

Working together or separately? The role of different review arguments in consumers' home-sharing service purchasing: evidence from China

Consumers'
home-sharing
service
purchasing

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Yanya Ruan

School of Management, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou, China, and

Ni Liang

School of Statistics, Xi'an University of Finance and Economics, Xi'an, China

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to distinguish between service arguments and communication arguments within a home-sharing review and to investigate their roles in consumer purchase decision-making.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on the setting of Airbnb, a 3 (service argument valence: positive, neutral, and negative) \times 3 (communication argument valence: positive, neutral, and negative) online experiment was conducted. Data collected from 379 participants were used to test the hypotheses.

Findings – The three main determinants of purchase intention: perceived host service quality, perceived facility service quality, and perceived social value, are affected by both service arguments and communication arguments. Service arguments positively influence perceived host service quality and perceived facility service quality, while communication arguments contribute significantly to perceived host service quality and perceived social value. However, perceived facility service quality is affected by the combination of service arguments and communication arguments rather than by the service arguments only, because service argument trustworthiness, a factor influencing the effect of service arguments, varies across the combination of two types of arguments.

Practical implications – This research helps home-sharing platform managers to understand how to facilitate transaction success through displaying different review arguments needed by consumers. Additionally, the dual role of communication arguments emphasizes a necessity for hosts to encourage positive communication arguments and provide additional cues on the facility service quality.

Originality/value – The service arguments and communication arguments in home-sharing reviews are distinguished, and their distinct roles in consumers' purchase intention have been uncovered.

Keywords Sharing economy, Online reviews, Argument types, Purchase intention

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Home-sharing lodging has become another option of accommodation. On home-sharing platforms, consumer reviews play a key role in service transaction success (Cui *et al.*, 2020; Han and Bai, 2022). The characteristics of consumer reviews have been emphasized and their impact on consumer decision-making have been discussed, similar to those in conventional hospitality research (Li and Tsai, 2022; Mao *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2021). However, home-sharing reviews differ linguistically from hotel reviews. Guests are encouraged to review hosts' efforts from more aspects, which generates new review topics and makes the arguments provided in reviews more informative (Minca and Roelofsen, 2021). For the accommodations with similar average ratings (Zervas *et al.*, 2021), argument characteristics are meaningful through communicating via more



nuanced, subtle cues (Bridges and Vásquez, 2018). Compared to a single rating, the arguments provided in reviews convey more information and raise a wealth of academic attention (Cheng et al., 2019; Lawani et al., 2019; Xu, 2020). However, a research gap exists. It is associated with the unrevealed role of communication arguments in consumer decision-making.

In home-sharing activities, host–guest communication is a unique aspect of accommodation experience (Gao et al., 2022; Zhang, 2019). Communication arguments are common in home-sharing reviews and have been proved to be a new topic (Kiatkawsin et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2022). They describe host–guest social interaction experience, mirror host service performance, and are directly related to reviewers’ emotions or overall satisfaction (Kiatkawsin et al., 2020; Lee, 2022; Zhang, 2019). Differing from conventional service arguments which are associated with hotel service and tangible quality (Cheng and Jin, 2019), communication arguments are new cues on host service and social value. Some researchers have suggested paying more attention to the role of communication arguments in home-sharing consumer behaviors (Gao et al., 2022; Zhang, 2019).

According to existing literature, the role of review arguments in consumer decision-making, depends on review helpfulness which emphasizes a matching between informative statements and the consumer’ purchase goals (Mackiewicz and Yeats, 2014). On home-sharing platforms, although one solid reason for individual engagement is the functional value (e.g. lower cost and unique accommodation experience) embedded in this business model (Gao et al., 2022; Tajeddini et al., 2021), social factors have been proved to be another important determinant for home-sharing activities (Kurillová and Marciánová, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Many consumers desire both functional and socioemotional outcomes (e.g. building connections with others or social communication) (Ertz et al., 2018; Petrucci et al., 2021; Volz and Volgger, 2022). The information they wish to seek from online reviews is not only about accommodation service, but also about the communication experience. However, few studies have explained how communication arguments affected readers’ purchase intention together with service arguments. To explore the impact of communication arguments, we separated both service arguments and communication arguments, then constructed a theoretical framework from a goal-oriented view. Two questions were addressed:

- RQ1. Apart from service arguments, do communication arguments affect consumers’ purchase decision-making on home-sharing platforms?*
- RQ2. If so, how do communication arguments affect consumers’ purchase decision-making together with service arguments?*

Literature review

Consumers’ goals and expected benefits in home-sharing activities

Online shopping is normally assumed as a goal-oriented activity, raised by consumers’ multidimensional goals (Shang et al., 2005). Consumers’ goals show their expectations of benefits and are useful in understanding consumers’ behaviors (Han, 2021; Kurillová and Marciánová, 2021). The benefits matching consumers’ goals are typically weighted more and have a significant influence on consumers’ information acquisition and choosing experiences (Belarmino and Koh, 2021; Huffman and Houston, 1993). In the home-sharing model, cost-effective accommodations, a home-like experience, and social interactions are the main driving goals of the tourists when they are selecting this lodging type (De Canio et al., 2020; Farmaki and Stergiou, 2019; Petrucci et al., 2021; Volz and Volgger, 2022). They help form tourists’ expected benefits. Specifically, the functional goals such as cost-effective accommodations and home-like experience raise the importance of high-quality service (Farmaki and Stergiou, 2019; Gao et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019); while social interaction draws attention to social value, which has been found to play an important role in consumer (re)purchase intention (Gao et al., 2022; Mauri et al., 2018), especially for the consumers with a

high interaction level (Lee, 2022). Thereby, perceived service quality and social value can be helpful to explain the role of argument type in consumer decision-making.

