

# When Western hosts meet Eastern guests: Airbnb hosts' experience with Chinese outbound tourists

Mingming Cheng<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Guojie Zhang<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Marketing, Curtin University, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Otago Business School, University of Otago, New Zealand

## ARTICLE INFO

Associate editor: Scott McCabe

### Keywords:

Chinese tourists

Airbnb

Host

Peer-to-peer accommodation

Chinese tradition

## ABSTRACT

As the number of Chinese tourists using Airbnb for their holiday accommodation is steadily increasing, this study investigates western Airbnb hosts' experiences with Chinese outbound tourists. In an analysis of hosts' self-reported posts on the Airbnb community forum, the main issues that emerged relate to Chinese guests' daily habits and lifestyles, cultural differences, and language barriers. This research highlights the role that cultural differences and tradition play in guest–host encounters, and offers a theoretical framework on inter-cultural host–guest relationship that provides an initial understanding of this phenomenon. This study extends the knowledge on the host–guest paradigm in the peer-to-peer accommodation literature from an inter-cultural perspective. This article also launches the Annals of Tourism Research Curated Collection on Peer-to-peer accommodation networks, a special selection of research in this field.

## Introduction

Chinese outbound tourists have become an increasingly important market owing to their sizeable numbers and the amount of money they spend (Jin & Wang, 2016; Pearce & Wu, 2017; UNWTO, 2017). They are widely acknowledged to be the next significant wave in the global tourism market. In fact, numbers of Chinese outbound tourists already lead in many traditional markets around the world, and with continued growth, their travel patterns and experiences have become significantly diversified (Pearce, Wu, & Osmond, 2013). Presently, a growing number of Chinese outbound tourists are using peer-to-peer accommodation providers such as Airbnb instead of conventional accommodation providers such as hotels. Their stays lodging at Airbnb listings outside China grew by 500% in 2015 and 142% in 2016, reaching nearly more than 5.3 million (Soloman, 2017). Under the umbrella of the sharing economy, peer-to-peer accommodation sharing denotes the online sharing of underutilized properties among peers either for free or for a fee (Prayag & Ozanne, 2018). While an abundant literature covers Chinese outbound tourists' motivations, special interests, travel experiences, and interaction with locals, researchers have paid less attention to these tourists' experience with peer-to-peer accommodations, and more importantly, to how hosts interact with Chinese guests during visits (Cheng, 2016).

At present, tourism studies have yet to adequately map the roles of culture and tradition in guest–host encounters (Cheng, 2016). In particular, research fails to address the complex process of how Airbnb hosts experience and deal with issues arising from their encounters with tourists from different cultural backgrounds (Xiang & Dolnicar, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this inquiry is to analyze the experiences of Western Airbnb providers who host Chinese guests. Hosts' self-report posts have the potential to offer insights and produce knowledge that can extend the understanding of the role of culture and tradition in guest–host relationships.

\* Corresponding author at: School of Marketing, Curtin University, Australia.

E-mail addresses: [mingming.cheng@curtin.edu.au](mailto:mingming.cheng@curtin.edu.au) (M. Cheng), [zhagu103@student.otago.ac.nz](mailto:zhagu103@student.otago.ac.nz) (G. Zhang).

This information is particularly useful from a cross-cultural perspective because guest–host experiences for Western guests differ from those of Chinese guests' (Chen, 2017; Xiang & Dolnicar, 2017). For many Chinese guests, the Airbnb experience may be the first time that they have stayed with foreign hosts while traveling internationally, particularly in such a private and personal space where they are dealing with unfamiliar ways of life and rules.

The study identified a number of key issues associated with hosting Chinese guests as well as strategies Western hosts have developed for correspondence. The process of linking issues, interpretations, and coping strategies is presented. This study presents a theoretical framework on inter-cultural host–guest relationships and its dynamics in the peer-to-peer context. Further, this investigation seeks to articulate the various complex relationships that occur between guests and hosts, in particular the mediating role of *Guanxi* and *Mianzi*. The study's results extend knowledge in the peer-to-peer literature from an inter-cultural perspective and respond to calls for empirical research from a non-Western perspective (Chen, 2017; Cheng, 2016; Xiang & Dolnicar, 2017).

## Literature review

### *Host-guest paradigm*

The host–guest paradigm has been important in tourism and hospitality studies in both commercial and non-commercial settings (Chan, 2006; Heuman, 2005), especially as the relationship between hosts and guests is multidimensional and dynamic (Sheringham & Daruwalla, 2007). It involves constant communications and negotiations between the two parties, in that the host is providing a service and the guest is seeking an experience. The host–guest relationship/paradigm has been widely addressed and is generally recognized as a key concept in understanding the hospitality phenomenon (McNaughton, 2006).

Prior work notes that hosts and guests share three major implicit assumptions (Aramberri, 2001). The host is responsible for the safety and protection of the guest in the dwelling. In return, guests are required to abide by a reciprocity principle and return the same favour to the hosts as needed. On this basis, the guest's material well-being needs to be safeguarded by the host and the guest is expected to follow the rules set by the host. However, where commercialization of hospitality has become the norm, such implicit host–guest assumptions may not always be afforded.

Besides meeting the physical needs of the guest, fun, enjoyment, and satisfaction stemming from the efforts of a hospitable host through entertaining and taking care of the guest have been deemed to be necessary and important (Lashley & Morrison, 2000). That is, the host–guest relationship is also social and cultural (Hemmington, 2007), reflecting five cultural dimensions: (1) honorable tradition, (2) fundamental to human existence, (3) stratified, (4) diversified and (5) central to human endeavor (O'Gorman, 2007).

Emerging evidence indicates that the Chinese host–guest paradigm—the *Zhu-Ke* paradigm—differs culturally from the Western notions of hospitality (Chen, 2017). In Western countries, strangers can become guests and hosts treat all guests equally. However, the traditional Chinese approach to host–guest relationships emphasizes the identification and categorization of guests by hosts: “hierarchy principles and host-centric are not merely ‘traditional’ or ‘ancient’ beliefs of the distant past but central to practices and beliefs that still exist in China today” (Chen, 2017, p. 510).

With the rapid growth of peer-to-peer accommodation, the guest–host relationship has attracted increasing attention, particularly peer-to-peer accommodation's ability to offer closer guest–host interactions (Guttentag, 2015; Yannopoulou, 2013). The intimate nature of these interactions can be a source of concern for both guests and hosts, as both parties are required to share their personal and private space with strangers (Dolnicar, 2017, chap. 1).

Sharing of space can be especially challenging when both parties have distinctly different cultural backgrounds. Importantly, the host–guest relationship may change when guests are involved in a financial transaction with the hosts, as in the context of Airbnb. However, it is hard to determine about how and when this will happen, as Airbnb has blurred the boundary of commercial and private space. In fact, “not all guests are the same. Not all hosts are the same” (Hardy & Dolnicar, 2017a, p. 170, chap. 15). Therefore, whether the host–guest paradigm will change owing to a financial transaction in the Airbnb context largely depends on individual guests and their hosts' motivations for using Airbnb. On the host side, although monetary compensation can be a major motivation, other motivations such as social interaction with guests have also been empirically found to play important roles (Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016). Similarly, on the guest side, cheaper rental price or higher performance price ratio may motivate guests to use Airbnb. However, other guests may choose Airbnb for authentic experiences (Guttentag & Smith, 2017). On this basis, individual guests and their hosts' motivations of using Airbnb are often multifarious and overlapping, potentially influencing the guest–host relationship.

While traditional Chinese values play an important role in modern Chinese guests' accommodation experiences (Sun, Tong, & Law, 2015; Tyler, Royo Vela, & Wang, 2008), to what degree these values influence Chinese guests' experiences in peer-to-peer accommodations is unclear. Despite the influence of political, social, and economic changes and the increasing influence of Western culture on China, a set of core traditional values stemming from China's long history has endured through its languages, thinking, and behavior (Davies, Leung, Luk, & Wong, 1995; Fan, 2000; Tsang, 2011). Two interrelated but distinct concepts of Chinese culture—*Mianzi*, or face (public self-image), and *Guanxi* (the Chinese manner of developing and maintaining social connections)—have the potential to significantly influence Chinese guests' peer-to-peer accommodation experiences. This influence is possible because the close guest–host encounter involves both *Mianzi* exchange and relationship building between both parties: “Peer-to-peer accommodation is as much about the hosts as it is about the guests” (Moon, Miao, Hanks, & Line, 2019, p. 1). Thus, a need arises to understand guest–host relationships in the inter-cultural encounter, as traditional accommodation types do not provide the same level of contact and engagement with people from various backgrounds (Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016; Yannopoulou, 2013).

