
Trusting The Wisdom of Stranger and eWOM Credibility in Collaborative Consumption: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

Using Airbnb as a platform for collaborative consumption, this conceptual paper helps us extend our understanding on the relationship between the benefits and satisfaction that Airbnb guests achieved during their stay and their intention to spread positive eWOM among Malaysians. Numerous studies have suggested significant impacts of eWOM on their businesses, specifically accommodation products in the tourism industry, however, scares study on it in the Airbnb Malaysia setting. This study will be using quantitative data through a survey method and a structured survey questionnaire that will be distributed to 400 respondents who have stayed at least once in any Airbnb accommodation located in Malaysia. Descriptive data will be analysed using SPSS and PLS-SEM will be employed to examine the relationship of the benefits of collaborative consumption towards customer satisfaction and eWOM. In addition, the role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between collaborative consumption benefits and eWOM will be analyzed. The findings of this study will contribute toward a further understanding of how consumer decision-making can be affected by a myriad of factors, including the words of total strangers. This study will also add to the existing literature on Airbnb by understanding the mechanics behind what drives consumers to be satisfied with the offerings of Airbnb and what factors perceived to be more important than others.

Keywords:

Consumption collaboration; sharing economy; airbnb; customer satisfaction; eWOM.

1 Introduction

The sharing economy is a fundamental change from the traditional business market to the new business platform (Cusumano, 2015). The rise of sharing economy as an economic model also known as peer-peers based activity has changed the way people travel and share resources among other types of activities. The sharing economy's business model allows individuals to rent assets that belong to someone else, particularly assets that are not fully utilized at all times such as an extra room in your house, or an extra seat in your car. A study in the UK has identified that the UK's sharing economy contributes a revenue of 15 billion US dollars in 2013, and it is expected to reach 335 billion US dollars in 2025 (Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC)), 2014). Airbnb is also blamed for the 4 per cent drop in New York state's hotel tax revenue in 2016 (Fermino, 2016). Consumers are becoming increasingly accepting this type of economic model for businesses such as Airbnb, Uber, GrabCar, HomeAway, and many more such.

Collaborative consumption is also gaining its momentum in the lodging industry (Gansky, 2010; Sundararajan, 2013). This can be seen in the increase of stays at Airbnb, a business model that connect guests to the accommodation hosts via a digital marketplace (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Zervas, Proserpio & Byers, 2015). In the collaborative consumption concept, trust is critical in generating and online interaction (Heinrichs, 2013). Airbnb uses mechanisms such as profile identification (Krishnan, Smith, & Telang, 2003) and a review system (Botsman & Rogers, 2011). The review system provides the opportunity for the buyer and sellers to leave feedbacks on products, services, as well as on transactions. The feedbacks are accessible to all users, as they are also given the opportunity to leave their feedback and reviews.

According to Belk (2014a), the common practices of collaborative consumption include; a. Using temporary access non-ownership models of utilizing consumer goods and services; b. Reliance on the internet and Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is referred to as "... website connecting people and allow user to contribute the content (Carroll & Romano, 2011). The rise of web 2.0 has elevated traditional WOM to electronic WOM (eWOM) where consumers provide positive, negative, or neutral information about a product or company, and is accessible to others via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler & Yale, 2004). Consumers are free to create information pertaining to a particular brand, product, or services on their social networks composed of family, friends, and other acquaintances (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008).

1.1 Problem Statement

Malaysia is known for its uniqueness and authenticity. Tourists are increasingly looking for unique and authentic experiences. In Malaysia, although Airbnb shows late start but it has grown significantly in recent years (Razli, Jamal & Mohd Zahari, 2017). This explains the increase of more than 200 per cent of Airbnb stays in Malaysia in 2016 (Kammed, 2017). It is timely that a research on Airbnb is conducted in the local setting as Malaysians continue to accept this type of business platform and like other service industries, the key to profitability is customer satisfaction. With the growing demand of Airbnb in Malaysia, understanding the factors that contribute to satisfaction with Airbnb stays and consumer intention to spread positive eWOM is critical.

