

Full Throttle! Engaging Ethnic Minority and Majority Consumers in Car Sharing

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Abstract

The world is affected by environmental and social challenges, resulting in calls for engaging consumers with initiatives focused on sharing underutilized resources in Western countries. Meanwhile, these countries are characterized by migration and ethnic diversity, giving rise to ethnic minority consumers. Although ethnicity is a driver of consumer engagement, little is known about the influence of ethnicity on consumer engagement with sharing initiatives in Western countries. To address this gap, we examine the role of perceived value and trust for engaging ethnic minority (vs. majority) consumers with sharing initiatives by relying on survey data gathered in the Belgian car sharing context. The results suggest that ethnic minority consumers perceive more environmental value of car sharing than ethnic majority consumers, yet no differences are observed with regard to perceived economic and social value of car sharing. Meanwhile, ethnic minority consumers have less trust in car sharing than ethnic majority consumers. Moreover, perceived value and trust act as important mediating mechanisms for non-behavioral manifestations of consumer engagement but even more for behavioral manifestations of consumer engagement. From a theoretical perspective, this research advances the sharing economy literature and the literature on sustainable business models by unraveling the mechanisms for engaging ethnic minority and majority consumers with sharing initiatives. From a practical perspective, this research supports practitioners and policymakers to include ethnic minority and majority consumers in the transition to a more sustainable economy by exploring their engagement with sharing initiatives.

Keywords

Sharing economy, consumer engagement, ethnic minorities, perceived value, trust

Main text

1. Introduction

Today's world is facing grand challenges such as climate change and social inequality. In response to these challenges, academics, practitioners and policymakers embrace sharing initiatives to increase the utilization rate of resources (Grinevich et al., 2017). They do so because sharing initiatives have the potential to simultaneously deliver – in accordance with the triple bottom line perspective – social equity for People, environmental quality for Planet, and economic prosperity for Profit (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Kirchherr, Reike & Hekkert, 2017). This sustainable potential can, however, only be realized if sufficient consumers engage with sharing initiatives (Edbring, Lehner & Mont, 2016; Weng et al., 2020). Even though consumers increasingly engage with sharing initiatives (Sands et al., 2020), few initiatives – such as Vinted, Couchsurfing and BlaBlaCar – were able to build a consumer base of millions of consumers (Clauss, Harengel & Hock, 2019; Möhlmann, 2015). Hence, insight into the determinants of consumer engagement with sharing initiatives, reflecting the psychological or motivational disposition of consumers in relation to sharing initiatives, is of utmost importance (Brodie et al., 2011; Clauss, Harengel & Hock, 2019; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014).

In parallel, today's world is characterized by migration and ethnic diversity. For example, in 2019, 23 million out of 447.3 million people living in the European Union (5.1%) were non-EU citizens and 44.9 million out of 328 million people living in the United States of America (13.7%) were non-American citizens (Batalova, Hanna & Levesque, 2021; Eurostat, 2021). As a result of migration, many Western countries are constituted of both ethnic majorities whose value set has its origins in Western nations or cultures as well as ethnic minorities whose value set is subject to non-Western influences (e.g. Kipnis et al., 2013; Linzmajer et al., 2020; Shoham, Segev & Gavish, 2017). Ethnic minorities are thus considered groups of people whose ethnicity – which reflects the state of belonging to a group with shared national or cultural origins (Antioco et al., 2012; Arnould, Price & Zinkham, 2004; Yang, 2000) – is different from that of the majority population in a specific country (Bartikowski et al., 2018). Some ethnic minorities in Western countries – like Turkish citizens in the European Union or Hispanics in the United States of America – are becoming a considerable consumer segment and hence cannot be left behind in the attempt to boost consumer engagement with sharing initiatives in the transition to a more sustainable economy (Knafo, Roccas & Sagiv, 2011; Lee & Huang, 2020). In most – if not all – Western countries, however, ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in the sharing economy, as a result of which the sharing economy is not yet inclusive (e.g. Etter, Fieseler & Whelan, 2019; Frenken, 2017; Piscicelli, Cooper & Fisher, 2015). Prior research on sharing initiatives did not elaborate on the influence of ethnicity within countries on consumer engagement. To date, research on ethnicity in relation to sharing initiatives has mainly focused on the way in which national or cultural differences between countries shape consumer engagement with sharing initiatives, thereby wrongly assuming that countries are homogenous in terms of ethnicity (e.g. Bartikowski, Taieb & Chandon, 2016; Cleveland, Laroche & Hallab, 2013; De Mooij, 2019). Given that ethnicity is an important driver of consumption (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007) and a possible barrier to the effectiveness of actions favoring sustainability (Zakari & Toplak, 2021), more insight into the influence of ethnicity on consumer engagement with sharing initiatives and the mechanisms resulting in non-inclusivity of ethnic minorities in Western countries is urgently needed.

