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# The Role of Service-provider's Attributes in Sharing Economy: a Data-driven Study from the Perspective of Trust

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**Abstract:** Trust has been found as the key determinant of consumer decisions in sharing economy platforms, and service-provider's attributes are crucial for trust building but rarely studied. In this paper, we investigate the effect of host's attributes on consumer's purchasing behaviors in xiaozhu.com, a leading short rental platform in China. Specifically, we argue that host's attributes can influence trustworthiness from the perspective of benevolence, ability, integrity and have significant effects on orders. Furthermore, it is found that consumers prefer to choose women as hosts when book single rooms and gender is an influencing factor in the decision process of ordering. These findings imply that service-provider's attributes can contribute to trust building and decision making in sharing economy. It's expected to make contributions to trust study theoretically and provide practical trust development guides for sharing economy platforms.

Keywords: trust, sharing economy, service-provider's attributes, gender

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of information technology and web service, a new type of C2C commerce which is commonly known as the "sharing economy" has emerged recently. It's a third-party platform that allow owners to share the benefits of their ownership<sup>[1]</sup> and make it easier for consumers to enjoy other's belongings and properties with some cost or commission<sup>[2]</sup>. Large amount of marketplaces about sharing economy build close relationship with our daily life, such as short rental service (Airbnb and XiaoZhu), shuttle vehicle service (DiDi and Uber), clothes sharing service (Rent the Runway) and so on. They all bring much surprise to our mind and change our lifestyle step by step.

However, because of the complex environment in online markets, trust problem is one of the greatest barriers between sellers and buyers who are not familiar with each other<sup>[3]</sup>. In traditional C2C markets, it's the reputation formed by consumer's comments or other evaluation indexes that enhances consumer's perception of trust on sellers<sup>[4]</sup>. Surprisingly, about 95% of properties boast an average rating of either 4.5 or 5 stars (rating scores ranging from 1 to 5 stars, with intervals of 0.5)<sup>[5]</sup>. Like Airbnb, most of the reputation scores in xiaozhu.com are almost close to maximum and lack of variance. This subtle difference makes it less effective to help make decisions. In order to reduce the loss caused by information asymmetry under this condition, consumers may resort to other relevant information.

Unlike traditional C2C websites, sharing economy platforms also offer more detailed information about service-providers, which may enhance understanding, build trust and help consumers make decisions. Therefore, this research focuses on whether service-provider's attributes will increase their trustworthiness level and influence consumer's purchasing behavior. XiaoZhu, as an outstanding representative of sharing economy in China, is chosen as the research object in this paper. Firstly, we investigate the influence of host's attributes (response rate, average confirm time, acceptance rate of order, the number of houses one host owns, whether host opens personal page) on consumer's purchasing behavior (orders) from the perspective of benevolence, ability and integrity. Much more interesting, we then explore whether gender may affect consumer's choice or not. As a result, consumers prefer to choose female hosts than male hosts.

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The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers a more detailed review related to sharing economy and trust studies. Section 3 presents research design and related variables. In section 4, we make empirical analysis to study the effects of service-provider's attributes on orders, and explore the role of gender when consumers are making decisions. Section 5 draws the conclusions and introduces visions for future research emerging from this work.

## 2. RELATED WORK AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Trust is essential for business transactions and product exchanges<sup>[6]</sup> because it provides consumers with high expectation and may produce more satisfaction for sellers and products<sup>[7]</sup>. Especially in electronic commerce context<sup>[8]</sup> where is full of uncertainty elements, trust is of great importance and make it easier for consumers to make purchasing decision<sup>[9]</sup> even if information asymmetry between buyers and sellers exists. In sharing economy, since sellers offer face-to-face services rather than physical commodities, consumers face not only property risks but also personal safety risks. We contend that facilitating construction of trust among parties is much more critical than earlier types of C2C platforms.

