

Millennial Perceptions of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

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ABSTRACT

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Over the years, a peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation service known as Airbnb has grown significantly in Malaysia. Airbnb has unique features that distinguish it from existing markets, such as traditional hotels, as it purchases and exchanges goods. Airbnb allows visitors from all over the world to make reservations from a list of registered hosts. Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies done related to millennial perceptions of the existence of Airbnb. Therefore, this study highlighted the relationship between authentic experience, social benefits, trust in Airbnb, and relative attraction with millennial perceptions of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. A descriptive research design with a quantitative approach was used to collect the data and the study focused on the millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah within the age range of 25 to 40 years of age as the population representative of millennials. The data collected through this online survey questionnaire is tabulated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). According to the results of the tests, all hypotheses were found to have a positive impact on the millennials' perception to use Airbnb services. Based on the data, it can be inferred that millennials in Kota Kinabalu are likely to continue and use Airbnb services in the future because their impressions of the service are extremely positive.



1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been identified as one of the most important service industries in today's world. This is demonstrated when Sabah tourism positively impacted the Malaysian economy by increasing foreign exchange earnings and job opportunities (Tarmudi et al., 2014). Recently, a new peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation service known as Airbnb has grown significantly in Malaysia (Razli et al., 2017). Airbnb has unique features that distinguish it from existing markets, such as traditional hotels, as it purchases and exchanges goods. Airbnb allows visitors from all over the world to make reservations from a list of registered hosts. Hosts can post their listings for free. It brings advantages to the guest because guests can select their preferences using a customised user interface designed to their search results, just like any other online hotel reservation (Razli et al., 2017).

Airbnb is a popular choice and a trend among Millennials who were born in between 1980 to 2000 (Citizen, 2016; Smith & Nichols, 2015; Cavagnaro et al., 2018). In Visit Malaysia 2014, the Malaysian government began to promote Airbnb, encouraging guests to book accommodation through the platform to stimulate the tourism industry and the local real estate market (Tourism Malaysia, 2016). The actual mission of Airbnb is to help people to travel to different parts of the world. Kong et al. (2020) stated that Airbnb is offering unique services to their customers; hence, the percentage of millennials choosing Airbnb for travelling has increased from 60% to 120% in recent years. Different factors affecting the millennial percentage regarding travelling with Airbnb. The enjoyment of staying in different places and regions is the reason for all the recognitions for Airbnb to most of these millennials. In addition, they want to interact with and learn about the local culture, which will make them feel like they are a part of the community (Airbnb, 2016). As one of the world's largest populations, this could be a significant situation in which millennials provide more benefits to Airbnb. Oxford Economics stated short-term rental accommodation company Airbnb contributed RM3.98 billion to Malaysia's GDP and supported 52,100 local jobs as of 2019. Airbnb guests spent a total of RM11.8 billion, expanding at an annual pace of 79.6 percent in Malaysia. In addition, according to an article from Property Hunter (2020) most Airbnb listings in Kota Kinabalu are in coastal locations or close to the city centre, providing convenience and attractive views during guest stays. According to the official website of Airbnb (2020), there are over 300 Airbnb's in Kota Kinabalu with rental sizes ranging from one to three bedrooms, with 78 percent offering the complete property. Surprisingly, it has been a huge success, as more and more tourists prefer to stay with Airbnb, even though it only offers a minimal service. In fact, 60% of all Airbnb guests are all millennials, with a 128 percent year-over-year growth rate (Airbnb, 2016). This is the average daily rate, monthly occupancy rate, and monthly revenue of Airbnbs in Sabah as of September 2020, according to AIR DNA.



