



The moderating role of sense of power and psychological risk on the effect of eWOM and purchase intentions for Airbnb

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study aims to explain the effect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on Airbnb consumers' behavioral intentions by examining the moderating role of sense of power and perceived psychological risk, especially in the challenging time after the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this research also considers the critical role of culture in Airbnb customers' experience by conducting a cross-cultural study in Italy, Portugal, and Vietnam.

Methods: Survey data from 1,146 Italian, 262 Portuguese and 441 Vietnamese customers allow us to test the hypothesis with the partial least squares structural equation modeling.

Results: The findings confirm the differential moderating role of sense of power and psychological risk in Airbnb customers' eWOM adoption process across those research settings. Moreover, the desire to book shared accommodation is the most influential factor in customers' purchase intention.

Implications: This research is among the first to delve into the understanding of how customers perceive and respond to eWOM with a specific emphasis on the accommodation sharing sector in a global pandemic. Additionally, it investigates the differential moderating role of sense of power and psychological risk in the online reviews adoption process of Airbnb customers by considering cultural differences.

Keywords: Airbnb, eWOM, sense of power, psychological risk, cross-cultural study

JEL Classification: L81, D81, D91

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1 INTRODUCTION

Consumers nowadays have changed the way they share their experiences and exchange service and product information,

in which eWOM has been a new recommendation approach among customers, thanks to the development of information and communication technology (Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2018). Due to the experiential nature of travel products,



customers are even more depending on user-generated content to make the best travel decisions and ensure their expected experience (Rageh et al., 2013). The vast majority of research confirmed significant influence of eWOM in consumer behaviors in the hospitality and tourism industry in general (e.g. Daugherty and Hoffman, 2014), or among accommodation sharing platforms like Airbnb in particular (e.g. Chin et al., 2019; Cui et al., 2019). During the pandemic period, online reviews were getting more important than ever since they provided timely updates on how service providers were operating in a cautious and controlling manner to constrain the fast and easy spread of the virus, which might persuade or deter potential customers' purchase intentions (Luo and Xu, 2021). However, research on the influence of WOM on consumer decision making in the context of Airbnb under the uncertain situation brought about by a global pandemic, is still limited.

This study aims to further deepen this somehow overlooked research area. Traditionally, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are prevalently used to study the motivational factors in travelers' adoption of online reviews (e.g. Assaker, 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Tapanainen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, these theories only comprise the rational and non-violational variables, while prior researchers found that emotional factors are the utmost important determinant in travelers' decision making process during the pandemic. To overcome this limit, this study applies the Model of Goal-directed Behavior (MGB) which comprises not only relational, but also emotional and motivational factors to holistically study the role of eWOM. MGB has been considered as the most powerful social psychology model to explain travel and tourist behavior in the fields of tourism and hospitality in uncertain situations (e.g. Lee et al., 2012). Furthermore, the construct of trust is also considered given the relevant role the existing literature attributes to it as being a major antecedent in shaping Airbnb customer behavioral intentions (e.g. Park and Tussyadiah, 2020) and, even more, as a variable that significantly mitigates the complexity, uncertainty and the risk travellers might perceive when traveling (Chen, 2013), especially when occurring during a health-related crisis scenario. According to Yi et al. (2020), the experiential and uncertain nature of shared accommodation requires the incorporation of perceived risk in MGB to support the better understanding of Airbnb potential customer behavioral intentions. Although perceived risk has been commonly investigated as the constraint of using the accommodation sharing platform, its moderating role was not often examined and remains unclear in the existing literature (Lho et al., 2022).

While the majority of existing research mainly focused on the properties of information and communication functions (e.g. Erkan and Evans, 2018; King et al., 2014), Cheung et al. (2008) stated that the effect of online reviews on the readers can be dissimilar from person to person due to their subjective judgement of the eWOM conversation. These differences can be explained by distinct research contexts, customer demographics, characteristics or psychological factors, which might intervene the mechanism through which the influence of eWOM on consumer behavioral intentions occurs. In line with these arguments, this paper

aims to adopt another perspective of personal characteristics that is the so-called sense of power consumers might express in their personality traits. Powerful customers are likely to be more optimistic of risk, are action – oriented, and have an illusion of personal control over the results, whereas their powerless counterparts are more sensitive to risk and are inhibition – oriented (Anderson and Galinski, 2006, Fast et al., 2009); this might lead customers to different reactions towards eWOM during the challenging times. Considering that there may not be any prior study examining the moderating role of sense of power in the influence of eWOM on consumer decision making in peer-to-peer accommodation platforms (i.e. Airbnb), this study intends to attain further knowledge pertaining to this aspect. For the purpose of the study, a quantitative study was conducted cross-culturally to examine the effect of eWOM on purchase intentions of Italian, Portuguese, and Vietnamese Airbnb users and non-users, employing a SEM analysis. In line with existing literature, Airbnb non-users in this study refer to those individuals, who are aware of the platform but do not use it (Del Chiappa et al, 2021). Thus, this study contributes to the large body of eWOM and consumer behavioural intentions related literature in various ways. Theoretically, this paper firstly extends the MGB with trust towards Airbnb hosts to have a better understanding about the new linkages through which the impact of eWOM on Airbnb customer behavioural intentions occurs in the prolonged global pandemic. Secondly, it assumes the moderating effects of sense of power and risk perception, which might shape how eWOM indirectly impacts consumers' intentions to book Airbnb accommodations dissimilarly through desire, perceived behavioural control, and trust in Airbnb hosts, taking cultural and situational differences into account. Practically, a deeper understanding about the influence of eWOM on Airbnb actual and prospective Airbnb users would provide useful insights to Airbnb marketers attempting to further boost their online-reputation and to sustain/recover their attractiveness and competitiveness onto the markets in the post-pandemic tourism context; they can also be proactively prepared to cope with similar health-related crises that might appear in the future.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Airbnb and the impact of COVID-19 on accommodation sharing platform

Sharing economy has witnessed a rapid development and burgeoning demand in which instead of buying and owning a product or service, people have been more interested in sharing and leasing them (Marzler et al., 2015). The growth of this sharing phenomenon has been said to affect the global economy in general, or to transform the traditional economic sectors in particular (Botsman and Roger, 2010). The development of the sharing economy has even been more significant within the hospitality and tourism industry, where tourists nowadays are more accessible to the service provided by local people (Ert et al., 2016). Being recognized as the most dominant example of accommodation sharing platforms, Airbnb connects people who are looking to rent

out their properties with those who are searching for affordable and unique accommodations. In more than a decade after its inception, the Airbnb platform, which self-promoted as “the world’s leading community-driven hospitality company” has attracted millions of hosts and guests all over the world.

