



Research Paper

Exploring guest response towards service failure in home-sharing: service presence and consumption motivation

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Service failure
service recovery
home-sharing
Airbnb
hotels

ABSTRACT

The present study leverages the tenets of social presence theory (SPT) and attribution theory to demonstrate a *service presence effect* on guests' behavioral responses toward home-sharing platforms following a service failure. Results indicate that in the case of a typical, controllable service failure, guests with a hedonic motivation have a higher tendency to complain and switch out of the home-sharing platform when the service contact is a hotel representative (vs. a private host), and this effect is mediated by levels of fault attributed to the home-sharing platform. However, guests with a utilitarian motivation respond to service failure equally across types of service contacts. For uncontrollable service failures, the *service presence effect* holds true across consumption motivations and is explained by fault attribution. The study is the first comprehensive inquiry into service failure in the home-sharing context and has important implications for theory and businesses competing in this space.

1. Introduction

The recent decade has witnessed a boom in demand for home-sharing rentals (e.g., Airbnb, HomeAway, Homestay, and FlipKey) as lodging alternatives. It is projected that home-sharing will represent about 10% of total accommodation bookings by 2025 (Olson and Kemp, 2015). For example, Airbnb's guest arrivals have increased by 62.5% during 2018 (Iproperty Management, 2019). Guests use home-sharing platforms as a replacement for hotels across the various class segments, from economy to upscale and luxury (Dogru et al., 2019). Nevertheless, as the home-sharing business continues to grow, service failure and guest complaints have gained traction and become increasing evident (e.g., Sthapit, 2018; Moon et al., 2019). Many guests have suggested that staying with Airbnb does not meet their expectations, owing to issues such as unsatisfactory service by hosts and the company's poor customer service (Sthapit, 2018). As such, 34% of Airbnb users have expressed greater trust in a leading hotel brand over home-sharing platforms (Lieberman, 2015). In fact, much of guest frustration is caused by the service provider, which has begun to turn travelers away from using home-sharing services (e.g., Cox, 2017).

In the existing literature, research on service failure and guest complaints with homesharing services remains scant (e.g., Moon et al.,

2019; Shuqair et al., 2019). Studies have shown that the social value and authentic local experiences serve as the prominent factor that sets home-sharing platforms apart from corporate-designed hotels (e.g., Mody and Hanks, 2019) as well as a critical determinant of guests' purchase intention and loyalty (e.g., Mody et al., 2019). Compared to a hotel service failure, homesharing guests exhibit greater post-failure loyalty to the platform due to the availability of social interactions from the local host (Shuqair et al., 2019). Nevertheless, not all guests have the opportunity to have interpersonal contact with a local host while staying at a homesharing property. Studies find that many home listings are posted by owners who live off-site (Cheng and Jin, 2019), typically referred to as *investor units*. In a major city like Toronto, for example, more than half of Airbnb's revenue is generated by hosts who simultaneously operate two or more listings (Wieditz, 2017), typically referred to as *multi-unit hosts*. These hosts do not have face-to-face interactions with their guests, rather they provide remote assistance upon request. Data from Airbnb's newly booked listings have shown an increase in the percentage of homes that are *professionally managed*, up from 24% of all new listings in 2017 to 27% in 2018 (Weinberg, 2018). As the homesharing business is diversifying its original roots that connect travelers to locals into a commercialized model, it is worth examining whether meeting a local host still holds value in influencing

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Received 21 August 2019; Received in revised form 25 December 2019; Accepted 1 March 2020

Available online 17 March 2020

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guests' post-failure responses. Moreover, we have recently seen hotels and homesharing platforms cross each other's boundaries. For example, Airbnb has expanded into boutique hotels and an Airbnb-branded hybrid hotel-condo tower (Warren, 2019a). Hotel companies (e.g., Marriott and Accor) and online travel agents (e.g., Expedia) have pursued the homesharing market by partnering with homesharing platforms, buying, or building their own homesharing offerings (Mody and Gomez, 2018). Marriott's newly established vacation rental brand, Homes and Villas, broadcasts its "Expert Curation" and "Trusted Hospitality" to gain a competitive edge in the growing homesharing market over existing peer to peer platforms. Thus, besides examining a typical homesharing model that involves a platform and local hosts as service providers, this research also incorporates hotel-homesharing collaboration as an important condition. This hybrid model combines the advantages of private homes (e.g., product uniqueness) and hotels (e.g., predictability and service standards), which indicates a promising type of future of travel accommodation (Warren, 2019b).

Therefore, drawing on the Social Presence Theory, this study examines a *service presence effect* (i.e., hosts meeting guests in person, hosts providing remote services, or a hotel representative providing onsite services for hotel home-sharing platforms) and how it influences guests' *behavioral responses* to the platform (e.g., complaining tendency and switching intention) upon service failure. We further demonstrate how this effect is mediated by *fault attribution* to the home-sharing platform across *consumption motivations*. Research suggests that homesharing consumption could be *utility-driven* (e.g., economic value, home benefits) or *hedonism-driven* (e.g., seeking uniqueness, authenticity and local experience, entertainment, and excitement) (Lee and Kim, 2018; So et al., 2018). Although host presence provides social benefits to the guest, such benefits cannot support a utility-driven consumption goal, such as economic benefits of transactions (Gwinner et al., 1998). The motivation of using a homesharing platform (i.e., consumption goal) also influences how guests evaluate the service failure as levels of relevance to their main consumption goal, which in turn may trigger guests to attribute responsibilities for the negative event (e.g., Johnson and Stewart, 2005). In service failure and complaint literature, *fault attribution* is one of the central approaches to explain the guest response to the service provider (e.g., Chung and Petrick, 2012; Iglesias, 2009; Song et al., 2016). Likewise, in the homesharing domain Moon et al. (2019) undertake an attribution lens to understand guest complaint and resolution, which has highlighted the platform's overarching responsibility for dissatisfactory service experiences, regardless of who directly causes the negative incidence. Thus, we include *fault attribution* as an important intervening variable to explain the *service presence effect* on guests' post-failure response to the platform, and how such a mechanism operates differently under hedonic and utilitarian consumption motivations.

As the home-sharing consumption continues to evolve beyond a phenomenon of guest-host cohabitation, there are varying levels of authentic "human touch" depending on the service contact. Our research adds significant findings to the literature by uncovering a *service presence effect* on guests' post-failure responses. Including the hotel-homesharing collaboration model also adds richness to our understanding of how guests respond to this emerging hybrid business model and provide forward-looking insights for the future of travel accommodation. Thus, industry practitioners may find this research valuable and timely, as the findings help managers strategize their service contact presence per guests' consumption motivation to effectively mitigate adverse outcomes in the event of service failure.

