

What makes Airbnb likeable?

Exploring the nexus between service attractiveness, country image, perceived authenticity and experience from a social exchange theory perspective within an emerging economy context

Abstract

As a result of the growth of the notions of collaborative consumption and sharing economy in the tourism industry, this paper applies social exchange theory to investigate how the Airbnb platform influences the Airbnb experience and authenticity, which might lead consumers to like Airbnb and influence their behavioural patterns. By recruiting 466 tourists who had stayed in Airbnb accommodation in Istanbul, Turkey via travel-related Telegram, Twitter, travel blogs, and Facebook groups, this study revealed the importance of the platform and its features in enhancing service attractiveness, perceived authenticity and experience.

Furthermore, the results revealed that visitors' experiences have an influence on Airbnb likability, where Airbnb likability influences their intention to re-visit and to recommend. Significant implications for tourism planning, management and researchers are highlighted.

Keywords: Airbnb; sharing economy; social exchange theory; Airbnb experience; perceived authenticity; county image.

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1. Introduction

The rise of the collaborative consumption platform coincides with the economic stagnation in 2008 (Ivanova, 2017; Yakin et al., 2017), thereby the increasing rate of the usage and integration of sharing economy practices into consumers' consumption activities has linked with some stimulating factors such as low costs due to the usage of information technologies (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016). The growing interest on the sharing economy and P2P platforms has led to a plethora of studies investigating peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms from the context of pricing and regulation (Chen and Xie, 2017), market characteristics (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016), customer value (Guttentag, 2015) and the impact on tourism (Bie et al., 2018) and economic benefits (Ivanova, 2017).

The literature urged to investigate the characteristics of individuals preferring P2P platforms, (Tussyadiah, 2015), the rationale of consumers choosing these marketplaces (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016), potential impacts of P2P platforms in the hospitality and tourism industry (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016), and factors contributing 'experience' in P2P platform contexts (Guttentag, 2013; Lalicic and Weismeyer, 2017). Defining itself as an online peer-to-peer platform, Airbnb allows individuals to access many accommodation types, with a mission of delivering unique travel experiences and a sense of belonging by allowing them to connect to local cultures via the accommodation they can choose (Airbnb, 2018). Yet, there is no evidence investigating whether and how the Airbnb platform influences the Airbnb experience of consumers and authenticity perceived by consumers, whether it might lead consumers to 'like' Airbnb and influence their behavioural patterns. Although the motivational elements underlying the consumers' use of online platforms and its consequences have not been thoroughly investigated and the question of '*what makes Airbnb likable*' remains unanswered, two exceptions, Guttentag (2013) and Tussyadiah (2015) argue that the experiential value of P2P platforms and the social interaction could be the reasons that motivate consumers to use them.

Since its foundation in 2008, Airbnb accommodations hosted 500 million guests by the end of the first quarter of 2019 (Airbnb, 2019) as such, it has been reported that Airbnb has succeeded to reach four million check in on one day- nominated as the highest number of check in for one day in their 11-year story (Burke, 2019). Another striking information is that Airbnb guests have a tendency to stay longer than hotel guests. As such, Airbnb guests spend

6.4 days on average comparing to hotel guests where they spend 3.9 nights in New York; 3.9 nights on average whereas hotel guests spend 1.9 nights on average in Amsterdam (Airbnb blog, 2019). Not surprisingly looking to the other locations such as London (4.6 nights versus 3.1 nights), Berlin (6.3 nights versus 2.3 nights) and San Francisco (5.5 days versus 3.5 days), it can be seen that the traveller's intention to spend more nights on Airbnb accommodations stay same.

Having considered that Airbnb and hospitality industry have two distinctive business model of Airbnb and hotel might be misleading after Zervas et al.'s (2017) baseline findings indicate that 1% increase in Airbnb listing resulted 0.05% decrease in hotel revenues located in Texas as well as Guttentag and Smith's (2017) study indicating that consumers choose Airbnb as a substitute to various types of accommodation. Even though the empirical evidence does not provide a solid and certain basis (Benitez-Aurioles, 2019) of being disruptive (Mody et al., 2017), inclined habit of consumers using Airbnb and their tendency to stay longer comparing the traditional accommodations has been evident, especially considering Airbnb is facing tax issues (Guttentag, 2018), or unstable health and safety standards (Elliott, 2016).

We argue that by underpinning the social exchange theory, service attractiveness, perceived authenticity and Airbnb experience are influenced by consumers' interaction of Airbnb platform, where it is Airbnb website and in turn lead consumers to have an intention to revisit and recommend the Airbnb platform. This study has chosen Istanbul, Turkey as the research context. As a relatively new market compared to other countries, Airbnb launched its operations in Istanbul in 2012 and became one of the fastest growing markets comparing other countries in Europe (Ftn News, 2012). Choosing both a developing market and a city trying to preserve its sustainable growth in tourism (Alkin, 2017), rather than a market already provided with market penetration, can be worthwhile for understanding the potential impacts of Airbnb, transforming profiles regarding accommodation preferences, and demands coming from tourists.

