Disruptive innovation and e-micro-entrepreneurship in tourism: the IRMA model approach for Airbnb platform

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine how Airbnb has been transformed from an informal form of tourism accommodation into an emerging form of tourism e-micro-entrepreneurship through an interesting triangle consisting of three distinct parts: hosts, platform and guests.

Design/methodology/approach – Considering that the peer-to-peer response has sealed the sharing economy’s success, research methodology involves primary research that focuses on the adeptness of Airbnb hosts as e-micro-entrepreneurs from the customers’ perspective. A quantitative methodology was employed by applying a convenience sampling strategy through a structured questionnaire that was distributed online, resulting in a collection of 150 useable responses. A statistical analysis has been performed to test the research’s objectives.

Findings – Driven by Airbnb hosts’ entrepreneurial behavior in managing their listings and guests’ responses, research findings led to the development of a post-conceptual IRMA model, which describes this particular form of hosting as an e-micro-entrepreneurship opportunity, while guests’ satisfaction confirms the platform’s performance and hosts’ efforts in service quality provision.

Research limitations/implications – This study brings valuable insights to the tourism e-entrepreneurship literature through the assessment of the Airbnb platform and the hosts as e-micro-entrepreneurs, providing useful information to researchers and managers involved in the Sharing Economy’s disruptive innovation and a more complete understanding of the drivers of Airbnb’s consumer adoption.

Originality/value – Research on Airbnb mainly focuses on service quality from the customer perspective, while the existing literature does not highlight how a new type of e-micro-entrepreneurship has emerged by operating in the sharing economy’s disruptive innovation ecosystem, which illustrates the factors that motivate hosts and guests to share accommodation services in an equilibrium bond.

Keywords Disruptive innovation, Sharing economy, e-micro-entrepreneurship, Airbnb platform, Hosts and guests, Assessment

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction
The sharing economy is a well-known concept that concerns buying and selling transactions and exchanges between peers (individuals) using digital platforms (Laurenti et al., 2019). It is observed that in recent years, the sharing economy platforms have become particularly popular as they help individuals to buy services and products at attractive prices, to obtain an additional income which ensures a better standard of living as well as a greater social networking (Destefanis et al., 2022; Frenken and Schor, 2017). The platforms of the sharing economy have also extended in the tourism sector as a result of which peers rent their underutilized properties to other peers who come as visitors from other places of the same or even another country (Kljucnikov et al., 2018; Midgett et al., 2017). One of the most popular platforms in the sharing economy is the Airbnb platform (Crommelin et al., 2018). It is a peer-to-peer platform where peers (hosts) are allowed to rent their properties for a short period, which can vary from a few days to a few months, to other peers (guests) who visit the area of the property (Chua et al., 2019; Kljucnikov et al., 2018).

According to the data provided online by Airbnb (2023), it is easy to see that it is a very prevalent platform, as in 2023 its 150m users-members come from 191 countries around the world who rent homes in more than 100,000 cities (Search Logistics, 2023), while the 6.6m (800,000 more than 2021) active listings globally are available by more than 4m hosts. Furthermore, Airbnb recorded an increase in revenues (40% YoY), showing the immediate recovery of the community after the COVID-19 outbreak. It is worth mentioning that by the end of the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2022, the platform experienced the highest number of active bookers, who have booked 20% more nights and experiences compared to the previous year (Airbnb, 2023), while every single second 6 guests check into an Airbnb listing (Search Logistics, 2023).

The creation of the Airbnb platform had undoubtedly a tremendous impact on tourism and the decision-making process of tourists while choosing their accommodation (Chua et al., 2019; Guttentag et al., 2018), regardless of accommodation category (González-Reverte et al., 2023). Notwithstanding, the research on this particular platform is ongoing regarding the quality of the services provided and the profile of the tourists who prefer to book their accommodation through this platform. At the same time, apart from the plethora of research on Airbnb from the customer perspective, what is still lacking is a holistic view that involves Airbnb hosts as e-micro-entrepreneurs. Moreover, the existing literature does not highlight how a new type of e-micro-entrepreneurship has emerged by operating in the sharing economy’s disruptive innovation ecosystem, which illustrates the factors that motivate hosts and guests to share accommodation services. Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap by focusing on the continuously evolving but often ignored role of e-tourism micro-entrepreneurs in the sharing economy. Specifically, the objectives of this study are (1) to approach Airbnb hosts as e-micro-entrepreneurs acknowledging the opportunity of Airbnb platform use and (2) to assess the platform’s performance and hosts’ e-micro-entrepreneurship through guests’ perspective.

