The accommodation experiencescape: a comparative assessment of hotels and Airbnb

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Abstract

Purpose – Accommodations providers in the sharing economy are increasingly competing with the hotel industry vis-à-vis the guest experience. Additionally, experience-related research remains underrepresented in the hospitality and tourism literature. This paper aims to develop and test a model of experiential consumption to provide a better understanding of an emerging phenomenon in the hospitality industry. In so doing, the authors also expand Pine and Gilmore's original experience economy construct.

Design/methodology/approach – Using data from a survey of 630 customers who stayed at a hotel or an Airbnb in the previous three months, the authors performed a multi-step analysis procedure centered on structural equation modeling to validate the model.

Findings – The authors demonstrate that the dimensions of serendipity, localness, communitas and personalization represent valuable additions to Pine and Gilmore's original experience economy construct. Airbnb appears to outperform the hotel industry in the provision of all experience dimensions. The authors further define the pathways that underlie the creation of extraordinary, memorable experiences, which subsequently elicit favorable behavioral intentions.

Practical implications – The findings suggest the need for the hotel industry to adopt a content marketing paradigm that leverages various dimensions of the experience economy to provide customers with valuable and relevant experiences. The industry must also pay greater attention to its use of branding, signage and promotional messaging to encourage customers to interpret their experiences through the lens of these dimensions.

Originality/value – The study expands a seminal construct from the field of services marketing in the context of the accommodations industry. The Accommodations Experiencescape is offered as a tool for strategic experience design. The study also offers a model of experiential consumption that explains customers' experiences with accommodations providers.

Keywords Experience economy, Airbnb, Experiencescape, Extraordinary, Memorable

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The sharing economy has emerged recently as a significant competitor for the hotel industry. While previous research suggests that lower-end hotels and hotels not catering to business travelers are more likely to be substituted with accommodations in the peer-to-peer market (Zervas *et al.*, 2013), more recent evidence shows the sharing economy to be a significant current and future competitor to the hotel industry across an even broader variety of consumer markets. Trivett (2013) highlights its growing popularity not only with cash-strapped travelers but also with high-end customers seeking luxurious options.

Moreover, Airbnb's newer efforts demonstrate the sharing economy's foray into the business travel market: the company recently launched its Business Travel Ready initiative, which identifies specific listings with a Business Travel badge and offers certified hosts who provide additional amenities suitable for business travelers, such as ironing boards, fire alarms, CO_2 detectors, etc. (Oates, 2016a). The company also partnered with leading meeting planner Experient to add Airbnb room blocks to MICE room inventory and provide metrics about booking patterns (Oates, 2016b). Several destination marketing organizations are officially recognizing sharing economy providers, viewing them as an opportunity to enhance their tax base (Freitag, 2014). Thus, hotel companies are likely to face growing competition from sharing economy providers across different consumer markets. Given its position as the world's largest peer-to-peer accommodations service provider following a series of acquisitions, Airbnb is the undoubtedly the hotel industry's largest competitor and the focus of the present study.

The hotel industry's response to the threat of the sharing economy has mainly been reactive. Many in the industry have cried foul about the lack of a level playing field with the sharing economy on issues ranging from occupancy taxes and the skirting of health and safety standards (Elliott, 2016) to the emergence of unregulated *super hosts* who generate a majority of these companies' revenues and force traditional hotels to restrain prices in some markets (O'Neill and Ouyang, 2016). Others have tried to shrug off the emerging threat by highlighting that the sharing economy is a "fundamentally different business model" serving a whole new set of customers and therefore not directly competing with the hotel industry (Trejos, 2016). Indeed, there are factors that remain in favor of hotels: for reasons of security, hygiene and uncertain and fluctuating quality, consumers familiar with the sharing economy are 34 per cent more likely to trust a leading hotel brand than Airbnb (Lieberman, 2015). An ongoing spate of safety-related incidents is likely to keep this statistic in favor of hotels, with a number of skeptics shying away from the idea of renting from strangers.

However, economic, social and technological changes in society are fueling the growth of the sharing economy. These changes are reflected in the experiential value propositions of sharing economy providers (Dredge and Gyimóthy, 2015; Trivett, 2013). In the case of Airbnb, they are evidenced in the company's strategic positioning platforms: *Belong Anywhere* and *Live There*. From providing an unprecedented range of differentiated accommodations – a US$15 per night spot on the couch to an US$8,000 per night mansion – to testing hotel-style packaging and amenities, such as local treats, wines and upgraded bath products in a select number of highly rated listings in Sonoma, the company's focus on enhancing the guest experience lies at the very heart of its strategic plans for the future (Ting, 2016a; Wright, 2016). Thus, while regulating the sharing economy is likely to level the playing field to a certain extent, the hotel industry must look to contend with the underlying experiential drivers of the popularity and growth of the sharing economy. These experiential drivers have brought disruptive innovations to the offer of tourist accommodation and to how visitors experience their stay in a destination (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). For example, Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2016) highlight that travelers' desires for more meaningful social interactions with locals and unique experiences in authentic settings motivate their use of peer-to-peer accommodations, which enables them to travel more often, stay longer and participate in more activities at the destination – much of which would otherwise be cost-prohibitive. Disruptive innovation theory indicates that "products that lack in traditionally favored attributes but offer alternative benefits can, over time, transform a market and capture mainstream consumers" (Guttentag, 2015, p. 1192). The fundamental alteration of customers' overall travel experiences instigated by the emergence of the sharing economy warrants an exploration into the evolving nature and

dynamics of the accommodations industry. Specifically, there is a need to examine the potential for the incorporation of the experiential elements of the sharing economy into hotel concepts of the future (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016).

There is sufficient evidence in the academic literature to suggest that experience is at the heart of the hospitality and tourism industry. Organizations and destinations are realigning their focus from a product- and service-oriented mindset to one that emphasizes the design of quality experiences (Tussyadiah, 2014). Despite this paradigm shift in the industry, experience-related research remains underrepresented in the hospitality and tourism literature (Jiang *et al.*, 2015; Ritchie *et al.*, 2011). In particular, the need remains for more sophisticated models of experiential consumption (Titz, 2007; Walls *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, despite the centrality of the accommodations experience to the memorability of tourists' overall experience of the destination (Tukamushaba *et al.*, 2016) and the evolving nature and dynamics of the accommodations industry, little is known about how customers using peer-to-peer accommodations services evaluate their experiences, versus those who use traditional tourism services (Heo, 2016). Thus, in view of these two trends – that is, the sharing economy's challenge to the hotel industry along experiential factors and the scope for more experience-related research in the literature – the present study uses Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory to develop and test a model of experiential consumption in the accommodations industry. The model examines how the dimensions of the accommodations experience affect a variety of psychological and behavioral outcomes. In developing the model, the study seeks to achieve two objectives: to expand Pine and Gilmore's (1998) seminal experience economy construct in the context of the accommodations industry and to examine the ability of the accommodations experience to produce extraordinary, memorable outcomes, which subsequently elicit favorable behavioral intentions.

The study has important implications for the hotel industry's strategic experience design initiatives, from the standpoint of product development and marketing communications. The authors address the following research questions in the present study:

RQ1. Which dimensions of the experience economy underlie customers' experiential involvement with hotels and sharing economy providers?

RQ2. How do hotels and sharing economy providers compare in their performance on these dimensions?

RQ3. To what extent do the dimensions of the experience economy translate into extraordinary, memorable experiential outcomes for customers?

RQ4. Do hotels and sharing economy providers differ in their ability to produce extraordinary, memorable experiential outcomes for customers?