Figure 1: Overview of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu Sabah (AIRDNA, September 2020)

The influence of millennials are considerably crucial since they are the generation that defines the trend of business, "They have grown up with technology, and are addicted to technology so much so that half of them would sooner or later give up their sense of smell than a critical device." (Gibson et al., 2014). They are the next generation that will be prepared with tools and move onward for the

benefit of the future in terms of economic, geopolitical, and environmental issues (Hershatter et al., 2010). There has been a great amount of research on the Airbnb service for years. Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies carried out related to millennials' perception of the existence of Airbnb. Therefore, new information can be acquired as a result of this study, and that knowledge can then be added to the literature. Considering the significance of Airbnb services and changing customer behaviour in Malaysia, studies that examine the contributing variables to Airbnb services among Millennials are still scarce in the literature. As a result, the aim of this study is to examine the perception of millennials using Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The following are the objectives of the study.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between the authentic experience and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?
2. What is the relationship between the trust in airbnb and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?
3. What is the relationship between the social benefits and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?
4. What is the relationship between the relative attraction and millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between the authentic experience and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
2. To determine the relationship between trust and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
3. To determine the relationship between social benefits and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
4. To determine the relationship between relative attractiveness and travel attributes on millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The goal of this study is to examine the millennials' perceptions of accessing Airbnb services. Information gathered from the study will be useful to the Airbnb companies to improve their services and management. The Airbnb organisation must fully appreciate how clients viewed this internet booking application, which necessitates assessing the quality of the service given by Airbnb. As a result, analysing millennials' purchase intent is crucial for service companies' efforts to develop client loyalty to survive and thrive in this highly competitive market. Also, Airbnb will be able to understand more about the factors that influence customers' decisions to utilise their online booking services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Airbnb started in Malaysia in the year of 2012 and continues to grow but the effect of Airbnb growth only arose in 2013. Razli et al., (2017) stated that although Malaysia's online short-term rental platform such as Airbnb began relatively late, its popularity has grown significantly in recent years because of aggressive marketing and brand awareness from other regions. In the year of 2013, Airbnb Malaysia has gained a 500 percent growth (Razli et al., 2017). Seeing the growth of Airbnb in Malaysia makes Malaysia one interesting market for Airbnb. Airbnb is mostly popular in big cities such as Kuala Lumpur which is a tourist destination. In Sabah capital city, Kota Kinabalu, which is a sub-urban city (Pawan et al., 2014), Airbnb also exists to accommodate tourists.

Table 1: Summary of Studies related to Airbnb Services

Authors	Theories	Studies	Variables
Kim, B., & Kim, D. (2020)	Affective events theory (AET) Social exchange theory	Attracted to or Locked In? Explaining Consumer Loyalty toward Airbnb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authentic experience ● Trust in Airbnb ● Social Benefits ● Relative Attractiveness ● Price Fairness
Sung, E., Kim, H., & Lee, D. (2018)	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Why Do People Consume and Provide Sharing Economy Accommodation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic benefit ● Sustainability ● Perceived enjoyment ● Social relationship ● Attitude
Jung, J., Park, E., Moon, J., & Lee, W. S. (2021)	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Exploration of Sharing Accommodation Platform Airbnb Using an Extended Technology Acceptance Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Network externalities ● Interactivity ● Trust ● Ease of use ● Usefulness ● Repurchase intention
Nathan, R. J., Victor, V., Tan, M., & Fekete-Farkas, M. (2020)	Extended Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2)	Tourists' Use of Airbnb App for Visiting A Historical City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effort expectancy ● Performance expectancy ● Habit ● Social influence ● Price value ● Facilitating conditions
Wang, Y., Asaad, Y., & Filieri, R. (2020)	Socio-technical theory	What makes hosts trust Airbnb? Antecedents of hosts' trust toward Airbnb and its impact on continuance intention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● User experience ● Social utility of sharing ● Social value orientation ● System quality ● Service quality ● Information quality ● Extrinsic reward ● Perceived effectiveness of privacy policy ● Perceived effectiveness of industry self-regulation ● Continuance intention
Garg, A. (2020)	Generational theory	Factors influencing generation Y to choose Airbnb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Socio-Economic Factors ● Technological Factors ● Social Media Influence ● Environmental Factors

2.1 Authentic Experience

In recent times, it has been identified that people, especially millennials, look for some authentic experiences while on vacation or travelling around. However, millennials' perception of an authentic experience engages a link with the local communities and comes into prominence with the idea of staying in someone's home instead of a hotel (mody & hanks, 2020). Authentic experience can be considered a significant independent variable as it can affect the entire concept of sharing economy, the corporation's brand, and millennials' perception about this exclusive experience. It has been identified by various researchers that authenticity plays a predominant role in promoting the repurchasing attitude of airbnb customers. The accommodation strategy of airbnb offers an exclusive and authentic experience in the form of household benefits not usually provided in hotels.