Inspired by Prayag and Ozanne (2018), the authors use a socio-technical transition theory, the multi-level perspective (MLP), which “provides a conceptual lens to understand systems transition”, in combination with the mixed approach research model proposed by Sainaghi (2020) who asserts that mixed nature research may generate models (post-models) as outputs which are helpful for the readers.

2. Literature review
2.1 Sharing economy and disruptive innovation
The continuous evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has significantly contributed to the development and wide use of digital platforms and mobile applications, where individuals are able to share and exchange resources free of charge or with charge. Katsoni and Poulaki (2021) postulate that the fourth industrial revolution,
characterized by a fusion of technologies such as the Internet of Things, has highly contributed to the tourism business’s adoption and adjustment. Evidently, ICTs are the distribution drivers of tourism products, reengineering the industry’s structure. Lalicic and Weismayer (2017) assert that the years of economic recession motivated consumers to consider their benefits and costs, resulting in cooperative consumption practices. These trends are apparent in the field of tourism as well. Additionally, Avdimiotis and Poulaki (2019) place these developments within the framework of the sharing economy, expanding its previous definitions as “Sharing Economy, is stemming from market digitalization and service customization, generating new opportunities of exchanging goods and services, between the peers of open platforms allowing economic, environmental and social benefits to various sectors connected to the Tourism Industry”, while Hamari et al. (2015) define modern sharing economy as a “peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services.” In addition, Dolnicar (2019) defines Airbnb as “paid online peer-to-peer accommodation” that focuses on profit, while it also serves as a “distribution channel for professional tourism accommodation businesses”.

Nonetheless, the sharing economy is not a new concept, but an instinctive practice of transaction, but its modern form, involving the evolution of technology and digitalization, generates new patterns in consumption (Katsoni, 2019), thus changes in the market. Therefore, the modern sharing economy has emerged as a disruptive innovation. More specifically, social networks and digital communities facilitate the principles of sharing economy, when it comes to peer-to-peer exchanges or even transactions with commercial dimensions. There are numerous sharing economy platforms that allow peer-to-peer transactions, while the most popular of them concerns accommodation opportunities. In fact, Tsogas et al. (2018) postulate that tourists consider, among others essential criteria for choosing online lodging services, the website’s credibility and value-for-money additional services provided by peers. Undoubtedly, Airbnb’s digital community platform has been the cornerstone for the sharing economy’s successful conquest of the lodging sector. In fact, Avdimiotis and Poulaki (2019) state that Airbnb exists in the context of “an emerging economy, with disruptive innovations, that has recently changed the flow of the tourism industry”, while Amaro et al. (2018) assert that bookings of Airbnb listings through the platform outnumber the bookings of well-established hotel chains. Moreover, Constantoglou et al. (2020) postulate that Airbnb is recording an enormous number of listings worldwide, offering alternative accommodation opportunities to each possible customer profile visiting any destination as a great example of “the phenomenon of sharing economy as a disruptor in tourism industry”. At this point, it is worth mentioning that its aggressive expansion has led to intense diversification of regulation regimes from one place to another (Avdimiotis and Poulaki, 2019), which is always considered by someone who wants to get involved. Nonetheless, Airbnb is indeed a success story of the modern sharing economy due to three main factors: digital innovation, hosts and guests.