## Mianzi and Guanxi

As noted above, two interrelated but distinct Chinese cultural practices heavily influence Chinese people's social interactions, interpersonal dynamics, and behavior (Cheung, Wu, Chan, & Wong, 2009; Lin, Xi, & Lueptow, 2013; Xin & Pearce, 1996). *Mianzi* refers to the desire to gain and maintain a positive public self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1978), while *Guanxi* is “a special type of personal relationships or social connections based on mutual interests and benefits that bonds the exchange partners through reciprocal obligations and exchange of favours” (Chen, Huang, & Sternquist, 2011, p. 569).

An important philosophical underpinning of both cultural practices is Confucianism (Chan, 2008; Chen & Chen, 2004; Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998). The notion of *Mianzi* exchange among the Chinese plays a significant role in establishing and maintaining their *Guanxi* with each other (Hwang, 1987; Punnett & Yu, 1990). Under the influence of Confucianism, *Mianzi* and its exchange process ensure a level of consideration among Chinese people during their activities in the process of establishing and maintaining *Guanxi* (Leung & Yee-kwong Chan, 2003). If people gain equal or more *Mianzi* as a favour from the other party during the exchange process, both sides are likely to benefit from a positive *Guanxi*, which facilitates a stable and reciprocal *Mianzi*, or exchange relationship (Hwang, 1987). In contrast, a negative *Guanxi* between two parties is likely to develop if one's *Mianzi* is threatened during the exchange process, which may occur when one is laughed at or feels disrespected, ignored, or rejected by the other party (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Han, Li, & Hwang, 2005). In a worst-case scenario, the *Mianzi* exchange process will be terminated and hostility may be created on both sides.

## Airbnb hosts

The literature on Airbnb hosts focuses mainly on two distinct but interrelated areas. The first stream explores the influences of hosts' profiles and reviews presented on Airbnb's official website. This exploration extends to rental price (e.g., Ert, Fleischer, & Magen, 2016), racial discrimination (e.g., Edelman & Luca, 2014; Kakar, Voelz, Wu, & Franco, 2018), and satisfaction (e.g., Johnson & Neuhofer, 2017). The second stream focuses on the psychological aspects of being an Airbnb host. An interview study revealed that both financial and social reasons motivate hosts to exchange hospitality services for money (Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015). Similarly, another study found that the financial benefits of hosting play a positive role in securing a reciprocal host–guest relationship (Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016), and an online survey of Airbnb hosts showed that income, social interactions, and sharing are major motivators for becoming an Airbnb host (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016). Relatedly, an investigation uncovered three main types of peer-to-peer hosts—capitalists, befrienders, and ethicists—with Airbnb hosts usually being a mixture of all three types (Hardy & Dolnicar, 2017a, chap. 15). Interestingly, other research found that a love-hate relationship exists between hosts and the Airbnb platform (Hardy & Dolnicar, 2017b, chap. 16).

While the studies above provide a number of insights, Cheng (2016) argues via an extensive literature review that there is a need to understand Airbnb hosts' interactions with guests who have a distinctively different cultural background. Despite recent evidence suggesting that Airbnb guests' experiences are similar across cultures (Brochado, Troilo, & Shah, 2017), careful examination of this generalization is needed, since unlike traditional accommodation providers, Airbnb is likely to provide opportunities for guests that would be unavailable in more traditional forms of accommodation, particularly the depth and engagement of contact with the Airbnb host in a home environment (Pearce & Wu, 2017). This depth and close engagement can lead to inter-cultural experiences of different values, attitudes, beliefs and social norms. Therefore, exploring Airbnb hosts' experiences with Chinese guests is timely and necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the inter-cultural experience for both guests and hosts.

## Methods

### Data collection

The Airbnb online community forum served as the primary source of data. As the forum states, it is devoted to a global community of Airbnb hosts who “join the conversation and connect with other hosts who are creating a world where anyone can belong” (Airbnb, 2018a). At the time of data collection, the community had 470,968 members with a total of 699,882 posts. One of the authors searched relevant discussion threads on Airbnb hosts' experiences with Chinese guests using the key word “Chinese.” Initial searches resulted in 417 conversation threads with a total of 10,918 replies. These conversation threads were then reviewed one by one. Only conversation threads that pertained to Airbnb hosts' experiences with Chinese guests and that were written in English were then selected for analysis. As a result, 25 posts with a total of 507 replies were analyzed. The conversation threads included 84 stories describing Airbnb hosts' experiences with Chinese guests and 41 posts discussing corresponding strategies of hosting Chinese guests. However, some overlap occurred between hosts' stories and coping strategies, as some stories not only documented hosts' experiences with Chinese guests but also contained relevant strategies. Fig. 1 is a typical example of the type of conversation tread posted by an Airbnb host.

Ethical clearance was not required in this study as Kozinets (2010, p. 151) notes, the “download of existing posts does not strictly qualify as human subjects research. It is only where interaction or intervention occurs that consent is required.” Key information from the posts was recorded, including posting time, superhost status, place of residency, and content of the posts.

While online forums are a useful source of data for investigating Airbnb hosts' experience by providing an “unadulterated first-person perspective” (Hookway, 2008, p. 107), particularly in an exploratory study of this type, the unsolicited nature of the data should be acknowledged. Like any research using online data, online forums offer naturally occurring communicative exchanges

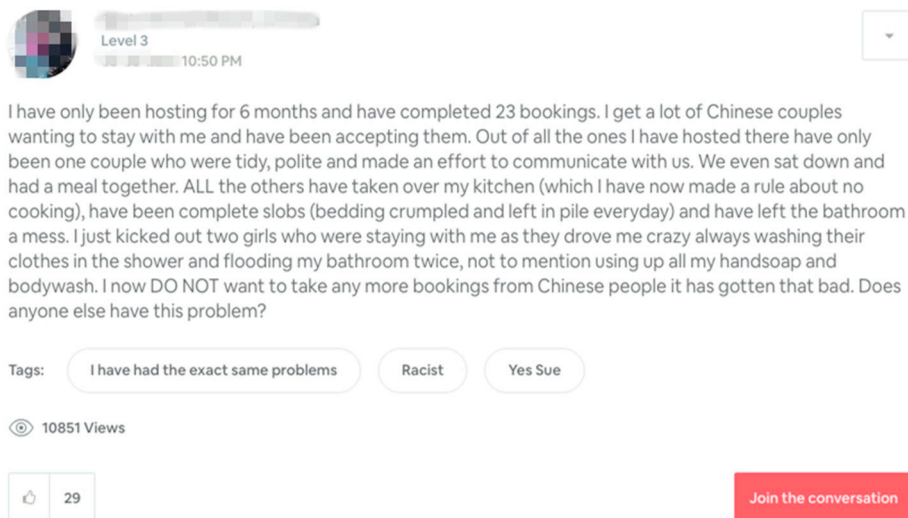


Fig. 1. An example of a post on Airbnb online community forum.

between users (Kozinets, 2010; Mkono, 2018). Therefore, some issues might not be identified as culturally specific, but collectively they demonstrate the complexity of host–guest relationship and therefore offer a robust corpus of information about a particular phenomenon (Mkono, 2018). In addition, while some bias may be present and also it is virtually impossible to assess whether the postings are true, the postings from Airbnb hosts are less intrusive and subject to less researcher bias when compared with other research methods such as ethnography (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017; Mkono, 2016). The postings from Airbnb hosts collectively reflect how inter-cultural encounters affect the guest–host relationship from an insider perspective. It is particularly helpful for an exploratory approach to investigate emerging phenomena (Wu & Pearce, 2014), as in the present research. In particular, this inductive approach using social media data provides opportunities to build theoretical propositions (Kozinets, 2010).

### Data analysis

Analysis of the data occurred in four stages. First, the authors read and re-read each post to identify key issues associated with Chinese guests. Second, issue co-occurrence was employed to identify the relational insights of each issue. If two issues co-occur in each post, then a relationship strength measure is established. That is, if two issues co-occur more often in posts, they are closely related.

Gephi software was used to perform the issue co-occurrence analysis. Connections between the issues are based on the weight of the issue's co-occurrence in each story, the distances between any issue through normalized strength scores, and the size of the circles indicating the number of times the issues were mentioned across all stories (Schweinsberg, Darcy, & Cheng, 2017). This network helps visualize and quantify not only each issue's perceived importance among hosts but also the relationship between them. In this case, when the issue communication occurs, other issues such as review, manner, damage, and mess are more likely to occur at the same time (Fig. 3). The innovative use of network analysis in this study was designed to harness the power of qualitative inquiry (Schweinsberg et al., 2017; Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015).

In the third stage, the various interpretations of these issues were identified, as this process can help to understand Airbnb hosts' perceptions and subsequently help with the interpretation of the coping strategies. Fourth, coping strategies pertaining to issues occurring in the first step were identified.

