Investigating the Motivations and Constraints of Chinese Peer-to-Peer Accommodation Hosts

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Abstract

Purpose – This research aims to identify peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation hosts' perceived motivations and constraints, to examine the prediction of the motivation and constraint factors on hosts' intention to continue business based on hosts' attitudes, and to explore the moderating role of business scale.

Design/methodology/approach – A scale for hosts' perceived motivators and constraints was developed. Mixed methods were used to develop and analyse a conceptual framework for demonstrating how constraints and motivations influence hosts' behavioural intentions. Findings from interviews with hosts interpretatively supported the survey results.

Findings – Chinese hosts' perceived constraints and motivators are identified and explained. The survey results indicate that constraints lower intention to continue one's business and motivators heightens it. Motivators have a higher effect on attitudes and intentions than constraints do. Business scale was confirmed as a moderator in the constraint—attitude link but not in the motivator—attitude relationship.

Practical implications – This paper offers policy implications for governments, online platforms and hosts in terms of establishing incentives and solving problems so that Chinese hosts can sustainably operate their businesses.

Originality/value – This paper identifies constraints and motivators and develops a measurement scale for both simultaneously, which provides a holistic explanation of hosts' attitude and behavioural intention. It also reveals the moderating role of business scale. In investigating the thoughts of existing hosts operating on global and local platforms in China, this paper complements the literature, which mainly focuses on the Western context and a single global platform.

Keywords: P2P accommodation, hosts, motivations, constraints, continuance intention, business scale

Paper type: Research paper

1. Introduction

The sharing economy has grown rapidly over the last decade, mainly due to the recognition of shared values and improvements in technology (OECD, 2016). The global revenues generated by the sharing economy, including hospitality, dining, car sharing, finance, staffing, and music and video streaming, are estimated to reach around US$335 billion by 2025 (PwC, 2015). The sharing economy is based on digital platforms that share underused assets (Prayag and Ozanne, 2018). The tourism and hospitality sector is a dominant participant in and contributor to the sharing economy due to peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation (Cheng and Edwards, 2019). After one of the earliest P2P accommodation platforms, Airbnb, was launched in 2007, the P2P accommodation business rapidly gained popularity among guests globally (Guttentag, 2015; Tham, 2016).

The sharing economy highlights the value of sharing, and its business activities heavily rely on interactions between hosts and guests. The boom in the P2P industry largely depends on the diversity of host offerings, and the platforms are merely the intermedium. These factors highlight the overlooked importance of hosts in the sharing economy. Compared to P2P accommodation consumers, who have been extensively evaluated in the literature (Karlsson and Dolnicar 2016; Moon *et al*. 2019), hosts' attitudes and behaviours have received little attention (Stors and Kagermeier, 2017). The few studies that have examined motivations and constraints have either focused on income and social interactions as motivations (Benoit *et al*. 2017; Farmaki, 2019; Farmaki and Stergiou, 2019; Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016) or on perceived risks as constraints (Alraeeini *et al.*, 2019; Malazizi *et al.*, 2018). In this type of business, constraints and motivations often co-exist.

The majority of the extant research has emphasised motivation factors and neglected the constraint factors that hosts encounter. These studies have attached importance only to the growth of the sharing-economy market, resulting in a lack of investigation into conflicts with other stakeholders, such as other residents and platforms, and the challenges posed by government regulations regarding safety, quality and hygiene. Thus, there is a gap in the literature concerning how such factors shape hosts' intentions to continue running their P2P accommodation businesses. Previous studies were conducted during the early stages of the P2P sharing-accommodation industry, when it was undergoing dramatic growth. The sharing model has now entered its second decade, during which a crisis has arisen, requiring the exploration of emerging issues. This study identifies and examines the constraints and motivators in a single model to provide a holistic, robust explanation of hosts' attitudes and behavioural intentions. This study also explores whether the relationships of constraint—attitude and motivator—attitude are contingent on business scale (single versus multiple properties). The implications of these findings can be suggested to hosts operating at different scales.

This research aims to identify hosts' perceived motivations and constraints, develop a measurement scale, and validate the predictive power of motivators and constraints on overall attitudes and behavioural intentions regarding future operation. Prior studies have mostly focused on Western countries and Airbnb, the implications of which may not be generalisable to Asian countries where local platforms have proved more popular than Airbnb. The present research focuses on the Chinese market and offers policy implications for relevant government departments and online platforms for establishing incentives and solving problems so that hosts can operate sustainable businesses.

This study makes four contributions. First, it enriches understanding of the sharing economy by identifying the motivations and constraints perceived by service hosts operating P2P accommodation and by developing a measurement scale. It contributes to the formation of a holistic picture of the sharing economy by complementing previous studies, which mainly focused on motivators. Second, the understanding of P2P accommodation management and experience has been restricted by the overwhelming focus on the Western context. Empirical evidence drawn from Chinese hosts provides implications that are relevant for Chinese destination management. Third, it demonstrates the power of various motivations and constraints in explaining business owners' continuance intention, whereas the literature has tended to examine the intention to join the industry. Fourth, previous research has focused on the predictors of hosts' attitudes towards and intentions to operate P2P accommodation. Less is known about moderating factors. This study explores business scale as a boundary condition that differentiates constraint–attitude and motivator–attitude relationships.

2. Literature review

2.1 Research on P2P accommodation hosts

The satisfaction level and perceptions of the supply side of the sharing economy are believed to be as crucial as the demand side in influencing the sustainable development of this business (Dolnicar and Talebi, 2020). Many studies have focused on the demographic characteristics of hosts (e.g., profile photos, names and gender on online platforms) and their non-demographic attributes to examine how such factors affect hosts' business performance (Ert and Fleischer, 2019; Xie et al., 2017).

The literature has explored hosts' attitudes towards platforms and guests, and some studies have examined hosts' behavioural intentions in relation to accepting/denying bookings and disclosing information. Wang *et al.* (2019) assessed the antecedents and consequences of hosts' trust in Airbnb and found that technical antecedents, including the quality of the system, service and information, had the strongest impact on hosts' trust in the platform. Karlsson *et al.* (2017) examined the factors influencing hosts' decision to accept or deny a booking. Their findings showed that hosts decide to accept a booking request based on age, guest self-assessment, length of booking, trip motivation, travel party, number of people in the profile picture and availability of the profile picture. Several studies have evaluated hosts' and guests' perceptions and behaviours, many of which have focused on the interactions between the two key stakeholders. Moon *et al.* (2019) found that hosts perceived fewer positive overall interactions and appeared to have a lower level of encounter satisfaction and behavioural intention compared with guests.