The platform experienced an exponential development in supply and demand worldwide till the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic that has significantly disrupted the business operations of Airbnb (Dolnicar and Zare, 2020). The perceived health-related risk induced by the outbreak significantly restrains customers to make any travel decision and book shared accommodation. Scholars affirmed that COVID-19 has not only imposed new dynamics regarding the structures of shared accommodations on the one side, but also the choices, needs, necessities and uses of customers on the other side (Gossling et al., 2020). The competitive advantages of Airbnb over conventional accommodations were pronounced as unique experience, affordable price, and especially social and physical interactions. However, these advantages might be redefined in the pandemic, when customers might emphasize the need of physical distance and prefer to rent a full flat to a shared room (Bresciani et al., 2021).

2.2. The role of eWOM on customer behavioral intentions

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined eWOM communication as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customer about a product or a company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet. eWOM or online reviews are becoming increasingly important for consumers and organizations in various settings because customers usually search for peer evaluations about a specific product or service to reduce uncertainty in the purchase decision making process (Cheung et al., 2008; Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2020). Especially in the context of Airbnb, due to a diverse array of properties, hosts and limited information regarding its quality prior to consumption, customers are more relied on the external signals such as online customer reviews in their accommodation booking process (Chin et al., 2019; Cui et al., 2019). eWOM can be spread through a variety of media forms and types of peer-to-peer applications, while online customer reviews and ratings represent the most accessible and prevalent type of eWOM (Chatterjee, 2001). Findings from previous articles showed that eWOM influences consumers’ purchase intentions in different ways. For instance, buying intention of consumers with high skepticism is not influenced by argument quality and review volume, but low skeptical consumers’ purchase intention is affected more by the quantity of arguments than the quality of online reviews (Sher and Lee, 2009). Ruiz-Equihua et al. (2020) argued that positive (vs negative) online reviews have a stronger influence on potential customers’ higher (vs lower) booking intentions for less familiar hotels, especially amongst those customers from restrained cultures. Thus, understanding how eWOM influences customers with diverse cultural backgrounds such as Vietnamese, Portuguese and Italian, who might be distinct in the level of sense of power is undoubtedly necessary, especially in the setting of the pandemic.

2.3. The model of goal-directed behavior

Previous scholars frequently utilized the TAM or TPB to explain customers’ eWOM adoption intention. Despite their wide usage, these theories only consist of the rational part or cognitive variables of the decision-making process, disregarding the emotional and hedonic characteristics of consumer behaviors. Hence, in order to better predict consumer behaviors in uncertain situations (e.g. pandemic time), it is essential to combine emotions, goals and motivation in their decision-making process model (Bagozzi, 1992). The MGB was suggested by Perugini and Bagozzi (2001), in which the attitude is a consequence of a rational evaluation, and the desire is a comprehensive result from rational, emotional, and social aspects. In particular, the MGB reconstructs the TPB and assumes that attitude and subjective norms indirectly influence behavioural intentions through a desire factor (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001).

2.4. The association between eWOM, customer attitude and desire

Previous research indicated that eWOM is a basic and easily accessible information source for travelers and, subsequently shapes their attitude towards a destination or a service provider (e.g. Jalilvand et al., 2012). An unfavorable eWOM on a tourist destination has a negative effect on visitors’ attitude towards visiting that place (Soliman, 2019). Goh (2015) found the significant relationship between eWOM and customers’ evaluation towards booking shared accommodation. Based on the discussion above, it is possible to propose that positive eWOM – which provides timely accommodation-related information in the pandemic – will positively impact potential customers’ favorable assessment towards this activity, as the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1a: eWOM has a direct relationship with customers’ attitude towards Airbnb.

In the MGB, attitude is one of the key components which shows a tendency of preference to a particular entity, while a desire shows the existence of motivation to perform or acquire something in mind (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001). While the TPB asserts that attitudes toward a behaviour and subjective norms strengthen an individuals’ intention to a particular behavior, the MGB redefines the role of attitude and subjective norms on intention formation through desire. The significant difference between travel desire and travel intention is the feeling or individual’s wishes, craving for travel in the former case, while the latter refers to an idea an individual plans to perform in the future (Prestwich et al., 2008). The latest hospitality and tourism related research in COVID-19 has also confirmed the role of travel desire on travelers’ decision making process such as their travel intention, and thus, provides stronger support on the inclusion of desire in this study (e.g. Han et al., 2020). Moreover, the indirect relationship between attitude and behavioral intentions through desire has been confirmed in previous studies (Lee et al., 2012; Prestwich et al., 2008; Yi et al., 2020). Hence, it is possible to say that consumers’ favorable attitude towards Airbnb indirectly increases their

intention to book Airbnb accommodation through desire, as the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1b: Customers' attitude towards Airbnb positively influences their desire to use this accommodation platform.