2.2 Airbnb hosts: the e(asy going)-micro-entrepreneurs
Airbnb’s idea refers to peers (hosts) who have the ability to rent their underutilized property (room, apartment, house) to other peers (guests) as short-term accommodation; and to peers (guests) who have the ability to rent a lodging (room, apartment, house) as consumers from other peers (hosts). These transactions (bookings) are feasible through a digital platform that has the character of a community. This platform revolutionized traditional accommodation, with its growth exceeding expectations (Guttentag, 2015, 2019) in the last 15 years of its operation. Airbnb has changed the hospitality industry so far, with many traditional accommodations affected by its appearance (Zervas et al., 2017), turning countless people into hospitality e-micro-entrepreneurs and making tourist accommodation a critical policy issue in cities worldwide (Guttentag and Smith, 2017; Guttentag, 2019).
On the other hand, however, Heo et al. (2019), citing relevant research, postulate that Airbnb is not a direct competitor for hotels, as it creates new demand from travelers who would otherwise not have been able to travel, while in some cities it slightly affects the hotel income per available room when the number of recorded listings in the platform increases significantly. Furthermore, Sainaghi and Baggio (2020) assert that a potential substitution is observed on weekends and holidays when both accommodation types work with leisure travelers, while on weekdays, they serve different market segments (business travelers: hotels, leisure travelers: Airbnb listings) with no synchronization between occupancy rates. The absence of direct competition between Airbnb and hotels is further observed in the differentiation of their seasonal patterns (Sainaghi and Baggio, 2021). At this point, it is worth mentioning that since the first year of its operation (2007) of two hosts and one listing, the Airbnb community currently numbers 4m hosts that have welcomed 1 billion guests around the globe (Airbnb, 2023).

During the economic recession, many individuals-owners with underutilized properties found an opportunity for additional income or even full employment by managing their property through the Airbnb platform. Especially in the cases of unemployment, low pay or job dissatisfaction, this self-employment opportunity constitutes a satisfactory solution. According to Bettinelli et al. (2017) the rapid pace of technological change, the rearrangement of social balances, the increasing uncertainty of work in big business, the desire for a more flexible profession that suits one’s desires and values, the prospect of being one's own boss, are some of the reasons why more and more people consider entrepreneurship as a real alternative to salaried work. So far, Airbnb hosts have declared that financial incentives were the main reason for engaging with Airbnb (Fischer et al., 2019; Visser et al., 2017). Thus, they may be considered micro-entrepreneurs activated by “utilizing unused space to cover expenses or earn additional money” (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016). In fact, according to Search Logistics (2023), each host earns on average an annual amount of €12,872 (€1,065 per month), which is quite satisfactory given that the average minimum monthly net salary in the European Union is €979 scaling from €310 (Bulgaria) to 2099 (Luxemburg). Airbnb hosts' average monthly income reflects the average minimum monthly net salary in Spain (€1,090) and Italy (€1,050), allowing a relatively decent life in these two countries (Nomadnotmad, 2023). At this point, it is worth mentioning that a study conducted by Busbud (2016) actually found that in many cities worldwide, Airbnb appears more expensive than hotels, while Search Logistics (2023) postulates that the average listing rate in North America is $163 (€152) per night.

Undoubtedly, Airbnb would only exist with hosts since they are the foundation of the Airbnb company, motivated by obtaining opportunities for additional income, social interactions and sharing. In fact, little attention has been given to hosts, with the vast majority of the scholarly papers referring to the guests and their experiences (Guttentag, 2019), legal asymmetries and financial perspectives. From the supply side, however, Sainaghi (2020) developed a very interesting framework on peer-to-peer accommodation platforms, which are the main tool for the hosts to apply their micro-entrepreneur status. Nonetheless, as the cornerstone of peer-to-peer accommodation, hosts’ motives, as well as the progress in their activity, are equally noteworthy. In particular, when it comes to the latter, hosts' behavior in managing their listings reflects a pattern of an entrepreneur (e-micro-entrepreneur) that exploits the benefits of this disruptive innovation (peer-to-peer accommodation platforms) to enter the lodging market with their underutilized property as the sole investment. Evidently, the majority of Airbnb listings, in terms of market focus, services offered and pricing policy, are managed by the hosts themselves, using the platform’s abilities.

