

Emerging Research on the Relational Benefits in Sharing Economy Services: A Bibliometrics Analysis

Muhammad Alif Ikhmal Mohd Azlan^{1*}, Nor Irwani Abdul Rahman¹

¹ Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

* Corresponding Author: alifikhmal@studentmail.unimap.edu.my

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Abstract: *The sharing economy has reshaped service delivery through digital platforms such as Grab, Uber, and FoodPanda, enabling seamless interactions between users and gig workers. Within this two-sided service model, relational benefits—particularly confidence and special treatment benefits—play a pivotal role in fostering trust, loyalty, and sustained engagement. However, research in this domain remains fragmented, lacking a cohesive conceptual foundation. This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 170 articles published between 2020 and 2025 using the Scopus database and VOSviewer software to map key trends, authorship patterns, institutional and geographic contributions, and keyword co-occurrences. Results reveal a surge in research following the COVID-19 pandemic, peaking in 2023, driven by shifts in digital labour and increased platform reliance. Key themes include trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and platform engagement, while emerging areas such as insurance-linked incentives, technological integration, and policy regulation remain underexplored. Analysis also highlights the prominence of specific institutions (e.g., Griffith University, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya) and countries (notably the United States and China) in advancing this field. This study consolidates scattered scholarship and proposes future research directions, including the reconceptualization of confidence benefits within digital labour contexts, the assessment of insurance schemes, and the examination of technological and regulatory moderators. These insights aim to guide the design of more inclusive and sustainable benefit structures for gig workers in evolving platform-based ecosystems.*

Keywords: Relational Benefits, Sharing Economy, Gig Work, Bibliometric Analysis, Commitment, Platform Services

1. Introduction

The sharing economy has revolutionized the service sector, particularly in Southeast Asia, by enabling platform-mediated work through digital apps such as Grab, Uber, FoodPanda, and Lalamove. These platforms connect consumers with gig workers—commonly known as delivery partners—offering services like transportation, parcel delivery, and food dispatch (Yang et al., 2017; Zou et al., 2023). For Instance, the p-hailing (parcel- and food-delivery) industry has surged, driven by rising demand for convenience and flexible income opportunities in Malaysia particularly, (Rusli et al., 2022). Prominent brands like FoodPanda, GrabFood, DeliverEat, and Lalamove have dominated this landscape. However, while this model offers flexibility, it also raises sustainability concerns—particularly in retaining gig

workers amid the temporary and unprotected nature of platform-based work (Nik Azman, 2024).

Unlike traditional employment, gig work is often characterized by inconsistent earnings, safety risks, and a lack of social security, which can erode long-term commitment (Aziz & Lee, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Loh, 2024). As a result, platforms are under increasing pressure to offer benefits that go beyond short-term incentives. Grab, for instance, has introduced comprehensive benefit programs across Southeast Asia—including Free Basic Insurance, Premium Insurance (RPG 24/7) and tiered reward structures—to improve partners' engagement (Salvucci, 2024; Wee, 2023). These incentive schemes are not merely transactional, namely relational benefits—additional value propositions aimed at fostering deeper psychological and functional bonds with platform users, including gig workers.

The concept of relational benefits originates from relationship marketing literature, where it denotes the added value received by customers or partners through sustained interactions with a service provider (Gwinner et al., 1998). Foundational types of relational benefits include confidence, social, and special treatment benefits. Over time, other variants such as structural, honor, safety, and personalization benefits have emerged to address different service contexts (Colgate et al., 2005; Su et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2017). In low-contact digital platforms such as food delivery, confidence and special treatment benefits—such as accident coverage, service prioritization, and training programs—are particularly critical for maintaining trust and commitment (Chou & Chen, 2018; Patterson & Smith, 2001). This aligns with the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which posits that trust and commitment are essential to sustaining long-term business relationships.

Despite growing scholarly attention on relational benefits, most existing studies focus on traditional service industries, and few systematically explore their role in digital, gig-based contexts. To date, we observed research trends on delivery platforms are often fragmented, case-specific, and conceptually inconsistent—leaving little clarity on how relational benefits are defined, operationalized, or measured in the sharing economy. Hence, we believe there is a lack of consolidated knowledge on who the leading contributors are, how research themes have evolved, and what future directions are emerging. Given the rising socio-economic importance of gig work and the uneven application of benefit systems, there is a timely need to map the intellectual structure of relational benefits research within this sector.

Building upon the above context, this study aims to examine the evolving research landscape of relational benefits in the sharing economy using bibliometric analysis. Specifically, it seeks to:

- i. Identify publication trends over time.
- ii. Determine the most influential journals, authors, institutions, articles, and countries.
- iii. Analyze collaborative networks.
- iv. Examine the evolution of thematic structures and keyword patterns; and
- v. Suggest future research directions for relational benefits in sharing economy services.