Against this background, we rely on survey research to investigate the influence of ethnicity on consumer engagement with sharing initiatives, thereby paying specific attention to the underlying

mechanisms which may differ according to ethnicity. Drawing upon social exchange theory, the present research examines the role of perceived value and trust to engage consumers from different ethnic backgrounds with sharing initiatives. Indeed, extant sharing economy research recurrently embraces perceived value to explain consumer engagement with sharing initiatives (e.g. De Canio et al., 2020; Tussyadiah, 2016), thereby emphasizing – consistent with the triple bottom line perspective – perceived economic, environmental and social value (e.g. De Canio et al., 2020; Méndez-León, Reyes-Carrillo & Díaz-Pichardo, 2021). In a similar vein, many scholars acknowledge that trust is of major importance for engagement in the sharing economy (e.g. Dabbous & Tarhini, 2019; Gu et al., 2021; Hazée et al., 2020). As ethnicity matters for perceptions of value and trust (Pankhania, Lee & Hooley, 2007; Soroka, Banting & Johnston, 2007; Tian et al., 2020), a key question is to what extent ethnicity affects perceived value and trust in relation to sharing initiatives, and consequently consumer engagement with sharing initiatives.

This research contributes to theory and practice in several ways. First, this research advances the sharing economy literature by generating a better understanding of consumer differences in terms of consumer engagement with sharing initiatives (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Lutz & Newlands, 2018). Specifically, this research investigates the role of ethnic differences between consumers within Western countries. Next, as the role of perceived economic, environmental and social value is investigated, this research embraces the triple bottom line perspective when examining the mechanisms for engaging ethnic minority and majority consumers with sharing initiatives. Additionally, this research contributes to the sharing economy literature by exploring the role of not only perceived value but also trust as a mechanism for engaging consumers with sharing initiatives (Akhmedova et al., 2021; Baker et al., 2021; Eckhardt et al., 2019). Finally, this research advances the literature concerning sustainable business models. Indeed, by investigating the mechanisms through which ethnic minority (vs. majority) consumers engage with business models that aim to simultaneously deliver economic, environmental and social value (e.g. sharing initiatives), we enhance extant knowledge on how these business models can expand their consumer base and grow (e.g. Day et al., 2020; Parente, Geleilate & Rong, 2018; Piscicelli, Ludden & Cooper, 2018). For business practitioners and policymakers, our findings can provide guidance in motivating consumers from different ethnic backgrounds to engage with sharing initiatives (Sands et al., 2020).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Ethnicity and engagement with sharing initiatives

Consumer engagement with an offering reflects the psychological or motivational disposition of consumers in relation to that offering (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). This disposition entails non-behavioral manifestations (e.g. thinking and feeling positive about an offering) as well as behavioral manifestations (e.g. using and recommending an offering) and both are necessary for the success of an offering.

Extant research suggests that ethnicity influences the extent to which consumers engage with an offering (e.g. Boshoff, 2012; El Banna et al., 2018; Gill, Kim & Ranaweera, 2017). Ethnicity, reflecting the state of belonging to subgroups that are distinguished – by itself or by others – on the basis of common national or cultural origins (Antioco et al., 2012; Arnould, Price & Zinkham, 2004; Yang, 2000), is a salient trait for categorization and comparison of subgroups between countries but also within countries (Bozkurt, Gligor & Hollebeek, 2021; Müller, 2009; Pichler et al., 2019). Indeed,

although relatively little research has investigated ethnic variation within countries, research has successfully evidenced that different ethnic groups within countries have different values which manifest themselves in different perceptions of an offering, which also affects their engagement towards that offering (e.g. Kipnis et al., 2019; Laroche et al., 2003; Pankhania, Lee & Hooley, 2007).