Arguments provided in home-sharing reviews and perceived benefits

Arguments are a basic component of online reviews. Types of arguments and the proportion of each type on a review system vary across platforms (Xiang *et al.*, 2017). On hospitality platforms, service arguments account for a large proportion and have been discussed widely (Bai *et al.*, 2022; Ju *et al.*, 2019). These arguments include ample information on consumers' perceptions of services and amenities, generated based on consumers' accommodation experience and are helpful to reflect the service quality (Sánchez-Franco and Rey-Moreno, 2022; Xie *et al.*, 2021; Zhang, 2019). Similarly, on home-sharing platforms where hosts provide their accommodations to consumers, service arguments are common in online reviews. However, home-sharing service attributes are separated into facility service and host service, and the service arguments typically reflect two types of service simultaneously (Ju *et al.*, 2019). An example of service arguments posted on Airbnb is "Cozy and beautiful home in a convenient and safe location. Clean and comfortable. Todd was friendly and helpful. He made everything so easy during my stay".

Apart from service arguments, host–guest social interaction/communication experience is also found to be shared in home-sharing reviews (Kiatkawsin *et al.*, 2020; Qiu *et al.*, 2022; Zhang, 2019). Different from service arguments that emphasize service, communication arguments convey reviewers' social interaction experience with the hosts (Qiu *et al.*, 2022). Social words often appear in these arguments and are associated with reviewers' emotions (Zhang, 2019). One explanation of this phenomenon would be that customers emphasize social interactions during their stay, which makes them prefer the hosts with high sociability and be satisfied with their experience if they are able to socialize with their hosts or residents (Zhang, 2019). During consumer decision-making processes, the reviews reflecting on both host–guest communication/interactions and services are deemed to be more helpful than the ones only focusing on service (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). An example of communication arguments posted on Airbnb is "Very fast response to questions. Usually, we do not talk to our Airbnb hosts much. But we thoroughly enjoyed the conversations with Kyle. He was very communicative and genuine".

The role of review arguments in perceived benefits has been confirmed in hospitality research (Book and Tanford, 2020; Hu and Yang, 2021). Benefiting from the arguments provided in online reviews, a consumer is able to evaluate the service and amenities and forms perceptions of benefits (Bai *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2021). In the home-sharing service, high-quality service and social value are the main expected benefits (Lutz and Newlands, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2019), making the information on these two aspects to be necessary. Specifically, service arguments are beneficial to perceived facility/host service quality, and communication arguments empower consumers to rate hosts' friendliness, welcoming degree and social interaction preference. According to prior research, whether a host is friendly or welcoming is related directly to host service quality (Ju *et al.*, 2019), and a host's social interaction preference determines the level of host–guest social value (Ruan, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesize that,

- H1. Service arguments influence (a) perceived host service quality and (b) perceived facility service quality. Positive arguments lead to higher perceived host/facility service quality than neutral/negative ones.
- H2. Communication arguments influence (a) perceived host service quality and (b) perceived social value. Positive arguments lead to higher perceived social value than neutral/negative ones.

However, given argument valence, not all service arguments lead to the same appraisal of service quality. The impact of specific service arguments depends on their trustworthiness (Gh and Hai, 2021; Reimer and Benkenstein, 2016). According to prior literature, service

argument trustworthiness is determined by many factors, among which the argument factuality/objectivity is taken into account seriously (Dong *et al.*, 2019; Filieri, 2016). Perceived reciprocity between sellers and reviewers, as a cue of argument objectivity, has been confirmed to reduce the perceived trustworthiness of online reviews significantly (Kim *et al.*, 2019). In home-sharing review systems, the reciprocity between hosts and guests is more frequently seen, due to the convenience for host–guest social interactions (Meijerink and Schoenmakers, 2021). Satisfied consumers normally review positively, with high review ratings and positive arguments (Meijerink and Schoenmakers, 2021). Even for the consumers who are not satisfied with the service very much, a favorable host–guest social relationship makes them reluctant to post negative reviews directly (Bridges and Vásquez, 2018). They often pay less attention to or even omit the negative experience and reciprocate with positive reviews only (Moon *et al.*, 2019). On the other side, the unfavorable treatment during social interaction would decrease the possibility of positive reciprocity and even lead to negative reciprocity, which results in vindictive behaviors (Zollo *et al.*, 2021).

Communication arguments, through which consumers share their personal host–guest social interaction or communication experience, signal host–guest social relationships built during their stay (Qu *et al.*, 2022). Positive communication arguments are more likely to imply good host–guest social relationships, while neutral or negative ones would imply likely unfavorable host–guest social relationships (Zhu *et al.*, 2019). According to existing literature, the level of interpersonal reciprocity is associated with the characteristic of a social relationship (Altman, 1973; Vriend *et al.*, 2020). People typically anticipate positive reciprocity between the agents who have good/close social relationships (Malloy and Albright, 1990), but negative reciprocity is recognized more in unfavorable social relationships (Vriend *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, consumers are thought to have a higher level of positive reciprocity within the positive reviews with positive communication arguments rather than neutral or negative ones, and a higher level of negative reciprocity within the negative reviews with negative communication arguments rather than positive or neutral ones. Subsequently, this would reduce the trustworthiness of the service arguments. Hence, we hypothesize that,

- H3a.* Service argument trustworthiness increases the impact of service arguments on perceived facility service quality.
- H3b.* Positive communication arguments (vs neutral/negative ones) make the positive service arguments within the same review less trustworthy, but positive communication arguments (vs neutral/negative ones) make the negative service arguments within the same review more trustworthy.
- H3c.* The relationship between service arguments and perceived facility service quality varies across different valences of communication arguments within the same review.

