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"I'm definitely on my best behavior now!" Two-sided online review systems as a driver for desirable customer behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Research on two-sided review systems—where customers and suppliers evaluate each other —has primarily focused on *post-consumption* outcomes, showing how reciprocity shapes the evaluations customers and suppliers provide to one another. But do these systems also influence other forms of behavior, especially those that happen *during* the consumption experience? Across eight experiments, we demonstrate that when suppliers operate on platforms with two-sided (vs. one-sided) review functionality, customers exhibit more ingratiation behaviors, such as being more courteous, polite, and amenable. This occurs because the anticipation of receiving a supplier review increases customers' self-presentational concerns. However, this effect emerges only when customers have an intention to reuse the platform, and amplifies when they perceive a review could impact this to a greater extent, or provides additional value to them.

1. Introduction

> "*The fact a host can review me impacts my behavior while using Airbnb because it will affect my future ability to get a room using the same service. If my review [score] starts to drop, then the owners at the next Airbnb will see my behavior and not accept me at their place. During my stay at an Airbnb I would be on my best behavior…*" (Tom, Airbnb customer, 40, M).

In 2019, some Uber customers faced a tricky challenge: raise their platform profile score, as rated by drivers, or risk losing access to the platform (Paul, 2019). The episode sparked an online debate about how riders should behave to maximize their rating—whether tipping, chatting politely, or sitting in the vehicle's front seat secured favored status.

What makes this case noteworthy is that Uber, like many platforms in the sharing economy, operates a bilateral (i.e., two-sided) review system whereby both customers and suppliers evaluate each other (Pocchiari et al., 2025). While prior research shows that frontline employees adjust their behavior when they expect, or anticipate, a customer evaluation to be forthcoming (Marder et al., 2023), little is yet known about how customers behave when in this same position. If they do, then *how*, *when*, and *why* does this occur? Through eight experimental studies and an impression management lens, we address these questions. We show that the mere presence of a two-sided review system leads customers to alter their conduct during consumption episodes (e.g., an Uber ride),

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displaying more ingratiatory behavior (e.g., being more courteous, polite, or friendly). This effect arises because customers experience heightened self-presentational concerns about how they appear to the supplier (i.e., the potential reviewer). Critically, this effect emerges only when customers intend to reuse the platform. It is amplified when reviews carry greater weight for their future access, or when they lead to more valuable benefits (e.g., discounts for higher ratings). Consequently, the research makes three core contributions to extant theory.

Firstly, a small but growing body of work in the online reviewing literature examines the effects of bilateral, two-sided review systems on customers and their actions (e.g., Rifkin et al., 2023; Usrey et al., 2024). Evidence suggests that this functionality causes shifts in post-experience evaluation behavior, whereby reviews and ratings become systematically more positive—even inflated and untrustworthy (Bolton et al., 2013; Zervas et al., 2021). Until now, this literature has focused exclusively on the post-consumption phase of the customer journey (i.e., how customers write reviews, assign ratings, or spread word of mouth *post facto*; Fradkin & Holtz, 2023; Rifkin et al., 2023). However, we posit that two-sided review systems *also* shape customer behaviors *during* the consumption stage (e.g., during a taxi journey, or whilst staying at a hotel). As such, our research shifts attention to *earlier* in the customer journey, from post-consumption actions (e.g., ratings of drivers) to in-consumption conduct (e.g., politeness towards drivers). Although prior studies have theorized this possibility (Proserpio et al., 2018), to the best of our knowledge, this work is the first to offer direct empirical evidence in its exploration.

Second, and remaining within the scope of online reviewing, we show the underlying mechanism by conceptualizing and empirically validating *self-presentational concerns* (i.e., concerns about evaluation by a specific audience) as the driver of the effect. Through the mere presence of two-sided review functionality, self-presentational concerns reflect an expectation of being evaluated, and a motivation to impress, with the assumption being that obtaining favorable evaluations can unlock future value. Ultimately, this shapes customer behavior, which safeguards positive appraisal. In this vein, we compare and evidence the explanatory power of our proposed mediator alongside *anticipated reciprocity*, a dominant explanation for post-consumption behavior found in earlier work (e.g., Proserpio et al., 2018). Moreover, our focus on self-presentational concerns makes a contribution to a body of work on the salience of (online) audiences in shaping behavior via anticipatory impression management (see Lavertu et al., 2020; Marder et al., 2016), whereby these studies have shown that customers modify their actions (i.e., conduct), even in response to an *imagined* belief that an online audience is watching them (e.g., social media followers). We make a bridge to this theory, showing that the mere presence (vs. absence – i.e., one-sided) of a two-sided review system makes it salient that a supplier will evaluate them—with this being sufficient to activate, and heighten, self-presentational concerns.

Finally, we argue that these behavioral adjustments are linked to goal pursuit, and are not universal. The extent to which customers engage in impression management is bounded by (i) their intention to reuse the platform (their goal), and is further influenced—amplified or attenuated—by (ii) the extent to which a supplier's review is consequential for securing effective future use (relevance to their goal), and (iii) the additional value tied to such use; e.g., enhanced access to features such as instant booking (increasing the benefit of future usage and heightening overall goal value).

2. Background and theoretical underpinnings of two-sided review systems

2.1. Two-sided review systems

The ability of firms, providers, and suppliers (hereafter collectively "suppliers") to evaluate customers marks an evolution from traditional one-sided review systems, where only customers provide feedback. Historically, customer reviews have appeared on platforms like Tripadvisor, Google Reviews, and TrustPilot, or directly on supplier websites. While suppliers can respond, replies are typically reactive—expressing thanks or defending shortcomings (e.g., explaining a delayed delivery – Pocchiari et al., 2025)—rather than offering bilateral evaluation. In contrast, two-sided review systems enable customers and suppliers to rate each other via a shared platform, creating cumulative profile scores often paired with qualitative feedback (e.g., Dolnicar, 2019). Popularized by sharing economy firms like Uber, Airbnb, and eBay, bilateral review functionality is expanding to new contexts, as seen on platforms such as Rate Your Customer App, The Help App, and ContractorsCustomers.com.

2.2. Prior research of two-sided review systems on customers

Although a substantial body of research examines how customer-authored reviews influence supplier behavior (e.g., Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006), less research has explored the reverse dynamic—that is, what happens when customers are evaluated by suppliers. This gap is notable, given that emerging bilateral feedback systems introduce a fundamental shift in power and accountability dynamics within customer-supplier interactions (Pocchiari et al., 2025). Table 1 summarizes existing research, listing empirical works on how two-sided review systems shape customer behavior, positioned against the current study.

Drawing on data from eBay, Bolton et al. (2013) found that bilateral (two-sided) reviewing introduces a form of systematic positivity bias into subsequent evaluation scores, whereby even dissatisfied buyers (and suppliers) refrain from leaving negative feedback to avoid supplier retaliation. This highlighted how (the *possibility* of) evaluation distorts customer reviewing behavior. A similar pattern was observed in the context of Airbnb by Zervas et al. (2021). Comparing evaluations of identical properties listed on platforms with (Airbnb) and without (TripAdvisor) bilateral reviewing, they found higher average ratings for the former, with over 90% of properties rated above 4.5 stars. This inflation is generally attributed to *anticipated reciprocity*, an expectation for individuals to automatically assume that (more) positive actions in one event will be later reciprocated (i.e., giving a higher rating means one may be rated higher in return). In support, Proserpio et al. (2018) analyzed Airbnb review data and found that both guests and hosts often

Table 1
Prior studies on customer responses to bilateral two-sided review monitoring.

Authors	Context	Design	Independent variable	Dependent variable				Mediator	Contribution
				Post–consumption	During consumption	Feedback behavior	Broader behavior		
Cabral and Hortaçsu (2010)	eBay seller reputation dynamics	Secondary panel data	First negative seller feedback	✓	–	✓	–	Adverse selection & moral hazard	Shows reputation's effect on seller outcomes; not about buyer conduct
Bolton et al. (2013)	eBay feedback reciprocity	Lab experiments + platform data	Observability/ timing of feedback	✓	–	✓	–	Reciprocity / retaliation	Identifies how reciprocity distorts post-review patterns; focus on design fixes
Proserpio et al. (2018)	Reciprocity in Airbnb	Secondary platform data	Reciprocity inferred via review features	✓	*	✓	–	Reciprocity (inferred)	Links reciprocity to market outcomes, but only via post-consumption proxies
Zervas et al. (2021)	Airbnb vs. TripAd ratings	Large-scale scraped secondary data	Platform comparison	✓	–	✓	–	Positivity bias / retaliation risk	Documents systematic inflation in Airbnb ratings; descriptive focus
Mousavi and Zhao (2022)	Airbnb's review policy	Secondary platform data	Policy asynchronous / simultaneous reveal	✓	–	✓	–	Reciprocity dampening via simultaneity	Demonstrates policy design can reduce reciprocity bias in reviews
Fradkin and Holtz (2023)	Incentivizing reviews on Airbnb	Large-scale field experiment	Incentive to review	✓	–	✓	–	Incentive participation effects	Shows more reviews don't guarantee better market outcomes
Rifkin et al. (2023)	Consumers being reviewed (P2P)	Experiments and surveys	Customer receives negative review	✓	–	✓	–	Psychological contract breach	First to show firm reviewing customers can backfire, creating betrayal and retaliation
Usrey et al. (2024)	One-sided vs. two-sided systems → positivity bias	Primarily experiments	One-sided vs. two-sided review system	✓	–	✓	–	Impression management propensity / social presence	Shows firm reviewing customers inflates review positivity; outcome is post-consumption
Our paper (2025)	**Two-sided reviews shaping customer conduct**	**Multi-study (experiments + real users)**	One-sided vs. two-sided review system	–	✓	–	✓	**Self-presentational concerns**	**First to show firms reviewing customers changes in-episode consumer conduct, not just post-review outcomes**

* theorized, not empirically tested.

delayed submitting reviews to avoid being the first to leave negative feedback—a tactic to mitigate retaliation. Although their analysis focused on post-consumption reviews, they also theorized that bilateral evaluation *could* influence in-episode behavior, as parties anticipate being reviewed and adjust their efforts accordingly. Building on this, Usrey et al. (2024) offer the first experimental tests of the effects of one- versus two-sided review systems on customer behavior. In controlled studies, they show that participants in a two-sided review condition provide more favorable evaluations, which is evidence that the expectation of mutual review triggers impression management motives.

Taken together, this body of work provides compelling evidence that customers modify how they evaluate and rate suppliers in contexts featuring bilateral, two-sided review systems. However, as Table 1 highlights, existing work has focused exclusively on post-consumption evaluation—namely, the content and timing of reviews and ratings. We argue that two-sided review functionality exerts a broader influence, shaping not only how customers evaluate an experience *after the fact*, but also how they behave *during the encounter.*[1] That is, customers do not just act strategically when rating suppliers, but adjust their conduct throughout the consumption episode. Consistent with this, we conducted a small correlational study with visitors to a popular UK destination. Visitors who had booked premises with one and two-sided review systems were surveyed. As expected, we observed a difference in positive reported behaviors during stays that had bilateral reviewing functionality (vs. those without), as detailed in Web Appendix A. To explain this, we begin by examining *how* customers adjust their behavior in anticipation of being evaluated.

2.3. Ingratiation behavior

In his foundational work, Goffman (1959) defined impression management as the act of controlling one's outward portrayal in social interactions to project a desirable image, typically in pursuit of social or economic rewards (albeit not exclusively). Goffman distinguished between verbal (communicative) and non-verbal (behavioral) types of impression management, whereas ingratiation refers to the strategic use of impression management to enhance one's likability using either approach (Jones & Pittman, 1982). As a generally deliberate and calculated behavior, ingratiation includes flattery, small favors, politeness, and showing interest in others. Unexpected gestures that subtly improve one's standing are also common (see Matovic & Forgas, 2018; Tal-Or, 2010).

