

Progress on Airbnb: a literature review

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to review the extant literature on Airbnb – one of the most significant recent innovations in the tourism sector – to assess the research progress that has been accomplished to date.

Design/methodology/approach – Numerous journal databases were searched, and 132 peer-reviewed journal articles from various disciplines were reviewed. Key attributes of each paper were recorded, and a content analysis was undertaken.

Findings – A survey of the literature found that the majority of Airbnb research has been published quite recently, often in hospitality/tourism journals, and the research has been conducted primarily by researchers in the USA/Canada and Europe. Based on the content analysis, the papers were divided into six thematic categories – Airbnb guests, Airbnb hosts, Airbnb supply and its impacts on destinations, Airbnb regulation, Airbnb's impacts on the tourism sector and the Airbnb company. Consistent findings have begun to emerge on several important topics, including guests' motivations and the geographical dispersion of listings. However, many research gaps remain, so numerous suggestions for future research are provided.

Practical implications – By reviewing a large body of literature on a fairly novel and timely topic, this research provides a concise summary of Airbnb knowledge that will assist industry practitioners as they adapt to the recent rapid emergence of Airbnb.

Originality/value – This is the first paper to review the extant literature specifically about Airbnb.

Keywords Airbnb, Literature review, Sharing economy, Peer-to-peer, Short-term rental

Paper type Literature review

论Airbnb的发展：文献综述

摘要

研究目的 – 本论文旨在审视过去文献对Airbnb的研究,旅游业中最显著发明之一,以衡量迄今为止的研究发展历程。

研究设计/方法/途径 – 经过大量文献搜索,共132份同行评审型期刊文章,来自不同研究领域,被作者审阅。每个文章的关键词被摘抄出来,本论文采用内容分析方法来分析文本。

研究结果 – 经过文献综述,作者发现大多数Airbnb研究都发表在近几年,往往发表在酒店/旅游期刊。期刊文章作者集中在美国/加拿大和欧洲。基于内容分析结果,发表的期刊文章被分类在六个主题-Airbnb顾客、Airbnb服务提供商、Airbnb供应商、以及其对旅游目的地影响, Airbnb规范、Airbnb对旅游行业的影响,以及Airbnb公司。研究结果还归纳出几项重要的话题,包括顾客动机和民宿地理分布。然而,大多数研究空缺仍然存在,因此,本论文总结出多项未来研究方向。

研究实践意义 – 本论文通过审阅大量较新和及时的文献,对Airbnb的相关知识进行了精准梳理,这个研究结果对从业者适应Airbnb较新较快发展的现象,有着实践意义。

研究原创性/价值 – 本论文是首篇审阅有关Airbnb文献的文章。

关键词 – Airbnb、文献综述、共享经济、P2P、短期出租



Introduction

The emergence of Airbnb is unquestionably one of the most significant and transformative recent developments within the worldwide tourism sector. Although Airbnb only has existed for roughly 10 years, by revolutionizing the age-old practice of peer-to-peer lodging with a new technology-driven distribution platform, the company has unleashed a timely innovation that has grown faster than virtually anyone had expected (Guttentag, 2015). Airbnb has now expanded to the point that it is impacting some traditional tourism accommodations (Zervas *et al.*, 2017), transforming countless individuals into hospitality micro-entrepreneurs and making tourism lodging a major policy issue in cities worldwide (Guttentag, 2017). Although Airbnb is far from the only company dedicated to peer-to-peer short-term rentals, owing to its immense size and vast impacts, most would agree that Airbnb is the most important company of its type and it has become a poster child of the so-called “sharing economy.” Consequently, academic research into peer-to-peer short-term rentals has often have looked explicitly at Airbnb, and this research area has grown significantly in recent years. This paper represents the first review of the academic literature specifically focused on Airbnb.

Airbnb is an online platform through which individuals can rent out their spaces as tourist accommodation. These spaces typically entail either an “entire place” (house, condominium, etc.) or a “private room” in a residence where the host is also present. Airbnb’s diverse inventory additionally includes some fairly exotic accommodations (castles, igloos, treehouses, etc.), and Airbnb listings range from quite modest to extremely luxurious. For “guests,” the process of finding and booking Airbnb accommodation is relatively similar to using an online travel agency (e.g. Expedia), although the booking process may require some personal communication with the “host.” For the hosts who own and/or manage Airbnb listings, the Airbnb platform offers the ability to freely and almost effortlessly become a tourism lodging provider – posting descriptions and photographs of one’s accommodation, communicating with potential guests and accepting reservations and payments from around the world.

Unlike pure matchmaking platforms such as Craigslist or distribution platforms like Expedia, Airbnb is involved in numerous aspects of the transactions it facilitates. Most obviously, Airbnb processes the payments from guests to hosts and earns money by charging a “service fee” (i.e. commission percentage) from both parties. Airbnb importantly also encourages both guests and hosts to publically review one another, which helps foster the underlying trust necessary for such a service to thrive (Jøsang *et al.*, 2007). Airbnb further promotes trust and security by offering various identity verification measures, free property damage protection (“Host Guarantee”), free liability insurance (“Host Protection Insurance”) and a “Guest Refund Policy” that protects against issues like inaccurate listing descriptions. Moreover, Airbnb has introduced various innovations to further enhance and expand its services. Some of its more noteworthy innovations have included an “Instant booking” feature that permits some reservations to be placed immediately, without explicit host approval; a “Superhost” status badge for particularly active and well-reviewed hosts; a “For work trips” filter that highlights listings appropriate for business travel; and an “Airbnb Plus” status badge for top-quality listings that have been personally inspected by an Airbnb representative. Furthermore, Airbnb has partnered with several travel management companies in order to facilitate corporate travel (Griswold, 2016), and recently even partnered with a real estate developer to build apartment complexes designed for Airbnb renting (Quackenbush, 2018). Airbnb also has extended beyond tourism lodging, and now additionally processes restaurant reservations and offers “Experiences”, which involve tours or other excursions led by local guides.

Given Airbnb’s diverse product portfolio and immense popularity, it is easy to forget that the company was founded just very recently, in 2008. Airbnb usage was limited very early on, but beginning around 2011 the company began growing very rapidly (Griswold, 2018). More

specifically, Airbnb had 140,000 guest arrivals in 2010; 800,000 in 2011; three million in 2012; six million in 2013; 16 million in 2014; 40 million in 2015; 80 million in 2016; an estimated 115 million in 2017; and an estimated 164 million in 2018 (Molla, 2017; Team, 2018). To accommodate these guests, at the time of writing the company boasted over five million active worldwide listings (Airbnb, 2018), which was higher than the room capacity of the top five worldwide hotel companies combined (Hartmans, 2017). Furthermore, it recently was estimated that if Airbnb were to go public, its market capitalization would be around \$60 billion – significantly higher than even Marriott International (Ting, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, Airbnb's rise has triggered reverberations in the tourism sector and beyond. The company's most direct potential impacts are on the tourism lodging industry, although the extent of these impacts are debatable. Airbnb denies it competes with hotels (Business Insider Intelligence, 2017; Trenholm, 2015), and numerous hotel executives have dismissed the potential threat posed by Airbnb (DePillis, 2016; Handley, 2017; Trejos, 2018). On the other hand, media headlines frequently highlight Airbnb's supposed threat to hotels (Griswold, 2016; Ting, 2017), and trade groups including the American Hotel and Lodging Association (Benner, 2017), the British Hospitality Association (Witts, 2016) and the Hotel Association of Canada (Press, 2018) all have pushed for greater regulatory oversight and enforcement against Airbnb.

In addition to potentially disrupting the hotel sector, Airbnb also often is perceived as disrupting communities around the world as residences for locals are transformed into tourism lodging. These transformations have prompted countless regulatory battles, which have focused on issues such as hosts' tax obligations, the safety of Airbnb rentals, Airbnb's impacts on housing markets and residential quality of life concerns (noise, community fabric, etc.) (Guttentag, 2017). The Airbnb policy debate is quite divisive and heated, as it relates to matters people feel very strongly about – their ability to earn money, their rights regarding their homes and the fabric of their communities. These tensions are crystallized in New York City, where protesters from both sides have held dueling rallies at City Hall (Durkin, 2018), the State Attorney General subpoenaed Airbnb's data and published a report criticizing the company (Schneiderman, 2014), a State Assemblymember secretly recorded her own undercover Airbnb sting operation (Golding, 2015), Airbnb released video ads claiming it is being scapegoated for housing affordability issues (Reader, 2018), and the Hotel Association of New York City and a hotel workers union created an ad linking Airbnb with terrorism (Lovett, 2017).

