

The Impact of Dual-Path Word-of-Mouth from Xiaomi Automobile Owners on Brand Defense Intention: Brand Trust as the Mediating Effect

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Abstract

As competition in the new energy vehicle market intensifies, the proactive defense of brands by vehicle owners has emerged as a pivotal issue. This study delves into the influence of perceived value and negative remediation on brand defense intention, addressing a theoretical gap in the proactive defense behavior of vehicle owners and offering insights to aid cross-industry automotive enterprises in their operations. A total of 338 questionnaires were collected from Xiaomi Automobile owners, and SPSS was employed for regression analysis and bootstrap mediation testing. Results: perceived experience value ($\beta=0.434$) and negative experience remediation ($\beta=0.314$) exert a significant positive impact on brand defense intention. Brand trust partially mediates these effects, accounting for 30.33% and 43.53%, respectively. The significance of this study lies in uncovering brand trust as the psychological nexus linking perception and defense behavior. It suggests that automotive companies, while enhancing product value, should also establish transparent remediation mechanisms to rebuild trust and activate "super defenders".

Keywords: *Xiaomi Automobile, perceived experience value, negative experience remediation, brand trust, brand defense intention*

1. Introduction

1) The "Xiaomi Phenomenon" in the New Energy Vehicle Market and the Role Transformation of Vehicle Owners Amidst the profound transformation in the global automotive industry, the penetration rate of China's new energy vehicle market has surpassed the critical threshold of 40%. Research by Zhou (2025) indicates that technology giants, epitomized by Xiaomi, have ventured into car manufacturing, overturning the traditional user relationship model. Xiaomi Automobile swiftly ignited phenomenal public opinion with its full ecological closed-loop encompassing people, vehicles, and homes, along with its unique community-driven attributes Chen (2025); Han (2025); Xiang (2025). However, as high-tech, long-lifecycle durable goods, new energy vehicles confront a fragmented and often hostile public opinion environment in the era of social media. In the face of irrational amplification or defamation of Xiaomi Automobile on major social platforms, a substantial number of genuine car owners have spontaneously emerged as "brand defenders," both online and offline, actively clarifying misunderstandings and refuting rumors for the brand Li et al. (2017); Lu (2024). This proactive reputation-guarding behavior by car owners is termed brand defense intention in consumer behavior studies Wallace et al. (2014). Ding and Wu (2021) believe that the transformation of car owners from ordinary consumers to brand defenders presents a highly valuable research scenario.

2) The Limitations and Theoretical Disparities in Traditional Word-of-Mouth Research For an extended period, the academic community has acknowledged that the credibility and behavior conversion rate of word-of-mouth communication significantly surpass those of commercial advertising Arndt (1967), with electronic word-of-mouth exhibiting explosive diffusion characteristics Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). Literature indicates that the quality and consistency of word-of-mouth exert a substantial and enduring impact on automobile users' brand attitudes. Within the realm of brand relationships, brand trust is regarded as the pivotal psychological hub connecting cognitive stimulation with long-term commitment Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). The manner in which enterprises address product crises directly influences the retention of brand trust, with the trust reconstruction of durable goods users relying more heavily on the sincerity of corporate performance and the speed of emotional response. Nevertheless, there persists a significant divergence between academia and industry regarding "how to enhance brand loyalty among car owners." Some scholars adhere to the traditional "product-first" perspective, asserting that exceptional product perceived experience value Dodds et al. (1991) naturally converts users into advocates. However, based on the "service recovery paradox", crisis management scholars have suggested that the "providing timely assistance" approach to negative remediation following occasional

product defects Fan and Chen (2002);Maxham (2001) often leads to a reconstruction of user trust that can more significantly alter car owners' perceptions of a brand than a consistently smooth daily experience Chen and Li (2016).

3) Zhang (2025) proposed the Academic Controversy: Core Pain Point and Research Motivation This academic controversy constitutes the core pain point of our study: amidst the complex social media public opinion maelstrom, should cross-border new energy vehicle brands prioritize resource allocation towards consolidating daily positive perception experiences or towards agile negative experience remediation during crises ? Existing literature predominantly views long-term car owners as mere word-of-mouth "publishers", overlooking their transformation into "brand guards", and lacks integrated quantitative research comparing the positive perception and negative remediation paths within a unified framework. This gap serves as a strong motivation for our study.

4) The Overall Objective of the Experiment In response to the aforementioned controversies and to address the management challenges, the primary objective of this experiment is to employ quantitative empirical research methods by distributing targeted questionnaires to 338 genuine Xiaomi Automobile owners. This approach aims to comprehensively integrate the owners' "perceived experience value" (front-end proactive path) and "negative experience remediation" (back-end crisis mitigation path) to construct a dual-source driven model. The study delves into how these factors ultimately translate into the owners' "brand defense intention" through the mediating variable of "brand trust." The research seeks to elucidate the disparities in the transmission effectiveness of brand trust across different paths, thereby providing a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for user lifecycle management and reputation protection for new energy cross-industry vehicle brands in the era of intelligent connectivity.

2. Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are delineated as follows:

- 1) Identify and describe the demographic attributes of the younger core customer base among Xiaomi Automobile owners, along with the context of their vehicle usage during the "trial period" period within the cross-border automotive manufacturing sector.
- 2) Examine the direct positive influence and driving effects exerted by the two paths— "perceived experience value" (Path A) and "negative experience remediation" (Path B)—on car owners' "brand defense intention".
- 3) Elucidate and quantitatively assess the mediating mechanism of "brand trust" in the process of translating the aforementioned two paths into brand defense intention, and compare the structural disparities in the proportion of mediating effects (30.33% versus 43.53%).
- 4) Devise specific management strategies for word-of-mouth management and after-sales service remediation for cross-border brand users of new energy vehicles, grounded in the psychological mechanism of "trust collapse and reconstruction".