Within this context, it is important to recognize the alignment between types of conduct valued by suppliers, and behaviors that constitute ingratiation. For instance, online forums and platform guidance pages, such as those for Uber and eBay, routinely advise customers to be polite, punctual, and amenable, linking such conduct to the likelihood of receiving exemplary (5-star) feedback (e.g., Quora, 2026; Uber., 2021). Customers are aware of these norms. A contributor on FlyerTalk (2023) urged: “provide a cash tip before you get out of the car—it'll almost certainly guarantee a five-star rating.” Supporting these accounts, Xue et al. (2022) conducted a systematic analysis of Airbnb host reviews and found that hosts frequently praised guests for being tidy, polite, and respectful communicators.

While a supplier's appreciation of ingratiation behaviors does not, in itself, demonstrate that customers alter their conduct in response to bilateral review systems, it establishes a meaningful conceptual link. In the next section, we formalize this connection by introducing self-presentational concerns as the explanation linking two-sided review systems to in-consumption ingratiation.

2.4. The mediating role of self-presentational concerns

Leary and Kowalski's (1990) two-component model of impression management elucidated how specific situations heighten focus on public image. Situational self-presentational concerns (hereafter self-presentational concerns)[2] capture the attentiveness paid by an individual to their projected image in a specific situation. Self-presentational concerns are activated in response to receiving or anticipating an evaluation (by an audience) where this has meaningful implications for achieving a valued goal (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In other words, it arises only when there is something to win or lose (Leary, 2019). It is important to distinguish it from the behavioral strategies that may follow. As such, concerns typically precede and guide behavior but are not isomorphic with it (Goffman, 1959; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Specifically, they capture anticipation of evaluation, whereas ingratiation reflects how this is behaviorally enacted.

In the context of two-sided review systems, the conditions underpinning self-presentational concerns (i.e., anticipation of an evaluation with valued implications) are common, with suppliers acting as an ‘evaluating audience’. Customers understand this dynamic. Prior research on mutual surveillance on peer-to-peer platforms such as Uber and Airbnb shows that customers often report a persistent feeling of being monitored by hosts or drivers (Chan, 2019; Gössling et al., 2021). Nonetheless, this remains nuanced and warrants careful unpacking. First, it is important to note that the mere existence of two-sided review functionality does not guarantee that a customer will receive a review or rating—nor that the supplier is performing the role of an audience. For example, an Airbnb host may not rate a guest or attend closely to their conduct during a stay, despite the platform having this functionality. Nevertheless, prior research demonstrates that a *perceived* or *imagined* belief of audience evaluation is often sufficient to still trigger self-presentational concerns (see Marder et al., 2023, for a synonymous process in the context of frontline employees). For example, Lavertu et al. (2020) found that the mere possibility of a charitable giving situation being photographed and shared on social media led customers to experience concern about their self-image due to potential evaluation by others online. Similarly, Marder et al. (2016)

[1] We position ourselves as looking at behavior during consumption, but recognize that suppliers and customers interact prior to consumption (booking, discussing bookings) and afterwards (post-consumption follow-ups).

[2] Self-presentational concerns can be situational or trait-based. It can also be referred to as impression management concern (Leary, 2019).

showed that once individuals became aware that someone at a party had a camera, they began to anticipate being tagged in posts, and evaluated by their connections—even though there was no certainty that any photos would actually be shared. Both studies illustrate how the *anticipated* possibility of evaluation—rather than its certainty—is often enough to activate feelings of judgment. We extend this same logic to bilateral reviewing, whereby the presence of a two-sided review system—rather than a camera—is expected to activate self-presentational concerns.

Second, recall that self-presentational concerns are not only triggered by potential evaluation, but also by the belief that this influences the achievement of a valued goal (Leary, 2019; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). For this, a positive evaluation (review/rating) must carry some instrumental benefit (i.e., a focal goal). But what types of goals are shaped by supplier evaluations? Across the sharing economy, platforms stress the importance of maintaining a strong profile to foster trust and cooperation (e.g., Airbnb., 2019; Bowman, 2019). Positive ratings and feedback function as social signals of trustworthiness (e.g., "I maintain a 5★ rating"), increasing supplier preference and, in turn, facilitating more favorable access and use within the platform. We refer to this critical benefit as *effective platform reuse*[3]—the ability to secure and maintain advantageous future interactions on the platform—which forms the motivational basis (i.e., "the" goal) for self-presentational concerns here.

But what does this mean for customer behavior? Critically, self-presentational concerns are an established antecedent of impression management behavior (e.g., ingratiation; Goffman, 1959; Leary, 2019; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Research has shown that powerful audiences with an ability to shape desired outcomes, such as managers, teachers, or romantic interests, have a more notable and significant impact on ingratiation (e.g., Wang et al., 2024). Similarly, the aforementioned studies by Lavertu et al. (2020) and Marder et al. (2016) validate this link, highlighting how heightened concerns led to more generous charitable behavior (Lavertu et al., 2020) and avoidance of taboo activities (e.g., drinking and drug-taking; see Marder et al., 2016). To this end, we expect that higher self-presentational concerns—activated by two-sided reviewing contexts—drive impression management behavior, manifesting in heightened ingratiation *during* consumption. This logic is nicely illustrated in our opening vignette, where Tom, an Airbnb guest, expresses concern about "the fact a host can review [him]" affects his "future ability to get a room using the same service," which prompts him "to be on [his] best behavior" during the stay. Thus, we offer the following predictions:

H1: Customers exposed to a two-sided (vs. one-sided) review system will exhibit higher ingratiation behaviors during the consumption experience.

H2: The effect of two-sided (vs. one-sided) review systems on customer ingratiation behaviors during the consumption experience is mediated by self-presentational concerns, so that greater self-presentational concerns explain ingratiation behavior.

2.5. Boundary conditions associated with goal pursuit

For the effects proposed in H1 and H2 to manifest, we situate three related conditions under a broader goal-pursuit lens. Specifically, we identify the key boundary condition as—customers' intention to reuse the platform effectively (herein, *platform reuse*), representing the focal goal—and two further conditions that shape the strength of the effect: the extent to which supplier reviews are relevant to achieving that goal (review relevance to the goal), and provision of additional benefits (increasing the value of the goal).

2.5.1. Intention to reuse the platform (i.e., the goal)

When an evaluation is tied to a valued goal, it becomes consequential for the individual (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Recall that Tom was concerned with receiving a positive review to maintain his ability to successfully book rooms via Airbnb (i.e., his goal). However, when no goal is associated with an evaluation, then self-presentational concerns—and the motivation to manage impressions—will diminish (Leary, 2019). Consistent with this, Wooten and Reed II (2000) showed that impression motivation dropped significantly among individuals who did not anticipate future interaction with others, but remained strong when it was expected (see also Baumeister, 1982).

Extending this logic, when customers have no intention to reuse a platform, the goal does not exist. As a result, self-presentational concerns should attenuate, with ingratiation behaviors being less likely to arise. In such cases, making a favorable impression carries little to no instrumental value, which is typical of limited-window or one-off (e.g., hiring a car on a foreign platform) interactions.

H3a: The effect of two-sided review systems on self-presentational concerns is attenuated when customers do not intend to reuse the platform.

2.5.2. Review relevance to the goal

Not all evaluations are equally relevant to the attainment of an associated goal (Griner & Smith, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As the relevance of evaluation to a goal increases, self-presentational concerns increase accordingly (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). We introduce *review relevance*, which represents the degree to which a prospective review, or rating, is thought to matter in securing the goal (i.e., platform reuse). This is shaped by three key determinants.

First, *customer platform status* refers to a customer's current profile or standing within the platform, as reflected in the strength and stability of their past evaluations. For example, a recent negative review may increase the importance of subsequent evaluations in attempts to restore platform standing (Leary et al., 1996). Similarly, new or infrequent users may perceive initial reviews as disproportionately influential on their overall platform rating, due to the statistical weight of initial data points and the diminishing impact of

[3] We use the term *effective platform reuse* to distinguish it from mere reuse. While customers may continue to use a platform despite poor ratings, such use is unlikely to be effective, as low ratings can reduce supplier trust and limit access to, or preference in, service provision.

later ones (Minard, 2016). As Locke (2023) notes, "if… [there are] a ton of reviews already, one review won't move the needle that much" (p. 1).

Second, *supplier characteristics* can shape the perceived impact of evaluations. Reviews authored by high-status suppliers—such as Airbnb Superhosts or higher-tier Uber drivers (e.g., Gold, Platinum)—may be perceived as more visible and consequential to platform reuse. Likewise, suppliers known for leaving detailed written feedback may heighten customers' concerns relative to those who offer only generic or perfunctory comments (Pooja & Upadhyaya, 2024). Lastly, *review system design* may influence review relevance by shaping the diagnostic clarity of feedback. Binary mechanisms (e.g., thumbs-up/down) will be less relevant to platform status than more detailed, multi-dimensional, rating scales. Collectively, these factors are examples that may influence the perceived relevance of reviews to future platform transactions, such that greater relevance is associated with heightened self-presentational concerns. Consequently:

H3b: The effect of two-sided review systems on self-presentational concerns is stronger when review relevance is high (vs. low).

2.5.3. Additional value attached to the goal

For customers who intend to revisit the platform, reuse carries inherent goal value, but is likely to become more motivating when additional value is *also* attached (increased goal value). In psychology, motivational intensity increases as a function of the value of desired outcomes (Higgins, 2002; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). For example, when interviewing for a highly desirable position (vs. a less attractive one), self-presentational concerns increase, prompting more strategic self-presentation behaviors (Pandey & Rastogi, 1979; Stevens, 1997). In platform contexts, two-sided review systems often link tangible rewards to customer profile status. For instance, Airbnb has explored the introduction of a "Super Guest" tier, offering premium-level benefits such as exclusive discounts and priority bookings to highly rated customers (Airbnb., 2018). As goal value increases, so does its importance, such that anticipated evaluation further heightens self-presentational concerns due to the greater potential gains at stake.

H3c: The effect of two-sided review systems on self-presentational concerns is stronger when the value attached to the goal is higher (vs. lower).

Fig. 1 illustrates the conceptual model.

3. Empirical overview

We provide support for our hypotheses through three sets of studies, comprising eight pre-registered experiments conducted across diverse consumption contexts (see Fig. 2). Studies 1 A–B test whether a two-sided (vs. one-sided) review system increases ingratiation behavior (H1). Studies 2 A–C examine the role of self-presentational concerns as the mediator underpinning this effect (H2). Finally, Studies 3 A–C explore conditions associated with goal pursuit, in bounding and shaping the effect on SPC, unpacked across three dimensions: (i) platform reuse (Study 3A, H3a), (ii) review relevance (Study 3B, H3b), and (iii) additional goal value (Study 3C, H3c). Fig. 2 presents an overview of the empirical package, with a rationale for each study. Table 2 consolidates operational design aspects, also highlighting differences in measures and procedures. Across the studies, multiple dependent variables were assessed. The focal dependent variables identified in the pre-registration procedures (including mediators, where applicable) were linked to specific pre-registered analyses and are reported as primary outcomes. All other dependent variables were pre-registered as exploratory (i.e., secondary) analyses. Table 2 identifies the status of each variable. Analyses are labeled accordingly in the results sections.

4. Study 1A: Main effect game simulation (non-verbal ingratiation behavior)

We examined whether a two-sided (vs. one-sided) review system impacts customer behavior during the consumption experience. A between-subjects, scenario-based experiment with two review system conditions, one where only the customer can write a review ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$), and one where both parties can review each other ($RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$), represented the experimental conditions.