2. Literature review

2.1. Service presence in home-sharing and response to service failure

In this study, we leverage social presence theory (SPT) and the role of the human touch in the home-sharing context to conceptualize three

types of service contact in the home-sharing context—host present, host absent, and a hotel representative present in the case of hotel home-sharing platforms—and their effects on guests' behavioral responses. The provenance SPT lies in Short et al.'s (1976) seminal work that defines social presence as the "degree of salience of other persons in the interaction and the consequent salience of interpersonal relationships." (p. 65). SPT conceptualizes social presence as a quality of the medium such that the medium of the contact itself (e.g., face to face, text-based, and audio) suggests a varying degree of social presence (Gunawardena, 1995; Short et al., 1976). Across the continuum of social presence, having face-to-face contact indicates the most salient level of social presence, whereas text-based contact is considered the lowest level of social presence. The contact medium by levels of social presence is grounded in two concepts: intimacy and immediacy (Short et al., 1976). Holding other influential factors equal (e.g., physical distance, face expression/emotion, and personal topics of the conversation), the contact medium contributes to varying degrees of social presence due to levels of intimacy. For example, having face-to-face contact via television contributes to greater intimacy than audio-only communication (Gunawardena, 1995; Short et al., 1976). Immediacy measures the psychological distance between the two parties in communication, which also results in varying levels of social presence.

Social presence research in services and retail settings has examined the influence of various types of social presence (e.g., friends, family and/or strangers, and service employees) on customer responses (e.g., Qiu et al., 2018; Weber et al., 2016; Söderlund, 2016). In the presence of other customers, the focal customer seeks to maintain a positive public image so that he/she is likely to experience physiological arousal and enhanced alertness which is characterized by attention conflict and cognitive overload (Chen et al., 2014). Research also shows that the mere presence of service employees is positively related to customer pleasure and satisfaction (Söderlund, 2016). When customers encounter service failure, research suggests that social resources associated with the presence of the employee (e.g., personal interaction with customers) can positively influence customer's perceptions of the business and response to service failure and recovery (e.g., inducing reciprocal behavior) (Roschk and Gelbrich, 2017).

Extending SPT to the current context, meeting a private host in-person characterizes a more salient social presence versus when the host communicates with the guest via text messages (i.e., host absent). Despite the face-to-face contact, a hotel representative entails a greater psychological distance than a peer-to-peer relationship (e.g., a host). Research shows that consumers consider service personnel more culturally distant than a peer host (Belarmino et al., 2019). For example, Airbnb guests typically use the first name to address their host, whereas guests tend to use "staff" to address hotel employees (Ert et al., 2016). Having direct social contacts with a local host is a crucial driver for using home-sharing platforms and a unique advantage over hotels (e.g., Ert et al., 2016; Guttentag et al., 2018). More specifically, we posit that the three types of social presence examined in the present study engender different levels of intimacy and immediacy as indicated in Table 1. Thus, across the three types of service presence, *host present* has a greater degree of social presence, compared to the other two types (i.e., host absent and hotel representative present).

The home-sharing model has enabled a shift in consumption mindset in that individuals can be a member of collaborative networks rather than being a pure consumer in an ownership-based market (Festila and Müller, 2017). By sharing resources, people reciprocate by

Table 1
Levels of social presence across three conditions.

Social Presence	Host Present	Host Absent	Hotel Representative Present
Intimacy	✓	×	✓
Immediacy	✓	✓	×

returning the favor and helping other members in the same network (Hamari et al., 2016; Prothero et al., 2011). Therefore, the presence of a host helps humanize guest experience by adding the human touch that customers often seek via home-sharing (Roderick, 2016). In this research, we consider *service contact* as encountered at the initial stage of guest-host interaction. If simply encountering a host in person can mitigate negative consequences of service failure, this research confers significant contributions to the home-sharing literature and industry practice.

2.2. Consumption motivations and response to service failure

Existing research has documented various reasons that motivate consumers to use home-sharing platforms, including seeking interaction, home benefits, novelty, authentic local experiences, and reaping economic benefits (Guttentag et al., 2018; Lee and Kim, 2018; So et al., 2018). These motivation factors can be conceptually classified as being either *utility-driven* (e.g., economic value, home benefits) or *hedonism-oriented* (e.g., seeking uniqueness, authenticity and local experience, entertainment, and excitement) (Lee and Kim, 2018; So et al., 2018). Hedonic motivations refer to the pursuit of the intrinsic value of a task such that individuals participate in activities for the experience itself, while utilitarian motivation leads to the pursuit of extrinsic value as a separable outcome outside of the activity itself, such as economic benefits and efficacy (Hamari et al., 2016). Thus, individuals driven by hedonic motivations are more attentive to the consumption experience (intrinsic rewards), whereas individuals with more utilitarian motivations emphasize outcome benefits (extrinsic rewards). In the home-sharing context, Lee and Kim (2018) find that guest's hedonic motivation has a more substantial impact on guest loyalty with Airbnb, compared to those holding a utilitarian motivation. Having social interactions with locals (e.g., the host) contributes to the hedonic value of home-sharing experiences (Festila and Müller, 2017). If consumers can experience authentic local culture, they tend to be more loyal and are willing to take the risk of trying out a home-sharing platform over a hotel (Lalicic and Weismayer, 2018). According to Shuqair et al. (2019), guests tend to be more forgiving with Airbnb service failures (vs. hotels) due to the social interactions with the host. Within the domain of sharing economy, research indicates that guests are more tolerant of service mistakes if the platform has a strong sharing-orientation (i.e., peer-to-peer collaboration) than a commercial-orientation (Decrop, 2017). Thus, the presence of professional customer service may undermine the sharing orientation, and also extends the psychological distance between the customer and the service provider (Belarmino et al., 2019), which may, in turn, undermine the intrinsic value for guests under hedonic motivation. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1. When guests have a *hedonic motivation*, having a host present for the initial service presence is likely to reduce negative behavioral outcomes upon service failure, thus: Guests are *less likely* to a) complain and b) switch out of the platform if a host is physically present for the initial service contact, compared to when a host is absent, or a hotel representative is present.