This paper proceeds by outlining the bibliometric methodology, followed by an in-depth analysis of findings, discussion of emerging research fronts, and conclusions with implications for scholars, policymakers, and platform stakeholders.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Relational Benefits in Service Contexts

Relational benefits are a foundational concept in relationship marketing, describing the additional value customers or partners receive from sustained interaction with a service provider (Gwinner et al., 1998). These benefits are positioned beyond core services, aiming to build emotional, functional, or economic ties that increase loyalty, satisfaction, and retention. Rooted in the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), relational benefits contribute to ongoing relationships where trust and perceived value drive continued engagement.

Scholars have identified various dimensions of relational benefits, notably: confidence benefits (reduction in uncertainty and anxiety), social benefits (interpersonal connections), and special treatment benefits (exclusive or customized offers). Subsequent studies expanded this framework by introducing structural benefits (long-term infrastructural support), personalization benefits, history benefits, and honor or safety benefits, reflecting the evolving needs of different service contexts (Colgate et al., 2005; Lin et al., 2003). These benefits have been positively associated with increased customer trust, reduced switching intention, and long-term commitment across industries such as retail banking, healthcare, hospitality, and aviation (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Patterson & Smith, 2001).

2.2 Application of Relational Benefits in Sharing Economy Services

The sharing economy is characterized by digitally mediated peer-to-peer exchanges that represent a new paradigm for service interaction. Platforms like Uber, Grab, and FoodPanda facilitate interactions between users and gig workers, where relational dynamics are increasingly governed by algorithms, app interfaces, and rating systems. This technological mediation challenges the conventional delivery of relational benefits.

In these low-contact service environments, confidence and special treatment benefits are more prominent than social benefits due to limited face-to-face engagement (Chou & Chen, 2018; Gwinner et al., 1998). Examples include Grab's accident insurance (confidence benefit) and tier-based reward programs (special treatment benefit) that reinforce loyalty and reduce worker turnover (Salvucci, 2024; Wee, 2023). Platforms like Uber and Lyft in the U.S. have implemented occupational insurance and exclusive reward tiers, while FoodPanda and Lalamove offer perks tied to task volume or quality scores. However, studies reveal uneven access to these benefits, with gig workers often unaware of entitlements or disincentivized by complex claims processes (Abdul Rahman et al., 2023; Mohd Azlan & Rahman, 2025).

2.3 Gaps and Justification for a Bibliometric Review

Current studies on relational benefits in gig work are largely case-based, focused on single platforms or national contexts, and often neglect cross-comparative or longitudinal perspectives (Mohd Azlan et al., 2025). The focus has traditionally been on consumer benefits, while gig workers—the service providers—are less studied despite their centrality in platform operations. Furthermore, varying terminologies and conceptual boundaries have led to inconsistent use of relational benefit dimensions, making cumulative knowledge building difficult (Colgate et al., 2005; Gremler & Gwinner, 2015). Given the evolving structure of digital labor and the regulatory pressures faced by platform providers, understanding the full scope and trajectory of relational benefits research is timely and necessary (Mohd Azlan & Abdul Rahman, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on relational benefits, the literature on their role in sharing economy services remains dispersed, multidisciplinary, and under-synthesized. The academic conversation spans marketing, labor studies, platform economics, and service science, with limited integration across contexts or stakeholder perspectives. Hence, we pursued bibliometric analysis to explore a structured and evidence-based approach to synthesize fragmented literature, identify influential scholars, map collaborative networks, and detect emerging research fronts.

3. Methodology

Bibliometric analysis emerged to be a crucial tool for measuring the scientific outputs of different scientific items (e.g., papers, authors, keywords, journals, institutions, and countries) in any research field and examining how the intellectual, social, and conceptual structure of the relevant field has evolved over time based on the relationships and interactions between these items (Donthu et al., 2021). To this end, the Scopus database was consulted, whose basis provides a comprehensive overview of scientific production thanks to the number of indexed works. Scopus is a commercial database for peer-reviewed literature produced by Elsevier (www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus) (Arachchige et al., 2021). Scopus served as the primary source of data collection to ensure data accuracy, (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; Di Stefano et al., 2010).

Beyond basic statistics, such as identifying journal publications, publication years, and leading authors (Wu & Wu, 2017), bibliometrics encompasses more sophisticated techniques such as document co-citation analysis. A successful literature review demands following a systematic and repeating procedure to select suitable keywords, search the literature, and perform an in-depth analysis (Mustafa et al., 2025). Therefore, this study used the keywords "relational benefit*" AND ("sharing economy" OR "gig economy" OR "collaborative consumption" OR "platform economy"). In addition, to maintain quality, the study only considered articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals, intentionally excluding books and lecture notes (Gu et al., 2019). The Scopus database was used because of its broad coverage to collect publications starting from 2020 to December 2025, and the tool used in this study is VOS viewer, aimed at building and visualizing bibliometric networks.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Publication Trends of Relational Benefits in Sharing Economy Services

