

# Exploration of Determinants and Service Quality Dimensions of Purchase Intention on Airbnb

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**Abstract:** This paper explored the determinants and service quality dimensions of purchase intention on Airbnb from the perspectives of hosts and guests, under the COVID-19 pandemic scenario. To do so, 25 interviews are carried out with Airbnb hosts and guests. There are 19 themes emerged from the interview responses of 10 peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and 15 peer-to-peer accommodation guests, where six of the themes are reserved for the determinants, seven themes for the service quality dimensions, three themes for the Theory of Planned Behaviour and three themes for the strategies to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, this paper exemplified several practical implications for Airbnb hosts to survive through the pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Peer-To-Peer Accommodation host, purchase intentions, determinants, service quality dimensions*

## 1. Introduction

In January 2020, [1] declared the Covid-19 outbreak to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This pandemic proceeded to force Airbnb's occupancy rates to plunge [2]. As initially assessed by [3], the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an estimated loss of around 30 to 50 USD billion in international tourism receipts. Peer-to-peer accommodation hosts have been on the receiving end of an unprecedented number of challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Since most countries are bringing various containment measures into effect, including Malaysia imposing a Movement Control Order (MCO) across its country. People have been forced to alter their ways of life, stepping into a world where social distancing takes on a form of paramount importance to halt the spread of the virus [4]. For this, people come to stop their travels, choosing

to avoid getting infected while being abroad.

In the meantime, peer-to-peer accommodation has been growing rapidly worldwide. As one of the leading peer-to-peer accommodation platforms, Airbnb was worth more than USD 30 billion, with a market cap of USD 23.3 billion [5], [6]. Between the years 2017 and 2018, Malaysia alone housed the fastest growing market in Southeast Asia, with peer-to-peer accommodations listed on the Airbnb platform amounting to 44,000 [7]. Therefore, it is of the highest level of importance for one to understand the purchase intention towards peer-to-peer accommodation, to make this business model sustainable in Malaysia. It is undeniable that peer-to-peer accommodation hosts will be able to build competitive advantages, attract more new guests and even increase the loyalty of existing guests by developing the relevant strategies [8], [9].

Notwithstanding, there has been several studies regarding

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purchase behaviour towards peer-to-peer accommodation conducted in the past. This can be reflected in the works of experts such as [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]. However, the majority of the research only placed their focus on areas around the United States and Europe [19]. Through the critical review in [19] of the 107 articles about peer-to-peer accommodation from 2010 to 2017, the frequency of consumer behaviour-related topics were observed to be at 24%, which is the highest among the nine identified topics. Researchers have also further implied that, across multiple articles on peer-to-peer accommodation, only 9% of the total articles have focused on Asian regions.

The studies regarding peer-to-peer accommodation context are overall incomprehensible, especially when they are compared to other hospitality products. For instance, [20] were unable to distinguish peer-to-peer accommodation users and non-users in their study, small and non-probability samples were used in the research conducted by [21], and only user involvement and gender differences were tested by [12]. The comparison between the choice process and performance expectations from both peer-to-peer accommodation guests and hotel guests should be done in a way that clarifies the differences in the mechanism between peer-to-peer accommodation and hotel sectors, as suggested by [22]. On the other hand, investigations conducted on service quality that use diverse criteria to assess varied quality models are still lacking [23]. Moreover, the results from studies conducted on consumer perception of service quality and its determinants are shown to be inconclusive [24].

The hospitality industry may significantly and permanently be changed after the spike of the Covid-19 pandemic, service quality becomes an integral aspect to both the stabilisation and improvement, particularly due to the business environment being increasingly competitive [25]. By being aware of the service quality dimensions in peer-to-peer accommodation, not only can the peer-to-peer accommodation hosts be benefited through obtaining useful knowledge, but the entire tourism industry in Malaysia would be given the same opportunity. This leads to the act in response, mainly through the use of appropriate management strategies and policies to increase sales [26]. Considering how peer-to-peer accommodation is a new type of accommodation, as well as the fact that the empirical study of the determinants and constructs of service quality dimensions in Malaysia remains scarce, there remains a great research gap for a service quality model in peer-to-peer accommodation to develop, particularly qualitative study is scarce. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to fill the research gap by exploring the Airbnb hosts' and guests' perceptions on determinants and service quality dimensions of Airbnb purchase intention in Malaysia, in particular under the effects of the COVID-19 phenomenon.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Airbnb**

Airbnb has been expanding excessively worldwide, and Malaysia is not excluded from this international phenomenon. Notably, Malaysia was the home to the fastest growing market for Airbnb in Southeast Asia in 2017 and 2018 consecutively [7]. There were 44,000 of peer-to-peer accommodations that were listed on the Airbnb platform alone in 2017, with more than two million of guests staying at them. There had also been a 99% rate of year-over-year growth in Malaysia [7]. As for 2018, the fastest growing cities for Airbnb in Malaysia were listed to be Sibul, Sarawak (290%), Sempurna, Sabah (290%), Alor Setar, Kedah (214%) and Tanjung Tokong, Pulau Pinang (177%) [27].