2.5. The relationship between eWOM, subjective norms and desire

Besides the role of attitude, a person's opinion of a given situation tends to be influenced by the perceived idea of salient referents (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Others' opinions or subjective norms are usually recommendations generated by not only acquaintances, family or co-workers (Teo and Pok, 2003), but also from external resources such as media intelligences, impersonal information and expert opinions. Nowadays, people desire to nurture social connections and build their own personal brand within a like-minded community through providing valuable eWOM on given social networking sites. These recommendations or shared experiences of a particular product or service significantly influences the perceptions of other followers in the networks (Lee et al., 2021). Regarding the relationship between eWOM and subjective norms, existing literature found the influential role played by eWOM in customers' subjective norms in the context of peer-to-peer platforms (Goh, 2015), or generation Y's subjective norms towards the intentions to book luxury hotels (Lee et al., 2021). Thus, the above discussion supports the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a: eWOM positively affects Airbnb customers' subjective norms.

Due to the unexperiential nature of the shared accommodations, customers rely more on the aggregated opinions of peers and external influencers to stimulate their decision making-process (Cui et al., 2019). People outweigh the advice or opinions from critical others in forming a travel decision to reduce the uncertainty. However, numerous scholars also proved the indirect relationship between subjective norms and intentions through desire, using the MGB (Lee et al., 2012; Prestwich et al., 2008; Yi et al., 2020). Therefore, it is strongly supported that Airbnb consumers' subjective norms directly influence desire, which ultimately motivates them to book Airbnb accommodation, as the hypothesis below:

Hypothesis 2b: Customers' subjective norms towards Airbnb are directly related to desire to use the platform.

2.6. The relationships among eWOM, customer positive/negative anticipated emotions and desire

The following component of the MGB, which might affect consumer desire is anticipated emotions. Consumers usually look forward to their affective reactions through their imagination of possible situations associated with a certain behavior. Their prior emotions of a certain experience might have occurred through searching information from other customers, or in other words, the emotional content in customers' feedback can induce readers' anticipated emotions towards the product or services. More simply, unpleasant online reviews make customers unhappy, and

vice versa (Guo et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to the Stimulus–Organism–Response paradigm, customers' online reviews can be considered as a kind of external stimuli which evokes the internal state of potential customers or specifically, their anticipated emotions in this study (e.g. Roy et al., 2021). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that eWOM influences how potential customers anticipate their emotions towards a specific behaviour, as the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: eWOM is related to customers' positive anticipated emotions.

Hypothesis 3b: eWOM is related to customers' negative anticipated emotions.

Either positive or negative anticipated emotions might positively affect customers' desire because it is related to the expectation to avoid situations of failing to achieve the goal (Yi et al., 2020). Therefore, the balance between positive and negative anticipated emotion about goal achievement significantly predicts the desire to perform a particular action (Bagozzi et al., 1998; Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001). According to this argument, the positive and negative anticipated emotions towards staying at peer-to-peer accommodation might influence customers' desire, which subsequently increases their likelihood to book Airbnb accommodation. Moreover, anticipated emotions were also confirmed as the most significant factor in stimulating travellers' desire and travel intentions during and after the pandemic. Grounded on the extant literature, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3c: Customers' positive anticipated emotions directly influence their desire to use Airbnb significantly.

H3d: Customers' negative anticipated emotions directly affect their desire to use Airbnb significantly.

2.7. The relationship between eWOM, customers' perceived behavioural control and desire

The final component of the MGB is known as perceived behavioral control (PBC). Customers, especially potential ones who have not gained direct experience from a service provider, would rely heavily on eWOM from prior customers to have indirect experience, subsequently increasing their confidence and perceived ease of making a final decision. Existing literature confirmed that eWOM has a significantly positive influence on individuals' PBC (Kwok and Yu, 2013; Lee et al., 2021). In COVID-19, travelers can access real-time information on the outbreak seriousness through a large amount of travel-eWOM posted on social media platforms, which can enhance their awareness and facilitate their control on coronavirus outbreak prevention. PBC was found to positively influence consumer intentions to book accommodation on the sharing platform (Goh, 2015). In the MGB, PBC was also proved to strengthen desire and intention to behave in a certain way or even actual behaviour (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001; Prestwich et al., 2008). Thus, based on the strong support of the literature review, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H4a: eWOM has a positive impact on customers' PBC.

H4b: Customers' PBC is related to desire to use Airbnb.

H4c: Customers' PBC is related to purchase intentions with Airbnb accommodation.

2.8. The association between desire and customers' purchase intentions

As mentioned previously, the TPB only comprises rational variables in predicting the customer decision – making process. It therefore excludes an important factor which is called desire, a motivation-based variable leading to intention (Bagozzi, 1992). Desire was argued as the most significant proxy predictor of the intentions in the MGB, which was found to play a mediating role in the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, positive and negative anticipated emotions, PBC and customer behavioural intentions (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001). Customers' desire to adopt the peer-to-peer accommodation affects their intentions accordingly (Yi et al., 2020). Based on the well-established MGB, the below hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Customers' desire to use Airbnb is positively related to their purchase intentions.

2.9. The antecedents and outcomes of customers' trust in hosts

In the shared accommodation economy, service providers and consumers confront security risks from uncertainty, as it is a physical transaction and requires the presence of customers at the premise for service experience (Lamberton and Rose, 2012). Before making any decision, both parties evaluate one another through prior users' reviews, which is an indication of what increases users' trust. In the case of Airbnb, the antecedents of consumers' trust in hosts are linked with the interactions between service consumer and provider, or hosts' reputation. Yang et al. (2019) found that host reputation, which is achieved through reviews, comments, referrals, and recommendation, has the most powerful impact on users' trust in hosts. Especially in the COVID-19 context, the mentioned cleanliness information in customer reviews was found to have the strongest influence in potential customers' trust toward the host (Godovykh et al., 2022). This trust subsequently leads to users' intentions or their actual participation in the sharing economy (Ert et al., 2016; Zervas et al., 2021). Based on the above, the authors assume that customers are more concerned about hygiene and sanitation standards to avoid being infected with the virus in a health-related crisis, thus, online reviews which reveal service providers' commitments in following a strict cleaning protocol and providing a safe and clean place definitely increases their trust, and enhances their intentions to book the accommodation. Therefore, the following hypothesis suggests:

H6a: eWOM positively influences Airbnb customers' trust in hosts.