Trust is one of the subjective perceptions from consumers to trustees. Only when consumers trust the sellers will they make purchasing decisions<sup>[10]-[12]</sup>. Thus, host who holds more trustworthiness<sup>[13]</sup> perhaps earns more orders in commerce. In traditional C2C marketplaces, reputation mechanisms - especially online reviews and rating scores are developed to encourage trust between traders. However, it is found that in sharing economy websites such as Airbnb, properties' rating scores are uniformly high, with an average score of 4.7 stars, and ratings tend to be overwhelmingly positive, occasionally mixed with a bit of negative reviews, leading to what has been characterized as a J-shaped distribution<sup>[5], [14]</sup>. Due to the lack of variance, consumers would attach importance to other information such as host's attributes for decision making. However, there have been few researches to study from this perspective. Some researchers argue that host's personal photos can have a significant impact on consumer behavior. Specially, the more trustworthy sellers' photos convey, the higher probability rooms can be booked<sup>[15]</sup>. In a similar way, we suggest that host's attributes may reflect his trustworthiness and have an impact on orders further.

As Schoorman pointed, trustworthiness consists of benevolence, ability and integrity<sup>[16]</sup>. Firstly, Benevolence is the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive, which means that trustee wants to help trustor even though the trustee is not required to be helpful and there is no extrinsic reward for the trustee<sup>[17]</sup>. In xiaozhu.com, response or reply is a subjective behavior and the time host takes is not constrained. Host who responds to consumers more quickly and tries to solve their problem timely can show his benevolence or kindness. The host who is more kind is more likely to be trusted. Thus, average response rate and confirm time stand for benevolence trustworthiness in our research. In addition, many scholars all consider ability an essential element of trust<sup>[18], [19]</sup> and ability trustworthiness increases with trustee's skills and competence promotion<sup>[20]</sup>. That is to say, the buyer may believe that the supplier who is able to provide high quality product if supplier shows satisfying performance before<sup>[16]</sup>. Unlike booking process of traditional hotel, consumers can check in as long as rooms are available. However, their orders may be rejected by hosts after booking in sharing economy websites. Therefore, acceptance rate of order and the number of houses one host owns both represent his ability of offering adequate products and providing service, so the two measures influence ability trustworthiness. Lastly, integrity is defined as the extent of seller's intention to display his true information and description<sup>[16]</sup>. As authentication and legitimate-confirmation process are required gradually, consumers tend to believe trustee who has a strong sense of integrity and honesty<sup>[21]</sup>. Consequently, it's supposed that the host who is willing to open personal page and shares more individual information (such as gender, age) conveys more integrity trustworthiness in research.

It is interesting to find in Ert's experiments that individuals might prefer women to men as hosts [15]. Nevertheless, they did not get exact conclusion that female hosts do have more orders than men. It is worth exploring whether gender plays a role in sharing economy. Actually, in other fields, Blanco's experiment in social dilemma showed differences between male and female do influence people's choices [22]. And the influence shows up because different gender information may produce stereotype impression on trustworthiness, which is confirmed as a leading and important motivation element of interactions [23]. Numerous early researches showed that men trust more while women are more trustworthy in Prisoner's Dilemma game [24]. Therefore, we suggest that there exists much possibility that gender information has an impact on consumer's intention and behavior of choosing host.

Based on theories mentioned above, host's attributes show the benevolence, ability and integrity trustworthiness and may influence consumer's decision. Since product's attributes are not our research focus, they are treated as control variables and detailed explanation will be demonstrated in later parts. The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

