

A study of customer engagement, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among Airbnb users

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Abstract: Although Airbnb has captured the attention of many researchers, few studies have examined customer engagement. This study aims to investigate customer engagement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions among Airbnb users. A total of 374 Airbnb users were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk. Data analysis using structural equation modelling was conducted to determine the effects of customer engagement on satisfaction and behavioral intentions of Airbnb users. The results show that customer engagement plays a crucial role in Airbnb user experiences. Moreover, the mediating role of satisfaction was examined to better grasp the importance of customer engagement among Airbnb users.

Keyword: Airbnb, sharing economy, disruptive innovation, customer engagement, behavioral intentions

1. Introduction

Airbnb has become a disruptive innovation in the tourism and hospitality industry (Christensen *et al.*, 2015; Meged & Zillinger, 2018; Guttentag & Smith, 2017). More than 750 million travelers have used Airbnb since the home-sharing platform's founding in 2007 (Airbnb, 2020). By 2019, home listings on the Airbnb platform had surpassed 7 million (Airbnb), and its market valuation was approximately USD 35 billion (Schleifer, 2019). This shows Airbnb's impact on traditional lodging management as an industry disruptor. According to the theory of disruptive innovation suggested by Christensen *et al.*, disruption is defined as "a process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses." In this regard, marketers and decision makers in the traditional lodging industry have realized the crucial impact of Airbnb on their business (Cai, Zhou, & Scott, 2019; Guttentag & Smith, 2017; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Lu & Tabari, 2019; Meged & Zillinger, 2018; Sun *et al.*, 2019). Not surprisingly, the Airbnb phenomenon has attracted the interest of many tourism and hospitality researchers.

As a result, previous studies have explored Airbnb's influence on the tourism and hospitality industry. For example, the concept of customer engagement, which is of importance both theoretically and practically, has recently started to gain popularity. It has proven to be influenced by customer involvement and it also leads to brand loyalty, trust, and brand evaluations. In other words, the more customers are involved with the Airbnb brand, the more customers feel engaged with and connected to it, and the more they develop trust and display loyalty (Harrigan *et al.*, 2017; So *et al.*, 2016). There is no doubt that customer engagement plays an important role for customers linked with Airbnb, and this can also be a useful method for Airbnb to pursue the creation of long-term business relationships, which can sustain and improve future consumption (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012). Notwithstanding, there is still a lack of consensus regarding the antecedents and consequences of customer engagement. Despite numerous studies that have investigated either satisfaction or intentions, relatively few empirical studies regarding Airbnb have attempted to assess customer engagement as a key construct (Guttentag & Smith, 2018; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Meged & Zillinger, 2018; Priporas *et al.*, 2017; Tussyadiah, 2016; Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016; Varma *et al.*, 2016; Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2017). For

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this reason, the purpose of this study is to examine the important role of Airbnb guests' customer engagement in developing effective marketing strategies by understanding the phenomenon of disruptive innovation in the tourism industry. Airbnb homes are peer-to-peer lodging businesses listed on the digital marketplace that allows Airbnb hosts and guests to interact with each other on the sharing economy platform. By its nature, sharing economy platforms seamlessly facilitate tourists' involvement with local experiences. Airbnb hosts understand that modern-day travelers prefer to avoid the tourist bubble (e.g., popular tourism attractions, global hotel chains, souvenir shops), and that they are more likely to engage in an authentic local lifestyle (Jaakson, 2004; World Tourism Organization, 2018).

While research has investigated customer engagement with Airbnb, customer experiences and their relationship to customer engagement and behavioral intentions have not been evaluated, especially in the context of tourism and hospitality. The present study aims to identify the impact of customer engagement on satisfaction and its sequential effect on behavioral intentions in the context of Airbnb. Furthermore, the authors seek to advance previous research by providing hospitality and tourism experts with scientifically derived primary data on customer engagement of Airbnb users.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Airbnb*