Airbnb and Couchsurfing are well-known P2P accommodation businesses (Prayag and Ozanne, 2018). Many studies on the sharing economy have been conducted in the context of Western countries and focused on mainstream online platforms, particularly Airbnb (Dolnicar, 2019), at the expense of diversity in the knowledge construction of the sharing economy. With the swift growth of P2P accommodation supply and demand in the Asian market and the launch of diversified local platforms, it is crucial to examine the operations of P2P accommodation in Asia. Studies on Asian countries and non-Western platforms are limited, perhaps due to restrictions on data accessibility. The current research enriches the literature by collecting data in China on hosts' perceived motivations for and constraints on using Airbnb as well as local platforms.

2.2 Motivations and constraints of P2P accommodation hosts

Although the importance of research on the hosts of P2P accommodation has been recognised (Prayag and Ozanne, 2018), research remains limited on the motivation and constraint factors influencing hosts' accommodation sharing (Wang *et al.*, 2019). Service providers in the sharing economy run businesses based on different motivations and constraints (Böcker and Meelen, 2017). Karlsson and Dolnicar (2016) summarised three categories of motives: 1) income, which includes paying bills, making money and affording luxuries; 2) social interaction, which means meeting and interacting with guests from various backgrounds; and 3) sharing, which mainly refers to the sharing of space, although several respondents mentioned the sharing of joy. Among the three categories, economic reasons and social interaction have been identified as predominant drivers (e.g., Alrawadieh and Alrawadieh, 2018; Benoit *et al*., 2017; Farmaki, 2019; Farmaki and Stergiou, 2019). From their interviews with Airbnb hosts and guests, Farmaki and Stergiou (2019) learned that reducing loneliness was a key driver for hosts and guests to participate in a sharing business. Moreover, Benoit *et al*. (2017) captured entrepreneurial freedom, including the flexible offering and individualization of service as an important motivator for service providers and confirmed the positive role of electronic sharing systems. Based on Airbnb host data collected in Dubai, Alraeeini *et al*. (2019) discovered the low costs and high value linked to accommodation sharing and having a user-friendly, highly informative accommodation-sharing system as the main drivers of accommodation sharing. Sustainable and environmental considerations, such as sharing energy and water resources, are also important reasons for participating in the sharing economy (Hamari *et al.*, 2015). These findings may reflect that the fundamental value of this business model is to share.

The main constraint identified in the literature is risk. Malazizi *et al*. (2018) revealed that two types of risk, financial and safety/security, negatively affect Airbnb hosts' satisfaction and behavioural intentions, along with political risk. Farmaki (2019) pointed out that female hosts may face an increased risk to their safety. This assumption could be based on Airbnb's 'guest-first approach', which restricts females from rejecting or cancelling bookings about which they may feel uncomfortable. Apart from risks, limited knowledge about platforms and underdeveloped legislation have also constrained hosts (Alraeeini *et al.*, 2019; Malazizi *et al.*, 2018). Alraeeini *et al*. (2019) showed that limited understanding of the use of new platforms and insufficient or underdeveloped legislation generated doubts over service quality and the benefits/losses of the business. Stiff competition was found to be another key challenge (Alrawadieh and Alrawadieh, 2018).

Research on the motivation and constraint factors of hosts has been scattered. Although Mahadevan (2019) examined motivators and barriers for hosts, she captured perceptions of guests as would-be hosts rather than existing hosts. The findings from that study indicate that a sharing philosophy is a dominant motive. In contrast, opportunity costs, such as the time spent on the property, and potential regulations, such as taxation and registration, are insignificantly associated with the intention to become a host. Mahadevan (2019) offered several insights into the influencing factors that attract existing guests to become hosts. However, in collecting guests' viewpoints, the study could not comprehensively identify the motivations and constraints of existing hosts to continue operating in the sharing business.

Studies that systematically analyse how hosts' motivators and constraints affect hosts' continuance intention are non-existent. The present study holistically evaluates hosts' motivation factors ('motivators' in the hypotheses) and constraint factors ('constraints' in the hypotheses).

To validate the predictive power of the identified motivators and constraints, this study follows previous studies (Amaro *et al.*, 2019; Huang and Hsu, 2009; So *et al.*, 2018) by investigating their predictive relationships with hosts' attitudes towards P2P accommodation business ('attitude' in the hypotheses) and behavioural intention to continue their P2P accommodation business ('intention' in the hypotheses). The theory of planned behaviour (TBP) can be used to examine behavioral intention, which can predict someone's actual behavior (Ajzen 1991). When TPB is applied to evaluating tourism and hospitality cases, it is found that motivators can largely explain variation of attitude and then behavioral intention (Huang and Hsu 2009). TPB has been applied to examining determinants of guests' intention to use Airbnb (So, Oh, and Min 2018). The negative (positive) effect of constraints (motivators) on behavioural intention will require the presence of an attitude as the explanatory variable (i.e., mediator). Specifically, constraints will lead to negative attitude towards continuance of P2P accommodation business and then intention to exit the market, whereas motivators will lead to positive attitude towards continuance of P2P accommodation business and then intention to stay in the market. Thus, the following hypotheses have been formulated.

H1: Constraints are negatively associated with attitude.

H2: Attitude mediates the negative relationship between the constraints and intention.

H3: Motivators are positively associated with attitude.

H4: Attitude mediates the positive relationship between the motivators and intention.

2.3 Business scale as a moderator

Although research about P2P accommodation has been well-documented in the literature, studies concerning hosts' attitudes towards and intentions to operate such businesses tend to focus on predicting factors (Mahadevan, 2019; Malazizi *et al.*, 2018; Xie *et al*., 2017). Less is known about the factors that moderate the predicting effects. Understanding the significant moderator can help practitioners effectively act on research implications. To fill the gap in the literature, we propose that business scale, in the form of single versus multiple properties, is a moderator.