According to the Penang branch of the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), the rise of Airbnb and illegal accommodations is seen to be one of the causes of the drop-in Penang hotel occupancy rates [28]. This was in line with findings of [29], which showed that with every 10% increase in peer-to-peer accommodation with Airbnb listings, there was a 0.37% reduction in hotel revenue. By the same token, an in-depth interview with 12 hotel executives has revealed that smaller hotels "have to fight" for every guest because the respondents stated that they are in direct competition with peer-to-peer accommodations like Airbnb [20].

In a survey conducted by Airbnb that involves 2,000 Malaysian hosts and guests, half of the Airbnb hosts agreed that hosting Airbnb, it aided them in paying their home mortgages, while another 40% said they earned a passive income, thereby making ends meet [30]. Malaysia was the fastest growing market for Airbnb in Southeast Asia, as the findings show that 89% of Malaysians support short-term rental and 74% of Malaysians confirmed that Airbnb provides Malaysian entrepreneurs the chance to have their self-sufficient businesses [31]. The Malaysian government has targeted 30 million tourist arrivals and RM100 billion in tourist receipts through the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign alone [32]. This insufficiency of tourist accommodation limits tourism revenue significantly [33]. "To increase accommodation capacity and options which is to support the projection of tourist arrivals of 30 million and RM100 billion revenue by 2020" [34, p. 6], therefore, is the role of peer-to-peer accommodation, all the while getting more and more important in the Malaysian tourism industry.

### **2.2. Determinants and Service Quality Dimensions**

Purchase intention is extremely complex [35] and multifaceted [36]. There are 15 determinants of purchase intention towards peer-to-peer accommodation, namely

authenticity, relationship with the host, place/location, uniqueness appeal. The previous literature on determinants convenience, assurance, understanding, and caring, of purchase intention towards peer-to-peer accommodation economic benefits, sustainability, social appeal, practical that are listed above is summarised in Table 1. benefit, enjoyment, desire for community, unique accommodation and variety, belongings appeal and

Table 1: Summary of Literature on Determinants of Purchase Intention towards Peer-To-Peer Accommodation

<b>Determinants</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Researchers</b>
authenticity	<i>“Is the local experience that guests receive by staying in private residences”</i> [21, p. 1193]	Hardy & Dolcinar [37], [38]
relationship with host	<i>“Through social relationships like generalised exchange, trust, and altruism”</i> [39, p. 2]	[39], [40]
place / location	Location of a lodging facility [20]	[20]
convenience	It refers to the convenience of the accommodation’s location [41]	[42]
assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence [43]	[42]
understanding and caring	Making the effort to understand the customer’s needs [24] The hosts that treat their guests in friendly manner [42]	[42]
economic benefits	Financial reasons are the motivation for the millennials to book peer-to-peer accommodation [10]	[10], [18], [20], [26], [36],[37], [44]
sustainability	Travellers’ perceptions of environmental footprints [45]	[36], [45]
social appeal	<i>“The experiential appeal of peer-to-peer accommodation (i.e., access to experiences in local neighbourhoods not typically exposed to tourists)”</i> [26, p. 3]	[18], [26]
practical benefit	<i>“Airbnb users are primarily attracted to the service by its practical advantages”</i> [22, p. 13]	[22]
enjoyment	<i>“Which is a major determinant for intrinsically motivated use”</i> [36, p. 2052]	[36]
desire for community	<i>“Desire for social relationships with the local community”</i> [26, p. 13]	[26]
unique accommodation and variety	<i>“Airbnb offers a better array of types of accommodations which include castles, luxury tree houses, houseboats and private islands”</i> [10, p. 11]	[10]
belongingness appeal	Advertising appeal that emphasising on “feeling at home” [15]	[15]

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uniqueness appeal	Advertising appeal that emphasising on “atypical place to stay” [15]	[15]
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Another important factor of success in ensuring a hospitality provider has repeat customers is service quality [46]. This is because it facilitates the process of differentiation among hospitality providers in a profitable way [43]. It also ensures companies achieve a higher return on investment and asset turnover, yet service quality concepts are not well developed [47]. However, it is difficult to define perceived service quality [48] due to three unique features, namely intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability of production and consumption [42]. The most common explanation of perceived service quality [49] is

quoted to be “a form of attitude, related but not equivalent to satisfaction, and results from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance” [43, p. 15].

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the service quality concept, the researcher adapted systematic reviews of [50] of nine service models (see Table 2). The reviewed models are gap models, attribute service quality model, synthesized model of service quality, performance only model, ideal value model of service quality, Evaluated Performance, Normed Quality Model, model of perceived quality, satisfaction, PCP attribute model, and service quality, customer value, as well as the customer satisfaction model.

