

Users' Willingness to Adopt Online Medical Consultation Suggestions: Social Interaction and Trust Transfer Theoretical Perspectives

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Abstract. Online medical consultation has become one of the important channels for people to seek medical advice and health information. Users' willingness to adopt online doctors' advice is the key to users' continued use of online medical consultation platforms, which depends on their trust in doctors and platforms. Therefore, from the perspective of trust transfer theory and social interaction theory, this article takes the Meituan drug-buying platform on Meituan Takeout APP as an example to explore the degree of user trust (user's initial trust in the platform, user interaction experience trust) on the adoption of health consultation opinions. The relative importance and differential impact of intention to verify the mediating role of trust. By comprehensively considering these factors, we hope to gain an in-depth understanding of users' decision-making process on the online medical consultation platform and provide useful theoretical support and guidance to improve the effectiveness and credibility of the platform.

Keywords. online medical consultation, adoption, trust transfer, social interaction

1. Introduction

In recent years, Internet + information technology has developed rapidly, and online medical consultation has become one of the important channels for people to seek medical advice and health information. According to the 52nd "Statistical Report on China's Internet Development" released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of June 2023, the number of Internet medical users in China reached 364 million, an increase of 1.62 million from December 2022. Accounting for 33.8% of the total Internet users.

At present, most research on online medical consultation focuses on doctor-patient communication and patient satisfaction, and most of them take independent online medical consultation platforms as the research object. For example, empirical research based on the "Ask the Doctor" platform found that the doctor-patient line The four development stages of interactive dialogue provide effective suggestions for interactive communication between doctors and patients.[1] Driven by technological development, offline medical consultation services will transform services online to a large extent, which is mainly based on users' consumption habits of online consultation services.

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Users' consumption habits and trust transfer will have a positive relationship between trust in the platform and patient satisfaction.[2] Faced with various online consultation service platforms, online medical consultation sub-platforms nested on more mature platforms are relatively special and complex, and there are relatively few existing studies. Taking these factors into consideration, we hope to gain an in-depth understanding of users' decision-making process on the online medical consultation platform and provide useful theoretical support and guidance to improve the effectiveness and credibility of the platform.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Online Medical Consultation Service

Online medical consultation service is an online healthcare service that enables professionals to conduct remote interactive diagnosis and consultation with patients through an online platform.[3] Although online medical consultation platforms have considerable development potential, there are also some problems, such as uneven matching of doctors and patients and insufficient resources of high-quality doctors.[4], positively affects patients' choice of online doctors. During the online medical consultation service process, doctors' responsiveness, service quality, diagnostic accuracy and interactivity will all affect patients' perceived satisfaction.[5] After the treatment is over, the patient's willingness to adopt or accept the doctor's advice and service evaluation affect the patient's subsequent willingness to pay, re-use and re-selection.[6] Online medical consultation service is a systematic service process, and the content that needs to be paid attention to in different service links is quite different. However, the user's trust level runs through the entire process of user experience, and is also the foundation for users to ultimately form experience and consumption habits. Through in-depth study of user behavior and experience, the advantages and disadvantages of online medical consultation services can be better understood, providing stronger support for their improvement and development.

2.2. Social interaction theory

Communication and interaction between people is one of the most important features of our society. Social interaction refers to the two-way communication between the communicator and the recipient of information. It includes two categories: person-to-person interaction and content interaction.[7] "Person-to-person interaction" emphasizes the interdependence between individuals, which means that an individual's cognition, emotion and behavior are affected by their interactions and relationships with others. Current research on the effectiveness of specific interaction factors in online health consultations confirms that the frequency of interaction between doctors and patients, information delivery methods and medical information have an impact on the development of online doctor reviews.[8] Based on the particularity of online consultation, the interaction between doctors and patients lacks more channels for contact and expression. In the interaction process between patients and doctors, this article focuses on the relationship between offline medical services and online medical services perceived by patients. The similarity between patients, the similarity between the doctor's diagnosis results and the patient's psychological expectations may have a

positive impact on the patient's trust. Good doctor-patient interaction can give patients more sense of security and trust, and patients will be willing to disclose more details of their condition to doctors. This is the key to high-quality information interaction between doctors and patients.