3. Materials and Methods

1) Theoretical Model and Research Hypothesis

This study centers on constructing a dual-path integration model: "Vehicle Owners' Perceived Experience Value/ Negative Experience Remediation → Brand Trust → Brand Defense Intention". The model aims to thoroughly investigate the formation mechanism underlying the profound emotional connection and collaborative defense mechanism between vehicle owners and automotive brands within the context of the new economy and intelligent mobility.

In traditional consumer behavior studies and modern relationship marketing theory, consumers' attitudes toward brands are typically contingent upon their perceptions of normalized value or recovery in crisis scenarios. Based on this premise, this study defines vehicle owners' perceived experience value as their comprehensive assessment of positive subjective feelings, encompassing the ecological and physical driving experiences within the intelligent cockpit, as well as the resultant social identity, all derived from the dynamic process of product usage and service reception Wang et al. (2019). Car owners' negative experience remediation is characterized as their satisfaction with the brand's responsiveness, problem-solving thoroughness, and compensation effectiveness following a series of remedial actions taken by the brand in response to technical failures, service errors, or product defects Yang et al. (2009). Brand trust is conceptualized as an intermediary transmission mechanism, referring to the profound belief and deterministic expectation that vehicle owners develop psychologically regarding the integrity of Xiaomi brand performance, professional and technical reliability, and altruistic motives, based on multidimensional interactions Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001);Jin et al. (2006). Brand defense intention is

designated as the ultimate dependent variable, representing vehicle owners' antagonistic behavioral inclination to defend the brand's reputation, actively refute negative remarks, and disseminate positive values when the brand faces external public opinion scrutiny, negative evaluations, or public relations crises Batra et al. (2012); Wallace et al. (2014).

2) Model Roadmap

Based on the logical interplay and multi-path synergistic relationships among the aforementioned core variables, this study has developed the following theoretical model roadmap. The model encompasses not only the positive path driven by normalized experiences but also incorporates the compensatory path prompted by crisis remediation. It offers a thorough examination of the pivotal role of brand trust in facilitating the transition from these dual paths to brand defense intention.

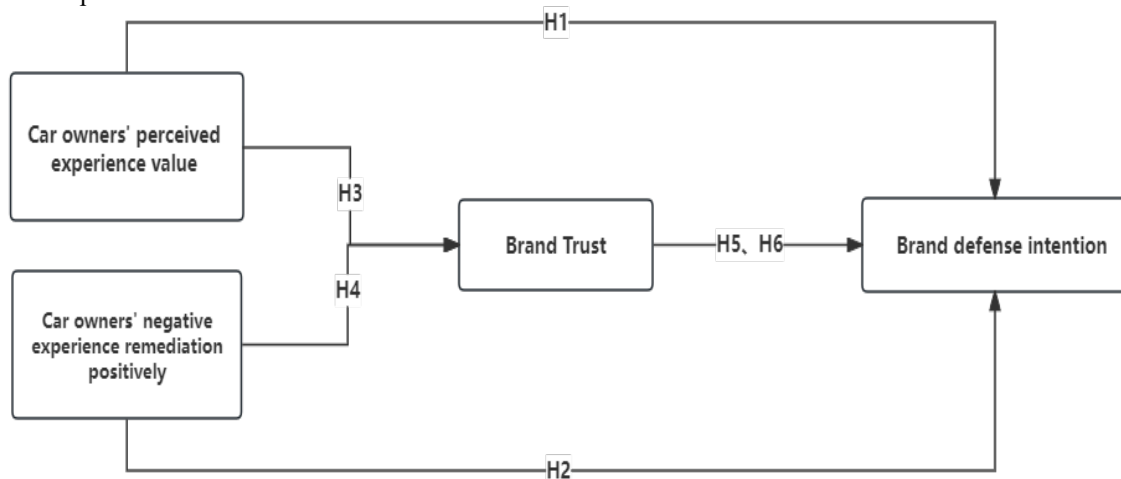


Figure 1 Model Roadmap

3) Research Hypotheses Proposed

Drawing upon the experience value theory, the service recovery paradox, and the distinctive brand characteristics of Xiaomi Automobile, this study advances the following six research hypotheses:

H1: Car owners' perceived experience value exerts a positive influence on brand defense intention.

H2: Car owners' negative experience remediation positively impacts brand defense intention.

H3: Car owners' perceived experience value positively affects brand trust.

H4: Car owners' negative experience remediation positively affects brand trust.

H5: Brand trust serves as a mediating variable between car owners' perceived experience value and brand defense intention.

H6: Brand trust serves as a mediating variable between the car owners' negative experience remediation and brand defense intention.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Research results

Descriptive statistical analysis represents a fundamental approach to data analysis, utilizing indicators such as frequency, mean, median, and standard deviation. It is commonly employed to observe basic characteristics of research participants, including gender, age, income, among others. In this paper, we utilize descriptive statistical analysis to examine the distribution patterns of Xiaomi Automobile owners with respect to vehicle models, duration of car usage and demographic characteristics.