Table 2: Summary of Service Quality models

<b>Model</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Researcher</b>
Gap model	Service quality is a function of perception and expectations	Words of mouth communication; personal needs; experience; external communication to the consumer	[42]
Attribute service quality model	The categorization of attributes into various groups is the first step toward the development of a service quality model, too much focus on only one attribute may lead to customer dissatisfaction	Physical facilities and processes; people’s behaviour; professional judgement	[51]
Synthesized model of service quality	Service quality is “similar to an attitude” and can be operationalized by the adequacy-importance model	Company image; traditional marketing activities; external influences	[52]
Performance only model	A performance-only measurement of service quality, SERVPERF	Performance; importance	[49]
Ideal value model of service quality	Modelling value approach to service quality as a result of satisfaction process	Negative disconfirmation	[53]
Evaluated Performance and Normed Quality model	Conceptualize the perceived ability of the product to deliver satisfaction as the product’s relative congruence with the consumer’s ideal product features	Normed quality	[54]
Model of perceived quality and satisfaction	Service quality and satisfaction are diverse	Desires congruency	[55]
PCP attribute model	Service quality that built from a hierarchical structure based on three main categories	Peripheral attributes; core attributes; pivotal attributes	[56]
Service quality, customer value, and customer satisfaction model	To understand the consumer decision process and evaluate company performance	Perceived price; perceptions	[57]

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### 3. Methodology

In this study, the qualitative research method is employed. This research method is described to be a multifaceted,

erratic, and contested field, as it involves a variety of methodologies and research practices [58]. To list out the research objectives of the qualitative research method for this study, (1) To explore the key determinants of purchase intention of peer-to-peer accommodations in Malaysia, (2) To examine the service quality dimensions towards peer-to-peer accommodations in Malaysia, and (3) To extend the Theory of Planned Behaviour impact on the peer-to-peer accommodation in Malaysia, and finally, (4) To identify the strategies to overcome the challenges in the context of peer-to-peer accommodation in Malaysia during COVID-19 pandemic. These research objectives are devised in favour of gathering in-depth opinions and inputs from the peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and guests.

The purposive sampling technique is applied in the qualitative approach of this research, where the Malaysian hosts and guests will be interviewed in the same approach. There are mainly two rationales for interviewing Malaysian host and guest participants instead of foreigners. Firstly, concerning the country border has been remaining closed since the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO) by the Malaysia government on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 till date. In this regard, it is a great difficulty to approach foreign guests for conducting interview. Secondly, according to the findings of a survey conducted by Tourism Malaysia during COVID-19 pandemic, 71.3% of Malaysian is shown to have a preference to domestic travel over going overseas [59]. Therefore, it is interesting to explore the determinants of their purchase intention towards peer-to-peer accommodations. In this aspect, a reference to the selection criteria by [60] in their study exploring the power dynamics between peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and guests is deployed. For peer-to-peer accommodation hosts, they state that there are two important criteria for selecting the sample, which are: a) The participants have to be active hosts on the peer-to-peer accommodation platform such as Airbnb as well as b) the participants' accommodations must be located in Malaysia. As for peer-to-peer accommodation guests, the participants have to be Malaysian and have experienced staying at peer-to-peer accommodation in Malaysia. A pilot study was conducted before the data collection process, where there were five participants interviewed by the researcher. The group of five consists of two peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and three peer-to-peer accommodation foreign guests. In addition to that, there were no modifications done to the peer-to-peer accommodation hosts' selection criteria for the main study.

The data for this study were collected during the in-depth interviews via video calls. The entire interviews were recorded using a voice recording application upon the consent of the participants. The coding process was then separated into two phases. For the first phase, researchers write the transcripts and fill codes into matrices. As for the second phase, transcripts are analysed to identify

meaningful categories from all the codes written in the first phase. During the first phase, transcripts of all 25 participants' interviews were written down using the Microsoft Word software after multiple reviews of the voice recordings. Three matrices were then devised on sheets, including 10 and 15 peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and peer-to-peer accommodation guests respectively. The hosts were given labels H1- H10, while the guests were given the labels G1-G15. The long list of codes was then extracted, and matrices were filled in according to the column of participants.

From 17th October 2020 to 5th May 2021, the qualitative data collection of this research was carried out. Within the process, a total of 25 in-depth interviews was conducted, all of which include 10 peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and 15 peer-to-peer accommodation guests. Among them, the first host participant was named H1, the second host participant was named H2 and the same logic applies to all 10 of them. On the other hand, the first guest participant was to be identified as G1, the second guest participant was identified as G2, and so on. The participant profile is tabulated and presented in Table 3. By implementing the concept of saturation, the samples of the 25 individuals are considered sufficient enough. The concept of saturation in the qualitative approach shall be implemented to maintain the research quality, all the while avoiding any compression of unnecessary time and labour [61].