2.3. *Trust transfer theory*

Trust transfer theory refers to the cognitive process by which a person's trust in one entity can be transferred to another related target entity.[9] For example, when users use an unknown product for the first time, they will first actively evaluate the relationship between the unknown new product and the already used product, and they will transfer the trust established in the used product to the unknown new product. Lee et al. divided the trust transfer process into trust transfer within channels and trust transfer between channels, and pointed out that people's trust in one area will affect their trust perception and attitude cognition towards other areas.[10] The transfer of trust from Meituan Takeout APP to Meituan drug-buying platform is a trust transfer within the channel. Trust can easily be transferred from the highly similar Meituan Takeout APP to the Meituan drug-buying platform. Trust is often considered the primary factor in users' behavioral intentions, determining whether users are willing to adopt or share information on online platforms.

3. Research object selection

In order to better understand users' use of online medical consultation and behavioral habits, through preliminary research on APPs that already provide online medical consultation services, and by selecting APPs with higher software downloads and evaluation rankings on the mobile application download interface, we finally Six online medical consultation service platforms including Meituan drug-buying platform on Meituan Takeout APP, Dingxiang Doctor APP, Good doctor online APP, Wei Doctor APP, Chunyu Doctor APP, and derived from other hospitals APP or mini-programs were selected to conduct a comparison of user behavior. Research surveys to select the best research subjects.

The previous survey used a general questionnaire survey method, and set up a total of questionnaire questions such as age, whether it is used, frequency of use, intention to use, etc. The people who distributed the questionnaire were divided into four age groups. The final number of questionnaires collected was 232, of which 207 were valid questionnaires, accounting for 89.22% of the total. According to the usage of online medical consultation services by existing users, users aged 14-40 account for nearly 90% of the total number of people surveyed. The proportion of people under 14 years old who have used online medical consultation services is relatively low. The specific cross analysis is shown in **Figure 1**.

In the survey data, the number of people who have used online consultation services and the Meituan Takeout APP accounted for 67.63%, and the number of people who have used the Meituan drug-buying platform service and intend to continue using the Meituan Takeout APP service accounted for 80.67% , 84.54% of the survey respondents were interested in using Meituan's drug purchase service (**Table 1**). Based on the analysis of the age and usage behavior of the survey respondents, the results show that Meituan Takeout users are mostly concentrated in the 14-26 age group, and

users who have used Meituan Takeout APP are largely interested in using Meituan drug-buying platform service. Other competing apps are basically independent online medical consultation platforms.