With regard to sharing initiatives, a couple of sharing economy studies suggest that differences in national origin may explain consumer engagement (e.g. Lang, Seo & Liu, 2019; Lee & Huang, 2020). Additionally, some studies investigate the influence of differences in cultural origin on consumer engagement with sharing initiatives (e.g. Gupta et al., 2019; Wu & Shen, 2018). Although countries are not homogenous in terms of ethnicity (e.g. De Mooij, 2019; Gbadamosi, 2015; Kipnis et al., 2019), the vast majority of studies in the sharing economy literature focuses on differences regarding national or cultural origins between countries (e.g. Lee & Huang, 2020). If ethnicity within countries is considered in sharing economy studies, extant research fails to explain how and why ethnicity shapes engagement beyond diversity in terms of cultural values (e.g. Wu & Shen, 2018).

2.2. Social exchange theory as mechanism of consumer engagement

To date, extant research suggests that consumer engagement with sharing initiatives is – in accordance with social exchange theory – dependent upon the perceived value stemming from sharing initiatives (Boateng, Kosiba & Okoe, 2019; Verleye, 2015). Sharing economy studies recurrently draw upon the triple bottom line approach and relate perceived value to the three dimensions of sustainable value: economic value (Profit), environmental value (Planet) and social value (People) (e.g. Böcker & Meelen, 2017; De Canio et al., 2020; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016). Next to perceived value, social exchange theory emphasizes reciprocity in social exchanges (vs. pure economic exchanges) and argues that engagement is also driven by trust (Chuah et al., 2021). In this regard, sharing economy research also stresses the importance of trust for engagement with sharing initiatives (Baker et al., 2021; Fritze et al., 2021).

Building upon the abovementioned evidence, this research investigates how the state of belonging to the ethnic minority (vs. majority) influences consumer engagement with sharing initiatives through perceived value of sharing initiatives and trust in sharing initiatives.

Perceived economic value – which reflects monetary gains and/or savings through sharing – is evidenced to induce consumer engagement in the sharing economy (e.g. Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016; Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018; Möhlmann, 2015). Meanwhile, a key question revolves around the influence of consumers' ethnicity on the perceived economic value of sharing initiatives. In this regard, prior research suggests that ethnic minorities may face restrained financial means (Bhutta et al., 2020; Choudhury, 2002; Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2018). As disclosing financial deprivation may have negative consequences for their economic position in society (Jaikumar, Singh & Sarin, 2018; Ungerer, 2019), sharing may have less economic value in the eyes of financially-restrained consumers. Consequently, ethnic minorities may prefer ownership over sharing as this allows them to hide financial deprivation from the outside world (Jugert, Leszczensky & Pink, 2018; Schaefers et al., 2021; Sharma & Alter, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: Compared to ethnic majorities, ethnic minorities in Western countries (a) perceive less economic value from sharing initiatives, which (b) negatively influences their engagement towards sharing initiatives. Hence, (c) perceived economic value

mediates the relation between ethnicity and consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives.

Regarding perceived environmental value, referring to positive environmental implications of sharing through increased utilization of idle resources, empirical studies conclude its stimulating role for consumer engagement in the sharing economy (e.g. Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016; Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018). Meanwhile, ethnicity may affect perceptions of environmental value as not all ethnic groups pay equal attention to the environment. Ethnic groups whose value sets find their origins in non-Western cultures or nations – which is the case for many ethnic minorities in Western countries – may care more about the environment, following a focus on collectivist rather than individualistic values (Kizgin et al., 2018; Patterson, 2017; Shavitt & Zhang, 2004). Indeed, several scholars have discovered a positive relationship between collectivism and environmental values (Eastman & Iyer, 2021; Segev, 2015; Shi, Wu & Kuang, 2018). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2: Compared to ethnic majorities, ethnic minorities in Western countries (a) perceive more environmental value from sharing initiatives, which (b) positively influences their engagement towards sharing initiatives. Hence, (c) perceived environmental value mediates the relation between ethnicity and consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives.