Table 1 Descriptive statistical analysis of samples

Name	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Xiaomi Automobile model	SU7	236	69.82
	YU7	102	30.18
Duration of driving a Xiaomi car	More than 1 week	79	23.37
	1-3 months	158	46.75
	3-6 months	63	18.64
	6 months -1 year	20	5.92

	More than 1 year	18	5.33
Sex	Male	133	39.35
	Female	205	60.65
Age range	18-25	124	36.69
	26-30	121	35.80
	31-35	69	20.41
	36-40	16	4.73
	41+	8	2.37
	Below RMB 5,000	110	32.54
Average monthly disposable income (after deducting rent/mortgage)	RMB 5,000-8,000	136	40.24
	RMB 8,000-12,000	54	15.98
	RMB 12,000-15,000	24	7.10
	Above RMB 15,000	14	4.14
Total		338	100

Based on the data presented in Table 4.1, this study has gathered 338 valid samples. Below is a detailed analysis of the demographic characteristics of these samples:

1) Model Distribution: The SU7 model predominates among surveyed car owners, with 236 users selecting it, accounting for 69.82%. In contrast, the YU7 model has 102 owners, representing 30.18%. This distribution closely mirrors the actual market performance of Xiaomi Automobile flagship models, ensuring the sample's representativeness.

2) Vehicle Usage Duration: The sample primarily consists of newly purchased vehicle owners. In terms of driving duration, the largest group comprises owners who have used their vehicles for "1-3 months" (158 individuals, 46.75%), followed by those with "over 1 week" of usage (79 individuals, 23.37%). Conversely, the proportion of owners with six months or more of usage is relatively small (approximately 11% in total). This indicates that most respondents are in the initial "fresh phase" of vehicle ownership, being highly perceptive of the vehicle's product capabilities and the brand's initial service recovery efforts. Because sales of Xiaomi cars were so strong during the initial launch period that production couldn't keep up, the company adopted a pre-sale model. Most owners had to wait quite a long time before receiving their dream cars, which also explains why the survey results show that the majority of participating owners had owned their vehicles for less than three months. This also suggests that most of the respondents are currently in the "early adoption phase" of vehicle ownership, during which they are most sensitive to the vehicle's product performance and the brand's initial service and remedial measures.

3) Gender Distribution: Female car owners exhibit greater participation enthusiasm. The sample includes 133 male car owners (39.35%) and 205 female car owners (60.65%). The notably higher proportion of women in the survey not only reflects their stronger inclination to share and interact in online surveys but also underscores Xiaomi Automobile's appeal in the female consumer market.

4) Age Structure: The respondents are predominantly young, with a high concentration in the 18-30 age bracket. Specifically, the 18-25 age group (36.69%) and the 26-30 age group (35.80%) collectively account for 72.49%. In contrast, mature users aged 36 and above constitute less than 8%. These data strongly support the notion that the younger generation forms the core support base for Xiaomi Automobile, aligning perfectly with the brand's positioning of "technology, innovation, and youthfulness."

5) Financial Status: Middle-income earners constitute the primary consumer group. Regarding monthly disposable income after deducting rent/mortgage expenses, the 5,000-8,000 yuan income bracket has the highest representation (40.24%), followed by those earning less than 5,000 yuan (32.54%). Together, these two groups account for over 70%, indicating that Xiaomi Automobile owner structure primarily comprises pragmatic middle-income individuals and newcomers to the workforce, who exhibit strong enthusiasm for technological consumption.

Based on the aforementioned data, it can be preliminarily concluded that the respondents are predominantly young, with a female majority, primarily in the young to middle-aged professional stage. The economic status of most surveyed car owners is relatively modest, aligning with Xiaomi Automobile's product positioning and target user profile of "high cost-effectiveness and technological accessibility."

Descriptive statistical analysis of variables is employed to illustrate the overall distribution characteristics and central tendencies of each core variable. This paper examines four variables—car owners' perceived

experience value, car owners' negative experience remediation, brand trust, and brand defense intention—using four indicators: minimum value, maximum value, mean value, and standard deviation. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of variables

Variable	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean value	Standard deviation
Car owners' perceived experience value	1.50	5.00	3.631	0.830
Car owners' negative experience remediation	1.00	5.00	3.277	0.862
Brand trust	1.00	5.00	3.362	0.859
Brand defense intention	1.00	5.00	3.408	0.849

From the descriptive statistical results presented in Table 1, the specific performances of each core variable are outlined as follows:

1) Car owners' perceived experience value: The minimum recognition score is 1.50, the maximum is 5.00, with a mean value of 3.631, ranking highest among all variables, and a standard deviation of 0.830. This indicates that most car owners provide positive evaluations of Xiaomi Automobile's comprehensive experience in terms of intelligent cockpit, intelligent driving capabilities, industrial design, and cost-effectiveness. Additionally, the relatively small standard deviation suggests a high degree of consensus among car owners regarding these core values, with minimal differences.

2) Car owners' negative experience remediation: There remains room for improvement in satisfaction, with a mean value of 3.277 and a standard deviation of 0.862. Although the average score is moderate, it is slightly lower than other dimensions, reflecting car owners' reservations about Xiaomi Automobile's response speed, problem-solving approaches, and communication transparency when addressing negative issues, indicating areas for further enhancement. Moreover, the high standard deviation highlights significant individual differences in the "sense of being repaired" among car owners after encountering problems.

3) Brand trust: Trust is steadily being established, with a mean score of 3.362 and a standard deviation of 0.859. This above-average level demonstrates that car owners have fundamental confidence in Xiaomi's integrity, commitment-fulfillment ability, and "user-centered" philosophy, though deep dependency has not yet been achieved. The perceived differences in brand trust among car owners fall within a moderate range.