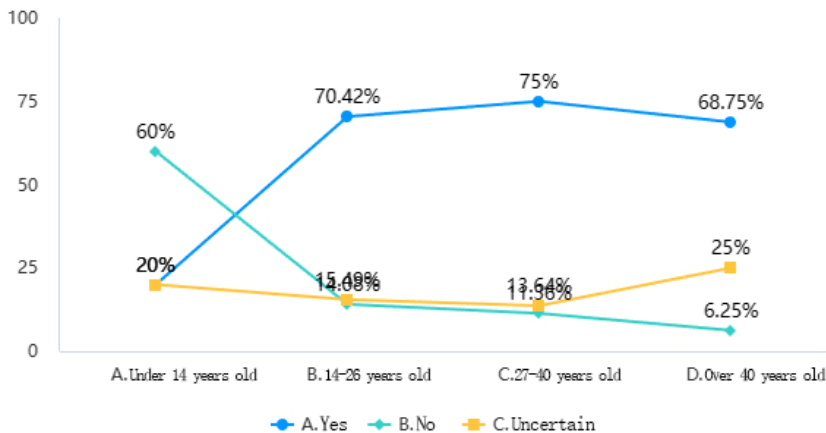


Figure 1. Cross analysis of age and usage

Table 1. Cross analysis of age and use intention

X/Y	Under 14 years old	14-26 years old	27-40 years old	Over 40 years old	Subtotal
Meituan drug-buying platform on Meituan Takeout APP	4 (2.29%)	124 (70.86%)	34 (19.43%)	13 (7.43%)	175
Dingxiang Doctor APP	0 (0.00%)	4 (66.67%)	2 (33.33%)	0 (0.00%)	6
Good doctor online APP	0 (0.00%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	4
Wei Doctor APP	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (100%)	0 (0.00%)	1
Chunyu Doctor APP	0 (0.00%)	2 (100%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2
Derived from other hospitals APP	1 (5.26%)	10 (52.63%)	6 (31.58%)	2 (10.53%)	19

After analyzing competing products of the online medical consultation APP and analyzing user behavior intentions, the Meituan drug-buying platform on Meituan Takeout APP was finally selected as the research object.Meituan drug-buying platform is based on the similarity of the characteristics of Meituan Takeout APP user groups and Meituan drug-buying platform user groups, and uses the O2O operating model to achieve Meituan drug-buying platform covering 2,800 cities, counties, districts and towns in China, connecting more than 200,000 pharmacies across the country. Users have established trust in the Meituan platform when using Meituan Takeout APP service, which may involve Meituan's good performance in delivery efficiency, service quality, payment security, etc.This accumulation of trust extends users' satisfaction with Meituan Takeout APP to other services, such as Meituan drug-buying platform.This helps reduce users' uncertainty when trying new services and makes users more willing to try new services.This article uses user trust as the intermediary to

analyze the factors that influence users' willingness to adopt doctors' advice on such platforms.

4. Theoretical model and research assumption

4.1. Information Quality

Chen et al. divide human-to-human interaction in social interaction into information interaction and emotional interaction. Information interaction refers to the communication and interaction process of information knowledge acquisition. Information quality is an important prerequisite for trust and satisfaction. [11] Doctors need to have the skills and level to evaluate medical information to ensure the reliability of diagnostic results and recommendations, thereby increasing patients' willingness to adopt their results and recommendations. [12] At the same time, patients need to understand their disease and treatment options in order to make informed medical decisions. Information quality should help establish a trusting relationship between doctors and patients. Patients need to believe that the information provided by doctors is credible, and doctors also need to believe that the information provided by patients is accurate to achieve the best medical results. Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Information quality has a significant positive impact on patients' trust in doctors.

4.2. Service quality

There are three important aspects of online medical consultation (OMC) service uncertainty, namely uncertainty about doctors, service quality and service coordination. High uncertainty may hinder OMC consumers from participating in follow-up services. [13] Service quality and trust are important influencing factors of satisfaction and behavioral intention loyalty models. [14] Doctors' information and emotional support in online doctor-patient interactions have a positive impact on patient satisfaction. When patients seek medical advice and treatment, they expect to receive effective and caring services. Patients with high satisfaction are more likely to follow treatment recommendations. This effective communication helps ensure that patients receive the best medical care. Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: The quality-of-service quality has a significant positive impact on patients' trust in doctors.

4.3. Interaction quality

Interaction is a uniquely human concept related to the consumer's social environment and his or her relationships with others. Under one-to-one online health consultation services, faster response times and lower response-to-question ratios can reduce the bias in online doctor reviews. [8] Doctors need to express medical concepts clearly, and patients also need to accurately communicate their symptoms to ensure that doctors can accurately understand the patient's condition. Good interaction quality should help avoid misunderstandings, improve patient engagement, and build trusting relationships,

while also helping to improve medical efficiency and reduce medical risks. Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Interaction quality has a significant positive impact on patients' trust in doctors.