Literature review
Experiential research in hospitality and tourism
The concept of the experience economy, pioneered by Pine and Gilmore, states that as services become increasingly commoditized, companies must look to differentiate their offerings by focusing on the design and delivery of experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Experiences mark the next step in the progression of economic value, requiring businesses to shift from a *delivery-focused* service paradigm to one that recognizes that the service is simply the *stage* and goods the *props* to engage individual customers in a personal way (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Walls *et al.*, 2011). In a hospitality and tourism setting, "everything

tourists go through at a destination can be experience, be it behavioral or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, or expressed or implied" (Oh *et al.*, 2007, p. 120). Thus, the concept of the experience economy has particular relevance for the hotel industry, in which "almost any service can be leveraged to stage a more compelling experience" (Gilmore and Pine, 2002, p. 88). While this would suggest a higher output of academic research on experiences, there has been no substantial increase in experience-related papers despite growth in the total number of articles published by each major journal. Thus, despite its fundamental importance, experience-related research remains underrepresented in the hospitality and tourism literature (Jiang *et al.*, 2015; Ritchie *et al.*, 2011).

Existing research on experiences in hospitality and tourism has taken three general directions:

(1) creating a taxonomy or classification of experiences;

(2) examining the causes of or explaining an experience; and

(3) comparing the relationship between experiences and other constructs (Walls *et al.*, 2011).

In the hospitality industry, customers experience heightened involvement in the consumption stage; thus, understanding the nature and dynamics of experiential consumption is key to a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior (Carù and Cova, 2003; Titz, 2007). Moreover, given the growing threat of the sharing economy to the hotel industry in terms of the consumption experience, the third area of research highlighted by Walls *et al.* (2011) – comparing the relationship between experiences and other constructs – represents the most promising way to develop relevant theoretical models and provide the industry with actionable insight to obtain experiential superiority over its sharing economy competition. In the present study, the S-O-R theory provides the conceptual framework for the evaluation of the customer experience.

Stimulus-organism-response theory
S-O-R theory has its roots in the field of environmental psychology. In the classical S-O-R model, the *stimulus* is defined as those factors that affect internal states of the individual and consists of both marketing mix variables and other environmental inputs (Chang *et al.*, 2011). *Organism* refers to:

[. . .] internal processes and structures intervening between stimuli external to the person and the final actions, reactions, or responses emitted. The intervening processes and structures consist of perceptual, physiological, feeling, and thinking activities (Bagozzi, 1986, p. 46).

Response in the S-O-R theory "represents the final outcomes and the final decisions of consumers, which can be approach or avoidance behaviors" (Chang *et al.*, 2011, p. 236). The logic underlying the S-O-R theory has been used extensively to explain consumer behavior in the hospitality and tourism context (Chen and Peng, 2015; Liu and Jang, 2009; Mason and Paggiaro, 2012). In these and other applications, the focus remains on understanding consumer behavior during the consumption experience. Thus, S-O-R can enable an understanding of the dynamics of customers' experiential involvement with hotels and sharing economy providers.

The present study offers a model of experiential consumption that is built on the logic of the S-O-R theory (Figure 1). The model reflects the most current thinking in the evolution of research on the hospitality and tourism experience (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009, see p. 121).

The following section details the components of the model and discusses the study's proposed hypotheses, which establish logical connections between the components.

Stimuli (S): dimensions of the experience economy
The first component of the model comprises the dimensions of the experience economy that serve as the stimuli during the consumption experience. Pine and Gilmore (1998) identified four dimensions of experience – entertainment, education, escapism and esthetics – differentiated at two levels:

(1) the degree of customer involvement (passive vs active participation); and

(2) the degree to which the customer connects or engages with the event or performance (absorption vs immersion) (Hosany and Witham, 2010).

Entertainment provides one of the oldest forms of experience and usually involves a passive involvement of the individual, whereby s(he) does not directly affect or influence the performance of the service provider. It also requires absorption, in which offerings catch and occupy customers' attention and readiness (Oh *et al.*, 2007). For example, major hotel brands like Hilton and Starwood are turning their ballrooms and lounges into convert venues, hosting an increasing number of musical events to reward loyal guests and attract news ones (Berg, 2016).

The *esthetics* dimension, which refers to customers' interpretation of the physical environment around them, also requires passive participation, but with greater depth and immersion with respect to what is seen and experienced – i.e. it requires customers to become physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Oh *et al.*, 2007). The company Onefinestay is an example of the sharing economy at work from an esthetics perspective. It offers over 2,500 luxury vacation apartments in London, New York, Paris, Los Angeles and Rome, each one handpicked for a distinctive design aesthetic. It differs from other sharing economy concepts like Airbnb in that each home is selected for inclusion within the brand's curated portfolio based on exacting standards of architecture and design ("About us", 2017).

With *educational* experiences, a customer absorbs the events unfolding before them while actively participating through the interactive engagement of the mind and/or the body (Oh *et al.*, 2007). Such experiences intrigue customers and appeal to their desire to learn something new. Airbnb's new positioning, *Live There*, focuses on moving the brand beyond merely offering accommodations to creating experiences, which include educational activities in neighbourhoods and communities. For example, the platform allows travelers to
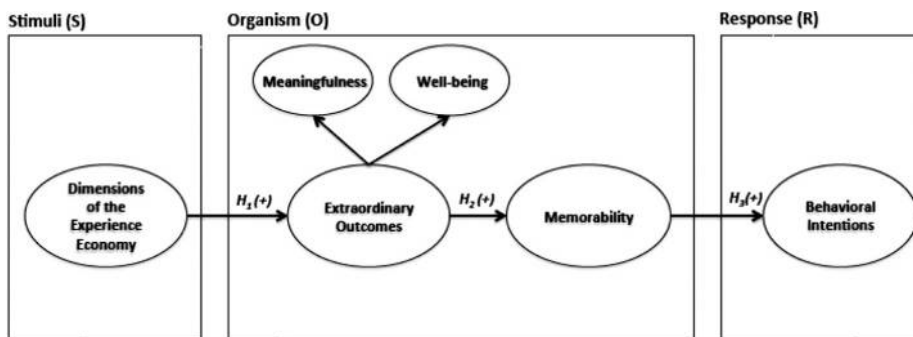

Figure 1.
Proposed model of experiential consumption

San Francisco to learn a new cuisine in a three-hour, group-based Thai food cooking class offered by a Thai native living in San Francisco ("Thai Cooking Class with Sunshine", 2017).

Escapist experiences also require active participation but are immersive in nature. Customers participating in escapist experiences not only seek to distance themselves from their daily routines but also want to escape to a specific place to actively involve and immerse themselves in activities worthy of their time (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Oh *et al.*, 2007). Getaway, a startup concept within the sharing economy currently based around Boston and New York, builds tiny houses, places them on beautiful rural land and rents them by the night to city dwellers looking to escape the digital grind. The exact location is only provided to travelers after the booking is completed, serving as a perfect example of *escapism* for couples or those seeking out writing or reading weekends ("Getaway", 2017).

These four dimensions have been extensively researched in the hospitality and tourism literature, with applications in the bed-and-breakfast sector (Oh *et al.*, 2007), cruise industry (Hosany and Witham, 2010), music festivals and museums (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011), wine tourism (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2016) and golf tourism (Hwang and Lyu, 2015), among others. However, sharing economy providers are leveraging more than these four dimensions in their experiential value propositions to their customers. Thus, if the hotel industry is to surpass its sharing economy competition *vis-à-vis* the guest experience, it must leverage an expanded experience economy paradigm that incorporates these additional dimensions. In this regard, Walls *et al.* (2011, p. 19) have suggested the need for researchers to identify specific dimensions "that exist in both our everyday and tourist experiences". The present study does this by incorporating four additional dimensions into Pine and Gilmore's (1998) original experience economy construct: serendipity, localness, communitas and personalization.

Tung and Ritchie (2011) highlight the importance of *serendipity* – unexpected, positive surprises that are above and beyond tourists' planned agendas – in creating memorable experiences. Surprise situations create unique opportunities for human interaction, generate a special connection with the place and build a common bond among travelers (Arsenault and Gale, 2004). The intensity of positive surprises also influences word-of-mouth and overall satisfaction (Vanhamme, 2000). Thus, businesses are encouraged to build pleasant, unexpected experiences into their offerings that supersede customers' baseline expectations (Ritchie *et al.*, 2011). One of the authors' own experiences with Airbnb attests to the significance of this dimension. The host surprised the author and his family by placing croissants and fresh strawberries in the refrigerator and a handwritten welcome sign on the dresser.