Table 3: Participant Profiles

No. of participant (host)	10
No. of participant (guest)	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>
Gender (host)	Male – 6 Female – 4
Gender (guest)	Male – 7 Female – 8 Sabah – 4
Location of peer-to-peer accommodation (host)	Kuala Lumpur – 3 Johor – 2 Selangor – 1 Sabah – 5
Location of peer-to-peer accommodation stayed (guest)	Kuala Lumpur – 5 Pulau Pinang – 3 Selangor – 1 Pahang – 1

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

The researcher has chosen to implement thematic analysis from the research of [62] in analysing the collected data as a qualitative method. During the whole process, the researcher transcribed the gathered data from the interviews, re-read it, and recorded the initial ideas, systematically coding the data from all the transcripts before defining and naming the themes.

As Table 4 illustrates, all themes that were developed from empirical qualitative data sets pertain to the determinants and service quality of purchase intention, Theory of Planned Behaviour towards peer-to-peer accommodation, as well as strategies to overcome the challenges that come with the COVID-19 pandemic. They are as showcased with the extracted codes from the interviewed 10 peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and 15 peer-to-peer accommodation guests.

Table 4: Themes Emerged from the Interview Responses

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Determinants</b>	
<b>Feeling like a home (FLH)</b>	Cosy home (H1, H2), Complete home (H1), Make them feel like they are at home (H10), It looks homey (G3), For a whole family (G5), Good experience for a whole family (G5), Home-alike feel (G6), To have a party with family (G10), More space for a family gathering (G11), Dining area for the family to sit and gather (G14), Feel like staying at your own home (G15).
<b>Interaction with the host (IWH)</b>	I treated my guests as my friends (H1), The host made it up (G1), and a great host (G3).
<b>Local cultural experience (LCE)</b>	Mix with local culture (H1), Learn from our culture (H1), Mix with the local people (H1), Meet my neighbour (G1), Go to the local market (G1), The real local feel (G1), It has a local vibe (G6).
<b>Price competitiveness (PCC)</b>	Competitive price (H2), They can save some money (H3), Extra mattress is for free (H4), It is cheaper (H9), Airbnb is cheaper for bigger space (H10), The price difference (G1), The price point (G2), It is worthy (G3), The cost factor (G5), I expect the price to be cheaper (G6), It is more worthy (G7), A larger area with lower cost (G8), Reasonable price (G11), Pricing is the main factor (G12), Price is cheaper than a hotel (G14).
<b>Location (LOC)</b>	Nice quiet town area (G1), The sea view was good (G3), It was close to food (G3), First factor would be the location (G4), It is very close to the MRT (G5), It must be convenient for me (G6), Access to the local food and public transport (G7), Comfortable environment with sea view (G10), Location is the main factor (G12).
<b>Accommodation design (ACD)</b>	The decoration and design (H4), Aesthetically pleasing (G3), I always look at the bathroom design (G3), Beautiful interior design (G9), Theme design of the accommodation (G10), Creative interior and exterior decoration (G14), The little touches (G15).
<b>Service Quality</b>	
<b>Responsiveness (RES)</b>	Attend to them immediately (H2), Promptly reply (H4), Fast response is important (H4), Always standby (G8), Fast response (G12), And quick response (G15).
<b>Reliability (REL)</b>	All items are provided as booked (G1), To provide what was promised (G2), No misrepresentation (G3), And no difference from the photos (G9).
<b>Caring (CAR)</b>	A caring host (H1), Put yourself in the shoes of the customer (H5), Always understanding (G1), I feel taken care of (G1), Sensitive to the other's needs (G3), Someone is taking care of us (G7).
<b>Home facilities (HFC)</b>	Dining area, TV and washing area (H5), Cooking facilities (G1), Kitchen is prioritised (G2), Kitchen with necessities (G3), Tea, coffee and espresso machine (G4), You can do your cooking (G5), Amenities (G6).
<b>Personal advice (PAV)</b>	Give them my own opinion (H1), Give them tips on where to go and where to eat (H2), Give recommendations (H3), Knowledgeable host (H4), Tell them the best place for dinner (H5), And offer advice, map and information (H7).
<b>Feeling welcome (FWC)</b>	They are happy and feel very welcome (H1), Everyone loves a warm welcome from the host (H7), A warm greeting (H10), And to make me feel welcome (G2).