4) Brand defense intention: Brand loyalty stands out, with a mean score of 3.408 and a standard deviation of 0.849. The results reveal that most car owners exhibit a strong sense of brand maintenance, willing to defend Xiaomi against external misunderstandings or false statements. The low standard deviation further underscores the widespread prevalence of this "brand gatekeeper" identity among car owners.

5) Overall assessment: The values of all variables fully span the Likert 5-point scale, with mean values ranging from 3.277 to 3.631 and standard deviations controlled between 0.830 and 0.862. This indicates a stable distribution of survey data with reasonable fluctuations and no extreme skewness, fully meeting the quality standards for subsequent empirical analysis.

Reliability analysis is employed to assess the consistency and stability of questionnaire measurement results. This study utilizes Cronbach's α coefficient as the primary reliability metric to evaluate the internal consistency of each variable, with results detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 Reliability analysis results

Variable	Cronbach's α	Item number
Car owners' perceived experience value	0.828	4
Car owners' negative experience remediation	0.825	4
Brand trust	0.829	4
Brand defense intention	0.812	4

Generally, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.8 suggests high reliability, values between 0.7 and 0.8 indicate good reliability, those between 0.6 and 0.7 denote acceptable reliability, and coefficients below 0.6 reflect poor reliability. As shown in Table 4.2 above, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables in this study exceed 0.8, demonstrating good internal consistency across each dimension of the questionnaire and a high overall level of reliability, thereby justifying subsequent empirical analysis.

Validity analysis serves to assess the degree of alignment between questionnaire measurement outcomes and theoretical constructs. In this study, the structural validity of the questionnaire was verified through the KMO test, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and exploratory factor analysis, with the results presented as follows.

Table 4 KMO and Bartlett test results

KMO sampling suitability quantity		0.907
Bartlett sphericity test	Approximate chi-square	2249.302
	Degree of freedom	120
	Significance	0.000

As shown in Table 4, the KMO value is 0.907, significantly exceeding the critical threshold of 0.6, indicating that the data is highly suitable for factor analysis. The significance level of Bartlett's test of sphericity is 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis that "variables are independent of each other." This suggests a significant correlation among variables, meeting the prerequisites for factor analysis.

In this study, principal component analysis was employed to extract common factors, with rotation performed using the maximum variance method. The results of total variance interpretation are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Total variance explanation table

Component	Initial eigenvalue			Extract the sum of squared loads			Sum of the squares of rotational load		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	6.154	38.462	38.462	6.154	38.462	38.462	2.690	16.811	16.811
2	1.976	12.350	50.812	1.976	12.350	50.812	2.662	16.640	33.451
3	1.313	8.206	59.018	1.313	8.206	59.018	2.620	16.372	49.823
4	1.092	6.825	65.843	1.092	6.825	65.843	2.563	16.020	65.843
5	0.599	3.744	69.587						

Table 5 Total variance explanation table (continued)

Component	Initial eigenvalue			Extract the sum of squared loads			Sum of the squares of rotational load		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
6	0.566	3.539	73.126						
7	0.544	3.402	76.528						
8	0.511	3.195	79.723						
9	0.483	3.018	82.741						
10	0.467	2.920	85.661						
11	0.444	2.775	88.436						
12	0.417	2.607	91.043						
13	0.394	2.463	93.505						
14	0.378	2.366	95.871						
15	0.349	2.183	98.054						
16	0.311	1.946	100						

Table 5 reveals that four common factors were extracted, with a cumulative variance explanation rate of 65.843% after rotation, surpassing the critical threshold of 50%. This indicates that the extracted common factors effectively capture the core information of the questionnaire items.

The rotated component matrix was utilized to verify the correspondence between items and factors, with the results shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Rotated component matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
The intelligent cockpit and autonomous driving features offered by Xiaomi Automobile provide me with a highly convenient and efficient experience.	0.758			
Driving Xiaomi Automobile makes me feel like I'm keeping pace with the latest technological trends.	0.748			
The interior design and human-machine interface of Xiaomi Automobile offer me exceptional aesthetic pleasure.	0.775			
Overall, the driving experience provided by Xiaomi Automobile far surpasses their market price.	0.785			
When my vehicle encounters any malfunctions or usage issues, Xiaomi officials promptly respond and address them.		0.755		
I am satisfied with Xiaomi's solutions to the negative issues I have encountered.		0.768		
Xiaomi maintains transparent communication and a sincere attitude when handling my negative experiences.		0.749		
After Xiaomi Automobile addressed my feedback, the same fault or service issue has not recurred.		0.800		
I believe that the Xiaomi brand has consistently upheld honesty and integrity in product development and promotion.			0.729	
I believe that Xiaomi has the capability to continuously enhance the driving experience and honor its long-term commitments.			0.762	
I trust that Xiaomi Automobile will prioritize user safety over corporate interests when confronted with technical challenges.			0.756	
Despite the current public opinion climate, I remain steadfast in my confidence in Xiaomi's original aspiration for car manufacturing.			0.725	
When I come across false statements about Xiaomi Automobile online or in social circles, I take the initiative to explain and clarify.				0.750
When someone criticizes or misunderstands Xiaomi Automobile, I step forward to defend its brand image.				0.712
I am willing to explain the controversial aspects of Xiaomi Automobile (such as delivery timelines, after-sales details, etc.) to others to dispel any negative perceptions.				0.748
Even when faced with differing opinions, I publicly express my unwavering support for the Xiaomi Automobile brand.				0.749

Based on the analysis results in Table 6, the following conclusions can be drawn:

In terms of factor loadings, all items exhibit factor loadings exceeding the standard threshold of 0.6, strongly demonstrating that each item can be adequately explained by its corresponding factor and possesses high representativeness. From the perspective of loading distribution, the four extracted common factors correspond to car owners' perceived experience value, car owners' negative experience remediation, brand trust, and brand defense intention, aligning perfectly with the initial theoretical framework and dimensional assumptions of this study.