4.4. Perceptual similarity

Consumers' perceived similarity to other members helps them enjoy interactions. [15] Before using online consultation services, patients have psychological expectations for their consultation results. The similarity between the consulting doctor's diagnosis results and the patient's expectations will have an impact on the level of trust. There are also perceptual similarities between patients from platform to platform. Trust can be transferred in different contexts of relevance. Based on users' perceived similarity between Meituan's online medical consultation platform and offline medical services, and the similarity between Meituan Takeout APP and Meituan drug-buying platform, explore whether users think that services operated on the same platform are similar. Quality standards and service experience, that is, whether users' perceived similarity positively affects their level of trust. Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Perceived similarity has a significant positive impact on patients' trust in doctors.

4.5. initial trust

Customers' brand trust in Internet companies positively affects their initial trust in Internet banks, and initial trust also plays an important role in the intention to use Internet banks. Research confirms that customer trust can be transferred between Internet companies and their Internet banks. [16] Based on the initial trust that users may have established in the Meituan Takeout APP, when users decide to try the Meituan drug-buying platform service, explore whether they will transfer the trust in the brand they previously accumulated in the Meituan Takeout APP to the Meituan drug-buying platform. Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Initial trust has a significant positive impact on patients' trust in doctors.

4.6. Perception control

Perceived control has a positive impact on the establishment of fast relationships. If customers are confident in product information and shopping process, their perceived control will be enhanced. [17] The higher the user's perceived self-efficacy, the higher the perceived control that using personal private devices to obtain library services can bring to the individual, thus bringing more confident emotions and a more positive mentality to the individual. [18] In this study, users can skillfully and effectively use various functions on the Meituan drug-buying platform, their perceived control will be improved, and their trust in the Meituan drug-buying and consultation service will also be greatly improved. Therefore, this article proposes the following hypothesis:

H6: Perceived control has a significant positive impact on patients' trust in doctors.

4.7. Adoption

During text-based online consultations, patients tend to adopt suggestions that include problem analysis, recommended actions, and emotional support. And patients with pre-existing conditions are more likely to seek informational support rather than emotional support. [19] Detailed and specific text comments and the display of real-name reviewers can enhance users' perceived credibility of the review content and review source, and further enhance users' subsequent adoption intention. [20] In this study, we explore whether users' willingness to adopt the platform's doctors' recommendations will also increase as their trust in the consultation services of the Meituan drug-buying platform increases. Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypothesis (**Figure 2**):

H7: The degree of trust's trust has a significant positive impact on adopting willingness.

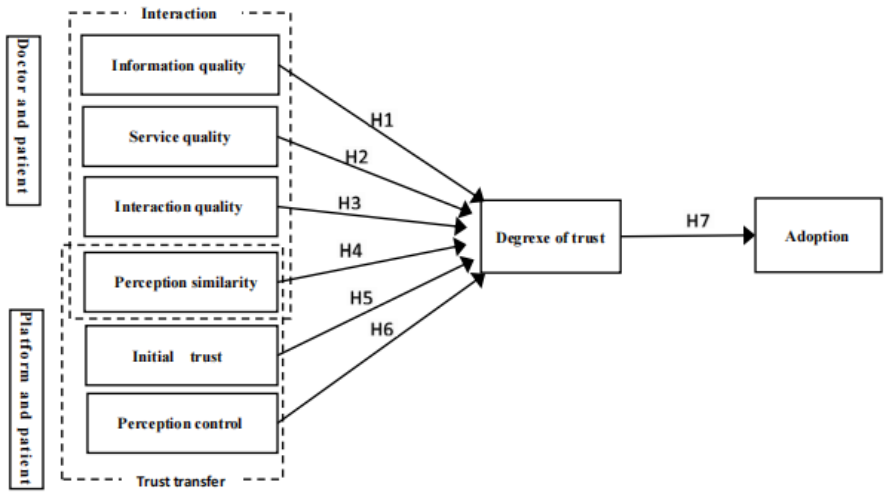


Figure 2. Research hypothesis model.