The researchers in this study are native mainland Chinese and are thus members of the population under study (Kanuha, 2000). Importantly, this “insider” approach enhances the researchers' expertise and facilitates an in-depth exploration of the area under investigation (Adler & Adler, 1987; Asselin, 2003). In addition, the researchers were aware that a potential “insider bias” can creep in during the data analysis process. To minimize bias, self-reflection in the form of written notes was constantly employed during the research process (Tilley, Chambers, & Mackenzie, 1996). An audit trail was also maintained throughout the process, whereby the collected data and interpretation were reviewed and discussed in an open and transparent process (Asselin, 2003). This practice helped the researchers gain a deeper understanding of the social phenomena and the relational insights relating to Airbnb hosts' issues, interpretations, and strategies.

## Findings

### Basic information on the data

Table 1 shows that the data included 84 stories written by 69 Airbnb hosts and 41 strategies offered by 31 hosts. As the stories and

**Table 1**  
Basic information of the Airbnb hosts.

	Stories		Strategies	
Place of residency	United States	26	United States	11
	Australia	13	Australia	5
	United Kingdom	14	United Kingdom	6
	Canada	4	Canada	4
	Netherlands	2	Norway	2
	Norway	2	Netherlands	1
	Bermuda	1	Slovenia	1
	Croatia	1	Switzerland	1
	Italy	1		
	Morocco	1		
	New Zealand	1		
	Poland	1		
	Slovenia	1		
	Switzerland	1		
Status	Superhost	36	Superhost	15
	Non-superhost	33	Non-superhost	16

coping strategies were mostly written by hosts who reside in North America, Europe, and Australia, the hosts of our study primarily represent Western hosts. A further check of the profile of each host in the study indicates that only one host was Asian, but this host stated clearly in her profile that she was born and grew up in Canada. Nearly half of the Airbnb hosts have the Airbnb superhost badge (stories: 52%, strategies: 48%). As indicated on the Airbnb website (Airbnb, 2018b), superhosts have hosted at least 10 stays per year, maintain a 90% response rate, have at least 80% of reviews rated as five-star, and rarely cancel their reservations. These superhosts were considered to be experienced. For those who do not have superhost status, it is unclear whether all of the commentators have had positive experiences as Airbnb hosts in the past, although some commentators clearly shared their positive hosting experiences via stories and strategies. In addition, the profiles of the hosts in this study are not entirely complete. At present, it is not possible to conclusively claim how many Airbnb hosts have multiple listings, or how many offer a space in their own home or have a standalone property. However, our research shows a mix of these.

The average length of each story collected was 218 words ( $SD = 166.27$ ). Fig. 2 shows the word length distribution. Only 22% of the stories have a word length of more than 300.

#### Network of key issues

Fig. 3 illustrates the network of 13 key issues identified, comprising 13 nodes and 42 edges. To identify the importance of each issue in the stories, weighted degrees of each issue were calculated. The weighted degree of a particular node is calculated according to the amount of edge connected to a node, but weighted by each edge—a measure of the importance of a node within the network (Opsahl, Agneessens, & Skvoretz, 2010). The results, along with the network, indicate that issues relating to mess, manner, communication, house rules, and bathroom were the most frequently mentioned in the stories with a weighted degree (37, 36, 28, 17, 15 respectively) higher than the average (14.3).

#### Mess

Mess was the most discussed issue with a weighted degree of 37, and was an important concern. These situations included the cleanliness of the room such as messy rooms, unwashed dishes, not making up the bed, and personal garbage. As Chinese guests are

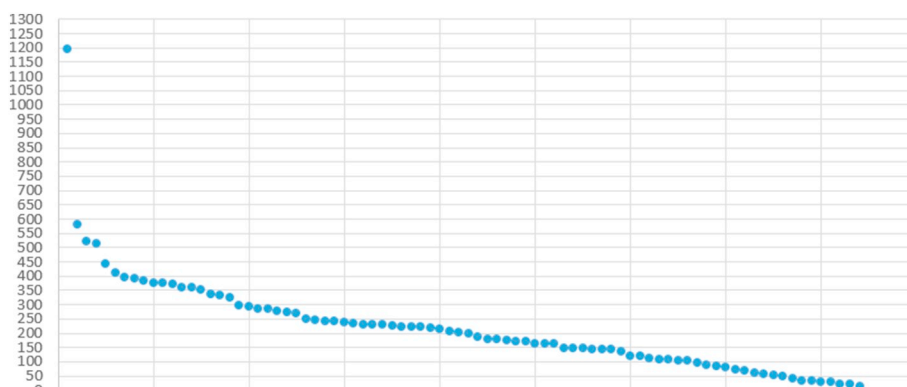


Fig. 2. Word length distribution.

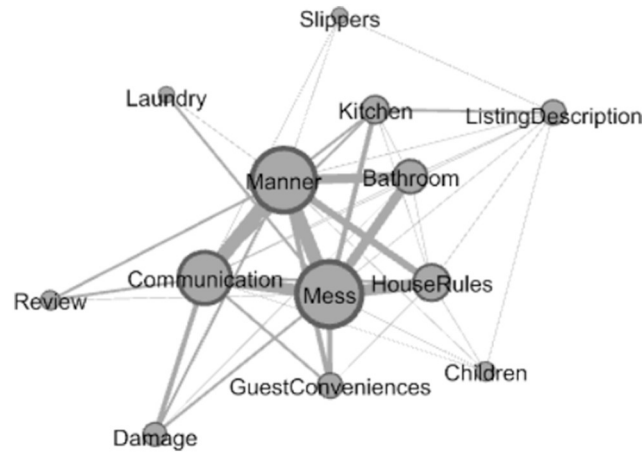


Fig. 3. Network of key issues.

relatively unfamiliar with Airbnb, they tend to view and treat hosts' places as hotels, expecting the same kinds of services. Chinese guests tend to assume that Airbnb hosts would take care of mess for them during their stay.

*I think the issue with guests from China...So it could be just a situation where the guests honestly don't have much of a clue about housekeeping, and assume that in your house, as in their house, someone is paid to come and clean up after them.*

(Airbnb host 60, United States)

*Yesterday 4 students from China left after 3 night stay. Nice people BUT BIG disaster... CHAOS—Kitchen under filthy foodstuffs/all plates/cutlery/pans/cooker etc. just abandoned/garbage all over the floor/parts of cooked chicken, half eaten chicken on the table cloth and floor—not even on any plates...*

(Airbnb host 96, United Kingdom)

#### Manner

The second issue that emerged from the analysis was the Chinese guests' manner. A mix of positive and negative responses was reported by Airbnb hosts. Some hosts used positive words to describe their experiences, acknowledging that Chinese guests were warm, curious, and considerate (e.g., some Chinese guests left gifts for the hosts). However, in a number of negative responses hosts described guests as inconsiderate, rude, lazy, and demanding. These comments largely related to Chinese guests disturbing their hosts and other guests at night, expecting the same kind of services that a hotel would provide, and demanding help from the hosts. Some hosts wondered if these behaviors were related to Chinese culture and stated that “the more money they (Chinese) have, the worse they have been!”

*Sometimes I want to tell them that if they want a hotel service, then go and pay for one! All part of hosting I guess, but the issues always seem to arise with those of a Chinese culture and rarely with others.*

(Airbnb host 4, United Kingdom)

*Most Chinese are either too spoiled to walk 1km I suppose or too afraid... I am mostly absent from the place that I rent, I just give them the keys and give them brochures and instructions so they can get to know the location themselves, but it seems if there is no one to hand hold them, they are utterly and completely lost.*

(Airbnb host 6, Slovenia)

#### Communication

Communication was the third most commonly discussed issue with a weighted degree of 28, and referred to various barriers between the Chinese guests and their Airbnb hosts. The most common observation posted was that Chinese guests generally had a limited mastery of English. As a result, Airbnb hosts felt that Chinese guests were unable to understand their instructions and rules, or simply misunderstood their messages during their stay.

*Fun. Evidently he never turns the air on and gives up. Etc. Either he doesn't read House Rules (English turns out to be poor again) or...*

(Airbnb host 107, United States)

*I just had my guests from China check-in and they are very unhappy. I have my place listed as a guest house with 2 beds, a king size bed and a sofa sleeper. They thought that meant that I had two bedrooms.*

(Airbnb host 49, United States)

Some hosts felt that Chinese guests are hard to communicate with:

*No greetings, no pleasantries, no gratitude, but minimal communications during her stay, other than “nihao” (hi in Chinese) three times without looking you in the eye...*

(Airbnb host 83, Canada)

An interesting comment of one Airbnb host was that Chinese guests sometimes had many questions because of their low trust levels in Airbnb. The host suspected this was “because people often get scammed and trapped in China.”