Recent studies have investigated consumer behavior in the context of Airbnb management (Guttentag et al., 2018; Meged & Zillinger, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2016; Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016; Zervas et al., 2017). The emergence of Airbnb has reshaped the tourism and hospitality landscape by introducing a new product with innovation-driven ideas (Guttentag et al., 2018). Specifically, Airbnb identified a consumer group whose needs were not being met and secured their business creating an economic impact characterized by traditional hotels taking a financial hit and the emergence of a new sector in the industry (Guttentag et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2017; Mao & Lyu, 2017). Guttentag et al. (2018) observed that Airbnb guests were motivated by five factors: interactions, home benefits, novelty, sharing economy ethos, and local authenticity. The study also found that five segments of Airbnb guests—Money Savers, Home Seekers, Collaborative Consumers, Pragmatic Novelty Seekers, and Interactive Novelty Seekers—differed significantly regarding motivations to choose Airbnb. For example, Home Seekers were strongly influenced by home benefits factors. Tussyadiah (2016) also discussed the factors influencing Airbnb guest behavior in peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation. The author suggested factors influencing guests' satisfaction and intention to use P2P accommodation. This study identified factors such as enjoyment, monetary benefits, and accommodation amenities had an impact on guests' satisfaction. Moreover, key determinants of intention to use P2P accommodation for future travel were enjoyment and monetary benefits. Out of three different guest segments based on P2P accommodation types, guests staying in a private room were especially influenced by social benefits that fulfilled their needs. However, guests' satisfaction for those staying in an entire home or apartment was not significantly influenced by social factors. In order to confirm how the use of P2P accommodation affects travelers' behavior, Tussyadiah, and Pesonen (2016) revealed that the social and economic appeals of P2P accommodation significantly influence expansion in destination choice, increase in travel frequency, length of stay, and range of activities. More notably, the desires for social connection with the local community and authentic experiences motivates travelers to consider other destinations, travel more often, stay longer, and participate in additional activities. Also, this study suggested that lower accommodation cost enables travelers to consider more destinations, trips, and tourism activities that otherwise would be cost-prohibitive.

Furthermore, there is a body of marketing literature emerging in the context of Airbnb management. Liang et al. (2017) focused on Airbnb's gamification reward feature, a "Superhost" badge to hosts. The "Superhosts" badge is awarded to Airbnb hosts who receive positive online reviews and ratings, maintain quick response times with a high response rate to Airbnb guests' messages, and obtain at least 10 bookings annually. According to the findings of this study, the "Superhost" badge system showed that guests are willing to pay extra for the hosts who hold the badge, and the hosts with the badge have a higher possibility of receiving positive reviews and higher ratings. Liu and Mattila (2017) investigated the effects of Airbnb's online targeted advertising on behavioral intentions using a 2 (an Airbnb consumer's sense of power: low vs. high) x 2 (advertising appeal: belongingness vs. uniqueness) experimental design. The results suggest that an individual with a lower sense of power is more likely to positively respond to the belongingness of Airbnb's online advertising appeal. Mao and Lyu (2017) examined the factors of repurchase intention of Airbnb travelers using an integrative model that synthesizes the theory of planned behavior and prospect theory. The findings of this study suggest that conceptual determinants such as attitude and subject norms are significant factors of reusing Airbnb while perceived behavioral control is not.

Additionally, research utilizing big data analytics suggest that Airbnb users are more likely to assess their experience based on the same accommodation attributes related to past hotel stays such as location, amenities, and host (Cheng & Jin, 2019). Findings from another study using a big data set of more than 5,800 Airbnb listings examined the quality attributes of Airbnb hosts influencing the performance of Airbnb rental homes. (Xie & Mao, 2017). For example, the average number of reservations of an Airbnb rental home benefits from host attributes such as the host response rate which reflects service responsiveness based on the number of inquiries from a potential guest to the number of host responses. These observations suggest that Airbnb guests value interaction with the host and contribute to customer engagement.