<b>Helpfulness (HEL)</b>	I always be there when they need my help (H1), I am very helpful (H1), Helpfulness (H2), Get ready when the guests need help (H4), We are always contactable (H7), Available in case of emergence (G3), We can look for them when there is a problem (G5), Helpful host (G11).
<b>Theory of Planned Behaviour</b>	
<b>Attitude (ATT)</b>	They are happy and satisfied (H1), Feel happy and satisfied (H7), It is valuable (H9), It is a very good experience (G5), A pleasant experience (G6), And really enjoy staying at Airbnb compared to a hotel (G9).
<b>Subjective norm (SJN)</b>	Recommendation from people around is important (H8), I stay at Airbnb if my friend and family introduce to me (G8)
<b>Perceived behavioural control (PBC)</b>	The ability to locate the accommodation (H6), The ability to locate the place (H7), The ability to handle the house appliances (H10), The ability to use the house appliances (G14).
<b>Strategies</b>	
<b>Re-pricing (RPC)</b>	Reduce the rental rate (H1), More budget range (H2), Offer super cheap price (H6), Create promotional package stay (H7), Set a cheaper price to attract local guests (H8), And lower the prices (H10)
<b>Long-term rental (LTR)</b>	Looking at the long-term rental (H1), One year contract (H3), Discount for long-term stay (H4), And long-term stay (H5).
<b>Downsizing (DSZ)</b>	Reduce workforce (H2), Scale as small as possible (H5)

From the findings of [63], it is stated that the home-like atmosphere influences the guests to stay longer in the peer-to-peer accommodation than in a traditional hotel. Therefore, it is shown that the results regarding feeling like a home are consistent with prior researches findings. Additionally, guests who stay at peer-to-peer accommodation with a homely atmosphere tend to show more satisfactory reactions than people who stay at a traditional hotel. Similarly, the findings also corresponded well with online review comments from the official Airbnb website, indicating that Airbnb users deeply value the feelings of being at home, which are also associated with the facilities for daily use [64]. The qualitative findings showed that it is often the feeling of like a home can be the main reason for the travellers to stay at peer-to-peer accommodation. Guest participants G3, G5, G6, G10, G11, G14, and G15 reported their reason for staying at peer-to-peer accommodations, voicing out their reason to be feeling like being in a home, even when they are physically away from home. Furthermore, host participants H1, H2, and H10 also agreed that a homely feel is a key aspect that distinguishes peer-to-peer accommodations from traditional hotels.

Participant H1 described booking, checking-in, and staying to be an inevitable direct-dealing process between peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and guests. Prior findings reported that some peer-to-peer accommodation guests expressed the intention to revisit or settle in the destination after an in-depth understanding of the place and local people through interactions with hosts [65]. Hosts who take the initiative to interact with their guests are often appreciated by their guests. The interactions between peer-

to-peer accommodation hosts and guests are considered to be authentic. Sometimes they continue being friends even after the fact that guests have already checked out from the accommodation. Friendship makes the travel experience joyful and memorable. For this, [66] have asserted the authentic experience due to the interaction with hosts leads to better guests' satisfaction while staying at peer-to-peer accommodations. Nevertheless, this sense of authenticity from interaction with hosts should not be manipulated to prevent development purely for commercial purposes, which decreases the authenticity.

For travellers, the local culture is essential for a unique experience. It is a method of learning a new culture, incorporating the local lifestyle and local building design into one's bank of knowledge [67]. It adds to the journey's meaningfulness, especially when travellers mix themselves with the locals and participate in both local and authentic experiences [26]. For this, travellers usually require more enlightening interactions with locals [68]. It is irrefutably true that the guests who stay at peer-to-peer accommodation will have a higher chance of having the local cultural experience compared to ones that stay at hotels. They can easily interact with the locals as some peer-to-peer accommodations are located in non-touristy residential areas. In the case of guest participant G1, his neighbours in the peer-to-peer accommodation he was staying in were nice enough to bring him to walk around:

*"I stay in Airbnb for two and half weeks, I get to meet my neighbours because there is only one lift going up and down so you meet people, they were nice to show us around" G1*

The travellers can immerse themselves in the local culture with their connections to the local people forged. That is what makes staying at peer-to-peer accommodation so appealing to some. Another study showed that cultural exploration and local lifestyle are two important reasons for travellers to choose peer-to-peer accommodations [67]. As explained by host participant H1, the rationale behind that is the desire to understand the local lifestyle and create memorable experiences.

