
Airbnb Physical Environment Attributes and Customer Behavioural Intention

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of Airbnb's environment in the hospitality and tourism industry has made a difference for customers to buy products or services. Over the years, customer behavioural intention has evolved according to various aspects and require to get more than expected to meet the needs and wants. Customers normally book accommodation online. Innovation disrupts Airbnb accommodation is an interesting element that causes customers to be wary of Airbnb. In line with this, customers intend to choose accommodation based on the physical environment, namely the atmosphere, decoration and layout. Despite, weak Airbnb services such as demand services are not provided, and Airbnb is still absent in a large number of fields. This paper aims to review the literature on the role of the physical environment in Airbnb behavioral intentions. Literature reviews indicate that there will be a positive relationship between atmosphere, decoration and layout with behavioral intentions among customers. The findings of this study are expected to fill in the gaps in the literature by expanding existing literary knowledge of Airbnb's behavioral intentions.

Keywords: Airbnb; physical environment; behavioural intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism industry are among the largest and fastest growing segments in the global economy. It is evolving into a prosperity business that accounts for 10.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 319 million jobs, or 10% of total employment for 2018 (World Travel & Tourism Council, WTTC2018). The tourism sub-sector in Malaysia without exception is also allocated as one of the areas of focus of the government, and supporters of the transformation of Malaysia into a high-income country that has contributed 13.3% to national GDP (WTTC2018). In fact, tourism and tourist options have evolved over the decades to encompass a wide range of tastes and styles both in terms of more tourists and more product options in a highly competitive market. These travelers are looking for alternative accommodation from hotels or serviced apartments.

Airbnb was formed when two college graduates turned their home into an "Air Bed and Breakfast" by offering an overnight mattress in the middle of a meeting in San Francisco in 2007 [1], Airbnb generated a commission-based web platform for room dividers and travelers. Airbnb accommodation primarily covers the entire house (e.g. attic, condominium, house), or shared house (e.g., private room) in the area where the host also lives there [1]. The airbnb innovation is an attractive element that has revolutionized the accommodation market and could somehow hit the hospitality industry [2]. Nevertheless, the intention of customer behavior is affected because as mentioned by Phua (2018) the tourists have trouble dealing with non-professional people whose behavior is irresponsible and the non-professional hosts are made to be unreliable and customer service protection on behalf of

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tourists' opinions. Customer purchase conclusion is affected Leland & Said (2012) describe residents who live close to Airbnb housing whining because of the commotion, voicing security concerns, and having different conclusions from Airbnb hosts and visitors.

As Airbnb has run well, it is becoming increasingly important that the travel platform combines the nature of the physical environment and the behavioral intentions of the customers to make the trip smoother [3,4,5,6]. What does the future hold and the market in which it operates? Hence, to overcome this specific and relatively new market scenario, there is a clear problem between the parameters that need to be sought. Therefore, this chapter is to enhance the understanding of the physical environment and behavioural intentions of customers in the context of Airbnb Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Physical Environment

The physical appearance of the hotel's exterior and open space is seen as the two most identified attributes having the option to choose the hotel to stay [7,8]. As stated by Pizam (2005), the physical environment is characterized as the material environment of a place. In contrast, Lee and Jeong [9] support that the physical environment of an organization consists of atmosphere, decoration and layout. The term *cape service* is used by Bitner, [10] in describing the physical environment produced where the distribution of products and services takes place. Recently, this phenomenon has emerged as an important part of customer evaluation of compliance with services (Ruiz, 2012). Past research has shown that an adequate physical environment in this sense results in more promising customer responses such as comfort sensitivity and enhances positive verbal confidence (Ryu & Han, 2012). Moreover, it is vital to create an attractive environment as it is a important factor in attracting and satisfying customers of the hospitality industry, particularly between academics and hoteliers (Han & Ryu, 2009). The physical environment is one of the important elements in differentiating service organizations and shaping the nature of the customer experience [10]. Considering the physical environment is described as the external appearance of the service provider, setting customer expectations can be critical [11] through the provision of intangible service quality through real indicators (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Therefore, this chapter aims to identify the physical environmental factors that affect the behavioral intentions of Airbnb customers in the Malaysian context.

2.2 Ambience

Ambience is another word in the sense of place atmosphere or setting for atmosphere. The expensive hotel has soft lighting and peaceful music, as well as a pleasant and relaxing ambience. As stated by Bitner [10], environmental conditions can be described as factors that affect the perception of the physical environment and human response. Moreover, Berglund and Halvarsson [12] stated that environmental background aspects such as lightning, various types of sounds, and music and temperature are environmental conditions. Bitter (2019), has proved that it is very hard to predict the effect of the ambience on the customer, yet all extreme factors can be easily seen in the approach or behavior of customer avoidance, for instance loud music, very low light or very low temperature or vice versa. The ambience is the quality of the surrounding space that the customer feels.