In a comparative analysis of Airbnb and hotels, Varma et al. (2016) found that there are distinctive differences (e.g., security, cleaning, loyalty programs, recommendations) between Airbnb users and traditional hotel guests when it comes to factors that motivate customers to select a lodging facility. To examine accommodation experiences in the hospitality industry, Mody et al. (2017) conducted a comparative assessment based on data from customers who used an Airbnb rental home or stayed at a hotel. This study revealed that Airbnb homes had more advantages to attract customers than traditional hotels in the context of experiential consumption. In the area of service quality management, An et al. (2019) observed that the service quality construct of Airbnb plays a significant role in overall marketing activities as it affects various relevant variables such as perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

In sum, the previous studies on Airbnb have widely covered different areas, but rarely examined the relationships among Airbnb guests' customer engagement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Building on the So et al.'s (2016) framework of customer engagement, the authors suggest this study fills the gap by examining customer engagement of Airbnb guests and expand the literature on Airbnb guests' satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

2.2 Customer engagement

According to Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, and Ilić (2011), engagement has been conceptualized in different disciplines and contexts: marketing (customer engagement), organizational behavior (employee engagement), sociology (civic engagement), political science (engagement of nation states), and psychology (social engagement). Customer engagement in marketing has been defined as "a two-way interaction between subjects (e.g., consumers, tourists) and objects (e.g., brands, tourist attractions)" (Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Taheri et al., 2014). In recent years,

research on customer engagement has taken a number of forms; it is important to consider what impact customer engagement has on tourism and hospitality management (e.g., Dijkmans et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017; Organ et al., & Probert, 2015; So et al., 2016). For example, Dijkmans et al. (2015) examined how customers' online company engagement relates with social media use and corporate reputation in the context of international airline companies. This study confirmed that the intensity of customers' social media use has a positive relationship with their engagement in the airline's social media activities which leads to a positive relation to corporate reputation.

Harrigan et al. (2017) investigated the nature of customer engagement with tourism brands (CETB) which increases the customer's behavioral intention of loyalty, trust and brand evaluations in the context of social media. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on customer engagement by validating CETB 25-item scale developed by So, King, and Sparks (2014). A study examining airline and hotel customers revealed significant correlations with customers' brand evaluation and customer engagement with traditional consumer loyalty constructs (So et al., 2016). More specifically, sub-dimensions of customer engagement (e.g., identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction) were assessed to confirm the logical relationship with service brand evaluation which consists of key factors including customer satisfaction, service quality and perceived value for money. Authors also provided empirical research findings of the relationship between customer engagement and customer brand loyalty. Thus, many previous studies confirm the importance of customer engagement in the tourism and hospitality industry, which indicates that customer engagement is positively associated with customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Previous studies have conceptualized customer engagement as a multidimensional construct (Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek, 2011; So et al., 2014; Thakur, 2018). Among established literature on customer engagement construct, Harrigan et al. (2017) replicated So et al.'s (2014) model, taking a broad view on customer engagement in both tourism and non-tourism contexts by proposing three dimensions of customer engagement: absorption, interaction, and identification. As a subdimension of customer engagement, enthusiasm refers to "an individual's strong level of excitement and interest regarding the focus of engagement" (So et al., 2014, p. 305). Attention is "a customer's level of focus, consciously or sub-consciously, on the brand" (Harrigan et al., 2017, p. 598). Absorption refers to a pleasant state of the customer's mind in which the customer, beyond attention, is deeply engrossed in the brand. Interaction refers to a customer's online and offline involvement in sharing and exchanging ideas, thoughts, and feelings about brand experiences with other customers of the brand (Harrigan et al., 2017; Vivek, 2009). Identification is "an individual's perceived oneness with, or belongingness to, the brand" (So et al., 2014, p. 306).

2.3 The relationships among customer engagement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions

Airbnb is, essentially, a sharing economy platform in the hospitality industry. As such, Airbnb guests' behavior should be discussed using theories of customer engagement and satisfaction in the context of hospitality and tourism management. A customer engagement model is a robust model in various areas of the tourism and hospitality industry across subsectors of the industry (Abror et al., 2019; Harrigan et al., 2017; So et al., 2014, 2016; Thakur, 2019). Although substantial customer engagement research in tourism and hospitality has been investigated in non-Airbnb contexts, the customer engagement model has been successfully applied to various consumer behavioral settings (e.g., Dolan, et al., 2016; Hapsari, et al., 2017; Hollebeek, et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2017). Previous studies have investigated satisfaction, trust, commitment, loyalty, and behavioral intention (Brodie et al., 2013). Consumer satisfaction is positively influenced by the customer's emotional reactions to using the service, such as gratification, pleasure, and enthusiasm, which can be the result of customer engagement (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017; Lynch et al., 2001; Rääkkönen, &