5. Research methods

The main research method used in this study is the questionnaire survey method, which is analyzed using SPSS23. The data of the questionnaire is collected and distributed to users who have used the Meituan Takeout APP through an online survey on the Questionnaire Star platform. Due to the basic characteristics of the Meituan Takeout APP user group, this questionnaire Mainly concentrated among college students and working young people who have just entered society. After collection, a total of 858 pieces of data were collected in this questionnaire, with 777 valid samples remaining, and the effective rate reached 90.56%. This study constructed users' willingness to adopt the Meituan drug-buying platform online consultation service, and made reference and modifications based on the existing scale to adapt to the context of this study. We use a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)). The specific variables are measured as follows in **Table 2**.

6. Data analysis

6.1. Reliability and validity testing

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of questionnaire test results, and reliability analysis analyzes the validity of the scale. Generally speaking, if the survey results of the questionnaire will not cause significant errors due to differences in investigators and survey time, then the questionnaire survey results are stable and reliable. This study uses the homogeneous reliability method to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Generally, a reliability coefficient above 0.70 meets the requirements of measurement science. This article uses SPSS23 statistical software for testing. The results show that the Cronbach α coefficients of the questionnaires are all greater than 0.9, indicating that the reliability of the questionnaire is very good (**Table 3**).

Table 2. Description of variables and measurements

Variable	Question	Source
Information quality	The consulting doctors at Meituan drug-buying platform are experienced in medical services. The consulting doctor at Meituan drug-buying platform explained the cause of my illness in detail.	Liu H et al.(2016) J.A.
	I think the information returned by the consulting doctors on the Meituan drug-buying platform is very accurate and reliable.	Colquitt (2001)
Service quality	The consulting doctors at Meituan drug-buying platform will be friendly and concerned about my condition.	Chen and Shen(2015)
	The consulting doctors at Meituan drug-buying platform were able to patiently listen to my needs. I had a great time talking to the consulting doctor at Meituan drug-buying platform. The consulting doctors at Meituan drug-buying platform can answer my questions quickly. I interact frequently with the consulting doctors at the Meituan drug-buying platform.	Kim, S., & Baek, T. H. (2018) Lee D et al. (2015)
Interaction quality	I can easily understand the reply from the consulting doctor at Meituan drug-buying platform.	Lee, S., & Choi, J. (2017)
Perception similarity	The consultation service of the Meituan drug-buying platform has many similarities with the offline consultation service. The results of the diagnosis by the doctor at Meituan drug-buying platform were similar to what I expected.	Stewart(2003) Nan
	The Meituan drug-buying platform consultation service provided by Meituan Takeout APP is trustworthy. I think the consultation process using the Meituan drug-buying platform is similar to the Meituan Takeout APP.	Wang(2013)
Initial trust	Meituan Takeout APP always provides reliable service. Meituan Takeout APP always provides quality products. Meituan Takeout APP always provides safe transaction services.	G. Kim, & B. Shin, H.G. Lee(2009)
Perception control	The functions set up by Meituan drug-buying platform are simple and easy to learn and operate. I know how to use the Meituan drug-buying platform effectively. I can quickly find the doctor I need on the Meituan drug-buying platform. I trust the consultation service of Meituan drug-buying platform.	Davis(1989)
Degree of trust	I recognize the quality of Meituan drug-buying platform's consultation services. I think the consultation service of Meituan drug-buying platform can provide reliable advice. I will consider the advice provided by the consulting doctors at the Meituan drug-buying platform.	Chen, J., Shen, X.L., (2015)
Adoption	I will use Meituan Takeout APP to complete the consultation service of Meituan drug-buying platform. I will recommend the Meituan drug-buying platform consultation service of Meituan Takeout APP to others.	Venkatesh V,Davis F D.(2003)

Table 3. Reliability analysis

Cronbach trust level analysis		
Number of items	sample size	Cronbach α coefficient
25	777	0.966

