human endeavor, including work, cooking exercise, travel or shopping. Convenience can also be defined as the capacity to lower non-financial expenses for customers (such as time, effort, and energy) when they buy or use goods and services (Srivastava & Kaul, 2014). Currently, convenience and customer satisfaction have been the subject of extensive research. Moutinho and Smith (2000) examined the relationships between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and switching behavior and access (i.e., ease of banking). According to their findings, clients' perceived satisfaction and banking ease were positively and directly correlated. Based on a meta-analysis of online banking conducted by Ladeira, Santini, Sampaio, Perin, and Araújo (2016), convenience and satisfaction are positively and significantly correlated. Presumably, customers would evaluate the provided service more favorably and be more satisfied if purchasing requires less mental and physical effort. Furthermore, for online stores, shopping convenience in the store is one of the most significant factors in building a good shopping experience. Beauchamp and Bednarz (2010) believed consumers' decision-making is influenced by how quickly and easily they can access retail stores. In a retail setting, search inconvenience is a barrier to consumer decision-making that could lower customer satisfaction (Boateng, Kosiba, & Okoe, 2019). In addition, relevant research in the sharing economy has demonstrated that convenience is the most important between all the elements influencing customer satisfaction from a qualitative standpoint (Huang & Kuo, 2020). Therefore, we propose hypothesis 4.

H4: *Convenience is positively correlated to Customer satisfaction.*

Customer Satisfaction and Word of Mouth Recommendation

Customer satisfaction is a "consumer's fulfillment response", according to (Ruiz-Alba, Abou-Foul, Nazarian, & Foroudi, 2022) within the marketing literature, customer satisfaction is commonly understood as the client's emotional inclination and cognitive capacity to compare their subjective assessment of the requested service with the actual service they received (Ruiz-Alba et al., 2022). Cognitive dissonance theory provides an explanation for current customer satisfaction and consumers' word of mouth recommendation behavior. This theory has been applied in research related to word of mouth (Yakın et al., 2023). According to cognitive dissonance theory, consumer satisfaction is a behavior that occurs after a transaction (Festinger, 1957). When customers encounter conflicts between performance and expectations, their psychology will produce an uncomfortable state (Yakın et al., 2023). This will lead to dissatisfaction and, in turn, rational behavior that reflects that subjective emotion (Anderson, 1973; Lim et al., 2022). According to the research of Haritha and Mohan (2022), customers' post-purchase satisfaction levels were significantly impacted by the cognitive dissonance experienced, and their satisfaction levels had a noteworthy effect on exhibiting electronic word of mouth behavior. In fact, customer satisfaction has an inverse relationship with cognitive dissonance (Sweeney, Soutar, & Lester, 1996). Customer satisfaction is a response to cognitive dissonance. Reducing the degree of cognitive dissonance will facilitate improved satisfaction (Lim et al., 2022). Nevertheless, in other research, there are different results on relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth. Some studies found customer satisfaction directly and positively influences word of mouth (Heckman & Guskey, 1995; Mittal, Kumar, & Tsiros, 1999). others find there is no direct relationship between them (Leon & Choi, 2020). Therefore, the relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth will differ in industry backgrounds. It is necessary to explore the applicability of the sharing car background. Based on the cognitive dissonance theory, this article puts forward hypothesis 5.