Perceived benefits and purchase intention

Purchase intention indicates that a consumer has a plan to perform a particular purchase action, being viewed as a primary antecedent of purchase action. In home-sharing accommodation, consumers' purchase intention is affected by diversified factors, which include environmental stimuli, benefits offered by the service model, and consumer characteristics (e.g. Chen and Chang, 2018; Gassmann *et al.*, 2021; Julião *et al.*, 2022; Kurillová and Marciánová, 2021). However, the attribution of intention, or in other words, the basic cause of intention, requires the purchaser believes that the implementation of a particular action will lead to those outcomes he/she desires for (Malle and Knobe, 1997). In home-sharing activities, as discussed before, consumers often desire high-quality service and social value (Cheng and Jin, 2019; De Canio *et al.*, 2020; Lutz and Newlands, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

Their purchase intention would enhance along with an increase in perceived service quality (including host aspect and facility aspect) and perceived social value (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2016). Thereby, we hypothesize that,

H4. (a) Perceived host service quality and (b) perceived facility service quality positively influence consumers' purchase intention.

H5. Perceived social value positively influences consumers' purchase intention.

Figure 1 shows the proposed research model.

Methods

Design and stimulus development

A 3 (service argument valence: positive, neutral, and negative) \times 3 (communication argument valence: positive, neutral, and negative) between-subject experiment was designed and conducted online (Bai *et al.*, 2022). Service arguments and communication arguments with three different valences each were developed (Appendix 1). To exclude the potential effect from argument length, the number of words in each argument was similar (the number of Chinese words ranged from 37 to 44). A pre-test was conducted to affirm argument valences. The valence of these arguments was rated using a 5-point scale (1-negative argument, 5-positive argument) by 209 undergraduate/postgraduate students who were arranged into 6 groups randomly. A *t*-test on the valence of these arguments was conducted. The results revealed that the score of the positive service arguments ($n = 35, M = 4.17, SD = 0.75$) was significantly higher ($t_{(1, 71)} = 6.614, p < 0.001$) than that of the neutral service arguments ($n = 38, M = 3.13, SD = 0.58$), and the score of the neutral service arguments was significantly higher ($t_{(1, 58.711)} = 6.119, p < 0.001$) than that of the negative service arguments ($n = 37, M = 2.11, SD = 0.84$). Similarly, the score of the positive communication arguments ($n = 33, M = 4.12, SD = 0.70$) was confirmed to be significantly higher ($t_{(1, 63)} = 5.723, p < 0.001$) than the score of the neutral communication arguments ($n = 32, M = 3.13, SD = 0.71$), and the score of the neutral communication arguments was significantly higher ($t_{(1, 64)} = 6.580, p < 0.001$) than the score of the negative communication arguments ($n = 34, M = 1.97, SD = 0.72$). These indicated that the manipulation of argument valence was successful and these arguments can be used in the scenarios.

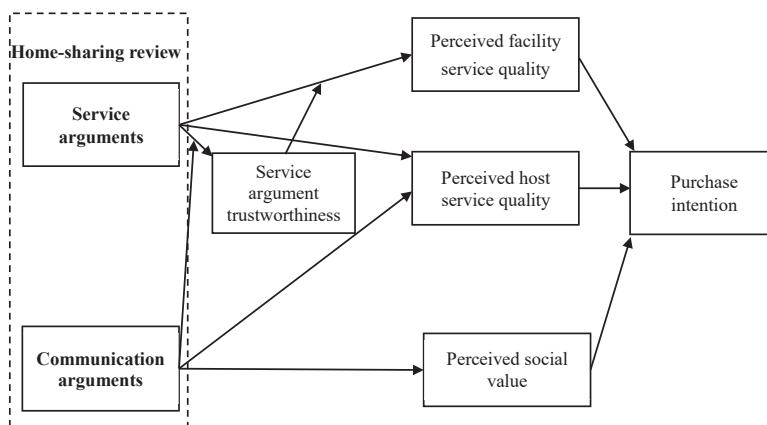


Figure 1.
The proposed model

Nine scenarios were created based on the setting of Airbnb, a worldwide leading home-sharing platform. A review page created by us was displayed on each scenario. Each review page contained three reviews: two short general reviews and one with different service arguments and communication arguments. The reviews with service and communication arguments were developed using the service arguments and communication arguments mentioned above. The service arguments and the communication arguments were combined randomly, to create nine reviews ([Appendix 2](#)).

