

GUESTS MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION IN PEER TO PEER ACCOMMODATION: EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the motives of guests when considering a peer to peer accommodation, such as Airbnb. An exploratory research design was employed based on in-depth qualitative interview of nine guests who have stayed in any peer to peer accommodation in Malaysia. In general, the guests in the study likely to choose this type of accommodation as opposed to the traditional type due to economic motive. Three other motives were derived – seeking new experience, meeting new people and pursuing others' recommendation. While research into peer to peer accommodation has received vast attention, those looking at guest motivations, particularly in Malaysia are still at infancy stage. The resulting motives of guests considering such platform helps the organizations in seeking better target market segment and the decisions criteria of the guests.

Keywords: peer-to-peer accommodation; sharing economy; Airbnb; motivation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emerging concept of peer to peer (P2P) accommodation that enable people to collaboratively make use of under-utilized accommodation using online platform has been widely researched by academic scholars. Study varies from the motivation factors people use such service [1-3], sustainability claims of such platform [4-6], the impact to the hotel industry [7-8], the legal and financial perspective [9] were discussed exhaustively. Although, many researches have been done on such platform, in Malaysia such study has yet to be comprehensive. A researched published by [9] act as the catalyst of this current research, where eWOM proven to have significant impact to customers when booking P2P online accommodation.

Therefore, using P2P accommodation in Malaysia as a context, this study aims to unfold this research gap with the following research questions:

RQ₁: What motivates guest to use P2P accommodation in Malaysia?

RQ₂: Does the guest feel guilty towards hotel industry while using such platform opposed to traditional hotel?

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Overview of Peer to Peer Accommodation in Malaysia

The popularity of short term rentals with sharing economy platform has grown significantly in Malaysia [11]. Currently, there are two types of P2P accommodation in Malaysia which is Airbnb and HomeAway. In 2011, the short-term rental has increased to RM129 million in values of sales. It continues to grow steadily in 5 years where the sales value was recorded to be worth ranging from RM150 to RM252 million respectively [11]. As the sharing economy continues to develop and grow, the impact of Airbnb to the lodging industry in Malaysia can be seen when the number of Airbnb guest nights booked in Malaysia has increased 350% in 2012.

While Malaysia saw a relatively late start to online short-term rental platform such as Airbnb, its popularity has grown significantly in recent years due to aggressive marketing and existing knowledge of the brand from other regions. A look at this escalating figure shows that the business interest at this platform has been intense and such platform describes

Malaysia as an exciting growth market. Government recognized the potentials and benefits of

the sharing economy to the country and few efforts were taken to encourage people to use Airbnb. The first government effort in promoting Airbnb was during Visit Malaysia Year 2014. Tourists were encouraged to book their accommodation via Airbnb and this simultaneously boosts the tourism industry and local real estate market [12].

The effort continues with a pilot project involving 130 homestays in Melaka to list their private homes in Airbnb. The aim of this program is to see the growth of international and domestic bookings of Malaysia homestays, resulting in increased income levels of homestay owners particularly those in the rural area via the online platform [13]. The hotel operators were unhappy with the emergence of the new platform of Airbnb and claimed it does affect their business by diverting their potential guest as much as 5-15% [14]. However, this statement was dismissed by Airbnb saying that it does merely complements hotels, it brings economic benefits to families, communities and local business which derived from the tourist dollar. The contradict statement could not be confirmed as data on Airbnb is difficult and time consuming to retrieve. In term of government intervention, the government has endorsed Airbnb and declared it is a legal business as long as there is no foul play [15]. Despite of these supports and the potentials that Airbnb can bring to Malaysia, the sharing business model is still in its infancy stage and very few topics were discussed.

1.2.2. Motivation to use Peer to Peer Accommodation

Study on motivation to use or participate in P2P accommodation has transpired as a significant academic field in collaborative consumptions or sharing economy studies in the past recent years. Nevertheless, it abides as an area that has yet to be fully and systematically researched due to the nature that this subject is quite new [4, 16]. In addition, most study in this subject were done in a broader context where motivation to participate were assessed in sharing economy area, relatively to just focus in specific P2P accommodation. A range of motivation to participate and intention to use again have been identified and examined based on diverse types of sharing economy in the previous related literature (Table 1).