Summary of reliability and validity analysis: The questionnaire demonstrates excellent reliability and fully meets structural validity standards. The data exhibits a high degree of scientific rigor and precision, fully supporting subsequent regression analysis and hypothesis testing.

To preliminarily verify the direction and strength of correlations among variables, this study employed Pearson correlation coefficients to conduct bivariate correlation analysis on car owners' perceived experience value, car owners' negative experience remediation, brand trust, and brand defense intention. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Analysis of variable correlation

	M	SD	Brand defense intention	Car owners' perceived experience value	Car owners' negative experience remediation	Brand trust
Brand defense intention	3.408	0.849	1			
Car owners' perceived experience value	3.631	0.83	0.509**	1		
Car owners' negative experience remediation	3.277	0.862	0.432**	0.268**	1	
Brand trust	3.362	0.859	0.493**	0.478**	0.510**	1
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01						

The correlation analysis results presented in Table 7 reveal a significant positive correlation among all variables. The detailed analysis is as follows:

1) Correlation of brand defense intention: Brand defense intention exhibited a significant positive correlation with car owners' perceived experience value ($r=0.509$, $p<0.01$), car owners' negative experience remediation ($r=0.432$, $p<0.01$), and brand trust ($r=0.493$, $p<0.01$). This intuitively indicated that when car owners have a higher recognition of product value, are more satisfied with the handling of negative issues, and possess stronger trust in the brand, their willingness to defend and advocate for the brand amidst public opinion becomes stronger.

2) Correlation of mediation path: Concurrently, there was a significant positive correlation between car owners' perceived experience value, car owners' negative experience remediation and brand trust ($r=0.478$ and 0.510 , respectively, $p<0.01$). This outcome preliminarily confirms the close relationship between independent and mediating variables, laying a solid logical foundation for subsequent in-depth examination of mediating effects.

3) Overall evaluation: The direction of correlation among variables aligned perfectly with the research hypotheses outlined in this paper, all reaching significance at the 0.01 level. This suggests the existence of a stable and positive interaction mechanism among variables, with high-quality data that supports further higher-order regression analysis and mediating effect testing.

This paper employed multiple linear regression analysis to examine the direct effects of independent variables on dependent variables and independent variables on mediating variables, thereby validating research hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4.

Multiple linear regression was performed with brand defense intention as the dependent variable and car owners' perceived experience value and car owners' negative experience remediation as the independent variables. The results are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8 Regression analysis results of independent variables versus dependent variables

	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
	B	Standard errors	Beta		
Constant	0.805	0.196	-	4.10	<0.00
Car owners' perceived experience value	0.434	0.047	0.424	9.29	<0.00
Car owners' negative experience remediation	0.314	0.045	0.318	6.98	<0.00
R ²			0.353	1	1
Adjusted R ²			0.349		
F			F=91.456, p=0.000		
Dependent variable: Brand defense intention					

Based on the results of the regression analysis, the model's indicators demonstrated excellent performance.

In terms of the model's overall validity, the F-test value was 91.456 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the model as a whole achieved a highly significant level. The adjusted R^2 value was 0.349, suggesting that the two core independent variables, "car owners' perceived experience value" and "car owners' negative experience remediation" can jointly explain 34.9% of the fluctuations in brand defense intention, exhibiting strong explanatory power. R^2

Regarding specific hypothesis verification:

The regression coefficient for car owners' perceived experience value was 0.434 ($t=9.294$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a highly significant positive impact. $t=9.294$ This demonstrates that for each unit increase in perceived value, the owner's willingness to defend the brand significantly increases, supporting Hypothesis H1.

The regression coefficient for car owners' negative experience remediation was 0.314 ($t=6.981$, $p < 0.001$), also showing a significant positive driving effect. $t=6.981$ this confirms that the brand's effective handling of negative issues can effectively stimulate the owner's defense motivation, supporting Hypothesis H2.

Multiple linear regression was conducted with brand trust as the dependent variable and car owners' perceived experience value and car owners' negative experience remediation as the independent variables. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Regression analysis results of independent variables on mediating variables

	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
	B	Standard errors	Beta		
Constant	0.637	0.193	-	3.298	0.001
Car owners' perceived experience value	0.38	0.046	0.367	8.268	<0.001
Car owners' negative experience remediation	0.41	0.044	0.412	9.269	<0.001
R ²			0.386		
Adjusted R ²			0.382		
F			F=105.162, p=0.000		

Dependent variable: Brand trust

From the results of the regression analysis, the model demonstrated good explanatory validity.

In terms of the model's overall performance, the F-test value was 105.162 ($p < 0.001$), reaching a highly significant level. The adjusted R^2 was 0.382, indicating that the two independent variables—car owners' perceived experience value and negative experience remediation—could jointly explain 38.2% of the variation in brand trust, suggesting a good model fit.

Regarding specific hypothesis verification:

The regression coefficient for car owners' perceived experience value was 0.380 ($t = 8.268$, $p < 0.001$), showing a significant positive predictive effect on brand trust. This indicates that the higher car owners' recognition of product value, the deeper their trust in the brand, thereby confirming Hypothesis H3.

The regression coefficient for car owners' negative experience remediation was 0.410 ($t = 9.269$, $p < 0.001$), also demonstrating a highly significant positive effect. This suggests that a brand's proactive handling of negative issues is a crucial source for car owners to establish and reinforce trust, thereby confirming Hypothesis H4.