With regard to perceived social value as another important determinant of consumer engagement with sharing initiatives, a distinction should be made between social value originating from belonging to a community of like-minded people (e.g. Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018; Möhlmann, 2015) and social value originating from gaining recognition from like-minded people (e.g. Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016; Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018; Lambertson & Rose, 2012). Consumers who embrace collectivistic values – such as many ethnic minorities in Western countries – may perceive more social value in the form of community belonging and recognition when sharing, because sharing initiatives tailor into the need for respectively strong social ties and desire for social approval (e.g. Koydemir & Essau, 2018; Prabhu, 2011; Yang, Ding & D'Alessandro, 2018). Meanwhile, drawing upon similarity-attraction theory, people tend to perceive higher levels of community belonging when connecting with people of the same ethnic group (i.e. in-group) compared to connecting with people of other ethnic groups (i.e. out-groups) (Bozkurt, Gligor & Hollebeek, 2021; Ta, Esper & Hofer, 2018). This so-called homophily effect is even stronger for ethnic minorities compared to ethnic majorities (Bozkurt, Gligor & Hollebeek, 2021). A similar pattern is observed when looking at recognition. Building upon social identity theory, ethnic minorities value recognition by their own ethnic group (i.e. in-group) more than they value recognition by other ethnic groups (i.e. out-groups) (Bozkurt, Gligor & Hollebeek, 2021). If the in-group is less engaged in sharing initiatives – which holds for ethnic minorities who are underrepresented in the sharing economy (Andreotti et al., 2017; Cansoy & Schor, 2017) – consumers may perceive less social value in terms of community belonging and recognition. Hence, we hypothesize:

H3: Compared to ethnic majorities, ethnic minorities in Western countries (a) perceive less social value of community belonging from sharing initiatives, which (b) negatively influences their engagement towards sharing initiatives. Hence, (c)

perceived social value of community belonging mediates the relation between ethnicity and consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives.

H4: Compared to ethnic majorities, ethnic minorities in Western countries (a) perceive less social value of recognition from sharing initiatives, which (b) negatively influences their engagement towards sharing initiatives. Hence, (c) perceived social value of recognition mediates the relation between ethnicity and consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives.

Following social exchange theory, not only perceived value is of importance to engage consumers, also trust plays a crucial role (Ma et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). In the sharing economy, exchanges commonly take place between strangers which makes trust even more vital for consumer engagement with sharing initiatives. Indeed, the urgency of trust in the sharing economy is stressed by multiple scholars (e.g. Crucke & Slabbinck, 2019; Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018; Möhlmann, 2015). Extant research suggests that consumers tend to perceive higher levels of trust when engaging in exchanges with the in-group than when engaging in exchanges with out-groups (Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015; Putnam, 2007). As ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the sharing economy (Andreotti et al., 2017; Cansoy & Schor, 2017), they are less likely to engage in exchanges with the in-group (i.e. consumers from the same ethnic group) than to engage in exchanges with out-groups (i.e. consumers from other ethnic groups) and hence have less trust in sharing initiatives. Based upon this evidence, we hypothesize:

H5: Compared to ethnic majorities, ethnic minorities in Western countries (a) have less trust in sharing initiatives, which (b) negatively influences their engagement towards sharing initiatives. Hence, (c) trust mediates the relation between ethnicity and consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives.

The research model resulting from these hypotheses is depicted in Figure 1.