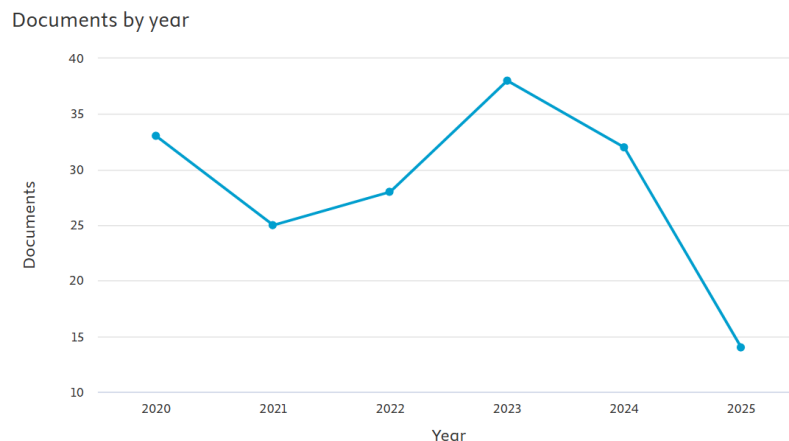


Figure 1: Document Publications by Years

As depicted in Figure 1, the number of publications exploring the nexus of relational benefits and the sharing economy experienced an initial surge in 2020, with 33 documents. This initial interest could be driven by a confluence of factors, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the importance of online platforms and collaborative consumption as alternatives to traditional economies. This increased focus on sharing economy practices, combined with the disruption caused by the pandemic, likely led to a surge in research and publications analysing the social and relational aspects of these platforms (Mishrif & Khan, 2023). Following this initial peak, a noticeable dip occurred in 2021, with the number of publications decreasing to 25. This decline might be attributed to research in this area might have been temporarily shifted or prioritized differently due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its immediate impact on the sharing economy.

However, the research interest appears to have regained momentum in 2022, with 28 publications, followed by a significant peak in 2023, which recorded the highest number of publications at 38. This peak in 2023 potentially signifies a growing scholarly recognition of the critical role that relational benefits (such as trust, community, and social capital) play in the success, sustainability, and competitive advantage of sharing economy models. Further content analysis of the publications from this period could reveal key themes and influential contributions that drove this increased attention. In 2024, the number of publications remained relatively high at 32, indicating a sustained interest in this research area. The data for 2025 currently shows 14 publications. While this number is lower, it is important to consider that this represents a partial year and may not fully reflect the eventual output for 2025. However, the current trend suggests a potential stabilization or slight decrease compared to the peak in 2023, warranting further monitoring as the year progresses.

Overall, the temporal distribution of publications suggests an emerging yet dynamic field of inquiry. The initial strong interest in 2020, followed by a dip and subsequent resurgence, culminating in a peak in 2023, highlights the evolving understanding of the significance of relational benefits within the context of the sharing economy. This bibliometric overview provides a foundation for a more in-depth analysis of the thematic content, methodological approaches, and key contributors within this growing body of literature. Subsequent sections of this paper will delve deeper into these aspects to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state and future directions of research on relational benefits in the sharing economy.

4.2 Analysis of Authors, Affiliations and Countries

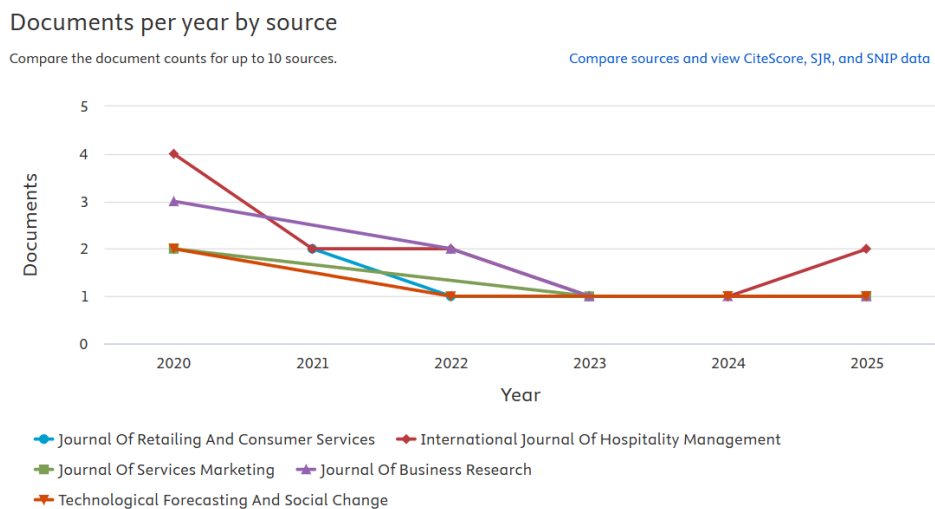


Figure 2: Types of Journals Published

The overall trends show the decline in document counts from year 2020 to 2023. Overall, the “International Journal of Hospitality Management” and “Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services” show an increase in document count in 2025. In details, “Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services” and “International Journal of Hospitality Management” faced a significant decline followed by a slight increase in 2025, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused a shift in consumer behaviour, with many sectors experiencing a downturn, including those within the sharing economy, and the sharing economy experienced rapid growth in the years leading up to the pandemic, with increased research and investment. This initial hype may have led to a saturation point, and a subsequent period of consolidation and recalibration as businesses adapted and found their footing in 2025 (Tsou et al., 2019).