2.2 Trust in Airbnb

Trust indicates a versatile psychological inclination that seems to have been engaged in the interactions between two parties. Trust plays a key role in constructing an emotional relationship between a brand and its customers (Kong et al., 2020). Airbnb tends to initiate a worthy interaction among its hosts and consumers, encouraging the development of a high level of trust in the sharing economy. However, Airbnb offers P2P accommodation and dominantly motivates guests to develop Airbnb and its hosts (Chua et al., 2019). Airbnb considers the public review system for facilitating trust between hosts and customers. Consequently, it drives Airbnb customers to develop an effective commitment while considering Airbnb as reliable and trustworthy. The study attempts to find out how customer's trust in Airbnb affects millennials' perception of Airbnb.

2.3 Social Benefits

Social benefits are associated with an expansion of meaning belonging to social identity and identity-seeking behaviour and suggest involvement with the respective members of a particular community. Social benefits have been considered significant antecedents of customer involvement, particularly in the sharing economy (Zervas et al., 2017). Airbnb helps to enhance customer's sense of social identity through interactions as well as provides a stimulating experience of society and community. It also helps to derive social benefits and encourages the customers to choose Airbnb. The study attempts to find out how Airbnb's social benefits affect millennials' perception of Airbnb.

2.4 Relative Attractiveness

Relative attractiveness is associated with the entire perception of a consumer's subjective evaluation of a particular product or service. In this case, customers are given a choice of comparing a product or service with potential alternatives based on their record, current situation, and probable future scopes, along with a measurement of its value. Airbnb allows its customers to compare with others before choosing them, hence adding positively to their perceptions (Kim & Kim, 2020). The study attempts to find out how Airbnb's relative attractiveness affects millennials' perception of Airbnb.

2.5 Millennials Perception

Along with time, the services of Airbnb are becoming popular among people for its exclusive services. As the millennials are more likely to travel, the tourism sector of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah considers them as the key customers of Airbnb (Sabah Tourism Board, 2017). It has been identified from various sources that the millennials are well concerned about the travel attributes of Airbnb, and their perception towards it depends on various factors (Garg, 2020). Authentic Experience, Trust in Airbnb, Social Benefits, and Relative Attractiveness are the predominant factors that have a strong impact upon the millennial's perception towards Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

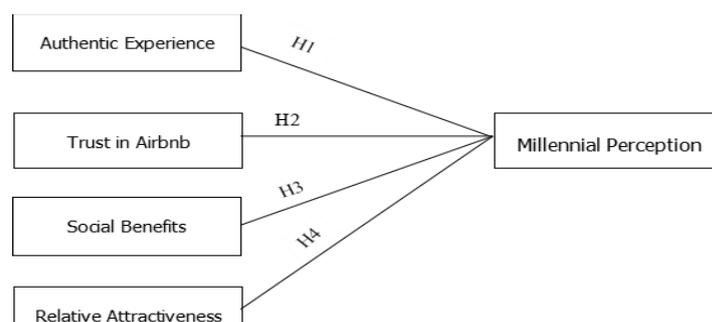


Figure 2: Travel Attributes Influencing Millennial Perception

(Adapted from: Kim & Kim, 2020)

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, quantitative methods are used for the research design. This study used a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach to collecting data. The unit analysis for this study are millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah within the age range of 25 to 40 years old. According to Sabah Tourism (2021), the majority of tourists visiting Kota Kinabalu from January to September 2019 are in the age range of 21 to 30 years old, accounting for 36%, followed by the age group of 31 to 40 years old, accounting for 26%, indicating millennials.

Aside from that, Green's (1991), formula was used in this work to establish the sample size based on the number of targeted populations: $N > 50 + 8p$, where p is the number of predictors. As a result, the sample size is $50 + 8(4) = 82$ people. As for the sampling method, a convenience type of sampling is considered in this study. The study used a questionnaire to accumulate the data from the respondents and this includes an only online instrument which is an online questionnaire created using Google form. The online questionnaires were distributed through online platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram as millennials actively engage with an online platform. The data collected through this online survey questionnaire were tabulated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

