



Cross-Cultural Reviews of Airbnb Superhosts

Comentários Interculturais sobre os Superanfitriões da Airbnb

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Abstract

The worldwide market of Airbnb accommodation has grown and correspondingly led to a refinement of digital badges to reflect better service quality in the form of "Superhosts". However, few studies have examined how online reviews on these superhosts manifest differently in terms of service quality outcomes across various cities and contexts. Addressing the lack of studies in this space, this research examines the similarities and differences in Airbnb Superhost service quality across four different cities - London, Paris, Bangkok, and Tokyo, and in turn, develops a typology of how these contents reveal cross-cultural differences. Content analysis and Leximancer were used as tools for data analysis. The findings in this study enhance existing literature on Airbnb service quality and offer theoretical and practical contributions to distinguish Airbnb reviewer comments where superhosts and guests come from different cultural backgrounds, and how this can lead to a redesign of more culturally inclusive spaces.

Keywords: Sharing economy, Airbnb superhost, Short-term accommodation, Service quality, Sentiment analysis, Cross-cultural differences.

Resumo

O mercado global de alojamento da Airbnb cresceu significativamente, levando a um aperfeiçoamento dos selos digitais para refletir melhor a qualidade do serviço, nomeadamente através da designação de superanfitriões. No entanto, poucos estudos analisaram como as avaliações online destes superanfitriões se manifestam em termos de qualidade do serviço em várias cidades e contextos. Para colmatar esta lacuna, esta investigação examina as semelhanças e diferenças na qualidade do serviço dos superanfitriões da Airbnb em Londres, Paris, Banguecoque e Tóquio, e desenvolve uma tipologia que revela diferenças culturais através do conteúdo das avaliações. Para a análise dos dados, foram utilizados a análise de conteúdo e o *software* Leximancer. Os resultados deste estudo contribuem para a literatura existente sobre a qualidade do serviço na Airbnb e oferecem implicações teóricas e práticas para distinguir as avaliações dos utilizadores quando superanfitriões e hóspedes têm diferentes origens culturais, promovendo, assim, um redesenho de espaços mais inclusivos culturalmente.

Palavras-chave: Economia da partilha, Airbnb superanfitriões, Alojamento de curta duração, Qualidade do serviço, Análise de sentimentos, Diferenças interculturais.

1. Introduction

The advent of digital technologies has provided organisations with a valuable tool to develop competitive advantages, especially in an experience-centric sector such as tourism (Jiang & McCabe, 2021; Kandampully & Solnet, 2020). For some organisations such as Airbnb and Uber, technology is at the crux of the business model, operating on what is a so-called sharing economy and disruptive innovation framework to redefine business capabilities and competitiveness (Belezas & Daniel 2023; Kim et al., 2022). Broadly defined, sharing economy characterise business models that tap on underutilised assets to deliver economic gains from a consumer-to-consumer perspective, which include Airbnb (Cansoy & Schor, 2024; Juliao et al., 2023). Incidentally, such businesses do not own any of their assets (accommodation or vehicles), and instead create a platform to connect users synchronously (Bosma, 2022). Such developments have not gone unnoticed, as academic and industry attention has been piqued to examine factors leading to user adoption and experiences with such services, either as guests or hosts (inter alia Moon et al., 2019; Negi & Tripathi, 2023; Thaichon et al., 2020). Yet, little remains known about cross-cultural service quality performance across geographical locations, such as in the form of Airbnb superhosts (Hsieh et al., 2021; Yao et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019).

The overarching framework for this research is service quality, which can be understood as an assessment of long-term levels of service relative to one's expectations (Ghobadian et al., 1994; Singh et al., 2023). In this vein, some studies have emerged to pay greater attention to the role of cultural differences in shaping engagements and satisfaction within Airbnb, though they acknowledge the need to further examine how reviews manifest in a cross-cultural context (Jang, 2023; Li & Gao, 2024; Wallace et al., 2024). This paper, therefore, seeks to investigate such knowledge gaps through online reviews of Airbnb superhosts in four destinations - Bangkok, London, Paris, and Tokyo. Knowing how the reviews elicit greater nuances in terms of Airbnb superhosts can help to advance theoretical and practical insights to enhance hosting and marketing behaviour in the future. Prompted by existing studies or the lack thereof, the research questions of interest are:



1. In what ways do Airbnb reviews reveal similar or different sentiments of superhost service quality across various locations?
2. How do the Airbnb superhost sentiments translate into cross-cultural service quality differences?

Answers to these research questions lend theoretical and managerial contributions to elucidate more nuanced insights to cross-cultural reviews of Airbnb, and how owners can better cater to the needs of diverse markets.

This paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, a review of the literature is conducted to examine the current body of work surrounding the key concept of service quality, overlaying the sharing economy in the context of Airbnb. Then, a discussion of the methods and sampling frame is presented. Findings and discussion of the outcomes are provided, which then leads to the answering of the research questions. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of its contributions, implications, limitations, and avenues for future investigation.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Airbnb in Tourism and Hospitality*

The tourism and hospitality industries are often criticised as being slow to adopt innovations, until the advent of Airbnb and other sharing economy practices radically defined the new competitive environment (Negi & Tripathi, 2023; Zach et al., 2020). Airbnb is to tourism and hospitality what Uber has done in the transport landscape, creating new ways to leverage underutilised private assets to become generators of economic revenue (Bosma, 2022; Geissinger et al., 2020). Often the poster child of the sharing economy, and synonymous with disruptive innovation, Airbnb is reportedly worth US\$75 billion, despite the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism and hospitality sector (Sauer, 2023). This is an impressive market valuation for a company that is just over 15 years old since being founded in August 2008. More importantly, Airbnb does not own any of the accommodation listings on its website and mobile application, yet it has gained global recognition, such as being a key strategic partner of the International Olympic Committee for the next three editions of the Olympic games (Jones, 2019).