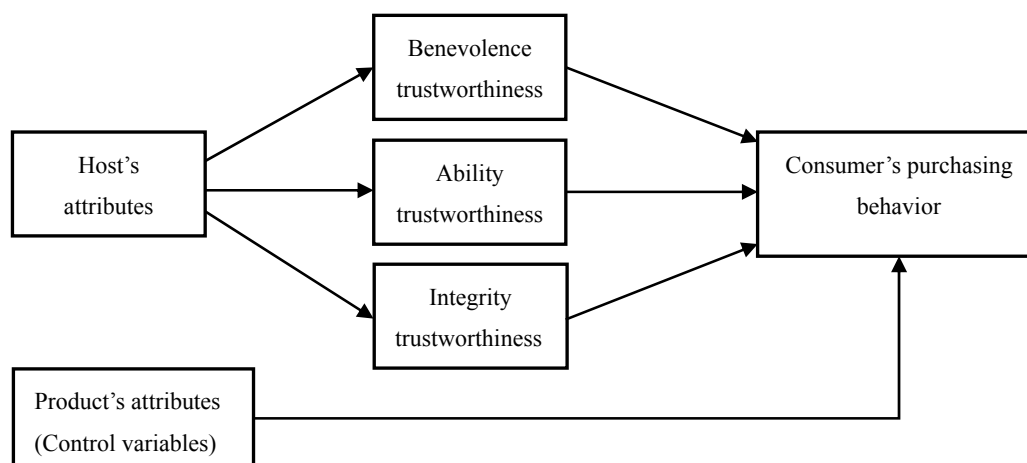


Figure 1. Research framework

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.1 Research Object

XiaoZhu, founded in 2012, as one of leaders in the online short rental market in China, provides users with cost-effective short term apartment, room rentals and other accommodations. Hosts offer idle house properties for rent in xiaozhu.com, such as whole apartment, single room, sofa, or just a bed, and guests can search for targeted city and book any of these properties for days, weeks or longer, once accepted by hosts.

Unlike booking platform of traditional hotel, XiaoZhu not only provides a detailed description of the room but also shows users with relevant information of hosts to assist making decisions. Basic information of room-price, room type, general location, room photos, head portrait is shown in the homepage. Guests can get more detailed information at room pages, and also link to host pages through head portrait. Not all hosts have personal pages. Actually, most of hosts do not open personal pages, but the online response rate, average confirm time, acceptance rate of order and other information are shown in their pages. Hosts who open personal pages share more details about themselves with guests such as gender, age, constellation, hometown, education background and so on. Examples of two kinds of pages are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Journal:10 TheNumber of houses: 12Reviews: 196Orders: 482

我的同事们

短租日记 [10篇] 房源信息 [12个可预订] 房客点评 [196个点评] 预订历史 [482个订单]

**我可爱的房客们！圣诞快乐！！**

近几年圣诞节的气氛越来越浓厚了，我们的圣诞节该怎么过呢？那就来送点小惊喜吧！一起来看看我可爱的房客们吧！第一家，推开门的一刹那，小伙伴们就看呆了，四个长腿大美女在沙发上促膝而坐，喝着红酒看着电影喝着零食，好一幅“美女观影图”哦！哈哈！节日气氛很浓郁哦！要不是还得“赶场子”，一定要留下来喝两杯呢！房间因为有了你们显... [更多](#)

设计师之家

实名认证 真实头像认证

性别：女  
年龄：80后  
星座：双鱼座  
生肖：蛇  
所在地：北京

Personal information  
Gender: female  
Age: after 80s  
Chinese Zodiac: snake  
City: Beijing  
Etc.

看 (33) | 评论 (1) | 赞 (4)

Figure 2.An example of host who opens personal page

该房东暂未开通房东主页，你要不然催他一下？（已有2人催促）

蓝加菲 Nickname

房源：当前可预订 1 在线的回复率：99%  
点评：总体好评率 暂无 平均确认时间：5分钟  
预订：共获得订单 215 订单的接受率：94.22%

Number of houses: 1 Response rate: 99%  
Reviews: general reputation Confirm time: 5 minutes  
Orders: 215 Acceptance of order: 94.22%

Figure 3.An example of host who does not open personal page

### 3.2 Data Collection and Variable Description

Our data consists of a snapshot of listings available in the city of Beijing on November 18, 2015. We crawled the price, general attributes of apartment and host information of two kinds of host pages. There are 1,345 hosts offering properties for rent in Beijing. Because the amount of hosts who only rent sofa or bed is very small, we mainly study whole apartment and single room. The host number of these two types is 1,304, and 222 hosts open personal pages, only accounting for 14.55%. Table 1 presents main variables in our research.