Honkanen, 2016; Teeroovengadum et al., 2018; Vieira et al., 2014; Vo Thanh et al., 2018; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). Customer satisfaction can be considered as a measure of the quality of the relationship between the customer and the company (Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder, 2001). Marino and Lo (2018) examined the impact of engagement on satisfaction and behavior-based CRM performance and confirmed that customer engagement affects satisfaction. Furthermore, according to Abror et al. (2019), customer engagement positively impacts satisfaction. Based on this discussion, we propose the following:

H1. Customer engagement has a positive influence on Airbnb users' satisfaction.

There are numerous studies within different fields, demonstrating the importance of satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Alarcon & Edwards, 2011; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017; Chen & Chen, 2010; Kim & Bonn, 2015; Rääkkönen, & Honkanen, 2016; Vieira et al., 2014) and the casual relationship between satisfaction and intention has been established by previous research (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2010; Kim & Bonn, 2015). Many researchers have proposed that customer satisfaction results in favorable post-consumption evaluations such as favorable word-of-mouth and repeated purchases, thereby fostering stronger customer loyalty and increasing sales and profits (Fornell, 1992; Han et al., 2011; Priporas et al., 2017; Tussyadiah, 2016). Accordingly, it is crucial to understand what determines customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions to use Airbnb accommodations to better understand Airbnb's guest base and contribute to effective management of Airbnb's platform and operations of rental home hosts. Based on this discussion, we propose the following:

H2. Satisfaction has a positive impact on Airbnb users' behavioral intentions.

Prior tourism and hospitality research on Airbnb neglected customer engagement, which is an antecedent to boosting customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions to use Airbnb (Harrigan et al., 2017; So et al., 2016). Although Airbnb users can be expected to have a baseline of satisfaction and behavioral intentions, engagement behaviors could reinforce their experience and enhance emotional bonding with Airbnb. In other words, increased engagement among Airbnb users would be expected to result in higher satisfaction and behavioral intentions to use Airbnb. We therefore make the following hypotheses:

H3. Customer engagement has a positive influence on Airbnb users' behavioral intentions.

H4. Satisfaction mediates the relationships between customer engagement and behavioral intentions.

This study adopts a customer engagement model suggested by So et al. (2016) in the context of Airbnb. Figure 1 proposes an illustration of the conceptual model. H1, H2, and H3 are the main effects, and H4 is a mediating effect.