H6b: Trust in hosts increases customers' purchase intentions.

2.10. The moderating influence of psychological risk perception

Perceived risk refers to an individual's felt uncertainty regarding the possible negative outcomes of using a product or service (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003). In the hospitality and tourism industry, psychological risk which embraces travel concerns including fear, unnecessary tension, anxiety and discomfort are more significantly related to perceived risk in the context of a pandemic (Al-Ansi et al., 2019; Han et al., 2020). For instance, Olya and Han (2020) stated that the possibility of death-caused incidents during the trip highly increase tourists' perceived psychological risk. Regarding the influence of the COVID-19 outbreak in Airbnb customers' perceived risk, Lee and Deale (2021) affirmed customers' higher risk perception during the pandemic, as the main restraint of customers' participation in peer-to-peer accommodation (e.g. Yi et al., 2020). In the tourism sector, prior research also confirmed the moderating role of customers' risk perception in the associations between cognitive, affective, and motivational factors and behavioral intentions (Han et al., 2020; Han et al., 2019). In line with the above arguments, this study proposes the moderating nature of Airbnb customers' perceived psychological risk, which might affect the relationship between eWOM, MGB constructs, trust in hosts and purchase intentions, as the following hypothesis:

H7: Airbnb customers' psychological risk perception moderates the hypothesized relationships.

2.11. The moderating role of consumers' sense of power

Consumers' sense of power was confirmed to play a critical role in various hospitality settings. Power refers to individual demographic characteristics such as social status, income, age, and gender (Tucker, 2014). Individuals with high power fosters an agentic orientation, which is associated with dominant behaviors, enhancing need for control, and independence, while powerless counterparts are more sensitive to risk and inhibition oriented (Anderson and Galinsky, 2006). Thus, it can be assumed that in COVID-19, perceived risk of being infected with the virus impules these powerless customers to either avoid travel to a destination or rely more on the opinions of others in the travel decision-making process. Nevertheless, Lammer et al. (2012) argued that power increases social distance, and consumers with a sense of power perceive their control over potential outcomes (Fast el al., 2009). Moreover, based on the construal level theory and psychological distance literature review, this study proposed that powerful customers with higher social distance from online reviewers compared to their powerless counterparts will process events at higher levels of construal with more abstract information (Trope and Liberman, 2010), and lead them to be more self-oriented and become less likely to take the perspective of others (Galinsky et al., 2006). Hence, it can be assumed that powerful and powerless customers perceive the effect of online reviews from other customers dissimilarly, which leads to their distinct responses, as the below hypothesis:

H8: Consumers' sense of power moderates the hypothesized relationships.

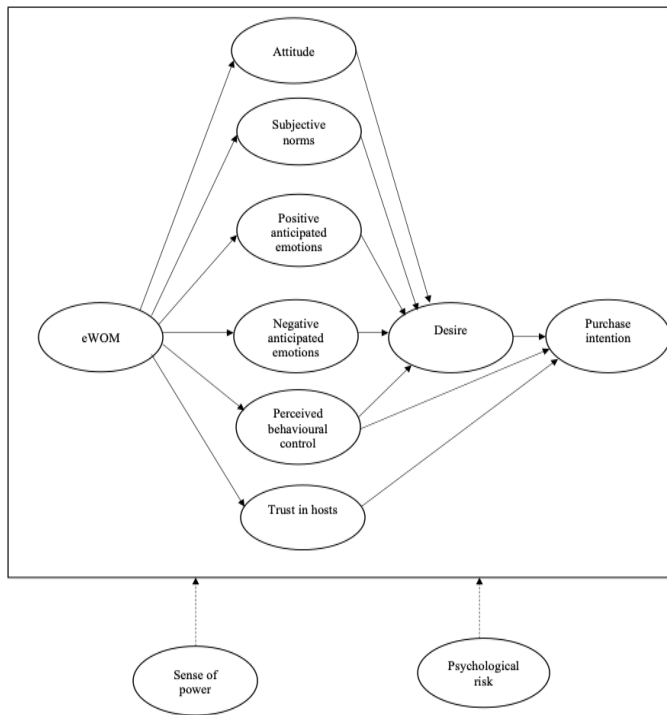


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data collection and sample

The selection criteria for the participants are based on the following characteristics: native speakers of Italian, Portuguese, or Vietnamese who are above 18, have had experience of staying at an Airbnb accommodation before, or never stayed but having some knowledge of the platform. These three countries were purposively selected considering that they show relevant cultural differences among them, for example, in terms of uncertainty avoidance (Italy=75, Portugal=99; Vietnam=30), which means that they are differently “optimistic” of risk (Hofstede, 2022). A web-based survey was applied for data collection as it is commonly used in hospitality research (e.g. Liang et al., 2018; Yi et al., 2020). Since it is almost impossible to have a sampling frame, this study collected data through a non-probability sampling approach. A link of an online questionnaire on Googleforms was then delivered to the target population through sharing the questionnaire link on social platforms sites.