We also argue that the country image and the perceived value in Airbnb of consumers are two factors need to be considered on the relationship between perceived authenticity, Airbnb experience and Airbnb likability. Given the changing dynamics in the hospitality industry, traditional organisations (hotels, lodges, etc.) face relentless business challenges with each

other, but now they are also in competition with sharing economy figures, such as Airbnb (Mody and Hanks, 2018). Understanding the driving factors and motivations underlying the Airbnb likability can be worthwhile for P2P platforms to create sustainability in the sharing economy. This study aims to provide insights to traditional hospitality figures for understanding motivations of consumers' preferences for using P2P platforms, force them to rethink the new business frameworks and the trends to be a guideline in their future tourism and marketing efforts.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Social exchange theory & Airbnb website

We focus on Airbnb and to fully comprehend the notion of the sharing economy and its modern way of social interaction, social exchange theory has been adopted (Kim et al., 2015; Priporas et al., 2017). Social exchange theory proposes social behaviour “as the result of an exchange process” (Priporas et al., 2017, p. 2282). The reason of adopting social exchange theory is to explain an interaction information system such as P2P platforms and to explain the motivation and the driving actors in engaging the state of exchange (Kim et al., 2015).

Website design elements including information, navigation, visual elements, and credibility are the significant characteristics influencing consumers' purchasing decisions (Bilgihan and Bujisic, 2015). Websites are the new intermediaries between consumers and places in the tourism industry, to provide information, enable consumers to be aware of their destination, and influence their decision-making process, which leads them to have positive responses (Foroudi et al., 2018). Airbnb maintains and delivers its services through its website, including payment, direct interaction with the host (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016), and connection with local communities (Guttentag, 2013). Service attractiveness can be influenced by the design of the servicescape within the online P2P accommodation platform, and it can indicate where consumers can reach the services (King et al., 2016; Van Doorn et al., 2017). Ert et al. (2016), propose that “services are intangible experienced goods and, as such, their quality cannot be verified before they are consumed” (p. 63). We argue that, for consumers who have used Airbnb platforms, website can be considered as the first touchpoint and the first interaction, where it provides Airbnb users an attractive service, ‘experience’ and ‘authenticity’ as positive behavioural outcomes. It is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 1: Airbnb website positively influences (a) service attractiveness, (b) perceived authenticity and (c) Airbnb experience

2.2. Service attractiveness

Service attractiveness is the major component needs to be investigated in the online marketplaces (King et al., 2016). The reason is that sharing economy platforms allow individuals to have online transactions, and service has become an inseparable part of their experiences (Dredge and Gyimothy, 2015); in the absence of service attractiveness, “customers are unlikely to be motivated to associate with a service” (Van Doorn et al., 2017, p. 49). Airbnb website is the only source where consumers access its platform and its services (Gallarza et al., 2002; Govers et al., 2007). We argue that service attractiveness leads consumers to have a positive experience and have an 'authentic perception', since experience and authenticity are two important factors that travellers and tourists have started to seek in the collaborative consumption settings (Lalicic and Weismeyer, 2017; Tussyadiah, 2015). Service attractiveness has also nominated the vital factor for online P2P platforms to have success in the changing consumers' perception and influence their decisions (Kim et al., 2009). We hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2: Service attractiveness positively influences (a) Airbnb experience and (b) perceived authenticity

2.3. Perceived authenticity

The main reasons for Airbnb and its increasing trend against traditional accommodation alternatives are claimed to be its way of delivering ‘authentic perception’ to consumers, and its ‘Airbnb experience’ being delivered to its consumers (Lalicic and Weismeyer, 2017; Mody and Hanks, 2018). From the tourism perspective, authenticity refers to the level of enjoyment of the tourists and the genuine experiences perceived by tourists (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010). Authenticity can refer to many different components that can influence the tourist experience, such as atmosphere, service, the historical places, architectural designs and landscapes (Hughes, 1995; Richardson and Fluker, 2004). The marketing domain indicates the importance of authenticity in different contexts, such as advertising and branding (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010), revealing that authenticity is an integral concept which plays a significant role in changing consumer perception and leads consumers to have positive responses.

There is a need for better understanding of what leads consumers to have authentic perception became a focus of interest because "the increasing need for tourists to experience epistemic values, for example, through the use of peer-to-peer accommodations, becomes an interesting field of research" (Lalicic and Weismayer, 2017, p. 782). We argue that having a social interaction between host and consumers, the attractive service or the idea of belonging to a community through the Airbnb platform might lead consumers to have perceived authenticity which may lead consumers to have a positive Airbnb experience and makes Airbnb likeable. It is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived authenticity positively influences (a) Airbnb likability and (b) Airbnb experience

2.4. Airbnb experience

The experience became more critical than ever with its power to differentiate a brand, service or a product itself from its competitors. Despite Airbnb's proposition of having the core value of creating an experience, information from the hospitality and tourism industry is scant regarding the drivers and motivations of experience and its outcomes (Mody and Hanks, 2018). Experience has been well-known concept for its positive impact on loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009), and customers' feelings (Grace and O'Cass, 2004). Even though the concept of likeability becomes more important for the firms to understand consumers' perception and allow organisations to be successful by maintaining their customers and leading them to re-purchase the brand or services, little attention has been received from scholars to understand what makes a brand or service likeable.