In [17] was among the earliest to discover that economic motivation was the main aim to use car sharing platform Zipcar. This is after the consideration of financial savings that can be made in comparison to individually own the car. In [18] agreed on the economic benefits car sharing provides although the study indicated that there was low awareness on such service to

the consumers. Another enabler or driver for collaborative consumptions is the advancement of digital information technology [19]. In [20] interviewed a total of 25 experts whom actively working in the collaborative consumptions environment agreed on this reason in addition to economic benefits. Feedbacks from different types of collaborative consumptions websites users done by [21] supported that economic benefits and enjoyment were significant antecedents of user intention to participate in such platforms. In [22] have their own views on “sharing” where each consumer that participated can be divided into four reasons such as social, community benefits, sense of belonging. This study explored the anti-consumption motivation of toy library members in New Zealand. Therefore, it is suggested that consumers who participate in collaborative consumption are aware of its economic benefits.

Furthermore, given the recent growth and development of the P2P accommodation and the recent changes in tourist patterns, there is a need to study the motivation factors specifically on accommodation sector. Study in this area stated that environmental concern has been most significantly related to staying in such accommodation [21, 3]. In addition, enjoyment and value received which result in guest satisfaction will determined the chances of using such service again. In [1] further explored and segmented the guest accordingly, which can benefit the P2P accommodation providers. Five factors were identified which include interaction, home benefits, novelty, sharing economy ethos and local authenticity. Therefore, it is suggested that, people motivated to use such platform are not just for the purpose of economic benefits but also other reasons such as environmentally concern, enjoyment and value received through collaborative consumptions.

Table 1. Summary of motivations to participate or intention to use again collaborative consumptions services

References	Sharing Economy Types	Motivations to Participate or Intention to Use It Again
[34]	Accommodation	Enjoyment and value
[21]	Combination of 254 types of collaborative consumptions websites.	Sustainability, enjoyment and economic
[17]	Car Sharing	Economic motivation
[34]	Accommodation	Sustainability and community as well as economic benefits.
[20]	Different types of collaborative consumptions	Technological and economics driver
[22]	Toy library	Social, community benefits, sense of belonging
[1]	Accommodation	Interaction, home benefits, novelty, sharing economy ethos and local authenticity.
[18]	Car sharing	Convenience and availability, monetary savings and expanded mobility options

2. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employed semi structured interview method for data collection. By using such interview approach, this study relies on the ability of the guest to recall and articulate the salient dimensions of their encounters and experiences during their last stay. A nonprobability sampling was adopted in choosing any Malaysian who has stayed in P2P accommodation in the last 12 months. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews, with

the primary unit of analysis being the individual; in particular, his/her opinion on motivation factors to stay in P2P accommodation. Respondents were recruited from travel-related Facebook groups which are based in Malaysia. These groups are well known and consist of thousands of members such as Backpack Buddies Malaysia, *Homestay Cuti Cuti Malaysia*, Backpackers Community and few other travel related sites. An invitation to participate in this study was posted to these Facebook groups before face to face interview was initiated.

P2P accommodation is an emerging topic; therefore, this study applies an exploratory approach to gauge the reasons why Malaysian uses P2P accommodation and their experiences using such service. The survey was divided into few questions. The first part is on the demographic and the frequency of the respondents using P2P accommodation. The second part of the survey concentrated on reasons why guest choose P2P accommodation with opposed to traditional hotels and their experience on using such service. The important criteria of choosing P2P accommodation were also asked. All respondents' comments were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method enables the researcher to identify, analyze and reporting patterns (themes) within a data set [23-24].