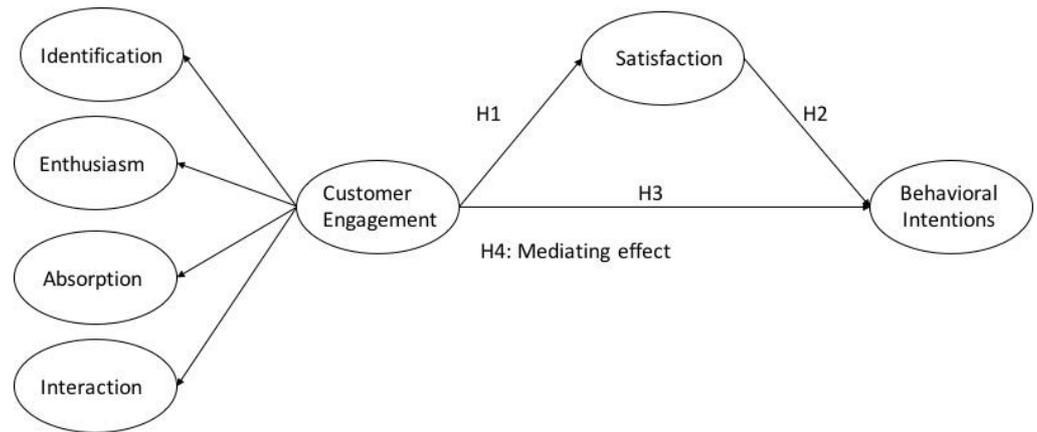


Figure 1. Conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1 Measurement

To assess customer engagement among Airbnb users, a customer engagement construct was measured based on existing literature (Brodie et al., 2013; Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014; So et al., 2016). Adapting the operationalization used by So et al. (2016) and Harrigan et al. (2017), customer engagement was measured on a 10-item scale (e.g., “I like to learn more about Airbnb.”, “I often participate in activities of Airbnb.”) which includes four sub-dimensions: (1) identification; (2) enthusiasm; (3) absorption; and (4) interaction (see <Table 2>). To make Airbnb users’ satisfaction measurable, satisfaction was operationally defined according to three items (e.g., “I am happy with my decision to stay at an Airbnb.”, “My experience exceeded my expectation.”) based on survey instruments used in the literature (Han et al., 2011; Priporas et al., 2017). Three items utilized by Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalú (2010) and Tussyadiah (2016) were used to measure behavioral intentions (e.g. “I intend to revisit Airbnb in the next 2 years.”, “I plan to revisit Airbnb in the next 2 years.”). In this study, all scale items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2 Data analysis

Survey data were analyzed in two steps using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 and AMOS 22.0, structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the measurement model and the structural model.

4. Results

4.1 Profile of survey respondents

<Table 1> shows demographic profile of respondents. Male respondents (56.7%) outnumbered female respondents (43.3%). Most respondents were in the group aged 27-35 (46.8%) and the average age for the respondents was 32 years old. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of respondents were White/Caucasian (74.6%) and just over half of the respondents were college graduates (51.6%). Most respondents were currently working full time (79.7%) and the most common annual household income range of respondents was \$20,000 to \$49,999 (44.4%).

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (N=374)

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Female	162	43.3
Male	212	56.7
Age groups in years:		
18–26	97	25.9
27–35	175	46.8
36–45	72	19.3
46–55	19	5.1
56–65	9	2.4
66+	2	.5
Ethnicity:		
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	.5
Asian	37	9.9
Hispanic or Latino	24	6.4
Black/African American	31	8.3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	.3
White/Caucasian	279	74.6
Education:		
Some high school	1	.3
High school graduate	22	5.9
Some college	84	22.4
College graduate	193	51.6
Some graduate school	15	4.0
Completed graduate school	58	15.5
Other	1	.3
Income:		
Less than \$20,000	40	10.7
\$20,000 to \$49,999	166	44.4
\$50,000 to \$99,999	127	34.0
\$100,000 to \$149,999	28	7.5
\$150,000 to \$199,999	8	2.1
\$200,000 or more	5	1.3
Employment:		
Working full-time	298	79.7
Working part-time	32	8.6
Homemaker	12	3.2
Retire	3	.8
Not working	6	1.6
Student	23	6.1

4.2 Measurement model

With the purpose of evaluating internal consistency construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in the current study. The results of the first-order CFA showed (see <Table 2>) the composite reliability of each construct (.83 to .92) to be confirmed with acceptable model fit ($\chi^2(89) = 255.81$, $p < .05$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .96, normed fit index (NFI) = .94, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = .95, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .071, standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = .515).

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Table 2. Results of the measurement model—First-order confirmatory factory analysis

Construct	Measures	Standardized Factor Loading	R	AVE	Composite reliability
Identification			.92	.79	.84
IDT1	<i>When someone criticizes Airbnb, it feels like a personal insult.</i>	.89***			
IDT2	<i>When I talk about Airbnb, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.</i>	.88***			
IDT3	<i>When someone praises Airbnb, it feels like a personal compliment.</i>	.90***			
Enthusiasm			.83	.71	.70
ENT1	<i>I love Airbnb.</i>	.83***			
ENT2	<i>I feel excited about Airbnb.</i>	.85***			
Absorption			.85	.73	.73
ABS1	<i>When I am interacting with Airbnb, I forget everything else around me.</i>	.85***			
ABS2	<i>In my interaction with Airbnb, I am immersed.</i>	.86***			
Interaction			.89	.72	.72
INT1	<i>In general, I like to get involved in discussions on Airbnb.</i>	.82***			
INT2	<i>I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others using Airbnb.</i>	.88***			
INT3	<i>In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people associated with Airbnb.</i>	.85***			
Satisfaction			.86	.68	.74
SAT1	<i>I am happy with my decision to stay at Airbnb.</i>	.88***			
SAT2	<i>My experience exceeded my expectation.</i>	.72***			
SAT3	<i>Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with Airbnb</i>	.86***			
Behavioral Intentions			.91	.76	.81
BI1	<i>I intend to reuse Airbnb in the next 2 years.</i>	.88***			
BI2	<i>I plan to reuse Airbnb in the next 2 years.</i>	.91***			
BI3	<i>I desire to reuse Airbnb in the next 2 years</i>	.82***			