Proposition 1: Ambience is positively related to behavioural intention

2.3 Décor

As stated by Wakefield & Blodgett [13], décor will show attractiveness for the surrounding area. Décor plays a major role as a marketing strategy by influencing customer intentions and responses such as satisfaction, behaviour, attitude, emotion, price perception and even value perception (Berry & Wall, 2007; Han and Ryu, 2009; Pullman and Gross, 2004; Pullman and Robson, 2007; Ryu & Jang, 2007). In line with this, Bitner's [10] décor is considered a concern in atmospheric research that encompasses exterior and interior design similar to the environmental conditions of service provision.

Décor may be influenced by colour schemes, wall/floor coverings, furniture, pictures/paintings, and flowers/plants to improve the quality of the landscape, capture the emotions of customers and influence their intentions (Ryu & Han, 2011). In academic research by Ryu & Jang (2008) usually classified colours, shapes, styles, decorations, and works of art, usually abbreviated as "aesthetics of convenience" and also describe the physical environment, including the overall layout, decoration, design, and aesthetics [14].

Preposition 2: Decor is positively related to behavioural intention

2.4 Layout

The effective physical space layout of the environment is very significant because the physical environment in the service settings is intended to meet and meet the specific needs and requirements of the customer [10]. Based on the needs of the service delivery process from Nguyen & Leblanc (2002), the layout of the space shows to arrange objects such as equipment and furniture. In addition, Bitner [10], also stated that accessibility to the layout refers to the organization of furniture, equipment, hallways and service areas. Layout facilities should include signage. Moreover, Robinson & Callan [15], observed in the study that the dimensions of accessibility include clear location signs and marked exits and fire routes. Lee and Kim [16], show that uncomplicated layout is a strong determinant of perceived quality of service. Moon et al. [17], agreed with the view, show that accessibility and layout efficiency is essential for a good physical environment at the airport where there are many processes that occur simultaneously such as immigration, check-in, security, and services.

Preposition 3: Layout is positively related to behavioural intention

2.5 Behavioral Intentions

Behavioural intention is described as the stage at which a person has formulated a conscious plan to perform or not perform some specified future behaviour [18]. The authors emphasize that behavioural intentions are linked to actual user behaviour. In contrast, Quellette, & Wood [19] argue that behavioural intentions can be a tool for predicting future consumer behaviour. Users can generate different behavioural intentions based on their experiences. For example, consumers say positive things about the company, recommend products or services to friends and family, and become loyal by repeating purchases when they have good behavioural intentions [20]. According to the authors, service quality is a determinant in establishing customer behavioural intentions, and therefore saying positive things about a product or service, recommending it and being a loyal customer is only possible when the quality is felt high. Furthermore, behavioural intentions are considered to include a revisit and word of mouth [21].

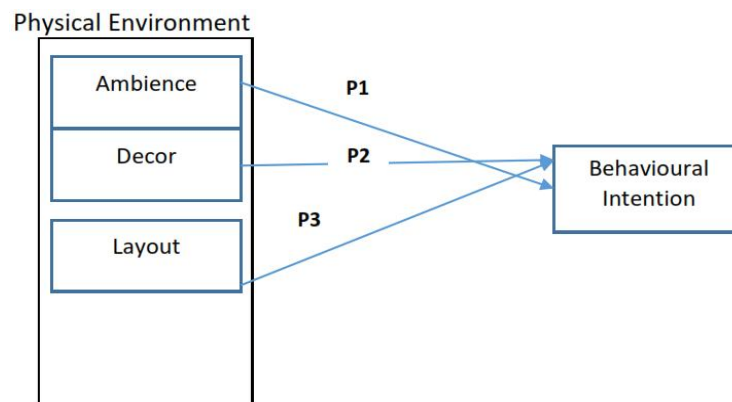


Fig. 1. A proposed conceptual framework

3. PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on the past literature, this study proposes a research framework to address the relationship between atmosphere, decoration and layout as factors that affect customer behavioral intentions towards Airbnb's physical environment. It is suggested that there is a positive relationship between these variables.

4. CONCLUSION

Yet, several dimensions and perspectives of the physical environment have been investigated. Nevertheless, less studies have discussed on the relationship between the dimensions of the physical environment and the actual behavioural intentions of customers and no one looked at the Airbnb accommodation industry. It is hoped that this study will be a suggestion for future customers to choose the best environment they want and determine the place of the physical environment in selecting them with subjects such as location, price or choice. The most crucial factors can be determined and contribute to the knowledge of the customer. Airbnb hosts, on the other hand, should give consideration to the atmosphere, decoration and layout of their accommodation in their area. In this way, the behavioural intentions of their customers can increase, and they can outperform their competitors. Improving the competitiveness of the physical environment of the accommodation will attract more customers and will be able to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on the factors that influence the dimensions of the physical environment on the behavioural intentions of customers.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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