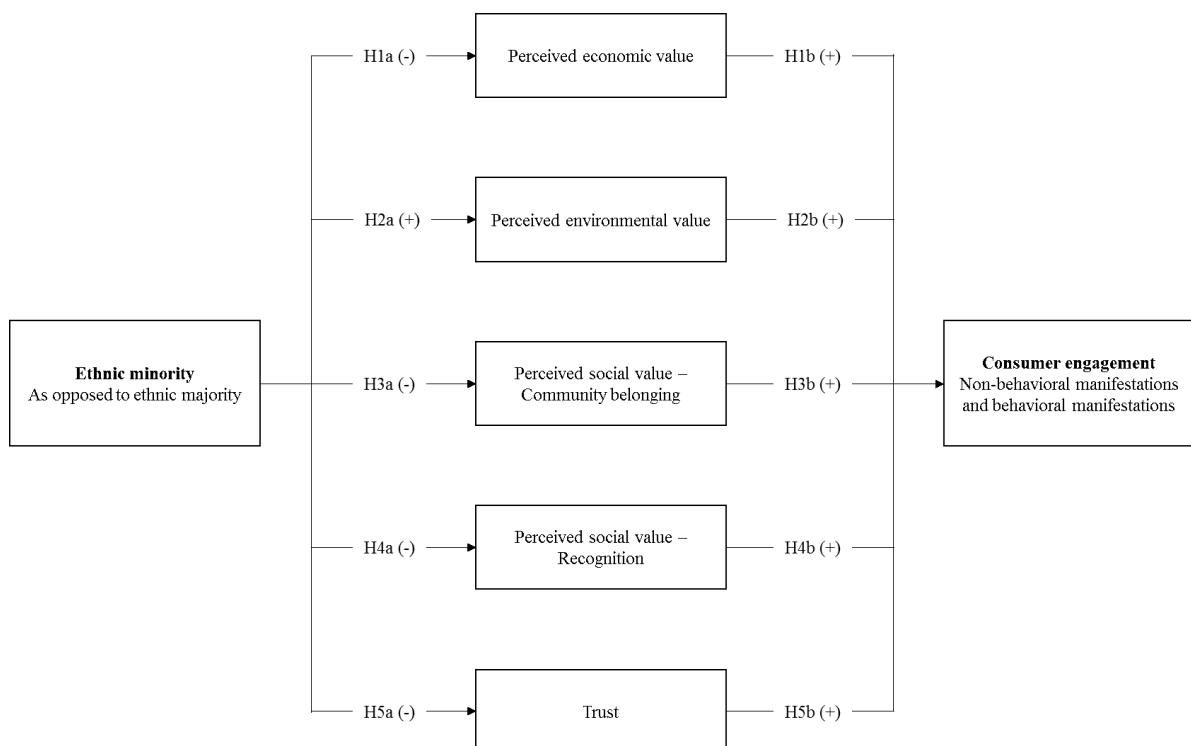


Figure 1. Research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

To empirically investigate the influence of consumers' ethnicity on their engagement with sharing initiatives, this research employs a survey design. Though the sharing economy covers a wide variety of sectors in different countries, this research focuses on business-to-consumer car sharing in Flanders, Belgium (Fernandes, Chimenti & Nogueira, 2020; Lang et al., 2021). First, car sharing is considered one of the most promising sectors in the sharing economy (Matthijs et al., 2021; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2016), not in the least because an average car is used only four to eight percent of the time (Kumar, Lahiri & Dogan, 2018) or because global CO2 emissions from road transport primarily stem from passenger vehicles (International Energy Agency, 2019; OECD, 2011). Second, many car sharing initiatives are active in Flanders (Chapman, Eyckmans & Van Acker, 2020; Crucke & Slabbinck, 2019). Third, even though the Flemish car sharing market is relatively mature, car sharing initiatives experience difficulties in engaging ethnic minorities (Chapman, Eyckmans & Van Acker, 2020; Crucke & Slabbinck, 2019; Staes, 2015). Finally, the ethnic diversity in Belgium is comparable to the ethnic diversity in other Western countries (Eurostat, 2021; Hooghe & De Vroome, 2015).

To capture whether respondents belong to the ethnic minority (vs. majority), we gathered information on their nationalities (Licsandru & Cui, 2018; Pires & Stanton, 2000). As non-EU ethnic minorities in Belgium – like most European countries – predominantly encompass people with the Turkish or Maghrebian nationality (Meeusen, Abts & Meuleman, 2019), we have classified people with the Turkish or Maghrebian nationality – whether or not combined with the Belgian nationality – as belonging to the ethnic minority group. People only having the Belgian nationality were classified as belonging to the ethnic majority group. Next, we relied on extant multi-item scales in the sharing economy literature to capture perceived value of sharing initiatives (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016) and trust in sharing initiatives (Möhlmann, 2015). With regard to consumer engagement, we distinguished – in line with our conceptualization – between non-behavioral consumer engagement (e.g. thinking and feeling positive about an offering) and behavioral consumer engagement (e.g. using and recommending an offering) (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). For non-behavioral consumer engagement, we used the scale of Hamari, Sjöklint and Ukkonen (2016). For behavioral consumer engagement, we relied on the scale of Barnes and Mattsson (2017). All aforementioned scales were measured on 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Finally, we collected sociodemographic information (here, gender and age).

3.2. Sample

Data was collected from November 2019 until March 2020, using an online survey administered via Qualtrics (in Dutch). It should be noted that data was captured before stay-at-home measures imposed by the Belgian government due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were approached via direct messages, social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and e-mails to ethno-cultural organizations. Next to being older than 18, respondents had to possess a driver's license and understand the Dutch language (as the survey was in Dutch).