In January 2022, a pilot test with nine samples was done to ensure the study's dependability. The Cronbach's Alpha test yields a result range from 0.899 to 0.978. It means that the internal consistency reliability of the set of responses has been reached. Then, using Google Forms, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, via social media such as Facebook and Instagram because both social media reached the audience faster and effectively. The reliability of the questionnaire, as well as the mean, frequencies, and standard deviation of the variables, were examined using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Finally, to assess the relationship between the variables in this study and to test the hypotheses, a multiple regression test was used.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two types of analysis which are descriptive analysis and multiple regression analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 shows the minimum and maximum responses, mean and standard deviation for all items under the study. The Cronbach's Alpha test was used to test the variables' internal consistency reliability. The results in Table 3 reveal that all Cronbach's Alpha values are in the range of 0.702 to 0.869 and all exceed 0.70 (Saunders et al., 2009), indicating eligible construct reliability.

Table 2: Variable's Descriptive Analysis (N=96)

Variables' Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
a) Authentic Experience (AE)				
I chose Airbnb to have an authentic local experience.	2	5	3.80	0.947
I would like to get to know people from the local neighbourhoods.	2	5	3.68	0.923
I chose Airbnb to understand the local culture.	2	5	3.76	0.981
Living in an Airbnb place represents a local way of life.	2	5	4.07	0.874
Cronbach Alpha Value			0.830	

b) Trust in Airbnb (TIA)				
Even if not monitored, I would trust Airbnb to do the job right	2	5	3.80	0.947
I have assurance that Airbnb's hosts are trustworthy people	2	5	3.68	0.923
I feel Airbnb is generally reliable.	2	5	3.76	0.961
I believe Airbnb is honest.	2	5	4.07	0.874
Cronbach Alpha Value			0.869	
c) Social Benefits (SB)				
I belong to a community of people who share the same values.	2	5	3.91	0.822
I feel close to Airbnb.	2	5	3.66	0.938
I feel I share the same values as Airbnb.	2	5	3.69	0.910
Cronbach Alpha Value			0.859	
d) Relative Attractiveness (RA)				
Compared to other hotel chains, Airbnb is cheaper.	2	5	3.85	0.882
Compared to other hotel chains, Airbnb is more convenient.	2	5	3.82	0.894
Compared to other hotel chains, Airbnb has more amenities and space.	2	5	4.19	0.837
Cronbach Alpha Value			0.811	

4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

This study was conducted to determine if authentic experience, trust in Airbnb, social benefits, and relative attractiveness can influence millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. It was hypothesised that all the four independent variables will positively affect millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The result shows that 52.6% of the variance in millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah can be accounted for by the four attributes, collectively, $F(4,94) = 48.408$, $P < 0.000$ (Table 3 and 4).

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.726 ^a	.526	.506	.49586

Table 4: ANNOVA Summary

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1Regression	24.870	4	6.217	25.287	.000 ^b
Residual	22.375	91	.246		
Total	47.244	95			

a. Dependent Variable: MP

b. Predictors: (Constant), RA, SB, TIA, AE

Looking at the unique individual contributions of the attributes (Table 6), the result presents that authentic experience ($\beta = .542$, $t = 6.958$, $p = .000$), *trust in Airbnb* ($\beta = .658$, $t = 7.656$, $p = .000$), *social benefits* ($\beta = .624$, $t = 9.42$, $p = .000$) and relative attractiveness ($\beta = .531$, $t = 6.544$, $p = .000$) positively affects millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Thus, all the hypotheses were supported. This suggests that all the four attributes are useful to study millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	B	T	P- Value	Hypothesis Supported
H1	AU -> MP	0.542	6.958	.000b	Supported
H2	TA -> MP	0.658	7.656	.000b	Supported
H3	SB -> MP	0.624	9.427	.000b	Supported
H4	RA -> MP	0.531	6.544	.000b	Supported

According to the results of the tests, hypothesis H1, which is authentic experience, was found to have a positive impact on the millennials' perception to use Airbnb services. The result is aligned with the studies by Kim and Kim (2020). It has been discovered through this research project that authentic experience has a substantial impact on affective commitment. In a research, Cohen, E. (1988) found that authentic experience is widely considered as a crucial aspect in motivating customers to travel to new areas, and that customers who have had authentic interactions through Airbnb are more favourable and satisfied with the service overall. Therefore, Airbnb providers should emphasize in their marketing campaigns how much convenience their services can bring to potential users of their services.