Variables

Our model contained 5 constructs anchored to a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from “1-disagree” to “5-agree” (See [Table 1](#)). Perceived host service quality was assessed by a 5-item scale adapted from [Ju et al. \(2019\)](#), which consisted of items such as “Host is helpful” and “Host is welcoming”. Perceived facility service quality was also measured with five items ([Ju et al., 2019](#)). An example of the items was “Room/house is comfortable”. As for perceived social value, it was measured with a 3-item scale adapted from [Ertz et al. \(2018\)](#). The scale included items such as “It is an opportunity for me to come into contact with other individuals if I book this accommodation”. Service argument trustworthiness was assessed with two items, which included “The service argument is trustworthy” and “The service argument is reliable” ([Filieri et al., 2018](#)). Consumer purchase intention, the dependent variable of our study, was

Variable	Items	Loading
<i>Perceived host service quality (PHSQ) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.852)</i>		
After reading this review, I feel that:		
PHSQ1	The host has my interests at heart	0.764
PHSQ2	The host is helpful	0.838
PHSQ3	The host is welcoming	0.825
PHSQ4	The host is friendly	0.785
PHSQ5	The host gives me a home-like feel	0.754
<i>Perceived facility service quality (PFSQ) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.884)</i>		
After reading this review, I feel the accommodation:		
PFSQ1	Is located in a favorable neighborhood	0.822
PFSQ2	Is comfortable	0.838
PFSQ3	Is visually appealing	0.830
PFSQ4	Offers a clean bathroom	0.844
PFSQ5	Has modern equipment	0.817
<i>Perceived social value (PSV) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.831)</i>		
After reading this review, I feel that:		
PSV1	It is an opportunity for me to come into contact with other individuals if I book this accommodation	0.835
PSV2	I can enjoy contact with the host and share my interests if I book this accommodation	0.881
PSV3	I can communicate with the host well and establish bonds with him/her	0.880
<i>Service argument trustworthiness (SAT) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.728)</i>		
I believe that the service arguments (i.e. visually appealing, bed, or other facility) is		
SAT1	Trustworthy	0.887
SAT2	Reliable	0.887
<i>Purchase intention (PI) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.875)</i>		
PI1	If I decide to book an accommodation on Airbnb, I would consider booking it	0.902
PI2	I have a high tendency to book this accommodation	0.884
PI3	I will book this accommodation	0.897

Table 1.
Items, factor loading
and reliability

measured via a modified 3-item scale (Agag and Elmasry, 2016; Sparks and Browning, 2011). An example of the items was "If I decide to book an accommodation on Airbnb, I would consider booking it". In addition, participants' sociodemographic information was controlled in this study.

Participants and data collection

All participants were Airbnb users in China. We recruited them via WJX (<http://www.wjx.cn>), a personal survey website with over 6.2 million members in China. A link titled "An experiment for Airbnb's customers" was sent to the members of WJX randomly via the paid service on March 1st, 2022. 400 people who had Airbnb booking experience in recent three months were invited to participate in our experiment. 379 participants completed the experiment earnestly. The participants included 191 males (50.4%), 184 females (48.5%) and 4 who selected the option of 'the third category' (1.1%). A majority of the participants were below 35 years old (77.6%). 70.4% of the participants held a bachelor's degree and the others were high school graduates/college graduates (19.3%) or with graduate degrees (10.3%). 67.3% of the participants earned below RMB 9,000 each month. Also, 13.7% of the participants had used Airbnb for less than a year, 44.3% had used Airbnb for one to two years, 30.6% had used Airbnb for two to four years, and 11.3% had used Airbnb for above four years. These fitted the demographic characteristics of consumers in the Chinese home-sharing market (China Tourism and Homestay Development Association, 2021), indicating that the sample was good reference.

At the beginning of the experiment, all participants were randomly allocated to one of the nine scenarios. In each scenario, participants were asked to imagine an Airbnb booking action for an upcoming journey, and then a review page was displayed. Participants were informed that the reviews were about an option and were invited to rate perceived benefits and booking intention based on the reviews. At the end of the experiment, service argument valence and communication argument valence were both rated by participants as well. To promote engagement and ensure the validity of the data, RMB 9 was reimbursed for each valid questionnaire, and the final findings will be emailed to the participants who were interested in this research after being published. A total of 400 people participated in the experiment and 379 of them completed the whole required procedure.

Results

Manipulation checks

In the experiment, a question was set below the review page to check the argument types involved in the reviews. Participants were asked about the information conveyed by these reviews. Three answers were given, which were: A) Service quality; B) Communication experience with the host; C) Service quality and communication experience with the host. 379 participants chose option C and formed the valid samples. Besides, a 3×3 chi-square analysis was conducted. The distribution of communication arguments (service arguments) with different valences was found to be not significantly different among the conditions where the valence of the service arguments (the communication arguments) was positive, neutral, or negative ($\chi^2 (4, N = 379) = 1.636, p = 0.802$).

Reliability and validity testing

Constructs' internal consistency and validity were assessed before we tested the proposed hypotheses. The internal consistency was assessed using the value of Cronbach's alpha (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The results were shown in Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha of each construct ranged from 0.728 to 0.883, exceeding 0.7 and suggesting good reliability

(Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Convergent validity was estimated using item loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). The results in Table 1 indicated that each item loaded well on their respective factors, with loadings over 0.7. The AVE of each construct, as shown in Table 2, was greater than the recommended cut-off level of 0.5. These indicated good convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). With regards to discriminant validity, the correlation values of constructs ranged from -0.091 to 0.625 (Table 2), less than 0.71 and the square root of AVE of respective constructs (Mackenzie *et al.*, 2011), suggesting acceptable discriminant validity.

Non-response bias and common methods bias were tested as well. Referring to the process recommended by Armstrong and Overton (1977), we compared the early respondents with the late respondents for all constructs' means and five demographic variables, respectively. A *t*-test was used to analyze the difference. The results showed that none of the *t*-tests was statistically significant, confirming that non-response bias was not an issue. As for the analysis of common methods bias, Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) was adopted. An exploratory factor analysis with all items of the five constructs of the research model was conducted. The results showed the first factor only explained 40.443% of the variance and a signal factor did not occur. Thereby, common methods bias was not the main concern in this study.