For this reason, academic and practitioner interest in Airbnb has been piqued by the explosive rise to prominence of this company, as evidenced by the burgeoning literature base surrounding the organisation. There have also been several special issues on the sharing economy, with Airbnb at the heart of many of the published works (see for instance Hall et al., 2022; Moreno-Gil & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020; Tussyadiah & Sigala, 2018). These illustrate the importance and the range of agenda triggered by Airbnb's foray into tourism and hospitality. Tracing the literature chronologically reveals different foci of scholars curious to unpack the impacts of Airbnb on tourism and hospitality. For instance, Guttentag (2015) was one of the earliest published works in this space and set the scene for how this mostly informal peer-to-peer accommodation sector has altered the rules of the game in tourism and hospitality. This was the catalyst for a few other publications the following year, where different scholars sought to explicate Airbnb implications in terms of hotel market share and revenues (Forgacs & Dimanche, 2016; Varma et al., 2016), governance (Tham, 2016), new business models (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016) and trustworthiness of content (Ert et al., 2016). These key themes then pioneered several streams of work in the coming years, and there is now copious body of knowledge around Airbnb and its trail into tourism and hospitality, which can be summarised into four key themes - value propositions for Airbnb guests and owners, user and owner motivations and experiences, pricing and location effects, and service and loyalty elements (Andreu et al., 2020; Belarmino & Koh, 2020; Dann et al., 2019; Ozdemir & Turker, 2019; Rey-Moreno et al., 2023; Volo et al., 2019).

2.2 *Airbnb and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)*

As one of the most widely utilised platforms within the sharing economy, Airbnb contains an enormous volume of eWOM in the form of text and photos. In brief, eWOM is characterised as digital recommendations to assist users with information search, heuristics to inform decision-making, and sharing of experiences with others (Do & Pereira, 2023; Liang et al., 2018). This offers owners and guests valuable cues to determine if they would like to enter a transaction based on the reviews left by previous encounters, supported by text and/or photos. As with any other tourism or hospitality experience, Airbnb transactions are mostly conducted sight unseen. This means that such service encounters are usually intangible, and often without any ability to pre-test these experiences (Han et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2021). For this reason, eWOM acts as a proxy to shape one's overall assessment of the potential Airbnb experience, to induce transaction intentions. Literature has also demonstrated that eWOM can be influential based on overall reviews, valence of textual content, and perceived authenticity of photos (Akdim, 2021; Chen & Chang, 2018). These variables can also be dovetailed with past experiences on Airbnb, leading to increased trust in utilising the platform as a viable substitute for other forms of accommodation (Broeder, 2023; Mao & Lyu, 2017).

This has given rise to the notion of a superhost on Airbnb, where individuals are given such a title on the platform if they have demonstrated a consistently high level of service quality delivered to guests, and repeatedly over a large volume of interactions/encounters (Christensen, 2023; Gunter, 2018). The affordances of superhosting correspond with higher prices on accommodation listings and are often accompanied by guest loyalty and favourable eWOM (Liang et al., 2017; Ye et al., 2023). For this reason, the technology-enabled Airbnb platform facilitates a competitive advantage for these superhosts over other hosts (von



Richthofen & von Wangenheim, 2021). Underpinning this experiential economy of Airbnb is the core theoretical framework of service quality, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Service Quality and Airbnb

Service quality is a well-established research agenda within tourism and hospitality as it has demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of leveraging brand reputation and generating consumer loyalty (Clemes et al., 2011; Salazar et al., 2010; Shyju et al., 2023; Worsfold et al., 2016). However, given the highly variable and contextualised nature of services (see for instance Cambra-Fierro et al., 2021; Wirtz et al., 2013), it is extremely challenging to comprehensively evaluate service quality outcomes, especially when the interactions involve a multiplicity of actors. In particular, service quality in the accommodation sector comprises numerous interactions across the duration of stay and involves staff from different departments such as the front desk, food and beverage, spa, and other recreational facilities, of which some of these providers are outsourced (e.g. car rental companies).

In the last decade, the accommodation sector has witnessed a new market entrant in the form of Airbnb, and subsequently other house-sharing providers (e.g. FlipKey, VRBO, OneFineStay). It should be acknowledged that measuring service quality on Airbnb is a complex undertaking, as the hosts and guests may not physically interact, and so other cues such as cleanliness, check-in procedures, response times, and problem-solving (due to faulty appliances) become tools to ascertain service quality outcomes. Moreover, service failures and recovery may not take place whilst the guests are on-site and occur following check-out. Some Airbnb hosts may also be located in a different city than their listed property and rely on an off-site manager to rectify some of the service quality issues. These circumstances create a complex operating environment, especially when disputes are raised with Airbnb in aspects such as refunds and lawsuits for instance. Amidst this backdrop, guests are heavily reliant on the Airbnb platform to reveal cues to ascertain service quality - photos, reviews, Superhost badges, and pricing to make an informed judgment of whether to use Airbnb (over other types of accommodation) and subsequently which Airbnb property to select for their needs (Rey-Moreno et al., 2023).