The A-priori Sample Size Calculator for Structural Equation Models was used to calculate the required sample size (Soper, 2021). Given the 28 observed items of the seven latent variables, the observed independent variable and the two observed control variables (Crucke & Slabbinck, 2019; Halder et al., 2020; Minami, Ramos & Bortoluzzo, 2021), a minimum sample size of 1244 was required to achieve a power of 0.80, an (small) anticipated effect of 0.12 and a probability level of 0.05 (Cohen, 1988; Lau et al., 2019; Morrison, Morrison & McCutcheon, 2017; Soper, 2021).

Altogether, 2553 respondents started the Qualtrics survey, yet only 1379 respondents fully completed the survey (completion rate of 54.01%). In the final sample, all respondents who answered all questions related to the research model in Figure 1 are included. The final sample includes 1495 respondents with variety in terms of ethnicity (10.34% ethnic minority respondents) and other sociodemographic characteristics (41.87% male respondents; mean age = 36.18).

4. Results

The measurement model and the structural model were analyzed by means of Structural Equation Modeling using the lavaan package in R (Rosseel, 2012).

4.1. Measurement model

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) exhibited an adequate fit of the measurement model. The chi-square statistic of 2285.11 with 329 degrees of freedom was significant ($p < 0.01$). The comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.94, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) was 0.93 and the root mean square error of approximation was 0.06 (Bentler, 1992; Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1998, 1999).

To assess the reliability of the constructs, we relied on Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability values. The Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs ranged between 0.81 and 0.94 which implies good to excellent construct reliability (Hair, 2009). Moreover, all composite reliability (CR) values exceeded the threshold value of 0.60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

To ensure convergent validity, both the factor loadings and the average variances extracted were investigated. The factor loadings were all significant and above 0.60 which indicates convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, all average variances extracted (AVE) were above 0.50, evidencing convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

To ensure discriminant validity, we followed the criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981). As the square root of the average variances extracted was always larger than the correlations between the constructs, discriminant validity was established (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

4.2. Structural model

The structural model also showed an acceptable fit with the data as CFI, TLI and RMSEA values were 0.88, 0.87 and 0.08, respectively (Bentler, 1992; Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1998, 1999). For the mediation model, we requested bootstrap standard errors and a bootstrap based p-value (5000 bootstrap samples). The hypotheses were tested whilst controlling for the influence of gender and age on consumer engagement with car sharing as these control variables were found

to influence consumer engagement in previous sharing economy research (e.g. Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Minami, Ramos & Bortoluzzo, 2021).

First, we investigate the direct effect of ethnicity on non-behavioral consumer engagement and behavioral consumer engagement. The former is significantly negative ($\beta = -0.155$, $p < 0.001$), thus indicating that ethnic minorities in Western countries exhibit less non-behavioral engagement towards sharing initiatives than ethnic majorities. The latter is not significant ($\beta = 0.039$, $p > 0.05$), hence no difference in behavioral consumer engagement across ethnic groups could be detected in this study.

Regarding perceived economic value, no significant relation is found between ethnicity and perceived economic value ($\beta = -0.030$, $p > 0.05$), thus not supporting hypothesis H1a. However, in support of hypothesis H2b, a positive relation was found between perceived economic value and non-behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.104$, $p < 0.001$) and between perceived economic value and behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.079$, $p < 0.01$). This evidence shows that perceived economic value is indeed a determinant of consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives. Next, the indirect effect of ethnicity on non-behavioral consumer engagement through perceived economic value is not significant ($\beta = -0.003$, $p > 0.05$), nor is the indirect effect of ethnicity on behavioral consumer engagement through perceived economic value ($\beta = -0.002$, $p > 0.05$). In other words, hypothesis H1c is not supported.

The results further suggest that ethnic minorities in Western countries perceive more environmental value of car sharing compared to ethnic majorities ($\beta = 0.081$, $p < 0.01$), which supports hypothesis H2a. Perceived environmental value, in turn, positively influences non-behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.001$) as well as behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, more perceived environmental value results in more consumer engagement towards sharing initiatives. Hence, hypothesis H2b is supported. Moreover, the indirect effect of ethnicity on non-behavioral consumer engagement through perceived environmental value is significant ($\beta = 0.019$, $p < 0.01$), as is the indirect effect of ethnicity on behavioral consumer engagement through perceived environmental value ($\beta = 0.011$, $p < 0.05$). As a result, hypothesis H2c is also supported.