Impact of argument type on perceived benefits

A MANOVA test was conducted to test hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3b and 3c. The weighted mean of items measuring constructs was used to constitute aggregate measure of corresponding constructs. Perceived host service quality, perceived facility service quality, perceived social value, and service argument trustworthiness were expressed as a function of service argument valence, communication argument valence, and their interaction, with participants' sociodemographic information as covariates. The results were shown in Table 3. There was a significant main effect of service argument valence on perceived host service quality ($F_{(2,365)} = 38.367, p < 0.001$) and perceived facility service quality ($F_{(2,365)} = 150.216, p < 0.001$), respectively. Both perceived host service quality and perceived facility service quality were higher when service arguments were neutral rather than negative (Former: Mean_{neutral} = 3.669, Mean_{negative} = 3.189, $t_{(1,251)} = 5.257, p < 0.001$; later: Mean_{neutral} = 3.849, Mean_{negative} = 2.979, $t_{(1,251)} = 9.792, p < 0.001$), and were also higher when service arguments were positive rather than neutral (Former: Mean_{positive} = 3.870, Mean_{neutral} = 3.669, $t_{(1,246)} = 2.462, p = 0.014$; later: Mean_{positive} = 4.268, Mean_{neutral} = 3.849, $t_{(1,246)} = 6.259, p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 1a and 1b are supported, respectively.

In addition, there was a main effect of communication argument valence on perceived host service quality ($F_{(2,365)} = 28.204, p < 0.001$) and perceived social value ($F_{(2,371)} = 24.904, p < 0.001$). Perceived host service quality was higher when communication arguments were neutral rather than negative (Mean_{neutral} = 3.515, Mean_{negative} = 3.287, $t_{(1,274)} = 2.470, p = 0.014$), but was lower when communication arguments were neutral rather than positive

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	AVE	PHSQ	PFSQ	PSV	SAT	PI
PHSQ	3.570	0.730	0.630	0.794				
PFSQ	3.693	0.816	0.689	0.552**	0.830			
PSV	3.654	0.772	0.749	0.465**	0.277**	0.866		
SAT	4.172	0.597	0.787	-0.171**	-0.148**	-0.091	0.887	
PI	3.669	0.835	0.800	0.600**	0.625**	0.491**	-0.110*	0.894

Note(s): **<0.01, diagonal elements represent the square-root of AVE

Table 2.
Mean, Standard Deviation, AVE, and latent variables correlations

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Variables	PHSQ			PFSQ			PSV			SAT		
	Mean square	F (p)	Mean square	F (p)	Mean square	F (p)						
Intercept	110.668	280.104 (0.000)	128.662	351.611 (0.000)	114.270	246.141 (0.000)	156.535	571.643 (0.000)				
SA	15.159	38.367 (0.000)	54.967	150.216 (0.000)	0.418	0.900 (0.407)	1.481	5.409 (0.005)				
CA	11.143	28.204 (0.000)	0.282	0.770 (0.464)	25.491	54.909 (0.000)	0.479	1.750 (0.175)				
SA*CA	0.238	0.603 (0.660)	1.309	3.576 (0.007)	0.651	1.401 (0.233)	2.596	9.480 (0.000)				
Gender	0.960	2.429 (0.120)	0.028	0.077 (0.781)	0.070	0.150 (0.699)	0.020	0.075 (0.785)				
Age	0.005	0.013 (0.909)	0.118	0.322 (0.571)	0.136	0.293 (0.589)	0.624	2.279 (0.132)				
Educational background	0.948	2.399 (0.122)	0.355	0.970 (0.325)	0.081	0.174 (0.677)	0.099	0.360 (0.549)				
Income	0.056	0.141 (0.708)	0.046	0.125 (0.724)	0.021	0.044 (0.833)	0.576	2.105 (0.148)				
Experience	0.518	1.311 (0.253)	0.160	0.457 (0.509)	0.677	1.459 (0.228)	0.011	0.039 (0.843)				

Table 3.
Results of between-subjects effects on perceived benefits and service argument trustworthiness

(Mean_{neutral} = 3.515, Mean_{positive} = 3.889, $t_{(1,255)} = -4.521, p < 0.001$). Similarly, neutral communication arguments resulted in higher perceived social value than negative communication arguments (Mean_{neutral} = 3.782, Mean_{negative} = 3.139, $t_{(1, 247)} = 6.755, p < 0.001$), but led to lower perceived social value when compared with positive communication arguments (Mean_{neutral} = 3.782, Mean_{positive} = 4.013, $t_{(1, 255)} = -2.816, p = 0.005$). These support [hypotheses 2a](#) and [2b](#), respectively.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed an interactive effect between service argument valence and communication argument valence on perceived facility service quality ($F_{(4, 365)} = 3.576, p = 0.007$). When service arguments were positive, perceived facility service quality was lower if the communication arguments were positive (Mean = 4.040) rather than neutral (Mean = 4.432, $t_{(1, 82)} = -6.462, p < 0.001$) or negative (Mean = 4.327, $t_{(1, 82)} = -4.119, p < 0.001$) ([Figure 2](#)). However, when service arguments were neutral or negative, the difference in perceived facility service quality among different communication argument valence was not significant (all $p > 0.05$). [Hypothesis 3c](#) is partially supported. In addition, there was a significant interactive effect between service argument valence and communication argument valence on service argument trustworthiness ($F_{(4, 365)} = 9.480, p < 0.000$). Positive communication arguments (vs neutral/negative ones) made the positive service arguments within the same review less trustworthy (Mean_{positive} = 3.797, Mean_{neutral} = 4.222, Mean_{negative} = 4.341, $t_{\text{positive-neutral}}(1, 82) = -4.009, t_{\text{positive-negative}}(1, 82) = -5.390, p < 0.001$), but built more trust for negative service arguments within the same review (Mean_{positive} = 4.532, Mean_{neutral} = 4.185, Mean_{negative} = 4.177, $t_{\text{positive-neutral}}(1, 86) = 2.395, p_{\text{positive-neutral}} = 0.019, t_{\text{positive-negative}}(1, 82) = 2.910, p_{\text{positive-negative}} = 0.005$) ([Figure 3](#)). [Hypothesis 3b](#) is supported.