Moreover, extant literature indicates a correlation between price, convenience, service quality, and customer happiness in contexts like this study examined. Akhmedova, Manresa, Escobar Rivera, and Bikfalvi (2021) uses bibliometric methods to explore the role of service quality in the sharing economy. Likewise, the research of Shiau, Chen, Chen, Liu, and Tan (2021) is based on shared bicycles and compares Chinese and American cultures to compare the similarities and differences in service quality factors of customer satisfaction with ride-sharing services. It is evident that a key role in sharing economy research is played by service quality. From the customers' viewpoint, Huang and Kuo (2020) explore the crucial success factors in the sharing economy combined with some unique technology. They discovered that convenience, competitive pricing, and cost savings have the highest related satisfaction increment indexes. Furthermore, it is a widespread scholarly assertion that product quality and pricing are the main factors driving repeat business from internet shoppers (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003; Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2000). No matter the research on the accommodation economy based on Airbnb (Yang, Lee, Lee, & Koo, 2018) or research on supply chain sharing platforms (W. Li et al., 2022), the importance of product quality cannot be ignored. Gholipour Soleimani and Einolahzadeh (2018) discovered that if the travel agencies in good quality, this situation leads to an intention to revisit a destination via destination image and satisfaction. Additionally, customer satisfaction is directly impacted by the quality of the services provided, and it further improves word of mouth. In the original S-O-R framework of consumer behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), a stimulus represents any environmental cue that causes an individual's emotional response to that environment. The literature shows that product and service quality are regarded as components of environmental cues (Alam & Noor, 2020). Besides, price and convenience variables are frequently utilized as the stimulus part of the SOR model to research consumer behavior (Sultan et al., 2021; Xue et al., 2023). Customer satisfaction as an organism is a psychological state, which also serves as a mediating link between environmental stimulus and individual responses (Alam & Noor, 2020). In this framework, Price, Product quality, Service quality, and Convenience as the main stimuli in the exploration of customer satisfaction by customers. Customer satisfaction is positioned as the "organism," which refers to the advantages derived from using P2P carsharing. The more advantages customers perceive in P2P carsharing app usage, the more satisfied they will be. Finally, word of mouth recommendation as the responses in the proposed mode. Thus, we propose hypothesis 6.

H5: *Customer satisfaction is positively associated with word of mouth Recommendation.*

H6: *Customer satisfaction of rental car experience with the app mediates the relationships between price, product quality, and service quality on word of mouth recommendation of the rental car with the app.*

### *Moderating Role of Brand Experience Sharing*

Brand experience is "subjective, internal consumer responses (feelings, sensations, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009) "Brand experience" describes how customers feel about a brand from the moment they interact with it (Alloza, 2008). In the view of the Internet field, due to the widespread use and popularity of social media platforms, academics have examined social media companies extensively in recent years. Customers' overall brand experience via social media is referred to as the "social media brand experience" (Chen, Jiao, Ji, & Li, 2021). Consequently, brand experience sources from clients' social interactions and psychological

perceptions on social media. This definition encompasses how consumers use social media to find information as well as their feelings and perceptions of social interaction (Wang, Cao, & Park, 2019). Currently, scholars have investigated the connection between word of mouth and brand experience. Siqueira, ter Horst, Molina, Losada, and Mateus (2020) discovered that customer experience had a beneficial impact on word of mouth behavior. Based on the research of Chattopadhyay and Laborie (2005), customers who are satisfied with their service experience are probably to tell their friends about it and plan to use it again. Beerli and Martín (2004) demonstrated that previous tourism industry experience influences travelers' word of mouth. Furthermore, Gómez-Suárez and Veloso (2020) show how beneficial and direct influence brand experience effect word of mouth recommendations in the hotel industry. What's more, Shared reality theory believes that cognitive motivation and relational motivation are the two main factors driving customers to share reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). From one perspective, the phrase "cognitive motivation" refers to people's innate desire to constantly learn about the world and ascertain the truth (Echterhoff et al., 2009b). From another perspective, relational motivation is about people's need to socialize and experience a sense of belonging (Echterhoff et al., 2009a). Therefore, brand experience sharing can inspire individuals to consider the truths they have decided upon in their hearts and spread more positive word of mouth. Meanwhile, if customers are more satisfied, they will feel more motivated to express their inner sharing which motivates the positive word of mouth recommendation. Thus, the ensuing hypothesis is arrived at.

H7: *Brand experience moderates the relationship between Customer satisfaction and Word of Mouth Recommendation.*