*Chinese guests from Mainland do not seem to trust Airbnb as much as Westerners. Many would inquire me about the payment methods and exchange rate repeatedly, showing me an air of skepticism.*

(Airbnb host 72, Canada)

### House rules

Airbnb hosts posted various reflections on issues relating to how Chinese guests ignored house rules and, in some cases, even violated them. They commented that the main reasons for this problem was Chinese guests' lack of English, daily habits, and simply treating Airbnb in the same way they would treat a hotel. Importantly, some Airbnb hosts explicitly stated that their privacy had been invaded by Chinese guests.

*My house rule states clearly that guests should not enter our family room and kitchen area unless invited by us. It is our place to sleep and rest. However, they repeatedly entering this area with Zimo (the husband) violated it when my wife and I were not fully dressed.*

(Airbnb host 85, United States)

*We hate to enforce any rules, but the past few bookings were beyond a joke. The majority of the guests completely ignore the 11 pm cutoff and are coming and going to the bathroom until about 3 am!*

(Airbnb host 15, United Kingdom)

### Bathroom

Use of the bathroom was the fifth most posted issue, which covered problems such as wet floors, the use (misuse) of a shower curtain, and late-night showering. Some Airbnb hosts were puzzled as to why bathroom floors could become wet when the shower curtain should have diverted water down the shower drain. One explanation was that Chinese guests had little knowledge of how to use a shower curtain. That is,

*The shower curtain was left outside the tub and the floor was flooded.*

*The guests showered with the door wide open and got so much water everywhere that it came through the ceiling in the bedroom below. That bathroom floor is tiled but, like you say, that doesn't mean it is a wet room and that you can flood it with water.*

(Airbnb host 28, United Kingdom)

*We're really starting to struggle with most of our East Asian, particularly, Chinese guests...They slam the doors, have showers which completely drench the whole bathroom (I don't even know how it's possible?).*

(Airbnb host 15, United Kingdom)

Showering late at night was also frequently mentioned, resulting in Chinese guests being seen as inconsiderate toward their hosts.

*I now have a policy that my guests not shower after 10 pm, in the shared guest bathroom, because I discovered my Chinese guests will do so, when my other guests and I have already gone to bed, thus waking others up.*

(Airbnb host 11, United States)

Some Airbnb hosts were also puzzled as to why Chinese guests did not use their bath towels.

*None of our large bath towels were used by the guests, our bathrobes were in high demand both day and night and I am still trying to understand how the family dried themselves after multiple showers.*

(Airbnb host 35, United Kingdom)

### Damage

Posts also mentioned damage to various amenities, such as the carpet, table, and dishwasher. The main reason for damage was that Chinese guests did not really know how to use the facilities properly.

*I'm going to assume my guests didn't realise it was wrong to put about a cup of dishwashing liquid into the dishwasher, (it was a very interesting sight like giant snowdrifts). The guests were Chinese but spoke very good English...*

(Airbnb host 94, Australia)

*They lacked common sense by using a Chinese hot water pot (200 volts) and inserted into our electrical outlet (100 volts) while running multiple appliances. They overloaded the electrical circuit, burnt the fuse, offered no apology; but blamed our US electrical circuits.*

(Airbnb host 85, United States)

Despite the extent of some damage, some Airbnb hosts felt helpless and expressed that they are not sure how to deal with Chinese



guests when damage occurs.

*I had Chinese group stay... They had also marked the top of an antique dining table by putting the hot kettle on it. I did ask to withhold the \$500 bond I set but within 24 h I cancelled this request as I didn't want to cause trouble and as I was new to Airbnb and was more important to me to have good review...*

(Airbnb host 87, Australia)

#### Kitchen

Use of the kitchen was an issue that received a number of negative comments. Chinese guests tended to use the kitchen quite often, cooking and occupying space in the refrigerator, and Airbnb hosts expressed concerns over the cleanliness of the kitchen after cooking and the lingering smell of the food.

*She made a big mess of the room by splashing food and cooking oil all over the floor. She also prepared smelly food (using onions, garlic and spice...) from 6:30 am to 10 pm.*

(Airbnb host 85, United States)

*They took over the fridge and kitchen with how much food they brought and how many pans, plates and cutlery they used.*

(Airbnb host 10, United Kingdom)

#### Other issues with low weighted degrees

A number of other issues received relatively low weighted degrees, including listing description, slippers, laundry, guest conveniences, children, reviews, and haggling.

#### Listing description

Listing description refers to the fact that Chinese guests tended to not read the description of the accommodation or simply ignored it.

*This weekend I hosted my first guests from China in a while... I have even stated on my listing that slippers aren't provided, but I guess people don't read that far!*

(Airbnb host 39, United Kingdom)

#### Guest conveniences

Guest conveniences refer to Chinese guests' tendency to take away or use up amenities that may be useful to guests during their stay at the property or use amenities within close proximity to the room without asking.

*They took all the courtesy guest amenities including all the Kurig coffee pods, Bug spray, sun screen and the entire basket of "if you forgot it" items I leave.*

(Airbnb host 40, United States)

*We leave conveniences out for our guests... they consumed everything including all the toilet paper and paper towels. We have only had 5 star reviews so far and outstanding guests. If I can avoid Chinese again... I will. What a nightmare!*

(Airbnb host 44, Canada)

#### Laundry

Airbnb hosts reported that Chinese guests were constantly doing laundry and also tended to wash everything upon arrival.

*I've had terrible experiences with many Chinese guests... Constantly doing laundry in the laundry room, which is next to my room.*

(Airbnb host 13, United States)

*How could their laundry be dirty? What I'm thinking is that they are washing ALL of the bedding upon arrival. The very nice people that arrived from China... They also did several loads of laundry and started to do more at 4 am. I'm practicing my AirBnB deep breathes. I strive to be a good host and I need to understand this culture better so I can make both of us more comfortable.*

(Airbnb host 51, United States)

#### Slippers

Slippers were reported by Airbnb hosts as items that were frequently requested by Chinese guests. Hosts were surprised and sometimes puzzled as to why Chinese guests needed slippers.

*This weekend I hosted my first guests from China in a while. Of course, moments after check in, they asked for slippers and look confused when I said I didn't have any.*

(Airbnb host 39, United Kingdom)



**Table 2**  
Linking main issues, interpretations and coping strategies.

Stage	Main issues	Interpretations from hosts	Specific coping strategies from hosts	Overarching strategies
Booking	Haggling Unnecessary and excessive enquires (communication)	Haggling is “typical with the Chinese community”. “Because people often get scammed and trapped in China”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reject/accept haggling from Chinese guests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learn more about Chinese guests and cultural difference</li> </ul>
Check in	Bringing extra children when checking in	“I have experienced this problem a number of times now and nearly all were Chinese guests.” “The cultural differences take a toll if you are not used to them” “Bad people” “Sadly, they also see their hosts as their Filipinos maids” “For \$20 a day, no, there is no maid service”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reject/accept bookings from Chinese guests who bring extra children when checking in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Direct, clear and progressive communication</li> </ul>
During the stay	Leaving hosts' house in a mess: Garbage/rubbish/junk Unwashed dishes/plates Don't make bed Don't do housekeeping Leftover food/food scraps Damages to hosts' amenities, including: carpets, table/desk, fuse, tiles of bathroom, hired car, cabinet, thermostat, water filtration system and dishwasher	“I had assumed they could read English language labels, perhaps not” “They lacked common sense”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Claim for the damage made by Chinese guests</li> <li>● Show guests around upon initial check in</li> <li>● Provide house manual and instructions of appliances and translate them into Chinese</li> <li>● Ensure on-site host</li> <li>● Translate house rule into Chinese</li> <li>● Explain house rule to Chinese guests proactively</li> <li>● Explain house rule to Chinese guests in advance</li> </ul>	N/S
	Ignore/violate/don't read house rules	“It was more that they were rude and inconsiderate people and you get a few of those in every part of the world!” “They simply do not respect rules and reminders mean nothing to them”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add new house rules about shower time</li> <li>● Provide mop/swift wipe/bathmat to prevent wet floor/flooding floor</li> <li>● Provide haircaps for Chinese guests so that they don't need to wash hair during the evening shower</li> </ul>	
	Bathroom: Wet floor/flooding floor Late night/long/late and noisy showers Don't use shower curtain Use hairdryer at late night	N/S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add new house rules about the use of kitchen</li> <li>● Provide utensils/ingredients for Chinese guests to cook their own food</li> <li>● Cook/have meals together with Chinese guests</li> <li>● Stop Chinese guests from using kitchen</li> </ul>	
	Kitchen: Cooking all the time Cooking smelly/delicious food Use a lot of plates/pans/cutlery	“Cultures can have certain differences and tendencies and habits that are hard for people from other cultures to understand.” “The more money they have, the worse they have been!” “I know that Chinese guests like to cook their own food.” “I have no problem in explaining cultural differences as it helps them in their travel experiences”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure clear and thorough listing description</li> <li>● Translate listing description into Chinese</li> <li>● Add new house rules with regard to inconsiderate behaviors of Chinese guests</li> <li>● Offer travel information/advice to Chinese guests</li> </ul>	
	Don't read/hasn't read listing description	N/S		
	Manner: Inconsiderate (disturbing hosts/other guests) Demanding (asking for maid/hotel service/company/tour guide) Clean/nice/lovely/sweet/friendly/respectful	“His wife told us he was very shy and childlike but how hard is it to say 'hi.' so I think he was just rude!” “They want to see/visit as much as possible” “I think a lot of them still see an Airbnb host as a small hotel with amenity as a hotel”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Try to become friends with Chinese guests</li> </ul>	