On the other hand, “Journal of Services Marketing” and “Technological Forecasting and Social Change” also had faced a decline with a stable low output. Initially, the journal likely experienced a surge in research output as the sharing economy gained prominence and scholars explored its societal, technological, and marketing implications. This early phase was marked by high interest and activity, driven by the novelty and disruptive potential of the sharing economy. However, as the concept matured and more established models and practices emerged, the novelty diminished. Consequently, the number of cutting-edge studies may have declined, leading to a gradual reduction in related publications within the journal (Javaid et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2017). In addition, it is different for the "Journal of Business Research" which has experienced a fluctuating pattern with low output in recent years (2020-2024) and a slight increase in 2025. This is likely due to the acceptance rate of new business models after their emergence when the covid-19 pandemic hit the world in early 2020. With this acceptance, it has opened opportunities for businessmen and job opportunities which indirectly also opens opportunities for researchers to explore new issues.

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

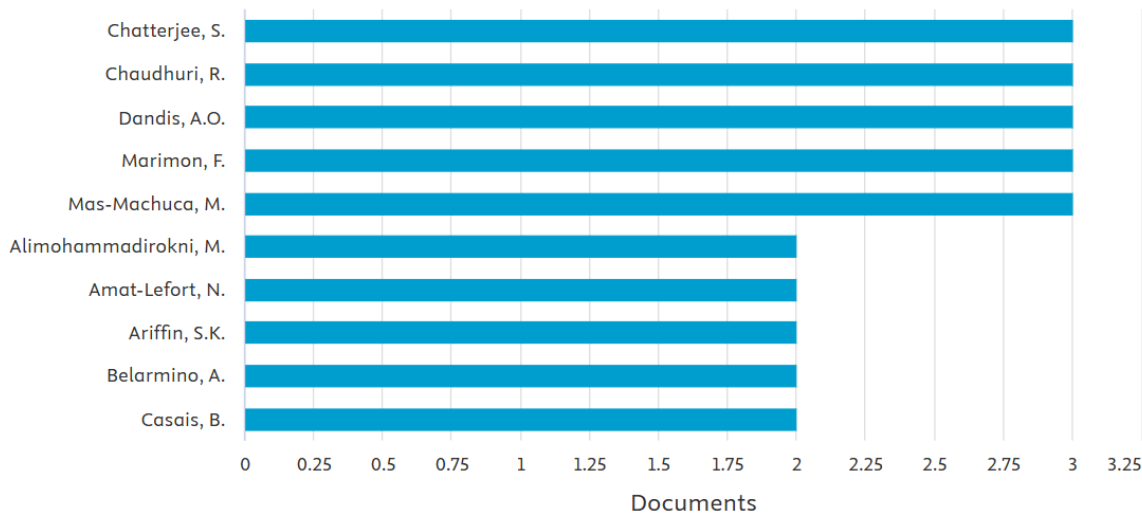


Figure 3: Document by Authors

Table 1: Top Authors by Number of Documents Published

Author	Number of Document Published	Percentage
Chatterjee, S.	3	1.8
Chaudhuri, R.	3	1.8
Dandis, A.O.	3	1.8
Marimon, F.	3	1.8
Mas-Machuca, M.	3	1.8
Alimohammadirokni, M.	2	1.2
Amat-Lefort, N.	2	1.2
Ariffin, S.K.	2	1.2
Belarmino, A.	2	1.2
Casais, B.	2	1.2

The analysis of authorship in relational benefits in sharing economy research highlights the contributions of leading scholars in the field. Chatterjee, S., Chaudhuri, R., Dandis, A.O., Marimon, F., and Mas-Machuca, M. have the highest number of publications, each contributing three documents, representing 1.8 % of the total 170 articles. Meanwhile, Alimohammadirokni, M., Amat-Lefort, N., Ariffin, S.K., Belarmino, A., and Casais, B. follows closely with two publications for each of them (1.2%). The distribution of publications among these leading researchers suggests that no single scholar dominates the field, indicating a diverse research landscape in which a variety of contributors are shaping understanding and advancing research on relationship benefits in the sharing economy. This diversity enhances the field by incorporating a variety of methodologies, theoretical perspectives, and regional contexts, ultimately fostering a more comprehensive approach to the implementation and importance of relationship benefits in sharing economy services in the future.

Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.