Micro-entrepreneurship refers to a business employing up to five employees or self-employed individuals (Jayachandran, 2021; Vial and Hanoteau, 2015; Zhang et al., 2019) and has been an emerging employment opportunity in recent decades (Gindling and Newhouse, 2014).
The rapid development of technology and the diffusion of its knowledge have hastened the advancements of micro-entrepreneurship for sustainable communities (Huang and Chen, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2010; Wang and Jeong, 2018). Due to the interplay among disruptive innovation, tourism movements and labor market, a shift toward a sharing economy is reflected by a growing trend toward self-employment (Bögenhold and Klinglmair, 2015). Thus, “people as businesses” outlines a novel type of micro-entrepreneurship, which responds to a new shape of the local economy to address environmental, economic and socio-spatial demands (Stabrowski, 2017). As a result, micro-entrepreneurs are described as people who use the sharing economy to strengthen sources of their household income for livelihood purposes (Honig, 1998; Martin, 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). The sharing economy has spread to many industries (Belk, 2014); tourism and hospitality seem to be the most prevalent (Abrate and Viglia, 2019; Priporas et al., 2017; Sigala, 2018). Sharing economy and disruptive innovation have led people to expand the boundaries of the home, turning people into businesses, residences into hotels and guests into hosts (Stabrowski, 2017).

The tourism e-micro-entrepreneurship is defined as “the process of launching or adding value to a small tourism enterprise that relies partially on web marketplaces to attract visitors and employs no more than five people, with the goal of serving a global market and allowing the owner a desired livelihood and lifestyle” (Ferreira et al., 2018). Airbnb relates to micro-entrepreneurs and especially to tourism e-micro-entrepreneurship, whose self-identification as brands allows them to attain security during economic uncertainty (Stabrowski, 2017). Airbnb’s services are similar to those provided by traditional tourist accommodation providers (Alrawadieh and Alrawadieh, 2018), enhancing the accommodation’s authenticity.

E-micro-entrepreneurs contribute to the evolution of tourism and especially the hospitality industry by providing guests with home benefits, novelty, social interaction and authenticity. Furthermore, they could cover the multi-dimensions of heterogeneous guests’ needs, targeting different segments of the tourist market. There are hosts who provide the equipment for guests with disabilities (Randle and Dolnicar, 2019) and/or there are hosts who provide entire homes with kitchen amenities that make guests feel like home (Guttentag et al., 2018), covering the gap created by traditional hotels (Huang and Chen, 2021). Additionally, in contrast to traditional hotels, this type of accommodation is scattered throughout residential areas and, thus, completes the map of hospitality, giving life to neighborhoods and not only concentrating tourism around the main tourist attractions (Guttentag et al., 2018; Shabrina et al., 2021). It is of particular interest at this point to highlight that “Airbnb has introduced various innovations to enhance and expand its services, such as the ‘Superhost’ status badge for particularly active and well-reviewed hosts” (Guttentag, 2019), rewarding their adeptness as e-micro-entrepreneurs.

2.3 Hosts and guests: equilibrium bonds
Airbnb hosts as e-micro-entrepreneurs build strong community ties, using the disruptive innovation of the modern sharing economy, which is based on creating a more sustainable and decentralized economy (Hussain and Yaqub, 2010). On the other hand, according to Lalicic and Weismayer (2017), tourists are satisfied with Airbnb when the accommodation and the e-micro-entrepreneurs (hosts) provide them with a sense of authenticity. This means that satisfied guests expect the hosts to have an authentic character, preserve cultural peculiarities and be friendlier without a purely professional demeanor. In addition, a survey that analyzed the characteristics that contribute to customer satisfaction indicated that the rental cost, the cleanliness of the apartments, the comfort of the space, easy access to it, the experience that the house offered them and the hosts, the home environment and the ability to live in neighborhoods like the locals have an important role (Guttentag, 2019).
Alternatively, Mylonidis and Assimakopoulos (2019) survey concluded that there was a gap between expectations and reality. Guests had higher expectations for specific features such as cleanliness, comfort, location, security, luxury and generally expected more authentic experiences than they received. However, the ease of use of the platform is an incentive to reuse it. However, this is one of the few surveys that results in a lack of tourist satisfaction and points out that their expectations were not met. In similar surveys, 5% of the respondents stated they are dissatisfied customers (Guttentag, 2016). Despite the great success and growth of Airbnb, there is insufficient research on the satisfaction of the customers who eventually used the platform’s services and the hosts who hosted them. The existing literature review reveals a research void, which will cover the present study. A comprehensive study of the motivational factors and satisfaction faced by Airbnb hosts and guests would significantly contribute to entrepreneurship literature.