This proposition is grounded in the size-survival relationship of organisations, which suggests that a large organisation has advantages in business continuance (Bercovitz and Mitchell, 2007). Compared with small competitors, a large business generally has advantages in terms of accessing and allocating resources (Kaul, 2012), maximising operation efficiency (Halkos and Tzeremes, 2007), bargaining power when dealing with external parties (e.g., suppliers; Tyagi, 2001), and innovativeness (Zaridis *et al.*, 2020). Given its advantages, a large business should be more capable of addressing the constraints imposed by an environment. However, motivators are internalised in people (Pritchard *et al.*, 2009) and affect attitudes, which are also internalised; thus, they should be less susceptible to environmental factors (e.g., business scale). Consistent with this argument, prior study reported that entrepreneurs' motivation is primarily driven by the psychological benefits gained from operating the business (for examples independence, freedom, job satisfaction, and others) (Alstete, 2008). In sum, the motivator effect on attitude towards business continuance is unlikely to vary with business scale. By contrast, the attitude of a host is more likely to be affected by the constraints if the host operates a single property (i.e., small scale) than if the host operates multiple properties (i.e., large scale). It is hypothesised that:

H5: Business scale moderates the negative relationship between the constraints and attitude, but it does not moderate the positive relationship between the motivators and attitude.

H5a: The negative relationship between constraints and attitude is significant for small-scale hosts (with a single property) but not for large-scale hosts (with multiple properties).

H5b: The positive relationship between motivators and attitude is not contingent on business scale.

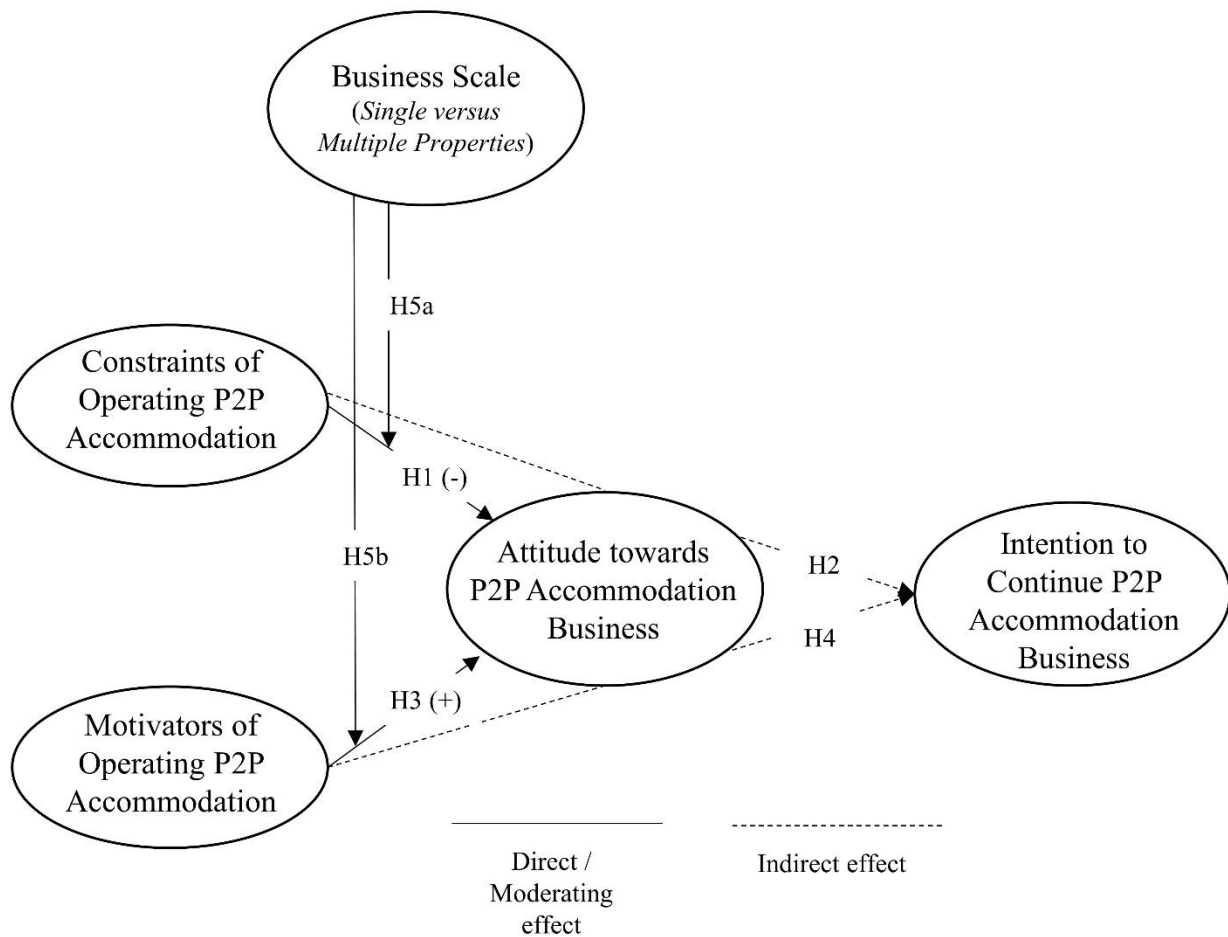Figure 1 illustrates the hypotheses in a conceptual framework.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

3. Research design

We adopted a mixed-methods approach to conduct two studies, Study 1 and Study 2 (Creswell *et al.*, 2003). In Study 1, a qualitative phase was followed by a quantitative phase. The qualitative phase was designed to supplement the inconsistent and Western-centric results of previous research and to identify hosts' motivations and constraints, which could then be tested to provide a relevant and useful scale. The quantitative phase involved the development and analysis of a conceptual framework to demonstrate how constraints and motivations influence P2P accommodation hosts' behavioural intentions. Study 2 included further explanatory qualitative research. The unique nature of Chinese P2P accommodation hosts necessitated further exploration of the model built in Study 1. The qualitative data were additionally investigated to provide new insights that were drawn to support and explain some key findings of the quantitative research.

