Why do people rideshare? An experimental study
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ABSTRACT

Enabled by mobile technologies and fueled by the economic downturn, ridesharing has emerged in recent years as a private transportation facet of the shared economy. Our study investigates the motives for participation in situated ridesharing. We propose a theoretical model that includes economic benefits, time benefits, transportation anxiety, trust, and reciprocity either as direct antecedents of ridesharing participation intention, or mediated through attitude towards ridesharing. We conduct a scenario-based survey, with 300 participants. Our findings indicate that, in situations where transportation anxiety is high (e.g. construction on the road), if people can trust the ridesharing service providers and participants, in the presence of economic and time benefits, they will have a strong intention to participate in ridesharing.

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1. Introduction

“A city that embraces shared modes of transportation will be a city where people spend less time stuck in traffic or looking for a parking space, a city where people will spend less of their income on cars and commutes, a city that lives and breathes more easily.”

[Kalanick, co-founder and former CEO of Uber, 2016.]

As urban populations around the world grew in an environment of limited resources, and amid sustainability concerns, ridesharing emerged as an alternative mode of transportation that would provide a partial solution to those issues. While it was encouraged by policy makers and employers for decades, it was not until the advent of recent mobile technologies (Chan & Shaheen, 2012; Smith, 2017) and the economic downturn (Chan & Shaheen, 2012; CTAA, 2012) that ridesharing exploded to an everyday reality that touches the lives of millions of consumers and disrupts the transportation industry (Waheed, Herrera, Ritoper, Mehta, Romero, & Narro, 2015). Even though sharing a ride is not a new subject (Brownstone & Golob, 1992; Dueker & Levin, 1976; Novaco & Collier, 1994), the version of ridesharing that is enabled by peer-to-peer software technologies is a recent phenomenon (Brereton & Ghelawat, 2010; Chan & Shaheen, 2012; Rayle, Shaheen, Chan, Dai, & Cervero, 2014).

Carpooling or ridesharing has various definitions in the literature and in daily conversation. Whenever one or more passengers enter a vehicle in a manner that is not fully commercial or fully formal, regardless of whether they are family members, friends, peers, or strangers, they enter into the ridesharing mode. A formal agreement, for example for splitting travel costs, may or may not exist between ridesharing participants, and this mode of commuting may be used on a regular
The model includes 11 hypotheses that involve the assumed antecedents of attitude towards ridesharing and the intention to participate in ridesharing. A diagram of the complete model is shown in Fig. 2 and an overview of the hypotheses is shown in Table 1. In the next section we elaborate on the definitions and the relationships between dependent and independent variables.
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