Given the aforementioned, the concept of attachment seems consequential. Derived from psychology, the concept of attachment focuses on relationships among people. However, attachment can extend beyond interpersonal relationships and literature describes and explains attachment among tourists and places (Chatzopoulou and Tsogas, 2022), possessions (Wu et al., 2017) and brands or firms (Park et al., 2010). Attachment describes the emotional bonds between customers and brands or enterprises, which is essential for long-term relationships (Thomson and Johnson, 2006). Positive consequences enacted from the feeling of brand attachment – as a strong emotional bond between consumers and brands/firms – have been well researched in the domain of consumer–brand relationships, resulting in an extended literature on brand love and brand loyalty, purchase intentions and customer satisfaction, emotional security and value, separation distress and compulsive buying (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). As behavioral outcomes arise from attachment, individuals with a stronger sense of attachment to an organization generally influence citizen attitudes toward the organization as well as toward peer hosts (Lee et al., 2019). Thus, attachment is vital for tourists’ motivation (Stylos et al., 2017), customers tend to buy more (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) and reuse travel services (Yen et al., 2018). Similarly, Tiamiyu et al. (2020) research on Airbnb concluded that tourists’ attachment to Airbnb due to external and internal factors is most likely to drive tourists to develop positive intentions to book through this platform.

3. Research methodology

This paper elaborates a survey, which described the customers’ (guests) evaluation of Airbnb e-micro-entrepreneurs (hosts). This research is a part of the holistic customer assessment of the Airbnb platform and hosts’ performance, allowing researchers to assess the e-micro-entrepreneurship approach of Airbnb hosts through Airbnb guests’ satisfaction with the platform and the rented lodgings. A quantitative methodology was employed by applying a convenience sampling strategy through a structured questionnaire that was distributed online, ending up in a collection of 150 useable responses. A statistical analysis (in SPSS software) has been performed to test the research’s objectives.

3.1 Sample and data collection

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, an online questionnaire was used to obtain data from Airbnb’s guests. Data were collected online using the tool Google Forms, the link of which was posted to tourism fan pages and social media. The data were collected using the Google Forms platform and distributed through social media and tourism fan pages. The data were collected by posting the surveys’ link on targeted fan pages (such as Tourism in Greece, OpenTourism), on social media (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn) and requesting the Airbnb
users to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were selected using screening questions about Airbnb’s previous experience in order to ensure the recruitment of qualified respondents. In addition, with this distribution method, there was the possibility of reaching guests from different places and general demographics. The environmental footprint of this work was minimized, as it was not required to print the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was derived from existing literature, thus designed in English and translated into Greek, using the method of “translation and translation back” to ensure the questionnaire’s validity (Bougie and Sekaran, 2019). A pilot test was conducted and some adjustments were made before posting and distributing the questionnaire link. A total of 150 responses from Greeks were collected, using the convenience sampling strategy. Both survey sample and sampling technique were the evolution of the COVID 19 pandemic, which did not allow researchers to obtain a larger sample.

3.2 Measures and reliability
The survey was based on measurement scales, which were used in previous research. All items, except the demographics section, were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated “Strongly disagree” and 5 indicated “Strongly agree”. Although the questionnaire consisted of three parts, only two were used for this research. The part that captured the demographic characteristics of respondents, portraying Airbnb users’ profiles and the part of consumers’ satisfaction from the hosts. The perceived satisfaction and expectations were developed to fit the Airbnb context based on Mylonidis and Assimakopoulos’ (2019) research. The tool’s reliability (questionnaire) was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha (α) reliability coefficient. The coefficient for the whole questionnaire was found to be equal to 0.911, which indicates very high reliability. Regarding the individual modules, high reliability is found in the evaluation of the level of satisfaction (α = 0.902).