Figure 1: Research model
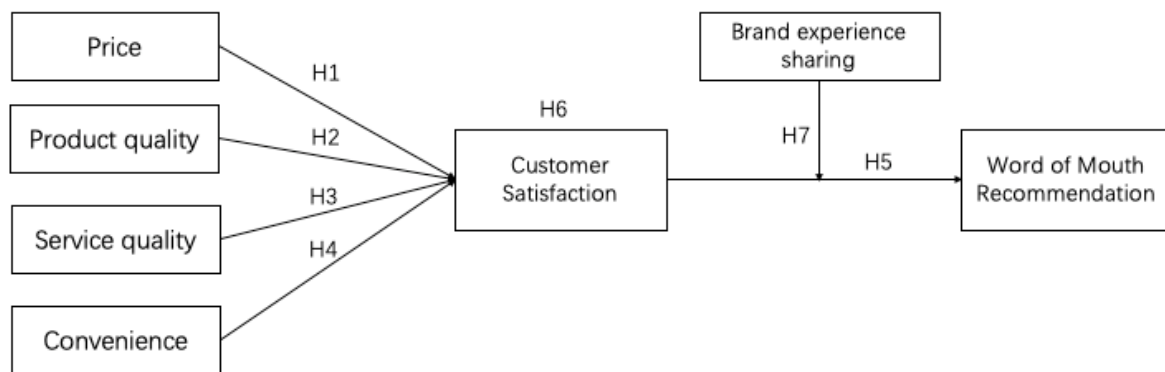
RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and Data Collection Procedure

This goal of this study is to explore the reasons behind word of mouth recommendations among P2P carsharing app users. Therefore, the respondents are car renters who have used the P2P carsharing app. Our target audiences are the Atzuche app users with rental car experience. Atzuche (Aotu Mobility) is one of the few P2P platforms in China. It was launched in June 2014 and has accumulated nearly 70 million registered users, more than 400,000 registered vehicles, and more than 10,000 vehicle models. Besides, its platform has acquired 4.2 billion user log records, and 6 billion cars have been displayed (China Daily, 2023). Therefore, it is

predicated on Atzuche's enormous user base and distinct peer-to-peer model. Selecting this application is more focused. This study used an online survey approach. A questionnaire was created using the popular Chinese online survey platform "sojump" (www.wjx.cn), and links to the questionnaire were shared via social media like WeChat, QQ, Weibo, and Little Redbook. Furthermore, a purposive sampling approach was used in this study to enhance the sample size, and upon completing the questionnaire, each respondent was eligible to earn a red envelope reward of RMB 3 yuan for gathering information through the survey. Based on the view of Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), the questionnaire's amount should fulfill structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis, and the sample size should have a ratio of 10:1, with 10 cases for each research variable. Thus, 230 (23×10) was the minimal sample size needed for this research. A total of 412 electronic questionnaires were sent out as part of this investigation, but only 382 valid surveys were left after missing values and outliers were removed using SPSS software. For the software part, this study employs the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique via SmartPLS 3.3.3 to analyze the suggested conceptual framework.

Measures

A 7-point Likert scale, scoping from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," was employed in this study to gauge participant attitudes. It is worth noting that some conditions of the variables are adjusted according to the current P2P carsharing atzuche app background as Table 2 shows. To situate the questionnaire to the background of the atzuche app theme, we first sought input from three academics specializing in consumer behavior before completing the questionnaire. After that, a sample of 50 respondents representing the target population completed the questionnaire and tested it. We revised the questionnaire based on professor feedback and a sample of 50 respondents to ensure its face and content validity. The questionnaire requires participants to make choices based on their actual situation. There are two parts to the questionnaire: the first part investigates the demographic characteristics of the research subjects, including age, gender, education, job, monthly salary, and purchase frequency; the second part includes potential demographic characteristics. Among them the three variables (customer satisfaction, price and word of mouth recommendation) that come from (Lim et al., 2022). Two variables (product quality and service quality) are cited from (Zhang, 2020). Besides, brand experience sharing sources (Liu & Yan, 2022). Finally, for the Convenience variable, there are three items after constituting in total: two from (Boateng et al., 2019) and one from (Srivastava & Kaul, 2014).