With Airbnb becoming an increasingly important issue in both tourism and public policy, scholarly research on Airbnb has increased over the past several years, scattered throughout journals in various disciplines. Nonetheless, to date, research specifically focusing on Airbnb has never been summarized in a single literature review, so this article intends to fill that gap. The only existing article that has somewhat summarized the extant Airbnb research is Prayag and Ozanne's (2018) review of the broader peer-to-peer accommodation literature from 2010 to 2016. However, there is particular value in a more focused examination of solely Airbnb, as the peer-to-peer accommodation sector is fairly diverse, comprising disparate services like Couchsurfing (in which hosts offer guests accommodation free of charge) and HomeAway (which only offers entire home rentals and has branded itself as distinct from the sharing economy) (Vranica, 2016). Furthermore, a plethora of Airbnb articles have been published between Prayag and Ozanne's (2018) review and the present study; in fact, only 26 of the 132 (19.7 per cent) articles included in the present study were examined by Prayag and Ozanne.

Methods

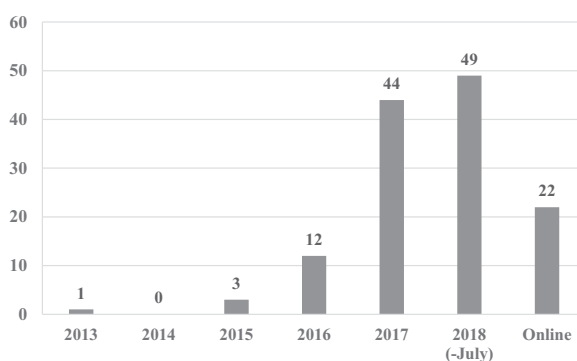
This study sought to retrieve every peer-reviewed journal article on Airbnb published in English by July 2018, when the literature search was conducted. To be as comprehensive as possible, this study sought articles published in journals from any discipline. Also, like

many literature reviews (Ip *et al.*, 2011; Law *et al.*, 2009), in order to focus exclusively on the highest level of scholarship only peer-reviewed journal articles were considered (including both full-length articles and research notes). Other publications were excluded, such as book chapters, conference proceedings, working papers, industry reports, theses and editor prefaces. Papers published in law review journals were excluded because such publications are not refereed, and a few papers were excluded because they were published in journals of dubious merit, as determined by the Australian Business Deans Council's Journal Quality List and Google Scholar's journal metrics. Finally, each paper needed to focus explicitly on Airbnb. This focus did not have to be exclusive (e.g. a paper could focus on both Airbnb and Couchsurfing), but Airbnb had to feature very prominently in the paper. Broader research on peer-to-peer accommodations or the sharing economy was excluded.

Numerous online databases were searched – ScienceDirect Journals, EBSCOhost Hospitality and Tourism Complete, EBSCOhost's full database, Emerald Insight, IngentaConnect, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Subsequently, Google Scholar was used to examine all of the articles that had referenced the two most highly-cited Airbnb articles (Guttentag, 2015; Zervas *et al.*, 2017). All searches were conducted using the keyword "Airbnb". Article titles, keywords and/or abstracts were examined to determine whether an article was retrieved for further consideration, and in this initial retrieval stage any article that seemed possibly relevant was saved, resulting in 293 saved articles. Subsequently, each article was examined more carefully to make a final decision on its inclusion, and 132 articles were kept and a content analysis was undertaken. As part of this analysis, the articles were divided into thematic categories based upon the primary topic being researched, and key attributes of each article (journal name, publication date, etc.) were recorded.

General characteristics of Airbnb research

The vast majority of Airbnb studies were published very recently (see Figure 1), with 87.8 per cent published in 2017, in 2018 (through July), or only had been published online by July 2018. Also, the majority of these papers (58.3 per cent) were published in journals related to hospitality/tourism. In fact, of the six journals that had published at least five Airbnb articles, all were hospitality/tourism-focused – *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Current*



Note: Despite this literature review being conducted in July 2018, one article had already been dated 2019, but was excluded from this chart

Figure 1.
Number of Airbnb
articles published in
print each year

Issues in Tourism, Tourism Management, Annals of Tourism Research and *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*. Together these six journals accounted for 39.4 per cent of all of the articles examined (see Table I). Beyond hospitality/tourism journals, Airbnb papers were published in journals associated with a range of disciplines, including business/management, urban studies and information technology.

The majority of Airbnb research has employed quantitative methods (61.5 per cent), and the remainder consists of qualitative studies (18.5 per cent); theoretical, conceptual, or review articles (11.5 per cent); and mixed methods studies (8.5 per cent). Among the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies, data publically available on the Airbnb website (e.g. listing attributes or guest reviews) were most commonly used. Such data were used in 48.7 per cent of the studies (keeping in mind that some studies had multiple data sources), and was derived from manual collection, independently programmed scraping scripts, Inside Airbnb (www.insideairbnb.com), or AirDNA (www.airdna.co). Data also commonly were obtained from surveys, interviews and experiments. With regards to geography (again keeping in mind that some studies collected data from multiple locations), 40.2 per cent of the studies collected their data in the USA/Canada, 29.5 per cent in Europe, 13.4 per cent in Asia, 7.1 per cent in Australia/New Zealand, 1.8 per cent in Africa, 1.8 per cent in the Caribbean/Latin America and 13.4 per cent from the entire world.

With regards to the geographic location of the researchers (as per the first author's byline), most Airbnb research was conducted by researchers in Europe (42.4 per cent) or the USA/Canada (33.3 per cent), with the remainder conducted by researchers in Asia (13.6 per cent), Australia/New Zealand (9.1 per cent) and Africa (1.5 per cent). The five most common individual countries were the USA (24.2 per cent), Canada (9.1 per cent), Australia (7.6 per cent), the United Kingdom (6.8 per cent) and Spain (6.1 per cent). The departmental affiliation of each lead author also was examined, revealing that about two-thirds worked in business, management, or economics (33.1 per cent) or hospitality, tourism, or leisure (32.3 per cent). The other authors were scattered amongst a range of disciplines, including information technology, urban/regional planning and geography.

Research themes and literature review

The papers were divided into thematic categories based on the primary focus of each study. Six thematic categories (plus various sub-categories) were established – Airbnb guests,

Journal name	Articles	Pct. of total (%)
<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	15	11.4
<i>Intl. Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Mgmt.</i>	12	9.1
<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	8	6.1
<i>Tourism Management</i>	7	5.3
<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	5	3.8
<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	5	3.8
<i>Tourism Geographies</i>	3	2.3
<i>Urban Policy and Research</i>	3	2.3
<i>Anatolia</i>	2	1.5
<i>Government Information Quarterly</i>	2	1.5
<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	2	1.5
<i>Journal of Housing Economics</i>	2	1.5
<i>Journal of Tourism Futures</i>	2	1.5
<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	2	1.5
<i>Tourism Economics</i>	2	1.5
<i>Tourism Recreation Research</i>	2	1.5

Table I.
Number of Airbnb
articles published in
journals with
multiple Airbnb
publications

Airbnb hosts, Airbnb supply and its impacts on destinations, Airbnb regulation, Airbnb's impacts on the tourism sector and the Airbnb company. As can be observed in [Table II](#), research on Airbnb guests was by far the most common thematic category. The following review of the literature includes every paper categorized within each theme. Papers that generated findings relating to more than one theme sometimes are mentioned under multiple themes, as space allowed.

Airbnb guests

Why travelers choose airbnb. When reflecting upon the rapid emergence of Airbnb, perhaps the first question that arises is why millions of travelers are opting to stay in the (oftentimes unlicensed) homes of strangers found online, rather than just simply booking a hotel. In [Guttentag's \(2015\)](#) early look at Airbnb through the lens of disruptive innovation theory, he proposed that even though Airbnb may underperform in comparison with hotels when considering hotels' primary performance attributes (e.g. service quality and security), Airbnb offers an alternative value proposition centered around cost-savings, household amenities and the potential for a more authentic local experience.

Numerous researchers have since tackled this motivation question empirically, and their research has repeatedly highlighted the particular importance of Airbnb's practical/utilitarian benefits, while also sometimes recognizing the importance of experiential benefits. For example, [Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto \(2018a\)](#) interviewed worldwide Airbnb users and found price and location were the two primary drivers of Airbnb use. Likewise, [So et al. \(2018\)](#) conducted a mixed-methods study that determined economic benefits, enjoyment and household benefits significantly impacted attitudes towards Airbnb, which in turn influenced behavioral intentions. In contrast, constructs including authenticity, social interaction and sharing economy ethos were not found to exert meaningful influence. [Guttentag et al. \(2018\)](#) surveyed over 800 Airbnb users, mostly in Canada and the USA, and concluded they were attracted primarily by Airbnb's practical benefits (e.g. price, location and household amenities), yet experiential ones (e.g. social interaction, authenticity and novelty) were still important for some guests. Finally, [Paulauskaite et al. \(2017\)](#) interviewed

Theme	Articles	Pct. of total (%)
<i>Airbnb guests</i>	55	41.7
Why travelers choose Airbnb	12	(9.1)
How guests choose their Airbnb accommodation	18	(13.6)
The Airbnb guest experience	15	(11.4)
Loyalty towards Airbnb	10	(7.6)
<i>Airbnb hosts</i>	25	18.9
Hosts' motivations	2	(1.5)
Hosts' experiences, strategies, and conduct	9	(6.8)
Airbnb accommodation pricing	14	(10.6)
<i>Airbnb supply and its impacts on destinations</i>	22	16.7
<i>Airbnb regulation</i>	10	7.6
<i>Airbnb's impacts on the tourism sector</i>	13	9.8
<i>The Airbnb company</i>	7	5.3

Note: The sub-category percentages, displayed within parentheses, indicate percentage of the overall total, and sum to the percentages shown for their parent categories

Table II.
Number of Airbnb
articles focused on
each thematic
category

Airbnb guests and found cost-savings to be their primary motivator. Nevertheless, that study focused explicitly on authenticity, and the researchers also found authenticity contributed to Airbnb's appeal, as related to three key areas – the accommodations, the social interactions with hosts and the interactions with local culture.