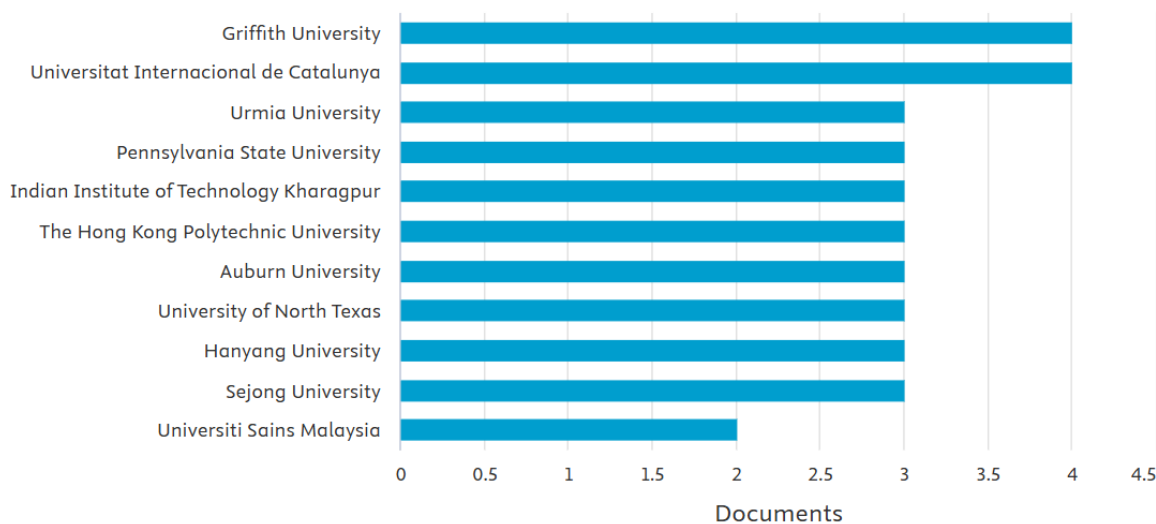


Figure 4: Documents by Affiliation

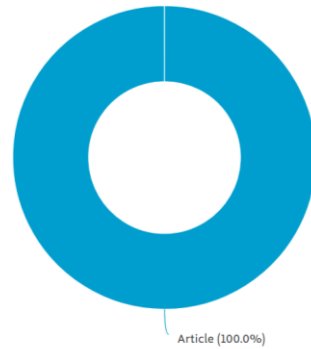


Figure 5: Document Type Distribution

Based on the analysis on figure 4, Griffith University and Universitat Internacional de Catalunya have the highest number of documents by affiliation, both at 4. Based on the data obtained, this shows that Griffith University and Universitat Internacional de Catalunya most productive combination in this data set. This can be attributed to both universities possibly having established research units or departments specializing in fields such as economics, business, technology or social sciences related to the sharing economy. In addition, a significant number of affiliations (8 out of 11) have a moderate and equal output of 3 documents. The combined majority of Urmia University, Pennsylvania State University, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Auburn University, University of North Texas, Hanyang University, and Sejong University all have a document count of 3. The clustering of several universities across the 3 documents indicated a consistent level of contribution from these combinations. Finally, based on the analysis made, Universiti Sains Malaysia shows the least contribution among the compared affiliations. The reason of this situation might be USM may not have actively prioritized or invested in research, development, or implementation of sharing economy platforms or models, due to USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia) is considered a core engineering university (Universiti Sains Malaysia, n.d.). Meanwhile, based on the analysis on figure 5, The bibliometric data reveals a focused set of 170 documents, all classified as articles, published between 2020 and 2025.