There is a need for understanding what makes collaborative consumption likeable - both for sustainability of the sharing economy and helping the traditional organisations to understand the insights of consumers' preferences and their reasons. As such, they are able to interact with consumers individually (Nguyen et al., 2013), web communities can provide opportunities for a more engaging experience, better service (Simonson, 2005) and more intimate relationships (Dibb and Simkin, 2009) whereby "services, communication, and personalised experiences can become more and more likeable, managers must not only understand their consumers' perceptions" (Nguyen et al., 2013, p. 371). It is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4: Airbnb experience positively influences Airbnb likability

2.5. *Perceived value in Airbnb*

To contribute an enhanced understanding on tourist behaviour and preferences, it is suggested investigating characteristics of travellers such as socio-demographic variables, personal characteristics or destination-related characteristics (Lang et al., 1997; Um and Crompton, 1990). It is not wise to consider Airbnb services as ‘standardised’ since the services are versatile, and each accommodation service is completely different from others. Therefore, the experience and authenticity fully depend on the travellers’ characteristics and feelings since they can choose the way in which they want to experience the Airbnb platform (Mao and Lyu, 2017). While forming the Airbnb experience, there might be some drivers and motivations belonging to the tourists, which enhance the tourists' Airbnb experience and leads them to positive behavioural outcomes (Guttentag, 2015). The increasing number of users and more than 140 million guests within a decade which continues to rise (Airbnb, 2018) shows a shift in consumer preferences, we argue that it might be due to increasing the perceived value of Airbnb for its users.

Perceived value has long been recognized in the tourism industry (Petrick, 2004) and highlighted as the crucial element in tourism research (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). We argue that perceived value can be useful for sharing economy figures “to cater experiences to their various markets in a way to maximise perceptions of value and inevitably future purchase behaviours” (Petrick, 2004, p. 29). We propose perceived authenticity should influence the Airbnb experience of consumers differently when people have high or low levels of perceived value in Airbnb. Few exceptional studies have revealed that perceived value has a positive influence on consumer attitude (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008), and tourism experience (Shen, 2016). Since tourists’ perceived value is the sum of cost and benefits perceived by the consumer (Morgan, 2006), we argue that it might have an influence on their experience. Chen and Chen (2010)’s study revealed that perceived value has a positive and direct influence on satisfaction and behavioural intention. We argue that consumers who have higher perceived value of Airbnb are likely to have a stronger connection between their perceived authenticity and the Airbnb experience. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 5: Perceived value in Airbnb positively influences the relationship between perceived authenticity and the Airbnb experience, such that there will be a positive

relationship between perceived authenticity and the Airbnb experience when only perceived value in Airbnb is high rather than low.

2.6. Country image

Country image is a cumulation of cognitive and affective evaluation of a country, where the total impression can be held by an individual for a given country (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). It has long been recognised that the positive image formation of a destination holds crucial importance in the fierce competition in tourism at national and international levels, where positive image formation influences destination choice decisions (Milman and Pizam, 1995; WTO, 1979). Positive image formation can be favourable for destination marketing organisations (DMO's) to execute the effective marketing promotions to the whole of the tourism industry.

The importance of country image has not gained much attention in respect of developing countries in the context of the tourism industry (Kirylyuk and Glinska, 2015). This study focuses on Istanbul, Turkey as the empirical context to examine the influence of Turkey's country image on international tourists who have used Airbnb in Istanbul. Investigating developing countries and emerging tourist destinations provide a guidance to these countries for increasing their market share in the international tourism industry to develop efficient marketing strategies (Sonmez and Sarikaya, 2002). Scrutiny of the literature highlights that country image to be an important predictor of destination perceptions and evaluations of a country, or destination (Elliot et al., 2010; Martinez and Alvarez, 2010). We argued that the way perceived value and Airbnb experience influence on Airbnb likability can be evaluated by tourists in different ways according to different levels of country image held by tourists. It is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 6: Country image positively influences (a) the relationship between Airbnb experience and Airbnb likability and (b) the relationship between perceived authenticity and Airbnb likability, such that there will be a positive relationship between (a) Airbnb experience and Airbnb likability and (b) perceived authenticity and Airbnb likability when only country image is high rather than low.

2.7. *Airbnb likability*

Whereas the concept of likeability has also been studied in the context of advertising in the marketing field, likeability is much more of a psychological concept which can occur as a reaction to the brand, price, company or even marketing strategies (Nguyen et al., 2013). As a result of the consumer's reaction, if consumers find it attractive, or 'likeable', consumers tend to purchase the brand's product or services (Cialdini, 1993) However, if consumers tend to find the brand, product or its services not 'likeable' or dislike the brand, then consumers are generally reluctant to buy this particular brand's product or services (Nguyen et al., 2013).

According to Nguyen et al. (2013), "firms must understand issues related to likeability and clearly follow a path that emphasises likeability in order to become successful" (p. 371). In this vein, answering 'what makes Airbnb likeable' can contribute a further understanding to both the sharing economy and traditional organisations and can change their marketing efforts. In the marketing context, brand likeability is positively associated with purchase intention (Choi and Rifon, 2002). We argued that consumers who like Airbnb will have an intention to revisit Airbnb homes, and intention to recommend Airbnb. Thus, it is hypothesised:

Hypothesis 7: Airbnb likability positively influences (a) intention to revisit and (b) intention to recommend.

<<<Insert Figure 1 Here>>>

3. Methodology

3.1. *Sampling and data collection*

A questionnaire survey was conducted with individuals who had used Airbnb in the last year for scale purification and hypotheses investigation. The studies investigating the country image have been primarily focused on the USA and Europe, and when it comes to the sharing economy concept, there is a lack of understanding of the developing countries and emerging economies as well (Yakin et al., 2017). This study focused on Istanbul, Turkey, where Turkey is categorised as a developing country regarding its developing economy (UN Report, 2012) and tourism (Bramwell, 2004), and it is one of the most visited developing countries by

European travellers (Center for the Promotion of Imports, 2017). Rather than investigating a developed country and its markets where it has been gaining its stability, the potential markets with unprecedented opportunities might foster many sharing economy opportunities and allow traditional figures to reinforce their marketing strategies.