Following the above criteria, after almost six months of data collection (from October 2021 to March 2022), 441 Vietnamese participants (54.4% female, 50.1% single, and 53.5% in the age cohort 18 -30) were recruited. A vast majority of Vietnamese study participants held a bachelor's degree or post-graduate degree (90.3%) and earned a monthly income that is above the nation's average (63%). Using the same criteria, 1146 Italian respondents (61.7% female, 34.3% in the 18-30 age bracket, 47.6% married or cohabitant) were also recruited online. Approximately 59.1% held a bachelor's degree or higher qualification. However, about 27.1% reported an annual income above the nation's average. Compared to Vietnamese and Italian study

participants, the characteristics of the Portuguese sample (n=262) are slightly different in terms of demographics, in which there are more males (55.6%), a more mature sample (30.0% in the age cohort 40-50), and single (51.1%). Around 65.6% earned a bachelor's degree or higher, and 38.5% reported an annual income above the nation's average. Moreover, Portuguese respondents perceived the highest level of sense of power with the median at 3.63, while the median of both Vietnamese and Italian samples is slightly lower at 3.50. The median value of perceived psychological risk is significantly different among the three samples, in which Vietnamese reported the highest value (3.00), followed by Italian (2.33) and Portuguese (2.00). The demographics of the respondents in this study are similar to the results of previous Airbnb-related studies conducted in Italy, Portugal, and Vietnam (e.g. Del Chiappa et al, 2021; Do and Pereira, 2023). Nevertheless, the sample size of these three studied countries is vastly different, with Italian respondents accounting for the most significant portion of the overall data. This unbalance is closely related to the popularity of Airbnb and number of listings in Italy compared to Vietnam and Portugal. While this accommodation-sharing platform has reached Italy for over a decade, the first Airbnb listings in Vietnam only started in 2015. Moreover, Italy was ranked second in Europe for the number of listed properties, with over 615,000 listings in 2018 (Buzzacchi et al., 2020).

3.2. Measurement items

Researchers developed a preliminary version of the questionnaire after conducting an extensive review of related literature. More specifically, to capture how customers perceive the influence of eWOM, six items were originated from Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), and Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011). All the constructs of the MGB were measured through adopting the measurement items from Lee et al. (2012); Perugini and Bagozzi (2001); Song et al., (2012); Yi et al. (2020). Particularly, all constructs were measured with four items each, except PBC that was assessed with three items. Psychological risk was evaluated with three items adopted from Han et al. (2020). Additionally, five indicators were adopted from Liang et al. (2018) to measure customers' trust in Airbnb hosts. Lastly, an eight – item chronic scale adopted from Anderson et al. (2012) to measure consumer sense of power, in which negatively phrased measurement items were carefully reverse coded to avoid meaning distortions.

Later, five hospitality researchers and five industry experts were invited to review the preliminary set of measurement items. In order to increase the survey's understandability, a pretest with 20 participants who fulfilled the criteria of the study was followed. All items were anchored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Since all the measurement items originated in English, back and forward-translation in Italian, Portuguese and Vietnamese questionnaires were conducted to ensure the accuracy of the meaning.

3.3. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics to profile the sample, which was followed by the

application of Partial Least Square approach to SEM to test the hypothesized relationships. The PLS-SEM has been recommended in testing the complex conceptual models with non-normal data or an extension of an existing theory like the one in this current research (Hair et al., 2017). Since data were collected using the same Likert-scale and a cross-sectional method from the same participants, common method variance (CMV) which negatively affects the findings might occur. To check for this problem, a full collinearity test was performed to detect if any constructs exist with variance inflation factor (VIF) values exceeding 3.3 (Kock, 2015). The results confirmed the non-existence of CMV, because the pathological VIFs for all latent factors fell in the range of 1.000–2.191.

According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-stage approach was followed to measure the model. First, the relationship between latent factors and its relevant indicators was evaluated to test the measurement model. Second, the associations between the proposed constructs were assessed to evaluate the structural model (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, this study also suggests the moderating role of consumers’ sense of power and psychological risk; measurement and structural variance followed through multi-group analyses.

4 RESULTS

4.1. Assessment of the measurement model

To assess the quality of the measurement model, we tested the validity and reliability of the reflective constructs. First, the convergent validity was examined through two indicators: factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 1, the loading of each item on its assigned constructs exceeded the ideal level of 0.707, except the only item (eWOM5) with loadings at 0.626, thus, all these indicators were retained in the model (Hair et al., 2017).

Moreover, the AVE values of all the constructs ranged from 0.686 to 0.907 which far exceeded the threshold value at 0.5, providing support for convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Second, Dijkstra-Henseler’s rho (pA) value was used to evaluate the internal consistency reliability. The results showed that the lowest rho value is at 0.814, implying adequate construct validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Moreover, the composite reliability for all constructs ranged from 0.889 to 0.975 (above 0.7), which once again confirmed the reliability of the measurement model in this study. Finally, we tested discriminant validity with Heterotrait – Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). As illustrated in Table 2, all HTMT values were lower than 0.85, confirming the discriminant validity of the measured constructs.

4.2. Assessment of the structural model

To assess the explanatory power of the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R²) was computed. The R² of purchase intention was 0.553, which indicates a substantial proportion of variance explained by its determinants (desire, trust in hosts, PBC). Attitude, subjective norms, positive and negative anticipated emotions, and PBC together also explained a significantly large variance (R²=0.629) of

customer desire. However, eWOM only provides small variance to the constructs in MGB model or trusts in hosts (with R² value ranging from 0.036 to 0.105). Moreover, the blindfolding procedure was employed to generate the Stone-Geisser’s Q² value. The sufficient predictive power of the proposed model is confirmed because the Q² value for all endogenous latent variables are greater than zero (ranged from 0.026 – 0.504).