*“You always stay in the hotel and you go out for sightseeing and have a good fun with the local main attraction. But, if a guest chooses to stay in a Airbnb [, they can mix with the local people, they can mix with the local culture because they are not staying in the places [that] everyone is a tourist” H1*

Price competitiveness is another fundamental in the overall tourism industry. This is stated because it is one of the most critical determinants in making any travelling decisions [69]. The importance of prices is collectively highlighted by guest participants G2, G3, G5, and G7 in their decision-making processes of choosing peer-to-peer accommodations over traditional hotels. As proposed by [37], the cost savings is one of the core types of peer-to-peer accommodation guests, as they are the ones who put more effort into keeping their vacation budgets low. In most cases, travellers just add a bit more of their budgets to stay at peer-to-peer accommodation locations, which possess larger spaces to house more people. The price of peer-to-peer accommodation is highly competitive when the accommodation costs are calculated by the person. For this matter, [36] brought up a suggestion that the economic benefit such as low price is of extreme crucial in the sharing economy. The peer-to-peer accommodation sector is not excluded from this, as price competitiveness is important in attracting travellers to spend on peer-to-peer accommodation. This finding is further solidified by [44] in their survey conducted in Melaka. They have found out that the price value of booking accommodation on Airbnb is from its mobile application. Besides, to obtain good reviews from the guests, some peer-to-peer accommodation hosts waived any charges for additional mattresses. This kind of flexibility is one of the strengths that makes peer-to-peer accommodations, competitive in the hospitality industry as a whole.

The location of accommodation is a major concern for many reasons. To exemplify this, the location is seen much more favourably if it is physically close to tourist destinations, public transportation, groceries, and restaurants [67]. In the experience of host participant H1, the location is one of the main factors for his guests in selecting his peer-to-peer accommodation in particular. In [20], who have confirmed that the location is one of the most important factors for Airbnb users while selecting

accommodation, resonates deeply with host participant H1's idea. However, the criteria of the location may vary across the large group of potential guests. Some make small-town areas their preference while others look for a condominium with a view of the ocean as their ideal place of a temporary stay. In general, all guests show a preference for a location that is convenient to them, such as a location that is close to a restaurant, public transport, or the place that they want to visit. It is also supported by the fact that the listing of Airbnb accommodations is generally more compatible with travellers visit spatial distribution than established hotels in both city and nature-based destinations [70].

As explored by [71], accommodation design prominently creates experiential appeals to guests purchasing the services from the hospitality industry. For this matter, an accommodation design that is aesthetically pleasing acts as a great motivator in attracting travellers to book a peer-to-peer accommodation. Booking peer-to-peer accommodation is most commonly done through the online platforms provided by each of their companies such as Airbnb, Agoda Homes, and HomeAway. [72] also discovered that a nicely decorated accommodation with images of high aesthetic quality on to say booking platforms tends to obtain higher booking numbers. According to [73], through expanding on the original conceptualisation of [74] construct of the experience economy, the aesthetics was discovered to have an effective influence on travellers' decisions while booking their accommodation. Therefore, it does not surprise one when accommodation design is identified as one of the significant determinants in purchasing peer-to-peer accommodation. From guest participant G3's input of her personal experiences, she booked the accommodation because the design was appealing visually, particularly the bathroom. She also stated that the accommodation becomes a very attractive point if the bathroom is designed to look modern.

*“I always look at is the bathroom so if the bathroom is nice so I'll most likely book the place” G3*

Responsiveness, on the other hand, is described as quoted: “caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers” [43, p. 23]. The in-depth interviews of this research have found responsiveness to be the key leading guests to feel they have been provided a great service by the peer-to-peer accommodation hosts. It is consistent with the findings from [75], which confirmed that responsiveness from hosts was one of the most important criteria to gather positive reviews from guests of peer-to-peer accommodations. From the experiences of host participants H2 and H4, they have stated that they must be attentive to their guests' needs immediately if there are any requests or complaints arising, all for the sake of achieving high standards in terms of service quality. Another recent study

conducted in Malaysia has also shown similar results, confirming that host responsiveness is a major concern for guests when staying at peer-to-peer accommodation, especially when it is incorporated under the category of customer service [76].

The definition of reliability is condensed down to the description of the “ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately” [43, p. 23]. Within the context of peer-to-peer accommodation, reliability is crucial because most guests make their bookings while they surf accommodation platforms on the internet. Many guest participants, particularly guests G1, G2, G3, and G9, have stressed that misrepresentation of the photos or descriptions on the website will eventually bring guests great disappointment and dissatisfaction. Hence, it is highly important that whatever promised on the internet sites must be authentic to the experiences of the guests are staying at the accommodation. Prior studies have also come to suggest that this sense of reliability has both a direct and indirect significant relationship with guest loyalty in the context of peer-to-peer accommodation [66], [77].

As the core of empathy, caring is explained by Parasuraman et al. [43, p. 23] to be the “caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers”, which reflects the level of empathy that leads to a display of service quality. In the context provided by guest participant G1, he felt taken care of when the peer-to-peer accommodation host brought him on a private tour and introduced him to some good places to visit. This correlates in terms of similarity with another statement from the host participant H1, a 22 times achiever of SuperHost in Airbnb, as he explained how he succeeded in hosting his own Airbnb guests: “[I’m] a caring host” In the same vein, guest participant G7 stressed the importance of providing enough care from the hosts because that is what distinguishes peer-to-peer accommodation and hotels. From this, human contact allows peer-to-peer accommodation to significantly distinguish itself in the sharing economy from the “mainstream” consumption [38]. Hosts who put themselves in the shoes of their guests and are willing to provide their guests a better-staying experience are considered to be caring.