**Table 1. Variable description**

	Dimensionality	Code	Explanation
Independent variable	Product's attributes	Price	Price of room or house
		District	Divided by location of the house
	Benevolence trustworthiness	Response_Rate	Host's average response rate
		Confirm_Time	Host's average confirm time
	Ability trustworthiness	Accept_Rate	Host's acceptance rate of order
		House_Num	Number of houses host owns
	Integrity trustworthiness	Has_Page	Host open personal page or not
Trustworthiness	Gender	Gender of host	
Dependent variable		Order	Orders that hosts receive

## 4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

### 4.1 The Effects of Host's Attributes on Order

In this part, we investigate the influence of host's attributes on orders and control house's attributes such as price and district. In general, consumers may firstly choose house type according to the number of people going together, and then take other factors into consideration. That is to say, choice of house type represents consumer's different requirement. Price is also significantly different within the two types. Thus we separately investigate types of whole apartment and single room.

#### 4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics and Regression Model

We contend that guests probably take location into consideration for the convenience of transportation when they choose one dwelling. As one of product's attributes, location can have an influence on order. Therefore we control this variable and simply divide the dwelling into two kinds - urban and suburban according to their location. Districts within the Fifth Ring Road of Beijing are defined as urban, others being suburban. There are 1,029 properties belonging to urban, accounting for 78.9%, and the rest belong to suburban. Table 2 presents the summary statistics of other continuous variables.

**Table 2. Summary statistics**

	Whole Apartment				Single Room			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Order	53.44	111.08	0	1213	47.89	111.37	0	1364
Price	499.7	526.90	85	6588	167.1	73.31	35	780
Response_Rate	0.84	0.26	0.00	1.00	0.81	0.31	0.00	1.00
Confirm_Time	11.06	37.94	0	664	8.76	21.78	0	354
Accept_Rate	0.69	0.35	0.00	1.00	0.61	0.38	0.00	1.00
House_Num	2.59	3.32	1	32	2.23	3.59	1	49
N	673				631			

In order to verify whether host's attributes have impacts on order, we use OLS regression method to explore the relationship between them and control price as well as district in the meantime. In this model, the dependent variable is host's order, and independent variables include average response rate, confirm time, acceptance rate of order, the number of host owns and whether host opens personal page. Regression model is shown in Equation 1, wherein the number of price and order both with skewed normal distribution are taken the log of 10.

$$= \beta_0 + \beta_1 + \beta_2 \text{District} + \beta_3 \text{Response\_Rate} + \beta_4 \text{Confirm\_Time} + \beta_5 \text{Accept\_Rate} + \beta_6 \text{House\_Num} + \beta_7 \text{Has\_Page} + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

#### 4.1.2 Main Results

The regression results of whole apartment and single room are respectively shown in Table 3 and Table 4. We add variables gradually by 4 steps and find that except confirm time, other variables all have significant effects on orders in both types of whole apartment and single room.

**Table 3. The regression result of whole apartment**

Dependent variable: Order				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Price	-0.3516***	-0.3163***	-0.2529**	-0.2425**
	(0.0996)	(0.0926)	(0.0791)	(0.0777)
District	0.3342***	0.2907***	0.1900***	0.1787***
	(0.0676)	(0.0630)	(0.0539)	(0.0530)
Response_Rate		0.9978***	0.3131**	0.2673**
		(0.0983)	(0.1000)	(0.0986)
Confirm_Time		-0.0013 <sup>+</sup>	-0.0010 <sup>+</sup>	-0.0009 <sup>+</sup>
		(0.0007)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)
Accept_Rate			0.8582***	0.8324***
			(0.0760)	(0.0748)
House_Num			0.0717***	0.0681***
			(0.0067)	(0.0066)
Has_Page				0.3122***
				(0.0614)
(Constant)	1.8097***	0.9331***	0.6430**	0.6417**
	(0.2667)	(0.2629)	(0.2244)	(0.2204)
F	19.27***	37.95***	78.44***	73.44***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0544	0.1852	0.4141	0.4360
Adj- R <sup>2</sup>	0.0516	0.1803	0.4088	0.4301