4.1. Stimuli, procedure, and sample

The study was pre-registered at: https://aspredicted.org/vbxy-rjqn.pdf. Whilst we originally specified a final target sample size of 300, a total of 301 participants were recruited through Connect (50.2% female; $M_{age} = 37.90$, $SD = 12.91$), split between the $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ ($n = 150$) and $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$ conditions ($n = 151$).[4]

Participants were US residents who had indicated renting accommodation on a short-term basis (in the past two years). Web Appendix B provides details of the data quality checks and data exclusion criteria for all studies. This appendix also reports tests of differences in exclusion rates across conditions and demonstrates the robustness of the reported effects using datasets both with, and without, excluded participants.

Participants were asked to imagine visiting London for a few days, where they would be staying in an apartment reserved via an online booking platform. In the one-sided review system condition ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$), they were instructed that at the end of their stay, they could write a review about the supplier, but the supplier did not have the same ability. In the two-sided review system condition ($RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$), a supplier-authored review was stated as possible. Note that this represented the core *review system manipulation,*

[4] In all preregistered studies, the final sample size slightly exceeded the preregistered target. This is because we collected a larger sample to accommodate anticipated exclusions in line with the preregistered protocol.

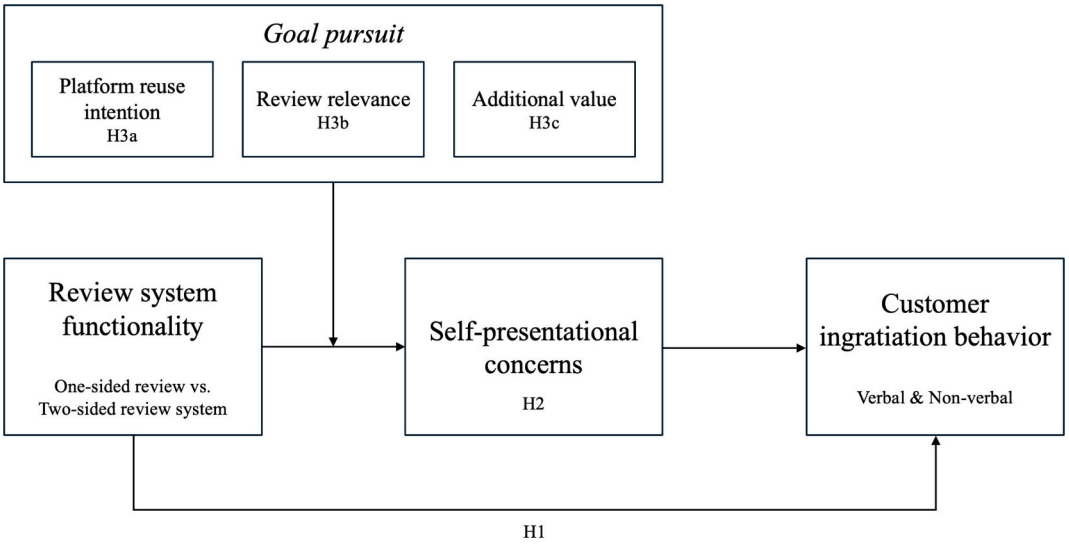

Fig. 1. Conceptual Model.

operationalized in all studies (with the exception of Study 2C).

Participants were asked to imagine it was the morning of check-out. They were invited to play an online cleaning game, which we designed and developed through GDevelop, to establish participants' (non-verbal) behavior at the apartment linked to the scenario. Ingratiation-related tasks, such as cleaning and tidying messy items, were simulated by participants dragging and dropping trash into a bin, mopping floors, and wiping surfaces. Participants needed to spend a minimum of one minute on the cleaning tasks, but were encouraged to take as long as they might in real life. It was made clear that payment for the survey would not depend on how long they performed the task. Web Appendix C provides details of the game, its development, as well as the full scenarios for all other studies.

The dependent variable captured progress in the game, defined as the extent of cleaning and tidying undertaken, and was operationalized primarily as the number of action sets completed by the participant. An action set comprised a set of between one and five individual actions (e.g., picking up four trash items). Participants could complete a total of 17 action sets across the three levels of the game, which were all presented sequentially and in the same order. It was necessary to complete each action set before progressing to the next, which afforded accurate tracking of progress and ensured a consistent experimental experience.

Participants were then invited to answer a manipulation check question, which asked them to reflect on the extent to which they agreed the platform allowed two-sided reviews, reported on a 7-point Likert scale. This check was included in all studies that used our *core* review system (one-sided vs. two-sided) manipulation. The manipulation check questions for all studies are provided in Web Appendix D. After this, the following control variables were measured: (i) age, (ii) gender, and (iii) accommodation booking frequency. These also reflected the *core control variables* included in all subsequent studies. Web Appendix E provides details of the measures used here and across the study series. For all studies, analyses conducted *without* control variables are reported within the manuscript, consistent with preregistration declarations. To assess robustness, and as previously mentioned, all analyses were also repeated with control variables. These demonstrate the same pattern of results and are reported in Web Appendix F (mean differences) and Web Appendix G (mediation models).

4.2. Results and discussion

The results of an analysis of variance (herein ANOVA) supported the manipulation (see Web Appendix D). The ANOVA demonstrated a significant difference in the number of action sets completed between conditions, with the two-sided system leading to more cleaning (i.e., ingratiation) activity than the one-sided system ($F(1,299) = 6.957$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = 0.023$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 13.06$, $SD = 5.51$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 14.58$, $SD = 4.45$). Given that progress in the game (the pre-registered focal dependent variable) can also be operationalized as the number of individual actions completed, or the number of levels finished, we conducted further ANOVA tests using this alternative dependent variable as a gauge of model robustness. Results were consistent (see Web Appendix F). Consequently, the study provides initial evidence for the main effect of review systems on non-verbal ingratiation behavior in an accommodation context (H1). Ultimately, customers 'up their game' when they know suppliers can write a review. In the following study, we test this effect using a verbal form of ingratiation behavior.

5. Study 1B: Replicating the main effect (verbal ingratiation behavior)

Study 1B was designed to replicate the main effect from Study 1 A, this time with behavioral and text-based ingratiation measures using a conversation simulation in a taxi-hire setting. We employed an online experiment with a two-condition between-subjects

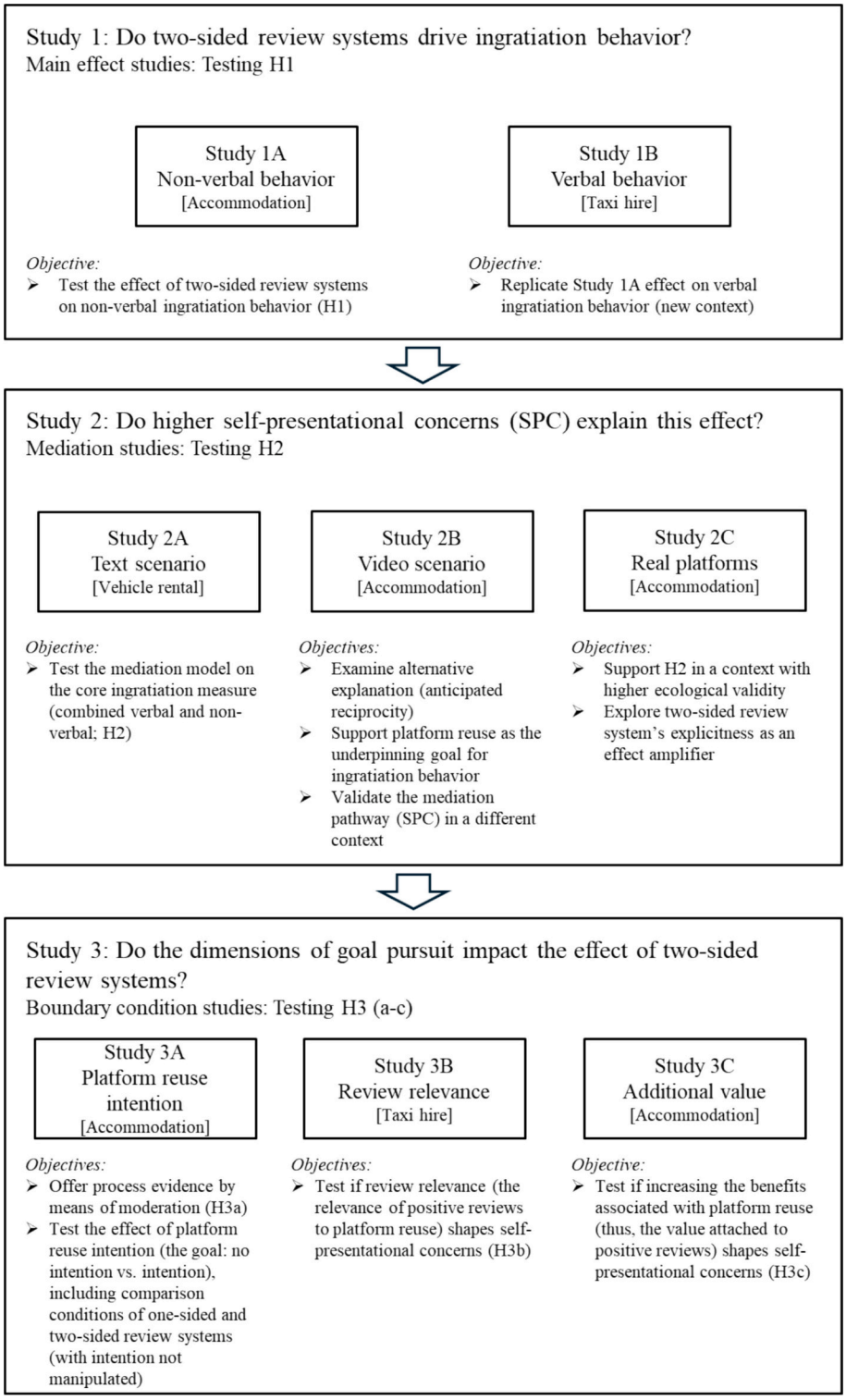

Fig. 2. Summary Map of Study Sequence.

Table 2
Overview of studies and hypotheses.

	Experiment	Sample	Independent variable	Mediator: *Self-reported scale*	DV: *Self-report intention*	DV: *Behavior proxy*	DV: *Behavior*	Findings
Main effect studies (Test H1)	**Study 1 A** Accom *Simulation*	US Accom bookers $n = 301$	*Review system* $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$	–	–	–	Progress in the game (i.e., actions completed)$^{+1}$	H1 supported
	Study 1B Taxi travel *Simulation*	US Taxi bookers n = 303	*Review system* $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$	–	–	–	Length of answers$^{\hat{}1}$ Convo reciprocity$^{\hat{}2}$ Prosocial, You, Emo words$^{\hat{}2}$	H1 supported
Mediation studies (Test H2)	**Study 2 A** Car Hire *Text vignette*	US Car renters $n = 183$	*Review system* $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$	✓[1]	✓$^{\hat{}+1}$	–	–	H2 supported
	Study 2B Accom *Video vignette*	US Accom bookers $n = 307$	*Review system* $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$	✓[1] + Antic recip[2]	✓$^{\hat{}+1}$	Cleaning time^{+2}	–	H2 supported
	Study 2C Accom *Video vignette*	UK Platform users $N = 463$	*Review system* **$RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}Implicit}$** + $RS_{TS\text{-}Explicit}$	✓[1] + Relatedness[2]	✓$^{\hat{}+1}$	Cleaning time^{+2}	–	H2 supported
Boundary condition studies (Test H3a-c)	**Study 3 A** Accom *Text vignette*	US Accom bookers n = 409	*Platform reuse* **$RS_{TS\text{-}Intent}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent}$** + $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ & $RS_{TS\text{-}Baseline}$	✓[1]	✓$^{\hat{}+1}$	Prosocial messaging$^{\hat{}2}$ Favor time^{+2}	–	H3a supported
	Study 3B Taxi travel *Text vignette*	US Taxi bookers $n = 456$	*Review relevance* **$RS_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$** + $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$	✓[1]	✓$^{\hat{}+1}$	Tip amount^{+2}	–	H3b supported
	Study 3C Accom *Text vignette*	US Accom bookers $n = 457$	*Additional value* **$RS_{TS\text{-}HigherGV}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}LowerGV}$** + $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$	✓[1]	✓$^{\hat{}+1}$	Favor time^{+2}	–	H3c supported

Notes
TS = Two-sided.
Focal comparison bolded.
$^{\hat{}}$Form of verbal ingratiation.
$^{+}$Form of non-verbal ingratiation.
[1] Primary variable for specified pre-registered analyses.
[2] Secondary variable pre-registered for exploratory analyses.

design ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$).