Note: ***p < .001. R = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; INT = Interaction; SAT = Satisfaction; IDT = Identification; ABS = Absorption; BI = Behavioral Intentions; ENT = Enthusiasm.

Moreover, composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.70 to 0.84, and the average variance extracted (AVE) values were between 0.68 to 0.79, which exceed the recommended cut-off points of 0.70 for CR and 0.50 for AVE (Anderson & Gerbing 1988).

Discriminant validity was indicated as the square roots of the AVE for each factor was greater than the correlations between that factor and other factor. Moreover, the maximum shared variance (MSV) was lower than the AVE for all factors (see <Table 3>), thereby demonstrating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2013).

Table 3. Discriminant validity test–First-order CFA

	INT	SAT	IDT	ABS	BI	ENT
INT	0.849					
SAT	0.262	0.823				
IDT	0.528	-0.008	0.890			
ABS	0.751	0.111	0.767	0.857		
BI	0.343	0.793	0.065	0.200	0.873	
ENT	0.751	0.516	0.493	0.544	0.605	0.843

Note: INT = Interaction; SAT = Satisfaction; IDT = Identification; ABS = Absorption; BI = Behavioral Intentions; ENT = Enthusiasm.

<Table 4> shows results of measurement model of second order confirmatory factory analysis.

Table 4. Results of measurement model–Second-order confirmatory factory analysis

Construct and Sub-dimensions	Standardized Factor Loading	R	AVE
Customer Engagement		.88	.65
Identification	.69***		
Enthusiasm	.80***		
Absorption	.84***		
Interaction	.87***		

Note: ***p < .001. R = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

In the second-order measurement model, the findings indicated the composite reliability of each construct (.86 to .91) to be confirmed with acceptable model fit with $\chi^2(100) = 427.76$, $p < .05$, CFI = .93, NFI = .91, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .094., and SRMR = .108. Furthermore, the AVE estimates for all constructs exceeded the recommended .5 threshold suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). As <Table 5> shows, discriminant validity was also satisfactory as the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than inter-construct correlations. Moreover, the maximum shared variance (MSV) was lower than the AVE for all factors, which demonstrates discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker).

Table 5. Discriminant validity test–Second-order CFA

	CE	SAT	BI
CE	0.805		
SAT	0.295	0.823	
BI	0.393	0.792	0.873

Note: CE = Customer Engagement; SAT = Satisfaction; BI = Behavioral Intentions.

4.3 Structural model

The proposed hypotheses were tested, and the model fit showed an acceptable level ($\chi^2(100) = 427.76, p < .05, CFI = .93, NFI = .91, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .101, SRMR = .108$). Figure 2 shows the result of standardized coefficients.