At the 100th meeting of the OECD's Tourism Committee, Turkey was ranked as 6th on the worldwide scale, according to the number of incoming tourists, as 36.8 million tourists generated 34.3 billion US dollars revenue and Turkey aims to receive 50 million tourists with a 50 billion US dollar revenue in the near future (Alkin, 2017). Turkey is trying to increase the income levels per tourists through diversity tourism in Turkey by implementing sharing economy figures into its tourism infrastructure and therefore strengthening and promoting sustainable tourism while contributing to the country's economy (Alkin, 2017). Airbnb is fairly new in Turkey, has only been used by a small proportion of the population, and has not been widely researched, the desired respondents exhibited various characteristics of a "hard-to-reach" population" (Guttentag et al., 2017, p. 4). An online non-random sampling technique was applied to gather respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The majority of respondents were recruited via travel-related Telegram, Twitter, travel blogs, and Facebook groups. An invitation message was sent to Airbnb hosts which asked them to invite their guests to help us by completing the questionnaire. Collecting the data from different sources was intended to diminish the research sample bias.

Measurements - for the research constructs were based on recognised scales from preceding studies, established to be statistically sound (Foroudi et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2006). All items are measured by employing a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. 20 to 25 minutes took for a respondent to complete the questionnaire. Prior to distribution of the questionnaire, this study followed the recommendations of Foroudi et al. (2018), and the item measurements were reviewed for face and content validity by 5 academics who are familiar with the topic.

4. Results and analysis

From 532 questionnaires distributed to the users of the website from May 2019 to July 2019, 466 usable questionnaires were returned and analysed. The majority of participants were female (65%), under 25 years old (36.9%) and have visited and used the website once (51.9%) or twice (26.6%). A high percentage of respondents were students (26.6%), and

21.2% were retired. 48.9% of the respondents held an undergraduate certificate. Table 1 reports the demographic profiles of the participants.

<<<Insert Table 1 Here>>>

To inspect the inter-relationships among a number of research variables and to describe the variables in terms of their common underlying factors, EFA (exploratory factor analysis) and reliability analyses using SPSS 21.0 were employed as an initial examination of their performance within the entire sample (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Initially, 66 measures of the eight proposed constructs were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. Table 2 reports the item loadings ranging from 0.737 through 0.961, which satisfy the minimum criteria for factor loadings and fit within the theoretical factor structures (Hair et al., 2006). The findings show that the Cronbach's alpha (0.861 through 0.968 > 0.70) for each were above the commonly accepted values, and items in each factor were internally consistent (Nunnally, 1978). Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy shows the appropriateness and accuracy of data collected, which was found to be 0.852, and Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) was significant (BTS=0.000 < 0.001) and satisfied the required criteria (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

To measure the internal consistency of the indicators, this study tested construct reliability or composite reliability as a congeneric assumption, presenting the extent to which they specify the common latent constructs. Composite reliability can be the better coefficient because it is based on a congeneric assumption and recommended a satisfactory level of reliability (Hair et al., 2006). Table 2 illustrates the measurement items, descriptive statistics and factor loadings, and Table 3 reports correlation matrix, reliability, and average extracted variance.

Following Harman's one-factor test, this study assessed common method variance (Lindell and Whitney, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) and used a chi-square difference between the original and fully constrained model which show the results are share a variance and statistically dissimilar. In addition, through the Mann-Whitney U-test, the possible non-response bias was examined by analysing the difference among early participants and late participants regarding the means of all the factors. The results show the significance value for any factors was not less than/or equal to a 0.5 probability-value, which is insignificant. So, there was no statistically major difference

among the early participants and late participants; hereafter, non-response bias was not a concern. next, the original findings of the model were verified without any deliberation of method-biases, and confirmatory factor analysis was recommended.

<<<Insert Table 2 Here>>>

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This study employed two-stage procedure (i) confirmatory factor analysis (CFI) and (ii) structural equation model (SEM), by using AMOS 21 (Analysis of Moment Structure). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to examine the associations among the set of measurement items in addition to their individual factors to assess discriminant validity (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Based on the stages, in a series of analyses, the relationships among each pair of latent variables was constrained to 1. The variance extracted for each construct was compared to the square of each off-diagonal value within the Phi-matrix for that construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), which recommends that each set of items signifies a distinct underlying concept.

In the second stage, the evaluation of the structural model is used to examine the hypothesised relationships. The model fit was evaluated for overall fitness by referring to the fit indices (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The CFI (the comparative fit index $.927 > .90$) indicates good fit and RMSEA (the root mean squared approximation of error $.061 < .08$) indicates acceptable fit and provide sufficient unique information to evaluate a model (Hair et al. 2006). The TLI (Tucker-Lewis index) and IFI (incremental fit index) were 0.922 and 0.927 respectively, > 0.90 , and each criterion of fit thus indicated that the proposed measurement model's fit was acceptable (Hair et al., 2006).

Based on the standardised parameter estimates, the values and the results of the path coefficient are illustrated in Table 4. To test the moderating effects of perceived value in Airbnb and country image, Table 5 illustrates the structural path results and models for the low-level and high-level effects of perceived value in Airbnb and country image on the hypothesised relationships, to compare the structural weights between models. The results indicate that the model and the hypothesised relationships between the constructs of interest can be considered satisfactory; ten out of thirteen hypotheses are supported.