5.1. Stimuli, procedure, and sample

The study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/9kqm-pxsx.pdf. A final sample of 303 US residents after exclusions (300 pre-registered) who had rented a taxi in the past 12 months was recruited through Prolific (www.prolific.com). The sample comprised 58.1% females, with a $M_{age} = 39.72$ ($SD = 13.79$), split between conditions ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 152$] vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 151$]).

Participants imagined visiting Edinburgh (UK) for a few days by watching a video about the scenario—enabling a more immersive experimental experience (Chen et al., 2022). The video presented information about their trip (i.e., visiting the Old Town, trying local food) and informed participants about taking a taxi to a local attraction, which was booked through GoTaxis—an international (but fictitious) app they had previously used. The core review system manipulation was then administered. Afterwards, participants were engaged in a conversation simulation with their taxi driver. While sitting in the back of the cab, the taxi driver asked five questions (e.g., Are you from around here, or are you visiting? How do you feel about Edinburgh so far? etc.), each one presented in individual videos. For each question, participants typed their (exact) response. This provided the data for the primary dependent variable, which was *reply length* (words). For each question, participants also selected whether they would ask a return question (Yes/No), providing data for a secondary dependent variable (*conversational reciprocity*, i.e., number of questions responded to, out of five). Both variables align with commonly accepted ingratiation behaviors (Jones, 1964; Matovic & Forgas, 2018).

As prior research supports the fact that showing care, being polite, showing interest in others and positive sentiment are all signals

of ingratiation (e.g., Matovic & Forgas, 2018; Tal-Or, 2010),[5] we used LIWC to count words linked to ingratiation (*prosocial words*, such as care, help, thank, please; *You-words*, such as you, your, u, yourself; *positive emotion words*, such as good, love, happy, hope). This used an embedded dictionary (see Boyd et al., 2022). After completing the task, participants recorded answers for the core control variables and whether they had been to Edinburgh before (Yes/No; see Web Appendix C for full scenarios and video links).

5.2. Results and discussion

Data included five written responses (i.e., levels) for each participant. In line with prior work (see Buechel & Townsend, 2018), whereby aggregated results rather than differences are analyzed between levels, we stacked data, generating a total of 1515 observations ($n = 303 \times 5$). ANOVAs were conducted with review system as the independent variable on the primary (i.e., reply length [average across answers]) and secondary dependent variables (conversational reciprocity; linguistic counts for prosocial, positive emotion, and You-words). An index variable identifying the question number (1–5) was also included as a fixed blocking factor, so that effects of the main independent variable were tested while controlling for variance attributable to differences between questions.

In support of H1, the presence of a two-sided review system was associated with a significant increase in almost all of the ingratiation behaviors tested in this study. The primary analyses showed average response length was significantly higher in the two-sided review system group ($F(1,1509) = 7.633$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = 0.005$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 10.20$, $SD = 8.85$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 11.42$, $SD = 8.83$). Similarly, conversational reciprocity was also greater ($F(1,1509) = 17.304$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.011$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 1.97$, $SD = 1.68$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 2.33$, $SD = 1.59$). Secondary analyses revealed the two-sided group with higher use of prosocial words ($F(1,1509) = 3.855$, $p = .050$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 0.14$, $SD = 1.11$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 0.34$, $SD = 2.53$). You-words were also higher ($F(1,1509) = 6.690$, $p = .010$, $\eta^2 = 0.004$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 0.79$, $SD = 2.94$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 1.20$, $SD = 3.54$). No significant difference in positive emotion words emerged ($F(1,1509) = 0.078$, $p = .781$, $\eta^2 = 0.000$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 3.23$, $SD = 9.73$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 3.12$, $SD = 7.11$; see Web Appendix F for the full set ANOVA and additional ANCOVA results).

Overall, Study 1B provides further support for H1, demonstrating the stability of the effect for verbal forms of ingratiation behavior. Note that the equivalence in positive emotion words across the two conditions *could* be attributed to participants being truthful yet polite, particularly when discussing local cuisine, since they had been primed in the scenario to believe the food was "not great". Nonetheless, and taken altogether, Studies 1 A and 1B provide strong and complementary support for H1. The following set of studies focuses on why ingratiation occurs in this context by establishing the mediating process.

6. Study 2A: Offering process evidence

To test H2 (and further support H1), we employed a scenario-based, between-subjects design experiment with two conditions ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$) in a vehicle rental setting.

6.1. Stimuli, procedure, and sample

This study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/xyfz-2qkj.pdf. A final sample of 183 (after exclusions) US residents (51.4% male; $M_{age} = 40.97$, $SD = 11.28$) who had rented a car in the past two years were recruited through CloudResearch (now Connect), split between the two groups ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 86$] vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 97$]). In line with the pre-registration, 208 responses were collected prior to exclusion checks.

Participants imagined being on vacation where they rented a car using an online platform. The core review system manipulation was then presented. Self-presentational concerns (SPC) and ingratiation were both captured on seven-point Likert scales (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 7) and presented in a randomized order (here and in all subsequent studies). SPC included four items adapted from Martin and Leary (2001; e.g., I would be concerned about what the rental provider would think of me.; $\alpha = 0.89$). Ingratiation behavior, comprising six items and covering both verbal (i.e., polite communication) and non-verbal behavior (i.e., respectful treatment of property), was adapted from Bolino and Turnley (1999; e.g., I would communicate exceptionally graciously with the rental provider, so they see me as likeable). As anticipated, both verbal and non-verbal components of the measure loaded onto one factor, providing an acceptable overall level of internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$). From this point onward, these two measures serve as the core mediator and ingratiation assessment in the *primary* (i.e., pre-registered) analyses. Control variables concluded the survey (see Web Appendix E for all measures).

6.2. Results and discussion

As part of the primary analyses, two ANOVA tests were specified with review system as the independent variable, and Ingratiation and SPC as the dependent variables. Results supported H1, with participants in the two-sided system group exhibiting higher levels of ingratiation behavioral intention ($F(1,181) = 5.929$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2 = 0.032$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.17$, $SD = 1.08$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 5.56$, $SD = 1.10$). Similarly, SPC was higher under a two-sided system ($F(1,181) = 24.522$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.119$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.19$, $SD = 1.63$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 5.21$, $SD = 1.13$).

[5] Textual responses were cleaned before analysis, typos were corrected, speech marks were removed, as well as other statements such as "I would say".

Following Pieters' (2017) guidelines for mediation analysis, we tested the mediating role of SPC (H2) using model 4 of the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018), as pre-registered. To support a meaningful mediation analysis, we examined the correlation between SPC and Ingratiation. The observed correlation ($r = 0.477$) was well below commonly used thresholds (e.g., 0.70) for treating constructs as empirically distinct (Tabachnick et al., 2007). Web Appendix H reports correlation coefficients between SPC and the dependent variables across all subsequent studies, which similarly support construct discriminance. A bootstrap analysis with 5000 samples supported the mediation, with the indirect effect being significant ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.360$, $SE = 0.087$, 95% CI [0.200, 0.541]; see Fig. 3). Specifically, when including the mediator, the direct effect of the review system on ingratiation became non-significant ($p > .05$), suggesting that an omitted mediating variable was unlikely (Zhao et al., 2010). Web Appendix G reports mediation results for all studies with and without covariates; estimates remain stable as model parameters increase. In line with impression management theory (Leary, 2019), these results support that two-sided systems increase ingratiation behavior because customers experience more SPC (H2). In the next study, we replicate this finding in a different context and examine the role of an alternative mediator alongside SPC.

7. Study 2B: Validating the proposed process

An experiment similar to 2 A was operationalized in a vacation accommodation setting ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$). We included anticipated reciprocity (i.e., the anticipation that behaving positively will be repaid by the supplier via receiving a positive review) as a potential alternative explanation of the effect.

7.1. Stimuli, procedure, and sample

The study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/fzhk-z2s5.pdf. A final sample of 307 (after exclusions) US residents (52.1% female; $M_{age} = 39.03$, $SD = 11.13$) who had booked accommodation in the past two years were recruited through Connect (300 pre-registered), split across the two groups ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 150$] vs. $RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 157$]).

Participants were presented with a fictitious booking platform ('GoPlaces'), with the core manipulation and measures from prior studies adapted to this context. As pre-registered, we included additional measures for exploratory (i.e., secondary) purposes: First, *anticipated reciprocity* was measured through four items adapted from prior work (Manatschal & Freitag, 2014; Ramaekers et al., 2025; e.g., If I am a good guest, the provider will repay me with a good review on the GoPlaces platform.; $\alpha = 0.98$). The order of anticipated reciprocity, SPC, and the primary ingratiation measure was randomized.

Second, to support our assumption that customers hold the goal of effective platform reuse, we collected data on a single-item measure (i.e., "to ensure providers will want to rent out to me in the future"). As an alternative plausible goal associated with receiving a positive review, we included self-esteem (i.e., "for my own self-esteem") since it is a construct identified as a common driver of impression management (Leary, 2019). Both measures were captured on seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) and presented only to participants in the two-sided review system condition. Lastly, we recorded *cleaning time*, a behavioral proxy measure for ingratiation, where participants imagined having just one hour before checking out, and were asked to specify how many minutes they would devote to tidying up (0–60 min; see Web Appendix E for all measures).

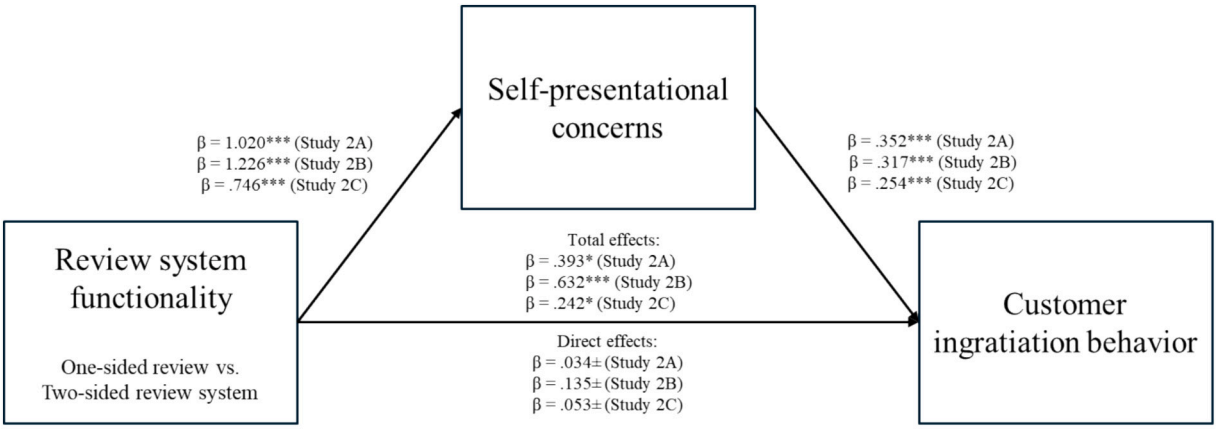

Fig. 3. The mediating effect of self-presentational concerns on customer ingratiation behavior (Studies 2 A-C).