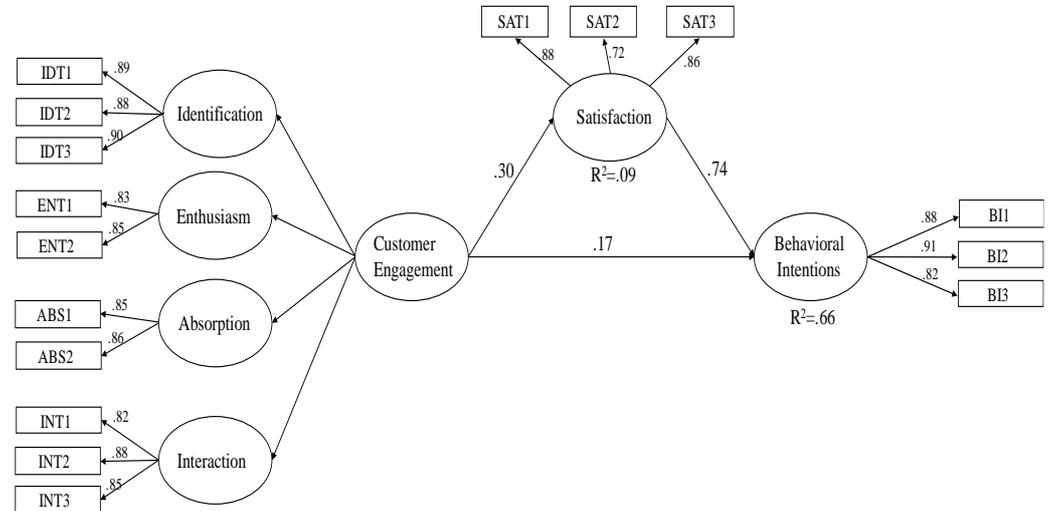


Figure 2. The result of SEM with standardized coefficients

H1 proposed that there would be a positive relationship between customer engagement and satisfaction and the results supported H1 ($\beta = .30, p < .001$), accounting for 9% variance. The current study also hypothesized that satisfaction significantly predicts behavioral intentions which supported H2 ($\beta = .74, p < .001$). This study tested whether there would be a positive impact of customer engagement on behavioral intentions, providing support of H3 ($\beta = .17, p < .001$). Moreover, customer engagement and satisfaction collectively explain 66% of the variance in behavioral intentions. <Table 6> shows standardized path coefficients of the structural model.

Table 6. Standardized path coefficients of the structural model–Overall model

Path	Standardized coefficients	Standard Error	Critical Ratio
Structural Model			
CE → SAT	.30***	.036	4.91
SAT → BI	.74***	.048	12.01
CE → BI	.17***	.047	4.00

Note: *** $p < .001$. CE = Customer Engagement; SAT = Satisfaction; BI = Behavioral Intentions.

Considering the effect of satisfaction, a mediating test calculated based on 2000 subsamples bootstrapping was conducted to analyze its mediating role between customer engagement and behavioral intentions. As indicated in <Table 7>, the findings revealed that customer engagement significantly and indirectly affected Airbnb users’ behavioral intentions ($\beta_{CE \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow BI} = .22, p < .001$) through satisfaction. Since a direct effect of customer engagement on behavioral intentions ($\beta_{CE \rightarrow BI} = .17, p < .001$) has been found, the significant effect of customer engagement on behavioral intentions is partially mediated by satisfaction.

Table 7. Mediating effect

Path	β (Indirect effect)	$\beta_{CE \rightarrow BI}$ (Direct effect)	Result
Mediation Test			

CE → SAT → BI	.22***	.17***	Partial Mediation
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Note: ***p < .001. CE = Customer Engagement; SAT = Satisfaction; BI = Behavioral Intentions.

Overall, these results indicate that the dimensions of customer engagement: identification, enthusiasm, absorption, and interaction are important determinants of users' satisfaction with Airbnb and their intention to use Airbnb.

5. Discussion

Customer engagement and satisfaction are well-known constructs that have been widely explored by researchers to examine their effects on behavioral intentions. Existing studies, however, mainly focused on the relationships separately; either the relationship between customer engagement and behavioral intentions (Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014) or the relationship between satisfaction and intentions (Liang et al., 2018). The relationship between customer engagement and satisfaction has not gained much attention in the field of tourism and hospitality yet. Therefore, this study contributes to tourism and hospitality research by applying a customer engagement scale previously developed by So et al. (2016) to examine the relationship between customer engagement and behavioral intentions to use Airbnb. In addition to this relationship, satisfaction was included as a mediator to better grasp the importance of customer engagement and the role of satisfaction among Airbnb users to seek ways to increase intention to use the Airbnb platform. This research also extends the current literature by examining how customer engagement with Airbnb impacts its users' behavioral intentions from an empirical perspective.