<<<Insert Table 4 Here>>>

<<<Insert Table 5 Here>>>

The exceptions are H2b, H3a, and H5. H2b (service attractiveness → perceived authenticity) and H3a (perceived authenticity → Airbnb likability) are not found to be statistically significant therefore, both hypotheses are rejected. Perceived value in Airbnb on the path of perceived authenticity → Airbnb experience does not exist on the higher-level perceived value in Airbnb, therefore H5 is not supported.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicate that website, service attractiveness, and perceived authenticity are the key factors that contribute to building a positive Airbnb experience for the consumers, where the website has a positive influence on service attractiveness. Even though the research remains scarce in the tourism industry, the results were consistent with prior research in the marketing literature, indicating that website design has a positive impact on customer experience (Novak et al., 2000), and this is supported by Schnurr et al. (2017) where it was found that the visual contexts such as websites and advertisements influence consumers' perception of product attractiveness. We, therefore, argue that it might be a call for managers to rethink the tools and ways to create effective strategies for strengthening the website, as it is their interaction platforms and should be visually appealing, easy to use and navigate, updated with clear information, secure, credible, and convincing.

Service needs to be customer friendly, and responsiveness needs to be managed for the service attractiveness which leads consumers to have a positive experience. Even though the traditional providers may not provide the same website interaction with their consumers, they can create the same interaction with the social engagements via various web communities such as Twitter, blogs, Facebook or Instagram to interact with their consumers individually to lead them to have a positive 'experience'. Practitioners has emphasised the importance of the social engagement where it should be one of the most important marketing efforts that hotel industry should adopt (Balcuinas, 2017; Eversham, 2017), yet the empirical attempts

revealing the influence of website on Airbnb experience, its service attractiveness and authenticity remained scarce.

Whereas the website is found to influence perceived authenticity, service attractiveness does not have any influence on perceived authenticity. The reason might be related to what Ram et al. (2016) highlight about the concept of being ‘authentic’ with its characteristics of being “real, reliable, trustworthy, original...” (p. 111). Even though Airbnb’s website is a P2P accommodation platform, it can be considered unique with its visual design elements (e.g. pictures, graphics), original way of delivering information (e.g. navigation) and reliable way of being credible and convincing. It can lead consumers to perceive ‘authenticity’, in a modern sharing economy context by taking benefit from this particular collaborative consumption platform. On the other hand, it is possible that service attractiveness may not recall ‘authenticity’ perceived by consumers since the structure of almost all collaborative consumption settings promises the responsiveness by allowing consumers the interaction between host and guest (Tussyadiah, 2015), and customer service, no matter the context or the industry. Therefore, it could be reasonable that service attractiveness did not have any influence on perceived authenticity, since the service within itself is not original; it belongs to the concept of sharing economy platforms where consumers could see any sharing economy platforms easily. Another unexpected result is perceived authenticity does not influence Airbnb likeability. This result may be connected to the setting of the research: Istanbul, Turkey. Perceived authenticity relates to understanding local culture, experience of local life, authentic experience and interaction with the community. It is possible that tourists who stayed in Airbnb homes in Istanbul, Turkey, even though their perception of ‘authenticity’ leads them to have a positive Airbnb experience for the particular research setting, does not lead them to ‘like’ Airbnb in general.

The website and the service provided by Airbnb host-guest platform, are both of interest in research domains, but there is a lack of empirical research. The present study combines conceptual foundations and methodological approaches from tourism and marketing to contribute to the social exchange theory by constructing the study framework and model. According to Standing et al. (2014), “strategic competitive positioning of a destination requires a location to develop a distinctive and strong image so that it is differentiated from the competition” (p. 105). Even though the strategic importance of ‘image’ has been emphasised by scholars (Foroudi et al., 2018; Sonmez and Sarikaya, 2002), this study

empirically presents the importance and the effect of country image on one of the leading sharing economy practices: Airbnb.

The results indicated that the country image has a moderation effect on the path of Airbnb experience and Airbnb likability, and on the path of Airbnb perceived authenticity and likability, where it indicates the crucial importance of country image on Airbnb likeability. Even though perceived authenticity does not influence Airbnb likeability, with the moderation effect of the country image, perceived authenticity does influence Airbnb likability at the high-level. Country image has a high-level effect on the relationship between Airbnb experience and Airbnb likeability, which indicates that the country image formation enhances the experience that Airbnb consumers have in Istanbul, where it leads them to 'like Airbnb'. We argue that even though the concept of image is subjective (MacKay and Fesenmaier, 1997), providing an image that portrays a safe environment where consumers can experience local life and local culture, should be one of the active measures that the tourism industry needs in order to implement active tourism strategies for an enhanced image of a country.

It is essential to examine the social context and country where authenticity needs to reflect the local culture, local life and local community. Having a bottom-up approach to the authenticity without considering country image might be a failure and lead consumers have negative behavioural outcomes. Not only the sharing economy figures, DMO's (destination marketing organizations) and traditional accommodation providers also need to pay particular attention when they want to launch their services internationally and investigate the concept of 'authenticity', cultural context and country image, where it directly links with experience, likeability and positive behavioural outcomes such as intention to revisit and intention to recommend.