Based on the above regression results, all main effect hypotheses were validated:

Both car owners' perceived experience value and car owners' negative experience remediation significantly and positively influenced brand defense intention (H1 and H2 are confirmed);

Both car owners' perceived experience value and car owners' negative experience remediation significantly and positively influenced brand trust (H3 and H4 are confirmed). This lays the groundwork for subsequent tests of the mediating effect of brand trust.

To verify the mediating role of brand trust between independent and dependent variables, this study employed stepwise regression combined with the Bootstrap method to examine the mediating effect of brand trust

in the two paths: "car owners' perceived experience value $\rightarrow$ brand defense intention" and "car owners' negative experience remediation $\rightarrow$ brand defense intention." The results are as follows.

Taking brand defense intention as the dependent variable, the independent variable - car owners' perceived experience value and the mediating variable brand trust were sequentially included. The regression results and Bootstrap test are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 Analysis of the mediating effect of car owners' perceived experience value - brand trust - brand defense intention

	Brand defense intention		Brand trust		Brand defense intention	
	B	t	B	t	B	t
Constant	1.515**	8.465	1.567**	8.482	1.014**	5.439
Car owners' perceived experience value	0.521**	10.839	0.494**	9.965	0.363**	7.017
Brand trust					0.320**	6.399
R 2	0.259		0.228		0.34	
Adjusted R²	0.257		0.226		0.336	
F value	F=117.492,p=0.000		F=99.309,p=0.000		F=86.202,p=0.000	
	* p<0.05 ** p<0.01					

Table 11 Decomposition of Bootstrap Mediating Effect (car owners' perceived experience value path)

	Effect value	Standard errors	Bootstrap95%CI		Proportion of total effect
			Lower limit	Upper limit	
Total effect	0.521	0.048	0.427	0.616	
Direct effect	0.363	0.052	0.261	0.465	69.67%
Indirect effect	0.158	0.031	0.103	0.223	30.33%

Through stepwise regression and bootstrap testing, this study thoroughly verified the mediating effect, with the results presented as follows:

1) Regression coefficient analysis revealed that after incorporating the mediating variable "brand trust" into the model, the direct effect of car owners' perceived experience value on brand defense intention remained significant (B = 0.363, p < 0.001). Concurrently, brand trust also exerted a significant positive influence on brand defense intention (B = 0.320, p < 0.001). This initially indicates that brand trust does not play the sole decisive role between the two but serves as an important conduit.

2) Bootstrap test results demonstrated that neither the direct effect nor the indirect effect included 0 within the 95% confidence interval, and both coefficients were positive. This data robustly confirms the significance of the mediating path, indicating that brand trust partially mediates the relationship between car owners' perceived experience value and brand defense intention.

3) From the perspective of effect decomposition, the proportion of the direct effect (i.e., the portion of value perception directly driving defense intention) is 69.67%, while the indirect effect (i.e., the portion mediated through brand trust) accounts for 30.33%. In summary, the mediating mechanism of brand trust has received empirical support, and Hypothesis H5 is validated.

Taking brand defense intention as the dependent variable, the independent variable— car owners' negative experience remediation—and the mediating variable—brand trust—were sequentially included. The regression results and bootstrap test are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 Analysis of the mediating effect of car owners' negative experience remediation - brand trust - brand defense intention

	Brand defense intention		Brand trust		Brand defense intention	
	B	t	B	t	B	t
Constant	2.014**	12.266	1.697**	10.722	1.396**	7.825
Car owners' negative experience remediation	0.425**	8.773	0.508**	10.875	0.240**	4.544
Brand trust					0.364**	6.864

R ²	0.186	0.260	0.287
Adjusted R ²	0.184	0.258	0.282
F value	F = 76.972, p = 0.000	F = 118.262, p = 0.000	F = 67.327, p = 0.000
* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01			

Table 13 Decomposition of Bootstrap Mediating Effect (car owners' negative experience remediation path)

	Effect value	Standard errors	Bootstrap 95% CI		Proportion of total effect
			Lower limit	Upper limit	
Total effect	0.425	0.048	0.330	0.521	
Direct effect	0.240	0.053	0.136	0.344	56.47%
Indirect effect	0.185	0.031	0.126	0.250	43.53%

Through stepwise regression and bootstrap testing, the analysis results of the mediating effect for the "negative experience remediation" path are as follows:

1) In the regression coefficient analysis, after introducing the mediating variable "brand trust," the direct predictive effect of car owners' negative experience remediation on brand defense intention remains significant ($B = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$). "B=0.240" Concurrently, brand trust also exerts a highly significant positive influence on brand defense intention ($B = 0.364$, $p < 0.001$). "B=0.364" This indicates that effective repair actions not only directly stimulate the willingness to defend but also indirectly reinforce this willingness by enhancing trust.

2) The Bootstrap sampling test results reveal that neither the direct effect nor the indirect effect includes 0 within the 95% confidence interval, and both effects are positive. This further confirms the robustness of the mediation path, demonstrating that brand trust plays a significant partial mediating role between car owners' negative experience remediation and brand defense intention.

3) According to the calculation results of effect decomposition, the direct effect accounts for 56.47%, while the indirect effect (transmitted through brand trust) accounts for 43.53%. Notably, compared to the perceived value path, the indirect effect of negative experience remediation through trust transformation accounts for a higher proportion (over 40%). This suggests that a brand's performance in crisis resolution and trust rebuilding serves as a crucial psychological motivator for transforming car owners into "brand defenders". In conclusion, Hypothesis H6 holds true.