This research focuses on Airbnb because such a peer-to-peer lodging concept is emerging, explaining the dearth in the literature pertaining to tourists' motivations in selecting such lodging platform. The increase in Airbnb stays means that existing hotels are losing its market shares. A better understanding of guests' motivation to use Airbnb will not only offer valuable insights for Airbnb hosts, but also for competing lodging industries. Understanding the reasons why consumers opt for this alternative lodging allows various establishments to make informed decisions on how to compete against disruptive innovations in the services industry.

1.2 Purpose of Study

This research aims to investigate Airbnb guests' perceptions on the benefits of collaborative consumption and the relationship with eWOM when staying in Airbnb in Malaysia. These collaborative consumption benefits include (enjoyment, social, economic, sustainability, location, and amenities). This study also investigates the influence of guest satisfaction on eWOM and its mediating effect on the relationship between collaborative consumption benefits and eWOM.

1.3 Significance of Study

The research adds to the body of knowledge by extending the works of Tusyyadiah (2016) with the addition of eWOM as an outcome variable. Investigating how perceived benefits, and level of satisfaction drive consumers' intention to spread electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) will be beneficial to both academics and practitioners alike. The findings of this study will contribute towards a further understanding of how consumer decision making can be affected by a myriad of factors, including the words of total strangers. This study will also add to the existing literature on Airbnb, an industry that is innovatively disrupting the entire lodging industry.

The findings of this study sheds light on the Airbnb phenomenon, which is fairly new in Malaysia. Understanding the mechanics behind what drives consumers to be satisfied with the offerings of Airbnb enables the hospitality industry to strategically prepare themselves in facing any probabilities of losing market share to Airbnb. Findings of this

study will allow Airbnb operators to be informed of the factors that is perceived to be more important than others. It is understandable that people are excited about the thought of generating money through their extra room or even an entire house, this study's finding will allow them to focus on the matters that is perceived as important for the consumers. Knowing the factors that can instigate consumers to spread positive word of mouth, will be beneficial to lodging operators in the long run.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Collaborative Consumption

The concept of the sharing economy entered wider public discourse around 2011-2012. Collaborative consumption is an economic system that includes a transition to the term of sharing economy and collaborative economy. Belk (2014b) defines collaborative consumption is another compensation, distribution of a resource for a fee or people coordinating the acquisition. This study proposes to adopt a definition similar to Belk (2014b).

2.1.1 Airbnb and Collaborative Consumption

Initially, Airbnb was founded in 2008. Previously known as Airbed and Breakfast and it offered alternative accommodation in cities with a saturated hotel market that drew a large number of attendees (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). , Airbnb served more than 17 million guests worldwide (Friedman, 2014) and its growth up about 350% compared to the same period in 2010. Airbnb service allows people who have the interest to share out or rent out their spare bedrooms to their customers. A previous study suggests that the sharing economy transforms and disrupts long-established business practices (Koopman, Wang & Shang, 2014).

As a newcomer to the industry Airbnb services platforms have rapidly cemented their position as a new and healthy competitor to hotels (Freitag & Haywood, 2015). As these social phenomena are increasing, it is essential to examine the factors that lead to customer satisfaction informing providers with critical needs to fulfil and to retain guests and generate more income.

2.1.2 Benefits of Collaboration Consumption

Enjoyment Benefits (EN)

Research showed that sustainability, enjoyment of the activity, and economic gain, with enjoyment being the strongest determinant as the factors of motivate customer (Hamari, Sjoekint, & Ukkonen, 2016). Social networking is the service that can be used and seen at anywhere especially on the promoting relatedness (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015).