On the flip side, utilitarian motivation leads customers to focus more on the outcome of the home-sharing experience. Thus, the human touch is not related to a utility-driven consumption goal. When guests emphasize utilitarian exchange (economic value, home benefits, etc.) via home-sharing, research shows that social interaction with the host is viewed as a burden more than a reward (Geiger et al., 2018). Per SPT, face-to-face contact characterizes greater social presence than other contact media (e.g., text-based), which signals greater expectation for a trustworthy communication between parties (Short et al., 1976). In service failure research, research has shown that guest complaints and switch intention can result from the extent to which guests' initial expectations are negatively disconfirmed by the service mistake (e.g., Cai et al., 2018). For *utility-driven* guests, since the human touch

contributes little to the consumption goal, it may lead to a greater perception gap when guests experience service failure (i.e., higher social presence → higher expectation → greater disconfirmation). Thus, we hypothesize:

H2. When guests have a *utilitarian motivation*, having a host present for the initial service contact may backfire if guests experience service failure, thus: Guests are *more likely* to a) complain, and b) switch out of the platform if a host is physically present for the initial service contact, compared to when a host is absent, or a hotel representative is present.

2.3. The motivation-conditioned mediating effect of fault attribution

Cognitive fault attribution has often been used in service failure research to explain guest responses to the service provider including complaining and behavioral loyalty (e.g., Chung and Petrick, 2012; Nikbin et al., 2016). Attribution is a cognitive reasoning process in which individuals evaluate whether they are fairly treated and the parties responsible for the negative incident (Chung and Petrick, 2012; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014). The (typically negative) outcomes of service failure are thus caused by the extent to which customers believe that the service mistake is attributed to the company rather than oneself or other situational factors (e.g., Harris et al., 2006). Although hosts are not official employees of the platform, they are responsible for providing service and interacting with guests on behalf of the platform; it is reasonable for guests to hold the home-sharing platform responsible for its hosts' behavior, including implementing proper training to ensure service quality and mediating host-guest conflicts (Phua, 2018; Smith, 2016).

Upon service failure, cognitive reasoning is triggered by high levels of perceived relevance to individuals' consumption goals (e.g., Cai et al., 2018). Consumers are more likely to engage in a cognitive appraisal when an event is closely related to his/her consumption goal in that specific situation (e.g., Johnson and Stewart, 2005). In the present context, service failure compromises the experiential benefits of using a home-sharing property which directly undermines the hedonic consumption goal, as opposed to a utilitarian goal. Thus, guests with a hedonic (vs. utilitarian) consumption goal tend to respond to a service failure event based on the extent to which they attribute responsibility to the home-sharing platform due to the direct relevance to the consumption goal (i.e., fault attribution). Fault attribution is a rational information processing mechanism, which is not automatically switched on upon the exposure of dissatisfying service event. According to research on service recovery and complaining behavior, consumers first evaluate the relevance of the dissatisfying service experience and how it has thwarted their consumption goal and motivation to decide whether or not to attribute responsibilities as a secondary stage (e.g., Cai et al., 2018; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Thus, fault attribution is unlikely to occur when the negative event imposes little hindrance to their attainment of the consumption goal (Kim et al., 2010; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Under the utilitarian motivation, guests' consumption goal is geared towards attaining outcome benefits of using a home-sharing platform (e.g., monetary value and home benefits). In the present context, *host presence*, evaluated as social/hedonic benefits, is irrelevant to a utilitarian consumption goal and thus cannot influence how guests attribute responsibility to the platform for the service failure event. Supported by such a line of conceptualization, guests who use a homesharing platform for utilitarian/outcome benefits are less likely to engage in a cognitive attribution process as an essential proxy of their behavioral response to the platform. Therefore, we propose that fault attribution, as a mediating variable, accounts for the service presence effect on guests' behavioral responses only under the hedonic motivation and that such a mediating effect is switched off when customers have a utilitarian motivation. The aforementioned theorization leads to the following hypotheses and a conceptual framework for this study (Fig. 1).

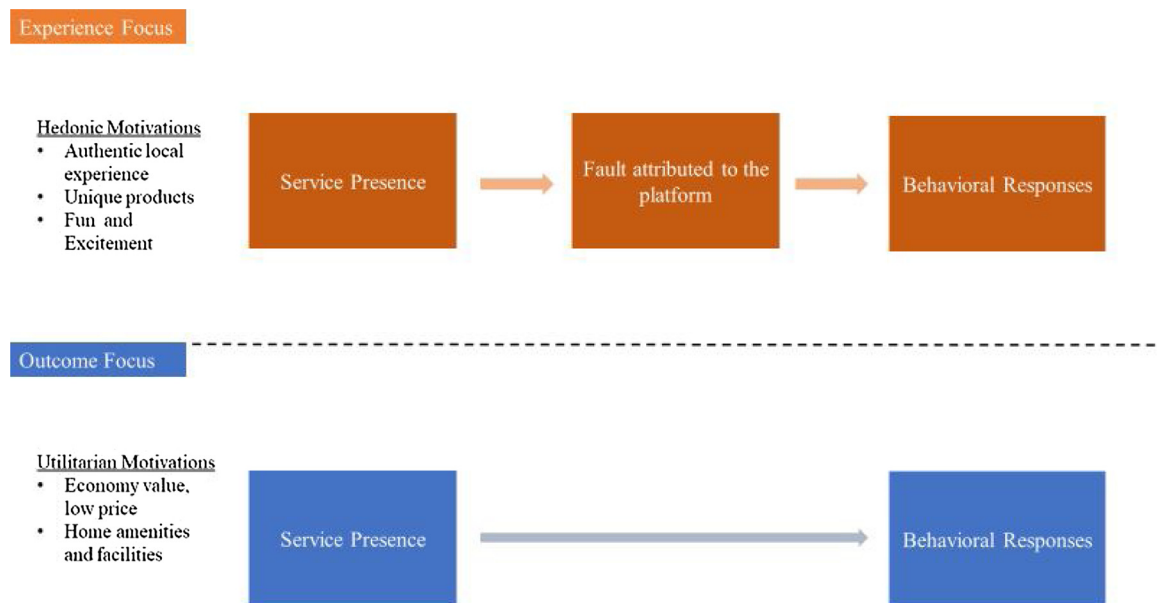


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for the motivation-conditioned mediating effect of fault attribution.

H3. When guests have a *hedonic motivation*, fault attributed to the home-sharing platform *mediates* the effect of service contact on a) complaining tendency and b) switch intentions.

H4. When guests have a *utilitarian motivation*, fault attribution *no longer* explains the effect of service contact on a) complaining tendency, and b) switch intentions.