7.2. Results and discussion

Two ANOVA tests (primary analyses) replicated Study 2 A results. The core ingratiation measure was significantly higher for the two-sided condition ($F(1,305) = 32.941$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.097$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.37$, $SD = 1.10$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 6.00$, $SD = 0.82$). Similarly, this group exhibited more SPC ($F(1,305) = 60.114$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.165$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.29$, $SD = 1.61$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 5.51$, $SD = 1.13$). Secondary ANOVA analyses found cleaning time was higher for two-sided reviewing ($F(1,305) = 11.588$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.037$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 28.51$, $SD = 14.06$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 33.94$, $SD = 13.85$). Furthermore, the two-sided condition reported higher anticipated reciprocity ($F(1,305) = 425.270$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.582$; $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 2.33$, $SD = 1.90$ vs. $M_{Two\text{-}sided} = 5.80$, $SD = 0.89$). See Web Appendix F for results including covariates.

To test if anticipated reciprocity served as an alternative explanation, it was included in parallel with SPC using PROCESS Model 4. A significant indirect path to ingratiation through SPC was established ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.389$, $SE = 0.093$, 95% CI [0.223, 0.592]; see Fig. 3), but not via anticipated reciprocity ($\beta_{AntRec} = 0.109$, $SE = 0.127$, 95% CI [−0.131, 0.362]). This model was re-run with cleaning time, producing equivalent results ($\beta_{SPC} = 2.642$, $SE = 0.877$, 95% CI [1.072, 4.481]; $\beta_{AntRec} = -3.011$, $SE = 2.077$, 95% CI [−7.199, 0.984]; see Web Appendix G). To support the platform reuse being the focal goal, we correlated this and the additional goal measure with SPC. As expected, we found a significant positive correlation for platform reuse ($r = 0.285$, $p < .001$) but not for self-esteem ($p = .868$).

Study 2B replicates the hypothesized process with mediation via SPC. Anticipated reciprocity is not supported when included in a parallel model as a mediator. We provide a discussion of this result in the General Discussion. The results also lend support to the assumption that customers seek positive reviews primarily to secure future platform reuse (extrinsic) benefits, rather than intrinsic outcomes such as self-esteem.

Thus far, all studies have used a core review system manipulation to sustain internal validity by explicitly stating that participants *can be reviewed* in the two-sided condition but *not* in the one-sided condition. Whilst explicit, this manipulation could have introduced a demand effect, whereby informing participants in the one-sided condition that they could not be reviewed may have signalled that ingratiatory behavior was less necessary, thereby suppressing reported ingratiation. Moreover, the core manipulation check was administered before the dependent variables, potentially increasing the salience of the review system on subsequent responses. To address these limitations and strengthen support for H1 and H2, we conducted a supplementary study, using Study 2B stimuli but with a less explicit manipulation and a post-DV manipulation check. The results were consistent with Study 2B, strengthening confidence in our conclusions across the study package (see Web Appendix I). While the prior studies together offer strong internal validity, Study 2C provides ecological validity by testing the model using real platforms and customers.

8. Study 2C: Extending ecological validity

We designed this study to closely reflect Study 2B, but operationalizing the review system manipulation through bookings made on two existing accommodation platforms: Booking.com ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$) vs. Airbnb ($RS_{Two\text{-}sided}$). The *central* comparison remains between one-sided and two-sided (TS) review systems. Participants were not informed of the *type of review system* associated with each platform, instead relying on their understanding of the platforms' review systems formed implicitly through prior experience. This avoids the limitation of directly communicating the type of review system functionality used in prior studies. We also include a third, exploratory condition in which participants were *explicitly* told that Airbnb uses two-sided review functionality. This condition provides a comparison point for assessing whether effects differ when two-sided review systems are implicit (not drawn attention to) versus explicitly highlighted. For clarity, we label the conditions as one-sided, two-sided implicit, and two-sided explicit ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}Implicit}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}Explicit}$).

8.1. Stimuli, procedure, and sample

The study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/d99x-kdt3.pdf. A final sample of 463 (after exclusions) UK residents (50.3% female; $M_{age} = 39.34$, $SD = 11.79$) with experience of booking accommodation through *both* Airbnb and Booking.com platforms in the past two years were recruited through Prolific (pre-registered $n = 450$).[6] Participants were randomly allocated to one of the three conditions, with the sample equally split: one-sided ($n = 156$), two-sided implicit ($n = 152$), and two-sided explicit review system ($n = 155$) conditions. As pre-registered, the third condition was included only for exploration, and so no effects were hypothesized.

Booking.com and Airbnb were chosen as the UK's most-used booking platforms, adopting one-sided and two-sided review systems, respectively. Participants were told they were booking an apartment in Stockholm using either Booking.com ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$) or Airbnb ($RS_{TS\text{-}Implicit}$). A video vignette instructed that the apartment was available through a professional provider and also gave brief details about the trip. After checking in, they received a message from the platform wishing them a good visit and inviting them to ask questions to mirror real-world platform communications. The stimulus in the two-sided explicit condition ($RS_{TS\text{-}Explicit}$) was identical, except for the fact that the message received after checking in included a natural mention of the review system and provided a link to an article on how to earn a good guest rating. Full scenarios and video links are shown in Web Appendix C.

Core measures were captured, along with a secondary dependent variable (i.e., cleaning time), as in Study 2B. Furthermore, since

[6] Participants needed to have booked through Airbnb (also having their own profile) and Booking.com. A pre-screening survey was administered through Prolific in line with their protocol to achieve this custom sample.

relatedness (i.e., how connected you feel to the supplier) is linked to caring behaviors (Levine et al., 2005), we sought to address it as a potential confound stemming from two-sided systems. Participants may perceive Airbnb hosts as more relatable than those on Booking.com, given that Airbnb properties are typically rented out by 'normal' people, possibly leading to ingratiation not explained by our review system manipulation. Both relatedness and the review system manipulation checks were measured after the core dependent variables. We measured perceived relatedness of the accommodation provider through three items with seven-point Likert scales (e.g., …a sense that you are similar to them [provider/host], $\alpha = 0.93$).

8.2. Results and discussion

The manipulation check supported a significant difference in perceived review system across the one-sided and two-sided conditions (see Web Appendix D). ANOVA tests with the primary dependent variables and cleaning time were specified across the three groups. A significant difference across the groups was found for ingratiation ($F(2,460) = 3.522$, $p = .030$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$). Relative to the one-sided condition, ingratiation was significantly higher in the two-sided implicit condition (focal comparison) as well as the two-sided explicit group ($M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.57$, $SD = 0.96$ vs. the $M_{TS\text{-}Implicit} = 5.81$, $SD = 0.81$, $p = .015$; $M_{TS\text{-}Explicit} = 5.78$, $SD = 0.83$, $p = .035$). However, no significant difference was found between two-sided implicit and explicit conditions ($p = .740$).

Similarly, SPC was different across conditions ($F(2,460) = 23.085$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.091$). In contrast to the one-sided condition, SPC was significantly higher in the two-sided implicit condition (focal comparison), and also the two-sided explicit group ($M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.10$, $SD = 1.61$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}Implicit} = 4.84$, $SD = 1.42$, $p < .001$; $M_{TS\text{-}Explicit} = 5.15$, $SD = 1.17$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, SPC was found to be higher in the explicit versus the implicit condition, although only at a level approaching statistical significance ($p = .053$).

An exploratory analysis using ANOVA revealed a significant effect for cleaning time ($F(2,460) = 4.258$, $p = .015$, $\eta^2 = 0.018$). Compared to the one-sided condition, cleaning time was marginally higher in the two-sided implicit condition (approaching significance), and significantly higher in the two-sided explicit group ($M_{One\text{-}sided} = 30.99$, $SD = 14.37$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}Implicit} = 33.93$, $SD = 12.63$, $p = .058$; $M_{TS\text{-}Explicit} = 35.39$, $SD = 13.49$, $p = .004$). Cleaning time did not differ between the two-sided implicit and explicit conditions ($p = .345$).

A further exploratory analysis (again with ANOVA) revealed no differences in relatedness across conditions ($p = .187$, all pairwise $ps > 0.05$). The focal pairwise comparison between one-sided versus two-sided implicit was insignificant ($p = .526$), and no further analysis was performed (see Web Appendix F for full ANOVA results).

Results from a mediation analysis with PROCESS Model 4 with a multi-categorical independent variable (one-sided review system as the reference group) supported (as before) the mediation through SPC for the primary ingratiation measure with the two-sided implicit condition ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.189$, $SE = 0.050$, 95% CI [0.099, 0.291]), as well as for the two-sided explicit condition – which, notably, had a greater effect ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.269$, $SE = 0.051$, 95% CI [0.177, 0.376]; see Fig. 3). The same pattern of results was found for cleaning time, with the mediation supported through SPC for both the two-sided implicit ($\beta_{SPC} = 1.052$, $SE = 0.442$, 95% CI [0.297, 2.000]) and two-sided explicit conditions ($\beta_{SPC} = 1.493$, $SE = 0.559$, 95% CI [0.466, 2.664]). An additional mediation model was estimated using the two-sided implicit condition as the reference group, to compare the indirect effect of SPC with the two-sided explicit group. For ingratiation, mediation through SPC was confirmed for the explicit two-sided condition ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.079$, $SE = 0.039$, 95% CI [0.006, 0.157]). The same results were observed for cleaning time ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.441$, $SE = 0.263$, 95% CI [0.007, 1.021]).[7] Refer to Web Appendix G for detailed mediation results.

Overall, Study 2C further supports H1 and H2 by demonstrating robustness in a more ecologically valid context. Furthermore, the study provides initial exploratory evidence that making two-sided functionality explicit during consumption may increase SPC and, in turn, ingratiation behavior—although this effect was approaching significance and therefore warrants further validation.

It is noteworthy that the manipulation check result for the one-sided condition was close to the midpoint of the scale, indicating that, on average, participants neither agreed nor disagreed that Booking.com uses a two-sided review system. Given the more ecologically valid design, where participants engaged with real platforms without explicit instruction about review systems per se, some degree of noise in reported perceptions is expected. However, to examine this further, we conducted a follow-up survey to better understand platform users' knowledge of both platforms (full details and discussion provided in Web Appendix J). The results provided reassurance that users were aware of the different review systems associated with the platforms. In particular, approximately 75% of participants were able to correctly map Booking.com to be a one-sided review system, and 95% knew Airbnb to have two-sided functionality.

Finally, we considered the possibility that a supplier's status might have an influence on the tested effects. Specifically, we address this in terms of the supplier being a professional or private host. We conducted a supplementary 2 × 2 experiment, manipulating provider type (professional vs. private) and review system (one-sided vs. two-sided). The results again supported the outlined process, regardless of supplier type (see Web Appendix K for full details). In the following studies, we turn our attention to testing the three dimensions associated with goal pursuit that bound and shape the effects: (i) customers' intention to reuse the platform (Study 3 A), (ii) the extent to which a supplier's review is consequential for securing effective future use (Study 3B), and (iii) the additional value tied to such use (Study 3C).

[7] The indirect effect of two-sided explicit (vs. two-sided implicit) on ingratiation via SPC should be interpreted with caution, as the a-path only approaches significance ($p = .053$). Notably, when including the core covariates, this path becomes significant ($p = .038$), providing additional support for the indirect effect (see Web Appendix G).