Social Benefit (SB)

It not only helps stranger to meet and communication online, Collaborative consumption an opportunist for individuals and communities to meet physically (Tussyadiah, 2015). Schor (2014) claim that sharing economy empower people and build a social movement centered on good practices of sharing and cooperation. Airbnb are the successful example for creating new social (Schor, 2015a). Web 2.0 has changed the transaction of business where online transaction makes from a stranger based on trust; the customer will book the Airbnb as claimed by a number of the platform, sharing economy bring the benefits meeting people, making friends and getting to know others (Schor, Fitzmaurice, Carfagna, Attwood-Charles & Poteat, 2016).

The potential of Airbnb website is enhancing social capital and create trust among strangers (Schor et al. 2016). There are many reasons for customer book the Airbnb services as Airbnb provide a unique travel experience (Airbnb, 2017). An example, the user of Airbnb is a stranger that rent a room or house from a host that posted on the website. Once they make host, they may expand the social circle. The customer can have the local activity or meaningful conversation with host. Therefore, the services of sharing economy become more personal and emotional by making customer experience become more personalize and socially (Hong, 2016).

Economic Benefits (EB)

The successful of Airbnb because of the economic benefits for both hosts and guest, and of the authenticity of the accommodation experience (Oskam et al., 2016). Beside that customer can save money and time without ownership duties and providing autonomy (Seign & Bogenberger, 2012). The price offer is competitive as ordinarily only basic need provided. Usually, there are no amenities or breakfast offered by host unless it mentioned on the website.

Aside, collaborative consumption customers will have the simplified transaction processing, time and effort saving to an improved product at the lower price (Denning, 2014; Smolka & Hienerth, 2014). In addition, economic resources can be save is an incentive for sharing economy (Luchs, Naylor, Rose, Catlin, Gau & Kapitan 2011). Economic benefit is the factor that influences customer satisfaction in term of cost-saving (Möhlmann, 2015).

Sustainability Benefits (SUS)

Collaborative consumption resolves the environmental issue by provides sustainable solutions (Firnkorn & Müller, 2011; Truffer, 2003). To solve environmental concern, collaborative consumption Sharing can be an eco-friendly. Sharing economy encourages sharing and cooperation, less consumed materials, and more accessibility (Bardhi & Eckhardt., 2012). The cheap ride service attracts people to take ride more often and resulting in the increasing volume of carbon emissions. Taking Airbnb as the example, the longer customer sharing and stay at one location, it may reduce pressure on the environment.

Amenities Benefits (AM)

Compare to the lack of the amenities, the prices will be higher if Airbnb that offer free amenities such as wireless internet and parking (Tarik & Osman, 2017). Guest often have access to use the residential amenities such as dryer, washing machine and kitchen (Yglesias, 2012a).

Location Benefits (LB)

There are not much distinguish on the location benefits for collaborative consumption. According to Tussyadiah & Zach (2013), accommodation location will affect Peer-to-Peer (P2P) accommodation reviews. However, the authors did not profoundly discuss on the locations.

Hence, the aspect for customer satisfaction on location is reducing travel cost in term of transportation (Canina, Enz & Harrison 2005). Prices of Airbnb accommodations decrease with increased distance from the city center (Tarik & Osman, 2017). Hence, the factors of customer satisfaction on location is easy accessibility to portals and tourist attractions (Lee & Jang, 2011). Taking the similar concept, the more convenience to portals and tourist attraction, the more chances customer will book the rooms in Airbnb Services.

Although many studies in sharing economy concept focus on social benefit, environmental benefits and economy but this study will explore more on the location benefits leads to customer satisfaction.