3. Methods

3.1. Design of experiments

This research examines the role of service contact and consumption motivation on guests' behavioral responses to service failure via two experimental studies. We administered a 3 (service presence: host present vs. host absent vs. hotel representative present) $\times$ 2 (consumption motivation: hedonic vs. utilitarian) between-subjects factorial design for both studies. In both studies, the experiment characterized a scenario in which guests experienced a service lapse while staying with a home-sharing company. Study 1 was considered the main study as the service failure incident that undermined the guest's experience was directly due to the service provider's oversight (i.e., controllable failure). We consider this type of incident a typically defined service failure that is of central interest in most service failure research (e.g., Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014) because it is the service provider's primary responsibility to prevent it from happening in the first place.

To control for familiarity with the home-sharing platform, we asked participants to indicate the name of the platform with which they had their most recent home-sharing experience and used that specific platform throughout the scenario. The consumption motivation for using a home-sharing platform was manipulated as either utilitarian or hedonic according to previous research (So et al., 2018; Lee and Kim, 2018; Guttentag et al., 2018). For the utilitarian treatment, the scenario specified the main reasons for using a home rental were due to the low-cost, good monetary value, and home-like benefits with amenities and features (So et al., 2018; Lee and Kim, 2018; Guttentag et al., 2018). In the hedonic motivation, participants chose a home-sharing platform over hotels because staying at a home-sharing rental was fun, entertaining, and participants could have an authentic local experience and culture. When the participant arrived at the rental home, they checked into the home either with a host in person (i.e., host present),

receiving an entrance code from the host via text message (i.e., host absent) or with a hotel representative (i.e., hotel representative present). The service failure featured an incident that the rental home had a broken heater in late January. The guest had to wait for hours for the problem to be fixed. Afterward, the participant was asked to indicate their likelihood to complain about this experience, their intentions to switch out of the platform, and the level of fault attributed to the home-sharing platform for this failed service. In Study 2, we extended the boundaries of a typical service failure and assessed participants' responses to an uncontrollable situation that disrupted their experience (i.e., drunk and noisy neighbors at night). We used the same manipulations as Study 1 for the treatments of consumption motivation and service presence. Although firms are not directly responsible for uncontrollable situations, the occurrence can undermine guest consumption experiences and thus determine their behavioral response to the service provider. Thus, service scholars often consider uncontrollable situations to gain a deeper understanding of the fallout of service lapse (e.g., Iglesias, 2009; Cai et al., 2018; Gelbrich, 2010). For example, Cai et al. (2018) found that uncontrollable negative incidences (e.g., other customers' misbehavior) can also lead to guests' negative WOM and switching intentions towards the business. Customers believe that having such an incident is against their expectations for a satisfactory experience and thus highly relevant to their consumption goal. In the peer-to-peer business model, Moon et al. (2019) conceptualized the underlying attributions of responsibility in the complaint and resolution process, suggesting that guests attribute responsibility to the home-sharing platform even in the case when failure service is not caused by the platform (e.g., association responsibility). Thus, examining uncontrollable situations may enrich our understanding of the proposed effect.

3.2. Sample and measures

Participants for both studies were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (www.mturk.com). Several screening criteria were used to recruit participants: 1) age above 18-year-old, 2) currently residing in the United States, and 3) used a home-sharing platform (e.g., Airbnb, HomeAway, VRBO, and Flipkey) in the past 12 months. The appropriateness of using MTurk consumers for behavioral and experimental research has been validated in previous research (see Buhrmester et al., 2011). Trust in home-sharing platforms was

measured via four items such as “Home-sharing rentals are trustworthy (Ert et al. 2016; Kharouf et al., 2014; Cronbach’s alpha = .852). The complaining tendency was measured using items “I will complain to my social network about this bad experience,” “I will post negative reviews on other online communities about the home-sharing website I chose for this trip” (Liu and McClure, 2001; Wu, 2013; Cronbach’s alpha = .86). Switching intention was measured by items such as “I will switch to other accommodation channels (e.g., hotels) rather than the home-sharing rental that I chose for this trip” and “I will NOT use this home-sharing rental for my next trip” (alpha = .812, Liang et al., 2018). Consistent with Shuqair et al. (2019), we measured switching intention at the level of the service provider/platform, and not at the level of the host. Studies have shown that much of guest frustration with the homesharing business is caused by the host, which has begun to turn travelers away from using such platforms (Chen and Schuckert, 2016, Cox, 2017). Given the multitude of hosts present on home-sharing platforms and the negligible likelihood of a guest purchasing services from the same host, guest responses toward the platform will confer far greater implications for home-sharing platforms. Participants rated all measures on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Variables with multiple items were converted to a composite score for data analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Study 1: Two-way ANCOVA and simple effect analyses

We employed a 3 (service presence: host present vs. host absent vs. hotel representative present) $\times$ 2 (consumption motivation: hedonic vs. utilitarian) between-subjects design. The final consumer data contained 343 valid responses. responses (cell sizes: $N_{\text{hedonic/host}} = 57$, $N_{\text{hedonic/no host}} = 44$, $N_{\text{hedonic/hotel rep}} = 56$, $N_{\text{utilitarian/host}} = 65$, $N_{\text{utilitarian/no host}} = 67$, $N_{\text{utilitarian/hotel rep}} = 54$). Among these participants, 59% were female, 76.9% were aged 26–54 years, 47.7% were married, 67.3% were Caucasian, and 73.7% held at least a college degree. Participants assigned in the host present condition indicated a significantly higher level of agreement that a host was available for their check-in, compared to the host absent condition ($M_{\text{host presence}} = 5.87$, $M_{\text{host absence}} = 3.01$, $t = 12.68$, $p < .001$). Participants assigned to the hotel representative present condition significantly agreed that there was a hotel representative rather than a private host for their check-in, compared to the midpoint ($t = 13.612$, $p < .001$). Participants assigned to the hedonic motivation scenario (vs. utilitarian) indicated significant higher levels of hedonic motivation ($t = 3.480$, $p < .001$), and lower levels of utilitarian motivation ($t = -4.06$, $p < .001$).

A two-way ANCOVA analysis was conducted with service presence and motivation for using home-sharing services as independent variables and complaining tendency upon service failure as the dependent variable. We included trust and their most recent experience (i.e., How would you rate your most recent experience with a home-sharing rental? “Extremely poor” – “Extremely good”) as covariates. The results of the two-way ANCOVA revealed a significant main effect of service presence on complaining tendency ($F_{(2, 335)} = 3.633$, $p < 0.05$), and no significant interaction effect between service presence and consumption motivation (Table 2). Probing the main effect results further, we performed simple effect analyses to examine differences between experimental groups. Across the three service presence treatments, dis-regarding consumption motivation, guests are more likely to complain when the host was present (vs. host absent) ($M_{\text{host presence-absence}} = .503$, $p < .05$). Guests were also more likely to complain when a hotel representative was present (vs. host absent) ($M_{\text{hotel representative-host absence}} = .582$, $p < .05$).