The importance of *localness* as a dimension of experience in the hospitality and tourism industry has been particularly recognized in the context of food experiences. For example, Tsai (2016) found that experiences of consuming local food created positive and unforgettable memories for tourists, which subsequently enhanced their attachment to local attractions and stimulated favorable behavioral intentions. Hotel companies are also developing "new brands and more sophisticated partnerships, new branding and marketing initiatives, and new business models to differentiate themselves and deliver experiences that immerse guests in local communities" (Oates, 2015a). Moreover, the perception of localness, a dimension that is actively absorbed by the customer, is often a source of authentication of the consumption experience (Mkono, 2013). Standard Hotels demonstrates exceptional use of localness to enhance the guest experience. Its website leads with lifestyle content about music, food, arts and other cultural programming, both on-property and offsite. The website reads more like an online travel magazine, with the hotels positioned as a base from which to explore the locale (Oates, 2015b).

Arnould and Price (1993) discuss the development of *communitas* – an evolving feeling of communion with friends, family and strangers – during the course of extraordinary consumption experiences. Wang (2004) highlights tourism's ability to give access to spontaneously generated interpersonal relationships with other human beings while also aiding the process of making new friends. Lugosi (2008) refers to such experiences as *communitesque moments* – short-lived emotional bonds that may be built or experienced through hospitality transactions – and emphasizes their active, immersive nature. Airbnb's positioning of *Belong Anywhere* is centered around the sense of community and belonging that its travelers seek. The company has cleverly used this simple, but powerful idea to position itself as a platform that helps people break barriers and leverage the socially transformative power of travel (Chesky, 2014).

The eighth and final dimension of *personalization* reflects the passive, immersive component of the expanded experience economy construct. Shen and Ball (2009) found that continuity personalization – ongoing customization based on adaptive learning and knowledge of customer preferences and/or goals – offers a promising strategic option for managing customer relationships. In the restaurant context, Nyheim *et al.* (2015) found that millennials perceived personalized smartphone advertising and communication as a welcome addition to their customer experience. With the rapid advancement in technology applications for the hospitality and tourism industry, it is imperative that businesses explore their potential to facilitate more meaningful and personalized services and experiences (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2015). As part of its new *Travel Brilliantly* campaign, Marriott became the first hotel company to offer Netflix on guest room televisions, allowing customers to stream their own content. In a society where personalized media consumption is becoming the norm, the brand's response to changing customer preferences is enabling it to enhance the guest room entertainment experience (Wolf, 2015). Airbnb is also jumping onto the personalization bandwagon with a new matching system that takes travelers' preferences into account and matches them with homes, neighborhoods and experiences that meet their needs (Ting, 2016a). Notably, these examples illustrate that the various dimensions of the expanded experience economy construct can and are being leveraged by both hotels and sharing economy providers. Thus, their inclusion in this study is timely and relevant to the strategic experience design initiatives of the accommodations industry as a whole.

While the expansion of Pine and Gilmore's original construct is valuable in itself, from a marketing point of view, the dimensions of the experience economy "represent the context where benefits are produced and consumed, thus [they have] a strategic function as [they] affect consumers' satisfaction and reactions" (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012, p. 1330). In effect, the present authors' expansion of the construct enables better modeling of consumer behavior through a more nuanced understanding of "how the consumer's mind works in relation to his or her experiences" (Walls *et al.*, 2011, p. 20). Given that the desired goal of those in the hospitality and tourism industry is to provide customers with extraordinary experiences (Ritchie *et al.*, 2011; Walls *et al.*, 2011), the first part of the model (Figure 1) examines the relationship between the dimensions of the experience economy and extraordinary outcomes. The authors hypothesize:

H1. The dimensions of the experience economy positively influence extraordinary outcomes.

Organism (O): extraordinary outcomes and memorability
The second component of the model comprises the "internal processes and structures intervening between stimuli external to the person and the final actions, reactions, or

responses emitted" (Bagozzi, 1986, p. 46). The first construct that characterizes these processes is the customer's perceptions of the extraordinary nature of their experiences. As highlighted by Knobloch *et al.* (2016), researchers have used terms such as *memorable*, *special*, *extraordinary* and *peak* interchangeably, imposing semantic limitations on understanding their nature. Based on these authors' recommendations, the present study incorporates the nested constructs of *meaningfulness* and *well-being* as the manifestations of an *extraordinary* consumption experience.

Arnould and Price (1993) defined the extraordinary as "intense, positive experiences that ultimately provide meaning and perspective to consumers' lives" (Walls *et al.*, 2011, p. 18). According to Wilson and Harris (2006), meaningful travel involves the search for an increased sense of self and reconsideration of perspectives on life, society and relationships with others. Boswijk *et al.* (2007) emphasize the dynamic nature of meaningful experiences, whereby the role of a business is to facilitate individualized treatment that leads to personal insight for customers and possibly the means for personal change or transformation. The experience causes the individual to change his or her perspective on self and/or the surrounding world. According to Hosany and Witham (2010), the various dimensions of the experience economy serve as the platform on which organizations strive to provide meaningful experiences. Similarly, Walls *et al.* (2011, p. 17) highlight that the experience economy framework enables a business to choreograph experiences that "foster the consumer's awareness or interest in order to create a meaningful and fulfilling consumption/transaction experience". Thus, the present authors expand on the relationship between the dimensions of the experience economy and extraordinary outcomes presented in *H1*. Given that the construct of meaningfulness is conceptualized as a nested manifestation of an extraordinary consumption experience, the authors hypothesize:

> *H1a*. The dimensions of the experience economy positively and indirectly influence customers' perceptions of the meaningfulness of their experiences.

Several studies provide support for the second nested construct of well-being as a manifestation of an extraordinary experience. According to Prebensen *et al.* (2014), tourism is premised upon the movements of people to experience well-being in non-residential settings. In their comprehensive review of 35 studies that have investigated this relationship, Uysal *et al.* (2016) emphasize the contribution of tourism experiences to people's quality of life and well-being. Brown and Vergragt (2014) discuss the sharing economy as a facilitator of the cultural transition towards the quest for a meaningful life and personal well-being. In their study of golf tournament tourists, Hwang and Lyu (2015) found that three of the four original experience economy dimensions influenced tourists' perceptions of the well-being they acquired from participation. Thus, the present authors expand on the relationship between the dimensions of the experience economy and extraordinary outcomes presented in *H1*. Given that the construct of well-being is conceptualized as a nested manifestation of an extraordinary consumption experience, the authors hypothesize:

> *H1b*. The dimensions of the experience economy positively and indirectly influence customers' perceptions of the well-being resulting from their experiences.

The second construct that comprises the Organism (O) component of the model is memorability, a concept at the heart of Pine and Gilmore's work. Additionally, as Pizam (2010, p. 343) puts it, "creating memorable experiences is the essence and the raison d'etre of the hospitality industry", which emphasizes its importance in the context of the present study. According to Oh *et al.* (2007, p. 123), a well-staged experience "leads to an enhanced

memory–that is, *remembering* a particular event–which will shape the tourist's attitude toward the destination in a positive manner". Tung and Ritchie (2011) established the relationship between extraordinary outcomes and memorability of the experience through the notion of consequentiality – i.e. some sort of personally perceived importance from the outcome of the trip makes it memorable. Moreover, existing research has recognized linkages between the constructs of meaningfulness and well-being – the manifestations of extraordinary experiences – and memorability (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Dias *et al.*, 2015; Gilbert and Abdullah, 2004; Kim *et al.*, 2010, 2012). Such evidence strengthens the present authors' hypothesis of a relationship between the overarching construct of extraordinary outcomes and the memorability of the customer's experience. Specifically, the authors hypothesize:

H2. Extraordinary outcomes positively influence the memorability of the experience.