Regarding perceived social value of community belonging, no significant relationship is found between ethnicity and perceived social value of community belonging ($\beta = 0.042$, $p > 0.05$), thus not supporting hypothesis H3a. Moreover, whereas the relation between perceived social value of community belonging and non-behavioral consumer engagement is not significant ($\beta = 0.022$, $p > 0.05$), the relation between perceived social value of community belonging and behavioral consumer engagement is significantly positive ($\beta = 0.063$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, hypothesis H3b is only partially supported. In addition, the indirect relation between ethnicity and non-behavioral engagement through perceived social value of community belonging is not significant ($\beta = 0.001$, $p > 0.05$), nor is the indirect relation between ethnicity and behavioral consumer engagement through perceived social value of community belonging ($\beta = 0.003$, $p > 0.05$). As a result, hypothesis H3c is not supported.

Regarding perceived social value of recognition, no significant relation is found between ethnicity and perceived social value of recognition ($\beta = 0.058$, $p > 0.05$), thus not supporting hypothesis H4a. In contrast, perceived social value of recognition positively influences non-behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.072$, $p < 0.01$) and the same holds for the relation between perceived social

value of recognition and behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.206$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis H4b is thus supported. Then again, the indirect effect is insignificant for non-behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.004$, $p > 0.05$) and behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.012$, $p > 0.05$). Consequently, hypothesis H4c is not supported.

Finally, the results indicate that belonging to the ethnic minority group negatively influences trust ($\beta = -0.049$, $p < 0.05$), which indicates that ethnic minorities in Western countries perceive less trust in car sharing than ethnic majorities. This is in line with hypothesis H5a. Moreover, trust positively affects non-behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.504$, $p < 0.001$) and behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.394$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, less trust in sharing initiatives results in less engagement towards sharing initiatives. This evidence supports hypothesis H5b. Ultimately, the indirect effect stemming from ethnicity mediated via trust is negative for both non-behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = -0.025$, $p < 0.05$) and behavioral consumer engagement ($\beta = -0.019$, $p < 0.05$), thus satisfying hypothesis H5c.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical implications

First, this research focuses on the role of ethnicity in engaging consumers with sharing initiatives. In doing so, this research advances the sharing economy literature, which suggests that consumer engagement with sharing initiatives is – in accordance with social exchange theory – dependent upon perceived value and trust (e.g. Boateng, Kosiba & Okoe, 2019; Chuah et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2020; Verleye, 2015; Wang et al., 2019). Specifically, the present research contributes to this literature stream by demonstrating how consumer perceptions about social exchanges in the sharing economy (here, perceived value and trust) are influenced by ethnicity. By unraveling how ethnic minority and majority consumers engage with sharing initiatives, this research also generates a better understanding of consumer differences (here, differences linked to ethnicity) in the sharing economy, as called upon in previous research (Akhmedova et al., 2021; Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Lutz & Newlands, 2018). Moreover, by providing insight into engaging ethnic minority and majority consumers, this research advances extant knowledge on attracting and retaining consumers with different ethnic backgrounds in the sharing economy, which is a key research priority in the literature on sustainable business models (Hu et al., 2019; Piscicelli, Ludden & Cooper, 2018).

Second, the present research embraces the triple bottom line perspective when investigating the mechanisms for engaging ethnic minority and majority consumers with sharing initiatives. Indeed, these initiatives – as a subset of sustainable business models – have the potential to deliver not only economic but also environmental and social value (e.g. Bocken et al., 2020; Ciulli & Kolk, 2019; De Giacomo & Bleischwitz, 2020; Lozano, 2018). The research findings, however, nuance the engagement potential of the triple bottom line, in that perceptions of economic, environmental, and social value of sharing initiatives vary among consumers. Consumers' ethnicity partially explains this variability in terms of perceived sustainable value, in that ethnicity influences perceived environmental value. This evidence suggests that different actors may have different views on the sustainable potential of sharing initiatives.

Third, this research presents not only perceived value but also trust as a mechanism for engaging ethnic minority and majority consumers with sharing initiatives, thereby building upon insights from the sharing economy literature (e.g. Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018; Möhlmann, 2015).

The present research also advances this literature stream by demonstrating that ethnicity affects trust in such a way that ethnic minority consumers have less trust in sharing initiatives than ethnic majority consumers and hence show less engagement. Although the influence of ethnicity on trust is less pronounced than its influence on perceived environmental value, the engagement potential of trust is higher than the engagement potential of perceived environmental value. As such, this research supports the important role of trust in engaging consumers with sharing initiatives whilst highlighting differences between ethnic minority and majority consumers.