3.3 Sample profile
A total of 150 valid responses were obtained. Regarding the demographics of the 150 respondents, approximately 60% were females and 73% were under 44 years old. A high percentage of the respondents (32%) was married with kids followed, while the 27% declared in relationship status. Regarding the highest education level attained, 42% of the respondents have completed a bachelor’s degree. In terms of annual income levels, almost 65% of the sample earned an annual income lower than €20,000.

4. Findings
Tables 1 and 2 below present the findings regarding the level of Airbnb guests’ satisfaction with the platform and the various characteristics of the lodging rented from e-micro-entrepreneurs (hosts) through the Airbnb platform. From their responses, it emerged that they are very satisfied with the ease the platform provides in making reservations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ease of booking</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Avg</th>
<th>Std</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to solve problems</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity of lodging descriptions</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarantee for the lodging quality</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refund guarantee in case of problem</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own creation

Table 1. Satisfaction with the various features of the Airbnb platform
In addition, tourists expressed a moderate to high degree of satisfaction with the guarantee provided for the refund in case of a problem and with the objectivity of the lodging descriptions. They expressed a moderate to high degree of satisfaction with the ability to solve problems provided by the platform and with the guarantee for the quality of the lodgings. Furthermore, they were very satisfied with the location, the ease of the check-out process, the ease of the check-in process and the comfort of the lodging rented. In addition, the research participants expressed a moderate to high level of satisfaction with the amenities, cleanliness, safety, guidance by the host, decoration and luxury of the lodging rented through the Airbnb platform.

The findings on tourists’ overall satisfaction with the Airbnb platform, intention to use it again and intention to recommend the platform to their familiars (Appendices 1 and 2) indicate that participants were very satisfied with their overall experience with the Airbnb platform. They will likely use it on their next trip and recommend it to someone they know.

The correlation coefficients between guests’ satisfaction with Airbnb lodging features and overall satisfaction with the platform, indicate that all lodging features rented through Airbnb are positively related to overall guests’ satisfaction with Airbnb services (Table 3), tourists’ intention to use the Airbnb platform on their next trip and tourists’ intention to recommend the Airbnb platform to their familiars. Therefore, to investigate which of the lodging features play an important role in tourists’ satisfaction with Airbnb, the intention of future use and the intention to recommend to familiars, the forward linear regression method was used.

Table 4 presents the findings of the linear model with the dependent variable overall satisfaction and independent variable satisfaction with suppliers’ characteristics. From the analysis, it emerged that four characteristics of the accommodations are important in predicting the overall satisfaction with the Airbnb platform (contact with the host, decoration, cleanliness, ease of the check-in process). These four characteristics explain 52.6% of the variability of overall satisfaction with the Airbnb platform ($R^2 = 0.526$, $F = 40.213, p < 0.001$). The analysis showed that the increase in satisfaction with the contact with the host ($b = 0.221, p < 0.001$), decoration ($b = 0.247, p < 0.001$), cleanliness ($b = 0.166, p = 0.009$) and ease of the check-in process ($b = 0.150, p = 0.034$) enhance tourists’ overall satisfaction with the Airbnb platform.

Furthermore, Table 5 presents the findings of the linear model with the dependent variable, the intention of using the Airbnb platform in the future and the independent variables, the satisfaction with each of the hosts’ accommodation features (cleanliness and ease of the check-in process). Indeed, these two characteristics explain the 39.8% of the