2.2 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET include exchanges of resources and propose the result of a process of exchange and interpersonal interactions (Emerson, 1976; Skidmore & Skidmore, 1975). According to (McKnight & Cummings, 1998), SET is an individual's willingness to make himself vulnerable to a trusted target's actions. Hence, SET has use to explain social interaction information system (Stafford 2008; Chen, 2013). Perception service quality and satisfaction in sharing economy will lead to personal internal processing but social interaction (Choo & Petrick, 2014; Emerson, 1976). Customer happiness and loyalty, as well as customer loyalty and profitability, are linked, according to Hallowell (1996). As explained in SET, social contact is critical to the Airbnb business model and has a significant impact on guests' experiences and satisfaction. This study will focus on the satisfaction propose SET as the theory.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Caruana, Money and Berthon, (2000) defined customer satisfaction as a comparison what a customer expects about the services provided by a service provider and what the customer received in the actual term.

Customer satisfaction is the key priority for brand success and performance as customer satisfaction is the foundation for building and maintaining loyalty and trust with a customer (Hanaysha, 2016). As discussed early, the key element for Airbnb is

customer satisfaction. An example for Airbnb case, the customer who choose to stay at Airbnb based on excitement of local attraction and interaction, location, cost saving, amenities such as pool, gym and etc. Once stay they will give chances to review or feedback during the stay period. It includes the response from the host where referring to during booking if the customer has any issue they are allowed to have a chatting session with a host in Airbnb website and house condition. The customer also worry-free if any bias happens as the policy of Airbnb, they will not delete review even is positive or negative (Airbnb, 2017).

2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Traditional WOM dominated customers' purchasing decision-making process, and customer seeking advice from close family and friends before making a purchase decision (Nam and Dân, 2018). However, the internet has changed merged as a platform for eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Many researchers indicated that the eWOM behaviors are the trend of consumers today, online reviews have become a habit before making purchase decision, and they tend to believe EWOM information than traditional marketing or advertisement (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). Individuals use social media and other online platforms to share their experiences and opinions about products and services they have used (Shashikala et al., 2020). Moreover, the consumer can look for the information related to brands and products that they interested not only from people also surrounding from worldwide (Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011). Tourists' behavioral intention to use technology for the choice of a tourism destination is influence by the attitude they form towards the use of social networks (Di Pietro, Pantano and Virgilio, 2012). In addition, the hospitality sector is the most strongly influenced by eWOM (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014) and become social phenomena need to follow and examine.

2.4.1 Customer satisfaction and eWOM

Web 2.0 has indirectly affected traveller behaviours either in searching for information or to make a purchase decision. Social media and mobile technology have enabled the latest expansion of the sharing economy and turned it into a big business (Penn & Wihbey, 2016). Hence, with the facility of social media, reviews provided by personal tourism experiences also affected travellers' choices of information sources during trip planning processes as well as the evaluation and sharing of experiences after the trip (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013b; Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutiérrez-Taño & Díaz-Armas, 2011; Xiang & Gretzel 2010). One of the sharing methods is via Social Media Sites (SSNs) are Facebook or Instagram. This sharing method also known as eWOM. eWOM is all informal the communications for Airbnb consumer through the Internet related to the usage or characteristics of booking and living in Airbnb accommodations (Litvin, Bing & Goldsmith, 2008). Consumers have a higher level of interest in a product if they obtain more information or feedback on the internet, according to Bickart (2001) and Goh et al. (2016). Consumers respond positively to ratings and feedback because

they indicate the product's honesty based on personal experience. The aim of this research also to examine the role of satisfaction in mediating the CC and eWOM relationship.

Consumers will try to seek references from eWoM before making decisions. As Airbnb is the most prominent example of the sharing economy in hospitality and it is becoming an essential player in the hospitality sector (Oskam et al., 2016; Richardson, 2015). Many studies are focusing on the customer satisfaction on Airbnb (Tussyadiah, 2015) however, little studies examined on customer satisfaction influences eWOM.

3 Conceptual Framework

3.1 Research Questions

Based on the arguments in the literature review section above, this study aims to investigate the following research questions:

Research Question 1:

Do collaborative consumption benefits (enjoyment, social, economic, sustainability, location, and amenities) drive consumer satisfaction?

Research Question 2:

Does consumer satisfaction with their Airbnb experience significantly influence eWOM?