Finally, this research explores consumer engagement with sharing initiatives in terms of behavioral as well as non-behavioral manifestations. By doing so, this research builds upon the sharing economy literature that – inspired by the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior – focuses on explaining behavioral intentions and actual usage of sharing initiatives, which resonate with behavioral manifestations of engagement (e.g. Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Lang & Armstrong, 2018; Toni, Renzi & Mattia, 2018). Non-behavioral manifestations of consumer engagement with sharing initiatives, however, are equally important, in that consumers who use offerings – such as sharing initiatives – without thinking and/or feeling positive about them may not contribute to their success from a triple bottom line perspective and the same goes for consumers who think and/or feel positive about offerings without using them (Brodie et al., 2013).

5.2. Managerial implications

For business practitioners in the sharing economy, this research offers relevant insights for generating and maintaining consumer engagement with sharing initiatives. First, as this research provides concrete insights into the determinants of consumer engagement among ethnic minorities (vs. majorities), it advances knowledge about consumer heterogeneity in the context of sharing initiatives based on consumer ethnicity (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Lutz & Newlands, 2018; Sands et al., 2020). Additionally, by revealing the underlying mechanisms of consumer engagement among ethnic minorities (vs. majorities), this research contributes to moving away from universally addressing and targeting (potential) consumers of sharing initiatives, which is unlikely to be a successful approach (Gupta et al., 2019; Lee & Huang, 2020). Different ethnic groups can be addressed more adequately when including the significant mediating influences from this study in marketing communications. For example, business practitioners could emphasize the environmental value of sharing initiatives even more in communications towards ethnic minorities. Next, given the significant influence of trust on consumer engagement, sufficient attention should be paid to trust building mechanisms (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017; Möhlmann, 2015). Finally, the findings from this study may also assist sharing business models – and by extension sustainable business models – in eliciting consumer engagement and expanding their consumer base. Indeed, it is no longer sufficient for businesses to only deliver economic value, also environmental and social value are of importance (Esch, Schnellbacher & Wald, 2019; Panapanaan et al., 2016). However, sustainable business models – such as sharing initiatives – are dependent upon a critical mass of consumers (and providers) to deliver sustainable value. In this regard, ethnic minorities represent an important target market as demographic trends suggest that ethnic minorities will continue to increase (Pankhania, Lee & Hooley, 2007). Hence, understanding ethnic minorities in relation to sustainable business models is a necessity for these business models to secure enough participants, leverage network effects and grow (e.g. Day et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2019; Parente, Geleilate & Rong, 2018).

5.3. Limitations and future research

This research has some limitations which offer suggestions for future research. First, this research exploits data stemming from Belgian consumers regarding engagement with sharing initiatives in the car sharing sector. As this may limit the generalizability of the findings, future research might want to replicate this study among consumers in different countries and different sectors (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Cocquyt, Crucke & Slabbinck, 2020; Möhlmann, 2015). Moreover, generations of ethnic groups might differ in their identification with host country and country of origin and, in turn, in engagement towards sharing initiatives (Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Second, although this research focuses on business-to-consumer car sharing initiatives, alternative car sharing business models – such as cooperative car sharing business models – exist, for which the influence of ethnicity and the underlying mechanisms regarding consumer engagement might be different (Crucke & Slabbinck, 2019; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). Third, this research investigates both non-behavioral engagement and behavioral engagement, yet no actual behaviors. Given the attitude-behavior gap as well as the intention-behavior gap, future research should invest in collecting data on actual behaviors in the sharing economy to assess whether the influence of ethnicity and the underlying mechanisms for consumer engagement will still be the same (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Cocquyt, Crucke & Slabbinck, 2020; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016; Nguyen, Nguyen & Hoang, 2019). Fourth, the cross-sectional data was collected before the onset of a worldwide pandemic which might have led to biased results. Indeed, the dynamics to engage with sharing initiatives might have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. social interactions), which strengthens the need for longitudinal data about consumer engagement with sharing initiatives to highlight long-term effects (Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016). Finally, as this research provides insights into the mechanisms of consumer engagement for ethnic minority and ethnic majority groups, it might support future research on promoting sharing initiatives among different ethnic groups through signaling value and trust (Anwar, 2017; Eckhardt et al., 2019; Prothero et al., 2011).

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