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

<sup>+</sup> $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

In Table 3, column 2 shows the house's attributes - price and district have significant influence on order. The higher the price is, the fewer orders the host receives, which conforms to market rules. Properties in urban areas obviously receive more orders than those in the suburb. Then controlling price and district, column 3 presents that response rate has a significantly positive influence on order, while confirm time has a significantly negative effect at the 0.1 level. It means that higher response rate and shorter confirm time can earn more orders, but the influence of confirm time seems not that significant. When variables representing host's ability trustworthiness are added to the model, the coefficient of response rate descends, while acceptance rate of order and the number of houses one host owns all have a significantly positive effect on order, as shown in column 4. The two variables reflect host's ability to offer enough rooms and accept orders, which make consumers perceive his or her reliability and trustworthiness. It is also easy to see that ability trustworthiness plays a key role from the change of Adj-R<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, we argue that the more information is provided for consumers by hosts, the more trustworthy consumers will feel through host's integrity to display more real information<sup>[16]</sup>. So we add another independent variable - has host page or not - to test if hosts who open personal pages have more orders than those who do not. Column 5 proves our hypothesis.

**Table 4. The regression result of single room**

Dependent variable: Order				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Price	-0.7088***	-0.2507	-0.1734	-0.1924
	(0.1934)	(0.1754)	(0.1459)	(0.1390)
District	0.2998***	0.1734*	0.1339*	0.1536**
	(0.0766)	(0.0687)	(0.0572)	(0.0545)
Response_Rate		1.1487***	0.3604***	0.3766***
		(0.0870)	(0.0896)	(0.0854)
Confirm_Time		-0.0014	0.0002	0.0003
		(0.0012)	(0.0010)	(0.0010)
Accept_Rate			0.9776***	0.8550***
			(0.0723)	(0.0706)
House_Num			0.0498***	0.0446***
			(0.0061)	(0.0059)
Has_Page				0.4372***
				(0.0548)
(Constant)	2.4146***	0.5951	0.3703	0.3867
	(0.4084)	(0.3874)	(0.3221)	(0.3070)
F	10.78***	50.49***	95.05***	99.74***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0334	0.2448	0.4813	0.5297
Adj- R <sup>2</sup>	0.0303	0.2399	0.4763	0.5243

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

We can get similar results of single room from Table 4, except that confirm time is not significant. Although the maximum of the average confirm time is 354 minutes, further analysis suggests that the null effect of confirm time results from the lack of variance of numerical value in the data - 90% of the numbers are less than 16 minutes, which may not make that difference for guests. This also explains why it is not so significant for whole apartment type. Social presence and interactions between traders contribute to building mutual trust in electronic commerce<sup>[25], [26]</sup>. Consumers could feel social presence through sufficient interactions with hosts, and perceive benevolence if hosts can reply and confirm their order timely. Benevolence is proven to help trust building<sup>[16]</sup>, as a result increasing sales further. Above all, both two regressions get good fitting results (whole apartment:  $\text{Adj-R}^2 = 0.4301$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; single room:  $\text{Adj-R}^2 = 0.5243$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), proving that host's attributes truly have a significant influence on consumer's purchasing behavior.

## 4.2 The Influence of Gender

Ert et al. found experiment participants prefer women to men as hosts<sup>[15]</sup>. But they argue that further studies should investigate the robustness of gender choice. In many other fields, gender is usually found to act as an influencing factor because of the natural difference between men and women. Thus we wonder whether gender will affect consumer's choice in sharing economy, especially in short term rental marketplace.

### 4.2.1 Main Results

Almost every host who opens personal page shows gender and other information at the page (see Figure 2). As for those who do not open, gender can be identified from host's portrait (see Figure 3). However, in xiaozhu.com, not all hosts take their personal photos as head portraits. We add gender into the model talked



about in section 4.1, and successively employ different data (namely all data, data of hosts who open and do not open personal pages) to test the robustness of the results. Another reason of why we separately study the latter two types is that we wonder whether there exists difference between them. Regression result is shown in Table 5 and gender is found to be all significant in situation of single rooms.

