

Reciprocity and Commitment in the Sharing Economy

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Abstract

A sharing economy is a form of social exchange relationship that is driven by the reciprocity of exchange. Despite the importance of reciprocity in collective relations, the literature has little evidence about the underpinnings of mutual reciprocation and relationship commitment in the sharing economy. To address this gap, the study adopts the equity theory perspective to explore the factors affecting perceived reciprocity and cognitive and behavioural outcomes of reciprocal relations. The data were collected from 403 users of sharing economy platforms located in the United States. As a result of structural equation modelling, the study found that the reciprocity of relations is predicted by fair procedures of transactions, a strong feeling of social identity and the tendency to compare personal outcomes of relations with the outcomes of other members of sharing economy communities. Also, the findings of the study indicate a direct effect of reciprocity on relationship commitment and emotion-focused coping, as well as an indirect effect through problem-focused coping. The theoretical and practical contributions of the findings are discussed