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

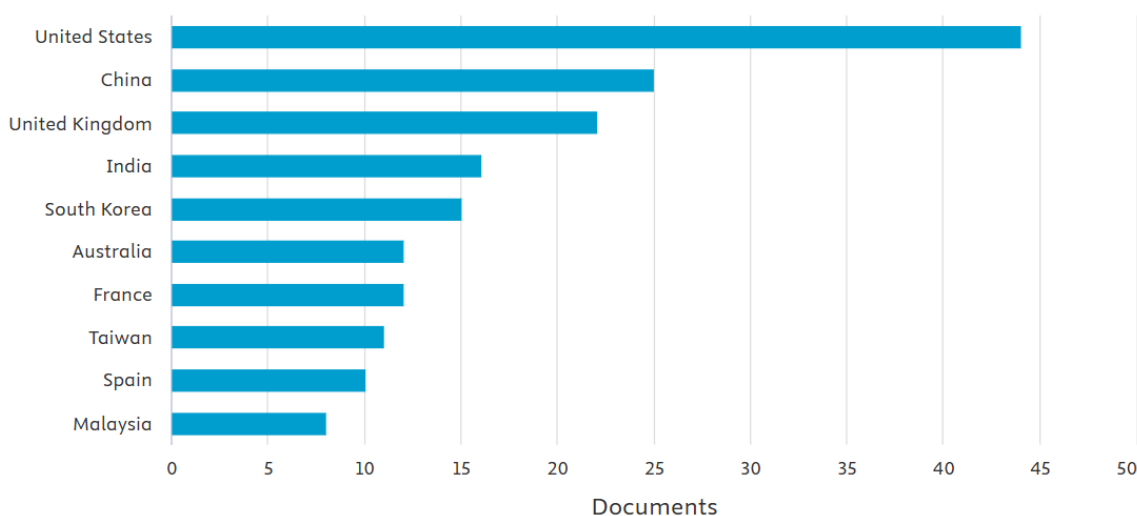


Figure 6: Documents by Country or Territory

Analysis reveals that the United States leads significantly in the number of documents by country or territory, with over 40 publications—far surpassing all other listed locations. This dominant contribution can be attributed to the country's strong economic foundation, early adoption of sharing economy platforms, and substantial investment in research and development. China ranks second with approximately 26 documents, likely reflecting its rapid and widespread adoption of the sharing economy, particularly in sectors such as ride-sharing and digital platforms. The United Kingdom and India follow with around 22 and 16 documents respectively, suggesting a shared interest in various aspects of the sharing economy, though potentially with differing sectoral or policy focuses. South Korea and Australia each contribute about 14 documents, indicating a similar level of academic and societal engagement with the opportunities and challenges presented by this evolving economic model. France and Taiwan also show comparable output, each with slightly more than 10 documents, while Spain and Malaysia round out the list of top contributors with approximately 10 and 8 documents respectively. This distribution underscores the dominant role of the United States, a strong showing from Asian countries—including China, India, South Korea, Taiwan, and Malaysia—and meaningful contributions from Western nations such as the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and Spain. Overall, the variation in document counts highlights differing levels of research emphasis and strategic interest in the sharing economy across these countries.

4.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

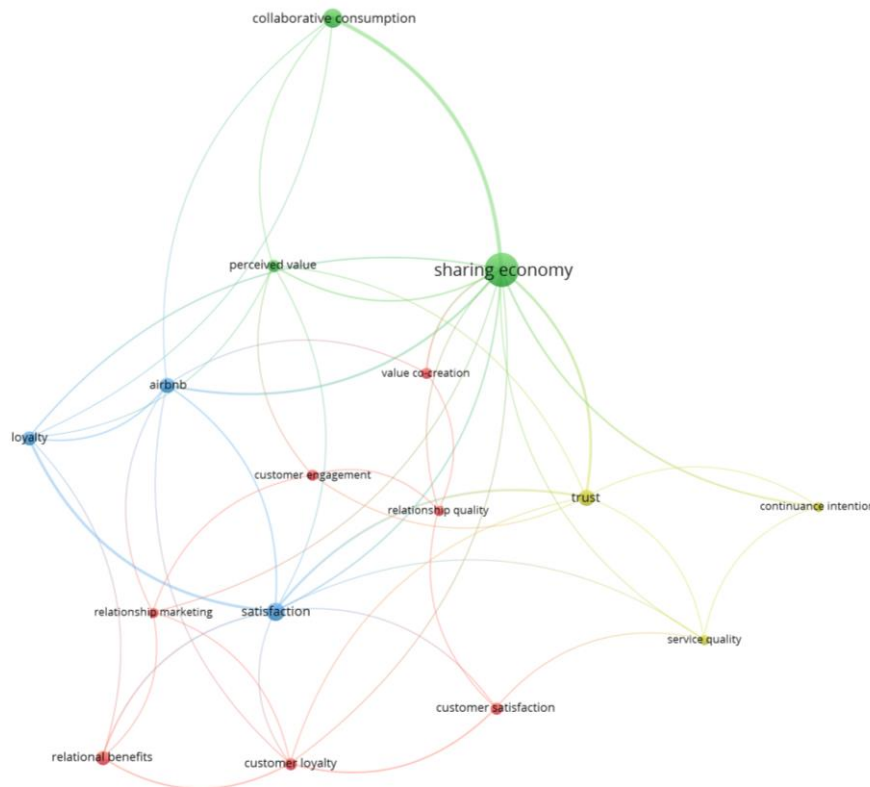


Figure 7: Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

A keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to identify the most frequently used and thematically relevant terms in the literature on the sharing economy. The analysis highlights key themes, with “sharing economy” (49 occurrences, 36 link strength) and “collaborative consumption” (16 occurrences, 15 link strength) emerging as dominant

keywords, indicating their central role in this research area, and might clearly define the main focus of the relational benefits study in the context of sharing economy services. Other frequently co-occurring terms include “satisfaction” (15 occurrences, 20 link strength), “trust” (11 occurrences, 14 link strength), “Airbnb” (10 occurrences, 12 link strength), “loyalty” (9 occurrences, 13 link strength), and “customer satisfaction” (7 occurrences, 5 link strength). Even though these keywords suggest medium alignment with the core topics, research questions, and theoretical frameworks commonly explored in relation benefits usage in the sharing economy studies. Additionally, keywords such as “value co-creation” (6 occurrences, 4 link strength) “relationship marketing” (5 occurrences, 5 link strength), “relationship quality” (5 occurrences, 4 link strength) had lower frequencies and link strengths. However, all these co-occurrences’ keywords presence may still indicate emerging or niche areas within the broader relational benefits in sharing economy discourse, suggesting potential for future research exploration despite their current lower visibility.