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Stage	Main issues	Interpretations from hosts	Specific coping strategies from hosts	Overarching strategies
Check out	Communication: English (language barrier/good English) Uncommunicative (cold personality/no response) Cultural misunderstandings Miscommunication (complain/problems) Amenities/conveniences: Use amenities and hosts' personal belongings without asking for permission Use up guest conveniences provided by hosts Laundry: Doing laundry all the time Washing everything in the house upon arrival Asking for slippers	N/S	N/S	
	Spilled children	<p>"Treating the shared bathroom like a laundry room...that is definitely a cultural thing I know"</p> <p>"I do find that I need to understand Chinese culture better"</p> <p>"I have been asked for these and the guests seem surprised when I don't have them, but other nationalities don't seem to expect them"</p> <p>"Now I'm regretting that I didn't specifically pull aside the children and tell them that it's very rude to run on the floors and jump off the sofa"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kick out Chinese guests</li> <li>Add new house rules about the use of laundry</li> <li>Provide slippers or cheap flip flops</li> </ul>	
	Door: Slamming doors Leaving doors/gates unlocked/opened Take away guest conveniences and hosts' belongings when checking out, including towel, coffee pods, paper towels, bug spray, snacks, sun screen, information books and soap	N/S	N/S	
	Review: Lower than average rating Never give 5-star review	N/S	N/S	
Post stay		<p>"I think it is cultural."</p> <p>"I have grown to believe that in Asian cultures it is generally mostly appropriate to express criticism but not so much praise?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reject bookings from Chinese guests</li> <li>Only take bookings from Chinese guests with excellent reviews</li> </ul>	

## Children

Chinese guests sometimes surprisingly check in with their children without telling their hosts. Further, Chinese children can be as rude as their parents, who seem not to be able to control them.

*I have experienced this problem a number times now and nearly all were Chinese guests... The first few times I let the couple of extra kids stay but now I don't. The most recent guests absolutely assured me they booked for 4 adults and 2 children. That is not possible with a limit of 4 guests at the property.*

(Airbnb host 101, Australia)

*Their 6 year old screamed "mama!" continuously as he repeatedly opened, then slammed the door of the 41 year old trailer without a peep from the parents.*

(Airbnb host 40, United States)

## Review/rating

Airbnb hosts were not happy with Chinese guests' ratings, as they tended to give low scores. Some Airbnb hosts suspect that this is due to culture-specific values—"there is no 'perfect' in Chinese culture." One Airbnb host reported that Chinese guests never gave 5-star ratings, despite being quite satisfied with their overall accommodation experiences.

*The worst thing is they never give 5 star reviews and so my host rating has suffered, as much as I have tried to be a great host to them.*

(Airbnb host 13, United States)

*I think it is cultural. Two very nice Chinese boys gave me 4 stars for one category and when I messaged to ask, they said it was because in their culture they would never give 5 stars.*

(Airbnb host 26, Australia)

## Haggling

Airbnb hosts perceived that haggling is "typical with the Chinese community," and Chinese guests sometimes asked Airbnb hosts for price discounts and extra services. Indeed, Airbnb hosts were not sure how helpful they would like to be to please Chinese guests and get a good rating. This finding is in line with prior research findings regarding how flexible an Airbnb host can be (Cheng & Jin, 2019).

*Haggling is atypical in my experience with the Chinese community in general: 1) I love your place so much; 2) But it is beyond my budget; 3) So, can you offer a discount?*

(Airbnb host 72, Canada)

*But this week, I got this tough Chinese Lady who just ask more and more. I am not sure what I should do...First it was days of bargaining the price of the room. After I lowered the price, she started to ask repeatedly for services that a travel agency would provide...*

(Airbnb host 98, United States)

## Strategies

To address the various issues related to hosting Chinese guests, Airbnb hosts developed a series of strategies. Many of these strategies are specific, demonstrating hosts' commitment to running their small business in an effective manner. However, some of the strategies could be construed as discriminatory. Moreover, hosts may use the Airbnb forum as a way to express their dissatisfaction. Particularly, two commonly discussed strategies aim to address these issues: (1) direct, clear, and progressive communication, and (2) learning more about Chinese guests and cultural differences. Table 2 presents the interpretations of various issues and the corresponding strategies taken by hosts. Linking the identified issues, interpretations, and strategies associated with hosting Chinese guests helps to understand the process that Airbnb hosts follow to develop their strategies.

### Direct, clear, and progressive communication

As indicated earlier, Airbnb hosts regularly reported that Chinese guests did not understand or read the house rules. Thus, many hosts highlighted direct, clear, and progressive communication, including the translation of house rules into Chinese, repeating the rules in person, and setting up new rules. However, despite such efforts, some hosts found that Chinese guests did not listen or seek to find out what they should not do.

*He had no concept of personal boundaries—going into areas that were off limits... taking furniture from the rest of the house for his room... I talked to him several times about boundaries to no avail.*

(Airbnb host 63, United States)

While the guest in the story above might be considered an inconsiderate person regardless of cultural background, the fact that he

was told about personal boundaries by the Western host made him lose *Mianzi*. In Chinese culture, openly criticizing or blaming someone for his or her misconduct is considered to be a *Mianzi*-losing situation, especially when other people are present, such as the person's family or other guests (Cardon & Scott, 2007). When the Chinese guest sensed that his *Mianzi* had been threatened, he employed a *Mianzi*-protecting behavior. *Mianzi*-protecting behaviors range from the termination of *Mianzi* exchange (e.g., room cancellation after the first night stay) or showing anger and hostility. Often, the initial unsuccessful *Mianzi* exchange between the Western host and Chinese guest could have been avoided with a more constructive communication style. In the above example, the Chinese guest disregarded and violated the house rules as a form of retaliation. One Airbnb host described her undesirable interaction with a Chinese guest owing to improper communication:

*She replied with an annoyed expression, but eventually agreed. Couple of hours later the bathroom was worse than ever before. She has now started to do this even more frequently.*

(Airbnb host 64, Italy)

#### *Learning more about Chinese guests and cultural differences*

Airbnb hosts also recommended learning more about Chinese guests and cultural differences. This strategy included gaining a better understanding of Chinese cultural values, social norms, and daily habits, as well as the provision of necessary amenities and food, such as hot water, tea, a toothbrush, and an invitation to join the Airbnb hosts for meals. One Airbnb host stated that “cultures can have certain differences and tendencies and habits that are hard for people from other cultures to understand.” Indeed, many of these strategies proved to be effective.

*Most Chinese people drink hot water, not tea, just hot water. I always make a pot of hot water for tea but never put the tea bag inside, guests can choose their tea flavour and Chinese guests just take water.*

(Airbnb host 68, Netherlands)

*Since we like to travel internationally, we are sensitive to cultural differences...we go to the Dollar store and purchase house sandals (\$1 - each) and packaged toothbrush with toothpaste which is typical in Asian hotels and guest houses.*

(Airbnb host 5, United States)

More importantly, Western hosts who treated Chinese guests as friends and engaged in social activities with them (e.g., having dinner together) or offering warm hospitality services (e.g., advice about sightseeing) usually shared positive hosting experiences.

*Though we are aware of the demonization of Chinese tourists all over the world...a young guy who would like to invite me to dinner after I took him to a friend's dinner party... I loved them so much and I miss them so much.*

(Airbnb host 67, Canada)

However, many Airbnb hosts in this study did not put forth a strong effort and their understanding of their guests remained superficial. One Airbnb host simply attributed the cold personality characteristics of Chinese guests to the widespread corruption that occurs in that country:

*The institutional corruption from top down in the PRC that has disrupted the traditional belief system, distorted people's moral and ethical values, and made people anti-social.*

(Airbnb host 72, Canada)

Finally, some Airbnb hosts commented that they simply wanted to reject all Chinese guests or prevent Chinese guests from cooking in their home.