In this space, very little is known about service quality within extant studies on the Airbnb platform across different geographical regions. This is somewhat surprising, given that Airbnb is a global phenomenon where hosts and guests can hail from different countries with considerable differences in terms of their perceptions of service quality dimensions (Broeder, 2023). Wider literature within tourism and hospitality has already alluded to such variations in service quality (Ayeh & Chen, 2013; Mok & Armstrong, 1998; Park et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2008), and so these knowledge gaps justify the need for this research to be undertaken. A collection of service quality studies on Airbnb is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Service Quality Papers on Airbnb (In Chronological Order)

Author(s)	Year	Context	Findings	Future Studies
Priporas et al.	2017	Phuket, Thailand	-Convenience and assurance are crucial facets of service quality assessment -Key service quality attributes include access to sights, accessibility to information, and prompt problem resolution	-Other service quality dimensions and destinations -Airbnb vs hotel service quality comparisons
An et al.	2019	USA	Understanding and caring for guest needs were key criteria in service quality evaluation of Airbnb experiences	Results could differ in other countries
Ju et al.	2019	Miami, New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, USA	-Multiple service quality attributes associated with website, host, and facility exist across Airbnb reviews -Importance of new host induction of what matters on Airbnb	-Cross-cultural and community influences -Detection of fake reviews -Seasonality effects -Differences between leisure and business guests
Sun et al.	2019	Hong Kong, China	Enhances to service quality can be made to the accuracy and relevance of the information provided, flexible check-in/out, and organisation of tours/events	-Larger sample size -Language and cultural comparisons
Yao et al.	2019	London, England	Other than characteristics such as Superhost, attributes in areas like price, extra charges region competitiveness, and house rules act as signals of service quality, especially those without	Comparing the effect of Airbnb and hotels Replication of study in other emerging destinations, as well as



			reviews	new markets such as Airbnb Plus
Ding et al.	2020	Malaysia	-Confirms the important role of hosts in service quality delivery -Convenience is linked to location proximity to attractions, transport -Other service quality attributes include group stay, water activities, sea view, and child-friendly outcomes	-Service quality in other sharing platforms -Longitudinal study of service quality attributes -Various cross-cultural attitudes to service quality
Ranjbari et al.	2020	Western Australia, Australia	Price reasonability was the most important service attribute, while check-in flexibility was the best-performing service attribute	-Different forms of short-term accommodation -Multi-language analysis -Cross-cultural variations
Sutherland & Kiatkawsin	2020	New York City, USA	-Some service quality discussions are similar to that of traditional accommodation -Safety was a more prominent topic on Airbnb -Location-specific details featured as an important topic of discussion on Airbnb reviews	Other contexts and home-sharing platforms
Thaichon et al.	2020	Host and guests in Australia	-Service quality was only identified with guest perceptions of the Airbnb experience -Service quality is positively related to perceived value and customer satisfaction	
Del Chiappa et al.	2021	Italy	Users left the Airbnb platform due to loss of service quality outcomes	-Future tourists and propensity for Airbnb non-use -Post-pandemic perceptions of service quality associated with Airbnb
Dogru et al.	2021	USA	Partitioning of incidental fees on Airbnb is perceived to be of higher service quality levels	-Other regional similarities/differences -Proportion of incidental charges to price of stay -Propensity to pay for incidental charges
Icoz & Gunay	2021	Izmir, Turkey	Customer loyalty is positively related to service quality, satisfaction, and trust	-Airbnb perceptions vs hotels -Cross-country studies
Majumdar & Adhikari	2021	New York, USA	Incentivising superhosts assists with enhancing overall service quality	Other cities
Meijerink & Schoenmakers	2021	Global destinations	Service quality perceptions are positively and linearly linked to a favourable review	Replicate on other sharing economy platforms
Sthapit & Bjork	2021	Global destinations	Individual host actions result in varying levels of service quality	Host and guest perspectives
Sthapit et al.	2021	British and US tourists	Service quality in Airbnb is less predictable than in traditional hospitality providers due to the shift from proficiently trained organisations to individual hosts	Training and baseline service quality expectations should be designed and prepared for all Airbnb hosts
Tajeddini et al.	2021	Staff and students from Switzerland	Service quality at Airbnb is perceived to be lower than traditional accommodation	Revisit intentions across cultures
Thomsen & Jeong	2021	16 US cities	Users care more about surroundings	-Host profiles and service quality



