Influence of Value Co-creation on Emotional Attachment to P2P Accommodation

Emergent Research Forum Paper

Kem Z.K. Zhang
School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China
zzkkem@ustc.edu.cn

Ruihe Yan
School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China
yanruihe@mail.ustc.edu.cn

Sesia J. Zhao
Management School, Anhui University
sesia@ahu.edu.cn

Abstract

Peer-to-Peer (P2P) accommodation has become more and more important in the hotel industry over the last years. It is thus necessary to understand why many people become attached to P2P accommodation. Based on value co-creation and emotional attachment, this study plans to investigate the impacts of social interaction and co-creation experience on emotional attachment to P2P accommodation. Our model will be tested with data of Airbnb users.

Keywords

Sharing economy, P2P accommodation, value co-creation, social interaction, emotional attachment.

Introduction

Taking the advantage of information technologies (ITs), sharing economy has been experiencing a huge growth, where many people use it for different categories of services and products (Belk, 2014). Companies like Airbnb develop online platforms to allow individuals to share access to sparse rooms with others. In the hospitality industry, P2P accommodation (e.g., Airbnb, Roomorama, 9flats) is considered as a new and promising entrant. Its significance in the industry poses an important concern regarding why people will become attached to P2P accommodation.

Given that P2P accommodation is a new topic in the information systems (IS) literature, little research investigates individuals’ emotional attachment to it. In this paper, we refer to emotional attachment as one ’s emotional bond connecting P2P accommodation with him/herself. Recent studies on P2P accommodation primarily investigate individuals’ adoption behavior. For example, Tussyadiah (2016) found that enjoyment, monetary benefits (value), and accommodation amenities affect intention to use P2P accommodation.

Meanwhile, prior marketing studies have investigated the determinants of emotional brand attachment (Mälär et al. 2011). For instance, researchers show that actual and ideal self-congruence significantly affect emotional brand attachment (Mälär et al. 2011). In the IS literature, Choi (2013) posited that relative visual aesthetics, personalization, and relative performance have positive impacts on IT attachment. In the current context, P2P accommodation guests often obtain positive value co-creation experience through interacting with hosts. It is thus possible that value co-creation may play an important role in the formation of guests’ attachment to P2P accommodation. Note that little research sheds light on value co-creation and emotional attachment in this setting. To bridging the research gap, this study examines how value co-creation practice and experience influence emotional attachment to P2P accommodation. Based on the above concerns, we intend to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: Whether co-creation practice significantly affects co-creation experience in P2P accommodation?
RQ2: Whether co-creation experience affects emotional attachment to P2P accommodation?
Based on value co-creation and emotional attachment (Vargo et al. 2016, Thomson et al. 2005), this study is expected to contribute to the literature in three ways. First, this study is one of the first to address the important concern of emotional attachment in P2P accommodation. Second, we bring new insights by examining the relationship between value co-creation and emotional attachment. Finally, we identify three process-based dimensions of social interaction (before-visit, during-visit, and post-visit interaction) as value co-creation practice (Frias Jamilena et al. 2016). The paper is structured as follows. First, an overview of theoretical background is presented. Next, we propose the research model based on value co-creation and emotional attachment. Third, we will discuss our research methodology, followed by discussions and conclusion.

**Theoretical Background**

**Value Co-creation Practice and Experience**

The co-creation of value was first introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) as a concept in the marketing literature. Following their seminal work, a number of studies on value co-creation have been conducted in different areas, such as marketing (Ramaswamy et al. 2016), tourism management (Shaw et al. 2011), and IS research (Kohler et al. 2012). According to these studies, value co-creation refers to the process by which service providers and consumers co-create value for themselves. In this value co-creation process, the two parties obtain benefits through a series of interactions.

In the current context, value co-creation practice can be considered as social interaction between P2P accommodation guests and hosts. Such co-creation practice has been receiving increasing attention in the marketing literature (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2017). For instance, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017) found that this co-creation practice has effects on people’s well-being. In this study, we thus refer to co-creation practice as social interaction.

Meanwhile, value co-creation experience is the mental state of consumers that arises from their participation in value co-creation process (Kohler et al. 2012). Research indicates that consumers’ co-creation experience has a significant effect on their satisfaction, future participate intention, and stickiness (Nambisan et al., 2009, Prebensen et al., 2017). Scholars have tested the relationships between co-creation experience and the outcomes of value co-creation. For example, Zhang et al. (2015) found that co-creation experience has a positive effect on people’s future participation intention in social media contexts. Under adventure tourism settings, research shows that co-creation experience mediates the relationship between co-creation practice and satisfaction (Prebensen 2017). Given that value co-creation is highly important in P2P accommodation, recent scholars have called for further research to understand its role (Heo 2016). To address this call, this study will focus on how value co-creation leads to people’s emotional attachment to P2P accommodation.

**Emotional Attachment**

The seminal work on emotional attachment was conducted by Bowlby (1979) in the field of person-person relationships. Previous studies have found that people can form emotional attachment to brands (Park et al., 2010). Park et al. (2010) referred to brand emotional attachment as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self” (p.2).