9. Study 3A: Intention to effectively reuse the platform

For the possibility of supplier-authored reviews to increase ingratiation behavior via SPC, there needs to be an associated goal for customers to realize; in this context: *effective platform reuse*. In the absence of this goal, the effect reported so far should be attenuated, because there are no (or very limited) gains at stake. We tested H3a using a single factor, four condition experiment, including two conditions in which platform reuse intention was manipulated; intention (i.e., goal present) versus no intention (i.e., goal absent) within a two-sided (TS) review system ($RS_{TS\text{-}Intent}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent}$).[8] Two additional conditions were included: a one-sided and a two-sided review system, whereby no information about the customer's future platform use was provided. Thus, any reuse intention would be automatically inferred rather than explicitly stated to participants. These conditions mirrored those of the prior studies, providing a direct point of comparison. For clarity, this two-sided condition was labeled as the baseline to distinguish it from the other two-sided conditions ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ & $RS_{TS\text{-}Baseline}$).

Following Hagen (2021), the study provides a form of process-by-moderation (through a single-factor design), where we use a blockage manipulation of the mediator to validate the process (see Pirlott & MacKinnon, 2016). In other words, when a potential review is not accompanied by an intention to reuse the platform, the review carries no benefit, and thus SPC is not activated, and the main effect for two-sided reviewing should be switched off (i.e., show equivalence to the one-sided review system manipulation).

9.1. Stimuli, procedure, and sample

The study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/jdw4-dh8w.pdf. After exclusions, a final sample of 409 participants (54.5% female; $M_{age} = 39.70$, $SD = 11.89$) was recruited, mirroring the sample and recruitment procedure of Study 2B (400 pre-registered). The sample was split across the four groups, i.e., $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ ($n = 92$) vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}Baseline}$ ($n = 104$) vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}Intent}$ ($n = 107$) vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent}$ ($n = 106$).

Participants imagined booking accommodation through a new site. They were first presented with the core review system manipulation (one-sided vs. two-sided). Participants in the $RS_{TS\text{-}Intent}$ (vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent}$) condition were told they definitely would (vs. would not) use the site again, implying they would care (vs. not care) about a review written about them (see Web Appendix C for scenarios). We included the core measures and also added two secondary dependent variables. First, an alternative measure of non-verbal ingratiation—favor time (i.e., the time the customer was willing to stay at the apartment as a favor to the provider, to receive clean linen, 0–90 min)—was captured. Second, prosocial messaging, a behavioral proxy measure of verbal ingratiation where participants indicated whether they would take the time to write a private thank-you message to the provider after the stay was captured (Yes/No; see Web Appendix E for measures). Whilst the review system manipulation check was included as part of the main study, the platform reuse goal manipulation was validated using a separate sample (see Web Appendix D for full details).

9.2. Results and discussion

The manipulation checks for both the review systems and the platform reuse goal were satisfactory (see Web Appendix D). The primary ANOVA tests revealed significant differences across the four conditions for ingratiation ($F(3,405) = 29.947$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.182$; see Fig. 4). Specifically, ingratiation was higher in the two-sided system when there was an intention to reuse, compared to when there was either no intention, and the one-sided condition ($M_{TS\text{-}Intent} = 5.97$, $SD = 0.78$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 5.00$, $SD = 1.17$ vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.33$, $SD = 1.12$, all pairwise $ps < 0.001$), No significant difference in ingratiation between the two-sided intention and two-sided baseline condition was found ($p = .249$). Higher ingratiation was observed in the two-sided baseline compared to the one-sided and two-sided no intention conditions ($M_{TS\text{-}Baseline} = 5.82$, $SD = 0.85$ vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.33$, $SD = 1.12$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 5.00$, $SD = 1.17$, all pairwise $ps < 0.001$). Ingratiation was also slightly higher in the one-sided condition compared to the two-sided no intention condition ($M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.33$, $SD = 1.12$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 5.00$, $SD = 1.17$, $p = .020$).

Significant differences in SPC were also observed ($F(3,405) = 21.656$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.138$; see Fig. 4). Specifically, SPC was higher in the two-sided intention condition compared to the two-sided no intention and one-sided conditions ($M_{TS\text{-}Intent} = 5.56$, $SD = 1.20$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 4.40$, $SD = 1.50$ vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.19$, $SD = 1.50$, all pairwise $ps < 0.001$), providing support for H3a. No significant difference in SPC was found between the two-sided intention and the two-sided baseline condition ($p = .249$). Higher SPC was recorded in the two-sided baseline compared to the one-sided, and two-sided no intention conditions ($M_{TS\text{-}Baseline} = 5.53$, $SD = 1.12$ vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.19$, $SD = 1.50$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 4.40$, $SD = 1.50$, all pairwise $ps < 0.001$). Lastly, and in line with prior expectation, there was no significant difference in SPC between the one-sided and two-sided no intention conditions ($p = .249$). Table 3 provides descriptives statistics for all dependent variables across conditions.

For the secondary analyses, an ANOVA for favor time and a chi-square test for prosocial messaging (binary variable) were specified. The ANOVA was consistent with previous findings, establishing significant differences in favor time across conditions ($F(3,405) = 5.542$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.037$). Specifically, favor time was higher in the two-sided intention condition compared to the two-sided no intention and one-sided review system conditions ($M_{TS\text{-}Intent} = 39.31$, $SD = 26.85$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 27.04$, $SD = 21.87$, $p < .001$, vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 30.01$, $SD = 23.37$, $p = .007$). Greater favor time was observed in the two-sided baseline compared to the two-sided no

[8] We employ a single-factor design in this and subsequent Studies 3B and 3C, as manipulating goal pursuit dimensions within a one-sided review system (e.g., within a 2 × 2 design) is neither ecologically valid nor meaningful, given that such systems do not support reviews that affect future platform reuse.

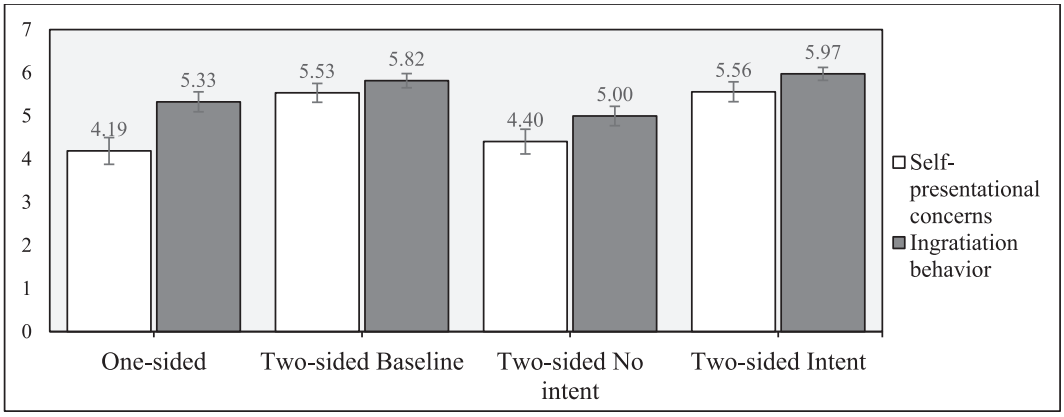

Fig. 4. The effects of review system and goal relevance on SPC and ingratiation behavior (Study 3 A). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table 3
Study 3A descriptive results (without covariates).

Dependent variable	Independent variable condition	M	S·D	Percent
Ingratiation	RS One-sided	5.326	1.12	
	RS Two-sided-Baseline	5.816	0.85	
	RS Two-sided-No-Intent	4.997	1.17	
	RS Two-sided-Intent	5.973	0.780	
Self-presentational concerns	RS One-sided	4.188	1.50	
	RS Two-sided-Baseline	5.534	1.12	
	RS Two-sided-No-Intent	4.404	1.50	
	RS Two-sided-Intent	5.559	1.20	
Favor time	RS One-sided	30.011	23.37	
	RS Two-sided-Baseline	34.904	24.41	
	RS Two-sided-No-Intent	27.037	21.87	
	RS Two-sided-Intent	39.311	26.85	
Proportion opting to write a thank you message to the supplier	RS One-sided			72.8%
	RS Two-sided-Baseline			84.6%
	RS Two-sided-No-Intent			64.5%
	RS Two-sided-Intent			81.1%

intention condition ($M_{TS\text{-}Baseline} = 34.90$, SD = 24.41 vs. $M_{TS\text{-}No\text{-}Intent} = 27.04$, $SD = 21.87$, $p = .019$). Favor time in the two-sided baseline was also descriptively higher than in the one-sided condition ($M_{One\text{-}sided} = 30.01$, $SD = 23.37$), although this difference was not statistically significant ($p = .159$). No significant difference was found between the one-sided and the two-sided no intention conditions ($p = .388$). See Web Appendix F for full ANOVA results and pairwise comparisons with and without covariates, and Table 3 for a summary of this study's results.

Next, the chi-square test for prosocial messaging revealed a significant difference in the proportion of people opting to write a *thank you* message to the supplier (X^2 (3, $N = 409$) = 13.96, $p = .003$, see Fig. 5). Pairwise chi-squared tests showed a greater proportion chose to write in the two-sided intention condition (81.1%) compared to the no intention (64.5%, X^2 (3, $N = 213$) = 7.45, $p = .006$), and the one-sided groups. However, here the difference was not significant and should be interpreted with caution (72.8%, X^2 (1, $N = 198$) = 1.94, $p = .164$). As expected, no significant difference was found between the intention condition and two-sided baseline (84.6%, X^2 (1, $N = 210$) = 0.448, $p = .503$). Furthermore, in line with the theorization, more people opted to write in the two-sided baseline (84.6%) compared to the no intention (64.5%, X^2 (1, $N = 196$) = 4.10, $p = .043$), and one-sided conditions (72.8%, X^2 (1, $N = 211$) = 11.22, $p < .001$).

For completeness, we conducted three PROCESS Model 4 mediation models with a multi-categorical independent variable (one-sided as the reference group), examining effects on the primary ingratiation measure and the secondary dependent variables (favor time and prosocial messaging) via SPC as the mediator. The results for ingratiation supported mediation for the two-sided intention ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.563$, $SE = 0.088$, 95% CI [0.397, 0.742]), and the two-sided baseline conditions ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.553$, $SE = 0.086$, 95% CI [0.390, 0.733]). As expected, we found no mediation for the two-sided no intention condition ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.089$, $SE = 0.087$, 95% CI [−0.081, 0.257]). Similarly, mediation was supported for favor time for the two-sided intention condition ($\beta_{SPC} = 3.469$, $SE = 1.418$, 95% CI [0.848, 6.571]) and the two-sided baseline condition ($\beta_{SPC} = 3.405$, $SE = 1.402$, 95% CI [0.851, 6.385]). Again, no mediation was found for the two-sided no intention condition ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.548$, $SE = 0.606$, 95% CI [−497, 1.895]). Finally, for prosocial messaging, mediation was once more confirmed for the two-sided intention ($\beta_{SPC} = -0.353$, $SE = 0.139$, 95% CI [−0.660, −0.111]) and two-sided baseline conditions ($\beta_{SPC} = -0.347$, $SE = 0.136$, 95% CI [−0.660, −0.107]). No mediation was found for the two-sided no intention condition ($\beta_{SPC} = -0.056$, $SE = 0.065$, 95% CI [−0.201, 0.052]; see Web Appendix G for detailed results).