			than service quality of the stay experience	Different countries -Gender, age, personality and nationality as moderators of service quality
Chen & Bi	2022	Global destinations	Accommodation attributes and host service quality combine to generate higher room sales	Cultural influences
Gao et al.	2022	New York, USA	Service quality was directed towards hosts and the accommodation attributes, especially for superhosts	-Different geographical contexts -Consumers' emotions -Post-COVID attitudinal differences
Iranmanesh et al.	2022	Malaysian residents	Website service quality was not a predictor of customer loyalty potentially because there are rare occurrences of service failures or booking glitches	-Post COVID evaluations of service quality -Service quality in other country contexts
Qiu et al.	2022	New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, USA	-Eight service quality attributes were identified - information service, hosts' expertise, responsiveness, availability, unexpected services, problem-solving skills and caring -Almost 15% of reviews identified helpful hosts as a proxy of service quality	-Service quality in other contexts -Interviews with hosts and guests
Sthapit & Bjork	2022	Finland	-Service quality is highly contingent on host hospitableness and expertise Airbnb guests are likely to experience varying levels of service quality from their hosts, perhaps due to lack of training -Standardising service quality expectations across hosts is recommended	-Interviews, and longitudinal investigations -Alternative to snowball sampling method
Sthapit et al.	2022	American, Indian, British, Brazilian and Italian	Facility service quality assists to construct a memorable experience	Cross-cultural samples
Sthapit et al.	2022	Global destinations	Key service quality dimensions that were memorable include the location, hospitality of the host, condition and amenities of the property	Interviews to elucidate emotions immediately after the trip
Tajeddini et al.	2022	Unspecified	Higher service quality leads to revisit intentions	-Other Airbnb services, as well as comparisons with various accommodation types -Service quality across cultures
Yoo & Yoon	2022	USA	-Service quality has a positive correlation to guest satisfaction -Service quality induces loyalty outcomes	-Other contexts -Accommodation types e.g. inn, apartment, hotel, resort
Zuo et al.	2022	San Francisco, USA and Beijing, China	Service quality is witnessing a downward trend across both cities	Customers expect more from the value they derive out of Airbnb, and future studies can evaluate cross-cultural differences associated with Airbnb service expectations
Amat-Lefort et al.	2023a	European tourists	A range of service quality attributes not previously identified in literature were located	Different countries
Amat-Lefort et al.	2023b	European tourists	-The key determinants of service quality were comfort, social interaction, trust, platform responsiveness and site organisation -Service quality has a positive effect on	Other countries



			customer satisfaction -Geographic location of guests have implications on service quality outcomes	
Tripp et al.	2023	USA	-About a quarter of participants experienced poor service quality -This results in a heightened risk of Airbnb adoption in the future	
Wong & Chan	2023	Malaysia	Further service quality dimensions have emerged - reliability, caring, home facilities, personal advice, feeling welcome, and helpfulness	Other countries

Source: Own elaboration.

From Table 1, some studies have also extended propositions and tenets of service quality to Airbnb, (see for instance Priporas et al., 2017; Ju et al., 2019). These two studies examining the service quality dimensions concerning Airbnb showed unique attributes that differ from traditional forms of accommodation such as hotels, service apartments, or inns. Priporas et al. (2017) identified five service quality attributes in the forms of convenience, assurance, adequacy in service supply, tangibles, and understanding and care as valued by guests. In contrast, Ju et al. (2019) extended the investigation of service quality attributes and indicated that facilities service quality, host service quality, website efficiency quality, and web responsiveness quality were instrumental in elevating customer satisfaction and value. Subsequent studies such as Kwok et al. (2020) adopted the 7Ps marketing mix framework to analyse online reviews on Airbnb. However, the authors noted the lack of detailed insights and systematic categorisation of service quality attributes, which is necessary to provide academics and Airbnb providers a more nuanced understanding of what service quality dimensions are important, and how to develop competitive advantages in the long term.

While these studies have illuminated more about the service quality characteristics associated with guest experiences on Airbnb, the work on geographical variations remains highly implicit. Against this backdrop, the use of online reviews has already prompted other scholars to probe the different service quality experiences contextually in tourism and hospitality, such as Nakayama and Wan (2021). Then, by extension, it can be argued that there are different meanings attached to service quality assessments through the online reviews published by guests on Airbnb superhosts in various cities. This paper therefore develops a taxonomy of service quality dimensions based on Airbnb encounters within superhost properties in four cities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Sampling

Review comments from Airbnb review pages of the top superhosts from four different cities- Tokyo, Bangkok, Paris and London were manually extracted into an Excel spreadsheet. These four cities. The cities were chosen because they are capital cities that draw a large number of tourists each year, and thereby also indicate that superhosts operate in a highly competitive environment. The data were collected over a four year period, allowing for longitudinal insights to analyse cross-cultural superhost reviews. The data were collected over a four year period. Across four different cities, all review posts under the top five listed superhosts were chosen. For this study, the data collected for properties from London (five properties, 500 entries), Paris (five properties, 457 entries), Bangkok (four properties, 295 entries) and Tokyo (five properties, 406 entries) were analysed. The entries were combined for each city and the four resulting data files cleaned to remove incomplete, duplicate, or erroneous content. The approach taken in this study is consistent with the work of other scholars (Casais & Cardoso, 2023; Santos et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020).

3.2 Data Analysis

Leximancer software was employed for the analysis of the data as it combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to help analyse complex textual data using nonlinear dynamics and machine learning (Wu et al., 2014). In doing so, a clustering algorithm is applied to display the relationships between major themes and concepts (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Rather than just applying word frequency or manual coding of terms and phrases, Leximancer aids the analysis of meanings within blocks of text. In addition, the qualitative approach of narrative analysis facilitates the conceptualisation of themes across multiple contexts. Leximancer learns what the main concepts are in a text and how they relate to each other, thus providing an objective thematic analysis and a relational clustering of the ideas and concepts buried in the textual data. Leximancer outputs include a graphic model of thematic “bubbles” and the association of direct quotes from the data that contribute to each theme. The size of each bubble indicates the theme’s prominence within the text being analysed. Whereas the positioning of the bubbles and their closeness to other theme bubbles within the model indicates the level of correlation each theme has with the others (Leximancer, 2021). This then aids the analyst to make informed conclusions regarding ideas, concepts, and meaning from the text.