3.1 Study 1: Methods and findings

We used both qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a scale for Chinese hosts' motivators and constraints, following Churchill's (1979) scale development process. The items were generated based on qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews with hosts and a review of the literature (e.g., Liu and Mattila, 2017; So *et al.*, 2018). We interviewed 20 hosts to provide rich information between June and July 2019. Themes were derived from the data (an inductive approach) based on the meaning captured in the interviews and existing literature (a deductive approach). The process identified 35 constraint items and 22 motivator items (see

Table 1). The reliability and validity of these items were assessed using the questionnaire survey approach. In particular, the measurement model was tested. As discussed in the section entitled 'Motivations and constraints of P2P accommodation hosts', the predicting power of motivators and constraints was validated through an examination of their relationships with attitude and intention and the testing of the proposed hypotheses. The survey design and results are explained below.

3.1.1 Survey respondents and procedure

All respondents were P2P accommodation hosts who operated their businesses in China. They were asked to complete an online survey, which was distributed through 27 host social media groups on WeChat. The hosts were also asked to send the survey link to their peers. We also sent the link to our known hosts. Data collection was conducted in mid-2019 and lasted a month. By the end of the survey, we had received 334 responses. Although data were collected before the current pandemic, hosts perceived the motivations and constraints scale and the theoretical framework developed in this study to be highly relevant in providing implications for helping P2P accommodation recover following the pandemic.

3.1.2 Measures

This study identified 35 constraint items and 23 motivator items. They were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). To measure attitudes towards the P2P accommodation business, we adapted three items from So *et al*. (2018). The intention to continue P2P accommodation business was operationalised in three items that had been adapted from Liu and Mattila (2017). Both attitude and intention were measured on a 7-point bipolar

scale. The final measurement items are reported in Table 1. Regarding the moderator of business scale, respondents were asked if they operated a single property or multiple properties. We asked about demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education level and annual family income. Six invited experts reviewed the questionnaire prior to the pre-test. The hosts were Chinese people who were likely to have difficulty in reading English; therefore, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese. Back-translation was then conducted to ensure that the two language versions were semantically equivalent. A pre-test was conducted among four hosts who did not indicate having any problems with the questionnaire.

Table 1. Outer loadings and the highest cross loadings of reflective constructs

Label	Items	Outer Loadings	Highest Cross-loadings (absolute value)
	Constraint		
	Extra Burden (EB)		
EB1	Too much effort put into maintenance	0.867	0.547
EB2	Too much effort put into cleaning	0.853	0.555
EB3	Extra expenses of cleaning	0.819	0.579
EB4	Extra expenses of maintenance	0.824	0.633
EB5	Lack of privacy especially for those who share the same accommodation with guests	0.679	0.453
EB6	Safety concerns of hosts especially for those who share the same accommodation with guests	0.712	0.583
EB7	Lack of freedom, e.g., spending time in waiting for guests' arrivals	0.647	0.402
	Limited Personal Capacity (LC)		
LC1	Lack of communication skills with guests (e.g., dealing with guests who do not know English)	0.858	0.432
LC2	Unfamiliarity with handling guests' online reviews	0.852	0.424
LC3	Lack of customer service skills	0.841	0.407
LC4	Unfamiliarity with the sharing economy platforms	0.781	0.338
LC5	Lack of technical skills (e.g., the operation of the booking system)	0.745	0.348

LC6	Unfamiliarity with the legislative status of P2P accommodation business	0.773	0.507
	Weak Market Demand (WD)		
WD1	Low occupancy rate	0.836	0.420
WD2	Decline in tourist arrivals	0.728	0.297
WD3	Seasonality	0.710	0.409
WD4	Limited revenues	0.765	0.501
	P2P Platform Constraints (PC)		
PC1	Some platforms are not responsive to hosts' enquires	0.714	0.352
PC2	Frequent change of regulations of the platform	0.783	0.429
PC3	Platforms favour the guests over the hosts especially when there is a dispute	0.763	0.530
PC4	Lack of platforms' supports	0.740	0.419
PC5	Hard to reject bookings due to platforms regulations	0.739	0.451
PC6	Inconsistent policy/requirements by different platforms	0.659	0.457
	Guest Issues (GI)		
GI1	Guests' inappropriate use of hotel standard to evaluate hosts' service	0.842	0.563
GI2	Receive neighbours' safety concerns regarding guests as strangers frequently appearing in the community	0.667	0.459
GI3	Guests' over expectation towards customer services	0.823	0.506
GI4	Emotional stress about guests' online reviews and ratings	0.762	0.571
GI5	Misbehaviour of guests (e.g., not paying the full rents, make a mess in the accommodation)	0.757	0.538
	Government Regulations (GR)		
GR1	Intervention from the local authorities (e.g., foreign guests' registration with police; Police's random checks)	0.821	0.380
GR2	Accreditation requirements by the local authorities	0.721	0.308
GR3	Charge taxes by the government	0.800	0.421
	Market Competition (MC)		
MC1	Price War among hosts	0.873	0.514
MC2	Severe competition	0.789	0.558
MC3	Availability of other forms of accommodation, such as hotels	0.742	0.465
MC4	Competitors' unethical practices jeopardizing the image of the sharing accommodation business	0.746	0.502
Motivator			
	Better Interpersonal Relations (BR)		
BR1	Learning from other cultures	0.863	0.419
BR2	Improving communication skills	0.842	0.440
BR3	Increase their social connections, e.g., making more friends	0.817	0.446