**Table 5. Regression result of that gender is added into the model**

Dependent variable: Order						
	All hosts		Hosts without pages		Hosts with pages	
	Whole apartment	Single room	Whole apartment	Single room	Whole apartment	Single room
Price	-0.2440** (0.0778)	-0.2055 (0.1387)	-0.2745*** (0.0829)	-0.3016* (0.1463)	0.0122 (0.2211)	0.2916 (0.3751)
District	0.1794*** (0.0530)	0.1546** (0.0544)	0.1419* (0.0570)	0.1485* (0.0593)	0.4349** (0.1437)	0.2255+ (0.1243)
Response_Rate	0.2687** (0.0987)	0.3829*** (0.0852)	0.3005** (0.1016)	0.3287*** (0.0861)	-0.2379 (0.4801)	0.5209 (0.3722)
Confirm_Time	-0.0009 (0.0006)	0.0002 (0.0010)	-0.0008 (0.0006)	0.0009 (0.0010)	-0.0067 (0.0057)	-0.0060+ (0.0032)
Accept_Rate	0.8312*** (0.0749)	0.8433*** (0.0705)	0.7959*** (0.0785)	0.8587*** (0.0711)	1.0966*** (0.3062)	0.7360* (0.3696)
House_Num	0.0682*** (0.0066)	0.0450*** (0.0058)	0.0739*** (0.0079)	0.0525*** (0.0073)	0.0569*** (0.0103)	0.0289** (0.0092)
Gender	0.0158 (0.0443)	-0.0947* (0.0421)	0.0487 (0.0487)	-0.0919* (0.0460)	-0.2012+ (0.1041)	-0.2276* (0.0925)
Has_Page	0.3099*** (0.0618)	0.4380*** (0.0546)				
(Constant)	0.6380** (0.2207)	0.4534 (0.3074)	0.7153** (0.2346)	0.6792* (0.3257)	0.5319 (0.7091)	-0.0932 (0.8460)
F	64.19***	88.48***	53.31***	68.04***	10.26***	10.73***
R2	0.4361	0.5335	0.3986	0.4859	0.4304	0.3889
Adj- R2	0.4293	0.5275	0.3911	0.4787	0.3885	0.3527

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. + $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

In Table 5, column 2 presents that gender fails to pass the test of significance and adjusted R square decreases when compared with the last column of Table 3, which means that gender does not affect consumer's decision when he or she chooses a whole apartment. However, column 3 shows that gender has a negative effect on order in the situation of single rooms. We consider that consumers who choose a whole apartment can possess the property and do not live with others. What's more, they probably travel with family or friends, which weakens the sense of insecurity to some extent. While choosing a single room, consumers may share the house with totally unfamiliar hosts even with other guests. Some researchers found that female clients hold more trustworthiness than male from auditors' discussion<sup>[27]</sup> and women are more trustworthy than men in certain conditions<sup>[24]</sup>. When taking security and trustworthiness into consideration, gender may play a role in affecting guest's choice, especially living with strangers under one roof.

Then we respectively investigate other two situations - hosts with personal page and without personal page, to test the robustness of gender findings. Column 4 and 5 present consistent results compared with column 2 and 3. Consumers prefer female hosts on condition that they choose the single room, but gender does not exert a

significant influence on order when consumers choose the whole apartment. As for situation of hosts opening personal pages, gender is found to have a negative effect on order both in column 6 and 7, which means that female hosts are preferred in all conditions. Moreover, the absolute value of coefficient  $\beta$  (gender) is relatively larger compared with column 2 to 5. In host's personal page (see Figure 2), gender information is explicitly displayed in the form of characters. We suppose that it may remind consumers to think about gender anterior to or together with other attributes, such as age and education, which may play a more significant effect on consumer's purchasing behavior. Brownlow demonstrated that female spokesperson especially with baby-face brings more purchasing amount than male, and the explanation of this interesting outcome is that women are regarded as high quality and trustworthy product users<sup>[28]</sup>. The major consumers of xiaozhu.com are young people, most of whom are probably students or young workers, and they may prefer female hosts with similar age.

#### 4.2.2 Further Discussion

After the research of gender effect, we make a further-test through Wechat to explore what gender people will choose in the world. We ask them "Suppose that you are going to Taiwan for travel with one friend, and you happen to get one chance to book one dwelling for free. There are four houses with almost the same size, facilities, location and so on. House A's host is a woman, B is a man, C is a couple and D is unknown. Which one will you choose?" At last, there are 150 respondents answer this question. The further-test result is shown in Table 6. The reason why we only set one question and add the option of couple is that we do not want to show our intention explicitly and try to let respondent choose without suggestive disturbance. Finally, we get a pleasant reply – almost everyone regards it as a psychological test.