Response (R): behavioral intentions
The third component of the model comprises the final outcome of the S-O-R model: the response that reflects customers' approach or avoidance behaviors. In the present study, the authors use the construct of behavioral intention as the approach aspect of the response component. Behavioral intention is the most common manifestation of attitudinal loyalty in the hospitality and tourism literature and is defined as "a deeply held psychological commitment to repurchase a product or repatronize a service in the future" (Oliver, 2010, p. 23). It is also perceived as a precursor to behavioral loyalty (Li and Petrick, 2008). Thus, businesses must seek to create conditions that facilitate the realization of positive memorable tourism experiences to develop customers' intentions to reuse the offering (Kim *et al.*, 2012).

The relationship between memorability and behavioral intentions has been firmly established in the hospitality and tourism literature. Memories act as an important filtering mechanism to link an experience to other attitudinal outcomes of the experience (Oh *et al.*, 2007). Thus, several researchers have incorporated this relationship as the final component of their modeling of the customer experience (Ali *et al.*, 2016; Hung *et al.*, 2016; Loureiro, 2014). Based on these studies, the present authors hypothesize the following relationship between the memorability of the experience and customers' behavioral intentions:

H3. The memorability of the experience positively influences customers' behavioral intentions.

Methodology
Data collection
The sample for the study was drawn from an extensive panel provided by the online research company Qualtrics. The sample was self-selected to be part of both the Qualtrics panel and the present study. In this model, Qualtrics sends a link to the survey to its panel members without revealing the subject of the study before they enter the survey, which helps minimize self-selection bias. Moreover, Qualtrics randomly assigns respondents to a survey that they will likely qualify for based on their responses to periodic refinement questions that enable better targeting. This helps further minimize self-selection bias and ensure that non-response is more of a random event versus a systematic event compared to more traditional sample platforms (the reader is referred to www.websm.org for an archive of web survey research related to sample coverage). As the purpose of the study was to compare and contrast customers' experiences of hotels and Airbnb, the authors separately surveyed individuals who had stayed at least one night at a hotel or an Airbnb for the purpose of leisure in the past three months. A total of 630 usable responses were collected:

315 for the hotel sample and 315 for the Airbnb sample. The sample represents 45 of the 50 states in the USA.

Following Hosany and Gilbert (2010), the retrieval hypothesis was used to capture respondents' experiences. Respondents were instructed to recall their most recent hotel or Airbnb experience for the purpose of leisure in the past three months. The three month benchmark was used to elicit more specific and recent memories, which would be expected to reduce errors and biases of recall (Kahneman *et al.*, 2004). The authors provided respondents with cues to encourage them to remember their experiences as vividly as possible (e.g. city/country visited, the setting of the hotel/Airbnb, the travel party, things done on the trip, etc.).

Survey development

The first section of the survey included questions about the trip, including its duration, destination(s), travel party composition, amount paid per night for the accommodations and an open-ended question about why respondents chose to stay with the specific hotel brand/ Airbnb. The second section comprised questions about respondents' experiences of the trip as pertained to the eight dimensions of the experience economy (Stimuli). The third section of the survey included questions about the Organism and Response components of the model, regarding the extent to which respondents' perceived their trip to be meaningful, conducive to their well-being and memorable, as well as their intentions to reuse the services of the particular hotel brand/Airbnb. The fourth and final section included demographic questions and offered respondents the opportunity to volunteer any additional information about their experience that was not captured in the survey.

In the second and third sections of the survey, which comprised questions pertaining to the study's overall model, the authors used Gehlbach and Barge's (2012) recommendation of intermixing items within the survey. Under this strategy, the survey designer groups items from distinct but related constructs into the same section of the survey and intersperses them within that section, taking care to avoid placing items from the same construct adjacent to one another. This strategy minimizes the bias that results from respondents' insufficient anchoring and adjusting of their responses to items ordered in a specific manner – bias that otherwise translates into inflated inter-item correlations within a construct, inflated scale reliabilities and inaccurate correlations between constructs. In the present study, constructs *within* the various components of the model were intermixed. For example, the authors intermixed items pertaining to the constructs of entertainment, escapism and localness on the same survey screen. All items in the second and third sections of the survey were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree. The survey was first pilot-tested with a sample of 50 respondents, also recruited via Qualtrics, who had stayed at least one night at an Airbnb for the purpose of leisure in the past three months; the objective of the pilot was to check for issues of clarity, length and comprehensiveness. The pilot respondents did not identify any problems regarding the clarity of the survey questions. None found the survey to be too long or tedious, an attitude that can result in respondent fatigue and subsequently deteriorate the quality of data. Additionally, none of the respondents indicated any further areas of inquiry in relation to their Airbnb experiences that were not captured in the survey, indicating its comprehensiveness. The survey was thus distributed to the final sample.

Analysis

As the first step in analyzing the data, descriptive statistics and distributions were assessed. Second, the authors conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the first component

of the model presented in Figure 1, the dimensions of the experience economy. As one of the objectives of the study was to validate the dimensions that underlie customers' experiential involvement with hotels and sharing economy providers (*RQ1*), the authors conducted a separate CFA to validate this first component. Two CFA models were concurrently tested: one for the hotel sample and another for the Airbnb sample. In addition, *t*-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores on the various experience economy dimensions between hotels and Airbnb to assess their relative performances on these dimensions and thus address the study's second research question.

Third, an overall CFA was conducted to validate the various constructs in the context of the overall model presented in Figure 1. The dimensions of the experience economy and the construct of extraordinary outcomes were modeled as second-order constructs, based on previous studies (Ali *et al.*, 2016; Knobloch *et al.*, 2016; Loureiro, 2014). Again, two separate CFA models were tested for the hotel and Airbnb samples. This was followed by the fourth stage of analysis, in which the authors conducted structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the proposed conceptual model in Figure 1. SEM allowed the authors to understand the dynamics of customers' experiential involvement with hotels and sharing economy providers and thus address the study's third research question. As with the CFA stage, two separate SEM models were tested for the hotel and Airbnb samples. Multiple measures suggested by Hair *et al.* (2010) were used to assess the fit between both the measurement and structural components of the models and the data, including normed chi-square (χ^2/df), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

In the fifth and final stage of analysis, the authors used multiple-group analysis and pair-wise parameter comparisons to determine whether any of the structural parameters were significantly different between the hotel and Airbnb models in the SEM stage, thereby addressing the study's fourth research question. For the pair-wise parameter comparison test, critical ratios for differences between the two structural parameters in question are calculated by dividing the difference between the parameter estimates by an estimate of the standard error of the difference. Under appropriate assumptions and with a correct model, the critical ratios follow a standard normal distribution (*Structural Equation Modeling*, 2017). Prior to testing for structural differences, the authors tested for the measurement invariance of the multiple-group model.

Results

The profile of the respondents in the hotel and Airbnb samples is presented in Table I. Interestingly, there were significant differences between the two samples. Using a series of chi-square tests, the authors found that the hotel and Airbnb samples differed in terms of respondents' age ($p = 0.000$), education ($p = 0.000$), household status ($p = 0.01$) and income levels ($p = 0.000$). Table I indicates that respondents in the Airbnb sample were younger, with double the sample, aged between 26 and 34 years (41.9 vs 21 per cent for hotels). Also, respondents in the Airbnb sample were better educated: a total of 85.6 per cent of the sample had at least a college degree as compared to 67.9 per cent of the hotel sample. A greater proportion of the Airbnb sample was also married with children compared to the hotel sample (55.6 vs 47.3 per cent). Finally, respondents in the Airbnb sample had higher incomes: 60.7 per cent made at least US$75,000 as compared to the 48 per cent of the hotel sample. In sum, respondents in the Airbnb sample were younger, better educated and more likely to be married with children and to have higher incomes than those in the hotel sample.