Code	Item		
BR4	Becoming more outgoing	0.792	0.412
BR5	Improve customer service skills	0.808	0.500
BR6	Allow their guests to have an authentic experience and live like a local	0.816	0.403
BR7	Meeting new people from other cultures	0.805	0.434
BR8	Experiencing a certain level of "strangeness."	0.758	0.424
Ease of Operation (EO)			
EO1	Found it easy to start	0.972	0.299
EO2	Found it easy to manage	0.927	0.197
Better Work-life Balance (BB)			
BB1	Diversify its sources of income	0.756	0.395
BB2	Helping increase family income	0.705	0.378
BB3	Offers more autonomy and freedom (e.g., being one's own boss)	0.862	0.475
BB4	Offers more flexibility (e.g., taking full control of one's time)	0.816	0.479
Showcasing a Trendy Character (SC)			
SC1	Running a sharing-economy business "a cool thing"	0.955	0.307
SC2	Running a sharing-economy business "a Novel thing"	0.960	0.324
Settling the Cost of Living (SL)			
SL1	Paying off the mortgage	0.879	0.393
SL2	Helping offset the cost of maintenance	0.867	0.338
SL3	Earning a living	0.761	0.383
Optimizing the Use of Resources (OR)			
OR1	Use spare rooms or vacant houses as resources	0.822	0.363
OR2	Use spare labor force (e.g., using spare time)	0.860	0.341
OR3	Use other available resources (e.g., accommodation refurbishment services provided by the platforms)	0.814	0.373
Attitude towards P2P accommodation business			
ATT1	Bad … Good	0.874	0.479
ATT2	Unpleasant … Pleasant	0.850	0.497
ATT3	Unfavorable … Favorable	0.878	0.521
Intention to continue P2P accommodation business			
INT1	Unlikely … Likely	0.917	0.575
INT2	Impossible … Possible	0.941	0.501
INT3	Improbable … Probable	0.924	0.520

3.1.3 Data cleaning and respondent profiles

Among the 334 responses received in the main survey, 22 responses contained missing values and were eliminated. The remaining 312 responses were checked for outlier cases. Two cases had variables with absolute *z*-values greater than 4, and they were removed. Therefore, the final number of responses retained for the model testing was 310.

Regarding respondents' profiles, there were more female participants (*n* = 163, proportion = 52.6%). The respondents were young in general, as almost three-fifths of the samples were under 36 (*n* = 182, proportion = 58.7%), and they were well educated, with over 60% holding undergraduate or graduate degrees (*n* = 196, proportion = 63.2%). Regarding their annual family income, the distribution was less uneven, and incomes in the range of RMB10,001 to RMB15,000 (approximately, US$1,430 to 2,150) were most commonly reported (*n* = 55, proportion = 17.7%).

3.1.4 Measurement model

To generate the factors or dimensions for the model, we conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) of the 35 constraint and 23 motivator items separately. The analyses were performed using the direct oblimin (delta = 0) rotation method and an eigenvalue of 1 as the cutoff point. Seven constraint factors were generated (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.889; Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (595) = 6,075.27, *p* = 0.000; total variance explained 63.95%). Among the motivators, one item (i.e., believed the sharing economy would continue to grow) had a communality of less than 0.5 and was loaded to a factor that was not relevant (i.e., optimising the use of resources). Therefore, it was eliminated, and PCA was performed again on the remaining

22 items. The analysis generated six motivator factors (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.837; Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (231) = 4,146.83, p = 0.000; total variance explained 73.05%). In the final models, all absolute values of factor loadings were greater than 0.4, and communalities were above 0.5. The factor labels are shown in Table 1.

The measurement model was further examined by applying Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The sample size was deemed adequate after taking in account the largest number of structural paths pointing towards a construct, power analysis (Hair *et al*. 2017) and inverse square root method (Kock and Hadaya, 2018). Given the latent dimensions of the constraints and motivators, a hierarchical component model (HCM) needed to be formed. This was an exploratory study; thus, the nature of the measurement model of constraints and motivators was uncertain (i.e., reflective or formative). We empirically examined it using confirmatory tetrad analysis (CTA) in the PLS-SEM. As Becker *et al*. (2012) suggested, a two-stage approach was adopted. First, the latent scores of the dimensions of the constraints and motivators were generated. CTA-PLS requires two criteria, which are as follows: (1) at least some indicators (i.e., dimensions) are significantly correlated and (2) more than three indicators per measurement model. The constraint dimensions were all significantly correlated with each other ($p < 0.05$), while 14 out of 16 correlations among the motivator dimensions were statistically significant. Therefore, the first criterion was met. Both the categories of constraints and motivators had more than three dimensions, and thus, the second criterion was met. Both constraints and motivators had at least one tetrad with a bias-corrected and Bonferroni-adjusted confidence interval not including zero, indicating that their measurement models should be formative. As such, reflective-formative HCMs of the constraints and motivators were formed and tested (see Figure 2).
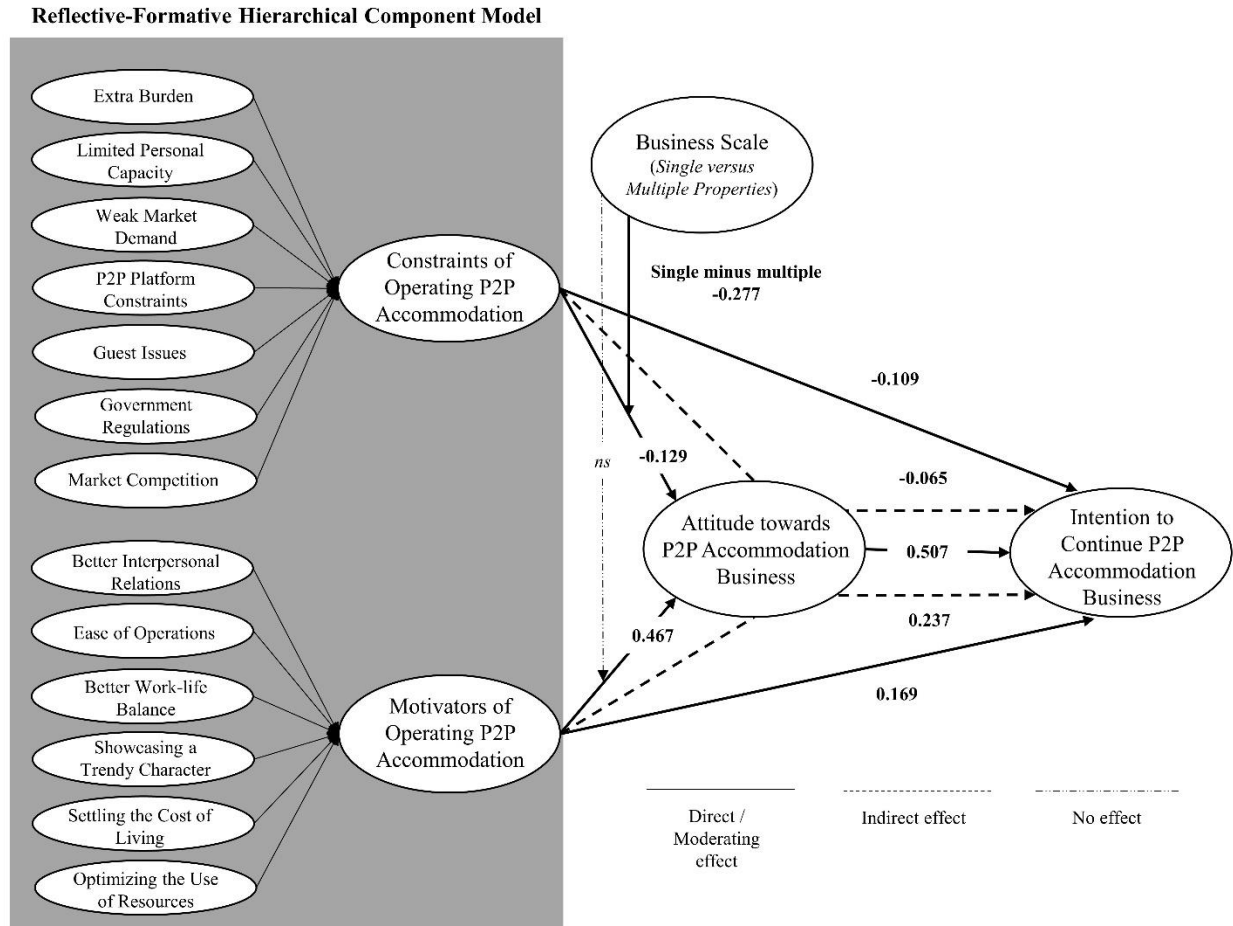
Reflective-Formative Hierarchical Component Model