Guttentag *et al.* (2018) additionally argued that Airbnb users are not homogenous, and the authors conducted a cluster analysis dividing their sample into motivation-based segments. The five resulting segments differed primarily according to the Airbnb users' desire for social interaction (with a host and other locals) and their use of entire homes (versus shared accommodations). Focusing on the disabled traveler segment, Boxall *et al.* (2018) noted that Airbnb homes are better suited than hotels for disabled people to develop feelings of place identity, yet the authors also acknowledged that widespread availability of disabled-access Airbnb rooms would probably only come from government intervention.

Also, two studies looked at Airbnb through the theoretical lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the closely related Theory of Reasoned Action. So *et al.*'s (2018) previously mentioned study found Airbnb behavioral intentions also were positively influenced by perceived behavioral control, trend affinity and social influence, and negatively impacted by perceived insecurity. Amaro *et al.* (2018) surveyed German and Chinese Millennials and found intentions to use Airbnb were driven, respectively, by subjective norms, an affinity for Airbnb's unique and varied listings, positive attitudes towards online shopping and perceived economic benefits. Interestingly, Amaro *et al.* found economic benefits to be of far lesser import than had other studies, plus the researchers found perceived risk did not exhibit a significant impact on behavioral intentions, unlike So *et al.*'s (2018) finding about perceived insecurity.

Numerous researchers also have explored perceptions of the Airbnb brand and service, thereby providing an alternative lens through which to understand Airbnb's appeal. For example, very early on Yannopoulou *et al.* (2013) analyzed Airbnb's website and social media, and found the company's brand identity focused on the everyday nature of its hosts, the friendship and warmth guests can experience and the balance between authenticity and professionalism that guests can enjoy. Lee and Kim (2018a) surveyed users' perceptions of Airbnb's brand personality and found highest agreement with the dimensions of exciting, sincere and competent (rather than rugged or sophisticated), and with the traits of original, friendly, up-to-date, unique and reliable. The authors additionally found that such perceptions were felt more strongly by users exhibiting higher levels of Airbnb involvement. Yang *et al.* (2018) surveyed Airbnb users and found that guests' trust in the Airbnb brand was fostered by their trust in individual hosts (which in turn was fostered by interaction with hosts), hosts' perceived credibility (based on reviews), perceived emotional bonding with hosts, and individual listing attributes. Finally, Stollery and Jun (2017) surveyed South Korean Airbnb users and found value perceptions of Airbnb were positively influenced by monetary savings, hedonic benefits and novelty (but not social interaction), and were negatively influenced by psychological risk (but not performance risk, physical risk, or time risk).

Finally, a pair of studies have more generally compared the characteristics of Airbnb guests with hotel guests. Volgger *et al.* (2018) compared international Airbnb and hotel guests in Western Australia and found Airbnb users were comparatively more likely to be visiting for pleasure, to visit attractions, to not be travelling alone, to be staying in semi-peripheral regions, and to be from Singapore or Malaysia. Nevertheless, many other characteristics were similar between the two groups, including total trip expenditure and most trip activities, leading the authors to conclude that Airbnb users did not represent a particularly alternative, non-mainstream type of visitor. In a somewhat similar study, Poon

and Huang (2017) surveyed tourists who were using Airbnb and hotels in Hong Kong and found Airbnb users were somewhat older and better educated, more focused on price and security when choosing accommodations, more allocentric, on longer trips, and more likely to be with friends. In contrast, the hotel users were more interested in service and more likely to be on trips that were shorter and/or with family.

How guests choose their Airbnb accommodation. In many destinations, Airbnb guests have a multitude of Airbnb listings to choose from, and numerous studies have examined how such decisions are made. Gunter and Önder (2018) examined which listing attributes influenced Airbnb listing demand in Vienna and found that listing size, photo quantity and host response rates increased demand, whereas price, distance from city center and host response time decreased demand. Visser *et al.* (2017) surveyed Airbnb guests to Cape Town and found the most important attributes guests focused on when choosing their accommodations were, respectively, location, price and facilities. Similarly, Varma *et al.* (2016) surveyed Airbnb users and found they placed the greatest importance on location, price, reviews, service quality and past experience, which aligned somewhat with the attributes seen as most important by hotel users (who also were surveyed). Abrate and Viglia (2017), looking at several European cities, found host revenue was boosted by having a verified identification; a Superhost badge; more time on the platform; and, to a lesser degree, higher review quantity and professional photos. Xie and Mao (2017) examined nearly 6,000 listings in Austin, TX and found demand was impacted by hosts' Superhost status, response rate, membership duration and number of listings, in addition to the accommodation's rating, review count, price and capacity. Also highlighting the appeal of Superhosts, Liang *et al.* (2017) examined Hong Kong Airbnb listings and concluded that listings managed by Superhosts were more likely to receive reviews (often seen as a proxy for booking volume) and higher ratings, plus guests were willing to pay a premium to stay with such hosts. Finally, Mauri *et al.* (2018) examined UK and Italian Airbnb listings and found popularity (operationalized as a combination of rating scores, review quantity and times saved to "wish lists") was driven largely by reputation, which itself was particularly impacted by personal narrative storytelling in hosts' self-descriptions.

While price is clearly an important factor as Airbnb guests assess their options, several researchers have instead examined the more general concept of value. Chen and Chang (2018) surveyed both Airbnb users and non-users and found star rating had a positive influence on perceived value, which in turn had a positive influence on purchase intentions, whereas rating volume had a direct positive influence on purchase intentions. Also, Zhang *et al.* (2018) surveyed Airbnb users and found they were willing to pay a premium (versus a hotel) based on perceived functional and social value early on in the buying process.

Acknowledging potential heterogeneity among Airbnb guests, Lutz and Newlands (2018) explored the more general choice of entire home versus shared space renting. Through a survey of Airbnb users, the authors found entire home renters tended to have higher incomes and education, were more often traveling with a partner/spouse, and were less comfortable with social interaction. In contrast, guests staying in shared spaces were more likely to be male, have a lower income, be traveling alone or in a large group and be open to social interaction. Looking at generational differences, Chang and Wang (2018) had members of Generations X (ages 35-49), Y (ages 21-34) and Z (under 20) rank Airbnb listings, and found Generations Y and Z were comparatively more focused on cost whereas Generation X was more focused on cleanliness. Nonetheless, all generations were influenced by reviews, shown in part via sentiment ratio scores that the authors calculated to efficiently indicate the positivity of reviews.

Reviews are indeed a central feature of Airbnb, because they help establish the required trust between guest and host, and several researchers have specifically investigated how reviews impact Airbnb choices. [Abraham et al. \(2017\)](#) conducted an experiment with several thousand Airbnb users in which the authors manipulated the demographics (age, gender, marital status and home state) and reputation (star ratings and review quantity) of hypothetical hosts, and found that positive reputations successfully counteracted biased distrust that arose due to social distance. The authors subsequently tested this notion by examining one million actual Airbnb interactions, and further confirmed their initial conclusions. Considering similar themes, [Bae et al. \(2017\)](#) surveyed South Korean Airbnb users and found decreased social distance increased the perceived credibility of reviews, and in turn purchase intentions.

Looking at reviews from a different angle, [Bae and Koo \(2018\)](#) conducted a netnography and a subsequent experiment, which found that South Korean Airbnb guests did not fully trust review content, and therefore employed various decision heuristics like focusing on review quantity and pictures rather than review content, and using reviews primarily as an initial anchor value for future information gathering. Also, some individuals were more strongly impacted by text, and some by pictures. Looking more generally at the concept of trust, [Mittendorf \(2018\)](#) surveyed Millennials and found that intentions to inquire about an Airbnb listing or request a booking were driven by both perceived trust in the host and trust in the Airbnb platform, with trust in the host having a greater impact on inquiries and trust in Airbnb having a greater impact on booking requests. Also, [Martin-Fuentes et al. \(2018\)](#) developed a machine learning classification technique based on data from several million hotels, which generally succeeded in assigning hotels to their correct star-rating category by focusing on review volume, price, review score and users' wish lists, rather than the criteria that are typically used. The authors showed that this same technique could be used to assign a hotel-like star rating to Airbnb listings (budget, mid-low range, mid-high range and superior), which could prove more useful than existing Airbnb star ratings due to their positive skew. Somewhat similarly, [Nguyen et al. \(2018\)](#) found that the ambiance of Airbnb listings could be determined by assigning them certain adjectives either via crowdsourcing or pre-trained neural networks.