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Table 2.
Satisfaction with the various features of the lodging rented through the Airbnb platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Avg</th>
<th>Std</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoration</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of check-in process</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of check-out process</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with the host</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance by the host</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own creation
variability of the intention to use the Airbnb platform in the future ($R^2 = 0.398$, $F = 50.289$, $p < 0.001$). The analysis showed that the increase in satisfaction with cleanliness ($b = 0.499$, $p < 0.001$) and the ease of the check-in process ($b = 0.365$, $p < 0.001$) enhance the tourists’ intention to use the Airbnb platform in the future.
Finally, Table 6 presents the findings of the linear model with the dependent variable, the intention to recommend Airbnb to familiars and the independent variables, the satisfaction with each one of the lodging features (safety, cleanliness, ease of check-in process). In fact, these three characteristics explain the 47.1% of the variability of tourists’ intention to recommend the Airbnb platform to their familiars ($R^2 = 0.471$, $F = 43.330$, $p < 0.001$). The analysis showed that the increase in satisfaction with cleanliness ($b = 0.241$, $p = 0.003$), safety ($b = 0.185$, $p = 0.038$) and the ease of the check-in process ($b = 0.434$, $p < 0.001$) enhance the tourists’ intention to recommend the Airbnb platform to their familiars.

5. Discussion
Evidently, the tourists who participated in the research were particularly satisfied with the overall experience. This corresponds with previous research findings converging that the experience offered through the Airbnb platform generally meets the needs of the guests (Calinao et al., 2019; Guttentag, 2016; Lalici and Weismayer, 2017; Mylonidis and Assimakopoulos, 2019; Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). Additionally, findings are consistent with those of Tussyadiah’s (2016) research in which convenience and safety are determinants of tourists’ overall satisfaction with the Airbnb platform. As referred, the purpose of this paper is to examine how Airbnb has been transformed from an informal form of tourism accommodation into an emerging form of tourism e-micro-entrepreneurship through an interesting triangle consisting of three distinct parts: hosts, platform and guests. Aiming to highlight the supply side (platform and hosts) through the satisfied demand side (guests), the authors decode the research findings, based on the literature on disruptive innovation, e-micro-entrepreneurship and attachment and develop the “IRMA” model to illustrate the equilibrium relationship between the e-micro-entrepreneurs (hosts) and the satisfied guests through the Airbnb platform, as depicted in Figure 1, where:

I: Innovation (disruptive) constitutes the cornerstone of the ecosystem developed between hosts and guests through Airbnb (Platform).

R: Registration, regulation, range of choices, requirements, reviews and reservation are the default framework for this ecosystem (Supply and Demand) to work properly.

### Table 5.
The dependence of the intention of using the Airbnb platform in the future on the satisfaction with the hosts' accommodation features – linear regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-standard coefficients</th>
<th>Standard coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of check in process</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>0.365</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own creation

### Table 6.
The dependence of the intention to recommend Airbnb to familiars on the satisfaction with the lodging features – linear regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-standard coefficients</th>
<th>Standard coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of check in process</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own creation
M: **Micro-entrepreneurs** (Hosts) are the peers who seized the opportunity to manage their underutilized properties, offering quality services to attract the *Market* (Guests).

A: **Adeptness** is the main characteristic that e-micro-entrepreneurs (Hosts) should have, while its **attainment** is defined by the customers’ (Guests) **assessment** and ensures the **attachment** of the latter (Revisit and Recommendation), thus retains hosts’ success (Superhosts).

More specifically, combining what Avdimiotis and Poulaki (2019) and Katsoni (2019) state, the sharing economy involves disruptive innovations which refer to the evolution of technology and digitalization where digital communities facilitate the principles of sharing economy, i.e. peer-to-peer exchanges with commercial dimensions. Thus, the Airbnb platform exists in this exact innovation context. Furthermore, on the supply side, registration in the Airbnb platform is required for a peer to be involved in such an ecosystem (Laurenti *et al.*, 2019), while they need to follow the regulations set, which often vary from one place to another, as Avdimiotis and Poulaki (2019) postulate. In addition, on the demand side, the Airbnb platform, apart from a digital community, constitutes a well-operating reservation system for finding and renting tourist accommodation (Guttentag, 2015, 2019) among a range of choices with available reviews assessing the hosts (Guttentag, 2019). Thus, the advantage of sharing economy’s innovations leads peers to enter the world of e-micro-entrepreneurship by exploiting their underutilized properties, which they manage through the Airbnb platform, in the broad and international market of tourist accommodation (Ferreira *et al.*, 2018). Nonetheless, their efficiency as hosts (e-micro-entrepreneurs) is assessed by their guests (customers), who are able to review lodging and hospitality services based on their satisfaction with each feature. Following the guest’s assessment, hosts have the opportunity to improve their offered services, as adeptness leads to the reward title of “Superhost” (Guttentag, 2019) which demonstrates their attainment as e-micro-entrepreneurs, ensuring...
6. Conclusions and the way forward