Dimensions & Items	Mean(Standard Deviation)	Loading	AVE	t
EWOM (rho_A: 0.922, CR: 0.928)			0.686	
EWOM 1	4.306(0.895)	0.847		80.034***
EWOM 2	4.300(0.906)	0.904		141.349***
EWOM 3	4.271(0.894)	0.895		114.171***
EWOM 4	4.134(1.002)	0.834		74.231***
EWOM 5	3.651(1.169)	0.626		30.523***
EWOM 6	4.153(0.935)	0.832		74.551***
Attitude (rho_A: 0.896, CR: 0.927)			0.760	
Attitude 1	3.649(0.891)	0.869		113.972***
Attitude 2	3.873(0.869)	0.866		116.894***
Attitude 3	3.496(0.927)	0.891		154.889***
Attitude 4	3.567(0.920)	0.859		97.615***
Subjective norms (rho_A: 0.899, CR: 0.930)			0.769	
SN 1	2.915(1.099)	0.894		141.882***
SN 2	3.021(1.099)	0.916		192.990***
SN 3	3.005(1.063)	0.908		160.955***
SN 4	3.413(1.015)	0.783		58.733***
Positive anticipated emotions (rho_A: 0.913, CR: 0.937)			0.788	
PAE 1	3.513(0.884)	0.884		122.492***
PAE 2	3.368(0.922)	0.922		206.431***
PAE 3	3.184(0.971)	0.875		118.961***
PAE 4	3.394(0.939)	0.870		101.523***
Negative anticipated emotions (rho_A: 0.951, CR: 0.961)			0.859	
NAE 1	2.404(1.110)	0.908		128.050***
NAE 2	2.438(1.130)	0.948		233.028***
NAE 3	2.507(1.142)	0.933		208.081***
NAE 4	2.275(1.116)	0.919		145.542***
Perceived behavioral control (rho_A: 0.814, CR: 0.889)			0.728	
PBC 1	4.134(0.908)	0.870		71.735***
PBC 2	4.155(0.936)	0.886		77.274***
PBC 3	4.091(0.963)	0.802		56.610***
Trust in hosts (rho_A: 0.926, CR: 0.943)			0.769	
TRUST 1	3.734(0.809)	0.828		82.951***
TRUST 2	3.571(0.809)	0.875		94.173***
TRUST 3	3.603(0.841)	0.884		124.533***
TRUST 4	3.647(0.808)	0.898		143.998***
TRUST 5	3.643(0.824)	0.898		141.378***
Desire (rho_A: 0.921, CR: 0.943)			0.807	
DES 1	3.488(0.945)	0.893		145.968***
DES 2	3.526(0.982)	0.919		180.366***
DES 3	3.165(1.103)	0.900		172.110***
DES 4	3.476(1.029)	0.879		126.554***
Purchase intention (rho_A: 0.967, CR: 0.975)			0.907	
PI 1	3.149(1.126)	0.952		261.974***
PI 2	3.093(1.151)	0.965		291.507***
PI 3	3.122(1.175)	0.952		220.364***
PI 4	3.135(1.171)	0.941		206.485***

Table 1. Descriptives and results of the measurement model

	Attitude	Desire	NAE	PAE	PBC	PI	SN	TRUST
Attitude								
Desire	0.709							
NAE	0.345	0.495						
PAE	0.684	0.810	0.554					
PBC	0.428	0.280	0.040	0.244				
PI	0.539	0.786	0.507	0.684	0.168			
SN	0.709	0.665	0.458	0.642	0.231	0.543		
TRUST	0.670	0.573	0.295	0.615	0.430	0.435	0.529	
eWOM	0.357	0.241	0.067	0.244	0.335	0.155	0.215	0.310

Table 2. Descriptives and results of the measurement model

Hypothesized relationships	β	p-value	Supported
H1a: eWOM→Attitude	0.324	0.000	Yes
H1b: Attitude→Desire	0.215	0.000	Yes
H2a: eWOM→SN	0.191	0.000	Yes
H2b: SN→Desire	0.149	0.000	Yes
H3a: eWOM→PAE	0.222	0.000	Yes
H3b: eWOM→NAE	-0.007	0.785	No
H3c: PAE→Desire	0.465	0.000	Yes
H3d: NAE→Desire	0.096	0.000	Yes
H4a: eWOM→PBC	0.299	0.000	Yes
H4b: PBC→Desire	0.039	0.022	Yes
H4c: PBC-> Purchase intention	-0.045	0.015	No
H5: Desire→PI	0.731	0.000	Yes
H6a: eWOM→TRUST	0.290	0.000	Yes
H6b: TRUST→PI	0.042	0.043	Yes

Table 3. Descriptives and results of the measurement model

Following the assessment of the measurement model, the hypothesized relationships among eWOM, MGB constructs, trust in hosts and purchase intention were examined using path coefficients, t-values by performing bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 sub-samples. As seen in Table 3, almost all the proposed hypotheses are supported. The only exceptions are the insignificant influence of eWOM on negative anticipated emotion ($\beta=-0.007$, $t=0.273$, $p=0.785$), or the significant but negative relationship between PBC and purchase intention ($\beta=-0.045$, $t=2.429$, $p=0.043$), which is different in the expected sign compared against the hypothesis. Thus, there is no empirical evidence to support H3b and H4c. Table 3 summarized the detailed evaluation of the structural model.

4.3. Testing the moderating effects of sense of power and psychological risks across the different cultural context

To test the moderating effect of sense of power in consideration of cultural difference, the median was used as a referent to categorize the sample in each country into two groups: one for those respondents with a value sense of power lower than the median (powerless customers) and another one presenting a higher value (powerful customers). Multi-group analyses were performed to investigate the differential moderating role of sense of power in different cultural contexts. As shown in Table 4, the non-parametric tests (Welch-Satterthwait test) revealed that the moderating effect of consumers' sense of power in the relationships among eWOM, MGB constructs, trusts in hosts and purchase intentions vary significantly across cultures. More specifically, regarding the Vietnamese sample, negative anticipated emotions hold a stronger influence on the desire of Airbnb consumers with a higher level of sense of power, compared to their counterparts (p -values<0.05). Contrastingly, the PBC of these powerful consumers is less influenced by the opinions of others (p -values< 0.05). However, in the context of the Italian sample, the effect of eWOM on Airbnb consumers' attitude, positive anticipated emotion and trust in hosts is significantly mitigated in the group of powerful consumers, compared to a powerless one (p -values< 0.05). The only exception belongs to the Portuguese sample in which powerful and powerless consumers showed no dissimilarity in their perceptions and responses towards eWOM (all p -values> 0.05).