In addition to reviews, host profile pictures also can influence guests' decisions. [Ert et al. \(2016\)](#) analyzed Airbnb pricing in Stockholm and conducted a pair of discrete choice experiments, which found that the perceived trustworthiness of hosts' photos increased booking probability and prices. Perhaps surprisingly, the authors also found that review scores had no impact on guests' choices. Similarly, [Fagerström et al. \(2017\)](#) conducted a conjoint experiment in which they manipulated hosts' facial expressions, and found that neutral and positive expressions increased booking tendencies, whereas negative facial expressions and a lack of host pictures reduced booking tendencies, even when complemented by low prices and positive ratings.

The Airbnb guest experience. Once Airbnb guests select and book an accommodation, they will have the experience of actually staying there, and the characteristics of Airbnb guest experiences have proven to be another popular area of study, with researchers often gleaning their findings from what guests write in their (public) reviews. Such studies have found that reviews tend to focus on a similar collection of themes relating to both the host (e.g. hospitality and social interactions) and the accommodation (e.g. comfort and location). For example, [Cheng and Jin \(2019\)](#) analyzed Sydney Airbnb reviews and found they were overwhelmingly positive and focused chiefly on location convenience; accommodation amenities; and hosts' helpfulness, flexibility and communication. Somewhat similarly, [Tussyadiah and Zach \(2017\)](#) cluster analyzed Airbnb reviews in Portland, USA and found

they focused on the service, the facility, the location (convenience and neighborhood character), feeling welcome and the comfort of staying in a home (ambiance and hospitality). Interestingly, however, whereas [Cheng and Jin \(2019\)](#) interpreted their results as paralleling hotel assessments in many ways, [Tussyadiah and Zach \(2017\)](#) interpreted their findings on the importance of hosts and feeling welcome in a home as underscoring the distinct nature of Airbnb. Tussyadiah and Zach also found that reviews focusing on location and feeling welcome were associated with higher rating scores. [von Hoffen et al. \(2018\)](#) developed a sentiment analysis toolkit and applied it to Airbnb reviews and tweets about Airbnb, and concluded that Airbnb guests particularly value cleanliness, bed comfort, fully-equipped kitchens, spaciousness, a good view, a central and quiet location and a non-intrusive host. Confirming the general consistency that is evident in the previously described studies, [Brochado et al. \(2017\)](#) compared reviews of Airbnb listings in the USA, India and Portugal and, contrary to the authors' expectation that different cultural norms surrounding individualism would lead to divergent review patterns, the authors detected homogeneity between the reviews. This finding led the authors to conclude that enjoyable Airbnb experiences were similar across different countries.

A pair of studies also have used Airbnb reviews to better understand the Airbnb experience through the prism of value co-creation that occurs between guests and hosts. [Johnson and Neuhofer \(2017\)](#) analyzed Airbnb reviews in Jamaica and found that value arose from a combination of the home, the surrounding community and the hosts, while the guests also found value in traveling like a local, cooking and cleaning with the host, cultural learning and relaxing. Somewhat similarly, [Camilleri and Neuhofer \(2017\)](#) analyzed Airbnb reviews in Malta and found the reviews focused on six common themes relating to value co-creation – arriving and being welcomed, expressing positive/negative feelings, evaluating the accommodation and location, interacting with and receiving help from hosts, recommending the accommodation to others and thanking one another.

Moving beyond looking solely at Airbnb, several studies have compared Airbnb experiences with hotel experiences. [Belarmino et al. \(2017\)](#) compared Airbnb reviews with TripAdvisor hotel reviews and found Airbnb guests tended to focus on interactions with the hosts, neighborhood ambiance and local businesses, whereas hotel guests tended to focus on room amenities, property amenities and location relative to attractions. [Mody et al. \(2017\)](#) added four new constructs (serendipity, localness, communitas and personalization) to the experience economy framework, and found surveyed Airbnb guests rated each experience construct more highly than hotel guests, yet hotels were equally able to translate guest experiences into extraordinary and memorable outcomes that in turn led to intentions to recommend and repurchase. In a subsequent survey study, [Mody et al. \(2018\)](#) added a hospitableness construct into the experience economy framework, and found hospitableness was not greater in Airbnb stays, prompting the authors to argue that hotels could leverage their hospitableness to compete with Airbnb by providing memorable experiences. Nonetheless, [Birinci et al. \(2018\)](#) surveyed Airbnb and hotel guests and found perceived authenticity was higher amongst the Airbnb guests, whereas safety/security risks, time/convenience risk and product performance risk showed no significant differences between the two groups.

Also using data other than review comments to examine Airbnb experiences, [Priporas et al. \(2017b\)](#) surveyed Airbnb guests in Phuket, Thailand and found convenience and assurance in accommodation quality contributed most highly to perceived service quality. Additionally, Airbnb guests interviewed by [Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto \(2018a\)](#) highlighted how positive host interactions were strong contributors to overall enjoyable Airbnb experiences.

It is important to have such research on Airbnb experiences that does not rely on reviews because Airbnb reviews tend to be extremely positive (Zervas *et al.*, 2015), partly due to various characteristics of the review system that seem to encourage positive reviews (Guttentag, 2017). In fact, Bridges and Vásquez (2016) examined Airbnb reviews (by hosts as well as guests) and found they were overwhelmingly positive, with only 2 per cent classified as categorically negative. Nonetheless, the authors noted that reviewers sometimes subtly indicated dissatisfaction by sandwiching a negative comment between positive comments, or simply leaving a fairly neutral review. Also, it is important to remember that not every Airbnb guest leaves a review. Bae *et al.* (2017) found that guests became more likely to leave reviews as an Airbnb experience increasingly differed from expectations (either positively or negatively), and as the quality of the experience deviated from neutral (either positively or negatively).

Indeed, not every Airbnb experience will be a positive one, and several researchers have looked specifically at negative Airbnb experiences. For instance, as part of their previously mentioned interviews, Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto (2018b) found negative Airbnb experiences most commonly revolved around poor communication between guests and hosts, leading to lost time and/or money. Also, Phua (2018) analyzed complaints posted about Airbnb on a third-party website and found the complaints tended to focus on a few core issues – poor customer service attention from Airbnb, uncertainty and a lack of trust (e.g. last-minute cancellations and accommodations not meeting expectations) and technological issues (e.g. the verification process). Finally, Bucher *et al.* (2017) interviewed Airbnb users about how guest-host closeness can lead to “interpersonal contaminations”, which were categorized as relating to poor environmental hygiene, hosts’ personal objects, interpersonal contact and privacy intrusions. Nevertheless, a subsequent survey found that perceived authenticity overrode concerns about the first three contaminants, thereby suggesting that guests tolerate some undesirable issues so long as the experience is considered authentic.

Loyalty towards Airbnb. Airbnb guests’ experiences in turn influence their loyalty towards Airbnb, and the question of what influences Airbnb guest loyalty has been a common subject of research. This research has most frequently used survey data and structural equation modeling in which different constructs serve as antecedents for satisfaction, which in turn is positioned as an antecedent of loyalty (or repurchase intentions). For example, Möhlmann (2015) surveyed German Airbnb users and found cost savings, familiarity with Airbnb, trust in Airbnb and acceptance of Airbnb as a hotel substitute all positively influenced satisfaction, which in turn positively impacted intentions to reuse Airbnb (or comparable services). Numerous other constructs – including the belief that Airbnb promotes feelings of community belonging or reduces one’s environmental impact – were not found to have significant impacts. Priporas *et al.* (2017a) surveyed Airbnb guests in Phuket and found service quality positively impacted satisfaction, and both constructs in turn impacted loyalty. Liang *et al.* (2018a) surveyed North American Airbnb users, examining both “transaction-based” satisfaction with the Airbnb purchase process and “experience-based” satisfaction with the Airbnb accommodation experience, and found transaction-based satisfaction was particularly important in influencing both experience-based satisfaction and repurchase intentions, which was a relationship partly mediated by trust in the Airbnb hosts and the Airbnb company. Lee and Kim (2018b) surveyed USA Airbnb users and determined that both perceived hedonic value and utilitarian value positively impacted satisfaction, which in turn positively impacted loyalty, plus hedonic value (but not utilitarian) had an additional direct impact on loyalty. Also, these

relationships held even when taking customer involvement into account as a moderating variable.