Table 14 Decomposition of Bootstrap Mediating Effect (car owners' negative experience remediation path)

	Effect value	Standard errors	Bootstrap 95% CI		Statistical Significance
			Lower limit	Upper limit	
car owners' negative experience remediation	0.185	0.031	0.126	0.250	Significant
car owners' perceived experience value	0.158	0.031	0.103	0.223	Significant
Significance Test	0.027	0.013	0.002	0.052	Significant (excluding 0)

As shown in Table 14, the difference in indirect effects between the "recovery from negative experiences" path and the "perceived experience value" path is 0.027. According to the Bootstrap test, the 95% confidence interval for this difference is [0.002, 0.052]. Since this confidence interval does not include 0 at all (it lies entirely within the positive range), this statistically confirms that the mediating effect of the remediation of negative owner experiences on brand advocacy intentions via brand trust (accounting for 43.53% of the total effect) is significantly stronger than that of the perceived experiential value pathway (accounting for 30.33% of the total effect).

4.2 Discussion

Based on the aforementioned empirical analysis results, the conclusions of this study are summarized as follows:

Value-Driven Path: Brand trust significantly mediates the path from "car owners' perceived experience value to brand defense intention," with an indirect effect contribution rate of 30.33%.

Repair-Driven Path: Similarly, brand trust plays a significant mediating role in the path "car owners' negative experience remediation → brand defense intention", with an even higher indirect effect proportion, reaching 43.53%.

All mediating effect hypotheses proposed in this study are corroborated by empirical data, strongly demonstrating that brand trust serves as the core transmission mechanism linking car owners' front-end experiences (product value and service repair) with their back-end behavioral intentions (brand defense).

Notably, when addressing negative experiences, the transformative power of brand trust becomes particularly pronounced. This underscores the necessity for Xiaomi Automobile to not only captivate users with high-value products but also to rebuild and solidify car owners' trust through efficient and sincere crisis management, thereby converting ordinary users into staunch defenders who spontaneously uphold the brand's reputation in the public sphere.

Based on the results of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediating effect tests, the verification status of the six core hypotheses in this study is as follows:

Drawing on various regression test results, the study's conclusions are as follows:

Driving Effect of Perceived Experience Value: The data reveals that car owners' perceived experience value exerts a highly significant positive predictive influence on both brand defense intention ($B=0.434, p<0.001$) and brand trust ($B=0.380, p<0.001$). " $B=0.434B=0.380$ " This indicates that exceptional product experiences and intelligent value form the bedrock of fostering user trust and loyalty.

Driving Effect of Negative Experience Remediation: Similarly, the repair of car owners' negative experience remediation demonstrates a highly significant positive impact on brand defense intention ($B=0.314, p<0.001$) and brand trust ($B=0.410, p<0.001$). " $B=0.314B=0.410$ " This suggests that a brand's remedial actions in response to problems are pivotal in reshaping trust and stimulating users' propensity to defend the brand.

Summary: all main effect hypotheses put forth in this study receive empirical support at the 0.001 level, strongly validating that car owners' experience value and the repair of negative issues constitute the two primary antecedents driving brand trust and brand defense willingness, collectively forming the key impetus behind car owners' psychological evaluations and behavioral tendencies.

Through an in-depth examination of the model paths, the verification results for research hypotheses H5 and H6 in this study are as follows:

H5 Verification Results: Empirical data indicate that brand trust significantly partially mediates the relationship between "car owners' perceived experience value" and "brand defense intention." Specifically, the indirect effect accounts for 30.33%, with a bootstrap 95% confidence interval of [0.103, 0.223] (excluding 0), strongly confirming the validity of this mediating path.

H6 Verification Results: Brand trust also plays a significant partial mediating role between "car owners' negative experience remediation" and "brand defense intention." Here, the indirect effect accounts for 43.53%, with a bootstrap 95% confidence interval of [0.126, 0.250] (excluding 0), indicating an exceptionally significant mediating effect.

Comprehensive analysis: Both paths exhibit partial mediation models. This finding suggests that car owners' perceptions of Xiaomi Automobile value and their satisfaction with negative issue resolution can directly drive their willingness to defend the brand, as well as indirectly influence it through the psychological mechanism of "brand trust."

Notably, the proportion of trust-mediated effects in the negative experience remediation path (43.53%) significantly exceeds that in the perceived value path (30.33%). This implies that rebuilding trust is a pivotal transmission link in transforming car owners' behavioral intentions during crisis resolution.

All six hypotheses in this study have been validated, fully elucidating the mechanism of "perceived experience value/ negative experience remediation → brand trust → brand defense intention" among Xiaomi Automobile owners. Specifically, car owners' perceived experience value and negative experience remediation are key drivers of enhanced brand trust and brand defense intention. Brand trust serves as a crucial intermediary in the transmission process from "experience/repair → defense willingness," acting as the core link between user perceptions and brand maintenance behaviors. Negative experience remediation exerts a stronger impact on brand trust ($\beta=0.410 > \beta=0.380$) and accounts for a higher proportion of the mediating effect (43.53% > 30.33%), highlighting the prominent role of service repair in transmitting brand trust and defense willingness.

In simpler terms, for Xiaomi Automobile owners to willingly speak positively about the brand online or in social circles, and even defend it against false statements, two factors are crucial: first, the car itself must be user-friendly (e.g., featuring a smart cockpit and a strong sense of technology), making users feel their investment is worthwhile; second, any issues must be handled effectively, demonstrating the brand's sincerity.