The findings indicate that Airbnb experience influences Airbnb likability where Airbnb likability is found to influence consumers' intention to visit Airbnb homes for their future holidays and recommend to others regarding Airbnb for their accommodation. Nguyen et al. (2013) state that in consumer-firm level activities, likeability occurs "when customers have positive associations/inferences towards a firm's activities – that is, when a positive motive is attributed to a firm, customers may find the firm likeable" (p. 781). Previous studies reveal that the 'unique' experience is one of the important motivations for consumers to prefer

Airbnb (Guttentag, 2015; Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). In the light of the findings, this study reveals a greater understanding on the motivations of preferring Airbnb and the motivations of intention to visit on their future travels and recommend it to others.

7. Implications, limitations and future study directions

By underpinning the social exchange theory, this research effort set out to answer the question of what makes Airbnb likeable by investigating the impact of the Airbnb platform (website) on service attractiveness, perceived authenticity, Airbnb experience and Airbnb likability, and in turn leads to the intention to revisit and intention to recommend. This study aims to investigate the influence of perceived value and country image on the relationship between perceived authenticity, Airbnb experience and Airbnb likability in Istanbul, Turkey. Turkey has positioned itself as a Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Balkan country where it is “the most significant main development axis of international tourism activities” (Alipour, 1996; p. 369).

Within the emerging sharing economy context, the collaborative consumption practices and have been investigated from perspectives of economic benefits (Denning, 2014), labour regulation (Teubner, 2014), and environment (Firnborn and Muller, 2011) but rarely investigated from the consumers’ perspectives (Tussyadiah, 2015). The findings propose the new line of the research by exploring the relationship between consumer-related variables and try to present the preliminary insights regarding the major drivers to lead consumers to ‘like’ Airbnb and lead them to use it for their future holidays. To date, such a framework has not been investigated in either marketing or in tourism literature.

There are some limitations for this study. Our aim is to be a guidance for the sharing economy practices for emerging and potential markets to integrate new collaboration consumption practices in favour of developing countries such as Turkey. As this study used consumers who stayed Airbnb previously in Istanbul, Turkey, the results will be different in other emerging economies and countries. By the time the data was collected, Airbnb was facing with the law regulations and new legislations in Turkey regarding the government taxes, therefore the results might be different if the data was collected now.

Future research should try to implement the conceptual framework in other emerging countries regarding the sharing economy context. To capture the phenomenon, different

research methods (e.g. qualitative, text mining) can be utilised. Since the sharing economy and its practices have not reached their full potential, and while prominent examples are launching in different industries and different countries, and the number of consumers using collaborative consumption platforms have been increasing gradually (Ert et al., 2016) such as health (e.g. HelpAround), food (e.g. The Food Assembly), and finance (e.g. Indiegogo) (Cohen and Kietzmann, 2014), there are still many issues and questions that the current research has not yet addressed such as the influence of host interactions, the effect of reviews on the Airbnb experience or social interactions of Airbnb. We have conducted our data before COVID19, which is the key limitation of this study. We recommend researchers to collect data during or after the pandemic and compare the results with our study.

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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

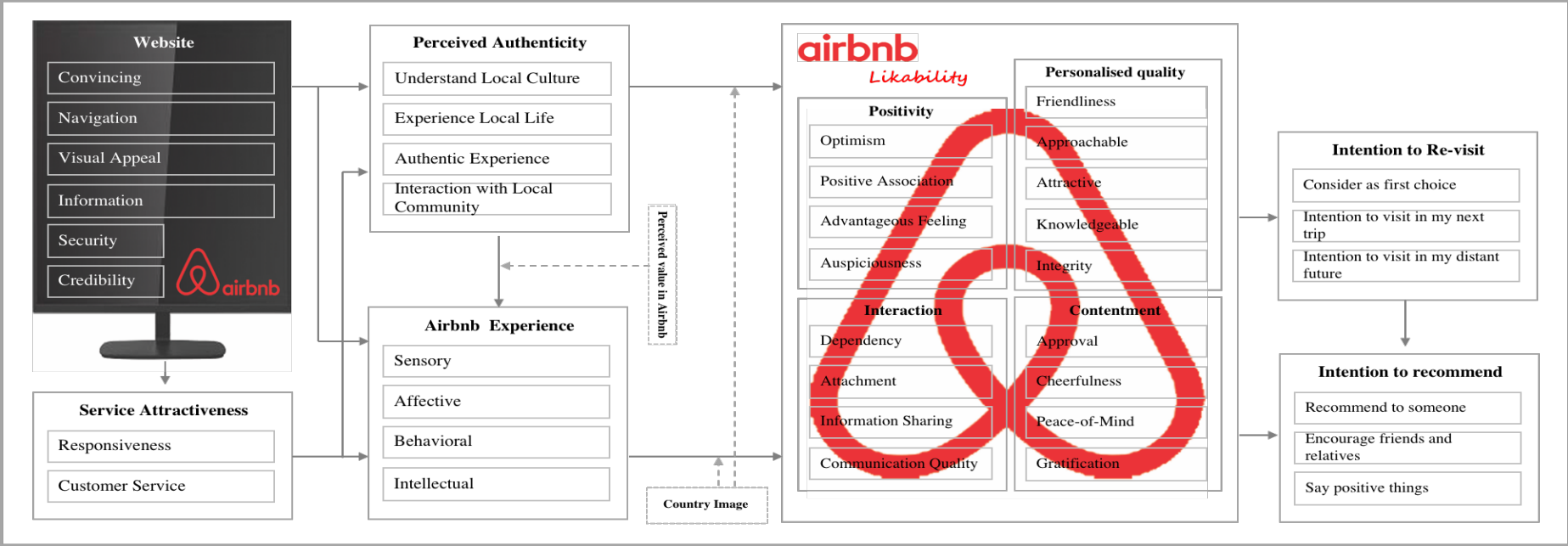


Table 1: Demographic profile (N=466)