Taking a more theoretical approach, [Wang and Jeong \(2018\)](#) surveyed USA Airbnb users with a model based on the Technology Acceptance Model and Innovation Diffusion Theory, and found that Airbnb loyalty was significantly impacted by both satisfaction (based on the quality of amenities, and the host's hospitality) and attitudes (based on perceived usefulness of the Airbnb website, and trust in the Airbnb website, with personal innovativeness serving as an antecedent for both). Also, [Tussyadiah \(2016\)](#) surveyed USA peer-to-peer short-term rental (primarily Airbnb) users and found enjoyment, economic benefits and amenities all had a significant positive impact on satisfaction, which in turn had a positive impact on repurchase intentions. On the other hand, social benefits and local benefits were not found to be significant, and sustainability surprisingly had a negative impact on satisfaction. Tussyadiah further compared entire home guests with private room guests and found that perceived social benefits promoted satisfaction in only the latter. [Birinci et al. \(2018\)](#) took a slightly different approach by surveying both Airbnb and hotel users and found that for both groups perceived authenticity influenced satisfaction, which in turn influenced repurchase intentions. Also, satisfaction was further predicted by safety/security risk among Airbnb users, whereas time/convenience risk and product performance risk were not significant for either group.

Although the majority of Airbnb loyalty studies have used satisfaction as an antecedent of loyalty, several have not. For example, [Liang et al. \(2018b\)](#) found use of electronic word-of-mouth, price sensitivity, perceived value and perceived risk all significantly impacted repurchase intentions, with the latter two constructs also acting as a mediator for the initial two constructs and for perceived authenticity. Additionally, [Mao and Lyu \(2017\)](#) surveyed USA Airbnb users with constructs based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Prospect Theory, and found repurchase intentions were most strongly impacted by attitudes, which were themselves most strongly impacted by unique experience expectations. Subjective norms also exhibited a direct positive impact on repurchase intentions, yet perceived behavioral control did not. Finally, [Lalicic and Weismayer \(2018\)](#) surveyed Airbnb users and found Airbnb loyalty was significantly impacted by the host's service quality and the enjoyment of social and authentic experiences, but was not impacted by perceived economic benefits or lack of risk.

Airbnb hosts

Hosts' motivations. As the research on Airbnb guests clearly demonstrates, Airbnb hosts are a critical part of the Airbnb experience, plus they are essentially the foundation of the Airbnb company, as without hosts there would be no Airbnb. Several studies have investigated why individuals become Airbnb hosts, although this topic has received far less attention than its guest equivalent. Like Airbnb guests, the hosts seem to be attracted by both financial and experiential benefits. For example, [Karlsson and Dolnicar \(2016\)](#) surveyed Australian hosts with an open-ended motivation question, and found answers fit into three primary categories – income (covering expenses or earning additional money), social interaction (enjoying meeting new people) and sharing (utilizing unused space and sharing one's world). [Visser et al. \(2017\)](#) surveyed Cape Town Airbnb hosts and found that financial incentives were the most common reason for hosting. Finally, [Ladegaard \(2018\)](#) interviewed Boston Airbnb hosts and found they saw hosting as an opportunity to interact with the foreign "Other" and achieve cosmopolitanism, but the hosts still often cherry picked guests for a certain degree of familiarity, which Ladegaard dubbed "comfortably exotic".

Ladegaard also found these encounters helped hosts acquire social capital related to the global knowledge and social connections they attained.

Hosts' experiences, strategies and conduct. Whereas Airbnb host motivation research has focused on the benefits of hosting, several studies on the hosting experience have underscored its numerous challenges. [Malazizi et al. \(2018\)](#) surveyed Airbnb hosts in Northern Cyprus about their risk perceptions and found host satisfaction was negatively impacted by financial concerns (e.g. regarding online payments) and security concerns, and this satisfaction in turn directly related to future hosting intentions. Such intentions also were directly impacted by financial concerns, security concerns and political concerns (e.g. political conflicts between a host's and guest's countries). Using a different methodological approach, [Roelofsen \(2018\)](#) conducted an autoethnography in which she stayed at 11 Airbnb listings in Sofia, Bulgaria, and found that Airbnb hosting altered the very essence of "home" for the hosts by blurring the lines between "front stage" and "back stage". Roelofsen additionally found that Airbnb homes became commodified, that certain objects were staged for the guests' experience, and that the privacy of intimate spaces had to be silently negotiated. Somewhat similarly, [Wilkinson and Wilkinson \(2018\)](#) offer an autoethnographic account of the authors' experiences as Airbnb hosts in Manchester, UK. The authors described tensions associated with maintaining a sense of privacy and preserving routines while simultaneously making guests feel welcome. The authors also highlighted the significant and sometimes unpleasant labor required to maintain a high standard of cleanliness. Finally, [Roelofsen and Minca \(2018\)](#) critiqued how Airbnb has commercialized people's living spaces, which is a sacrifice hosts must make in order to join the Airbnb community. Roelofsen and Minca further argued that hosts are reduced to quantifiable data signaling their ability to provide hospitality experiences, the pinnacle of which is the Superhost.

In addition to being hospitality providers, hosts also must market themselves to potential guests. For example, [Lutz and Newlands \(2018\)](#) compared the listing descriptions written by hosts of entire home and shared space rentals, and found entire home hosts explicitly targeted older guests, couples, business travelers and high-income professionals, while highlighting professional-level cleanliness and ensuring privacy. In contrast, shared room hosts targeted younger and frugal guests, did not boast about cleanliness and assured social interaction was a part of the experience. [Tussyadiah and Park \(2018\)](#) analyzed USA Airbnb hosts' profile descriptions, and found hosts tended to describe themselves either as well-traveled individuals eager to meet new people or with a focus on their professions. In a follow-up survey of peer-to-peer accommodation users, the authors found potential guests perceived the hosts describing themselves as well-traveled were deemed more trustworthy, and booking intentions towards these hosts were higher. Another way to stand out as a host is to achieve Superhost status, but Airbnb offers only general guidance, rather than precise detail, on how this status can be achieved. [Gunter \(2018\)](#) explored this subject by examining San Francisco host characteristics and found that obtaining and maintaining excellent reviews was easily the most important criterion for becoming a Superhost, followed by reliable cancellation behavior, responsiveness and sufficient demand.

Once potential guests are attracted, hosts additionally can choose whether or not to accept a booking request (unless the host is using Instant booking), and numerous studies have explored how such decisions are made. [Karlsson et al. \(2017\)](#) conducted a choice experiment in which they presented Australian Airbnb hosts with several pairs of hypothetical booking requests, and found hosts preferred certain personal characteristics – older, female, a profile picture (although facial expression did not matter, unlike what was found by [Fagerstrøm et al., 2017](#)), a picture of couples and a picture without kids. Also, hosts

preferred guests who requested longer bookings, made a positive self-reference about their behavior, were travelling with a partner, were not travelling with family/friends, were travelling to attend a wedding, and were not celebrating their birthday.

It seems natural that hosts may exhibit preferences for guests deemed trustworthy, compatible and profitable, yet the ability to deny booking requests also permits inappropriate forms of discrimination, like racial discrimination. In fact, numerous racial discrimination complaints have been levied against Airbnb, and the company has responded with various actions including the establishment of a Nondiscrimination Policy (Benner, 2016; Glusac, 2016). Useful insight into Airbnb discrimination is provided by Edelman *et al.* (2017), who conducted an experiment in which they sent inquiries to Airbnb hosts from fake accounts with distinctively white or African American names, and discovered the African American requests were 16 per cent less likely to be accepted than the white ones. Discrimination was demonstrated by both male and female hosts, by both African American and white hosts, by hosts offering entire homes and shared accommodations, by hosts with significant experience and multiple properties, by hosts with high- and low-priced units, by hosts in diverse and homogenous neighborhoods, and towards both male and female potential African American guests. Nevertheless, hosts who had previously hosted African American guests did not discriminate, leading the researchers to conclude that discrimination primarily was exhibited by a particular subset of hosts. The discrimination issue has received fairly significant media attention, and Cheng and Foley (2018) examined reader comments to a *Guardian* article about Airbnb's anti-discrimination policy. The authors found that people viewed the issue from varying perspectives, such as in terms of economic implications for the company, governmental regulations, and hosts' rights regarding their ability to select who they accept into their homes.

Airbnb accommodation pricing. Unlike some other sharing economy services (e.g. Uber), Airbnb hosts have the freedom to set their own prices, and copious research has used hedonic regression models to better understand how different host and listing attributes influence price. (It is worth noting that while pricing is a direct responsibility of hosts, and therefore included in this section of the paper, pricing also relates to the consumer side of Airbnb by highlighting what guests value most.) These studies often have been conducted with large data sets – up to nearly 500,000 listings (Benítez-Aurioles, 2018b) – and have included listings from a wide range of destinations in Canada (Gibbs *et al.*, 2018a), Germany (Teubner *et al.*, 2017), Italy (Magno *et al.*, 2018), Spain (Aznar *et al.*, 2018a; Benítez-Aurioles, 2018a), the USA (Chen and Xie, 2017; Kakar *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2017) and worldwide (Benítez-Aurioles, 2018b; Wang and Nicolau, 2017).