The study reveals that both paths ultimately foster users' trust in Xiaomi. Notably, after-sales repair performance has a greater impact on trust than product quality alone. This suggests that when car owners encounter problems, Xiaomi's provision of transparent, timely, and satisfactory solutions can build trust more effectively through "timely assistance" than through enhancing product experiences in normal circumstances ("icing on the cake"), thereby cultivating staunch brand defenders.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1 Research Conclusion

This study focuses on the real owners of Xiaomi Automobile (represented by the SU7 and YU7 models) and conducts quantitative empirical analysis based on 338 valid questionnaires, drawing the following core conclusions:

User profiles exhibit distinct characteristics of "youthfulness" and a desire to "try something new": The cumulative proportion of the 18–30 age group in the sample exceeds 72%; SU7 models account for 69.82%; and over 70% of users are within the "trial period" of three months after purchasing a car. The overall sample aligns closely with Xiaomi Automobile's brand positioning as a favorite among tech enthusiasts.

The "dual-path" model demonstrates a significant driving effect on brand defense intention: Path 1 (Perceived Value-Driven): Under normal circumstances, the smart cockpit experience and high cost-effectiveness directly drive brand defense intention ($\beta = 0.434$, $p < 0.001$). Path 2 (Negative Remediation-Driven): Under abnormal circumstances, efficient and sincere after-sales crisis remediation can effectively reverse word-of-mouth and drive supportive behavior ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < 0.001$).

The mediating mechanism of brand trust has been thoroughly validated: In the "perceived value $\rightarrow$ brand defense intention" path, brand trust plays a partial mediating role, with the indirect effect accounting for 30.33%. In the "negative remediation $\rightarrow$ brand defense intention" path, the mediating effect of brand trust significantly increases to 43.53%. The empirical results confirm that "timely assistance" in crisis repair is more effective in triggering trust reconstruction than "icing on the cake" under normal circumstances, serving as the psychological core that motivates car owners to become staunch "brand defenders."

5.2 Management Countermeasures and Suggestions

Strengthen the "Smart + Aesthetic" Experience Closed Loop to Consolidate Normal Perceived Value Given the significant positive impact of perceived value on brand defense intention ($\beta = 0.434$), Xiaomi Automobile should fully leverage its internet-based strengths:

Continuous OTA Function Iteration: Maintain high-frequency updates to algorithms and cockpit modes, enhancing car owners' technological identity and motivation for social sharing through "fresh" functionalities.

Create Ultimate Sensory Details: Integrate the minimalist aesthetics of the ecological chain into digital interfaces and physical interactions, transforming unexpected aesthetic experiences into a source of value that fosters spontaneous brand stability among owners.

Build a Fully Transparent After-Sales Response Mechanism to Leverage the Repair Effect of "Timely Assistance" In light of the strong pulling effect of negative remediation on brand trust ($\beta = 0.410$, mediating effect accounting for 43.53%), enterprises should deepen service recovery efforts:

Process Digitalization and Transparency: Integrate an "after-sales full-link tracking system" into the app to provide real-time updates on repair progress and expected delivery times, alleviating car owners' anxiety through information symmetry and turning crises into opportunities.

Root-Cause Closed-Loop Repair: Establish a "case-by-case traceability" management system for common technical issues, preventing "recurring failures" and actively disclosing improvement results to rebuild car owners' confidence in the brand's long-term performance capabilities.

Deeply Cultivate the Young Car Owners' Community to Empower and Motivate "Super Defenders". Given that users under 30 account for over 72% of the sample, the young digital community should be operated with precision:

Provide Hardcore Professional Support: Regularly publish technical disassembly white papers and supply chain progress reports within the community, empowering car owners with transparent data to shift public opinion from "emotional disputes" to "factual rational clarification."

Establish an Honor Incentive System: Select and confer honorary titles such as "Joint Co-Creation Officer" on core car owners who actively uphold the brand's reputation, complemented by in-depth spiritual and material incentives like priority test drives and factory visits, to fortify a brand moat spontaneously formed by users across major social platforms.

6. Research Deficiencies and Future Research Directions

6.1 Research Deficiencies

The sample composition exhibits bias: there is a high proportion of female car owners (60.65%), and 72.78% of respondents have a monthly disposable income of less than 8,000 yuan. The strong "fan attribute" may introduce an emotional bias into evaluations.

Inadequate coverage of external interference variables: the model primarily focuses on the internal perceptions of car owners and fails to incorporate external moderating variables such as social media KOL opinions, delivery cycles, and entrepreneurs' personal IPs. Consequently, the model's explanatory power (adjusted $R^2 = 0.349$) still has room for improvement.

The spatial-temporal dimension is static: only 5.33% of the sample has driving experience exceeding one year. This study captures the user psychology during the "honeymoon period" and cannot reflect the dynamic degradation process of vehicles after prolonged use (e.g., battery degradation and vehicle aging).

6.2 Future Research Directions

Conduct cross-stage longitudinal dynamic tracking: in the future, the "owner lifecycle" model should be employed to conduct longitudinal tracking studies on the same group of owners at the initial purchase stage, after driving 20,000 kilometers, and following major maintenance.

Incorporate diversified moderating and categorical variables: it is recommended to introduce "perception of public opinion pressure" and "community engagement" as moderating variables, and include "switching from gasoline to electric vehicles" and other repurchase backgrounds as categorical variables for multi-group analysis.

Expand cross-brand comparative research: select Tesla or Huawei (AITO/LUXEED) as control groups to compare the similarities and differences in the formation mechanisms of "brand defense intention" between internet ecological thinking and traditional/other technology giants.

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