Home facilities play a very important role in the process of attracting travellers to stay at peer-to-peer accommodation as it provides more facilities than hotels. Parasuraman et al. [43, p. 23] in this case, defined tangibles as “physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel”. Home facilities are therefore considered to be tangibles of the accommodation. As an example, peer-to-peer accommodation is generally furnished with kitchens, washing machines, and dryers which hotels do not provide. The idea that home facilities provided in peer-to-peer accommodation are important were supported by the results

of [78] reporting it is the major factor in increase in service quality. The results of another research support this concept, as it produces a distinctive effect on guest satisfaction [79]. Within the concept, the kitchen is one of the most important home facilities as guests stay at their peer-to-peer accommodation. Four guest participants have even reported that the kitchen is one of the most important factors in their choices to stay at peer-to-peer accommodation over any traditional hotel establishments.

Within the realm of peer-to-peer accommodation, the supposed employees are the hosts, with their responsibility being the provider of hospitality services. To expand on this point, the hosts give their advice to their guests about their favourite restaurants, gyms and grocers. Because travellers are all the more fascinated with the golden spots that local people often go, but they are usually unable to get information from the internet. Therefore, personal advice from the hosts is a service that is unique to peer-to-peer accommodation. Because of its sheer importance, it is an aspect that cannot be overlooked. The hospitality providers who convey their knowledge to their guests in a polite manner are a requirement to achieve high standards of service quality [17], [42]. The findings from the experiences of most of the hosts that participated in this research are in line with [41] claim on the same topic, which describes hosts who provide useful information to their guests are more likely to generate a memorable staying experience for their guests. Particularly, host participants H1, H2, H3, H4, and H7 highlighted that they regularly give personal advice regarding the best places to visit and to eat at to enhance the guests’ staying experiences.

Feeling welcome is another factor that has been proven to be important in the hospitality industry. For instance, [80] portrayed that a sense of “warm welcoming” is the second most important dimension in elaborating the hospitality of hotel services. At the same time, [81] have also revealed that feeling welcome is the emotional equivalent of loyalty for mid-price and upscale hotels. Recently, [82] showed similar findings, that depicted the feeling of welcome to be positively influenced the guest satisfaction levels in peer-to-peer accommodation. The thematic analysis of the interviews of the peer-to-peer accommodation hosts in this research displays consistency as well, where host participants H1, H7, and H10 confessed to having given a warm welcome to their guests upon arrival.

Helpfulness is also one of the elements of personal touch that are integral in shaping the experience for the customers and their level of satisfaction [83]. [23], in their longitudinal study, have also devised a conclusion that helpfulness is a part of personal attention, which operates as a factor of service quality. By the same token, host participants H1, H2, H4, and H7 emphasized their own opinions on the importance of helpfulness, especially in terms of providing

good service to guests of peer-to-peer accommodation. To further elaborate, even guests themselves view this trait positively, as one of the guest participants, G11 has stressed the cruciality of hosts' helpfulness.

*"A helpful host will lead me to give a positive review"*  
G11

In a study conducted by [35], it is said that when there is a more favourable attitude, there is a stronger intention initiated for the individual to perform certain behaviours. Past studies show support for this concept, collectively stating that attitude is very closely associated with the purchase intention toward peer-to-peer accommodation [16], [44], [84], [85], [86], [87]. Generally speaking, the peer-to-peer accommodation hosts believe most of their guests are happy and satisfied during their stay at their peer-to-peer accommodation. One of the participants, H9 highlighted some insights that portray guests to have considered their stay at peer-to-peer accommodation a valuable experience. Thoughts similar to that were observed and recorded during the numerous interviews done with the peer-to-peer accommodation guests. Most of them show general agreement when it comes to the question if their respective times spent at a peer-to-peer accommodation is a good experience.

Subjective norm is the beliefs of others' normative expectations, where an individual holds a stronger intention to perform particular behaviours due to a higher force of social pressure [35], [88]. In this matter, the relationship between subjective norm and intention to stay at peer-to-peer accommodation has later been detected and acknowledged by more recent studies such as [10], [85], [89].

In the same study by [35], it is deemed that perceived behavioural control is an element that positively affects the intention to perform a certain behaviour. In short, if there is a greater perceived behavioural control, it would lead to the strengthening of an individual's intention to perform the behaviour. The guests who have greater ability in locating, checking into the peer-to-peer accommodation, and using the house appliances are perceived to hold more control over their behaviour. As a result, a stronger intention to stay at peer-to-peer accommodation is formed in those individuals.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions, quarantines, flight cancellations, and country border closures all across the globe have all converged into a full force that forced the hospitality industry in Malaysia into the local limitations [90]. From this phenomenon, pricing wars that are caused by the low occupancy rate during the Covid-19 pandemic becomes the major challenge for peer-to-peer accommodation hosts. The main reason for such seriousness in this price war is the oversupply of the

accommodations in the market. To counter this issue, many hosts are willing to substantially reduce their selling prices to more local travellers. This in turn increases the chances of potential guests choosing their accommodation and services. Eventually, it transforms into a buyer's market, in which hosts do not hold much bargaining power in setting a more profitable selling price for their guests.