Table II presents the summary statistics for the items used to measure the various constructs of the model for both the hotel and Airbnb samples. Each construct was

Demographic category	Hotel sample Sample size (n = 315)	(%)	Airbnb sample Sample size (n = 315)	(%)	Chi-square value (df)
Age					71.059[a] (4)
18-25	13	4.1	28	8.9	
26-34	66	21.0	132	41.9	
35-54	105	33.3	110	34.9	
55-64	69	21.9	29	9.2	
65 or over	62	19.7	16	5.1	
Gender					0.229 (1)
Male	160	50.8	154	48.9	
Female	155	49.2	161	51.1	
Education					28.044[a] (4)
Grade school	2	0.6	0	0	
High school	25	7.9	7	2.2	
Some college	74	23.5	42	13.3	
College	134	42.5	152	48.3	
Graduate school	80	25.4	114	36.2	
Household status					18.081[a] (6)
Single	54	17.1	56	17.8	
Married w/o children	55	17.5	53	16.8	
Married with children	149	47.3	175	55.6	
Divorced/separated/widowed	41	13.0	13	4.1	
Living with partner	16	5.1	18	5.7	
Income					25.510[a] (6)
Less than US$15,000	6	1.9	9	2.9	
US$15,000-US$29,999	23	7.3	10	3.2	
US$30,000-US$44,999	45	14.3	22	7	
US$45,000-US$59,999	47	14.9	31	9.8	
US$60,000-US$74,999	43	13.7	52	16.5	
US$75,000-US$90,000	56	17.8	89	28.3	
More than US$90,000	95	30.2	102	32.4	

Table I.
Respondent profile

Note: [a]Significant at p = 0.000

measured using three items. One particularly noteworthy finding is that the means for all items were higher for the Airbnb sample than for the hotel sample. Table II also indicates the literature sources from which these measures were adapted, as well as the Cronbach's alpha values for various constructs. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.84 to 0.93 across the two samples, well above the recommended 0.70 level (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), indicating high internal consistency between the items measuring the various constructs. As the measures have been previously validated in studies on hospitality and tourism experiences (the reader is referred to the last column of Table II), the authors were able to move directly to the CFA without the need for an exploratory phase.

To address the study's first research question and identify the dimensions that underlie the customer's experiential involvement with hotels and sharing economy providers, the authors conducted a separate CFA to validate the first component of the model presented in Figure 1. The CFA indicated that the model fit the data well for both samples [(Hotel sample: χ^2/df = 2.579; CFI = 0.952; TLI = 0.941; RMSEA = 0.071; SRMR = 0.042); (Airbnb sample:

Constructs and measurement items[*]	Hotel sample			Airbnb sample			Adapted from
	Mean[**]	SD	Cronbach's α	Mean[**]	SD	Cronbach's α	
Entertainment							
The hotel/Airbnb experience was fun	5.63	1.23	0.90	5.96	1.08	0.86	Oh *et al.* (2007)
The hotel/Airbnb was entertaining	5.34	1.41		5.71	1.18		
I really enjoyed this hotel/Airbnb experience	5.74	1.29		5.91	1.14		
Education							
I learned a lot through my experience	4.69	1.55	0.92	5.66	1.24	0.85	Oh *et al.* (2007)
The hotel/Airbnb experience stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	4.71	1.59		5.52	1.31		
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb was a real learning experience	4.56	1.59		5.57	1.12		
Escapism							
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb made me feel I was in a different world	4.93	1.59	0.87	5.55	1.40	0.86	Oh *et al.* (2007)
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb made me feel I was living in a different time or place	4.70	1.73		5.44	1.54		
I completely escaped from reality during the hotel/Airbnb experience	4.96	1.66		5.36	1.50		
Esthetics							
It was pleasant just being at the hotel/Airbnb	5.62	1.22	0.89	5.73	1.19	0.87	Oh *et al.* (2007)
The setting of the hotel/Airbnb provided pleasure to my senses	5.26	1.42		5.52	1.32		
The setting of the hotel/Airbnb really showed attention to detail in terms of design	5.28	1.43		5.54	1.28		
Serendipity							
On this trip, I enjoyed getting to do things on the "spur-of-the-moment"	5.28	1.33	0.85	5.72	1.16	0.84	Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013); Kim *et al.* (2010); Neal *et al.* (2007)
I spontaneously experienced things I never thought I was going to	4.77	1.65		5.49	1.27		
I experienced pleasant surprises during this trip	5.13	1.52		5.70	1.18		
Localness							
The hotel/Airbnb experience allowed me to engage with local people and the local culture	4.85	1.53	0.87	5.71	1.31	0.85	Chesky (2014); Richards (2010); Ting (2016)
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb allowed me to experience what the locals do	4.79	1.57		5.77	1.24		
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb allowed me to discover local attractions and offerings	5.32	1.41		5.80	1.18		

(*continued*)

Table II.
Summary statistics and literature sources

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Constructs and measurement items[*]	Hotel sample Mean[**]	SD	Cronbach's α	Airbnb sample Mean[**]	SD	Cronbach's α	Adapted from
Communitas							
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb allowed me to turn strangers into friends	4.35	1.72	0.89	5.26	1.52	0.86	Arnould and Price (1993);
I felt I was part of the local community	4.56	1.55		5.52	1.36		Chesky
Staying at the hotel/Airbnb made me feel I belong to a special travel community	4.68	1.64		5.44	1.43		(2014)
Personalization							
Personalized communication by the hotel brand/Airbnb makes me feel that I am a unique customer	5.08	1.47	0.93	5.64	1.22	0.88	Nyheim *et al.* (2015)
I believe that communication by the hotel brand/Airbnb is customized to my needs	5.03	1.46		5.66	1.14		
Communication by the hotel brand/Airbnb provides me with product and service recommendations that are tailor-made for me	5.05	1.47		5.60	1.18		
Meaningfulness							
I did something important	5.19	1.42	0.90	5.56	1.28	0.87	Boswijk
I learned about myself	4.64	1.61		5.45	1.31		*et al.* (2007);
I felt a renewed sense of self after the hotel/Airbnb experience	5.10	1.50		5.53	1.24		Kim *et al.* (2010)
Well-being							
The hotel/Airbnb experience played an important role in my well-being	5.25	1.49	0.92	5.57	1.23	0.88	Hwang and Lyu (2015);
The hotel experience played an important role in enhancing my quality of life	5.06	1.54		5.71	1.26		Kim *et al.* (2010)
I felt revitalized after the hotel experience	5.33	1.44		5.67	1.28		
Memorability							
I have wonderful memories about the hotel/Airbnb experience	5.43	1.34	0.89	5.95	1.15	0.85	Oh *et al.* (2007); Tung
I remember many positive things about the hotel/Airbnb experience	5.54	1.32		5.92	1.11		and Ritchie (2011)
I like going back and re-experiencing the trip in my mind	5.31	1.49		5.77	1.19		

Table II.

	Hotel sample			Airbnb sample				Assessment of hotels and Airbnb
			Cronbach's			Cronbach's	Adapted	
Constructs and measurement items*	Mean**	SD	α	Mean**	SD	α	from	
Behavioral intentions								
I say positive things about the hotel brand/Airbnb to other people	5.89	1.25	0.90	6.14	1.04	0.92	Li and Petrick	**2391**
I would recommend the hotel brand/ Airbnb to other people/friends and relatives	6.03	1.24		6.20	1.04		(2008); Mody *et al.* (2014)	
I intend to continue using the hotel brand/Airbnb	6.13	1.22		6.20	1.08			

Notes: *Respondents viewed the survey with the appropriate wording (hotel/Airbnb) depending on the sample to which they belonged; **All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree

Table II.

χ^2/df = 2.277; CFI = 0.954; TLI = 0.943; RMSEA = 0.064; SRMR = 0.035)]. While the scales indicated high reliability (Cronbach's alpha), as discussed in the Table II results, the authors also checked for the validity of the CFA models (Liu and Jang, 2009). All items loaded on to their respective constructs with high and significant (p = 0.000) standardized factor loadings that ranged from 0.806 to 0.942 for the hotel model and from 0.841 to 0.986 for the Airbnb model, indicating convergent validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was higher than 0.50, further demonstrating convergent validity, and greater than the squared correlations between paired constructs, thus demonstrating discriminant validity across both models. These results address the study's first research question by validating a model for the dimensions of the experience economy.