The same procedure was performed for switching intention as the dependent variable. The results suggested a significant interaction effect ($F_{(2, 335)} = 3.211$, $p < 0.05$) between service presence and consumption motivation, and no significant main effects of service

presence and consumption motivation (Table 2). Probing the interaction effect further, we conducted simple effect analyses to examine how consumption motivation altered the influence of service presence on customers’ intentions to switch out of the platform. In the hedonic motivation treatment, there was a significant effect of service presence on guests’ switching intentions ($F = 3.028$, $p < .05$). The presence of a hotel representative significantly increased customers’ switching intention as compared to the presence of a private host ($M_{\text{host presence-hotel representative}} = .783$, $p < .05$). However, when the consumption motivation was utilitarian, guests’ intentions to switch did not differ across three service presence treatments ($F = 1.128$, $p = .325$). Fig. 2 illustrates the two-way ANCOVA results for complaining tendency and switching intentions. Overall, these results for Study 1 indicate partial support for H_1 and a lack of support for H_2 .

4.2. Study 1. Moderated mediation analyses

To test hypotheses H_3 and H_4 , we conducted moderated mediation analyses following the Hayes (2018) PROCESS procedure to examine whether the motivation for using home-sharing significantly moderated the mediation pathways between service presence and customer responses i.e., service presence $\rightarrow$ fault attributed to the home-sharing platform $\rightarrow$ negative behavioral outcomes (complaining tendency and switching intention). First, we carried out the moderated mediation procedure for complaining tendency using IBM SPSS version 25. PROCESS macro (Model 8) was paired with the recommended bootstrapping technique to test conditional indirect effects (resampling 10,000 for bias correction; Hayes, 2018). Service presence was specified as a multi-category antecedent, leading to an examination of the indirect effects of every pair of factor category (Hayes, 2018). We found that the indirect effect of service presence on complaining tendency was only significant for guests having a hedonic motivation. Specifically, the difference in complaining tendency between the hotel representative and host presence conditions (95% confidence interval [CI] = .0516, .6684), was significantly explained by the level of fault attributed to the home-sharing platform. However, when guests had a utilitarian motivation, the indirect effect of service presence on complaining tendency straddled zero (95% confidence interval [CI] = -.4455, .0933). Detailed results of the moderation mediation are displayed in Table 3.

We then performed the same procedure for switching intention. As proposed in H_4 , the indirect effect of service presence through fault attributed to the home-sharing platform was only significant in the hedonic motivation condition. In this condition, the difference in switching intention between the hotel representative and host present conditions was significantly mediated by the level of fault attributed to the platform (95% confidence interval [CI] = .0612, .6861). Thus, the presence of a hotel representative (vs. having a host present) led to a higher likelihood that guests blame the home-sharing platform for a service failure, and thus they become more likely to complain and switch out of the platform. These mediation effects only existed when guests had a hedonic motivation. The results thus lend full support to H_3 and H_4 in that the indirect impact of service presence on complaining tendency and switching intention was indeed conditioned by the motivation for using a home-sharing platform (Table 3).

4.3. Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA and simple effect analyses

Study 2 explored whether the findings remain valid when the service failure is not directly controllable by the service provider (i.e., drunk and noisy neighbors at night). The final consumer data contained 335 valid responses (cell sizes: $N_{\text{hedonic/host}} = 53$, $N_{\text{hedonic/no host}} = 66$, $N_{\text{hedonic/hotel rep}} = 57$, $N_{\text{utilitarian/host}} = 45$, $N_{\text{utilitarian/no host}} = 57$, $N_{\text{utilitarian/hotel rep}} = 57$). The experiment has successfully passed the manipulation checks as did in Study 1. In Study 2, when the service failure was not directly controllable by the service provider, the results

Table 2
Two-way ANCOVA and simple effect analyses (Study 1).

Dependent variable	Source	Type III Sum of squares	df	F	P	Simple effect: Motivation ^a	
						Hedonic motivation	Utilitarian motivation
Complaining tendency	Corrected model	43.77	7	2.113	0.042	Only the main effect and no interaction effect reported: Host present > Host absent: $p < .05$	
	Intercept	128.69	1	43.487	0.000		
	Last experience	10.10	1	3.412	0.066		
	Existing trust	8.83	1	2.985	0.085		
	Motivation	2.24	1	0.756	0.385		
	Presence	21.50	2	3.633	0.027		
	Motivation* Presence	9.14	2	1.544	0.215		
	Error	991.36	335				
	Total	6798.50	343				
	Corrected total	1035.13	342				
Switching intention	Corrected model	27.633	7	1.442	0.188	Host present < Hotel representative; $p < .05$	
	Intercept	166.793	1	60.923	0.000		
	Last Experience	0	1	0	0.989		
	Existing trust	2.95	1	1.078	0.3		
	Motivation	0.176	1	0.064	0.8		
	Presence	4.753	2	0.868	0.421		
	Motivation * Presence	17.584	2	3.211	0.042		
	Error	917.149	335			No difference across three treatments	
	Total	6823.5	343				
	Corrected total	944.783	342				

Note: ^aonly significant comparisons are presented.

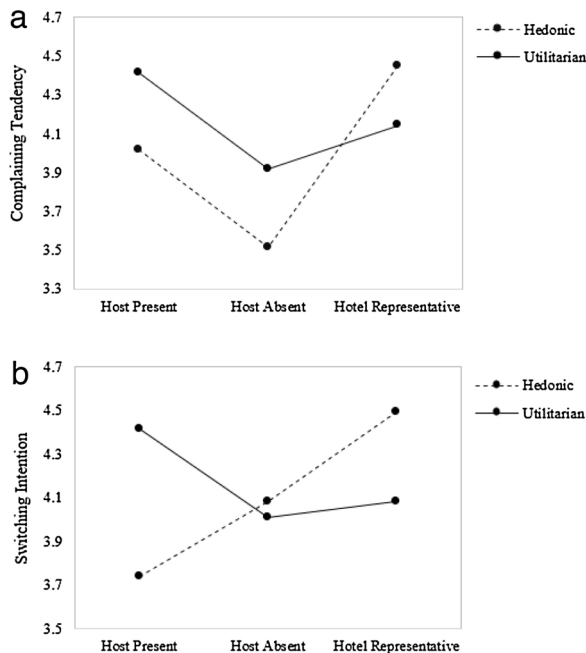


Fig. 2. a. Two-Way ANCOVA results for complaining tendency (Study 1). b. Two-Way ANCOVA results for switching intention (Study 1).

Table 3
Moderated Mediation Analysis (Study 1).