This study confirms that identification, enthusiasm, absorption, and interaction are key determinants of customer engagement. Identification captures "the degree of a user's perceived oneness with or belongingness to Airbnb", and enthusiasm captures "the degree of excitement and interest that a user has in the Airbnb brand". Moreover, absorption is referred to as "a pleasant state which describes the user as being fully concentrated, happy and deeply engrossed while playing the role of a user of Airbnb" and interaction is referred to as "various participation that a user has with the Airbnb organization or other customers outside of purchase".

The hypotheses of the current study proposed that customer engagement would affect customers' satisfaction, which will lead to future purchase behavior and the role of satisfaction as a mediator would be significant were it statistically supported. The findings revealed that customer engagement significantly and directly affected Airbnb users' behavioral intentions ($\beta_{CE \rightarrow BI} = .17$, $p < .001$) and satisfaction played a significant role as a mediator between those two constructs ($\beta_{CE \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow BI} = .22$, $p < .001$). The positive effect of customer engagement on satisfaction as well as behavioral intentions is unsurprising since determinants such as satisfaction and behavioral intentions have been found to be influenced positively and directly by customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013) which suggests that consumer satisfaction is a precursor of successful development of brand marketing campaigns and brand image for P2P accommodations.

6. Implications, limitations, and future study direction

This research explored how customer engagement affects satisfaction and behavioral intentions of Airbnb users. It contributes to the body of knowledge in two ways. Firstly, this study extended a parsimonious model of a customer engagement construct proposed by So et al. (2016) to Airbnb users. This construct, which explains what drives customers to use the Airbnb platform when they travel, was re-validated. Secondly, this study confirmed the linkage between customer engagement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions that has been neglected in the field of tourism

and hospitality. Satisfaction was explored as a mediator between customer engagement and behavioral intentions. Although previous research has suggested that customer engagement has a direct effect on behavioral intentions, the current empirical study constituted the first attempt to investigate the relationships among customer engagement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions with Airbnb users in the tourism and hospitality industry. This study contributes to the discipline by providing an approach that would be valuable for consumer behavior researchers and supporting potential online purchasing studies in terms of the mediating role of satisfaction. In addition, the customer engagement factors, and the corresponding items identified in this study can be used in advancing marketing research pertaining to Airbnb users as well as other sharing economy users.

Moreover, the findings of this study have practical implications not only for Airbnb but for the entire lodging industry. The findings on what motivates users' intention to use certain platforms may warrant greater attention to each dimension of customer engagement. As the results indicate that satisfaction is a significant mediator between customer engagement and behavioral intentions, other types of accommodations may want to adopt the Airbnb model for customer engagement and satisfaction in order to attract more customers. This model includes opportunities to experience local life and become immersed in the local community, which particularly appeals to novelty seekers. Other types of accommodations wishing to appeal to this group could provide local experiences such as guided museum tours, sporting events, food tastings, and art classes (Liptak, 2018).

In addition, the role of hosts could also be emphasized as a means of engaging customers. Since guest's value hosts' responsiveness (Lalicic & Weismayer, 2017), hosts might be trained to interact productively with guests by replying in a timely manner and providing answers to guest questions. The industry could also train hosts to serve as guides to the local community. Nurturing hosts' relationship with guests would thus contribute to guests' positive behavioral intentions to recommend and reuse the peer-to-peer platform.

Moreover, since customer participation was found to be a great influencer of customer engagement, marketers should utilize online reviews and responses more efficiently in order to develop effective customer engagement strategies. Marketers should try to maintain engagement by preventing Airbnb hosting from being a purely commercial endeavor.

There are several limitations of the current study, which lead to further research opportunities. Firstly, this study depends on constructs from customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions to examine the relationships in the proposed research model whereas future studies could examine closer relationships among customer engagement, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. In other words, constructs such as service quality, brand trust or brand loyalty can offer advanced implications to customer engagement. Secondly, future research can include constructs such as social and economic benefits, which may provide significant comparisons between different accommodation types (i.e., Airbnb vs. luxury hotels). Thirdly, since the sample of the current study consisted of Airbnb users living in the US who are registered with the Mturk online survey company, future researchers should be cautious in generalizing the findings of the study to other markets. Further studies can extend the current model to other countries by using different types of random sampling which would make the research more interesting in peer-to-peer accommodations.

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