Finally, to test [hypothesis 3a](#), a bootstrapping estimation method was implemented using SPSS Process macro (Model 1), with 5,000 bootstrapping samples. Service argument valence (coded as a ternary variable, taking the value 1 for negative valence, value 2 for neutral valence, and value 3 for positive valence) served as the independent variable. Service argument trustworthiness served as a moderator and perceived facility service quality served as the dependent variable. The results showed that the impact of service argument valence on perceived facility service quality was moderated by service argument trustworthiness significantly ($R^2\text{-chng} = 0.0237, p < 0.001$). As proposed in [hypothesis 3a](#), the role of service argument valence experienced an enhancement along with the increase in service argument trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.275, p < 0.001$).

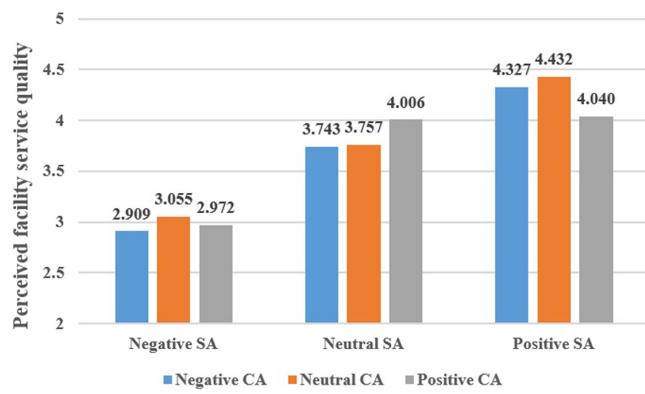
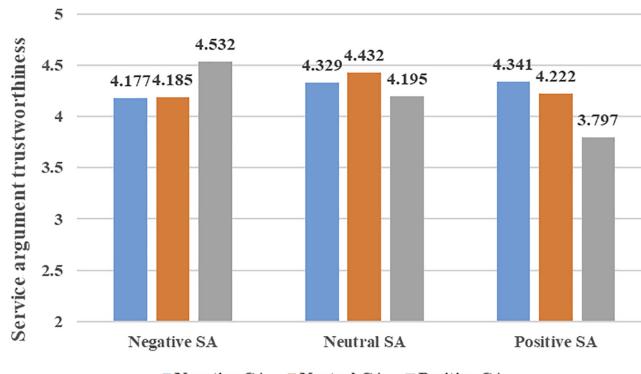


Figure 2.
The interaction
between SA and CA on
perceived facility
service quality

Note(s): SA represents service arguments, CA represents communication arguments



Note(s): SA represents service arguments, CA represents communication arguments

Figure 3.
The interaction between SA and CA on service argument trustworthiness

Perceived benefits and purchase intention

To test [hypotheses 4a, 4b](#), and [5](#), purchase intention served as a function of perceived host service quality, perceived facility service quality and perceived social value, with sociodemographic information as control variables. The results were shown in [Table 4](#). Purchase intention was affected by perceived host service quality ($\beta = 0.247, p < 0.001$), perceived facility service quality ($\beta = 0.414, p < 0.001$) and perceived social value ($\beta = 0.260, p < 0.001$). Adjusted $R^2 = 0.528$. Consumer purchase intention was enhanced with the increase in perceived host service quality, perceived facility service quality, and perceived social value. [Hypotheses 4a, 4b](#), and [5](#) are supported, respectively (see [Table A1](#)).

Discussion and conclusions

Conclusions

To distinguish between service arguments and communication arguments in a home-sharing review, this study explored the role of review arguments on consumers' purchase decision-making. The potential interaction between service arguments and communication arguments was considered. The findings implied that three determinants of purchase intention: perceived host service quality, perceived facility service quality and perceived social value, were influenced by service arguments and/or communication arguments. Specifically, positive service arguments were able to generate favorable perceived host service quality and perceived facility service quality, while positive communication arguments contributed significantly to perceived host service quality and perceived social value. However, the

Variables	B	T	P
PHSQ	0.247	5.327	0.000
PFSQ	0.414	9.711	0.000
PSV	0.260	6.493	0.000
Gender	-0.018	-0.502	0.616
Age	0.005	0.126	0.900
Educational background	0.026	0.704	0.482
Income	0.013	0.310	0.757
Duration of Airbnb experience	-0.016	-0.411	0.681

Table 4.
Results of regression analysis

positive effect of positive service arguments on perceived facility service quality varied across the valence of communication arguments within the same review. Perceived facility service quality influenced by positive service arguments was lower when the communication arguments were positive rather than neutral or negative, because of the difference in the trustworthiness of service arguments.