Dependent variable	Complaining tendency					Switching intention				
	Multi-categorical comparison	Indirect effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Multi-categorical comparison	Indirect effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Hedonic motivation	Conditional indirect effects of service presence (X) on behavioral outcomes (Y) within two types of motivation					Host present vs. Hotel representative				
	Host present vs. Hotel representative	0.348 ^a	0.1571	0.0516	0.6684	Host present vs. Hotel representative	0.3605	0.159	0.0612	0.6861
Utilitarian motivation	No significant mediation effects					No significant mediation effects				

Note: ^aonly significant results are presented; the difference between the compared treatments in dependent variable is significantly mediated by fault attributed to the home-sharing platform.

Table 4
Two-way ANCOVA and simple effect analyses (Study 2).

Dependent variable	Source	Type III Sum of squares	df	F	P	Simple effect: Motivation ^a	
						Hedonic motivation	Utilitarian motivation
Complaining tendency	Corrected model	69.304a	7	2.965	0.005	Only main effect and no interaction effect reported: Host present < Hotel representative, $p < .001$	
	Intercept	104.61	1	31.326	0.000		
	Last experience	6.67	1	1.999	0.158		
	Existing trust	0.35	1	0.105	0.746		
	Motivation	0.14	1	0.042	0.838		
	Presence	51.47	2	7.707	0.001		
	Motivation *	9.89	2	1.481	0.229		
	Presence						
	Error	1091.95	327				
	Total	5037.25	335				
Switching intention	Corrected total	1161.25	334			Host present < Hotel representative, $p = .05$ No different across three conditions at $p < .05$	
	Corrected model	56.088	7	3.350	0.002		
	Intercept	186.4342	1	77.954	0.000		
	Last experience	7.250991	1	3.032	0.083		
	Existing trust	3.464326	1	1.449	0.230		
	Motivation	0.225152	1	0.094	0.759		
	Presence	14.78768	2	3.092	0.047		
	Motivation *	12.9121	2	2.699	0.057		
	Presence						
	Error	782.0505	327				
	Total	5343.25	335				
	Corrected total	838.1388	334				

Note: ^aonly significant comparisons are presented

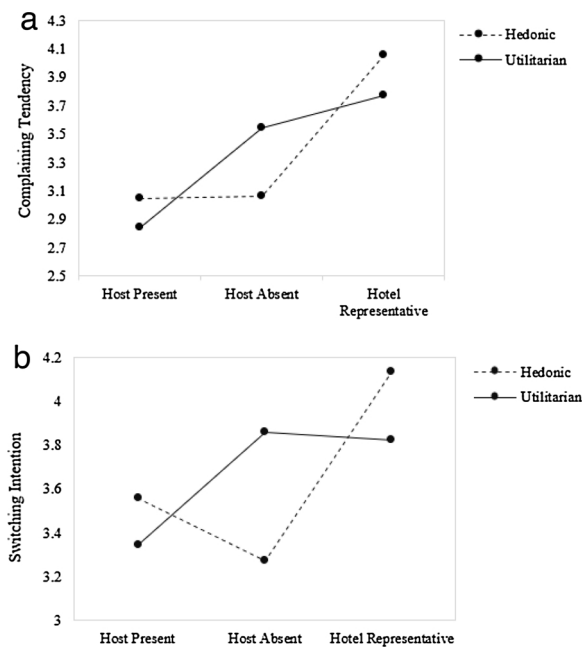


Fig. 3. a. Two-Way ANCOVA results for complaining tendency (Study 2). b. Two-Way ANCOVA results for switching intention (Study 2).

4.4. Study 2. Moderated mediation analyses

We conducted two separate moderated mediation analyses to examine the motivation conditioned mediating effect of fault attribution on negative behavioral outcomes (complaining tendency and switching intention) when guests encountered uncontrollable service failure. Table 5 indicates that consumption motivation did not moderate the mediation effect of fault attribution when the failure service was uncontrollable. While H_3 was supported, the results of Study 2 failed to support H_4 . Fault attribution to the platform significantly explained both “service presence → complaining tendency” and “service presence → switching intention” links, independent of motivation.

5. Discussion

While social interaction is a key experiential driver for staying with home-sharing platforms, the significant increase in investor units and multi-unit hosts and the consequent *professionalization* of these platforms has resulted in a large number of experiences where guests do not have in-person contact with the host. This makes it important to understand the effect of the host present/absent dichotomy on guest behaviors. Moreover, with the hotel home-sharing platform becoming increasingly prevalent (e.g., Marriott Homes & Villas) (Ting, 2019), the third condition pertaining to service presence i.e., the presence of a hotel representative is an important determinant of guest response to service failure.

Our findings indicate that for the typical service failure occurred during guest stay within the property (Study 1), the physical presence of a service contact—either private host or hotel representative—leads to a significantly higher complaining tendency, irrespective of consumption motivation. Corresponding to the previous theorization, we proffer that the face-to-face contact characterizes a higher social presence and thus guests’ higher expectations from the service encounter. In the event of a service failure, such presence can lead to a higher level of disconfirmation that translates into a higher tendency to complain (Choi & Mattila, 2008). However, consumption motivation becomes important in the case of switching intention. Guests with a hedonic motivation are significantly more likely to switch out of a home-sharing platform in the event of a service failure when a hotel representative serves as the service contact than the case of a host present. This finding indicates that when guests seek hedonic benefits from using the home-sharing platform, they are less tolerant of service failure when their experience is backed by the “quality guarantee” of a hotel company. Instead, having a “real host” demonstrate the value of a more authentic human touch in the peer-to-peer service process can effectively reduce guest intentions to switch, compared to the more transactional service-orientation of a hotel home-sharing experience. Per the SPT, when a private host is present (vs. a hotel representative), guests are likely to experience a greater level of *immediacy* (i.e., a lower psychological distance), thus reducing their intention to switch out of the platform when things that could have been controlled go wrong. In contrast, guests with a utilitarian motivation do not conceptually differentiate

Table 5
Moderated Mediation Analysis (Study 2).