In sum, these strategies and associated interpretations clearly show that while Airbnb hosts seemingly have some understanding of Chinese guests from different channels, their knowledge was generally quite superficial.

#### **Theoretical framework of the inter-cultural host–guest relationship**

Building on the findings and the theoretical perspective on the guest–host paradigm and the *Guanxi* and *Mianzi* cultural factors, an explanatory model was established to (1) connect a wide range of concepts into a set of manageable relationships, and (2) demonstrate the dynamic relationship. Fig. 4 shows how the guest–host relationship evolves in an inter-cultural context. These include five guest–host modes: stranger–stranger, friend–stranger, friend–friend, enemy–stranger, and enemy–enemy. Some of these modes are explained in the Table 3.

When online communication first takes place between Chinese guests and Western hosts, both parties treat each other as strangers. Soon after the Airbnb hosts accept the Chinese guests' booking requests, Chinese guests shift to a different mode of social relationship, treating the guest–host relationship as friend–friend. In contrast, Airbnb hosts are likely to continue to treat Chinese guests in a stranger–stranger mode. These perspectives continue during the stay. However, along with various interactions between Chinese guests and their Western hosts, a series of host–guest relationships begin to occur, which are mediated by *Mianzi* and *Guanxi*. The relevant outcomes depend largely on how Western Airbnb hosts deal with and understand *Mianzi* and *Guanxi*.

When Western Airbnb hosts take advantage of the *Mianzi* exchange process with Chinese guests, they are likely to secure a positive *Guanxi*, moving to a friend–friend relationship. As the study suggests, hosts' engagement in ritualistic behaviors and hosts' presence when guests first arrive indicate hospitality for Chinese guests. The literature suggests that despite the language barriers,

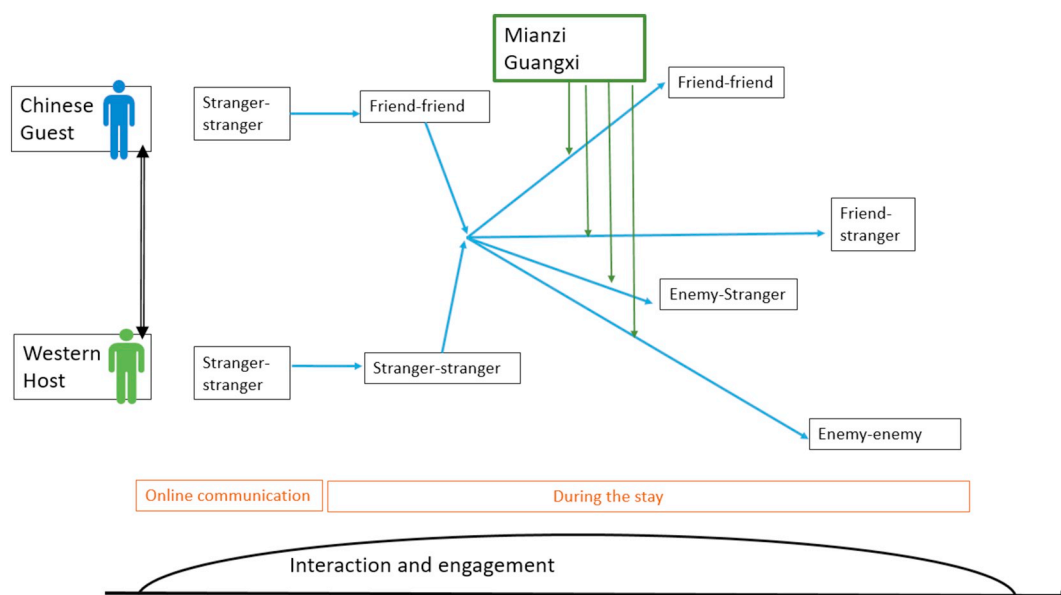


Fig. 4. Inter-cultural guest-host relationship.

**Table 3**  
Guest-host modes during the inter-cultural encounters.

Mode	Explanation
Friend-stranger	The “friend-stranger” mode shows that Chinese guests still consider themselves as friends to the hosts. However, to Western hosts, their Chinese guests are merely strangers who share the same properties—a person with whom the host is unacquainted.
Friend-friend	The “friend-friend” mode denotes that both Chinese guests and Western hosts treat each other as friends by attaching to each other by affection or esteem.
Enemy-stranger	In either “enemy-to-stranger” or an “enemy-to-enemy” mode, Chinese guests are antagonistic to the Western hosts. In return, the Western
Enemy-enemy	host may still treat the Chinese guest as a “stranger” or as an “enemy” the Western host hates.

ritualistic behaviors such as handshaking, smiling, and greetings are crucial factors in making Chinese guests feel respected and cared for (Tyler et al., 2008). Consequently, *Mianzi* exchange with Chinese guests is likely to be guaranteed via ritualistic behaviors performed by Western Airbnb hosts. Even without these behaviors, Chinese guests can still maintain an amicable friend-stranger relationship. The notions of *Zhu* (host) and *Ke* (guest) indicate that being accepted as a guest of hosts signals to Chinese tourists that they are friends to the hosts (Chen, 2017). From this perspective, issues such as entering hosts' private space or using hosts' belongings without permission are likely to be associated with Chinese tourists' idea of being hosts' friends. As this study indicates, the majority of Western hosts who became friends with Chinese guests did so via activities such as having dinner together or offering sightseeing advice, which resulted in positive hosting experiences.

However, once *Mianzi* and *Guanxi* are not maintained (Chen, 2017), a shift is likely to occur, to an enemy-stranger relationship or even worse to an enemy-enemy relationship. Thus, resorting to house rules in an uncompromising manner to settle potential disputes with Chinese guests makes establishing positive *Guanxi* difficult. The house rules of Western hosts are frequently ignored and violated by Chinese tourists despite the hosts' repeated emphasis.

## Discussion

Close guest-host encounters challenge the conventional wisdom articulated in the existing accommodation literature. Airbnb hosts take on various roles, ranging from informal service providers and entertainers to co-creators of the tourists' experiences. Such engagement not only creates opportunities for Airbnb hosts to experience how Chinese guests behave, but also starts to challenge the hosts' own norms. An understanding of traditional Chinese culture, in particular the way in which they frame the guest-host relationship (*Zhu* and *Ke*), would greatly assist Western Airbnb hosts in avoiding some of the pitfalls that have been outlined in this study.

First, it is important for Western Airbnb hosts to customize their communication styles to avoid situations where the *Mianzi* of Chinese guests is likely to be threatened, such as scolding guests for behaviors or challenging their lack of English (Cardon & Scott, 2007; Chen, 1990). The situation will be made worse if family members, friends, and other guests are present and a collective *Mianzi* occurs rather than an individual one (Hoare, Butcher, & O'Brien, 2010). In addition, *Guanxi* is a flexible and efficient alternative to the binding contract-based relational development of the West, which takes on a more significant role in modern Chinese society

(Wong & Chan, 1999; Yen, Barnes, & Wang, 2011). This perspective on the Airbnb guest–host paradigm provides an explanation for why Western hosts' house rules are frequently ignored and violated by Chinese guests despite the hosts repeated emphasis on them. Airbnb hosts should attempt to avoid directly applying house rules to settle potential disputes by making an effort to establish positive *Guanxi*, which closely links back to *Mianzi*.

Second, eating and drinking are not only physical needs for Chinese people but also are important psychologically (Huang, 1991). Dining offers a fundamental setting for the Chinese to connect with family and friends as well as to develop *Guanxi* with business partners (Butcher & Jin Hoare, 2008; von Weltzien Hoivik, 2007). As the excerpts in this study indicate, Chinese guests like to spend a great deal of time cooking in the kitchen. This tradition can create problems for Western hosts who may not be used to the grease, smell, and complex cooking practices that go into preparing Chinese food. They may ask Chinese guests to cook more mild food or prevent them from cooking Chinese food (e.g., stop them from having access to essential cooking facilities or the whole kitchen). Such a scenario may disappoint the Chinese guests as one of their essential requirements is not being made available to them by the host, resulting in their *Mianzi* being threatened or lost (Ho, 1976). As a result, some Chinese guests may believe that they are being treated as inferior guests/simple friends of the hosts and so their overall experience may become a negative one. In the worst case, Chinese guests may realize that they are merely strangers to the hosts and stop putting effort into the *Zhu-Ke* relationship with their hosts. If this happens, the Chinese guests may immediately terminate their stay or continue but view the host as an enemy. In contrast, Airbnb hosts who invite their Chinese guests to have dinner with them create the basis for a positive host–guest encounter. Thus, our research indicates that without a deeper understanding of *Mianzi* and *Guanxi*, and their influence on the host–guest (*Zhu-Ke*) paradigm, many of the issues reported in this study may not be resolved.