The re-pricing strategy is therefore needed to be focused upon, as it is a key aspect for peer-to-peer accommodation to survive under such circumstances. This is also because the local market has a lower purchasing power in comparison to the international travellers. This situation is most accurately explained by the host participant H2.

*"[The] market is localised now so you are looking at the local market, which the purchasing power may not as strong as the foreigner market. They are looking at something that within the range, more budget range"* H2

Host participants H1, H3, H4, H5, and H9 mentioned that a long-term rental option is a more effective alternative to increase sales during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in correspondent with the findings of [91], who mentioned a similar result from their study. Nevertheless, the price discount is to be given to the long-term tenants. Thus, applying the same discount to peer-to-peer accommodation hosts is not a preferable course of action. Last but not least, three types of downsizing implementation strategies exist, consisting of workforce reduction strategies, work redesign strategies as well as systemic strategies [92]. Host participants who are operating their peer-to-peer accommodation with workers have expressed that they had workforce reduction strategies implemented, all in favour of reducing monthly expenses. Although it is the case for employers with workers, the same thing cannot be applied for those hosts who are operating peer-to-peer accommodation by themselves.

## 5. Conclusion

The determinants of purchase intentions was studied in this study. In it, there emerged 19 themes from the interview responses of the 10 peer-to-peer accommodation hosts and 15 peer-to-peer accommodation guests. Out of the 19 themes, six of them are reserved for the first research objective, seven of them are for the second research objective, three themes for the third research objective, and the final three themes are applied to the fourth research objective. As for theoretical contribution to the hospitality industry, the current research hopes to distinguish peer-to-peer accommodation from hotels in terms of the determinants in terms of purchase intention. In more traditional terms, brand loyalty as a determinant was important in forging the purchase intention towards hotels [15], [93]. Previous kinds of literature have also suggested that the hotel brand image, with its luxury hotel room

attributes conveyed, has significantly influenced the travellers. For instance, [11] implied that hotel guests emphasized more on room attributes, especially when it is compared to peer-to-peer accommodation guests. [94] found that hotel facilities are capable to have the level of loyalty among hotel guests increase. [95] also depicted the importance of hotel attributes in retaining guest satisfaction, which is tied to repurchase intention.

Aside from making practical implications, this research also addressed a multitude of strategies to overcome challenges regarding peer-to-peer accommodation during COVID-19. During the research, the participating hosts are advised to implement three strategies, namely re-pricing, long-term rental, and downsizing. The peer-to-peer accommodation hosts are to survive the pandemic during these trying times. This is so that they can remain in the market when the border restrictions are lifted or the pandemic is over. As a periodical strategy, re-pricing is used as a tactic to counter the oncoming issues. Done through the implementation of an adjustment to reduce the overall accommodation price to suit the local market, the accommodation, daily rate according to the predicted demand and length of stay can be maintained. In this matter, it is also advised for the hosts lower their daily rates on weekdays and non-public holidays. However, the price can be slightly increased when there is higher demand available, especially during school holidays and festive seasons like Christmas, Hari Raya Aidilfitri, and Chinese New Year. Besides that, hosts should provide some discounts to guests who decide to stay longer. Some of the examples are 10% discount for a 3-day stay, 20% discount for a 7-day stay and so on. Overall, hosts are highly encouraged to lower their daily rates, to stay competitive in the current market among peer-to-peer accommodations and other hospitality service providers.

The long-term rental has come to people's minds as a comparatively easier strategy to be implemented, as it reduces effort in checking guests in and out, housekeeping, and servicing guests. The length of the COVID-19 pandemic is uncertain and indefinite. Therefore, hosts are advised to rent their accommodation out for as long as they possibly can. Expatriates, lecturers, government officers, and doctors... are some of the targeted markets in the realm of long-term rentals. Although the profit of long-term rental is considered much lower than a daily rental, it is still able to generate a certain source of income with lesser effort required. Aside from that, downsizing is a good strategy to survive this merciless pandemic as it allows monthly expenses to be trimmed down. Hosts should reduce their number of accommodations by terminating the partnerships they have with the house owners. In the scenario where the hosts themselves are the house owners, they can consider selling their houses to cut down on their loan facility monthly instalments. In addition to that, peer-to-peer

accommodation hosts in particular are recommended to cut down their number of employees by executing certain redundancy policies.

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