Dependent variable	Complaining tendency					Switching intention				
	Multi-categorical comparison	Indirect effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Multi-categorical comparison	Indirect effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Hedonic motivation	Conditional indirect effects of service presence (X) on behavioral outcomes (Y) within two types of motivation ^a					Host present vs. Hotel representative				
	Host present vs. Hotel representative	0.763 ^a	0.273	0.227	1.302	Host present vs. Hotel representative	0.519	0.193	0.150	0.910
Utilitarian motivation	Host present vs. Host absent	0.818	0.288	0.260	1.383	Host present vs. Host absent	0.557	0.200	0.178	0.965
	Host present vs. Hotel representative	0.612	0.287	0.050	1.174	Host present Hotel vs. representative	0.417	0.201	0.029	0.826

Note: ^aonly significant results are presented; the difference between the compared treatments independent variable is significantly mediated by fault attributed to the home-sharing platform.

service contacts in that the presence or absence of a service contact does not influence their intention to switch out of a platform in the event of a service failure. This result further confirms that failed service compromises experiential value more so than the monetary value in the home-sharing context, in that guests with a utilitarian motivation are mainly concerned with the outcome of the purchase (e.g., “getting a better price”) than the experience itself (Hamari et al., 2016). While both utility and hedonism-oriented guests may complain, and more so in the presence of a service contact (either private host or hotel representative), hedonism-oriented guests are more likely to offer the home-sharing platform another opportunity (i.e., less likely to switch out) when a private host is available rather than a professional guest service. Hence, our findings have corroborated previous literature that hedonic motivation (vs. utilitarian motivation) is more influential of guest loyalty (Lee & Kim, 2018) even in the case of service failure, which has reinforced the importance of having local contact in creating the experiential and hedonic worth of home-sharing (e.g., Festila & Müller, 2017).

This research also reveals that the dynamics of service failure are indeed different between hedonic and utility-oriented guests. The indirect effects of service presence on behavioral responses via the mediating pathway of fault attribution were only significant for guests with a hedonic motivation. Moreover, hedonism-oriented consumers had both a higher tendency to complain and switch out of the home-sharing platform when a hotel representative serves as the service contact than in the conditions where a private host is present. These results further confirm that guests are potentially less forgiving of service failure when the experiential value is important to them and is backed by the quality guarantee of a hotel company. This mediating pathway of fault attribution is switched off for utility-oriented guests, which, when combined with the results presented above, demonstrates these guests' relative indifference to various levels of service presence and a greater emphasis on the monetary value of the experience instead. In sum, the results of Study 1 demonstrate that the moderated mediation model provides a more nuanced explanation of the dynamics of service failure in the case of typical, controllable service failures, and emphasizes the importance of fault attribution to guest responses to service failure.

The results of Study 2 have extended the boundaries of typical service failure to uncontrollable situations when guests' experience is compromised by incidental factors. Even for uncontrollable service failure, guests are less forgiving of service failure when the service contact represents a hotel company (vs. a private host) in that a hotel representative present in the case of the home-sharing platform leads to a significantly higher tendency to complain and switch out of the platform. Unlike typical controllable service failure, we found that the mediating pathway of fault attribution appears for both consumption motivations when guests encountered an uncontrollable incident. As the uncontrollable failure occurs outside the consumption, it is reasonable that guests' consumption motivation does not interfere with the mediating pathway through fault attribution.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Service failure continues to be an important research theme in hospitality and tourism, in particular, research that examines the causes and consequences of service failure and recovery in different sectors of the industry (Lai et al., 2018). However, “empirical research on peer-to-peer accommodations has neglected the impact of service failures and service recovery” (Shuqair et al., 2019, p. 10), due to which we have a limited understanding of the mechanisms of service failure/recovery in collaborative consumption. Thus, we created and operationalized a conceptual framework that examines the factors of both theoretical and practical salience. Our use of these factors is substantiated by the nascent research on service failure in the home-sharing context. The role of social interaction has been previously emphasized in the peer-to-peer (P2P) setting, whereby contact with a local host is a crucial driver for using home-sharing platforms and a unique advantage over hotels (e.g., Ert et al., 2016; Guttentag et al., 2018). In their study on post-failure loyalty, Shuqair et al. (2019) highlighted that “customers' emotional and behavioral responses are influenced by an individual's subjective evaluation of the Airbnb host as an “equal peer” (social interaction)” (p. 2). Moreover, these authors demonstrated the relevance of hedonic consumption (host interaction) as a driver of post-failure loyalty in the sharing economy. Leveraging SPT, our findings corroborate the impact of the social contact and the host's role in determining guests' loyalty and repurchase intentions towards home-sharing services (Shuqair et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019). In addition, beyond the traditional home-sharing model, our study is the first to account for new developments in collaboration with hotel companies (e.g., Marriott Homes & Villas). Moreover, we extend Shuqair et al. (2019)'s findings by establishing a *motivation-conditioned service presence effect* on guest responses to service failure. Such effort well responds to previous calls for understanding the motivations for using home-sharing platforms for a deeper appreciation of guests' evaluations and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Lee and Kim, 2018; Mao and Lyu, 2017).

The importance of the mediating mechanism of fault attribution in our conceptual framework is underlined by Moon et al. (2019) examination of the complaint and resolution process in a P2P business model. They found that responsibility for service failure is attributed to the platform provider both when it directly causes the complaint (commission) or is indirectly related to the complaint (association). However, beyond understanding the extent to which guests attribute responsibility to the platform provider, their study did not examine the underlying dynamics of post-failure behavior. We demonstrate how the motivation-conditioned service presence effect is mediated by the levels of fault attributed to the platform, and in so doing, answer one of Benoit et al.'s (2017) key questions about the nature of service recovery in triadic models of collaborative consumption involving guests, host/service provider, and platform, in contrast with the dyadic hotel-guest relationship (Moon et al., 2019). Finally, while the results were reasonably consistent, the differences between the dynamics of typical, controllable service failures and the more uncontrollable scenarios, in

terms of the mediating role of fault attribution, open up avenues for future research that extends the theoretical boundaries of this topic by identifying alternative mechanisms that may or may not be specific to the home-sharing context (Abramova et al., 2015).

5.2. Managerial implications

Sthapit (2018) identified the need for successful recovery efforts after service failure as an antidote to value co-destruction in the Airbnb context. In this regard, the findings of our study pertaining to the dynamics of service failure in the home-sharing context provide such platforms with valuable insights into potential recovery strategies. First, home-sharing platforms, in particular, Airbnb, need to alleviate their reputation as providers of poor customer service in situations where things go wrong. There remains a need for platforms to establish clear and streamlined procedures for service recovery, by clearly identifying avenues for customer re-quit, and establishing clear lines of accountability and responsibility for service failure, which further involves the definition of hosts' tasks and responsibilities. As highlighted by Sthapit (2018), "if the hosts' tasks are unclear, then customers cannot be served in an effective manner and with consistent service quality" (p. 3). In this regard, our findings pertaining to the effect of service presence are important. The presence of a host or hotel representative leads to guests' higher expectations from the service encounter and thus a higher tendency to complain after experiencing failed services. Guests who have such initial service contact need to be handled more carefully than in cases where the host is not physically present.