Lastly, besides these important cultural traditions, the current study indicates that many issues raised by Airbnb hosts may not relate to Chinese culture and tradition, even though they were frequently framed by Airbnb hosts as the cause. This prevailing perception undermines the potential for positive host–guest relationships. Thus, the current study is timely as it seeks to better clarify these issues.

## Conclusion

By analyzing Western Airbnb hosts' stories concerning Chinese guests, this study established an intercultural framework to uncover their issues, their interpretations, and their coping strategies for dealing with Chinese guests. Two strategies were proposed: direct, clear, and progressive communication and learning more about Chinese guests and their cultural differences. However, these strategies do not necessarily ensure positive outcomes where the Chinese practices of *Zhu-Ke* and *Guanxi* and *Mianzi* play important roles.

Theoretically, this study empirically supports the argument that business ideas promoted by peer-to-peer accommodation platforms such as “hosting a stranger at home” or “being hosted by a stranger” might be culturally challenging for both the Chinese guests and Western hosts, particularly in light of the host–guest practices of *Zhu-Ke*, which frames the Chinese guest experience in this context (Chen, 2017, p. 508). For the Chinese, “being a guest of the host” largely equates to the host “being a friend of the guest” (Chen, 2017; Peng, 2012). The preliminary evidence based on the *Zhu-Ke* paradigm, suggests that Chinese guest experiences might be different. Therefore, this study calls for further investigation into the claim that the Airbnb experience can be similar across cultures (Brochado et al., 2017). The framework developed in this study, which is based on the theoretical perspective of the host–guest paradigm, provides new insights into the host–guest relationship in the emerging and under-researched area of peer-to-peer accommodation.

While every service encounter has dynamic relationships, the guest–host relationship in the Airbnb context is distinctive, particularly in the intercultural encounters. *Mianzi* and *Guanxi*, and their mediation role on the Chinese *Zhu-Ke* relationship become more salient since Airbnb blurs the boundaries between conventional accommodation providers and private and business transactions (Cheng & Foley, 2018). The accommodation relationship goes beyond conventional understanding of dynamic relationships of service encounter in the hospitality industry, which assumes that all guests are valuable individuals and should receive equal treatment from the hosts regardless of their varied characteristics and backgrounds (Foster & Botterill, 1995; Lashley, 2008). This study advances the understanding of the guest–host paradigm in peer-to-peer accommodation literature from an inter-cultural perspective and also addresses calls for further investigation (Cheng, 2016; Xiang & Dolnicar, 2017) by seeking to better understand how the sharing of private spaces intersects with Chinese tradition and culture in this sphere.

Although this study provides insights into hosts' experiences and their coping strategies with Chinese guests, it has some limitations. Data collected from the Airbnb community forum may not be representative of all Airbnb's hosts' experiences. Thus, to reduce the potential bias of outliers that are often associated with social media content (Crampton et al., 2013; Haklay, 2012), future studies might include other sources of data, such as the Airbnb hosts community on Facebook (e.g., Hardy & Dolnicar, 2017b, chap. 16). In addition, as this research includes only one Airbnb host who is absent from the place, future research including more Airbnb hosts who are absent would generate further insights into the proposed framework and its generalization. The study is also limited in that only Western hosts' stories are selected and analyzed. Future research should seek to analyze Chinese hosts' Airbnb experiences with Chinese guests. This inquiry would provide additional insights into the cross-cultural understanding of Airbnb experiences as well as contribute to the globalization of tourism knowledge.

Finally, Airbnb hosts' stories on Chinese guests in this study present a largely negative perspective. However, the predominant experience may be otherwise, as a number of the Airbnb hosts in this study reported many positive experiences. Indeed, content posted by Airbnb hosts is often contested by their counterparts on the forum. In addition, this study's examination of other posts on this forum indicates that the forum is mainly a place for Airbnb hosts to exchange ideas and information and seek help when required.

Therefore, future studies might investigate whether sharing negative issues related to hosting predominates on the Airbnb forum and whether guests of other nationalities receive similar/different negative comments when compared with Chinese guests.

## References

- Adler, P., & Adler, P. (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Airbnb (2018a). Community center “A global community of hosts like you”. Retrieved from <https://community.withairbnb.com/t5/Community-Center/ct-p/community-center>.
- Airbnb (2018b). What is a superhost? Retrieved from <https://www.airbnb.co.nz/help/article/828/what-is-a-superhost>.
- Aramberri, J. (2001). The host should get lost: Paradigms in the tourism theory. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(3), 738–761. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(00\)00075-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(00)00075-X).
- Asselin, M. E. (2003). Insider research: Issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal of Nurses in Staff Development*, 19(2), 99–103.
- Brochado, A., Troilo, M., & Shah, A. (2017). Airbnb customer experience: Evidence of convergence across three countries. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 63, 210–212.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in language use: Politeness phenomena. In E. N. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction* (pp. 56–289). NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Butcher, K., & Jin Hoare, R. (2008). Do Chinese cultural values affect customer satisfaction/loyalty? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(2), 156–171. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110810852140>.
- Cardon, P. W., & Scott, J. C. (2007). Loss of face among Chinese businesspeople in intracultural and intercultural business interactions. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*, 49(3), 19–39.
- Chan, G. K. Y. (2008). The relevance and value of Confucianism in contemporary business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77(3), 347–360.
- Chan, Y. W. (2006). Coming of age of the Chinese tourists: The emergence of non-Western tourism and host—Guest interactions in Vietnam's border tourism. *Tourist Studies*, 6(3), 187–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797607076671>.
- Chen, V. (1990). Mien Tze at the Chinese dinner table: A study of the interactional accomplishment of face. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 24(1–4), 109–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351819009389334>.
- Chen, X. (2017). Multidimensional study of hospitality and the host-guest paradigm in China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(1), 495–513. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2016-0509>.
- Chen, X. P., & Chen, C. C. (2004). On the intricacies of the Chinese guanxi: A process model of guanxi development. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 21(3), 305–324.
- Chen, Z., Huang, Y., & Sternquist, B. (2011). Guanxi practice and Chinese buyer–supplier relationships: The buyer's perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(4), 569–580. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2010.12.013>.
- Cheng, M. (2016). Sharing economy: A review and agenda for future research. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 57, 60–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2016.06.003>.
- Cheng, M., & Foley, C. (2018). The sharing economy and digital discrimination: The case of Airbnb. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 70, 95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.11.002>.
- Cheng, M., & Jin, X. (2019). What do Airbnb users care about? An analysis of online review comments. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 76, 58–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.04.004>.
- Cheung, M. F. Y., Wu, W., Chan, A. K. K., & Wong, M. M. L. (2009). Supervisor–subordinate guanxi and employee work outcomes: The mediating role of job satisfaction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88(1), 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9830-0>.
- Costello, L., McDermott, M.-L., & Wallace, R. (2017). Netnography: Range of practices, misperceptions, and missed opportunities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917700647. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917700647>.
- Crampton, J. W., Graham, M., Poorthuis, A., Shelton, T., Stephens, M., Wilson, M. W., & Zook, M. (2013). Beyond the geotag: Situating ‘big data’ and leveraging the potential of the geoweb. *Cartography and Geographic Information Science*, 40(2), 130–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15230406.2013.777137>.
- Davies, H., Leung, T. K. P., Luk, S. T. K., & Wong, Y. (1995). The benefits of “Guanxi”: The value of relationships in developing the Chinese market. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 24(3), 207–214. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0019-8501\(94\)00079-C](https://doi.org/10.1016/0019-8501(94)00079-C).
- Dolnicar, S. (2017). Unique features of peer-to-peer accommodation networks. In S. Dolnicar (Ed.), *Peer-to-peer accommodation networks: Pushing the boundaries*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.
- Edelman, B. G., & Luca, M. (2014). Digital discrimination: The case of Airbnb.com (Harvard Business School NOM Unit working paper no. 14-054). Retrieved from <https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/units/nom/Pages/default.aspx>.
- Ert, E., Fleischer, A., & Magen, N. (2016). Trust and reputation in the sharing economy: The role of personal photos in Airbnb. *Tourism Management*, 55, 62–73.
- Fan, Y. (2000). A classification of Chinese culture. *Cross Cultural Management*, 7(2), 3–10.
- Farh, J.-L., Tsui, A. S., Xin, K., & Cheng, B.-S. (1998). The influence of relational demography and guanxi: The Chinese case. *Organization Science*, 9(4), 471–488. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.4.471>.
- Foster, N., & Botterill, D. (1995). Hotels and the businesswoman: A supply-side analysis of consumer dissatisfaction. *Tourism Management*, 16(5), 389–393. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(95\)98952-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(95)98952-T).
- Guttag, D. A. (2015). Airbnb: Disruptive innovation and the rise of an informal tourism accommodation sector. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(12), 1192–1217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.827159>.
- Guttag, D. A., & Smith, S. L. J. (2017). Assessing Airbnb as a disruptive innovation relative to hotels: Substitution and comparative performance expectations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 64, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.02.003>.
- Haklay, M. (2012). ‘Nobody wants to do council estates’: Digital divide, spatial justice and outliers. *Paper presented at the 108th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers*, New York.
- Han, K., Li, M., & Hwang, K. (2005). Cognitive responses to favor requests from different social targets in a Confucian society. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(2), 283–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407505050952>.
- Hardy, A., & Dolnicar, S. (2017a). Types of network members. In S. Dolnicar (Ed.), *Peer to peer accommodation networks: An examination* (pp. 171–180). Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.
- Hardy, A., & Dolnicar, S. (2017b). Networks and hosts: A love-hate relationship. In S. Dolnicar (Ed.), *Peer to peer accommodation networks: An examination* (pp. 182–194). Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.
- Hemmington, N. (2007). From service to experience: Understanding and defining the hospitality business. *The Service Industries Journal*, 27(6), 747–755. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642060701453221>.
- Heuman, D. (2005). Hospitality and reciprocity: Working tourists in Dominica. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(2), 407–418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.07.010>.
- Ho, D. Y. (1976). On the concept of face. *American Journal of Sociology*, 81(4), 867–884.
- Hoare, R. J., Butcher, K., & O'Brien, D. (2010). Understanding Chinese diners in an overseas context: A cultural perspective. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 35(3), 358–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348010384599>.
- Hookway, N. (2008). ‘Entering the blogosphere’: Some strategies for using blogs in social research. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 91–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794107085298>.
- Huang, S. (1991). Chinese traditional festivals. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 25(3), 163–180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1991.1633111.x>.
- Hwang, K. (1987). Face and favor: The Chinese power game. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(4), 944–974.
- Ikala, T., & Lampinen, A. (2015). Monetizing network hospitality: hospitality and sociability in the context of Airbnb. *Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on computer supported cooperative work & social computing*, Vancouver.
- Jin, X., & Wang, Y. (2016). Chinese outbound tourism research: A review. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(4), 440–453. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515608504>.
- Johnson, A.-G., & Neuhofer, B. (2017). Airbnb – An exploration of value co-creation experiences in Jamaica. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(9), 2361–2376. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2016-0482>.
- Kakar, V., Voelz, J., Wu, J., & Franco, J. (2018). The visible host: Does race guide Airbnb rental rates in San Francisco? *Journal of Housing Economics*, 40, 25–40.



- Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work*, 45(5), 439–447. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/45.5.439>.
- Karlsson, L., & Dolnicar, S. (2016). Someone's been sleeping in my bed. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 58, 159–162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2016.02.006>.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. London: Sage.
- Lampinen, A., & Cheshire, C. (2016). Hosting via Airbnb: Motivations and financial assurances in monetized network hospitality. *Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*.
- Lashley, C. (2008). Studying hospitality: Insights from social sciences. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(1), 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250701880745>.
- Lashley, C., & Morrison, A. (2000). *In search of hospitality: Theoretical perspectives and debates*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Leung, T. K. P., & Yee-kwong Chan, R. (2003). Face, favour and positioning – A Chinese power game. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(11/12), 1575–1598. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560310495366>.
- Lin, L., Xi, D., & Lueptow, R. M. (2013). Public face and private thrift in Chinese consumer behaviour. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37(5), 538–545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12023>.
- McNaughton, D. (2006). The "host" as uninvited "guest": Hospitality, violence and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(3), 645–665. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2006.03.015>.
- Mkono, M. (2016). Sustainability and indigenous tourism insights from social media: Worldview differences, cultural friction and negotiation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24(8–9), 1315–1330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1177066>.
- Mkono, M. (2018). Troll alert!: Provocation and harassment in tourism and hospitality social media. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(7), 791–804.
- Moon, H., Miao, L., Hanks, L., & Line, N. D. (2019). Peer-to-peer interactions: Perspectives of Airbnb guests and hosts. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 77, 405–414.
- O'Gorman, K. D. (2007). Dimensions of hospitality: Exploring ancient origins. In C. Lashley, P. Lynch, & A. Morrison (Eds.). *Advances in tourism research series*. (pp. 17–32). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Opsahl, T., Agneessens, F., & Skvoretz, J. (2010). Node centrality in weighted networks: Generalizing degree and shortest paths. *Social Networks*, 32(3), 245–251.
- Pearce, P., & Wu, M. (2017). *The world meets Asian tourists*. Wagon Lane: Emerald.
- Pearce, P., Wu, M., & Osmond, A. (2013). Puzzles in understanding Chinese tourist behaviour: Towards a triple-C gaze. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 38(2), 145–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2013.11081741>.
- Peng, Z. (2012). Food of hospitality: The narratives of tension in the ethical structures of table manners. *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities*, 16(5), 3–8.
- Prayag, G., & Ozanne, L. K. (2018). A systematic review of peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation sharing research from 2010 to 2016: Progress and prospects from the multi-level perspective. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2018.1429977>.
- Punnett, B. J., & Yu, P. (1990). Attitudes toward doing business with the PRC. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 20(1–2), 149–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.01.11656531>.
- Schweinsberg, S., Darcy, S., & Cheng, M. (2017). The agenda setting power of news media in framing the future role of tourism in protected areas. *Tourism Management*, 62, 241–252.
- Sheringham, C., & Daruwalla, P. (2007). Transgressing hospitality: Polarities and disordered relationships? In C. Lashley, P. Lynch, & A. Morrison (Eds.). *Hospitality: A social lens* (pp. 33–45). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Soloman, B. (2017). Airbnb doubles down in China, where uber failed. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/briansolomon/2017/03/22/airbnb-doubles-down-in-china-where-uber-failed/#348889001f99>.
- Sun, S., Tong, K. T., & Law, R. (2015). Chinese hotel guest perception of international chain hotels under the same hotel brand in different travel destinations: The cases of intercontinental and Sheraton. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 23(2), 172–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766715614344>.
- Tilley, S., Chambers, M., & Mackenzie, J. E. (1996). Problems of the researching person: Doing insider research with your peer group. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 3, 267–268. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2850.1996.tb00121.x>.
- Tsang, N. K. F. (2011). Dimensions of Chinese culture values in relation to service provision in hospitality and tourism industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(3), 670–679. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.12.002>.
- Tyler, K., Royo Vela, M., & Wang, Y. (2008). Cultural perspectives: Chinese perceptions of UK hotel service quality. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 2(4), 312–329. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506180810908970>.
- UNWTO (2017). UNWTO world tourism barometer. Retrieved from <http://mkt.unwto.org/barometer>.
- von Weltzien Hoivik, H. (2007). East meets west: Tacit messages about business ethics in stories told by Chinese managers. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74(4), 457–469.
- Wilson, E., & Hollinshead, K. (2015). Qualitative tourism research: Opportunities in the emergent soft sciences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 54, 30–47.
- Wong, Y. H., & Chan, R. Y.-k. (1999). Relationship marketing in China: Guanxi, favouritism and adaptation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 22(2), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006077210425>.
- Wu, M., & Pearce, P. (2014). Chinese recreational vehicle users in Australia: A netnographic study of tourist motivation. *Tourism Management*, 43, 22–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.01.010>.
- Xiang, Y., & Dolnicar, S. (2017). Networks in China. In S. Dolnicar (Ed.). *Peer-to-peer accommodation networks: Pushing the boundaries* (pp. 148–159). Oxford: Goodfellow.
- Xin, K. R., & Pearce, J. L. (1996). Guanxi: Connections as substitutes for formal institutional support. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 39(6), 1641–1658. <https://doi.org/10.2307/257072>.
- Yannopoulou, N. (2013). User-generated brands and social media: Couchsurfing and Airbnb. *Contemporary Management Research*, 9(1), 85–90. <https://doi.org/10.7903/cmr.11116>.
- Yen, D. A., Barnes, B. R., & Wang, C. L. (2011). The measurement of guanxi: Introducing the GRX scale. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(1), 97–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2010.09.014>.

**Mingming Cheng** is currently a senior lecturer in the School of Marketing, Curtin University, Australia. Mingming was a lecturer in tourism at the Department of Tourism, Otago Business School, University of Otago. His research interests include the sharing economy, data science and Chinese tourists.

**Guojie Zhang** is a PhD candidate at the University of Otago, New Zealand. His current research interests lie in the areas of nature-based tourism, visitor experiences and cultural difference.