**Table 6. Further-test result**

	Host(Male)	Host(Female)	Couple	Unknown	Sum
Male	11(15%)	26(36%)	28(39%)	7(10%)	72(100%)
Female	5(6%)	29(37%)	42(54%)	2(3%)	78(100%)
Sum	16(10%)	55(37%)	70(47%)	9(6%)	150(100%)

Note: corresponding percentages are reported in parentheses.

Table 6 presents that both of male and female respondents are likely to choose couple than other options. Comparing female hosts with male hosts, the former is preferred obviously. What's more, we ask those respondents who choose the couple option another question "If you must choose from option A and B, what is your choice?" About 76% of them prefer female hosts yet. Above all, we come up with a conclusion from our further-test that people are more likely to choose female hosts. However, Table 4 and Table 5 present that gender affects consumer's purchasing decision, but it is significant at the 0.05 or 0.1 level, which seems that there exists some of the gap compared with further-test.

We consider that, we directly let respondents choose without other questions in further-test, invisibly magnifying the influence of gender. While from data in xiaozhu.com, it presents the behavior of macroscopic emergence. Which influencing factor ranks in the top during the decision-making process varies from person to person, and gender may also exert an effect interacting with other attributes. So it is normal to find some subtle difference between two results.

We also interview some further-test respondents. Most of them think that couple hosts are most trustworthy, and female hosts rank second. When considering personal safety, they prefer to trust female hosts. Therefore, we argue that gender acts as an influencing factor during consumer's decision process, and female hosts are preferred to some extent. Reasons of this phenomenon must be various and complicated, which should be further studied, but it is beyond the scope of this work.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Trust is the cornerstone of stable development for sharing economy. Only when consumers perceive seller's reliability and trustworthiness will they choose them<sup>[10]-[12]</sup>. In traditional C2C marketplaces, consumers can build trust depending on seller's reputation, such as online reviews and rating scores. However, reputation mechanism is not found useful enough in sharing economy since review ratings lack of variance<sup>[5]</sup> and the same situation occurs in xiaozhu.com. Except product's attributes and reputation, we contend that host's attributes must become an integral part in sharing economy platforms.

We conducted an empirical study to assess the influence of host's attributes on consumer's purchasing behavior in xiaozhu.com meanwhile accounting for product's attributes (price and location of the house). Since house type may be taken into consideration prior to other factors during consumer's decision making process and there exists difference between whole apartment and single room, thus we separately study them.

Response rate representing benevolence trustworthiness has a significantly positive influence on orders, while average confirm time is not significant in single rooms. Further analysis suggests that almost 90% of the values are less than 16 minutes, which may not make that difference for guests. What's more, acceptance rate of order and the number of houses representing host's ability trustworthiness also have a significantly positive effect on orders. In addition, hosts who open personal page can show integrity trustworthiness and earn more orders than those who do not. At last, motivated by previous research results<sup>[15]</sup>, we attempt to study the effect of gender on orders. According to our data analysis and further-test result, we argue that consumers prefer to choose female hosts and gender acts as an influencing factor in consumer's decision process.

The results of this study emphasize the importance of service-provider's attributes in sharing economy, which can contribute to trust building and decision making. Specifically, service-providers are suggested to improve their performance (such as reply and accept timely) and share more personal information (open personal page) to gain trust from consumers. Therefore, these findings make a great help for the improvement of short rental market, which can be also applied into other sharing economy domains.

It also shows that further studies should be conducted to investigate the mechanism of trust building in the booming sharing economy. Both of product's attributes and service-provider's attributes play key roles in consumer's choices. What other factors contribute more to trust building are still needed to be investigated. In future work, we will test our conclusions in more cities, countries even different platforms, and other service-provider's attributes will be taken into consideration. Moreover, it is interesting to keep studying the robustness of gender finding as well as reasons for its occurrence.

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