The data analysis process started with reading and re-reading the transcripts in order to get familiarize with the data corpus. Next, general codes were generated using open coding. Codes were compared, discussed and modified throughout the transcripts. Due to the small number of data collected, all these processes were done by hand with pens and highlighters as suggested by [25]. Subsequently, once the codes were examined, reasons why guest used P2P accommodation emerged and grouped together into themes. The final step in data analysis was writing the result, in line with the research questions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sample Profile

A total of 9 respondents were interviewed during this research. The respondents stayed on average of 2 days in their chosen P2P accommodation and 35% mentioned it was their first experience and the remaining 65% are repeat guests. From the total, 98.8% used Airbnb and only 1.2% used other types of P2P accommodation which is HomeAway. Based on the thematic analysis, motives for individuals to use P2P accommodation were identified and four

themes derived which are monetary motives, friends' recommendation, to experience new things and able to meet new people.

3.1.1. Theme 1: Economic Motives

Major motive for people to choose P2P accommodation over hotel is due to the economic benefits that they gained. Majority of the respondents agreed that those accommodations that they chose offered a better deal compare to staying in hotel. In addition, they were able to save money by choosing such accommodation type. For example, a respondent travelling with family mentioned the following quotes: -

“We managed to save quite a sum of money while travelling in Pangkor last month by staying in Airbnb. The two-bedroom unit that we stayed was cheaper compare to the 1 room in a hotel nearby”.

Another respondent commented: *“After much research, I decided to stay in a studio apartment in the middle of the city. I save quite a lot of money”.*

In addition, a respondent indirectly agreed on the monetary benefits P2P accommodation has offered by stating: *“My studio unit came with cooking facilities and washing machine. I can cook and I don't need to send my dirty laundry outside. I was able to save up my money on these items”.*

3.1.2. Theme 2: Pursuing Others' Recommendation

It is common for customers to share and exchange stories with their friends and family with regards to their service consumption experiences [26]. This word of mouth communication contributed greatly in the decision-making process about purchasing by the guest [27]. The data illustrated that this is also the motivation reason why users decided to stay in P2P accommodation after being recommended by their friends and family. The following statements are as follow:

“I never heard about Airbnb before, my friends told his positive experience and how they enjoyed staying in such place.”.

While, another respondent supported this by stating: *“My parents travelled to Hong Kong last year and stayed in Airbnb unit. They recommended me to give it a try”.*

Related to this, one respondent commented that he decided to stay in such accommodation because his friend recommends him to stay although the mentioned friend has yet to

experience it.

“My friend who knew about Airbnb from Facebook recommended it to me. The funny thing was, he has yet to experience it by himself..ha ha ha.”

3.1.3. Theme 3: Seeking New Experiences-Noveltty Seeking

According to [28], human curiosity is one of the dominant inner forces that motivate people to explore new things and at the same time motivate people to learn, do, experiment, explore and experience. This is also known as novelty-seekers where people want to try something novel or unique in their travels, dare to break traditional rules, take risks and desire to experience new environments [29]. P2P accommodation such as Airbnb is an emerging trend and become the largest company and brand all over the world. With the help of technology, this platform able to attract these novelty seekers to search for new experience as stated by a respondent:

“All these while I’ve been travelling and staying in a hotel. I heard about Airbnb and would like to experience this new platform”.

A respondent agreed to this statement by stating: *“We stayed in Hyatt Hotel (Kota Kinabalu) when we first arrived in KK, but we decided to stay in Airbnb when we were in Ranau, Kundasang. This is something new (experience) for the kids”.*

This novelty seeking is crucial parts in tourist motivation in choosing destination because it could influence the tourist’s decision making [30]. Some novelty seekers purposely choose to travel for the reasons of boredom alleviation, thrill, adventure and surprise [31]. This is supported by a respondent: *“I purposely choose to stay with Mr. Lim (Airbnb Host) because he is voted as Super Host by Airbnb. He surprised me with positive experience and I am happy for the first-time encounter”*

3.1.4. Theme 4: Meeting New People

Most of the user indicated that on the ability to meet other people is one of the reasons they opted for P2P accommodation. This reason has been supported by prior study on the motivation factors on participating in network hospitality, which is to have the pleasant and meaningful social encounters [32-34]. A respondent supported this statement by saying:

“I booked a sharing unit. I am lucky the other room was occupied with another guest, Joseph from Australia. After getting to know each other, we decided to venture Ipoh together”.