Figure 2. Model estimation results
    (*Note*. Statistically significant results are bolded; *ns* denotes non-significant results).

The use of bootstrapping estimation in the PLS-SEM ruled out the concern of data

normality. First, the adequacy of the measurement model was assessed. We evaluated the

internal consistency and validity of the measures based on multiple criteria. Internal consistency

was demonstrated, as all composite reliability values were greater than 0.7 (see Table 2). The

outer loadings were relevant, as they were above 0.4. The elimination of items with outer

loadings below 0.7 did not lead to an increase in composite reliability, and, thus, they were

retained. Convergent validity existed because the average variance extracted (AVE) values were

greater than 0.5. Discriminant validity also existed because of three results: (1) the outer loadings

of the items were greater than their cross-loadings (see Table 1); (2) the AVE values exceeded

square correlations with other constructs (see Table 2); (3) the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

(HTMT) values were less than 0.9 (the largest value was 0.793), while the HTMT$_{inference}$ criterion

of the bias-corrected confidence intervals did not include 1.

3.1.5 Common method bias

To examine if the common method bias existed, we conducted Harman's Single-Factor Test. A

PCA of all items (without rotation) resulted in more than one factor, and the first factor

explained 20.17% of the variance (far below 50%). The results indicated that this bias did not

exist. To further validate the results, we adopted the unmeasured latent market construct method.

The conclusion remained, as (1) a few method factor loadings were statistically significant, (2)

the substantive variances of items exceeded their method variances, and (3) the ratio of average

substantive variance to average method variance (233:1) was large.

3.1.6 Structural model

The adequacy of our structural model was reflected in the non-existence of multicollinearity

issues (all variance inflation factors were less than 5) and satisfactory predictive accuracy (the

blindfolding test reported Q^2 values above zero).

The results of the hypothesis tests about the direct and indirect effects are shown in

Figure 2. All hypotheses were supported. Constraints were negatively associated with attitude

(H1: coefficient = -0.129, $p < 0.05$, $f^2 = 0.018$), while motivators were positively associated with attitude (H3: coefficient = 0.467, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.241$). Attitude was positively related to intention (Coefficient = 0.507, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.321$). The constraint–intention relationship was significant (coefficient = -0.109, $p < 0.05$), and attitude partially mediated the relationship (H2: coefficient = -0.065, $p < 0.05$, *Variance accounted for* = 0.374). Similarly, the motivator–intention relationship was significant (coefficient = 0.169, p < 0.05), and attitude partially mediated the relationship (H4: coefficient = 0.237, $p < 0.001$, *Variance accounted for* = 0.584). The coefficients indicate that motivators have stronger effects on attitude and intention than constraints do. The R^2 values of attitude and intention are 0.195 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.355 ($p < 0.001$), respectively.

3.1.7 The moderating effect of business scale

Business scale was a dichotomous variable (single versus multiple properties). Thus, Hypotheses 5a and 5b were examined using multi-group analysis, which requires the sample size of the bigger group to be less than twice the size of the smaller group (Hair et al. 2018). This criterion was met as there were 178 cases recorded of single-property businesses, which was less than twice the 121 cases of multiple-property businesses (i.e., 242). The analysis also requires the establishment of configural invariance and partial or full measurement invariance.

Configural invariance was demonstrated, as indicators, data coding and algorithm settings were the same for both groups. Measurement invariance was examined using a measurement invariance of composite model (MICOM). According to the MICOM Step 2 results, correlation c values exceeded those of the 1% quantile of the empirical distribution of c_u. Therefore, the compositional invariance of the measurement was established. Regarding the MICOM Step 3

results, the mean values were unequal for limited personal capacity ($p = 0.025$), market

competition ($p = 0.012$) and ease of operation ($p = 0.037$). For variances, all values were equal.

Hence, partial measurement invariance was confirmed, and multi-group analysis was deemed

adequate (Hair *et al*., 2018).

The results of the moderating effects of business scale on the constraint–attitude and

motivator–attitude relationships are reported in Table 3. The permutation test, PLS-MGA,

parametric test and Welch-Satterthwaite *t*-test converged on the same conclusion that the

moderating effect exists in the constraint–attitude link (all *p*-values < 0.05) but not in the

motivator–attitude link (all *p*-values > 0.05). By separately conducting structural modelling

analyses for single-property and multiple-property businesses, we found that the constraint–

attitude link was significantly negative only for the single-property group (coefficient = -0.241, *p*

< 0.05) and not for the multiple-property group (coefficient = 0.036, *p* > 0.05). The motivator–

attitude link was positively significant for both groups (*p* < 0.05; see Table 3). Thus, H5 was

supported.