6.1 Conclusions
Airbnb wouldn’t exist without hosts since they are indeed the foundation of the Airbnb company, motivated by the acquisition opportunities for additional income, social interactions and sharing, acting like e-micro-entrepreneurs in managing their listings through the platform, while guests consider, among other important criteria for choosing online lodging services, the platforms’ credibility and value-for-money additional services provided by peers, which this research ensure it. Approaching Airbnb through the development of the IRMA model simulates an actual e-micro-entrepreneurship operations management system. As the cornerstone of this ecosystem, the platform enhances hosts’ (e-micro-entrepreneurs) efforts in managing and promoting their listings. The guests consume accommodation services, through an easy search process and assess supply side (platform and hosts) toward experience optimization. Implications, limitations and future research regarding the IRMA model approach for Airbnb platform are following.

6.2 Theoretical implications
This study brings valuable insights into tourism e-entrepreneurship literature by assessing the Airbnb platform and the hosts as e-micro-entrepreneurs, providing useful information to researchers and managers involved in the Sharing Economy’s disruptive innovation. The empirical results of this research contribute substantially to the tourism behavior, sharing economy and tourism e-micro-entrepreneurship literature by synthesizing findings from previous research and providing a new framework for a complete understanding of the drivers of Airbnb’s ecosystem operations, when it comes to the hosts’ attainment as e-micro-entrepreneurs (supply side) and to the guests’ attachment as consumers (demand side).

6.3 Practical implications
Undoubtedly, this paper illustrates the success of the Airbnb platform and hosts that exploit the sharing economy’s disruptive innovation abilities, acting as e-micro-entrepreneurs, taking seriously the opportunity to have or even increase their income, managing their underutilized properties (listings) at its best, offering quality services at competitive prices. However, it seems that there is room for improvement when it comes to the amenities, cleanliness, safety, guidance by the host, decoration and luxury of the lodging rented through the Airbnb platform. In conclusion, research findings indicated that Airbnb listings satisfy the needs of tourists and substantially meet their expectations. However, some points need to be ameliorated in hosts’ entrepreneurial behavior.

6.4 Limitations and future research
Despite the valuable insights provided by this research, there are several limitations. Nevertheless, the present study considered Airbnb guests as homogeneous rather than as members of potential incentive-based market segments. As such, the results do not refer to
market segments or address the particular characteristics of Airbnb’s different guest segments. Last but not least, it is quite important to consider the research period which concerned the early COVID-19 pandemic crisis characterized by travel restrictions and protocols, thus difficulty reaching actual Airbnb platform users during their activity.

Future research could divide respondents into clusters in order to analyze the tourists’ satisfaction according to their profile. For instance, upcoming studies could investigate if satisfaction with this type of accommodation differs among countries of origin, age categories and marital status. Future research may also illustrate whether the economic benefits of peer-to-peer short-term housing are losing importance versus long-term rentals. Finally, future research could indicate what Airbnb expects of its hosts and how this differs from other forms of accommodation.

References


Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>18–24</th>
<th>25–34</th>
<th>35–44</th>
<th>45–54</th>
<th>&gt;55</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to solve problems</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarantee for the lodging quality</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refund guarantee in case of problem</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own creation

Table A1. Significant differences regarding the age group of tourists regarding the satisfaction with the use of Airbnb – Kruskal Wallis test

Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Avg</th>
<th>Std</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with your overall experience with the Airbnb platform?</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to use the Airbnb platform on your next trip?</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to recommend the Airbnb platform to a familiar?</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own creation

Table A2. Overall satisfaction with the Airbnb platform, intention to use in the future, and intention to recommend to familiar

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