To address the study's second research question, the authors used *t*-tests to compare the mean scores on the various experience economy dimensions between the hotel and Airbnb samples. The mean scores were calculated as the average score of the three items used to measure each construct. The authors also compared the other dimensions that comprise the Organism and Response components of the overall model. The results of this comparison are presented in Table III. Consistent with the means presented in Table II, respondents in the Airbnb sample reported significantly higher mean scores on all dimensions of the model. The largest differences were observed in the dimensions of education (0.94), communitas (0.88) and localness (0.77).

The CFA for the overall model presented in Figure 1 indicated that the model fit the data well for both samples [(Hotel sample: χ^2/df = 3.562; CFI = 0.915; TLI = 0.904; RMSEA = 0.089; SRMR = 0.059); (Airbnb sample: χ^2/df = 2.641; CFI = 0.935; TLI = 0.926; RMSEA = 0.072; SRMR = 0.044)]. While the scales indicated high reliability (Cronbach's alpha), as discussed in the Table II results, the authors also checked for the validity of the CFA models (Liu and Jang, 2009). All items loaded on to their respective constructs with high and significant (p = 0.000) standardized factor loadings that ranged from 0.710 to 0.975 for the hotel model and from 0.732 to 0.994 for the Airbnb model, indicating convergent validity. The AVE for each construct was higher than 0.50, further demonstrating convergent validity and greater than the squared correlations between paired constructs, thus demonstrating discriminant validity across both models.

Experience economy dimensions	Mean: Hotel sample	Mean: Airbnb sample	Difference (Hotel-Airbnb)	t
Entertainment	5.59	5.86	−0.27	3.31[**]
Education	4.65	5.59	−0.94	9.12[***]
Escapism	4.86	5.45	−0.59	5.27[***]
Esthetics	5.39	5.60	−0.21	2.24[*]
Serendipity	5.06	5.64	−0.58	6.09[***]
Localness	4.99	5.76	−0.77	7.96[***]
Communitas	4.53	5.41	−0.88	7.96[***]
Personalization	5.06	5.63	−0.57	5.93[***]
Meaningfulness	4.98	5.51	−0.53	5.31[***]
Well-being	5.21	5.65	−0.44	4.35[***]
Memorability	5.43	5.88	−0.45	4.96[***]
Behavioral intentions	6.01	6.19	−0.18	2.14[*]

Notes: [***]$p = 0.000$; [**]$p = 001$; [*]$p < 0.05$

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Table III.
Performance on experience economy dimensions: Hotels vs Airbnb

An examination of the skewness [(Hotel sample: between −1.966 and −0.198); (Airbnb sample: between −1.863 and −0.563)] and kurtosis [(Hotel sample: between −0.938 and 4.243); (Airbnb sample: between −0.057 and 6.413)] indices for the variables in the overall model indicated that the data were only moderately non-normal. The maximum likelihood estimation technique has been shown to be fairly robust to these conditions and was thus used for structural estimation (Bryne, 2010; Finney and DiStefano, 2006).

The results pertaining to the structural model address the study's third research question. The structural model indicated an acceptable fit for both samples, with a better fit to the Airbnb data [(Hotel sample: χ^2/df = 3.153; CFI = 0.904; TLI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.083; SRMR = 0.064); (Airbnb sample: χ^2/df = 2.441; CFI = 0.917; TLI = 0.910; RMSEA = 0.068; SRMR = 0.048)]. The parameter estimates presented in Table IV indicated that the second-order construct for the dimensions of the experience economy significantly and positively influenced the second-order construct of extraordinary outcomes [β (Hotel sample) = 0.1.165; β (Airbnb sample) = 1.046]. Thus, *H1* was supported. To test *H1a* and *H1b*, the authors used the bootstrapping method to assess the significance of the indirect effect of the second order construct for the dimensions of the experience economy on the nested constructs of meaningfulness and well-being. Bootstrapping confirmed the presence of a significant, positive indirect effect for both meaningfulness [(Hotel sample: $\beta = 1.165$, $p = 0.008$); (Airbnb sample: $\beta = 1.046$, $p = 0.017$)] and well-being [(Hotel sample: $\beta = 1.352$, $p = 0.009$); (Airbnb sample: $\beta = 1.020$, $p = 0.011$)]. Thus, *H1a* and *H1b* were supported.

The significant, positive relationship between the second-order construct of extraordinary outcomes and memorability [β (Hotel sample) = 0.1.031; β (Airbnb sample) = 0.905] provides support for *H2*. The authors also found support for *H3*; the significant parameter estimates [β (Hotel sample) = 0.663; β (Airbnb sample) = 0.770] indicate that the memorability of the experience positively influences customers' intentions to continue using the brand, say positive things about it and recommend the brand to other people.

The study's fourth research question explores whether hotels and sharing economy providers differ in their ability to create extraordinary, memorable experiential outcomes for customers. To answer this question, a multiple-group analysis procedure consisting of two steps was used: an initial test for measurement invariance, followed by the test for structural differences across the hotel and Airbnb models using pairwise parameter comparisons. Following Chen *et al.*'s (2005) recommendations for testing measurement invariance of

Path	Hotel sample Estimate[a]	C.R[b]	Airbnb sample Estimate[a]	C.R[b]
Exp Economy → Entertainment	1.009	12.01	0.886	13.35
Exp Economy → Education	1.407	13.02	1.130	14.94
Exp Economy → Escapism	1.410	12.71	1.183	13.87
Exp Economy → Esthetics	0.973	11.74	1.054	14.44
Exp Economy → Serendipity	1.000	c	1.000	c
Exp Economy → Localness	1.371	12.86	1.148	14.34
Exp Economy → Communitas	1.517	12.70	1.334	14.34
Exp Economy → Personalization	1.286	12.72	1.013	13.64
Exp Economy → Extraordinary Outcomes	1.165	12.11	1.046	13.67
Extraordinary Outcomes → Meaningfulness	1.000	c	1.000	c
Extraordinary Outcomes → Well-being	1.161	16.43	0.974	15.37
Extraordinary Outcomes → Memorability	1.031	16.27	0.905	15.45
Memorability → Behavioral Intentions	0.663	13.11	0.770	14.36

Notes: [a]Unstandardized estimates; [b]all estimates are significant at $p = 0.000$; [c]Parameter fixed to 1 for identification

Table IV.
Results of structural
equation modeling

second-order factor models, the authors tested for the configural and metric invariance of the multiple-group model created by the type of accommodations (hotels and Airbnb) as the moderator. To test for configural invariance, two groups (in this case, hotels and Airbnb) are tested together and freely, and configural invariance is established if the resultant model for that moderator indicates acceptable fit to the data. To test for metric invariance, all the first and second-order factor loadings are constrained to be equal across groups. The fit of the resultant model is then compared with that of the configural model; the *lack* of a significant difference in chi-square establishes metric invariance. The multiple-group model indicated an acceptable fit to the data (χ^2/df = 2.789; CFI = 0.906; TLI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.053; SRMR = 0.064), thus establishing configural invariance. While the chi-square difference test between the configural and metric invariant models was significant ($p = 0.000$), the performance of this test is affected by large sample size, particularly for psychological research, in which case one can examine the differences in the other fit indices as evidence of measurement invariance. There were no substantial differences between the other fit indices (ΔCFI = 0.003, ΔTLI = −0.001, ΔRMSEA = 0 and ΔSRMR = 0.001) across the configural and metric invariant models, which allowed the authors to proceed to the next step of testing for structural differences.

The critical ratios for differences for each pair of structural parameter estimates indicated that none of the structural relationships represented by the various hypotheses of this study [*H1* (including the indirect structural effects suggested by *H1a* and *H1b*), *H2* and *H3*] were significantly different across the hotel and Airbnb models. This result demonstrates that the underlying dynamics of customers' experiential involvement do not differ between hotels and sharing economy providers. The findings of the study have important theoretical implications for experience-related research in hospitality and tourism, as well as practical implications for the hotel industry.