Table 1: Survey Items

Construct	Indicator	Research Items
Price	PRICE1	The rental car prices on atzuche app are affordable.
	PRICE2	The rental car prices on atzuche app are reasonable.
	PRICE3	The rental car prices on atzuche app are special offers.
	PRICE4	The rental car prices on atzuche app are value for money.
Product quality	PQ1	The quality of the car I rented with atzuche app was consistent with what I expected.
	PQ2	The car I rented was in line with atzuche app description.
	PQ3	The function of the car I rented with atzuche app was consistent with what I expected.
Service quality	SQ1	The car owner and customer service personnel's knowledge of the renting process on atzuche app was consistent with what I expected.
	SQ2	The car owner and customer service personnel on atzuche app provided warmer services than I expected.
	SQ3	In the case of any problems, the car owner and customer service personnel on atzuche gave me prompt services.
	SQ4	I really needed not to worry atzuche app-using problems when I rented cars with atzuche app.
Convenience	CONVE1	I can rent a car on atzuche app anytime I wanted.
	CONVE2	It is easy to search for a car for rent on atzuche app.
	CONVE3	The take and return location as I expect is convenient for me to take and return the car.
Customer Satisfaction	CS1	I am satisfied with my experience with the atzuche app.
	CS2	I am pleased to have my experience with the atzuche app.
	CS3	I really enjoyed myself to rent cars on atzuche app.
Word of Mouth Recommendation	WOMR1	I will spread positive word of mouth about this rental vehicle app.
	WOMR2	I will recommend this atzuche app to my family, friends, and others.
	WOMR3	I will recommend the atzuche app to someone who seeks my advice.
Brand experience sharing	BES1	I feel proud of sharing the atzuche app on the internet.
	BES2	I think sharing the atzuche app on the internet can make myself be in the spotlight.
	BES3	I make comments on others' sharing of the atzuche app.

Respondents' Profile

Detailed descriptions related to demographics are mentioned in Table 2. From the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents, 230 boys and 152 girls participated in this survey. The number of boys is 1.5 times that of girls. Most participants—63.1% of the population—are between 24 and 35. Furthermore, the educational level of most participants was undergraduate, and 44% of the total participants were students. Regarding monthly salary, 63.4% of the people have a monthly salary of less than 6,000 yuan. Judging from the frequency of the car rental users in this survey, most people use this app 3-5 times.

<div align="center">**Table 2:** Demographic profile(N=382)</div>

Construct		Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	230	60.2
	Female	152	39.8
	Total	382	100
Age	18-23	97	25.4
	24-29	126	33.0
	30-35	115	30.1
	36-41	38	9.9
	>= 42	6	1.6
	Total	382	100
Education	Primary school or below	10	2.6
	High school	58	15.2
	Undergraduate	235	61.5
	Graduate or over	75	19.6
	Others	4	1.1
	Total	382	100
Job	Manager	63	16.5
	Housewife	50	13.1
	Student	168	44.0
	Self-employed	67	17.5
	Others	34	8.9
	Total	382	100
Salary	< RMB3000	142	37.2
	RMB 3001-6000	100	26.2
	RMB 6001-10000	78	20.4
	> = RMB 10001	62	16.2
	Total	382	100
Frequency rentals	Less than 2	100	26.1
	3-5 times	137	35.9
	6-10 times	95	24.9
	over 11 times	50	13.1
	Total	382	100

RESULT

Measurement Model

It was necessary to guarantee validity and reliability when estimating the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) can be used to determine dependability. Table 3 indicates that all constructs' Cronbach's α and CR values were higher than the threshold of 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This means the seven variables in the scale's measurement were deemed reliable. Additionally, every latent variable's AVE was more significant than 0.5, proving the latent variables' convergent validity by showing that they could account for most of the indicator variance (Chin, 1998). Moreover, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of

correlations technique was our last approach. This technique states that discriminant validity can be assured if the HTMT value of any two latent variables is less than the critical value of 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Table 4 shows that any two latent variables with an HTMT value less than 0.85 support the discriminant's validity.

Table 3: Items to Measure the Variable Constructs

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
Brand experience sharing	BES1	0.861	0.838	0.840	0.902	0.755
	BES2	0.859				
	BES3	0.886				
Convenience	CONVE1	0.857	0.836	0.845	0.901	0.753
	CONVE2	0.880				
	CONVE3	0.865				
Customer Satisfaction	CS1	0.876	0.848	0.849	0.908	0.767
	CS2	0.882				
	CS3	0.870				
Product quality	PQ1	0.872	0.855	0.857	0.912	0.775
	PQ2	0.899				
	PQ3	0.869				
Price	PRICE1	0.873	0.887	0.889	0.922	0.747
	PRICE2	0.844				
	PRICE3	0.864				
	PRICE4	0.877				
Service quality	SQ1	0.846	0.883	0.888	0.919	0.739
	SQ2	0.871				
	SQ3	0.845				
	SQ4	0.876				
Word of Mouth Recommendation	WOMR1	0.845	0.809	0.821	0.886	0.722
	WOMR2	0.868				
	WOMR3	0.836				