Leximancer has been used in tourism research for decades (Scott & Smith, 2005). As such its application for effective analysis of large data sets is well documented (Oliveira et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Tseng et al, 2014) and justifies the decision to employ it for this study. While the application of Leximancer provides objective analysis, some technical adaptations were required to obtain meaningful results particularly when using informally generated narratives such as online reviews. For example, mistakenly repeated words or meaningless words such as “of” or “the” were removed while processing the data. Various names used to identify actual hosts (e.g. “Kei or Katoro san” versus “the Kero family”), or terms used to identify facilities (e.g. ‘the train’ versus “the station” and “room” versus “apartment” or “home”) were merged. Repeated examination of results and exploring and modification of settings identified the main topics within the data with relevant concepts clustered into themes with their relationships highlighted. This enabled comparison and alignment with concepts and constructs emerging from the extant literature review.

3.3 Taxonomy Development

The extant literature (or lack thereof) in the Airbnb landscape has led to the justification for the development of a taxonomy of service quality to elucidate a more nuanced understanding of the different tiers associated with terms utilised across online reviews for this peer-to-peer accommodation platform. In brief, a taxonomy is defined as a hierarchy of terms that serves to unpack varying levels of descriptors and their corresponding characteristics (Jardine et al., 1967). One of the most well-known types of taxonomies is that of Linnaean classifications comprising seven ranks of the animal and plant system - Kingdom, phylum or division, class, order, family, genus, and species (Buck & Hull, 1966). Applied to tourism and hospitality, the use of taxonomies has appeared in areas such as community tourism action planning (Go et al., 1992), urban tourism precincts (Howard, 2010), tourism workforce research (Baum et al., 2016), tourism products (McKercher, 2016), and value co-creation on social media (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). These taxonomies offer a deep dive into the different levels of tourism and hospitality that contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of how each layer operates, rather than just a cursory identification of the different categories across a single level.

This is an important consideration for unpacking new experiences such as Airbnb and other sharing economy/disruptive innovation platforms that have redefined how scholars should approach and understand service quality. Then, guided by the phenetic approach employed in McKercher (2016), this research analyses the online reviews of Airbnb across different destinations to offer a geographical perspective of service quality to create a taxonomy. This iterative process combines both a top-down (derived from service quality dimensions from extant literature), and bottom-up (induced from the Airbnb online reviews) to formulate a geographical service quality taxonomy for Airbnb.

The first stage was then to undertake a comprehensive review of service quality dimensions within academic literature related to Airbnb, and more broadly in the marketing/consumer behaviour space. This then collates the five service quality dimensions - reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness with other Airbnb indicators such as accuracy, cleanliness, location, room and facilities, authenticity, understanding and care, adequate service supply, social interaction, and local touch as derived from previous studies (An et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2019).

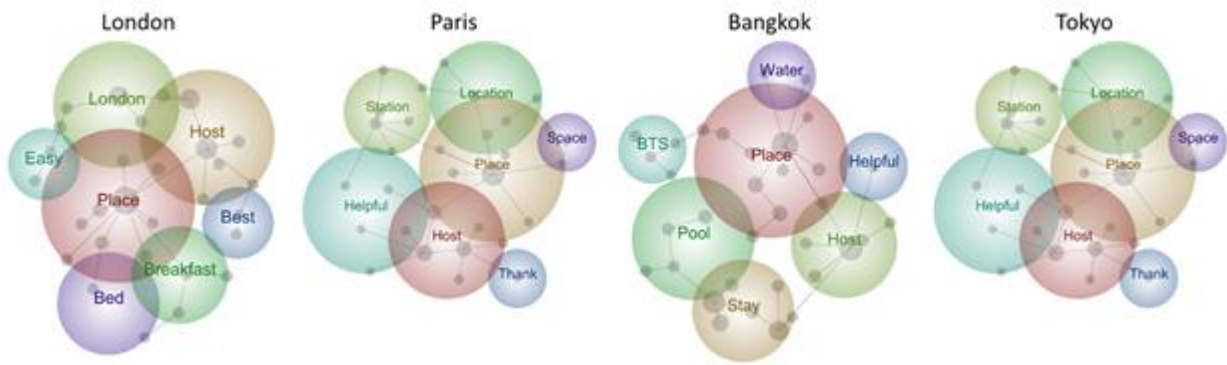
The second stage was to employ content analysis of online reviews using Leximancer. Reviewers' comments were extracted according to the themes of bubbles and further analysis of the actual sentences described for each bubble. Content analysis guidelines by Kolbe and Burnett (1991) were adapted accordingly. Three independent judges intensively reviewed the worksheets and agreed to categorise the bubbles and themes into sub-themes and elements according to the main themes of “Place” and “Superhost”. The attributions of the main themes referred to existing service quality literature as summarised in Table 1 and also discussions among the authors of this study. Sub-themes of “Internal Factors” and “External Factors” were identified within the main theme of “Place” and sub-themes of “Competence” and “Congeniality” were identified for the main theme of “Superhost”. These were subsequently analysed based on relevant keywords appearing under each sub-theme. For example, elements such as “internal ambience”, “spatial layout”, “functionality”, and “augmented facilities” emerged in the sub-theme of “Internal Factors”.