Theoretical implications

The findings show several implications for the research topic of home-sharing reviews. First, the findings provide new evidence for the necessity to distinguish the difference between communication arguments and service arguments. Host–guest communication has been proved to be a unique topic in home-sharing reviews (Kiatkawsin *et al.*, 2020; Qiu *et al.*, 2022; Zhang, 2019). However, whether communication arguments play a distinct role from service arguments and then it is necessary to distinguish between them and service arguments have not been properly discussed. Following the previous studies which classified review content from the perspective of consumer decision-making (Sim *et al.*, 2021; Sparks *et al.*, 2013), this study confirmed the distinction between communication arguments and service arguments. The findings add new evidence to the suggestion that communication arguments should be considered independently in home-sharing reviews (Gao *et al.*, 2022; Zhang, 2019).

Second, this study extends the understanding of how home-sharing reviews contribute to purchase intention through multidimensional benefits. Many studies have suggested that functional benefits and social value are the main reasons facilitating individuals' engagement in sharing economy (Volz and Volgger, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2019), and consumers' perceptions of them are affected by online reviews (Chen and Chang, 2018). However, home-sharing service is suggested to be segmented into host and facility service (Ju *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2021), which leads to the classification of overall perceived service quality into perceived host service quality and perceived facility service quality. The potential contrast in the impact of review characteristics on two types of perceived service quality has not been explored in previous literature. Based on the findings of Ju *et al.* (2019), this study distinguishes between perceived host service quality and perceived facility service quality, and proves the different roles each played in explaining the impact of communication arguments and service arguments on purchase intention. This result enriches the findings on the influence mechanisms underlying the effect of review characteristics on purchase intention in the context of peer-to-peer accommodation.

Finally, this study is among the first to uncover the interactive effect between communication arguments and service arguments on perceived facility service quality. Although there has been a wealth of knowledge on the determinants of review performance (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Chatterjee, 2020; Filieri *et al.*, 2018; Meek *et al.*, 2021), the interaction between different review components has progressively attracted attentions (Filieri *et al.*, 2019; Shin *et al.*, 2021). Focusing on the interaction between different types of arguments, this study gets some other interesting findings. The effect of positive service arguments on perceived facility service quality is found to be decreased when the communication arguments within the same review are positive rather than neutral or negative. This finding suggests that apart from the interaction between ratings and text (Shin *et al.*, 2021) or ratings and length (Filieri *et al.*, 2019), the interaction between different argument types helps to explain how home-sharing reviews play a role in the consumer decision-making process as well.

Practical implications

The mixed roles of service arguments and communication arguments revealed in this study also shed light on the home-sharing platform management. Although an online review

system has served as a vital part of accommodation booking websites and home-sharing platforms have benefited from the successful experiences of hotel review systems, home-sharing platforms managers should consider the unique reviewing phenomenon on home-sharing platforms when improving the efficiency of home-sharing review systems. Differing from hotel consumers who pay most of their attention to accommodation service, consumers in home-sharing accommodation emphasize both the service quality and social value (Gao *et al.*, 2022). Host–guest communication experience is usually shared via online reviews in the form of communication arguments and benefits to potential consumers' decision-making, especially for the ones who like to socialize. Therefore, to better meet consumers' demand for diverse information, it is necessary for a home-sharing review system to emphasize both communication arguments and service arguments when setting the review labels for different review arguments.

In addition, the findings on the distinct roles of service arguments and communication arguments in consumer decision-making can be useful for hosts. Positive arguments give consumers more confidence in making transactions with unfamiliar hosts, regardless of the type of arguments (Cheng *et al.*, 2019; Li and Tsai, 2022). More favorable arguments in online reviews need to be encouraged by hosts. However, when encouraging positive home-sharing arguments, not only service experience, but also communication experience should be emphasized. Besides providing high-quality facility service, it is necessary for hosts to ensure quick response, courtesy, helpfulness, and hospitality during host–guest interactions, especially for the ones occurring among hosts and the guests with a high level of interaction (Lee, 2022).

Finally, the dual roles of positive communication arguments in perceived benefits call for some attention from hosts to minimize the negative one. According to our findings, positive communication arguments contribute to perceived social value, but weaken the role of positive service arguments within the same review in perceived facility service quality. These demand for additional cues on high-quality facility service instead of a prevention of positive communication arguments. Some cues such as a more detailed accommodation introduction via pictures and videos or favorable service arguments from other reviewers should be offered. These will help to increase the trustworthiness of particular positive service arguments and then weaken the negative role of positive communication arguments.

Limitations and future research

Although this study is among the first to uncover the role of argument type in home-sharing purchase intention, there are several limitations, which offer opportunities for future research. First, the online reviews utilized in our study were classified based on argument types (service arguments/communication arguments) and argument valence (positivity/neutrality/negativity). Although such classification reflects some main attributes of online reviews and fits our research goals, these attributes cannot represent all characteristics of online reviews. According to previous literature, other attributes such as volume, length, and expressions will influence readers' responses as well (e.g. Lee and Park, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2022). In future research, more attributes of online reviews should be investigated to ensure the generalizability of the findings. Second, the potential effect of the reviewer-reader similarity was not discussed in our research. The self-construal match between the reviewer and the reader has been proved to influence online review performance (Feng *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Park, 2022). The role of reviewer-reader similarity should be considered as a moderator in future research. Third, this study only focused on three consumption benefits: host service, facility service and social value. Future research can incorporate other benefits desired by individuals in sharing economy as control variables. Lastly, since the data in our research was only collected in China, it cannot represent the global home-sharing consumers.

According to existing literature, the importance of social interaction in home-sharing services would vary across countries (Lin *et al.*, 2019; Ruan, 2020). Participants coming from other countries should be recruited and compared in future research, to affirm the degree of generalizability of the findings.