Table 4: The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for Constructs

Construct	BES	CONVE	CS	PRICE	PQ	SQ	WOMR
BES							
CONVE	0.465						
CS	0.453	0.443					
PRICE	0.500	0.461	0.494				
PQ	0.528	0.445	0.493	0.462			
SQ	0.511	0.488	0.494	0.477	0.574		
WOMR	0.540	0.418	0.416	0.435	0.373	**0.346**	

Note: BES=Brand experience sharing, CONVE = Convenience, CS= Customer Satisfaction, PQ=Product quality, PRICE= Price, SQ= Service quality, WOMR=Word of Mouth Recommendation.

Common Method Variance (CMV)

Test for a common approach Variance method is necessary because this study uses a cross-sectional way for data collection (Podsakoff., MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In this study, common method bias was assessed using the Harman single-factor test. According to the test result, a single component explained 36.396% of the overall variation; this does not imply that the data set has common bias problems, and it fulfills the standard that Less than 50% accounts for the variance (Jaiswal, Kaushal, Mohan, & Thaichon, 2022). Additionally, we evaluated each variable's variance inflation factor (VIF) in the study model and found that all the VIF values fell between 1.000 and 2.505. Kock (2015) and Hair et al. (2017) state that if the VIF value is less than 3.3, the structural model does not have any collinearity problems.

Structural Model

In general, path coefficients, effect sizes (F^2), coefficients of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) were all examined to assess the structural model. As Henseler et al. (2015) suggested, the bootstrapping process ascertained the path coefficient's significance level with 5,000 resamples. The first is about the path coefficient. All the results are shown in Table 5. H1 was supported by offering that PRICE ($\beta=0.219$, $p<0.001$) positively and significantly impacts CS with the app. Besides, H2 is supported because PQ ($\beta=0.187$, $p<0.05$) favorably and substantially affects CS with the app. Meanwhile, SQ ($\beta=0.185$, $p<0.05$) positively and significantly impacts customer satisfaction with the app, thus supporting H3. Moreover, H4 is supported by CONVE ($\beta=0.142$, $p<0.05$), which has a favorable and significant impact on user satisfaction with the app. In addition, satisfaction with using the app ($\beta=0.186$, $p<0.001$) completely and significantly impacts WOMR, hence validating H5.

Second, regarding effect size (F^2), it illustrates how crucial exogenous factors are in explaining the variance within the endogenous construct (Cohen, 2013; Hair et al., 2014). According to Cohen (2013), F^2 values of 0.35, 0.15, and 0.02 denote significant, moderate, and weak, respectively. The results indicate that among the pre-variables of CS, PRICE ($F^2=0.050$) is more substantial compared to other factors (PQ $F^2=0.035$, SQ $F^2=0.035$, CONVE $F^2=0.022$). In addition, CS ($F^2=0.038$) also has a significant impact on explaining behavior that becomes WOMR. Based on the above conclusions, the model has good goodness of fit.

Third, the coefficient of determination (R^2) can be used to evaluate the explanatory power of the model. Meanwhile, R^2 values around 0.670, 0.333, and 0.190 indicate strong, moderate, and weak explanatory power. This study found that the combined utility of the independent variables (price, product quality, service quality, convenience) explained most of the variance in the dependent variable (word of mouth recommendation) ($R^2=0.305$). Besides, the R^2 of customer satisfaction for word of mouth recommendation was 0.249, which means that customer satisfaction explains 24.9% of the variance of word of mouth recommendation. As a result, the model's explanatory ability is good.

Finally, regarding the predictive correlation (Q^2), the predictive power of a structural model is often evaluated using Stone-Geisser Q2 values calculated via blindfold procedure (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). The Q^2 values for word of mouth recommendations and customer satisfaction are 0.17 and 0.227, respectively, both more than zero, showing that the route model's prediction accuracy is adequate (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021). Additionally, it demonstrates that, in the context of word of mouth recommendations for P2P carsharing apps, the structural model is successful in predicting the pertinent structures and relationships.