These studies have tended to find that price is positively associated with review scores, offering an entire home (versus shared accommodation), bedroom count, bathroom count, guest capacity, Superhost status, host's time as a member, certain amenities (e.g. parking) and photo count. In contrast, price generally has been negatively associated with distance from a destination's city center, a host having multiple listings, more flexible cancellation policies, Instant booking availability and review count. Although these pricing patterns have been fairly consistent, it is important to note that studies looking at multiple destinations have found noteworthy differences between them (Gibbs *et al.*, 2018a), plus some studies' findings have not conformed with these general patterns. For example, Kakar *et al.* (2018) did not find that cancellation policies significantly impacted price, and neither Teubner *et al.* (2017) nor Chen and Xie (2017) found that Superhost status significantly impacted price. Also, several studies have acknowledged that it is somewhat counterintuitive that flexible cancellation policies, Instant booking and review count would

negatively impact price, as such attributes should make a listing more attractive to potential guests, and authors have rationalized this phenomenon in different ways. For instance, [Benítez-Aurioles \(2018b\)](#) explained it in economic terms, claiming that hosts simply are encouraging demand with strategies including both lower prices and more appealing booking policies. Somewhat differently, [Gibbs et al. \(2018a\)](#) explained it as commercially-oriented hosts being more likely to use Instant booking and reduce prices to ensure demand, while casual hosts have a higher minimum threshold for the compensation that makes hosting worthwhile. Additionally, [Teubner et al. \(2017\)](#) detected an interaction effect between review scores and quantity as related to price, with the negative impact of high review volume being greater for listings with low rating scores.

Also, most Airbnb price studies have looked at additional variables beyond what has been described. For instance, [Kakar et al. \(2018\)](#) used their analysis to look specifically at racial discrimination and found that, all else being equal, Asian and Hispanic hosts in San Francisco tended to charge eight to ten per cent less than white hosts. Nonetheless, occupancy rates were the same, and neither gender nor sexual orientation had a similar impact on price. Furthermore, [Ram and Hall \(2018\)](#) looked at both Airbnb listings and hotels in Tel Aviv to explore the relationship between walkability and price, and found no significant relationship in either case.

Rather than examining static prices, numerous studies have examined the degree to which Airbnb hosts have adopted revenue management practices, adjusting prices strategically. [Magno et al. \(2018\)](#) found that hosts in Verona, Italy were increasing their prices in response to increased demand, thereby demonstrating basic dynamic pricing behavior. However, [Aznar et al. \(2018b\)](#) examined Barcelona Airbnb listings and hotels and found that Airbnb hosts varied prices by season, but, unlike hotels, did not vary much by day of week. Similarly, [Gibbs et al. \(2018b\)](#) examined nearly 40,000 Airbnb listings and over 1,000 hotels in Canada, and found that while dynamic pricing among Airbnb hosts was evident by day of week and by season, many Airbnb hosts were shifting prices minimally or never. Also, Airbnb price fluctuations tended to be less pronounced than those of hotels, and hotel rates correlated more closely with their occupancy levels. Lastly, [Oskam et al. \(2018\)](#) examined dynamic pricing by Airbnb hosts in Amsterdam and found that hosts who adjusted prices more frequently performed better in terms of occupancy levels and daily rates.

Airbnb supply and its impacts on destinations

Complementing research on hosts and guests, numerous studies have examined Airbnb supply in various destinations to more generally understand its characteristics and impacts. For example, [Abdar and Yen \(2017\)](#) examined over 673,000 Airbnb listings from 16 countries and found that apartments and houses were the most common property types, entire homes were the most common room type, and most listings had a 4.5 or five star rating. [Crommelin et al. \(2018\)](#) examined Airbnb listings in Hong Kong, London, New York City, Paris and Sydney and found the majority of listings were entire homes, and a substantial proportion were “dedicated units” available over 90 days per year and/or owned by a host with multiple listings, which the authors contrasted with the supposed ethos of the sharing economy. Also, [Adamiak \(2018\)](#) examined 737,000 listings in 432 European cities and identified meaningful differences between the Airbnb supply characteristics of different countries (e.g. more or fewer fully-dedicated Airbnb units), and concluded that Airbnb supply volume roughly corresponded with a city’s size and status as a leisure destination. Adamiak additionally found the relative proportion of entire homes dedicated to short-term renting was higher in major tourist destinations, and Airbnb seemed to play a particularly

important role in rapidly growing inbound markets like Iceland. This form of large-scale inventory analysis requires purchasing or otherwise attaining scraped Airbnb data, and [Osés Fernández et al. \(2018\)](#) offered methodological guidance for such Airbnb data scraping to assist with sector monitoring. Also, [Palos-Sanchez and Correia \(2018\)](#) found that the volume of Google searches for different keyword terms associated with Airbnb could successfully predict income from short-term rentals.

By examining large Airbnb data samples, researchers have gained insights into public health questions as well. For example, [Kennedy et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated the fire safety and first-aid features that hosts claimed at over 120,000 listings in various USA cities. The authors found 80 per cent had smoke detectors, 58 per cent had carbon monoxide monitors, 42 per cent had fire extinguishers and 36 per cent had first-aid kits, suggesting less safety preparedness than would be found in hotels. The authors also noted that smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors were comparatively more prevalent in cities that had Airbnb permits requiring such devices. Looking at a different public health issue, [Kennedy et al. \(2017\)](#) found significant disparity between Canadian cities regarding the percentage of Airbnb listings permitting smoking, and the authors predicted that Airbnb may fill a gap as hotels increasingly become smoke-free environments.

Large data sets also permit analyses of the geographic dispersion of Airbnb rentals. This form of research has been conducted in Austin, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. ([Wegmann and Jiao, 2017](#)); New York City ([Dudás et al., 2017a](#)); Barcelona and Madrid ([Benítez-Aurioles, 2018a](#); [Gant, 2016](#); [Gutiérrez et al., 2017](#)); Berlin ([Schäfer and Braun, 2016](#)) and Hamburg ([Brauckmann, 2017](#)); Budapest ([Boros et al., 2018](#); [Dudás et al., 2017b](#); [Smith et al., 2018](#)); Cape Town ([Visser et al., 2017](#)); Sydney and Melbourne ([Alizadeh et al., 2018](#); [Crommelin et al., 2018](#)); Utrecht, Netherlands ([Ioannides et al., 2018](#)); and Warsaw ([Gyódi, 2017](#)). With the exception of Cape Town, these studies consistently have found that Airbnb listings are highly concentrated in city centers and around tourist attractions and facilities. For example, [Benítez-Aurioles \(2018a\)](#) found that in Barcelona and Madrid over 80 per cent of Airbnb listings were found within a three-kilometer radius of the city centers. Consequently, this body of research has largely concluded that Airbnb listings reflect fairly similar spatial patterns to hotels, although there are distinctions when considering proportional densities in different areas ([Gyódi, 2017](#); [Ioannides et al., 2018](#)), plus Airbnb is introducing tourism lodging into some previously residential neighborhoods ([Gutiérrez et al., 2017](#)). Moreover, [Wegmann and Jiao \(2017\)](#) found evidence in some cities that Airbnb listings cluster around transit lines. This area of research also has repeatedly found that, demographically, Airbnb listings are primarily found in relatively affluent ([Alizadeh et al., 2018](#); [Visser et al., 2017](#); [Wegmann and Jiao, 2017](#)) and predominately white areas ([Visser et al., 2017](#); [Wegmann and Jiao, 2017](#)), aside from in Hamburg, where Airbnb was more prevalent in multicultural neighborhoods ([Brauckmann, 2017](#)).

Some researchers have examined the consequences of Airbnb's rapid expansion throughout destinations. [Freytag and Bauder \(2018\)](#) looked at Airbnb as one of various change agents precipitating the "touristification" of Paris, and determined that Airbnb disperses tourists throughout the city and immerses them in local neighborhoods, thereby introducing tourism into new areas of the city beyond the traditional "tourist bubbles". Also, [Fang et al. \(2016\)](#) examined Airbnb's impact on tourism sector employment in Idaho, USA, and found the relationship was positive, as Airbnb brings increased tourists to the destination. Nevertheless, the authors cautioned that this lift could be offset as Airbnb potentially grows to the point that it reduces hotel employment. Finally, [Gurran and Phibbs \(2017\)](#) examined Airbnb's impacts in Sydney by analyzing

written submissions by local planners and other interested parties to a government inquiry into short-term letting. The authors found greater opposition coming from urban areas, characterized by concerns about issues like noise, traffic, parking and waste management.