4. Results

An initial comparison of the Leximancer models derived for each city revealed strong similarities in conceptual structures (Figure 1). The concepts of “Superhost” and “Place” appeared in and dominated all four models and were the main influences on positive recommendations for the properties. These concepts have broad alignment with the service and amenities-related aspects of quality frameworks commonly applied in tourism and accommodation contexts (Ju et al., 2019; Kai et al., 2020; Kwok et al., 2020; Xie & Mao, 2017). This finding both supports and expands on the findings of Ju et al. (2019) and Ding et al. (2020) by demonstrating a cross-sectional consistency of such principal concepts that give rise to positive reviews of AirBnB properties.



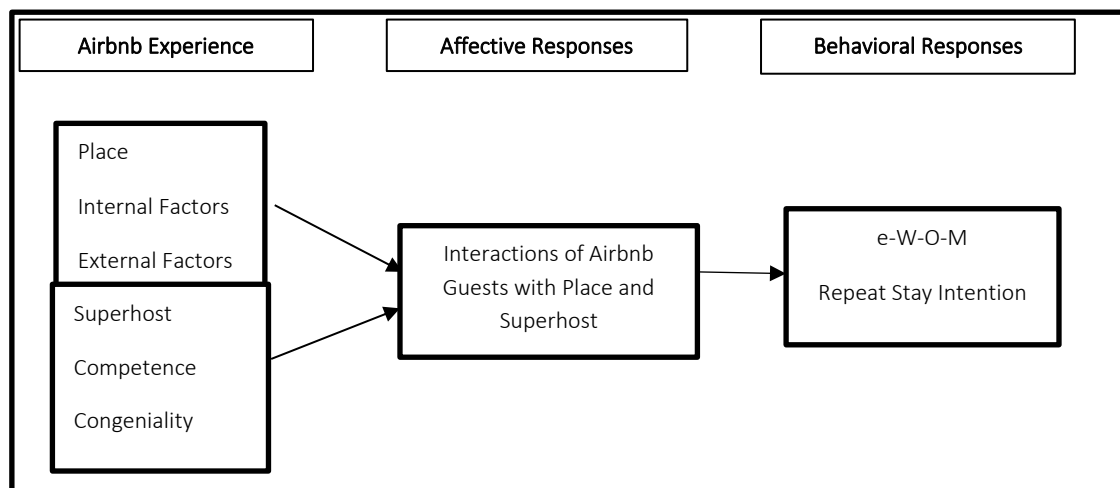
Figure 1. Leximancer models for Airbnb online reviews of superhost properties from four international locations



Source: Own elaboration.

Often it is said, “the devil is in the details”. And so, it is with a deeper exploration of the analysis of each of these cases. The other themes that emerged within the models generated differences in concept labels although there were some similarities. For example, the concept of “Thank” appears in both the Paris and Tokyo models, and quotes for this concept relate to recommendations for the property based on the reviewer’s overall experience of their stay - *“I honestly can’t speak highly enough of our 3-night stay, absolutely brilliant. Thank you Ikko!”*. In the London and Bangkok models, the respective concepts of “Best” and “Stay” were similarly related to recommendations. This indicates that some differences in the concept labels could be attributed to variations due to language translation effects. For instance, the concept labels across the models include “Breakfast” (London) “Water”, and “Pool” (Bangkok). This indicates there are localised issues that can contribute to variations in reviews. These findings provide some response to the first aim of this study which was to identify how Airbnb reviews are similar or different across geographical regions within the context of service quality. Nonetheless, the findings highlight the need to determine a consistent taxonomy of terminology that could capture the variations and provide a service quality framework applicable to Airbnb properties across the world. Based on the Leximancer models derived from the analysis of the four locations in this study, the framework shown in Figure 2 is proposed.

Figure 2. A framework for Airbnb experiences, affective responses and behaviour responses



Source: Authors’ own creation.

The framework provides a broad taxonomy of terms whereby both consistent themes and disparate localised elements can be grouped. The construct of “Place” can be composed of the sub-themes “Internal Factors”, which refers to the interior elements of the Airbnb space and building, whereas “External Factors” refers to the exterior elements of the Airbnb building and immediate surrounding location. The construct of “Superhost” comprised sub-themes “Competence” and “Congeniality” of Superhosts. Our findings indicate those constructs influence the quality of a reviewer’s stay experience and in turn, the nature of their online review of the property. To illustrate the taxonomy, (Table 2) provides quotes from within the data of this study and related words identified from the Leximancer analysis. “Internal Factors” comprise elements - internal ambience, spatial layout, functionality, and augmented services. For these elements there were comments related to comfort, décor, wi-fi and cleanliness. Whereas “External Factors” consist of destination convenience (e.g. close proximity to public transport or tourist attractions), surrounding services (e.g. shops, cafes, laundry) and external ambience (e.g. views, neighbourhood charm or safety).



“Superhost Competence” covers elements such as communication, action and efficiency and effectiveness. Communication refers to verbal and non-verbal communication between superhost and Airbnb guests. Often this is initially done via email and therefore responsiveness was viewed as a positive competency. Action means the action taken by Superhost in response to guest’s needs and wants. Pre-empting of these by the Superhost (e.g. provision of water bottles in hot climates) was likewise viewed as a positive competency. Efficiency and Effectiveness are the quality of communication and actions taken by Superhosts in going ‘above and beyond’ to ensure guest enjoyment of their stay. “Superhost Congeniality” refers to endearing personal qualities of the Superhost, which translate to hospitality and guests feeling welcomed into what many responses described as a feeling of ‘family’. Hence the element of Sociable equates to a willingness to chat and offer local perspectives to enhance a guest experience and Affable equates to being perceived as friendly and good-natured.