Discussion

The shift towards sharing and collaborative consumption has serious implications for the accommodations industry. While competitors such as Airbnb faced several teething problems, particularly those pertaining to trust and customer safety, and continue to face

legislative hurdles in many jurisdictions, they are progressing on their paths to becoming full-blown hospitality brands that deliver seamless, end-to-end travel experiences. Much of their recent disruption pertains to the guest experience, a domain in which they are changing the rules of the game, particularly through their innovative use of technology. These providers are leveraging dimensions of the travel experience that deliver a more compelling experiential value proposition to the customer. In view of these developments, the present study sought to examine the nature of experiential consumption underlying these two types of accommodations provision: hotels and Airbnb.

The authors successfully validated an eight-dimensional construct of the experience economy that significantly expands Pine and Gilmore's (1998) original conceptualization. Moreover, the authors found that Airbnb appears to be leveraging these eight dimensions to a greater extent than the hotel industry. Respondents who stayed at an Airbnb indicated a significantly greater experience of all eight dimensions – entertainment, education, escapism, esthetics, serendipity, localness, communitas and personalization – than those who stayed at a hotel. The importance of the additional dimensions is evidenced by the fact that two of the top three areas in which Airbnb outperforms hotels are communitas and localness.

However, the relationship between the dimensions of the experience economy and the psychological and behavioral outcomes of those experiences did not differ between hotels and Airbnb. The model of experiential consumption (Figure 1) was validated across both samples, and none of the structural relationships represented by the various hypotheses of this study [H1 (including the indirect structural effects suggested by H1a and H1b), H2 and H3] were significantly different across the hotel and Airbnb models. Hotels appear to be doing as good a job as Airbnb at translating customer experiences into extraordinary, memorable outcomes, which in turn produce desirable behavioral intentions. The findings of this study have important theoretical implications for experience-related research in hospitality and tourism and practical implications for the hotel industry.

Theoretical contribution

Given the relatively recent emergence of the sharing economy as a significant accommodations alternative to the hotel industry, there is little research on the phenomenon, particularly in terms of the guest experience. Dredge and Gyimóthy's (2015) reflections on the topic and Germann Molz's (2012, 2014) development of the concept of network hospitality come closest to addressing some of the experiential aspects of the provision of hospitality by sharing economy providers. The present study thus makes a valuable contribution to the pursuit of a more informed, evidence-based assessment of the sharing economy and the hospitality and tourism industry (Dredge and Gyimóthy, 2015).

First, from a theoretical perspective, the present study's expansion of Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy construct is timely (Walls et al., 2011). The expanded eight-dimensional construct of the experience economy is presented in Figure 2. This construct is referred to as The Accommodation Experiencescape.

The concept of experiencescape is based on a marketing perspective which recognizes that "experiences are highly personal, subjectively perceived, intangible, ever fleeting and continuously on-going" (O'Dell, 2005, p. 15). It has an obvious parallel to what Bitner (1992) calls the servicescape and represents the arena in which experiences are staged and consumed (Mossberg, 2007). Experiencescapes, which represent a blend of many elements (both physical and imagined), "are [thus] spaces of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, as well as the meeting grounds in which diverse groups move about and come in contact with one another" (O'Dell, 2005, p. 16). Their study allows us to come to terms with the

cognitive, social and cultural processes that work to define and frame them (O'Dell, 2005). Moreover, the experiencescape is particularly important for its strategic role in effecting desirable customer reactions (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012), as in the present study, which demonstrated that the various dimensions were extensively used by sharing economy providers to facilitate extraordinary, memorable guest experiences.

In this regard, the study's second key theoretical contribution lies in its development of a model of experiential consumption (Titz, 2007) that enables a theoretically founded and practically meaningful understanding of customers' experiences with accommodations providers. The low causal effect of satisfaction and other existing customer experience measures on loyalty behavior has highlighted the need to extend customer experience studies by incorporating additional factors that significantly influence behavioral intentions (Kim *et al.*, 2012). To this end, the authors used the S-O-R theory to develop the model. While the model was developed in the context of Airbnb experiences, its underlying logic applies to the larger sharing economy in the accommodations industry. The connection between the accommodation experiencescape stimuli (S) and the subsequent psychological and behavioral outcomes (O, R) represents the experiential value proposition of hotels and sharing economy providers.

Third, in response to the need to draw more research attention – particularly in line with Pine and Gilmore's conceptual framework – to the specific consequences of customer experiences that influence their future behavior (Oh *et al.*, 2007), the present study conceptualized and validated the construct of extraordinary outcomes as comprising the nested constructs of meaningfulness and well-being. Following Knobloch *et al.*'s (2016) recommendations, the present authors did not predefine the study's consumption context as extraordinary; this has been done in much previous research and is "problematic, as objects, events, and experiences are not imbued with the power to *produce* an emotional state in the tourist" (Robinson, 2012, p. 28). Instead, the authors allowed respondents to ascribe
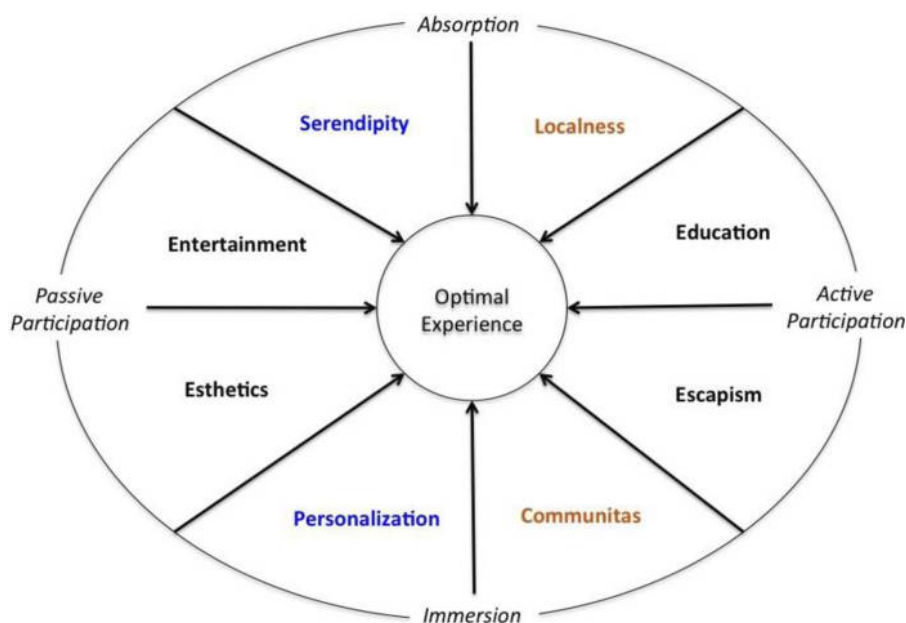

Figure 2.
The accommodation
experiencescape

extraordinariness to their experience in the form of the manifest constructs of meaningfulness and well-being. The present study's conceptualization of the extraordinary offers a tool for future research on the topic.

Practical implications

The findings of the study also have important implications for the hotel industry's strategic experience design initiatives. First, designers must appreciate the role of accommodations as a platform for customers to explore the larger destination, given the intricate linkages between the various elements of customers' travel experiences. The evolving nature and dynamics of experiential consumption, enabled by the disruption of the sharing economy, requires the hotel industry to be proactive and more expansive in its creation of customer value (Varma *et al.*, 2016). Contemporary marketing practitioners have adopted such a holistic paradigm in the form of *content marketing*. The idea behind content marketing is to create and distribute "valuable, relevant, and consistent content" to the target market to drive profitable customer action ("What is Content Marketing?", 2017). Thus, even if the content of a brand's marketing endeavors does not relate directly to the business itself, in this case the hotel product, it is considered important if it provides the customer with a relevant and memorable experience. In fact, the hotel industry and the sharing economy are increasingly emphasizing the various dimensions of the accommodation experiencescape based on a content marketing paradigm. For example, Renaissance Hotels incorporates localness into its offerings through its Navigators, local neighborhood experts who have been selected to connect guests with the most imaginative experiences that the neighborhood around the hotel has to offer ("Meet our Navigators", 2017). Airbnb's parallel to incorporating localness into the guest experience is a new app feature called Guidebooks, which includes insider tips from Airbnb's community of hosts from around the world. The company has also been testing an experiences feature that allows its guests to book local tours, activities and experiences when they book a room on Airbnb (Ting, 2016a). Thus, in designing and marketing their experiences, hotel companies must shift their focus from a delivery-focused paradigm that emphasizes product and service quality (Oh *et al.*, 2007) to a content marketing paradigm that emphasizes hotel products and services as the stage and the props for creating holistic, relevant and memorable guest experiences. The findings of the study pertaining to both the accommodation experiencescape and the relationships established by the model of experiential consumption provide support for these suggestions.