The current policy pertaining to service failure for most home-sharing platforms [e.g., Airbnb, VRBO (part of the Expedia Group), Flipkey by TripAdvisor, etc.] requires guests to first contact the host/property owner/manager directly, and only in the event that the guest and host cannot reach an agreement on resolving the issue are guests asked to contact the platform. Unlike the case for hotel stays, guests are asked to extensively document any evidence (e.g., photos, videos, and documentation) pertaining to their complaints, to allow the platform to review their case if it is indeed escalated to a higher level. Placing the onus for problem resolution on the guest in such a manner is not only cumbersome but also demonstrates an unwillingness on the platform's behalf to take responsibility for the experience delivered by their service providers. (Moon et al., 2019). As evidenced by our findings, such a laissez-faire approach to problem resolution may be particularly problematic when guests' motivations are hedonic in nature and they attribute fault to the platform and will only make guests significantly more likely to complain about and switch out of the platform. Moreover, leaving the problem resolution to the host does not offer the platform the opportunity to offer the right kind of reparation the first time around, be it monetary compensation for utility-oriented guests or experience recovery for hedonism-oriented guests. This may be particularly problematic when hosts have not been trained for service recovery like hotel employees are, not only in terms of offering the right type of resolution, but also the manner in which the resolution is offered (apology, display of empathy, language and tonality of communication, etc.). Currently, while major platforms like Airbnb have standards and expectations for both hosts and guests pertaining to a variety of issues, and information on host responsibilities in the event of disputes i.e., service failure, much of these standards are fluid and open to interpretation. There remains a need for platforms to develop a tighter policy on service failure, supplemented by a service recovery training program for hosts (as is the case for Airbnb's unconscious bias training toolkit to fight discrimination) which equips them to deliver better service, particularly if platforms wish to continue having hosts remain the first point of contact for problem resolution.

Moreover, segmenting guests by consumption motivation can help platforms strategize procedures for service recovery, including providing more effective recovery training to the host and customer service agents of the platform. For example, if, in their complaint, the guest

refers to monetary issues or seeks out monetary compensation, it is likely that they possess a utilitarian motivation. Since utility-motivated guests attend to the outcome more than the experience, either the platform or the service contact should quickly step in and offer financial compensation (e.g., travel credit, a discount towards future travel, etc.) to remedy their compromised value perception of the purchase. On the other hand, if the guest complains about how a much sought-out experience (e.g., an authentic local adventure for a family vacation) was disrupted by the service failure, the platform may want to mediate immediately instead of having the guest approach the host first. Since the fault attributed to the platform was the underlying mechanism that explains hedonism-oriented guests' responses after a service failure, the home-sharing platform should demonstrate their effort, especially when a private host did not serve the guest during their stay. In addition to taking direct responsibility for problem resolution, the platform may want to offer experience-oriented alternatives. For example, the platform can delegate a personable service agent to coordinate the guest's next stay with the platform and ensure that things are in place before and upon arrival, or, alternatively, assist the guest with immediately finding an alternative accommodation if the complaint occurs during the stay. In such situations, involving hotel service personals in home-sharing businesses needs to be particularly cautious. Given that 90% of guests that booked homes during Marriott's pilot of Tribute Portfolio Homes were part of the company's Bonvoy loyalty program, and that this percentage is likely to remain high for any hotel home-sharing offering (Santana, 2019), the consequences of making an elite loyalty member unhappy can be devastating for the hotel company, rendering it essential for the company (e.g., Marriott) to handle the guest directly in the event of service failure as opposed to having them deal with a third-party property manager.

It is important to note that the recovery strategies suggested above are reactive in nature; service providers can only initiate them *after* the problem has occurred *and after* the guest has complained to the service provider. It requires identifying guests' motivations (hedonic vs. utilitarian) based on nature (wording, tonality, etc.) of their complaints (if they complain at all). However, hosts and service providers may be well served if guests' motivations and preferences can be identified *before* the trip, via data collection processes such as pre-trip surveys (sent along with the confirmation email), or increasingly via predictive analytics based on past behavior (using data collected via the service provider's app, pre and post-trip surveys, social media listening and text mining, among others). Such information can be used directly by the service provider (e.g., a service provider email re-iterating how the guest has found "the best deal") and/or shared with hosts for service delivery and/or recovery. Also, some platforms (e.g., Airbnb) require guests to give hosts more information as part of the booking request process, including who is traveling with the guest and the reason(s) for their travel. Hosts can be trained to identify motivation-related cues from such information (and from other data shared by the service provider) that would not only help them better respond to complaints if they are the first point of contact for the guest (i.e., offer the right type and manner of resolution) but also enable superior experiences that prevent problems in the first place (e.g., a personalized welcome note upon arrival for a hedonic-oriented guest; providing specific amenities and "touches" based on guest preferences, etc.). Whether the increasing prevalence of professional hosts on home-sharing platforms will enable or impede such service delivery and recovery remains to be seen.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the results only apply when the service failure occurs over the course of guests' onsite experience so that the initial contact medium exerts influences on guests' subsequent evaluations. Scholars should take precaution in generalizing the findings for service failure occurred during the transaction and reservation stage. Second, the focus of the current study was to understand the

dynamics of service failure in home-sharing and our pragmatic implications for service recovery follow from an understanding of these dynamics. Thus, the results help predict guests' behavioral responses if no recovery service takes place. As such, our study calls for future research that examines the effects of specific recovery strategies (e.g., types of apology and compensation) and other determinants of successful recovery (e.g., speed of recovery, recovery effort) on guest's behavioral responses towards the platform. This can be explored by the source of recovery service, either from the host or from the platform, to gain a deeper understanding of their distinctive leverages on guest retention upon service failure. Relatedly, while our conceptual framework provides a theoretically- and practically-salient explanation of the dynamics of service recovery in a home-sharing context, future research can examine the role of a variety of other factors that have been identified as being important in extant service failure and recovery research—such as trust and brand relationship quality, the extent of social interaction, choice and co-creation in service recovery, fairness and perceived justice, among others—using a variety of field research methods beyond experimental design. Finally, as platform brands increasingly look to standardize their offerings, for example through newly launched sub-platforms such as Airbnb Plus (i.e., quality-verified homes) and Airbnb Luxe (i.e., upscale homes targeting the luxury traveler that also include a dedicated trip designer i.e., Airbnb service representative), examining the impact of these efforts on guest and host expectations and responsibilities and their subsequent effects on service failure and recovery will allow for a richer understanding of these complex issues in the context of these multi-stakeholder business models.

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