Table 5: The Results for Path Coefficient (N=382)

Hypothesis	Relationships	β	SE	t-values	Decision	R²	F²	Q²	P
H1	PRICE -> CS	0.219	0.053	4.124	Supported	0.305	0.050	0.227	0.000
H2	PQ -> CS	0.187	0.055	3.41	Supported		0.035		0.001
H3	SQ-> CS	0.185	0.053	3.472	Supported		0.032		0.001
H4	CONVE-> CS	0.142	0.049	2.896	Supported	0.249	0.022	0.17	0.004
H5	CS-> WOMR	0.186	0.047	3.944	Supported		0.038		0.000

Note: CONVE = Convenience, CS= Customer Satisfaction, PQ=Product quality, PRICE= Price, SQ= Service quality, WOMR=Word of Mouth Recommendation.

Figure 2: Structural Model
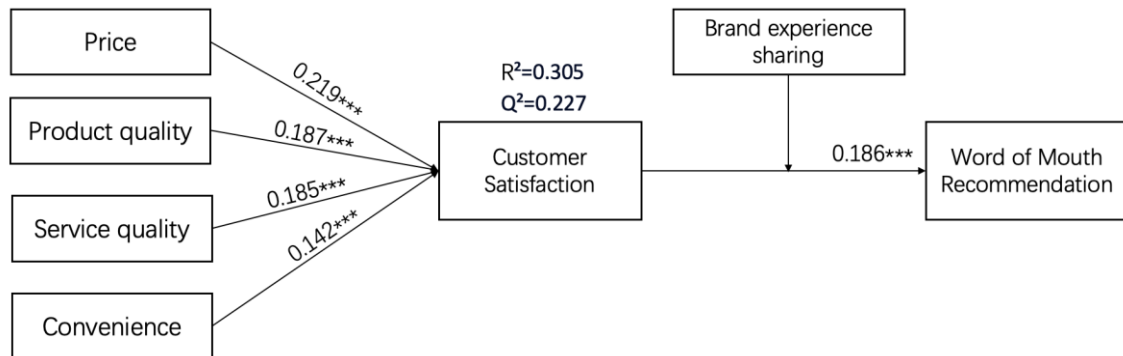
Note: **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01, →no relationship, →significant relationship.

Mediation and Moderation Test

The mediation analysis was conducted on 5000 resampling using the bootstrapping approach in this study to uncover additional potential influencing mechanisms related to pricing, product quality, service quality, convenience, and word of mouth recommendation. The results in Table 6 show all the p-values (p<0.05), meaning that all indirect effects are significant within the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. Therefore, customer satisfaction is essential in the relationship between price, product quality, service quality, convenience, and word of mouth recommendation, H6 is supported.

Table 6: Results of Structural Model (Indirect Relationship)

No	Path	Indirect Effect	STD	P-values	Supported
1	CONVE-> CS -> WOMR	0.026	0.012	0.029	YES
2	PQ-> CS -> WOMR	0.035	0.014	0.013	YES
3	SQ-> CS -> WOMR	0.034	0.014	0.011	YES
4	PRICE-> CS ->WOMR	0.041	0.014	0.005	YES

Note: CONVE = Convenience, CS= Customer Satisfaction, PQ=Product quality, PRICE= Price, SQ= Service quality, WOMR=Word of Mouth Recommendation.

In addition, a moderation effect test was performed. Figure 3 demonstrates that the green line (the higher brand experience sharing group) has a steeper slope than the red line (the lower brand experience sharing group). Customer satisfaction has a more significant influence on word of mouth recommendations when brand experience sharing is higher. Therefore, H7 is supported.