Validity refers to the validity of questionnaire survey results, which means whether the survey content is what the researcher wants to investigate to verify the validity of the scale in this study. Validity tests include convergent validity and discriminant validity. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test convergent validity. The measured item KMO=0.983, with a value higher than 0.8, indicating that these data are suitable for factor analysis. The significance of Bartlett's sphericity test is close to 0 ($p<0.01$). From (Table 4), it can be seen that the validity of the questionnaire is very good. (Note: **: $p<0.001$,*: $P<0.01$,*: $P<0.05$)

Table 4. Validity analysis

KMO and Bartlett's test		
KMO		0.983
Approximate chi-square		13036.017
Bartlett's test of sphericity	df	300
	p	0.000

6.2. Correlation analysis

In order to verify the factors that affect user experience, the survey data was included in SPSS for relevant analysis. Correlation analysis is mainly a mathematical statistical method that studies the dependence between phenomena and studies the correlation direction and degree of correlation between the variables of the hypothesized relationship. Using Spearman correlation coefficient analysis, the table shows that the r value of the two-sided test is located Between 0.665-0.803, showing significance at the 0.01 level (Table 5), the significance test shows that all items $p<0.01$, there is a significant positive correlation. (Note: **: $p<0.001$,*: $p<0.01$ *, $p<0.05$)

Table 5. Correlation analysis

		Adoption	Degree of trust	Perceptual control	Initial trust	Perceptual similarity	Interactive quality	Service quality	Information quality
Adoption	Correlation coefficient	1							
Degree of trust	Correlation coefficient	0.795**	1						
Perceptual control	Correlation coefficient	0.802**	0.783**	1					
Initial trust	Correlation coefficient	0.748**	0.791**	0.758**	1				
Perceptual similarity	Correlation coefficient	0.796**	0.799**	0.803**	0.769**	1			
Interactive quality	Correlation coefficient	0.742**	0.723**	0.742**	0.707**	0.784**	1		
Service quality	Correlation coefficient	0.732**	0.742**	0.723**	0.735**	0.786**	0.759**	1	
Information quality	Correlation coefficient	0.665**	0.668**	0.669**	0.648**	0.711**	0.720**	0.708**	1

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

6.3. Regression analysis

Regression analysis is used to determine the degree of influence of independent variables on dependent variables. According to the analysis results in **Table 6**, in this model, the constants perceived controllability, initial trust, perceived similarity, interaction quality, service quality, and information quality have a significant positive impact on adoption intention. The corresponding standardized regression coefficients are: 0.360 ($P<0.001$), 0.165 ($P<0.001$), 0.217 ($P<0.001$), 0.113 ($P<0.01$), 0.092 ($P<0.05$), 0.075 ($P<0.05$).

Table 6. Regression analysis of independent variables and dependent variables

	Adoption				
	B	standard error	t	p	β
constant	-0.058	0.081	-0.721	0.471	-
Perceptual control	0.360***	0.035	10.162	0.000	0.345
Initial trust	0.165***	0.035	4.716	0.000	0.156
Perceptual similarity	0.217***	0.045	4.883	0.000	0.197
Interactive quality	0.113**	0.037	3.095	0.002	0.108
Service quality	0.092*	0.037	2.509	0.012	0.087
Information quality	0.075*	0.034	2.229	0.026	0.067

According to the analysis results in **Table 7**, in this model, the constants perceived controllability, initial trust, perceived similarity, interaction quality, service quality, and information quality significantly positively affect the degree of trust, and the corresponding standardized regression coefficients are: 0.238 ($P<0.001$), 0.295 ($P<0.001$), 0.233 ($P<0.001$), 0.790 ($P<0.001$), 0.109 ($P<0.001$), 0.088 ($P<0.001$).