The results of Study 3 A support H3a, underscoring the central role of customers' intention to reuse the platform as the (i.e. their) focal goal. In the absence of this goal, SPC and ingratiation are attenuated to levels broadly similar to those observed in a one-sided system. These findings are consistent with Leary (2019), who conceptualized impression management as fundamentally goal-driven. It is noteworthy that the two-sided baseline condition exhibits similar levels of SPC and ingratiation to the condition in which reuse intention is explicitly present. This pattern suggests that, even in the absence of a more explicit manipulation, customers naturally have an intention to reuse the platform, which is consistent with the assumption underpinning the model. The findings further support the proposed mechanism, suggesting that empathy is unlikely to drive ingratiation behavior. Peer-to-peer platforms facilitate empathy in customer-supplier exchanges, potentially affecting ingratiation behavior (Costello & Reczek, 2020; Ross et al., 2025). While empathy reflects an awareness of, and concern for, others, it is not inherently rooted in transactional exchange (Costello & Reczek, 2020). Our results, however, show that customers' ingratiation behavior is fundamentally self-oriented, motivated by the pursuit of securing platform benefits enabled through receipt of a positive supplier review.

While we manipulated one dimension of goal pursuit in this study (platform reuse intention), we test its second dimension (relevance of the review to the goal) in the following study.

10. Study 3B: Review relevance to the goal

Testing H3b, we used a three-condition single-factor between-subjects design to compare high (vs. low) *review relevance* (RR) to the goal of platform reuse in a two-sided (TS) review system. A one-sided review system comparison condition was also included ($RS_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ vs. $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$). This was operationalized in a taxicab setting.

10.1. Stimuli, participants, and procedure

The study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/p674-5rsz.pdf. After exclusions, a final sample of 456 (53.5% female; M_{age} = 38.45, SD = 13.41) US adults who had booked a taxi in the past twelve months were recruited via Connect (450 pre-registered). The sample was split across three groups: $RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ (n = 150) vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ (n = 150) vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$ (n = 156).

Participants were asked to imagine they were on holiday in a US city they had not previously visited, using a familiar taxi app to travel between local attractions. They were then exposed to the core review system manipulation. Review relevance was manipulated by varying the perceived importance of ratings for a customer's overall profile score within the app, such that ratings either strongly or weakly influenced their ability to continue using the platform in the future (e.g., Uber). Specifically, in the low RR condition ($RS_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$), participants already had 100+ ratings, inferring that any single additional rating would only have a small to negligible impact on their overall platform score. In contrast, in the high RR condition ($RS_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$), participants had just one previous rating, making additional ratings from this point onwards highly relevant to their platform score and profile (see Web Appendix C for full scenarios). Core measures and an RR manipulation check were collected. In addition, we included a secondary dependent variable, tipping behavior, as an alternative and non-verbal form of ingratiation behavior (i.e., the amount participants would be willing to tip, presented with reference to the trip costing USD 30; see Web Appendix E for full measures and Web Appendix D for manipulation checks).

10.2. Results and discussion

The manipulation checks were successful (see Web Appendix D). The primary analyses consisted of ANOVAs testing the effect of the three conditions on SPC and ingratiation. For ingratiation, scores were significantly higher in the two-sided high RR condition compared to the others (F(2,453) = 18.248, p < .001, η^2 = 0.075; $M_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$ = 6.01, SD = 0.94 vs. $M_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ = 5.50, SD = 1.18, p < .001; $M_{One\text{-}sided}$ = 5.28, SD = 1.13, p < .001). The two-sided low RR condition exhibited descriptively higher ingratiation than the one-sided, although the difference was not significant ($M_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ = 5.50, SD = 1.18 vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided}$ = 5.28, SD = 1.13, p = .070). SPC was significantly higher in the two-sided high RR condition compared to the two-sided low RR and one-sided review system conditions, providing support for H3b. Furthermore, the two-sided low RR condition was associated with higher SPC than the one-sided review system condition (F(2,453) = 53.604, p < .001, η^2 = 0.191; $M_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$ = 5.66, SD = 1.18 vs. $M_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ = 4.79, SD = 1.39 vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided}$ = 4.01, SD = 1.59, all pairwise ps < 0.001). For secondary analyses, an ANOVA for tipping behavior revealed a pattern of results mirroring those observed for ingratiation (F(2,453) = 5.986, p = .003, η^2 = 0.026; $M_{TS\text{-}HighRR}$ = $4.57, SD = 3.34 vs. $M_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ = $3.67, SD = 3.37, p = .009; $M_{One\text{-}sided}$ = $3.46, SD = 2.02, p = .001; & $M_{TS\text{-}LowRR}$ = $3.67, SD = 3.37 vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided}$ = $3.46, SD = 2.02, p = .542; see full results with and without covariates in Web Appendix F).

To establish further support for H2, we estimated two multi-categorical mediation models (PROCESS Model 4) with the one-sided review system as the reference group and SPC as the mediator—predicting ingratiation and tipping, respectively. SPC significantly mediated the effects of both the two-sided low RR (β_{SPC} = 0.345, SE = 0.081, 95% CI [0.194, 0.512]) and two-sided high RR conditions (β_{SPC} = 0.734, SE = 0.093, 95% CI [0.562, 0.924]) on ingratiation. For tipping behavior, mediation was again supported for the two-sided low RR (β_{SPC} = 0.163, SE = 0.076, 95% CI [0.027, 0.325]), and two-sided high RR conditions (β_{SPC} = 0.346, SE = 0.143, 95% CI [0.061, 0.627]).

Additional mediation models were estimated using the two-sided low RR condition as the reference group with the goal of assessing whether the two-sided high RR condition exhibited a significant indirect effect through SPC. The indirect effect was significant on ingratiation (β_{SPC} = 0.389, SE = 0.073, 95% CI [0.250, 0.541]) and on tipping behavior (β_{SPC} = 0.183, SE = 0.080, 95% CI [0.034, 0.349]; see Web Appendix G for details).

Overall, the study results support H3b, demonstrating that when a rating is of higher relevance to a customer's goal (in a two-sided review system), they exhibit more SPC. However, even when the review relevance is low, the effect on SPC is not as low (i.e., diminished) as it is for a one-sided system. In the final study, we test whether increasing the value of the goal itself has an alternative amplifying effect.

11. Study 3C: Additional value attached to the goal

The present study considers whether platform-level features that managers can directly determine influence SPC. Specifically, we examine whether increasing the goal value (GV) of platform reuse, by linking additional benefits, increases SPC (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In this vein, total goal value comprises the inherent value of platform reuse plus any additional linked benefits (e.g., booking discounts). To test H3c, we employed a three-condition, single-factor between-subjects design comparing a two-sided (TS) review system with *higher* goal value (additional benefits), a two-sided review system with *lower* goal value (the baseline inherent platform reuse value), and a one-sided review system control ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}LowerGV}$ vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}HigherGV}$).

11.1. Stimuli, participants, and procedure

This study was pre-registered at https://aspredicted.org/t4m4-8mkb.pdf. Following exclusions, a final sample of 457 remained (52.7% female; $M_{age} = 39.89$, $SD = 12.53$), recruited as in Study 2B (450 pre-registered). The sample was split across three groups ($RS_{One\text{-}sided}$ [$n = 155$] vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}LowerGV}$ [$n = 150$] vs. $RS_{TS\text{-}HigherGV}$ [$n = 152$]).

Participants imagined going on a vacation booked through an online platform and were then presented with the core review system manipulation. In the two-sided higher GV condition ($RS_{TS\text{-}HigherGV}$), they were told a feature existed to gain 'Super Traveler status,' awarded upon receipt of a 5/5-star rating in three bookings in a row. This status came with benefits, including: 1) a 5 % discount on stays, 2) instant booking (i.e., booking without approval of hosts), and 3) flexible cancellations (100% refund). These benefits were inspired by those available through Airbnb's (planned) super guest status (Airbnb., 2018) and rated as most appealing in a ranking pre-test of these benefits ($n = 44$, see Web Appendix L for details). In the two-sided lower GV condition ($RS_{TS\text{-}LowerGV}$), participants were not told about this new status or its benefits, and therefore, only held the goal value inherent to reusing the platform. A manipulation check for additional value and a measure of favor time (as in Study 3 A) were added to the core measures (see Web Appendix E for full measures).

11.2. Results and discussion

The manipulations worked as intended (see Web Appendix D). We tested the main effect by specifying ANOVAs on the primary (i.e., SPC and ingratiation behavior) and secondary (i.e., favor time) dependent variables. In support of H3c, SPC was significantly higher when GV was higher, in relation to both other groups ($F(2,454) = 51.373$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.185$; $M_{TS\text{-}HigherGV} = 5.70$, $SD = 1.11$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}LowerGV} = 5.36$, $SD = 0.99$, $p = .016$; vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.33$, $SD = 1.54$, $p < .001$). Ingratiation behavior was also increased when GV was higher, in contrast to the other conditions ($F(2,454) = 20.769$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.084$; $M_{TS\text{-}HigherGV} = 6.10$, $SD = 0.83$ vs. $M_{TS\text{-}LowerGV} = 5.82$, $SD = 0.85$, $p = .007$; vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.45$, $SD = 0.97$, $p < .001$). In line with prior studies, participants exhibited more SPC in the two-sided lower GV condition compared to the one-sided review system condition ($M_{TS\text{-}LowerGV} = 5.36$, $SD = 0.99$ vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 4.33$, $SD = 1.54$, $p < .001$), whilst at the same time reporting increased ingratiation behavior ($M_{TS\text{-}LowerGV} = 5.82$, $SD = 0.85$ vs. $M_{One\text{-}sided} = 5.45$, $SD = 0.97$, $p < .001$). We did not find significant differences for favor time ($F(2,454) = 2.016$, $p = .134$, $\eta^2 = 0.009$), although the pattern of mean scores resembled that of the ingratiation measure (see Web Appendix F for detailed results). Results from a multi-categorical mediation model (PROCESS Model 4), with the one-sided condition as the reference group, supported mediation through SPC (H2) for ingratiation, for the two-sided with lower GV ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.372$, $SE = 0.067$, 95% CI [0.254, 0.512]) and two-sided with higher GV conditions, with the latter exhibiting a stronger effect ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.497$, $SE = 0.083$, 95% CI [0.349, 0.674]). The same pattern was found for favor time for the two-sided with lower GV ($\beta_{SPC} = 3.443$, $SE = 1.149$, 95% CI [1.324, 5.874]) and two-sided with higher GV conditions ($\beta_{SPC} = 4.599$, $SE = 1.493$, 95% CI [1.781, 7.662]).

We ran the same model with the two-sided lower GV condition as the reference group, which supported mediation versus two-sided with higher GV for ingratiation ($\beta_{SPC} = 0.125$, $SE = 0.047$, 95% CI [0.037, 0.225]). The same results were observed for favor time ($\beta_{SPC} = 1.156$, $SE = 0.558$, 95% CI [0.240, 2.401], see Web Appendix G). Taken together, the results demonstrate that as the perceived value of the goal (i.e., platform reuse) increases, and thus the value of receiving a supplier review, the effect of two-sided review systems on customers' SPC strengthens, which in turn drives greater ingratiation behavior.

12. General discussion

To marketers, the pervasiveness and importance of online reviews for business outcomes are well established (e.g., Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Luca, 2016). Many firms have benefited—or been hindered—by what customers write about them online. Yet, an important question remains: does the influence of online reviews extend beyond what customers say? Specifically, what happens when the shoe is on the other foot—when suppliers can also review and rate customers via bilateral, two-sided review systems (e.g., Airbnb)?