Similarly, the median value of psychological risk in each country was also applied to divide the sample into groups of respondents with low perceived psychological risk (with a value lower than the median) and those presenting high risk perception (with higher value). With respect to the moderating nature of psychological risk, the positive influence of eWOM on Vietnamese Airbnb consumers' attitude, subjective norms and trusts in hosts is significantly weakened when consumers perceive higher psychological risk in using the Airbnb accommodation (p -values<0.05). Contrastingly, in the context of the Italian sample, higher psychological risk perception reduces the effect of eWOM on negative anticipated emotions, compared to groups of lower risk perception (p -value<0.05). Once again, Portuguese respondents also report no difference in their perception, emotion and behavioural intentions towards online reviews regardless of psychological risk perception (all p -values>0.05). In this paper we briefly present the significant interaction effects of sense of power and psychological risk in the association among eWOM, MGB constructs, trust in host and purchase intention in three respective countries.

Significant interaction effect	β (High Vs Low)	p-value	β (High Vs Low)	p-value	β (High Vs Low)	p-value
	Vietnamese		Italian		Portuguese	
H1a: eWOM→Attitude	-0.191	0.119(No)	-0.174	0.005(Yes)	-0.081	0.665(No)
H3a: eWOM→PAE	-0.065	0.634(No)	-0.125	0.043(Yes)	-0.12	0.459(No)
H3d: NAE→Desire	0.191	0.016(Yes)	-0.008	0.856(No)	0.097	0.290(No)
H4a: eWOM→PBC	-0.255	0.048(Yes)	-0.097	0.166(No)	0.141	0.370(No)
H6a: eWOM→TRUST	-0.228	0.086(No)	-0.141	0.020(Yes)	-0.042	0.818(No)

Table 4. Multi-group analysis – consumers' sense of power

Significant interaction effect	β (High Vs Low)	p-values	β (High Vs Low)	p-values	β (High Vs Low)	p-values
	Vietnamese		Italian		Portuguese	
H1a: eWOM→Attitude	-0.398	0.002(Yes)	-0.053	0.386(No)	-0.019	0.604(No)
H2a: eWOM→SN	-0.307	0.011(Yes)	-0.101	0.076(No)	-0.009	0.830(No)
H3b: eWOM→NAE	-0.149	0.222(No)	-0.123	0.035(Yes)	0.056	0.753(No)
H6a: eWOM→TRUST	-0.377	0.006(Yes)	0.004	0.950(No)	0.003	0.836(No)

Table 5. Multi-group analysis – psychological risk

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Discussion

The importance of emotion and desire in influencing travelers' decision making process has been critically emphasized in most recent COVID-19 related hospitality and tourism research (e.g. Das and Tiwari, 2021; Xu et al., 2021). Thus, unlike prior research, which predominantly utilized the TAM and TPB to study the motivational factors of travellers' online review adoption (e.g. Assaker, 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Tapanainen et al., 2021), this study extends the MGB to provide a holistic understanding of how online reviews influence Airbnb consumers' perception and

behavioural intentions, especially in the context of the global pandemic. More importantly, our study contributes to a greater understanding of the contradictory and incomplete findings regarding the role of eWOM in Airbnb customers' purchase intention through considering the moderating role of sense of power and psychological risk perception across three different cultural contexts: Italy, Portugal and Vietnam.

The findings reveal that eWOM positively triggers Airbnb consumers' favorable assessment towards the platform activity, their perceived social pressure, positive anticipated emotion, PBC and trust in hosts. These results once again confirmed the role of eWOM on consumers' cognitive, affective and behavioural factors, which are in line with prior studies (e.g. Godovykh et al., 2022; Goh, 2015; Guo et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Soliman, 2019). These rational, social and emotional factors subsequently increase Airbnb consumers' purchase intention directly or indirectly through desire, which also corroborate closely with extant literature (e.g. Ert et al., 2016; Han et al., 2020; Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001; Yi et al., 2020). As findings indicate, purchase intention towards Airbnb is mainly affected by the motivational factor – desire, which is followed by trusts in hosts. The critical role of desire in consumer behavioural intention has been affirmed in previous studies which were conducted in relation to the crises (e.g. Lee et al., 2012; Yi et al., 2020), thus, the findings of this study concurs with this literature. While extant literature has widely confirmed the alleged positive relationships between PBC and customer behavioural intentions (e.g. Goh, 2015; Han et al., 2020), our study found the significant but negative association between these two constructs, which is surprisingly exciting. The possible explanation for this surprising finding can be the consequences of situational factor – the COVID-19 pandemic. This health-related crisis is an external shock that has been lasting for years and left severe impacts on global and individual life. Thus, the well-understanding of the limited behavioral control under the unexpected situation might constrain travelers' planning for travel in the near future.

Moreover, consumers' sense of power and psychological risk perception generally weaken the effects of eWOM on Airbnb consumers' attitude, subjective norms, anticipated emotions, PBC and trust in Airbnb hosts. Nonetheless, the moderating effect of these constructs vary significantly across the three countries. More specifically, the influential role of eWOM on attitude, positive anticipated emotions, trust in Airbnb hosts is reduced among Italian powerful consumers, while these effects show no dissimilarity in Vietnamese and Portuguese powerful and powerless consumers. Relying on Hofstede Insights (2022), the difference can be explained by the fact that Italians register a lower score in power distance (50) and higher in individualism (76) which means they are less likely to accept and expect inequality power distribution and that they tend to express lower trust towards the "others" (Zeffane, 2020). In this case, it seems that there is a low level of influence from the opinions of significant others, especially those with a high sense of power. But Vietnamese and Portuguese registered high scores in power distance (70 and 63 respectively) and low in masculinity (40 and 31 respectively). The high power distance and low masculinity

present stronger reliance on social influence or online reviews from others, as it refers to compliance and desire to gain positive reactions from superiors regardless of their level of sense of power (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). However, negative anticipated emotions trigger stronger desire in Vietnamese Airbnb consumers with higher sense of power, while this group is less impacted by eWOM on enhancing their PBC; this finding indicates that Vietnamese powerful customers relied more on their own experience, knowledge or self-efficacy to enhance PBC.