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Appendix 1

Table A1.
Service arguments and communication arguments

Arguments	Type	Valence
Very beautiful. It is in a convenient and safe location. The room was clean and comfortable. Considerate tips. Everything was so easy during my stay. The house was amazing!!	Service arguments	Positive
It is OK for a couple of days but compared to other Airbnb it had not style or design. Some service details were not perfect		Neutral
The room was small and there was a bit noise outside. The facilities were a bit old. The air condition did not work well. Small community. Check in was not convenient. We waited a long time for the host		Negative
The host responded to our questions very fast. We thoroughly enjoyed the conversations with her. She was very communicative and genuine	Communication arguments	Positive
The host answered my questions when I asked her, but she was not very hospitable. We did not talk much with her during our stay		Neutral
The host was very busy. Very slow to response to our questions and was not hospitable. She seemed to dislike talking with us when we asked some recommendations on local interesting things		Negative

Appendix 2 Review pages

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房客评价

梦 Lv3
2022年2月 | ★★★★★

Positive service arguments: Very beautiful. It is in a convenient and safe location. The room was clean and comfortable. Considerate tips. Everything was so easy during my stay. The house was amazing!!!

非常漂亮，房子位置方便又安全。房间很干净很舒适，房东留了指引，入住过程很简单。
房子体验超棒！！！房东会很快地回复我们的信息。入住过程中我们也非常喜欢跟她聊天，跟她聊天太愉快了，她很健谈很真诚。

Jay Lv3
2022年2月 | ★★★★★

Positive communication arguments: The host responded to our questions very fast. We thoroughly enjoyed the conversations with her. She was very communicative and genuine.

可以的

张可儿 Lv2
月 | ★★★★★

还不错

Figure A1.
Review page 1

房客评价

梦 Lv3
2022年2月 | ★★★★★

Positive service arguments: Very beautiful. It is in a convenient and safe location. The room was clean and comfortable. Considerate tips. Everything was so easy during my stay. The house was amazing!!!

非常漂亮，房子位置方便又安全。房间很干净很舒适，房东留了指引，入住过程很简单。
房子体验超棒！！！不过，虽然问房东问题的时候她会回复，但感觉不太热情。在入住过程中我们也没有跟她有太多的其它交流。。

Jay Lv3
2022年2月 | ★★★★★

Neutral communication arguments: The host answered my questions when I asked her, but she was not very hospitable. We did not talk much with her during our stay.

可以的

张可儿 Lv2
月 | ★★★★★

还不错

Figure A2.
Review page 2

Figure A3.
Review page 3



Figure A4.
Review page 4



Consumers' home-sharing service purchasing

房客评价

梦 Lv3 2022年2月 | ★★★★☆
小住几天还是凑合的，但跟爱彼迎上很多房子比没有特别出彩的地方。房东有些服务细节也不太顾得上。问她问题的时候她会回复，但感觉不到太多的热情。在入住过程中我们也没有太多地跟她交流。

Jay Lv3 2022年2月 | ★★★★★
可以的

张可儿 Lv2 2022年1月 | ★★★★★
还不错

Neutral service arguments: It is OK for a couple of days but compared to other Airbnb it had not style or design. Some service details were not perfect.

Neutral communication arguments: The host answered my questions when I asked her, but she was not very hospitable. We did not talk much with her during our stay.

Figure A5.
Review page 5

房客评价

梦 Lv3 2022年2月 | ★★★★☆
小住几天还是凑合的，但跟爱彼迎上很多房子比没有特别出彩的地方。房东有些服务细节也不太顾得上。房东好像很忙，等很久才回复信息，语气也不热情。问她一些当地的事情，她也爱答不理的。

Jay Lv3 2022年2月 | ★★★★★
可以的

张可儿 Lv2 2022年1月 | ★★★★★
还不错

Neutral service arguments: It is OK for a couple of days but compared to other Airbnb it had not style or design. Some service details were not perfect.

Negative communication arguments: The host was very busy. Very slow to response to our questions and was not hospitable. She seemed to dislike talking with us when we asked some recommendations on local interesting things.

Figure A6.
Review page 6

Figure A7.
Review page 7



Figure A8.
Review page 8



Consumers' home-sharing service purchasing

The figure displays three user reviews from a mobile application. The first review, by '梦' (Level 3) in February 2022, is highlighted with a red border and contains negative service arguments. The second review, by 'Jay' (Level 3) in February 2022, is highlighted with a blue border and contains negative communication arguments. The third review, by '张可儿' (Level 2) in February 2022, is not highlighted.

梦 Lv.3 | 2022年2月 | ★★★★☆

房间小，外面还有点吵。家具比较旧，空调也不是很好用。小区不大，入住有点麻烦，等房东过来等了很久。房东好像很忙，等很久才回复信息，语气也不热情。问她一些当地的事情，她也要答不理的。

Negative service arguments: The room was small and there was a bit noise outside. The facilities were a bit old. The air condition did not work well. Small community. Check in was not convenient. We waited a long time for the host.

Jay Lv.3 | 2022年2月 | ★★★★★

可以的

Negative communication arguments: The host was very busy. Very slow to response to our questions and was not hospitable. She seemed to dislike talking with us when we asked some recommendations on local interesting things.

张可儿 Lv.2 | 月 | ★★★★★

还不错

Figure A9.
Review page 9

Corresponding author

Yanya Ruan can be contacted at: ruanyy@gzhu.edu.cn

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