Table 2. Taxonomy illustration of framework

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Elements	Related Words (Leximancer)	Indicative Quotes
Place	Internal Factors	Internal Ambience	quiet, clean, cosy	<i>“...The beautifully appointed rooms offer comfortable bedding and adequate kitchen amenities...”</i> (Paris)
		Spatial Layout	space, spacious, complex	<i>“...The house was very spacious...”</i> (Tokyo)
		Functionality	amenities, bathroom, bed/s/room	<i>“...Gorgeous flat equipped with everything you need for a weekend away.”</i> (London)
		Augmented Facilities	Wifi, couch, courtyard	<i>“Great apartment, well maintained, good pool gym and garden too...”</i> (Bangkok)
	External Factors	Destination Convenience	access/ible, airport, subway,	<i>“...Very convenient location too within a walking distance to the train station...”</i> (London)
		Surrounding Services	bars, restaurant, store/s	<i>“...7-eleven, Family mart just downstairs which is very convenient and I love it. There is a 24/7 stall that sells my favourite street food...”</i> (Bangkok)
		External Ambience	busy, peaceful, safe surrounding, traditional	<i>“...We have great time in this house and it has good location and surrounding have a lot of eateries and convenient stores. Just that it is all korean’s stores among the surrounding...”</i> (Tokyo)
Superhost	Competence	Communication	guide, tips, advice	<i>“...Saowaluck was excellent with communication & was very helpful & was able to let us check in early which we really appreciated.”</i> (Bangkok)
		Action	breakfast, bottle, snacks	<i>“... made tasty breakfast. After our arriving Marc showed us the streets nearby and gave us tips where to eat”</i> (Paris)
		Efficiency and Effectiveness	prompt, quick, organized	<i>“...Annie was flexible and gave prompt responses to our questions....”</i> (London)
	Congeniality	Sociable and Affable	hospitable, attentive, accommodating	<i>“... Waan and Pil is one of the best AirBnb host I had...They are extremely helpful and friendly...”</i> (Bangkok)
Affective Responses			Amazing, perfect, felt like home	<i>“Amazing home with plenty of amenities! The room was very nice and private. The host also went with me to get dinner on my first night. The hospitality was amazing...”</i> (Tokyo)
Behavioural Responses			return, expectation, look forward	<i>“...Would strongly recommend - ...”</i> (Paris)

Source: Own elaboration.



Further analysis was conducted across different geographical locations as demonstrated in Table 3 and Table 4. Tokyo and Paris are the cities that show greater frequencies of words related to the aspect of “External Factors”, which are 54.5% and 56.3% respectively. On the contrary, “Internal Factors” of the city of London (51.5%) and Bangkok (61.5%) recorded greater percentages than “External Factors”. A greater number of words for “External Factors” was recorded in both Tokyo and Paris, specifically on “Destination Convenience” - Tokyo (77.4%) and Paris (62.5%). Whereas, a particular “Internal Factors” element - “Spatial Layout” recorded the highest percentage for the cities of Bangkok (55.2%) and London (59.7%) compared to other elements.

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of “Internal Factors” and “External Factors” across four cities

Main theme	Sub-themes	Tokyo		Paris		Bangkok		London	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Place	Internal Factors	1389	45.5	1264	43.7	1978	61.5	1828	51.7
	External Factors	1662	54.5	1626	56.3	1239	38.5	1706	48.3
	Total	3051	100	2890	100.0	3217	100.0	3534	100.0

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4. Breakdowns of elements - “Internal Factors” and “External Factors” across four cities

Main theme	Sub-themes	Elements	Tokyo		Paris		London		Bangkok	
			Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Place	Internal Factors	Internal Ambience	348	25.1	516	40.8	547	29.9	511	25.8
		Spatial Layout	606	43.6	460	36.4	1009	55.2	1181	59.7
		Functionality	276	19.9	184	14.6	213	11.7	163	8.2
		Augmented Facilities	159	11.4	104	8.2	59	3.2	123	6.2
	Sub-total		1389	100	1264	100	1828	100	1978	100
	External Factors	Destination Convenience	1287	77.4	1017	62.5	1335	78.3	808	65.2
		Surrounding Services	277	16.7	421	25.9	264	15.5	333	26.9
		External Ambience	98	5.9	188	11.6	107	6.3	98	7.9
		Sub-total	1662	100	1626	100	1706	100	1239	100
	Total		3051		2890		3534		6434	

Source: Own elaboration.

Actions speak louder than words, which is proven in the analysis of superhost capability as the cities of Tokyo (53.5%), London (47.7%) and Bangkok (42.6%) in Table 5, demonstrate the highest percentage of sub-theme “Actions” taken by the superhosts compared to “Communication” and “Efficiency and Effectiveness” of the actions taken. The detailed breakdowns of the elements for “Superhost Capability” are depicted in Table 5. Paris is the only city recording the highest percentage of words relating to “Efficiency and Effectiveness” of actions taken, which was one of the crucial contributions to overall Airbnb guests’ positive stay experience.

Table 5. Breakdowns of elements- “Superhost Capability” across four cities

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Tokyo		London		Paris		Bangkok	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Host Capability	Communication	117	12.7	139	12.5	117	20.4	216	16.4
	Action	490	53.3	532	47.7	157	27.4	563	42.6
	Efficiency and Effectiveness	313	34.0	445	39.9	299	52.2	542	41.0
		920	100.0	1116	100.0	573	100.0	1321	100.0

Source: Own elaboration.