Figure 3: Moderating Effect of Brand Experience Sharing
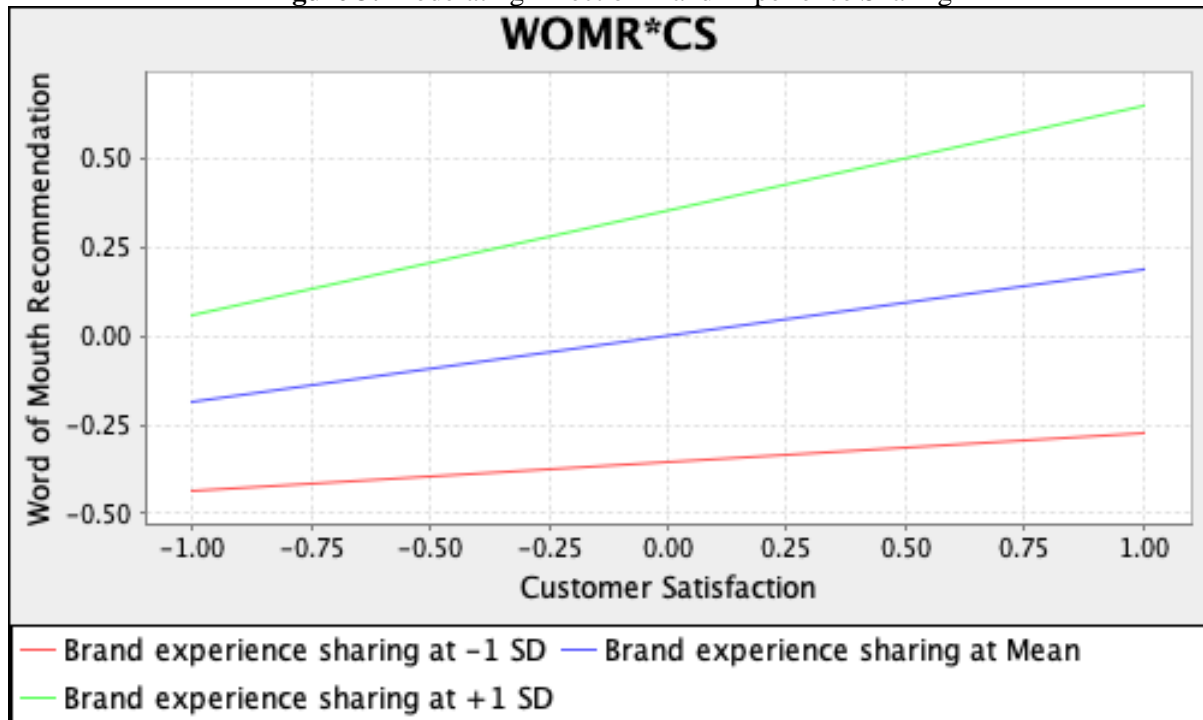
Note: CS= Customer Satisfaction, WOMR=Word of Mouth Recommendation.

RESULT

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the triggering mechanism behind the word of mouth recommendation behavior of P2P carsharing. This article combines the SOR model with shared reality theory, using customer satisfaction as the moderator and brand experience sharing as the moderator. Exploring the impact mechanism between price, product quality, service quality, convenience, and P2P carsharing word of mouth recommendation, all seven of the existing hypotheses (H1–H7) have been proven.

The results of this study show that price, product quality, service quality, and convenience positively impact P2P carsharing word of mouth recommendation through the moderator function of customer satisfaction. The results are consistent with the views of previous scholars. In the sharing economy, price, service quality, product quality, and convenience positively affect customer satisfaction (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Leon & Choi, 2020; Shiau et al., 2021). Ranking the antecedents that affect customer satisfaction from large to small are price (F^2=0.050), product quality (F^2=0.035), service quality (F^2=0.032), and convenience (F^2=0.022). In previous research, saving money, competitive prices, and convenience were the three most essential factors ranked by the satisfaction increment index of the sharing economy (Huang & Kuo, 2020). Therefore, the results of this article extend the current research on the success factors of the sharing economy. P2P carsharing is a special member of the sharing economy. Users share cars. This product is different from short-distance share mobility products. Therefore, users will pay more attention to product quality and the service attitude of the platform and car owners. The quality of the products and the platform's and the owners' approach toward service will, therefore, be more noticeable to users.

In addition, the results of this study can be well explained by the SOR model and are consistent with this theoretical basis. This research takes the price, product quality, service quality, and

convenience of shared cars as external environment stimulus elements, selects customer satisfaction as the organism of the emotional part, and finally uses the word of mouth recommendation as the behavioral outcome. Besides, it has made further contributions to the research on word of mouth recommendation combined with the SOR model.