Trust in Airbnb was found to influence millennials' perception on using Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, thus hypothesis H2 was supported. The result supports the claim by Wang et al. (2020) where they stated that they had discovered several factors that enabled people to trust in Airbnb, which in turn had an impact on their continuous usage of these lodgings. Möhlmann (2015) discovered that familiarity was a predictor of choosing a sharing option again in an Airbnb study. Another study by Mittendorf (2016), discovered that familiarity with the website (i.e., Airbnb) is an important predictor of trust. Indeed, for first-time users, trusting in Airbnb might be hard. It may take time for trust to grow. While prior tourism and hospitality research has focused on consumers' (i.e., visitors') perspectives on trust and the requirement for familiarity with the platform to engage in sharing, the need for familiarity is even greater in the case of hosts. However, based on the survey we did, the result suggests that millennials' perception on Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu has an exceedingly positive result for trust in Airbnb.

As indicated in the results, social benefits have a positive impact on millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services. Social relations not only create psychological or emotional losses, but also substantial economic losses in this increasingly tech-savvy world. According to the findings of a study conducted by So et al. (2018), which aligned with our findings, social benefits and social encounters are powerful predictors in customers' decisions to use Airbnb services. Users in sharing economy platforms have stated that the social benefits and the experience they have while on the platform are more significant to them than the economic and financial advantages they receive from participating in the platform. Thus, it can be observed that social benefits have a significant impact on millennials' perception of Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, as evidenced by the findings of this study.

In addition, the researchers discovered that relative attractiveness (hypothesis H4) had a statistically significant positive effect on millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Calculative commitment is greatly influenced by relative attractiveness. The findings of Shukla et al. (2016), which are in line with our findings, indicated that relative attractiveness is a significant component in facilitating consumers' calculative commitment in the service industry. According to the findings of the study, consumers' perceptions of pricing fairness are not significantly connected with their calculative commitments when it comes to purchasing decisions. Consequently, pricing fairness is not the most important predictor when it comes to describing a customer's calculative

commitment. As a result of this study, it can be concluded that relative attractiveness also has a substantial impact on millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to examine millennials' perception of Airbnb in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The four criteria (authentic experience, trust in Airbnb, social benefits, and relative beauty) were found to have a major influence on millennials' perception of Airbnb, according to the results of multiple regression analysis. The results concur with previous studies in relation to intention to use Airbnb services (Kuzmanović, & Langović, 2018; Garg, 2020; Dogru, 2021).

According to the findings, residents in Sabah are highly aware of the existence of Airbnb service. Surprisingly, it has become one of the most popular lodging options due to its numerous advantages. Social media, where users may read reviews and comments, as well as the use of smartphones to download Airbnb applications, have encouraged the expansion of Airbnb services. Based on the data, it can be inferred that millennials in Kota Kinabalu are likely to continue and use Airbnb services in the future because their impressions of the service are extremely positive.

This study has limitations because it only focuses on millennials in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and hence the findings may not be generalised and applicable to other parts of Malaysia. Furthermore, this study only used four attributes, even though there are other possible attributes that are important to this study. Other attributes not utilised in this study, such as convenience motivation, time-saving motivation, price-orientation motivation, and so on, should be included in future research. Future research might be undertaken in other parts of Malaysia to acquire a greater knowledge of millennials' perceptions of Airbnb services, as this demographic is tech-savvy, and according to a Deloitte report, 43% of Malaysia's population are millennials (25-40 years old) as of 2021. As a result, it's critical to look at how these localised and specialty Airbnb services are viewed by current and potential users. Because of the present COVID-19 epidemic, the usage of mobile applications is no longer only a trend for millennials, but rather a need for all individuals. Hence, studies on other consumer categories will also have a lot of potential.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

All authors took part in the process of completing and refining the manuscript. NFIA and NINA carried out the introduction and literature review. Amf also contributes in the literature review and methodology part. NFIA is in-charge of heading the data collection process and analysing the data by using SPSS. NMMZ, NMM and AG helped out in refining the overall manuscript including the content structure and language NFIA, AMF and NINA brainstorming on the discussion part with the assistance of NMMZ. All authors read and approved the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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