5. Discussion

The Airbnb guests’ experiences generated positive affective responses to hedonic experiences, which positively related to both satisfaction and loyalty behaviour (Enrique Bigné et al., 2008; Souki et al., 2023; Wen et al., 2018). The hedonic experiences, interactions between the place, Superhosts and guests, generated pleasure for the guests. Subsequently, this led to positive behavioural responses such as statements of satisfaction, intention for return stays and recommendations to others via review comments. Our study findings on the memorable Airbnb experiences were related to the location and surroundings of the accommodation, social interactions with the Superhosts and attitude of the Superhosts are consistent with the study of Sthapit



and Jimenez-Barreto (2018). These findings are supported by another recent study noting that Airbnb experiences have a positive impact on memorability, which affects loyalty and how the role of arousal of affective responses influences the relationship between social interaction and memorability (Li et al., 2023).

The differences of both internal factors of place and external factors of place across four different cities could be due to the location and interior design as well as the construction of Superhosts' accommodation. A study research indicates that Airbnb predominates in both main and peripheral areas, the main areas are around the famous tourist attractions; the downtown area Airbnb and hotels are in the state of coexistence (La, et al., 2022). Moreover, existing studies found that preferences of Airbnb guests vary according to location, guest demographics and type of property (Ding et al., 2020; Zervas et al, 2017). This current study enhances existing literature as it reveals "Destination Convenience" as a critical element of external factor; whilst, "Spatial Layout" for the internal factor of Airbnb accommodation. Undeniably, both internal and external factors of place play a crucial role in Airbnb selection and the overall stay experience.

Airbnb guests in four different cities expressed satisfaction with the hosts' capabilities, particularly regarding the actions they took and the efficiency and effectiveness of their responses throughout the guests' stay. The findings are consistent with previous studies, which identify the host and the services they provide as critical attributes affecting Airbnb guests' satisfaction. These include hosts' efficient and effective responses and assistance (Ding et al., 2021), the quality of service offered by the host (Li & Gao, 2024), and overall host service (Cavique et al., 2022).

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The research presented here responds to gaps in the literature where very little is known about service quality within extant studies on the Airbnb platform across different geographical regions and how this relates to cross cultural evaluations of service. The findings reveal a more nuanced insight of Airbnb Superhosts and how guests provide unmoderated reviews related to service quality dimensions across different cities. The typology proposed in this research emphasises the need for scholars to recognise the contextual differences emancipating from reviews across geographical boundaries and responding to the numerous calls by several other scholars to address this lack of insight (inter alia An et al., 2019; Dogru et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2022; Sutherland & Kiatkawsin, 2020; Wong & Chan, 2023). Theoretical contributions emerging from the research demonstrate how service quality differs across the cities, and the emphasis placed on the host/accommodation characteristics. In particular, it sheds light on the detailed elements of sub-themes that are lacking in existing literature. These elements are crucial in providing both academics and industry practitioners with a clearer understanding of the specific attributes that contribute to guest satisfaction. The findings reveal a more nuanced insight to contextualising service quality of Airbnb Superhosts across various destinations. Furthermore, the research extends the use of Leximancer as a tool to enhance service quality research on Airbnb, through in-depth analysis of Superhost reviews in four different destinations.

5.2 Practical Implications

The practical nature of this study, whereby numerous actual online reviews were analysed, gives rise to several implications for Airbnb hosts and practitioners within other so-called sharing economies. Practitioners could use the terminology and highlight attributes from the taxonomy for marketing of their properties. Aligning such terminology in promotional communications with review examples would help in demystifying the intangible nature of such service offerings, and overcome the assumption of a homogeneous market. Practitioners could also employ the framework to evaluate and improve the intangible and tangible elements of their product/service in a similar way in which the Servqual framework is employed in hotel chains. We suggest our taxonomy and framework is more contextually relevant for Airbnb and similar sharing economy services.

Positive elements of the physical environment - both internal or external factors (Cheng & Jin, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2020) as well as the favourable hosting behaviour (Cheng & Jin, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2020; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018) and competencies are crucial for Airbnb stay experience. This study has identified the satisfaction elements contributing to the overall stay experience of Airbnb guests at Superhosts' accommodation. These demonstrate the key areas in service quality for Airbnb hosts to make continuous improvements that will bring more business opportunities and pleasure to both the hosts and guests. Although modification of external factors is challenging and difficult for some Airbnb hosts, the Airbnb hosts can offer some tips and guidance before and during the stay that would be helpful and enhance the Airbnb guests' stay experience. Moreover, the modification of elements for internal place factors and competence and congeniality of Airbnb hosts are possible, for example, enhancing the internal ambience and leveraging the hosts' local knowledge.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study proposes a systematic taxonomy framework for Airbnb accommodation service quality, which is different from the existing service quality literature on hotel accommodation. Future studies using a quantitative approach for the development of construct scales to test the framework are recommended. The review data for this study were collected before



the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. As such, concerns around hygiene safety and precautionary practices were not evident in the data. Airbnb guests' expectations toward their stay experience in Airbnb would likely have changed because of the pandemic. Therefore, future studies on post-Covid Airbnb experience or expectations could explore this aspect. This study includes a selection of several top Superhosts for these four cities, which could cause some degree of data bias, therefore, it is proposed that future studies include a wider sample of Superhosts and reviews across destinations for data analysis.

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