Lastly, in line with the theoretical framework developed by the previous shared reality theory (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), this study investigates the moderating influence of brand experience sharing between customer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendation. Brand experience sharing will positively mediate the relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendation. In other words, Word of mouth recommendation has a positive impact because this process embodies both cognitive motivation and relational motivation.

Theoretical Implications

First, the shared reality theory is widely used in education and interpersonal relationships field (Haraldsen et al., 2023; Marocco & Talamo, 2022; Wilson et al., 2021). This study applies it in the business field as an innovation. Besides, it elaborates on the moderate function of brand experience between customer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendation behavior. In addition, this article is the first to use brand experience sharing to explore customer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendation. Thus, in terms of theoretical novelty and the connection between regulatory factors, this study can fill the current research gap.

Second, few literatures integrate shared reality theory into the SOR model. In the current literature, shared reality theory is often combined with social identity theory to explain the relationship between group behaviors (Lutterbach & Beelmann, 2020; Moran & Prochaska, 2023). Furthermore, although some studies have mentioned the relationship between word-of-mouth recommendations and consumer satisfaction, most of them stop at the theoretical level but do not directly test the relationship between these two variables. For example, Lai and Hitchcock (2020) explains the importance of word-of-mouth by utilizing satisfaction theory. Al Halbusi, Al-Sulaiti, Abbas, and Al-Sulaiti (2022) applies the word of mouth recommendation as a moderator variable between customer satisfaction and consumer intention. Therefore, by combining shared reality theory with the SOR model, this research explores the relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendation which contributes to the recommendation behavior in the sharing economy. Meanwhile, it also extends the SOR model. Furthermore, there is a novelty in the Stimulus section of the SOR since the variable combination therein closely matches the antecedents that influence P2P carsharing customer satisfaction.

Third, empirical research on P2P shared travel is still scarce (Prieto et al., 2022). Since P2P carsharing is a special sharing economic situation, its antecedent variables will be special, especially product quality and service quality, which expands the conclusions in the previous study (Huang & Kuo, 2020). Meanwhile, this article's research can fill the gaps in empirical research.

Practical Implication

Shared systems can be applied to address transportation needs and environmental issues (Dill et al., 2019; Prieto et al., 2022). Considering China's low market penetration rate and the potential social and personal benefits of P2P carsharing (Valor, 2020; Ye et al., 2021),

examining P2P carsharing word of mouth recommendations can help address some societal issues. In addition, it offers governments, businesses, and car owners' valuable guidance.

Firstly, from the car owner's perspective, according to the conclusions of this study, they should set reasonable prices, check the car's condition frequently, and actively cooperate with the P2P carsharing platform to serve consumers well. In this way, personal word of mouth rating will be better with better customer satisfaction.

Second, starting from the view of the companies, which are intermediaries between car owners and car renters, they should confirm the service quality of the platform, car quality, and the convenience of platform technology so that platform users can get solutions to the problems instantly. In this way, they can obtain better customer satisfaction and ultimately get a better reputation. In addition, enlightenment from the conclusion of the moderator variable, whether in terms of publicity or public welfare, companies should promote their corporate brand in order to leave a good corporate image to users and make users feel proud of sharing the company's app brand.

The Chinese government should aggressively promote the advantages of P2P carsharing through social media, news, etc. to raise public knowledge of the P2P carsharing model. Furthermore, preferential car parking locations on P2P platforms can be established via road policies to facilitate the convenient pick-up and drop-off of vehicles for both car owners and renters.

Limitations and Future Direction

From a social and environmental issues perspective, this research is quite significant due to P2P carsharing word of mouth recommendation is super important. First, this study applies cross-sectional data to make sure correlations in the research model and draw basic conclusions about causal relationships. Therefore, future research should focus on experimental studies to improve the results. In addition, this study only explores word of mouth recommendation behavior based on the SOR model and shared reality theory. In the future, scholars can consider combining other theories to expand the conceptual model, such as TPB, ABC, consumer value theory, etc. What's more, since car sharing is still in its infancy in China (Hui et al., 2019) and there are only a few P2P carsharing apps for choose as target, this study questionnaire is only limited to atzuche app brand to explore. It is necessary to expand the scope of P2P brand exploration research in the future. Furthermore, the age groups of the population can be classified in more detail in the future and linked to word of mouth recommendation behavior.

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