Using an impression management lens, this research offers empirical support from eight studies for our central expectation: two-sided review functionality on a platform triggers customers to change their conduct during the consumption experience, exhibiting higher ingratiation behaviors, in the form of behaving more politely, tidily, or amenably, among other positive behaviors. In Study Set

1, we find consistent support for this effect, supporting H1. The effect is replicated across both a non-verbal behavioral (Study 1 A) and a verbal-simulation experiment (Study 1B). In Study Set 2 (Mediated effect; Studies 2 A–2C), we turn to the underlying mechanism, supporting the second hypothesis (H2): self-presentational concerns is the key mediator driving ingratiation behavior. Using fictitious platforms, we first confirm the mediating role of SPC in a car rental context (Study 2 A), then demonstrate that it outperforms an alternative explanation—anticipated reciprocity—in an accommodation setting (Study 2B). We further confirm this in an ecologically valid set-up by replicating the effect among real platform users (Booking.com vs. Airbnb) in Study 2C. In Study Set 3 (Studies 3 A–3C), we examine the conditional role of goal pursuit dimensions. Consistent with H3a–H3c, we show that the effect of two-sided review systems on SPC and subsequent ingratiation is contingent on customers holding the underlying goal of reusing the platform (Study 3 A; H3a), with the effect attenuating when this is absent. Beyond this boundary condition, the magnitude of the effect is shaped by two factors: the extent to which a supplier's review is consequential for securing the goal, recognizing that not all reviews equally influence one's platform standing, such that greater relevance strengthens the effect (Study 3B; H3b); and the value attached to the goal, which can be increased through additional benefits amplifying the effect (Study 3C; H3c).

It is noteworthy that the *core review system* manipulation yields larger effects on SPC and ingratiation than when the review system is implicit (Study 2C) or more naturalistically manipulated (supplementary Study 2B; Web Appendix I). Whilst this is the case, the core review system manipulation was chosen to cleanly establish the nuances in each review system in the minds of respondents. Nonetheless, although the pattern of effects is consistent with other studies, this manipulation may overstate the effect. Study 2C and supplementary Study 2B offer a more conservative and ecologically valid set of estimates, reflecting settings where review system functionality (one-sided vs. two-sided) may be less salient, or when customers lack complete knowledge of its composition. As these studies both still yielded modest effect sizes, we are confident in the holistic effect of bilateral reviewing studied here. Further work is needed to better understand its implications (i.e., effect sizes) in more naturalistic settings.

Moreover, while we find that recently acquired customers perceive positive reviews as especially relevant to effective future reuse, leading to more ingratiation behavior, this may also reflect novelty or limited platform familiarity. Examining the role of platform familiarity becomes a useful avenue for future research. Nonetheless, from an impression management perspective, behavior is primarily driven by the perceived relevance of one's impression to valued goals rather than generalized politeness norms (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), suggesting this possibility does not undermine our explanation.

12.1. Theoretical contributions

Our first contribution lies in reversing the dominant perspective in online review research. Whereas most prior work has focused on how customers evaluate suppliers, we shift the lens to examine how customers themselves are affected when they are subject to potential evaluation. While a small body of studies has begun to explore this dynamic (e.g., Bolton et al., 2013; Zervas et al., 2021), existing research primarily shows that bilateral review systems encourage strategic, retaliatory-averse behavior—typically inferred from post-consumption data such as written reviews and star ratings. In contrast, we extend that the presence of a two-sided review system exerts upstream influence, shaping how customers behave *during* the consumption experience itself. While prior work has suggested this as a possibility (Proserpio et al., 2018), we provide direct empirical evidence for this. In so doing, we reveal a previously overlooked within-episode adaptation: impression management unfolds in real time during the service encounter, and not only in post-hoc reviews. This may explain why bilateral systems generally drive positive outcomes (e.g., reviews). However, strategic 'rating games', where both parties give each other positive ratings for their own benefits, undoubtedly play a dominant role (Proserpio et al., 2018).

Second, we offer self-presentational concerns as the key psychological driver of ingratiation. The presence of a two-sided review system activates customers' perception of an evaluative audience, whereby anticipating that conduct may be reviewed, and that ratings could influence effective future platform use, people manage impressions in a way that they appear as more desirable to the supplier (i.e., enacting ingratiation behavior). Critically, and consistent with imagined-audience research (e.g., Lavertu et al., 2020), this shift is driven not by actual evaluation but by its *perceived possibility*. Even without an explicit or noted intended review, mere evaluability raises SPC, so long as it is tied to a desired goal. In this sense, our findings reinforce research on anticipatory impression management (e.g., Marder et al., 2023) and modestly extend it by showing the effect in settings with embedded, bilateral surveillance.

As noted earlier, reciprocity has been a prominent explanation in prior research for why two-sided review systems generate more positive outcomes (e.g., Bolton et al., 2013; Mousavi & Zhao, 2022). However, in this context, SPC outperforms anticipated reciprocity as the explanatory mechanism. In Study 2B, when both were entered as parallel mediators into the model, only SPC remained significant. We suggest that this may be because SPC captures greater motivational nuance: customers engage in impression management not simply because they anticipate that good behavior will be met with a positive review, but because they perceive that evaluation to be consequential for securing a valued goal (here, platform reuse). Hence, concerns manifest. Anticipated reciprocity is less well suited to explaining this distinction. Customers may recognize that good behavior could lead to a positive review, but this expectation alone is unlikely to motivate ingratiation when the review carries little value. We therefore position SPC as an important construct for future research in bilateral review contexts. Future work could further disentangle the relationship between SPC and anticipated reciprocity, particularly their shared link to expected returns, and examine whether such expectations inherently imply value, as well as the conditions under which each mechanism may become more salient.

12.2. Practical implications

The findings provide several useful insights for managers. While not all suppliers or firms operate within platforms that support

two-sided review functionality, such as those used by Uber, Airbnb, and eBay, a wider array of firms stand to gain, provided that the system is implemented and leveraged effectively. For platforms that connect customers with individual suppliers, such as Booking.com, Amazon Marketplace, DoorDash, or TaskRabbit, we recommend treating two-sided reviewing as a strategic priority. Two-sided reviews may not suit all contexts (e.g., omnichannel retail), but the core mechanism—customers behaving better when they expect to be evaluated—can still be leveraged. For instance, retailers could create profile-based scores from behavioral data (e.g., returns, service interactions, payment history). If made visible and tied to benefits, this could encourage ingratiation and other positive forms of customer behavior.

It is also worth considering how bilateral reviewing can be (even) more effectively leveraged. Indeed, simply enabling two-sided reviewing may not be sufficient. To foster SPC and, in turn, ingratiation, customers must hold a goal of effectively using the platform in the future and view reviews as instrumental to achieving this. When either the goal or the relevance of reviews to that goal is absent or trivial, ingratiation is unlikely to emerge. Accordingly, platforms should ensure that reviews carry meaningful consequences for customers, as greater perceived value directly amplifies ingratiation. These insights provide actionable implications for platform design (which we expand below) and extend research on bilateral review systems (e.g., Bolton et al., 2013; Mousavi & Zhao, 2022) by highlighting that when reviews lack personal value, customer behaviors during consumption are likely to remain muted. Table 4 outlines a series of practical strategies through which platforms (e.g., managers, designers, and marketers—those who design and promote review systems) and suppliers (e.g., drivers, homeowners, and agents—those who write reviews about customers) can implement these insights in line with the empirical findings.

12.3. Limitations and future research

Like all research, our findings come with limitations that offer opportunities for further inquiry. First, our studies rely on a mix of behavioral and behavioral-intention measures of ingratiation, within controlled experiments. Future research could build on these insights by capturing ingratiation in more naturalistic reviewing environments. For example, ethnographic methods, video diaries, or digital trace data (e.g., smart lock logs, timestamped cleaning records in Airbnb properties) could provide richer, ecologically valid indicators of behavioral adaptation. Second, while our study focuses on SPC as a cognitive driver of behavior, it does not examine potential accompanying emotional responses. Does SPC evoke positive emotions like determination (Marder et al., 2023), or negative states such as social anxiety (Leary, 2001)? Understanding these emotions could clarify the motivational pathways between cognition and behavior, and the type of impression management used. Moreover, not all impression management is proactive. Although we test ingratiation, defensive tactics, such as apologizing or justifying (Jones & Pittman, 1982), may arise in self-presentational predicaments where social anxiety occurs (Leary, 2019) and particularly among prevention-focused individuals (Higgins, 1997). How SPC operates in these scenarios—whether prompting specific forms of ingratiation, or repair, concealment, or deflection—remains an open question. Third, whilst we focus on in-consumption behavior, ingratiation likely spans the entire customer journey, from pre-consumption (e.g., polite booking messages) to post-consumption (e.g., thank-you notes). Future research could examine its temporal dynamics, such as: does ingratiation build or fade over time? Fourth, although we identify platform reuse intention as the primary driver, other goals may shape ingratiation. Following Leary (2019), customers may, under certain conditions, be guided by more self-focused goals such as self-esteem or personal standards, or be predisposed to such motivations based on psychological traits (e.g., need for approval, perfectionism). Future work could explore how motivational orientation aligns with different reward structures—status, access, or self-validation. Similarly, individual differences and contextual cues are likely to moderate SPC (and thus ingratiation). For instance, customers low in public self-consciousness or self-monitoring (see Tobey & Tunnell, 1981) may be less affected.

Finally, two-sided reviewing may resemble digital surveillance (e.g., Jeske & Santuzzi, 2015), encouraging positive behavior but also imposing psychological costs. When impression management feels forced, customers may experience reactance, resisting perceived loss of autonomy. For example, a guest may clean up just to protect their rating but feel resentful. This may explain why, in Study 2C, making evaluations explicitly salient during consumption broadly increased SPC but did not further boost ingratiation—hinting at saturation or backlash. Future research should explore this possibility.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the manuscript preparation process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT in order to proofread sections and identify inconsistencies in style and format. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the published article.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Ben Marder: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Project administration. **Rob Angell:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Antonia Erz:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Laura Lavertu:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Methodology.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to

Table 4
Practical strategies to raise ingratiation behavior.

Actor	Boundary condition	Action (design or behavior)	Mechanism-based justification
Platforms	*Platform reuse goal*	Emphasize profile continuity and long-term membership (e.g., "Your profile follows you across stays/rides"; onboarding messages highlighting future access).	SPC activates only when customers want to successfully use the platform in the future.
Platforms	*Review relevance to the goal*	Signal reputational accumulation (e.g., visible review histories, progress indicators towards benefits).	Making reputation cumulative reinforces goal existence beyond a single transaction.
Platforms	*Review relevance to the goal*	Design diagnostic, multi-dimensional review interfaces (e.g., cleanliness, communication, rule adherence), avoiding binary or overly compressed formats.	Customers show greater SPC when evaluations are expected to be informative and diagnostic.
Platforms	*Review relevance to the goal*	Ensure the relevance of reviews and ratings does not diminish with greater accumulation (e.g., base average score on those acquired in the last year, or 'pin' most recent review as highly visible on profile pages).	SPC weakens when reviews feel less impactful towards supplier impressions; recency preserves relevance.
Platforms	*Review relevance to the goal*	Consider cross-site collaborations where ratings are accumulated and disseminated through multiple platforms using linked profiles (e.g., Uber, Lyft, or Airbnb and Vrbo).	SPC increases with the increasing impact of a single review if it has implications beyond a single platform.
Platforms	*Additional goal value*	Tie customer ratings to enhanced meaningful benefits (e.g., priority booking, instant confirmation, preferential support), with transparent thresholds.	Additional benefits tied to future platform use increase overall goal value; with more at stake, SPC and ingratiation are amplified.
Suppliers	*Review relevance to the goal*	Provide specific, behavior-linked feedback rather than generic reviews (e.g., "left property tidy," "communicated clearly").	SPC depends on perceiving a real, attentive, evaluating audience.
Suppliers	*Review relevance to the goal*	Signal how customer ratings inform future selection decisions (e.g., preferred guests, acceptance thresholds).	Customers experience greater SPC when they expect their behavior to be interpreted and acted upon.

influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2026.05.003.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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