Research Question 3:

Does satisfaction mediate the relationship between collaborative consumption benefits and eWOM?

3.2 Research Hypotheses and Framework

Several factors (independent variable) will be investigated regarding their effects on consumer satisfaction (dependent variable). The independent variables that are to be tested in this study include collaborative consumption benefits such as enjoyment, social, economic, sustainability, location and amenities. The dependent variable is the customer eWOM behaviour and guest satisfaction will be tested for its mediating roles in the customer eWOM behaviour.

H1: Collaborative consumption benefits (enjoyment, social, economic, sustainability, location, and amenities) positively drives consumer satisfaction.

H2: Consumer satisfaction significantly influence eWOM.

H3: Consumer satisfaction mediates the relationship between collaborative consumption benefits (enjoyment, social, economic, sustainability, location, and amenities) and eWOM.

The proposed framework for this study is as follows:

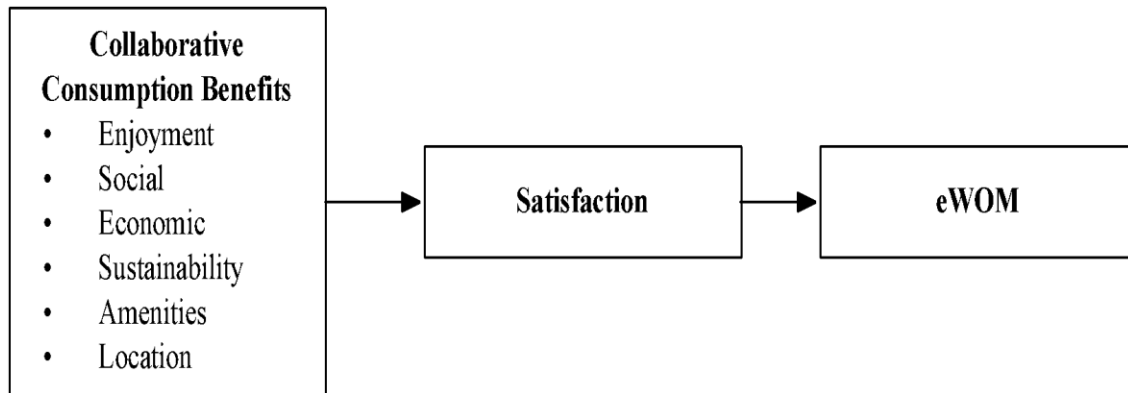


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

Conclusive research design, using a descriptive research method will be used in this research due to the research questions are related to customer perception which is also known as a type of market characteristic towards collaborative consumption benefits. Due to constraints of resources such as time and money, this study will be cross-sectional with data collected at a single point in time and recapitulated using statistical measures (Kumar, Talib & Ramayah, 2013).

The data will be conducted on general adult population who have stayed at least once in an Airbnb in Malaysia and a survey link generated by Google Form will be posted on various travel groups on Facebook. Structural equation modelling (SEM) will be used to examine the relationship between variables of interest. SEM is appropriately used as causal relationships between variables can be tested simultaneously. The study will choose the maximum number based on the previous study suggested is 400 whereby according to Jackson (2001) recommend N should be between 200- 400. To minimize recall bias, only those who have stayed at an Airbnb in the past one year will be recruited. The study will employ close-ended survey items adopted from past literature. The survey will comprise of three sections: A, B, C, and D. Section A measures six benefits of collaborative consumption: enjoyment, social, economy, environment, amenities, and location. Items in section B will measure customer satisfaction, while items in section C will gauge customer satisfaction. Respondents' demographics will be gauged using items in section D. The breakdown of measures is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of Measures

Section	Variables	Number of Items
A	Collaborative Consumption Benefits	
	• Enjoyment	5 items
	• Social	5 items
	• Economy	4 items
	• Environment	4 items
	• Amenities	4 items
	• Location	4 items
B	Customer Satisfaction	4 items
C	E word-of-mouth (Ewom)	4 items
D	Demographics	6 items

A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely disagree) to 7 (extremely agree) will be used in this study. Items that will be used in section A and B is adopted from Tusyadiah (2016). Items that will be used in section C will be adopted from the works of Han, Kim, and Hyun (2011). The items used in the respective sections are illustrated in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. Section D comprises demographics questions such as age, education level, income, ethnicity, and gender.