In the marketing literature, a number of studies have explored the influence of emotional attachment. Vlachos et al. (2010) indicated that consumer-firm emotional attachment has a positive influence on loyalty intentions. Hwang et al. (2016) showed that product attachment significantly affects willingness to pay a premium. Park et al. (2010) found that brand attachment positively influences a consumer’s actual purchase behavior. In the IS literature, Choi et al. (2013) revealed that IT attachment significantly influences community participation intention. Ren et al. (2012) found that attachment to a large community has a positive effect on participation and retention. To sum up, attachment is an important factor that drives people’s participation, loyalty, and even paying a premium. We thus expect that it is necessary to examine emotional attachment in the P2P accommodation context.
Research Model and Hypotheses

Research Model

In this study, we apply the value co-creation perspective to examine the formation of emotional attachment in P2P accommodation. We contend that co-creation experience have three components: social benefit, epistemic value and hedonic value (Nambisan et.al. 2009). We further examine three dimensions of co-creation practice: before-visit, during-visit, and post visit social interaction. The proposed conceptual framework (in Figure 1) depicts the effect of co-creation practice in P2P accommodation on co-creation experience, as well as the effect of co-creation experience on emotional attachment to P2P accommodation.

Effect of Social Interaction

Social benefit refers to the benefits derived from social and relational ties in P2P accommodation. In this context, guests can interact with hosts directly, which helps them to establish social ties with hosts. We define hedonic value as guests’ pleasure received in P2P accommodation. Epistemic benefit refers to the benefits that satisfy one’s curiosity and meet guests’ desire for knowledge. In P2P accommodation, guests often find opportunities to learn local culture by interacting with hosts or locals.

Prior studies have explored the relationship between consumers’ engagement and benefits. Nambisan et.al. (2009) found that consumer interaction characteristics (product-related content, member identity, and human interactivity) have positive influences on perceived benefits. Kuo et.al (2013) provided empirical evidence to explain that community interaction characteristics (product information sharing, community interactivity, and community engagement) positively affect perceived benefits. Zhang et al. (2016) showed that social interaction has a significant influence on consumer value creation experience. Based on these studies, this study puts forward the following three hypotheses:

H1: Social interaction is positively related to social benefit.

H2: Social interaction is positively related to hedonic value.

H3: Social interaction is positively related to epistemic value.

Effect of Co-creation Experience

We propose that co-creation experience may be an important determinant for emotional attachment. In P2P accommodation, guests and hosts often interact with each other and pay attention to topics of common interests, which may be related to society, lives, and culture. In this process, guests can obtain valuable information, develop social ties with locals, and make vacation happier. Meanwhile, the interaction between them may result in pleasant emotional experience. Guests tend to be attached to P2P accommodation because of the received pleasure and happiness. Prebensen et al (2017) pointed out that emotional value, social value, and learning value influence satisfaction positively. Zainuddin et al. (2017) proposed a similar finding that functional value, emotional value, and social value lead to satisfaction. In online community contexts, increasing consumer learning value and social integrative value are found to promote future participation intention (Zhang et al. 2015).
We expect that guests may exhibit increased attachment to P2P accommodation if hosts can provide them with useful information and satisfy their curiosity. Grisaffe et al. (2011) argued that user-derived benefits often drive strong emotional attachment. To sum up, emotional attachment to P2P accommodation is likely to emerge when guests can benefit from using P2P accommodation. Therefore, we provide the following three hypotheses:

H4: Social benefit is positively related to emotional attachment to P2P accommodation.
H5: Epistemic value is positively related to emotional attachment to P2P accommodation.
H6: Hedonic value is positively related to emotional attachment to P2P accommodation.

Research Methodology

We will conduct an online survey to test the hypotheses proposed in our study. An online questionnaire will be developed based on the measures of the constructs. The items of constructs will be adapted from past research papers (Tussyadiah 2016, Vlachos et al. 2010). Necessary modifications will be applied to make sure that the items fit the context of our study. Seven-point Likert scales will be used.

We plan to collect data by reaching a sample of Airbnb users. Airbnb is the biggest P2P accommodation platform. To reach the potential users, we intend to distribute the URL of our questionnaire to a number of online travel communities. To increase the response rate, we plan to provide gift rewards to valid respondents. We will employ Partial Least Squares (PLS) to analysis the collected data. The measurement and structural model will be tested.

Discussions and Conclusion

Our study attempts to investigate emotional attachment to P2P accommodation in the Airbnb context. We intend to empirically investigate how social interaction (co-creation practice) can play a role in affecting users’ co-creation experience and then influence emotional attachment. We believe that our research will provide useful insights for both research and practice. First, our study identifies three dimensions of social interaction (before-visit host-to-guest interaction, during-visit host-to-guest interaction). The purpose is to provide a process-based and more comprehensive picture of co-creation practice and offer insights regarding their different influences. Second, to the best of our knowledge, we are one of the first studies that examine the relationship between co-creation experience and emotional attachment in P2P accommodation settings. Third, P2P accommodation hosts may benefit from the potential outcomes of our research. For instance, to attract people to book rooms on Airbnb, Airbnb hosts are advised to increase guests’ co-creation practice and experience in the process. Further, the Airbnb online platform may shed more light on providing tools to facilitate further host-to-guest interaction.

Nevertheless, there may be limitations in our study. For instance, some other important factors may be missing in our research model. Further research can also investigate other outcomes of value co-creation experience (e.g., satisfaction, future intention) to enhance our understanding of value co-creation in sharing economy.

REFERENCES