In addition to disrupting the daily life of locals, Airbnb also may impact local housing markets by reducing supply and raising prices, which is an important issue in many of Airbnb's regulatory battles. In fact, several of the previously mentioned studies on Airbnb's spatial patterns and impacts suggested that impacts on housing were possible in neighborhoods of high Airbnb density (Alizadeh *et al.*, 2018; Brauckmann, 2017; Gurran and Phibbs, 2017). Multiple other studies have focused specifically on this issue. For example, in Berlin, Schäfer and Braun (2016) found that over 5,500 Airbnb units were being offered beyond the nightly limit prescribed by law, representing 0.3 per cent of Berlin's housing, but this figure increased to seven per cent in areas of particularly high Airbnb density. The authors also found that rental rates had increased more significantly in areas with higher Airbnb density. In Boston, Horn and Merante (2017) determined that every standard deviation increase in Airbnb inventory volume was associated with a 0.4 per cent increase in asking rents (and up to 3.1 per cent in areas of high Airbnb density), and a 5.9 per cent decrease in long-term rental unit supply. In simpler terms, the authors found that every 75.8 Airbnb listings equated with 4.5 fewer long-term rental units. In Barcelona, Gant (2016) found that in high-density areas, like the Gothic Quarter, Airbnb rentals represented up to 17 per cent of homes. Gant also interviewed locals in the Gothic Quarter about Airbnb's impacts and found nearly all of her 42 interviewees spoke of displacement concerns. Gant summarized that displacement occurs in various forms, including housing shortages, rent increases and frustrations with daily disruptions, which together produce a snowball effect of residents leaving and being replaced by tourism investors. Finally, in New York City, Wachsmuth and Weisler (2017) explained that because Airbnb creates a new opportunity to generate revenue through residential housing, it creates and augments a "rent gap" in which landlords' actual earnings are smaller than their potential earnings, leading to loss of rental housing via direct evictions and indirect displacement as housing is made unaffordable. With a particular focus on gentrification, the authors found that although Airbnb revenue was greatest in wealthier areas (e.g. Times Square), some peripheral areas (e.g. Harlem) appeared ripe for gentrification.

Airbnb regulation

Concerns over housing markets are one of just various reasons why policymakers across the world are looking to regulate Airbnb. Existing regulatory frameworks were not prepared for the rapid rise of a technology-driven peer-to-peer short-term rental platform like Airbnb, and the regulatory battles that have ensued have often been highly contentious affairs. Crommelin *et al.* (2018) compared short-term rental laws in five large global cities and found that different regulatory instruments were used, but each city historically had regulations on short-term letting prior to Airbnb, and each city has limited the number of nights a short-term rental could be let out annually. Ferreri and Sanyal (2018) explored how Airbnb is pushing to shape the short-term rental regulatory environment in London. The authors additionally highlighted the challenges associated with identifying and collecting evidence on violators of London's 90-night quota passed in 2015, which necessitated data scraping and triangulation. The authors argued that such difficulties raised questions about the degree to which platform companies like Airbnb should be involved in the rule enforcement process. Taking a more general look at Airbnb regulation, Gurran (2018) summarized the debate from an urban policy

perspective and highlighted key concerns with Airbnb – consumer protection measures are challenging to enforce, Airbnb disrupts local neighborhood life and Airbnb adversely impacts housing markets. Gurran also presented a future research agenda, calling for greater knowledge regarding how Airbnb is changing conceptualizations of “home”, how Airbnb is triggering gentrification and more general neighborhood change and how well companies like Airbnb can self-regulate.

Looking at Airbnb’s approach to its regulatory battles, [McKee \(2017\)](#) critiqued how Airbnb has successfully framed the regulatory debates such that the default position has been legality, even though Airbnb listings have often been illegal and produce negative externalities. McKee posited that Airbnb’s success on this front has come from its association with notions of open markets (that are themselves positioned as natural, politically neutral, consensual and efficient), family and technology. Similarly, [Stabrowski \(2017\)](#) examined the Airbnb regulatory debate in New York City by describing how Airbnb had positioned itself using alternative notions of community, sustainability and governance, with a particular focus on individual economic empowerment coming from transformed meanings of “home”.

Different jurisdictions have approached Airbnb regulation very differently, and several studies have explored these differences. [Tham \(2016\)](#) compared Australia and Singapore and found that the Australian government’s response has been more fragmented and localized, whereas Singapore’s response has been more driven by the federal government. Tham also noted that Singapore was more resistant than Australia to Airbnb, despite being fairly welcoming towards Uber. [Hong and Lee \(2017\)](#) interviewed various government and Airbnb employees in South Korea and found that federal government officials were more open than local ones to adapting regulations in a manner favorable to sharing economy services like Airbnb, because the local officials were more beholden to their local constituents. Somewhat similarly, [Hong and Lee \(2018\)](#) examined Airbnb regulatory policies in 47 USA cities and determined that political competition (i.e. degree of victory in most recent election) was positively associated with more favorable regulatory action towards sharing economy companies like Airbnb, which is consistent with the general phenomenon of more entrenched government administrations tending to favor the status quo, and vice versa.

Offering a path forward, based on their examination of Airbnb data in five major USA cities, [Wegmann and Jiao \(2017\)](#) suggested four guiding principles for Airbnb policymakers – web scraping is imperfect but still cheap and effective for data gathering, regulation should take into account local factors including Airbnb usage patterns, regulation is only meaningful if paired with dedicated enforcement (often financially supported by permit fees), and commercial operators should be distinguished from other hosts. The enforcement issue is particularly important because it can be so challenging, as was highlighted by [Ferreri and Sanyal \(2018\)](#) and [Leshinsky and Schatz \(2018\)](#). However, [Leshinsky and Schatz \(2018\)](#) also noted that some jurisdictions are therefore enlisting the assistance of private companies, but the authors argued that this practice raises questions about the role that private companies should play in the enforcement of public regulations.

Airbnb’s impacts on the tourism sector

One of many factions involved in the Airbnb regulatory debates has been the hotel industry. Hotels are naturally vulnerable to competition from Airbnb, but questions remain as to whether Airbnb has a material negative impact on hotels, with some studies detecting impacts while others have not. In their seminal study on Airbnb’s hotel impacts, [Zervas et al. \(2017\)](#) examined nearly seven years of Airbnb and hotel data in

Austin and found that Airbnb supply negatively impacted hotel revenues, primarily by pressuring hotels to lower their rates, and particularly in hotels that were budget-priced and/or had a limited business clientele. The authors additionally determined that this negative impact was especially pronounced during peak demand times, when Airbnb supply would surge. Also looking at Austin, [Xie and Kwok \(2017\)](#) found Airbnb supply increases exerted a significant negative impact on hotel RevPAR. However, this impact decreased as the price differential between a hotel and nearby Airbnb listings increased or the dispersion of Airbnb prices increased. Looking at New York City hotels, [McGowan and Mahon \(2018\)](#) found that Airbnb growth had exerted small, but statistically significant, effects on hotel revenue, occupancy and rates. The authors additionally noted that despite Airbnb's limited apparent impacts, hotels should nonetheless be concerned due to Airbnb's rapid growth.

[Guttentag and Smith \(2017\)](#) examined the substitution question at a micro level by surveying Airbnb guests about what they would have done if Airbnb and other similar platforms had not existed. The authors found that nearly two-thirds indicated they would have otherwise used a hotel, with the majority indicating a mid-range hotel. Additionally, over 25 per cent of the respondents indicated they would have used a hostel or a bed-and-breakfast, and fewer than six per cent claimed they would have stayed with friends/family or not taken the trip. The authors also examined guests' comparative performance expectations from their last Airbnb with hypothetical nearby hotels, and found Airbnb was generally expected to outperform budget hotels/motels, underperform upscale hotels, and have mixed outcomes versus mid-range hotels when considering traditional hotel attributes (e.g. cleanliness and comfort). When considering attributes more closely associated with Airbnb (experiential attributes and low price), Airbnb was expected to significantly outperform all three hotel classes.

Despite such findings, other research has not found that Airbnb has a material impact on hotels. For example, [Choi *et al.* \(2015\)](#) found that Airbnb listing volume had virtually no impact on hotel revenues in South Korea, and [Ginindza and Tichaawa \(2017\)](#) found that hotel occupancy and Airbnb occupancy rates were positively correlated in Swaziland. Additionally, [Blal *et al.* \(2018\)](#) examined several years of San Francisco hotel and Airbnb data, and found Airbnb supply was unrelated to hotel RevPAR, and increases in average Airbnb prices actually were associated with RevPAR increases among luxury hotels. On the other hand, [Blal *et al.*](#) also found that increases in Airbnb satisfaction (as per user reviews) were associated with RevPAR decreases, suggesting that improvements in Airbnb quality may impact hotels negatively.