Table 7. Regression analysis of independent variables and mediating variables

	Degree of trust				
	B	standard error	t	p	β
constant	-0.060	0.076	-0.781	0.435	-
Perceptual control	0.238***	0.034	7.104	0.000	0.232
Initial trust	0.295***	0.033	8.877	0.000	0.283
Perceptual similarity	0.233***	0.042	5.523	0.000	0.215
Interactive quality	0.790***	0.024	33.248	0.000	0.767
Service quality	0.109**	0.035	3.131	0.002	0.105
Information quality	0.088**	0.032	2.760	0.006	0.080

The degree of control of sexuality and trust is significantly positive, and the corresponding standardization regression coefficient is 0.461, 0.480 ($P < 0.001$). The degree of trust plays a part of the intermediary role in the relationship between controlling sexual perception in the relationship of adopting the willingness. The initial

trust perception and trust are significantly positively affected to adopt their willingness, and the corresponding standardized regression coefficient is 0.324, 0.591 ($P < 0.001$). The degree of trust plays a part of the intermediary role in the relationship of initial trust. Similarity perception and trust are significantly positive and positive, and the corresponding standardization regression coefficient is 0.456, 0.498 ($P < 0.001$). The degree of trust in the relationship of similarity to the willingness to adopt the interaction quality perception of the interaction quality perception and trust is significantly positively affected. The corresponding standardized regression coefficient is 0.337, 0.595 ($P < 0.001$). The degree of trust plays a part of the intermediary role in the relationship between interaction quality. The service quality and trust are significantly positive and adopt the willingness to adopt the willingness, and the corresponding standardized regression coefficient is 0.312, 0.612 ($P < 0.001$). The degree of trust plays a part of the intermediary role in the relationship of service quality. The degree of information quality perception and trust is significantly positive, and the corresponding standardization regression coefficient is 0.268, 0.668 ($P < 0.001$). The degree of trust played part of the intermediary role in the relationship of information quality perception in the relationship of adoption (**Table 8**).

Table 8. Regression analysis between variables

	unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p
	B	standard error	Beta		
constant	0.229**	0.074	-	3.085	0.002
Degree of trust	0.480***	0.031	0.472	15.576	0.000
Perceptual control	0.461***	0.032	0.443	14.609	0.000
Degree of trust	0.591***	0.034	0.581	17.577	0.000
Initial trust	0.324***	0.035	0.305	9.240	0.000
Degree of trust	0.498***	0.033	0.489	15.077	0.000
Perceptual similarity	0.456***	0.036	0.413	12.726	0.000
Degree of trust	0.595***	0.029	0.585	20.216	0.000
Interactive quality	0.337***	0.030	0.321	11.111	0.000
Degree of trust	0.612***	0.031	0.601	19.994	0.000
Service quality	0.312***	0.032	0.295	9.798	0.000
Degree of trust	0.668***	0.028	0.657	23.629	0.000
Information quality	0.268***	0.031	0.240	8.645	0.000
Degree of trust	0.846***	0.020	0.831	41.594	0.000

7. Conclusion

Our research emphasizes the importance of six factors based on social interaction and trust transfer theory: information quality, service quality, interaction quality, perceived similarity, initial trust, and perceived controllability to user trust. The degree of trust in turn affects user trust. Willingness to adopt online medical consultation advice plays an important role. The research results show that these six factors all have a positive impact on patients' trust, and then have a positive impact on patients' willingness to adopt. The conclusion shows that if users experience convenient and efficient services on the Meituan Takeout APP, they may expect to get a similar experience when using the Meituan drug-buying platform. Meituan Takeout APP can improve users' trust in the entire platform by maintaining the consistency of user experience in different services, thereby increasing users' stickiness to the overall APP ecosystem through trust transfer between platforms.

Based on the review and combing of the literature, it was found that the main problem of this study was that it did not deeply explore whether trust based on interaction and transfer has a significant impact on the user's subsequent willingness to accept or pay. In addition, this study only used a questionnaire survey method, and the scope of the survey objects was relatively narrow, and there was no in-depth user behavior analysis of segmented groups. The use of more diverse and effective data collection methods can be explored in depth to expand the application scenarios of social interaction and trust transfer theories.

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