4.4 Analysis of Articles

The sharing economy has garnered growing scholarly attention for its transformative impact on consumer behaviour, business models, and digital platforms. Among the most influential contributions to this field is the study by Nadeem et al. (2020), which has received 191 citations. This research investigates the antecedents of consumer value co-creation intentions on Sharing Economy Platforms (SEPs) such as Airbnb and Uber. The study reveals that ethical perceptions are primary drivers of value co-creation, influenced significantly by social support. Contrary to conventional expectations, trust and commitment do not directly affect co-creation behaviour, emphasizing the pivotal role of perceived ethics in shaping user intentions within the sharing economy landscape. Other highly cited works include those by Gerwe & Silva (2020) and Yen et al. (2020), with 180 and 179 citations respectively.

In addition, Gerwe & Silva (2020) offer a conceptual contribution by integrating and clarifying existing literature, developing a typology of sharing economy organizations, and addressing the broader economic, social, and regulatory implications. Their study captures the dual nature of the sharing economy, highlighting both its benefits and its challenges. On the other hand, Yen et al. (2020) focus on customer value co-creation in the restaurant industry. Their findings indicate that innovativeness significantly enhances customer engagement, which acts as a key mediating factor in co-creation behaviours. The study underscores how innovative practices can strengthen user participation and collaboration, making them vital for competitive advantage in the hospitality sector.

A study by Casais et al. (2020) contribute further to the discussion by examining relational mechanisms between hosts and guests in the sharing economy. Their work emphasizes how these interactions foster incremental innovation in tourism services through the co-creation of value. Although Casais et al. (2020) and Yen et al. (2020) address similar themes, they differ in scope and methodology, with each offering unique insights into customer engagement and innovation. Casais et al.'s work has been cited 84 times, reflecting its growing influence in tourism and hospitality research.

In a more recent and technologically focused study, Cheng et al. (2022) investigate the dual impact of Big Data Analytics (BDA) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) on user participation in ridesharing platforms. Their research applies cognitive appraisal theory and adopts a mixed-methods approach—combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys—to explore how BDA and AI affect user behaviour. Published in the *European Journal of Information Systems*, a Q1 journal with a 2023 impact factor of 7.3 (Scimago Journal & Country Rank,

n.d.), the study finds that while BDA and AI enhance the user experience through improved matching, efficiency, and safety, they also raise concerns related to privacy and uncertainty. Crucially, when users feel in control of their personal data, they are more likely to focus on the benefits of these technologies and continue engaging with the platform. This balance between perceived benefits and risks plays a fundamental role in determining user behaviour in technology-driven sharing platforms.

Taken together, these studies provide a comprehensive view of the various factors influencing value co-creation and innovation in the sharing economy. From ethical considerations and social dynamics to technological advancements and customer engagement, the literature underscores the multifaceted nature of user participation in this evolving economic model.

Table 2: Details Primary Data for Top 10 Highest Citation

Numbers	Authors	Title	Years	Cited by
1.	Nadeem et al.	Consumers' value co-creation in sharing economy: The role of social support, consumers' ethical perceptions and relationship quality	2020	191
2.	Gerwe & Silva	Clarifying the sharing economy: Conceptualization, typology, antecedents, and effects	2020	180
3.	C.-H. Yen et al.	Innovativeness and customer value co-creation behaviors: Mediating role of customer engagement	2020	179
4.	Cheng et al.	The good, the bad, and the ugly: impact of analytics and artificial intelligence-enabled personal information collection on privacy and participation in ridesharing	2022	88
5.	Casais et al.	Tourism innovation through relationship marketing and value co-creation: A study on peer-to-peer online platforms for sharing accommodation	2020	84
6.	Tajeddini et al.	Exploring the visitors' decision-making process for Airbnb and hotel accommodations using value-attitude-behaviour and theory of planned behaviour	2021	84
7.	Behnam et al.	Exploring customer engagement in the product vs. service context	2021	83
8.	Liang et al.	What drives consumers to adopt a sharing platform: An integrated model of value-based and transaction cost theories	2021	64
9.	Tran et al.	Sharing with perfect strangers: The effects of self-disclosure on consumers' trust, risk perception, and behavioral intention in the sharing economy	2022	57
10.	Utkarsh & Gupta	Effects of confidence and social benefits on consumers' extra-role and in-role behaviours: A social identity and social exchange perspective	2022	25

5. Future Research Directions for Advancing Relational Benefits Research in Sharing Economy Services

This bibliometric analysis illustrates that research on relational benefits in the sharing economy is expanding, particularly in response to shifts in platform dynamics, worker expectations, and technological advances. The publication surge in 2020 and the peak in 2023 suggest growing academic interest in the sustainability of platform labour relationships (Mishrif & Khan, 2023). Grounded in both content trends and empirical gaps, the following future research directions are proposed.

5.1 Reconceptualizing Confidence Benefits for Two-Sided Digital Platforms

In high-risk, low-contact services such as p-hailing, traditional conceptualizations of confidence benefits—including reduced anxiety and perceived service predictability—may be insufficient (Abdul Rahman et al., 2023; Gwinner et al., 1998). Given that platform workers are not formal employees and operate under contract-based terms, future research should

explore qualitative approaches to redefine confidence benefits within digital labor contexts. Proposed constructs may include risk mitigation, app reliability, financial predictability, or post-accident support, particularly in platforms offering minimal physical interaction but high service dependency (Colgate et al., 2005; Yen & Gwinner, 2003).