Researchers conducting qualitative research with hotel representatives also have found limited levels of concern over Airbnb. For example, [Koh and King \(2017\)](#) interviewed representatives from Singaporean economy/mid-tier hotels and hostels and found they tended to feel as though a stricter regulatory environment was needed, although Airbnb was not perceived as an immediate threat. Indeed, some hostel owners even indicated that they listed rooms on Airbnb. Likewise, [Varma *et al.* \(2016\)](#) interviewed a dozen USA hotel executives and found they doubted Airbnb was impacting the hotel industry, feeling instead that Airbnb was targeting a different segment of travelers. Nonetheless, whereas the larger hotels seemed satisfied to simply monitor Airbnb, smaller hotels tended to be more active in opposing Airbnb through actions like regulatory lobbying and enhancing their hotel products. Also, [Tham \(2016\)](#) analyzed tourism industry responses to Airbnb in Australia and Singapore and concluded the responses had been quite limited in both places.

Finally, a handful of papers have examined Airbnb's potential competition with hotels through a more conceptual lens. Hansen [Henten and Windekilde \(2016\)](#) explained the emergence of Airbnb from a transaction cost theory perspective, explaining that Airbnb facilitates transactions that would not have otherwise occurred, due to the prior challenges for hosts and guests to find each other, establish trust and engage in a transaction. The authors posited that Airbnb has created a new market that both complements and competes with the traditional hotel industry. Also using transaction cost theory, a proposition paper by [Akbar and Tracogna \(2018\)](#) predicted that Airbnb's inherent uncertainties, lack of specificity (i.e. Airbnb listings are not built to be short-term rentals) and low transaction frequency may push the service to evolve from a strictly peer-to-peer platform to a more "integrated" platform in which there are tighter standards, more centralized control and asset ownership. [Forgacs and Dimanche \(2016\)](#) summarized some of the reasons why Airbnb has proven so successful (e.g. strong business model, intuitive and user-friendly website and an association with authentic local travel), but argued that hotels have ample opportunities to compete on these same grounds – by competing on value rather than rate, enhancing their websites, incorporating local elements into their properties and embracing customer relationship management practices. Lastly, [Sovani and Jayawardena \(2017\)](#) discussed how the Canadian tourism sector should respond to sharing economy services like Airbnb, based on a travel conference panel discussion on the sharing economy that included a representative from Airbnb. Sovani and Jayawardena recommended that the Canadian tourism sector have a positive attitude towards change, carefully revise relevant laws and regulations, encourage technological innovations, try to quantify part-time employment in the sharing economy and think outside the box in promoting healthy competition.

The Airbnb company

The final category of Airbnb research comprises articles that have examined the Airbnb company more generally. For example, [Boswijk \(2017\)](#) summarized how value is co-created by Airbnb and its community, as established by the company's vision, the unique experience of staying in a local's home, Airbnb's creation of a trusted marketplace, the company's culture and its innovative business model. [Midgett et al. \(2018\)](#) posited that Airbnb should typically be more sustainable than hotels, and the authors presented various associated propositions regarding energy use, emissions, water use, waste production, users' economic well-being and the creation of social ties. Taking a more critical stance, [O'Regan and Choe \(2017\)](#) critiqued Airbnb through the prism of cultural capitalism, highlighting that the company has contributed to the commodification of life experiences. She further argued that, although Airbnb adopts appealing rhetoric of sharing and speaks of other ideals like sustainability and transformative travel, the company is just another profit-driven lodging enterprise that is introducing new market-based problems into the tourism accommodation sector.

Looking at Airbnb's advertising efforts, [Pera and Viglia \(2016\)](#) interviewed several Airbnb users about an Airbnb YouTube ad that tells a host's story. Many viewers were emotionally engaged by the story and even became eager to meet the host and visit the sites presented in the video. Considering hypothetical advertising techniques, [Liu and Mattila \(2017\)](#) explained that two of Airbnb's key appeals are feeling a sense of belongingness and the uniqueness of Airbnb accommodations. The authors conducted an experiment in which they manipulated people's sense of power, and found that individuals feeling a sense of powerlessness responded more favorably to hypothetical

Airbnb advertising focusing on belongingness, whereas individuals feeling a sense of power responded more favorably to hypothetical Airbnb advertising focusing on uniqueness, and these relationships were mediated by individuals' self-brand connection. Such forms of experimentation align well with a data-driven tech company like Airbnb and, indeed, Airbnb employees [Bion *et al.* \(2018\)](#) described how they use the free statistical software program *R* for various tasks, including data analysis, experimentation and data visualization. Finally, [Oskam and Boswijk \(2016\)](#) mapped out possible future scenarios for Airbnb, based on a travel sector workshop and a Delphi panel, and suggested that Airbnb's evolution will differ between different cities, primarily as a function of consumer demand and regulatory policies.

Future research

The plethora of studies that have been published on Airbnb in the past couple of years demonstrate how academia can generate a large body of knowledge on a novel phenomenon in a fairly short time. Nonetheless, this initial wave of research still has many limitations and leaves many questions left unanswered. As was shown, the majority of the extant Airbnb research has been conducted by researchers in the USA/Canada and Europe, and much of it has similarly focused on these same regions, while destinations in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East have received minimal attention. Likewise, much of the research has focused chiefly on large urban destinations (e.g. New York City, Barcelona and Sydney) rather than destinations that are less populous and/or popular with tourists, though the dynamics of Airbnb may be very different in such locales.

Methodologically, there is also a need for greater diversity. While myriad methods have been used to examine Airbnb, many research questions have been looked at repeatedly using the same methods. Generally speaking, surveys have been used to understand guest motivations, experiments have been used to investigate accommodation choice, surveying with structural equation modelling has been used to examine loyalty, hedonic regressions have been used to examine the importance of different listing attributes, text mining and content analysis have been used to analyze Airbnb reviews and profiles, and scraped data with geographic information systems have been used to examine Airbnb dispersion. Nevertheless, these same questions undoubtedly could be examined with other approaches. For example, choice experiments could be used to examine guests' motivations to use Airbnb, interviews with Airbnb guests could be used to investigate satisfaction and loyalty, questionnaires could be used to investigate why Airbnb listings tend to concentrate in certain areas, and hosts' reviews of guests could be used to better understand host experiences. In general, quantitative methods have been most common thus far, and have helped to establish foundational knowledge on many topics, but there is ample opportunity for more qualitative research that could offer rich insights into the many questions surrounding Airbnb. Indeed, a large number of studies have relied on relatively easily accessible listing and review data that is scraped from the Airbnb website, but it is time for more researchers to tackle their research questions in more ambitious ways.

Also, by looking back at the Airbnb research agenda that [Guttentag \(2015\)](#) laid out several years ago, it is clear that many important questions remain mostly unanswered. For example, more research is needed regarding how Airbnb impacts destinations' tourism economies beyond the lodging sector, how non-hotel accommodations (e.g. hostels and bed-and-breakfasts) are being affected by Airbnb, how online travel agencies and guided tour companies are being affected by Airbnb, why Airbnb reviews tend to be so positive, whether tourists actually save money by using Airbnb and what they do with those savings, how businesses and business travelers perceive and use Airbnb, how users' (or the general public's) attitudes towards Airbnb have shifted over time, how later adopters differ from earlier adopters, how different regulatory

measures impact Airbnb inventory and host behavior, and how residents perceive Airbnb and the factors that influence such attitudes. Also, it must be recognized that because Airbnb and its regulatory environment are evolving so rapidly, older findings could quickly become outdated and need to be re-examined.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the research progress that has been made on the topic of Airbnb since the company's inception. The literature review grouped the extant Airbnb research into six different thematic categories – Airbnb guests, Airbnb hosts, Airbnb supply and its impacts on destinations, Airbnb regulation, Airbnb's impacts on the tourism sector and the Airbnb company. By reviewing this large, recent body of literature, this paper fills a significant research gap. It additionally has highlighted several areas of Airbnb knowledge that are beginning to mature as consensus emerges between similar studies. For example, repeated findings have demonstrated the importance of money in motivating both Airbnb guests and hosts, the importance of attributes like room type and guest capacity in determining listing prices, and the geographical concentration of Airbnb listings in many city centers.

This literature review offers clear theoretical and practical implications. In terms of theoretical implications, this review advances comprehension of the peer-to-peer economy, it adds a new layer to understandings of tourism lodging choice and the various factors (e.g. perceived authenticity) that influence such choice, and it similarly offers new perspectives for thinking about innovation and value co-creation. In terms of practical implications, this paper provides a valuable synthesis of Airbnb knowledge that should be useful to Airbnb and other tourism lodging providers as they compete for guests, Airbnb and other peer-to-peer short-term rental platforms as they look to attract and retain hosts, destination marketing organizations as they seek to better cater towards modern tourist preferences and policymakers as they look to more effectively manage the Airbnb phenomenon.

Despite the sizeable body of research that has been covered in this review, there remain countless knowledge gaps that need to be filled by future research, and numerous recommendations for such research have been provided. Such research is particularly important due to the speed of technological innovation and regulatory flux that is constantly shifting the Airbnb landscape. Fortunately, given the rapid pace at which Airbnb research has been conducted over the past several years, one can be optimistic that researchers will continue generating findings of both theoretical and practical value on the increasingly important subject of Airbnb.

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