		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
Visit				Employment			
	Once	242	51.9		Businessperson	18	3.9
	Twice	124	26.6		Lawyer, dentist or architect, etc.	13	2.8
	More than two times	100	21.5		Office/clerical staff	58	12.4
Gender					Worker	53	11.4
	Female	303	65.0		Civil servant	11	2.4
	Male	163	35.0		Craftsman	52	11.2
Age					Student	124	26.6
	under 25	172	36.9		Homemaker	16	3.4
	25-34	146	31.3		Retired	99	21.2
	35-44	91	19.5		Unemployed	22	4.7
	45-54	28	6.0				
	55-64	24	5.2				
	65 and over	5	1.1				
Degree							
	PhD	16	3.4				
	Postgraduate	85	18.2				
	Undergraduate	228	48.9				
	Pre-university	35	7.5				
	Diploma	22	4.7				
	High school or lower	80	17.2				

Table 2. Study constructs, scale items, mean, factor loadings and standard variation

Constructs and measurement items	Mean	SD	Factor loading	Adapted from
Airbnb website				
The website is convincing	5.4592	1.37389	.922	Cyr and Head (2013); Foroudi et al. (2018); Tarafdar and Zhang (2008); Kim and Fesenmaier (2008)
The website is easy to navigate	5.4442	1.45103	.908	
The website adequately meets my information needs	5.4506	1.42434	.845	
The website has provisions for secure transactions	5.4785	1.34747	.911	
The website is trustworthy	5.4850	1.40383	.900	
Service attractiveness				
<i>Responsiveness</i>				
Airbnb staff are helpful and courteous	5.4657	1.37407	.860	Ho et al. (2007)
Airbnb staff are eager to spend time with visitors	5.5429	1.37852	.892	
Airbnb staff makes visitor feel welcome	5.4249	1.46784	.879	
<i>Customer services</i>				
Airbnb staff are well-informed about costumes request	5.5987	1.31979	.894	
Airbnb has no restriction for visitors to explore	5.6652	1.35184	.899	
Airbnb has available staff when they are needed	5.7232	1.23679	.859	

Perceived authenticity				
Living in an Airbnb place represents local ways of life	4.8948	1.41105	.859	Ramkissoon and Uysal (2011)
An Airbnb place offers a feeling of real home for my trip.	4.9378	1.39984	.904	
Living in an Airbnb place represents the local community.	4.9764	1.42084	.910	
Living in an Airbnb place allows for interaction with the local community.	4.9034	1.44777	.857	
Airbnb experience				
<i>Sensory</i>				
Airbnb makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses	5.5021	1.49874	.812	Brakus et al. (2009)
I find Airbnb interesting in a sensory way	5.6588	1.48161	.863	
Airbnb does not appeal to my senses	5.4700	1.51273	.817	
Construct and measurement items	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
<i>Affective</i>				
Airbnb induces feelings and sentiments	5.3884	1.48012	.892	
I do not have strong emotions for Airbnb	5.4678	1.46795	.916	
Airbnb is an emotional brand	5.4185	1.51509	.889	
<i>Behavioural</i>				
I engage in physical actions	4.8906	1.58312	.872	

and behaviours when I use Airbnb				
Airbnb results in bodily experiences	5.0258	1.56692	.884	
Airbnb is not action oriented	4.9678	1.58115	.839	
<i>Intellectual</i>				
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter Airbnb	5.3176	1.61378	.853	
Airbnb does not make me think	5.3841	1.50429	.785	
Airbnb stimulates my curiosity and problem solving	5.3476	1.52941	.803	
Perceived value				
Airbnb places are reasonably priced	4.9893	1.50336	.844	
Airbnb places offer value for money	4.9378	1.50783	.868	Sweeney and Soutar (2001), Liang et al. (2017)
Living in an Airbnb place would help me make more friends.	4.9614	1.52210	.823	
Airbnb Likability				
<i>Positivity</i>				
I strongly believe that Airbnb can keep its promise to me.	5.5515	1.51924	.738	Nguyen et al. (2015)
I feel that I am favoured and given priority by Airbnb	5.4871	1.56055	.805	
I believe that Airbnb continues to get better and better.	5.5322	1.56577	.776	
<i>Interaction</i>				

I feel attached to this city.	5.5043	1.59063	.791	
This city openly shares information with me	5.6888	1.59021	.857	
I have continuous interaction with this city.	5.6910	1.57910	.824	
<i>Personified quality</i>				
I would describe this city as friendly.	5.5193	1.40378	.871	Nguyen et al. (2015)
I would say that this city is approachable	5.4056	1.51007	.903	
This city is very attractive.	5.3755	1.34986	.837	
<i>Contentment</i>				
Overall, I approve of this city.	5.3519	1.55078	.796	
I feel cheerful when visiting this city	5.4356	1.52016	.854	
This city takes care of everything for me	5.1052	1.56703	.841	
I am grateful for this city's offering of services.	5.4270	1.51126	.868	
Intention to Revisit				
I consider Airbnb as my first choice compared to other choices.	5.5322	1.57809	.860	
I have a strong intention to visit Airbnb in my next trip	5.5579	1.60573	.883	Assaker and Hallak (2015); Li (2014); Mattila (2001);
I have a strong intention to visit Airbnb in my distant future	5.4828	1.61069	.857	Maxham and Netemeyer (2002)