5.2 Evaluating the Impact of Insurance-Linked Benefits on Partner Commitment

While free personal accident insurance (e.g., Grab's Personal Insurance Plan; Uber's Partner & Rider Injury Protection; Lyft Occupational Accident Insurance; Free Lalamove Personal Accident Insurance) has been implemented to improve retention, recent findings reveal low awareness, limited claims activity, and dissatisfaction with claim procedures (Mohd Azlan & Rahman, 2025). There is a need to validate, through quantitative studies, whether premium insurance plans—offered at low daily costs—significantly enhance long-term delivery partner commitment, especially when moderated by income stability, platform tenure, and claim accessibility (Clarity, 2024; Leung et al., 2019).

5.3 Advancing Research on Digital Fairness and Communication Transparency

Keyword analysis revealed recurring terms such as “trust,” “loyalty,” and “satisfaction,” reflecting the importance of digital fairness and transparent benefit communication in sustaining relationships (Figure 7). Future research should examine how app-based interfaces, claim tracking systems, and incentive notifications affect delivery partners' perceptions of fairness and subsequent loyalty. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing the importance of platform accountability and user control over service interactions (Al-Emadi et al., 2021).

5.4 Integrating Technological Innovations into Relational Benefits Research

Recent contributions (e.g., Cheng et al., 2022) suggest that Big Data Analytics (BDA) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) influence both trust and participation in ridesharing platforms. Researchers should investigate how emerging technologies such as real-time hazard alerts, predictive earning dashboards, or gamified reward systems serve as modern extensions of relational benefits, especially in enhancing safety, satisfaction, and platform stickiness (Cheng et al., 2022; Chou & Chen, 2018).

5.5 Theorizing Policy and Regulatory Support as Relational Moderators

Despite the introduction of episodic benefits, the absence of strong regulatory frameworks limits their efficacy (Abdul Rahman et al., 2023). Research should examine how national-level protections (e.g., Malaysia's Self-Employment Social Security Act 2017) or platform compliance with social insurance schemes (e.g., SOCSO) moderate the relationship between benefit structures and worker commitment. This direction underscores the need for a multi-stakeholder perspective, involving government, platforms, and workers.

5.6 Exploring Underrepresented Keywords and Niche Themes

Keywords such as *value co-creation*, *relationship marketing*, and *relationship quality* were less frequent but represent emerging areas in the literature (Figure 7). Building on studies by Nadeem et al. (2020) and Casais et al. (2020), future research could investigate how co-created value, mutual innovation, or community-based interactions act as relational catalysts in sustaining gig worker-platform ties, particularly in hospitality and tourism services.

5.7 Applying Mixed-Methods and Contextualized Models

Current studies rely heavily on quantitative survey designs. Future research could benefit from mixed methods approaches that integrate qualitative interviews or field ethnographies with structural modelling. Moreover, enriching the theoretical base by integrating the Commitment-

Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) with Equity Theory or the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model would offer a deeper understanding of the emotional, ethical, and risk-related dynamics of gig work (Colgate et al., 2007; Gremler & Gwinner, 2015).

6. Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis offers a detailed overview of the expanding scholarly landscape surrounding relational benefits in the sharing economy from 2020 to 2025. The data underscores a dynamic research field characterized by an initial surge during the COVID-19 pandemic and a notable peak in 2023, reflecting heightened academic and industry attention to digital labour models. Despite this momentum, the literature remains conceptually fragmented, particularly in addressing how relational benefits are defined, operationalized, and experienced by gig workers in high-risk, low-contact service contexts such as p-hailing. The analysis reveals dominant themes around trust, satisfaction, and loyalty but also exposes significant gaps in the exploration of confidence benefits, insurance-linked incentives, and the role of regulatory frameworks. Institutions and countries contributing to this field show a diverse yet uneven distribution, with the United States and China leading in research output, while key journals exhibit fluctuating publication trends influenced by the pandemic and platform maturity cycles.

Building on these findings, the study proposes a multifaceted research agenda: (1) reconceptualize confidence benefits in light of digital risk and gig worker precarity; (2) empirically evaluate the role of insurance offerings in influencing partner commitment; (3) examine digital fairness and communication transparency through app-based features; (4) explore the relational implications of technological tools like BDA and AI; (5) assess the moderating role of national regulatory support; and (6) delve into underrepresented themes such as co-creation, relationship marketing, and community innovation. A shift toward mixed-methods and interdisciplinary frameworks is also recommended to better capture the complex dynamics of platform-worker relationships. Overall, this study contributes to advancing theoretical clarity and practical relevance in the study of relational benefits within the sharing economy. By integrating platform design, user experience, policy, and trust-building mechanisms, future research can better support equitable and sustainable relationships in digitally mediated service ecosystems.

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