<Insert Table 3 here>

3.2 Study 2: Methods and findings

The goal of the supplementary qualitative study (Study 2) was to provide interpretive evidence of

the relationships among constraint, motivation, attitude, business scale and intention to continue

one's P2P accommodation business in China. After the survey, we interviewed 20 hosts from

different backgrounds to gather more detailed information. The duration of the interviews ranged

from 25 to 45 minutes, with an average of approximately 30 minutes. The interview was audio

recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews ended when no new substantive

information emerged. Two of the authors conducted the interviews and took notes and then adopted a thematic analysis to organise and understand the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

First, the results revealed that the respondents jointly evaluated the negative impacts of constraints and the merits of motivators in the formation of their attitude and intention to continue their P2P accommodation businesses. Anna (63, a retired doctor, single property) noted, 'I have to put in a lot of effort. I do not have to rely on this tiny profit for a living. Cleaning, replying to customers' inquiries and even worrying that they may commit some crime in my property. I like meeting new people, but it is not fun now.' Likewise, Stacey (32, in marketing, single property) said, 'I shared the property with my guests. I meet a lot of people, but as a woman, I am always concerned about my safety. Some minor incidents of sexual harassment have happened.' The perceived constraints outweighed the novelty and desire of interpersonal relations, leading these respondents to an intention to quit.

In line with the survey results concerning the moderating role of business scale, the findings of Study 2 show that the owners of multiple properties were less affected by constraints. Joyce (42, business owner, multiple properties), who owned many high-end properties in Shanghai, expressed that 'our well-designed villa is less likely to have many constraints, [un]like those who use their own home to run P2P accommodation. Our properties will bring the right clients, who want to experience natural beauty. Sometimes, we receive clothing designers' requests on the platforms. They use our villa to take photos. It is a really exciting new opportunity for us'.

All of the hosts listed their properties on various platforms, but the majority expressed that they had had a good experience with the local Chinese platforms and a relatively negative experience with Airbnb. Tom (50, engineer, single property) explained, 'It is extremely hard to

contact customer services on Airbnb. They want a commission and to regulate us without delivering much. Tujia is great. Their manager teaches me how to do things and even replies to my customers. You can also transfer these features to Xiaozhu easily, but not to Airbnb.' Many studies focusing on Chinese culture have shown that Chinese people emphasise interpersonal contact (e.g., Zhang *et al*., 2019). The extra interpersonal services provided by local platforms have made Chinese hosts more likely to choose them. Criticisms of Airbnb have increased over its failure to adapt to Chinese culture and its limited selection of Chinese hosts compared with local platforms (Beijing News, 2020). However, some younger Chinese hosts believe that 'Airbnb is an internationally recognised brand. They bring better quality people than the local platforms do. They are fun and innovative to live with' (Lucy, 25, single property). Nevertheless, the perceived special interpersonal relations might be a unique selling point, differentiating the local Chinese platforms from Airbnb.

4. Discussion and conclusions

4.1 Conclusions

The sharing economy has become an important and popular research topic (Heo, 2016). The findings of the present study contribute to the further development of a theoretical understanding of the sharing economy. Using a mixed-methods approach with two studies, this paper captures a comprehensive set of motivation and constraint factors facing hosts and builds a theoretical framework to validate the predictive power of these factors on hosts' attitudinal and behavioural

responses. Qualitative data provide several in-depth explanations for the key findings generated from the questionnaire survey. The paper contributes to the formation of a holistic framework for analysing the motivations and constraints affecting continuity in a key sector of the sharing economy, P2P accommodation. Although the factors that encourage or deter guests from staying in P2P accommodation have been well examined in the literature (e.g., So *et al.*, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2015), the full set of motivation and constraint factors that affect existing hosts' intention to continue in the business remains unexplored. The literature on the motivator and constraint factors of hosts has emphasised their influence on the decision to join the business, and have paid more attention to the growth of the sharing economy. The emerging issues that may deter the sustainability of the business have received little attention. This paper contributes by examining the power of motivations and constraints in determining hosts' continuance intention. The influencers on existing hosts to continue to run their businesses are vital to the sustainable development of the sharing economy.

4.2 Theoretical implications

This research enriches the discussion on the sharing economy through (a) testing factors captured in previous studies and (b) uncovering additional key drivers and deterrents. The findings of our semi-structured in-depth interviews revealed various themes of constraint and motivation. The additional qualitative findings provided interpretive evidence to support and explain the survey results. The hosts' perceived constraints included themes that have been identified in previous research, such as guest issues, government regulations and market competition (e.g., Alraeeini *et*

al., 2019; Malazizi *et al.*, 2018). The findings on P2P platforms constraints, including the difficulty of rejecting a booking due to platform regulations, and inconsistency in the policy/requirements of different platforms, align with those of Farmaki (2019), who noticed that Airbnb's inconsistent regulations and favouring of guests presented challenges to hosts seeking to reject bookings. Our results uncovered new items, such as the need to put much effort into maintenance and cleaning.

Among the motivators, better interpersonal relations, settling the cost of living, optimising the use of resources and ease of operation have been reported in the literature (e.g., Farmaki and Stergiou, 2019; Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016). The result of offering more autonomy, freedom and flexibility is consistent with Benoit et al. (2017). Jung *et al*. (2016) found that having a 'human relationship' becomes a key shared asset of P2P accommodation, but making a profit remains important. Our findings uncovered motivators that have not been discussed in the literature, including showcasing one's trendy character, such as feeling it was 'a cool thing' or 'a novel thing' to run a sharing-economy business, and being one's own boss.