Intention to Recommend

I would say positive things about Airbnb to other people.	5.5730	1.51268	.937	Li (2014); Lee et al. (2012), Byon and Zjhang (2010), Mattila (2001)
I would recommend that someone stay at Airbnb	5.5429	1.56139	.911	

Country Image

This country is accessible	5.3734	1.49338	.908	Beerli and Martin (2004); Byon and Zhang (2010); Foroudi et al. (2018); Veasna et al. (2013)
This country has various and quality accommodation	5.4528	1.37681	.888	
This country is culturally diverse	5.4142	1.37963	.879	
This country offers historical (museums and/or art centres) and cultural events (festivals or concerts) and attractions	5.4227	1.40178	.928	

Table 3: Correlation matrix, reliability, and AVE

	WEB	SAR	SAC	PA	EXPS	EXPA	EXPB	EXPI	PVL	LIKP	LIKI	LIKPQ	LIKC	IRV	IRC	CIM
SAR	.235**															
SAC	.263**	.320**														
PA	.096*	-.059	-.001													
EXPS	.348**	.219**	.220**	.118**												
EXPA	.233**	.207**	.176**	.113**	.431**											
EXPB	.213**	.205**	.103*	.091*	.434**	.244**										
EXPI	.450**	.242**	.194**	.138**	.486**	.350**	.394**									
PVL	.031	.088*	.016	.223**	.311**	.214**	.334**	.174**								
LIKP	.122**	.232**	.270**	.123**	.328**	.194**	.266**	.216**	.250**							
LIKI	.180**	.027	.195**	.264**	.197**	.195**	.072	.202**	.254**	.418**						
LIKPQ	.120**	-.027	.039	.326**	.228**	.078*	.131**	.157**	.271**	.353**	.379**					
LIKC	.218**	.265**	.316**	.137**	.357**	.228**	.404**	.317**	.185**	.525**	.367**	.300**				
IRV	.343**	.317**	.319**	-.038	.260**	.249**	.274**	.333**	.234**	.352**	.226**	.086*	.362**			
IRC	.085*	.021	.143**	.048	.137**	.058	-.003	.095*	.291**	.273**	.362**	.122**	.116**	.155**		
CIM	.366**	.280**	.248**	0.032	.267**	.141**	.236**	.818**	.053	.193**	.192**	.102*	.310**	.322**	.129**	
Cronbach α	.968	.917	.925	.925	.919	.934	.923	.940	.880	.861	.890	.911	.946	.945	.967	.962
AVE	.897	.880	.885	.896	.859	.880	.859	.805	.534	.599	.681	.755	.719	.867	.938	.902
Cons. Reliability	.818	.725	.726	.780	.711	.729	.720	.707	.717	.699	.712	.723	.772	.722	.738	.783

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

WEB: Website, SAR: service responsiveness, SAC: service attractiveness/ customer service , PA: perceived authenticity, EXPS: Airbnb experience/ sensory; EXPA: Airbnb experience/ affective, EXPB: Airbnb experience/ behavioural ; EXPI: Airbnb experience/ intellectual; PVL: perceived value; LIKP: likeability/ positivity; LIKI: likeability/ interaction; LIKPQ: likeability/ personalised quality; LIKC: likeability/ contentment; IRV: intention to re-visit; IRC: intention to recommend; CIM: country image

Table 4: Results of hypothesis testing

Structural Path				Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
H1a	Website	→	Service Attractiveness	0.214	0.037	5.712	***	Supported
H1b			Perceived Authenticity	0.119	0.057	2.081	0.037	Supported
H1c			Airbnb Experience	0.202	0.061	3.298	***	Supported
H2a	Service Attractiveness	→	Airbnb Experience	0.94	0.213	4.412	***	Supported
H2b			Perceived Authenticity	-0.212	0.171	-1.237	0.216	Not supported
H3a	Perceived Authenticity	→	Likability	0.084	0.045	1.876	0.061	Not supported
H3b			Airbnb Experience	0.165	0.049	3.38	***	Supported
H4	Airbnb Experience	→	Likability	0.645	0.076	8.445	***	Supported
H7a	Likability	→	Intention to Re-visit	0.743	0.083	8.901	***	Supported
H7b			Intention to recommend	0.415	0.084	4.957	***	Supported

Table 5: Results of moderating effects

Moderation				Structural Path						Hypothesis		
Moderation (Perceived Value in Airbnb)				Effect	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	DF	CMIN	P	
H5	Perceived Authenticity	→	Airbnb Experience	Low level	0.393	0.093	4.217	***	48	120.981	0	Not supported (low level effect)
				High level	-0.063	0.05	-1.26	0.208				
Moderation (Country Image)												
H6a	Airbnb Experience	→	Likability	Low level	0.21	0.083	2.546	0.011	48	80.221	0.002	Supported (High level effect)
				High level	0.4	0.077	5.23	***				
H6b	Perceived Authenticity	→	Likability	Low level	-.020	.093	-.211	.833	48	137.654	.000	Supported (High level effect)
				High level	.148	.045	3.296	***				