With respect to the moderating nature of perceived psychological risk, its effects on the relationship between eWOM, MGB constructs, trust in hosts and purchase intention are also dissimilar among the three countries. Particularly, the high perception of psychological risk reduces the effect of eWOM on Vietnamese Airbnb customers' favorable evaluation towards the platform, subjective norms and trust in Airbnb hosts, while the strength of these relationships remains similar among the low and high psychological risk groups of Italian and Portuguese respondents. These results contradict the uncertainty avoidance dimension amongst the three countries, as Vietnam registered low scores in this dimension which means they are more willing to take risk and may even totally disregard eWOM (Schumann et al., 2010). However, these surprising differences can be the results of contextual factors beyond cultural effects, as Vietnam was experiencing the serious outbreak only a few months before the data collection. On the contrary, the high psychological risk perception of Italian Airbnb customers weakens the influence of online reviews on their negative anticipated emotions; yet, the moderating role of psychological risk is insignificant in affecting how Portuguese Airbnb customers respond towards eWOM.

5.2. Implications

Although many studies have investigated the role of online reviews on customer behavioural intentions (e.g. Goh 2015; Lee et al., 2021; Tapanainen et al., 2021), our research is among the first to delve into the understanding of how customers perceive and respond to eWOM with a specific emphasis on the accommodation sharing sector, especially in a context highly influenced by a global pandemic and its subsequent long lasting objective and subjective / psychological effects. Furthermore, prior cross-cultural research with Airbnb customers also revealed that customer behavior may be culturally-driven (e.g. Tran et al., 2022). All this said, our findings provide four main contributions to the literature of Airbnb and eWOM as follows.

First, this study offers strong evidence on explaining the contrasting findings regarding the effect of eWOM on consumer perception and behavioural intentions in the existing literature; it confirms the differential moderating role of sense of power and psychological risk in the relationships between eWOM and Airbnb consumers' rational, cognitive, affective factors, or the relationships between these constructs with their purchase intention, taking cultural and contextual difference into consideration. Second, even though perceived risk has been commonly investigated as the constraints of using the accommodation sharing platform, its moderating role was not often examined and remains unclear (Lho et al., 2022). Therefore,

this study deepens the existing knowledge on the moderating effect of risk perception in consumers' behaviour in the context of the sharing economy.

Third, another finding of this study is the negative relationship between PBC and Airbnb customers' purchase intention which is not aligned with previous research; it reflects that the well-established relationship between customers' cognitive factors and their behavioural intentions can be counterintuitive in different situations, which requires further investigation to have a better comprehension of consumer behaviours.

Fourth, although PBC negatively affects Airbnb customers' purchase intention, it still plays a significant role in boosting their desire to use the platform. Once again, this finding supports the critical role of travel desire in customers decision making process in challenging situations (e.g. Fedeli et al., 2022; Gursoy et al., 2022). Thus, we argue that the MGB is an appropriate theoretical background to investigate how eWOM affects Airbnb consumers' purchase intention in a health-related crisis, especially when desire also explains a large variance in their intention to book Airbnb accommodation in the future, compared to trust in hosts and PBC.

By investigating the effect of eWOM on Airbnb consumers' purchase intention in a global pandemic, our findings provide meaningful managerial implications for Airbnb management platform and its accommodation service providers – Airbnb hosts. The finding reveals that the online reviews from previous customers are positively related to Airbnb customers' attitudes, perceived social pressure, anticipated emotions, PBC, and trust in hosts, which subsequently increase their desire to use the platform services. Therefore, Airbnb platforms should provide an accessible, easy-to-use mechanism and offer monetary or non-monetary rewards to encourage customers to leave feedback after their stay. More importantly, Airbnb hosts must ensure the service quality that meets or exceeds customer expectations to gain their satisfaction, which motivates them to write a positive review or recommend the services to potential customers. In post-COVID-19, people are more concerned about hygiene and cleanliness, especially those with a high psychological risk perception. Hence, Airbnb hosts should put extra effort into providing safe and clean accommodation, such as following a strict cleaning protocol or offering additional amenities to fulfill personal disinfection needs. This information should be well-presented to customers while searching the listings to reduce their psychological risk perception significantly when online reviews from others influence them less.

Furthermore, the findings also found that Italian Airbnb customers with a high sense of power are less influenced by the effect of online reviews. According to Rucker et al. (2012), power is related to structural factors in an individual's social environment. Therefore, the belongingness appeal of a sharing accommodation should be targeted to powerless customers, while uniqueness should be highlighted to their counterparts (Liu and Mattila, 2017). In summary, to attract the consumers with a high level of sense of power, Airbnb hosts must definitely provide a unique and novel staying experience which can enhance their social recognition. Overall speaking, the result of this cross-cultural study can assist Airbnb managers and

service providers in these three countries or countries with similar cultural backgrounds in understanding the insights of their target customers. These insights can be used to formulate the types of marketing strategies which are more attractive to these markets.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

As with any quantitative research, this study is not without limitations. First, the study is based on the usage of convenience samples, thus rendering findings hard to generalize. Second, due to the complexity of the conceptual model, the comparison between Airbnb users and non-users' behavioural intentions was beyond the scope of this study. Future researchers can examine whether the effect of eWOM remains unchanged on Airbnb users and non-users' purchase intention. Third, this study investigated the different moderating role of sense of power and psychological risk in the relationships between eWOM and Airbnb consumers' perception and behavioural intentions across different cultures. Further studies can propose and test the moderating role of other customers' characteristics such as using the Big Five personality model to re-test these hypotheses in these countries. Finally, consumers often change their behaviours along with changing situations, thus, measuring their behavioural intentions longitudinally especially in the post COVID-19 is highly recommended to enhance this study's findings reliability and validity.

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