Table 2: Collaborative Consumption Benefits Instruments

Dimension	Items	Label
Enjoyment Benefits (EN)	Staying at an Airbnb	
	...is enjoyable	EN1
	...is exciting	EN2
	...is interesting	EN3
	...is fun	EN4
Social Benefits (SB)	...is pleasant	EN5
	...allows me to get insiders' tips on local attractions	SB1
	...allows me to have a more meaningful interaction with locals.	SB2
	...allows me to get to know people from the local neighborhoods.	SB3
	...allows me to develop social relationships.	SB4
Economic Benefits (EB)	...helps me connect with locals.	SB5
	...saves me money.	EB1
	...helps lower my travel cost.	EB2
	...makes travel more affordable.	EB3
	...benefits me financially.	EB4

Sustainable Benefit (SUS)	...is a more sustainable way of travel.	SUS1
	...helps reduce the negative impacts of travel on the environment.	SUS2
	... helps reduce the consumption of energy and other resources while traveling.	SUS3
	... allows me to a more socially responsible traveler.	SUS4
Amenities Benefit (AM)	... the property has good amenities.	AM1
	... the property has nice features.	AM2
	... the property has nice appliances	AM3
	... the property is of high quality	AM4
Locational Benefit (LB)	...it is close to transportation.	LB1
	... it is close to restaurants.	LB2
	...it is close to shops.	LB3
	...it is close to tourist attractions.	LB4

Table 3: Consumer Satisfaction Instruments

Dimension	Items	Label
Consumer Satisfaction (SA)	I am happy with my decision to stay at this Airbnb accommodation	SA1
	I believe I did the right thing when I stayed at this Airbnb accommodation	SA2
	Overall, I am satisfied with the decision to stay at this Airbnb accommodation	SA3

Dimension	Items	Label
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)	I often read other tourists' online reviews to know whether Airbnb makes a good impression on others.	eWOM1
	To make sure I choose the right Airbnb place, I often read other tourists' online reviews	eWOM2
	I often consult other tourists' online reviews to help choose a good Airbnb place.	eWOM3
	I frequently gather information from tourists' online reviews before I choose to book an Airbnb place.	eWOM4

Two major phases of data analysis will be undertaken for this study. The first phase of the data analysis is data screening and data preparation. This phase will help the researcher to identify missing data, straight lining responses, reliability, outliers, data normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity.

Structural Equation Modelling will be conducted in the second stage. SEM will allow the researcher to examine a series of dependence relationship simultaneously. Using SEM will enable the researcher to assess the study's measurement properties, as well

as test the key theoretical relationships using a single technique (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2015).

4.2 Data Analysis

In this study, data will be analysed using two types of techniques, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0 and PLS-SEM. Using SPSS, the descriptive analysis will be applied in analysing the demographical data of the respondents. PLS-SEM will be used because it estimates the multiple and interrelated dependence in a single analysis and to check on the validity via, construct validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

5 Conclusion

This study is an ongoing investigation and the result of this study are expected to explore the factors that contribute to satisfaction with Airbnb stays and consumer intention to spread positive eWOM among Malaysian. The research will add to the body of knowledge by extending the works of Tusyyadiah (2016) with the addition of eWOM as an outcome variable. Investigating how perceived benefits, and level of satisfaction drive consumers' intention to spread electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) will be beneficial to both academics and practitioners alike. In addition, the findings of this study will contribute towards a further understanding of how consumer decision making can be affected by a myriad of factors, including the words of total strangers.

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