30% of the guest stayed with the owner of the units and had the ability to socialize and

interact. A respondent further commented:

“As a single traveler, I am glad to meet Mr Hassan (the host). He recommended me to visit places in Terengganu. Mr Hassan also tagged along to Pulau Perhentian with me. He seemed to know many beautiful places”.

In addition, two other interviewees expressed their opinion by saying, by staying in P2P accommodation, they able to socialize and interact with another guest. Therefore, this study supported the findings by [35] where by participating in collaborative consumption is an opportunity to make new friends and to develop meaningful connections.

3.2. Guest Experience Using Peer to Peer Accommodation

The guests analyzed in this study equate that 8 of them had a positive experience, while staying in such platforms. Other than cheaper options, the booking system which is easy and efficient enhanced the positive stay experienced. As one of the respondents commented:

“I love the idea of quick confirmation. I received instant feedback from the host. The host replied most of my questions. I asked him about the transportation and location of its unit. This impressed me!”

This general opinion was echoed by another respondent. He stated, *“I am happy with the service. The room is just like what was shown and described in the websites”.*

However, 1 guest shared his negative experience with one the host while checking in, *“We waited for 1 hour (for check in), the host did not keep his promises. The host seemed cold towards us too but not to worry, we left not so good comment for him in the websites (Airbnb)”.*

Such incidents should not be happening as guest satisfaction is one of the determinants of customers repurchase intention and it is pivotal for the success of hospitality business [36]. In addition, all respondents did not feel guilty using such towards hotel industry while using such service.

“Guilty? For what? I am sure hotel industry have different target market”.

This is supported by another 42-year-old lady, *“Ha ha...hotel is too expensive! I can't afford it. I rather stay in such accommodation, as long as public transport is easily accessible.”*

Therefore, it can be concluded that, people who use P2P accommodation did not feel guilty towards hotel industry. Study by [37] confirmed this statement by stating such platform did

not significantly affect hotel's revenue per available room in average, but did contribute to a reduction in the average price of a room where such platform has entered the most. Furthermore, P2P accommodation differ significantly than traditional hotel by offering guests a "feeling at home" (e.g., belongingness) and an "a typical place to stay" (e.g., uniqueness) [38].

4. CONCLUSION

This exploratory study aimed to map current knowledge in tourism and the collaborative consumptions field. The study shed important lights on the existence of P2P accommodation specifically in Malaysia. A positive trend in such platform can be seen as the number of rooms booked via this platform has increased consistently for the past 3 years with the support from the government. A table on motivations to participate and intention to use again was included, which were divided into different sectors and user types in collaborative consumptions. Consistent with other studies, economic benefit was found to be the main reasons to participate in such platform.

In particular, findings of the research presented here have identified four guest motives to participate in P2P accommodation which include economic motive, seeking new experience, meeting new people and pursuing others' recommendation. The results supported the study done by [4] where motivations to participate can differ from few reasons such as social-demographic group and between types of shared goods examined. This study also provides an insight on guest experience while staying in P2P accommodation in Malaysia where positive feedback was reported. This is due to reasons such as reliable host, fast and efficient check in and rooms are the same as portrayed in the websites. Guests echoed that they were happy and did not felt guilty towards the hotel industry as they believe, P2P accommodations have their own target market which will not affect the traditional hotel.

5. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As preliminary research in a field for which there is little prior research, the empirical part of this research is limited to a qualitative study with a small number of sample. From the methodological perspective, the findings can be generalized only for P2P accommodation in

Malaysia and may not be directly applicable to sharing-economy services in other countries. Future research may try to use an open-ended questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews that combine and summarize the dimensions of motivations to participate in P2P accommodation to supplement the questionnaire. It is worth to note that this research solely on P2P accommodation and further work can be done such as to compare what motivate users to use different types of P2P services such as ride sharing and knowledge sharing.

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