Most existing studies have investigated P2P accommodation hosts operating on the Airbnb platform in the West, such as in Northern Cyprus (Malazizi *et al.*, 2018), the United States (Ert and Fleischer, 2019) and Europe (Farmaki and Stergiou, 2019). This paper is among the few that explore hosts operating P2P accommodation on global and local platforms in Asian countries. Thus, it generates several new ideas about motivations and constraints; the perception that it is 'a cool/novel thing' to run a sharing-economy business appears to be one of the most important motivators in this context. Previous studies have reported that sharing and interaction are the key drivers of joy (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016). Complementing this aspect of the literature, our study found that considering the operation of P2P accommodation to be 'a cool/novel thing'

made Chinese hosts feel good. Our findings also reveal that hosts face new P2P platform constraints, including a lack of technical support and non-responsiveness to hosts' inquiries. These issues may be due to a lack of professional workers on platforms or hosts' unfamiliarity with the platforms and relevant regulations. Chinese hosts also felt that having to put too much effort into maintenance was a severe constraint. This finding differs from Mahadevan (2019), who found that opportunity costs, including time and effort investment in maintenance, was not significantly associated with the intention to become a host based on a survey among Australians. This might be because, unlike Western hosts, most Chinese are not used to engaging in accommodation maintenance by themselves.

The paper enriches the literature by developing a scale to measure the motivators and constraints of operating P2P accommodation. The predictive power and validity of motivators and constraints were demonstrated in the relationships with attitude and behavioural intention. The advantage of this empirical examination is that it took the influence of both motivation and constraint factors into account on determining outcome variables. The results indicate that constraints lower the intention to continue one's business because of an unfavourable attitude, whereas motivators heighten the intention because of a favourable attitude.

The simultaneous examination of motivators and constraints enabled the comparison of their effects on attitude and intention. We found that in general, motivators had a greater effect on attitude and intention than did constraints. Motivations play a more important role than do constraints in influencing hosts' attitudes towards P2P sharing accommodation. The findings are not surprising if the moderating effect of business scale is considered. The positive effect of motivators on attitude is positive and robust against business scale, whereas the negative effect of constraints on attitude only exists for single-property hosts. In line with the size-survival

relationship (Bercovitz and Mitchell, 2007), we found that constraints have a greater impact on small businesses (i.e., single properties) owing to their insufficient resources to address the problems arising from the constraints. Therefore, single-property hosts hold a greater negative attitude towards operating a P2P accommodation. The motivator effect is not contingent on business scale because motivation is internalised to the host. This internalised trait has low relevancy with the external factor of business scale. Their interaction did not influence attitude. The findings of the moderating effect add knowledge to the literature by showing the asymmetrical effects of constraints and motivators on their consequences. Future research should examine the boundary situation qualifying the constraint and motivator effects.

4.3 Practical implications

This study identifies several constraints on operating P2P accommodation. The major constraints include platforms favouring guests over hosts, especially in disputes; inconsistent policy/requirements by different platforms; and the difficulty of rejecting bookings due to platforms' regulations. Platforms should develop clear, transparent and consistent regulations to clarify the duties and responsibilities of hosts and guests. In terms of guest issues, hosts highlighted the emotional stress caused by guests' online reviews and ratings, as they are highly concerned about guests' inappropriate use of hotel standards to evaluate hosts' accommodation and customer service. It is advised that platforms include information on their websites to explain the differences between sharing accommodation and hotels, which may help to adjust guests' expectations. Platforms can help hosts cope with the emotional stress caused by online reviews. They can facilitate hosts' sharing of their views and emotions with other hosts on social media, such as in a WeChat group or Facebook page built for hosts. Furthermore, our results

imply that hosts, especially new entrants, are facing limited personal capacity constraints. Working with the relevant industry associations, platforms could provide self-learning packages and training to enable hosts to familiarise themselves with the legislative status of the P2P accommodation business and improve their communication skills with guests. Platforms could also work with third parties to offer services, such as maintenance and cleaning, to reduce hosts' burden. Finally, there should be measures to reinforce the motivations recognised by hosts. For example, platforms could provide opportunities for offline interactions between guests and hosts, especially for those who value interpersonal relations as a motivator. Brands that showcase the trendy characterisations of the sharing accommodation business could be designed to attract new hosts.

The results have two types of policy implication for government departments. First, government regulations, such as the intervention and accreditation requirements of the local authorities and the charging of taxes, pose significant constraints for existing hosts. P2P accommodation hosts are suffering from an increase in expenses and dramatic decrease in revenues due to COVID-19 (Dolnicar and Zare, 2020). Unclear government regulations seem to be an underlying constraint on sharing accommodation, especially in the context of this crisis. Therefore, it is crucial to design new regulatory measures (Dolnicar, 2019) to standardise rules for this novel market and offer support for its sustainable development. Second, the other major concerns for hosts are weak market demand and stiff market competition. Similar to traditional tourism and hospitality businesses, the sharing accommodation industry is sensitive to the external market environment. Tourism bureaus and hospitality associations should incorporate this business into their marketing strategies and promote it with unique and positive images.

Regulations over price wars among hosts and competitors' unethical practices should also be considered.

This paper also has novel insights for existing and future hosts. They should measure prospective gains against costs according to the holistic framework developed in this paper before deciding to join, continue or exit the P2P sharing business. Hosts need to be fully aware of the constraints and alert to potential problems, such as regulations, guest issues and seasonality, so that they can prepare the corresponding solutions. Hosts should carefully consider the recommendations for addressing constraints, especially if they operate a single property, given the moderating effect of business scale.

4.4 Limitations and future research

The implications of this study should be considered in light of several limitations. First, despite our efforts to recruit diverse participants, the population of Chinese hosts was unknown. We might have missed hosts who were resistant to taking part in the study. Future studies could try to extend the sample to reach hosts in other Asian countries, where local platforms are also popular. Second, the P2P platform constraint reflected respondents' generic experiences with various online platforms. The variances aroused from evaluations based on global or local platforms were unknown. Future research is recommended to measure this constraint factor by asking the respondents to base their evaluation on a particular platform or the one that they most recently used. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have altered hosts' perceptions on motivations and constraints that were not captured in this research, which was conducted before the pandemic. However, the measurement scale and model developed in this paper can provide a useful framework for future research to explore the motivators and constraints caused by the

pandemic. This research examined hosts operating sharing accommodations in China. A review of the literature showed that most studies have focused on hosts in Western countries; thus, the findings of this paper are both general and unique constraints and motivations. Future research could examine the similarities and differences in the attitudes and behavioural intentions of hosts in Western and Eastern countries.

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