In this regard, Ritchie *et al.* (2011) and Ting (2016b) emphasize the importance of partnerships that enable hotels to facilitate good content marketing and deliver exclusive branded experiences beyond the room, and thus own the overall traveler journey. For example, the Hyatt mobile app includes integration with Uber, allowing guests to request a ride to their Hyatt destination without leaving the brand's own platform (Schaal, 2015a). Four Seasons offers a collection of Extraordinary Experiences in conjunction with local businesses and operators at its various destinations ("Extraordinary Experiences", 2017). A company's loyalty program also plays an important role in delivering branded experiences, with brands including Wyndham, Starwood, Marriott, Ritz Carlton and Hilton offering "experience marketplaces" that allow loyalty members to unlock access to specially curated events and activities during their stays. Of course, building partnerships and engaging the customer with good content marketing is not limited to the large brands. Experience designers even at independent hotels and smaller brands can creatively leverage the various dimensions of the accommodation experiencescape to deliver compelling content and engaging experiences that are valuable and relevant to customers.

Relatedly, the three dimensions in which the hotel industry appears to have fallen behind the most are education, communitas and localness (mean differences = 0.94, 0.88 and 0.77, respectively). Given that hotels appear to be doing as good a job at translating customer experiences into extraordinary, memorable outcomes (no differences in structural parameters across the hotel and Airbnb models), one can infer that enhancing the performance of hotel providers on these dimensions through better content marketing may strengthen the relationships that underlie customers' experiential involvement with them. These dimensions comprise the socio-cultural factors that drive the needs of the modern traveler (Dredge and Gyimóthy, 2015; Oates, 2015a; Trivett, 2013). In fact, with factors such as safety, trust and reliability still favoring the hotel industry, enhancing its experiential performance on various dimensions could go a long way in mitigating the long-term threat of the sharing economy.

The positioning implications of the model for the hotel industry cannot be emphasized. As the dimensions of the experience economy play an important role in effecting extraordinary, memorable outcomes, which subsequently elicit desirable behavioral intentions, the hotel industry must pay greater attention to its use of branding, signage and promotional messaging to encourage customers to interpret and make sense of their experiences along the lines of the various dimensions (Ritchie *et al.*, 2011). For example, the CEO of Virgin Hotels describes his company as being "in the entertainment business" and designs guest experiences to reinforce this positioning (Oates, 2016c). Moreover, chains with multiple brands in their portfolio must pay particular attention to the use of these dimensions in their positioning efforts across brands while retaining the differentiation of individual brands (Walls *et al.*, 2011). For example, while personalization may be a key dimension in the Marriott brand's *Travel Brilliantly* campaign, Moxy aims to be a fun hotel where the guest experience is spirited and lively, thus leveraging the entertainment dimension (Oates, 2014). Such positioning efforts must be informed by sophisticated and creative understanding of the target customers' demographic and psychographic characteristics (Oates, 2015a). In the present study, the authors found that customers in the Airbnb sample were younger, better educated and more likely to be married with children and to have higher incomes than those in the hotel sample, which is likely to have impacted these customers' need for and experience of the various dimensions and the resultant outcomes.

Limitations, future research and conclusion

It is important to highlight the limitations of the present study. First, the study's evaluation of the customer experience is rooted in the post-experience phase, unlike other studies that have been conducted *in situ* (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Oh *et al.*, 2007). While the authors restricted the sample to those who had stayed at a hotel or Airbnb in the preceding three months, thus remaining as close to the actual experience as possible, modeling the customer experience across the various stages of consumption – pre-experience, participation and post-experience – would allow a more holistic understanding of experiential consumption in the context of hotels and the sharing economy (Knutson and Beck, 2004; Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Second, while the present study's modeling of the dimensions of the experience economy and extraordinary outcomes as second-order constructs had theoretical support and enabled a more succinct model, doing so did not allow an assessment of the effect of individual dimensions on extraordinary outcomes (holistically or separately), or of the separate effect of meaningfulness and well-being on memorability. However, modeling all constructs as first order would have made the model cumbersome, particularly given the expansive nature of the accommodation experiencescape. Third, while Airbnb represents a more uniform unit of analysis (notwithstanding its extensive range of offerings), the present study did not differentiate between the various types of hotels that customers in the hotel sample may have experienced.

The underrepresentation of experience-related research in hospitality and tourism, particularly in the context of the sharing economy, presents several avenues for future research. First, there remains the potential to further expand the accommodation experiencescape by incorporating additional dimensions that may be critical to the guest experience. For example, dimensions such as ethical consumerism and hospitableness have been suggested to play an important role in creating memorable experiences (Ariffin, 2013; Hamari *et al.*, 2015; Teng *et al.*, 2015). Relatedly, the potential interaction between the dimensions can be explicitly modeled in future research (Walls *et al.*, 2011). Second, a host of situational factors and individual characteristics – factors that are usually outside the control of the business but may influence the customer's willingness or ability to recognize staged experience elements – can be incorporated as antecedent or moderating variables into customer experience models (Walls *et al.*, 2011). Examples of such variables include customer motivations (Prebensen *et al.*, 2014), the level of customer involvement and co-creation (Hwang and Lyu, 2015; Prebensen *et al.*, 2015), trip characteristics, personality type (Walls *et al.*, 2011) and psychographic types (Plog, 2001), among others. Such inclusion can provide a more holistic understanding of experiential consumption in the context of hotels and the sharing economy.

Third, while post-consumption research is useful to understand customer experiences and outcomes, the *importance* of the various dimensions in the customer's decision-making process has rarely been examined. Thus, while customers might experience a high level of entertainment through the experience provider, whether they seek out an entertaining experience in the first place will likely play an important role in their decision to purchase a product or patronize a service. A methodological approach such as importance-performance analysis can allow researchers to evaluate experience providers' performance *vis-à-vis* the importance attributed by the customer to specific factors. Fourth, a host perspective on the creation of experiences in the sharing economy, along the lines of research in the homestay sector (McIntosh *et al.*, 2011; Tucker and Lynch, 2005), might provide a richer understanding of the experiential aspects of this emerging phenomenon, from which the hotel industry can learn and adapt.

Oskam and Boswijk (2016) have suggested that the guest experience will be central to the success of the hotel of the future; hospitality managers will become experience managers, and the guest experience will become a critical element in real estate valuation. According to Richard and Cleveland (2016), hotel chains of the future must explore innovative, disruptive business models that incorporate the sharing economy. BeMate.com is an example of such innovation: the apartments on the site are managed by Room Mate Hotels, and guests have access to most of the same services as a Room Mate Hotels guests, such as housekeeping, airport transfers and breakfast (Peltier, 2014). With the potential for future collaboration between the hotel industry and the sharing economy – as evidenced by the pilot guest experience program between Hyatt and Onefinestay at the Hyatt Regency London (Schaal, 2015b); independent, boutique hotels using Airbnb as a distribution channel ("Boutique hotels now listing rooms on Airbnb to fill vacancies", 2015); and hotel companies looking to develop new brands and/or transforming existing brands to sharing economy competitors (e.g. Marriott's possible transformation of Starwood's Element brand) – there are endless possibilities for an industry that slowly is coming to terms with the popularity and longevity of such offerings (Higley, 2016). At the heart of this evolution lies a focus on the guest experience. Thus, research on the customer experience that evaluates and informs such developments is critical to advancing the field.

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