

# Measuring Overall Customer Experience in a Hospitality Collaborative Consumption Context

## Evidence from Airbnb Users

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**Abstract:** Measuring and managing customer experience is increasingly becoming a priority in the experience-laden hospitality context. With the growing desire of consumers for living more authentic experiences, the collaborative consumption (CC) model has gained significant popularity in this industry. However, to date, the underlying structure of customer experience in a hospitality CC context has not been uncovered and a generalizable quantitative measure is yet to be developed. To fill this gap, this research aims to develop and validate a scale for measuring customer experience in a hospitality CC context. Based on a sample collected from Airbnb customers, results yield a 17-item five-dimensional scale (Platform brand experience, Accommodation sensory experience, Social experience with the host, Platform responsive capacity, and Quality of interaction with the host). This work demonstrates that providing an excellent customer experience in a CC context stems from a customer-centred approach from all the involved parties. Theoretical and managerial implications are also presented, along with relevant research avenues.

**Keywords:** customer experience, collaborative consumption, service quality, platform brand experience, sensory experience.

## Introduction

With the increasing desire of consumers for living more authentic experiences, the conventional business model (Business-to-Consumer, B-to-C) in the hospitality industry is now facing unprecedented competition from the peer-to-peer (P-to-P) accommodation rentals, that companies such as Airbnb, Couchsurfing, and Hospitality Club offer ([Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017](#)). P-to-P transactions are a fundamental part of the sharing economy, also referred to as collaborative consumption (CC) and defined as “peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services” ([Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016](#)). In the highly competitive and evolving hospitality industry, providing a superior customer experience has therefore become a central focus for marketers ([Forno & Garibaldi, 2015](#)). In parallel, investigating customer experience and its impact on consumers has increasingly interested marketing and hospitality researchers, who have demonstrated the richness and the context-specific nature of this concept (e.g., [Schlosser, Mick & Deighton, 2003](#)). In the literature, researchers studied customer experience in a variety of contexts and accordingly developed different constructs, such as product experience ([Hoch, 2002](#)), shopping and service experiences ([Kerin, Jain & Howard, 1992](#)), and consumption experience ([Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982](#)). Most research pertaining to customer experience in a hospitality context focused on the conventional sector and, until recently, very few papers studied it from a CC perspective ([Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017](#); [Lyu, Li & Law, 2019](#)). Besides, most of the literature on customer experience in a CC hospitality context used a qualitative approach, which provided an insightful understanding of the experiential aspects, but did not provide a specific and generalizable measure to assess it (e.g., [Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017](#); [Lyu, Li & Law, 2019](#)). On the other hand, most studies that investigated this phenomenon using a quantitative approach did not focus on its conceptualization and did not specifically adapt their measures to the CC unique characteristics. One main difference with the conventional hospitality context, for instance, lies in the multifaceted nature of the CC service itself, which includes interactions with: 1) the provider platform through which the accommodation is booked; 2) the accommodation itself; and 3) the host with whom customers interact during their stay. This specificity calls for a necessary adaptation of the manner in which researchers and marketers assess customer experience in a multilevel interaction-laden CC context. To fill this void, this paper aims to develop and validate a scale for measuring customer experience in a hospitality CC context (CC-Customer Experience). Its main purpose is twofold: to enhance the understanding of customer experience in a hospitality peer-to-peer context; and to develop a measurement tool that is relevant for both researchers and practitioners.

## Literature Review

### Collaborative consumption and customer experience: theoretical foundations

Collaborative consumption (CC), or the sharing economy, is a new paradigm proposed as a more sustainable model of economic organization against the backdrop of energy crises, environmental degradation, and economic recession ([Botsman & Rogers, 2011](#)). According to Benoit *et al.* ([2017](#)), three types of actors interplay in a CC context: the customer, the host, and the digital platform service provider. This specificity confers three characteristics to CC: (i) the number and types of actors involved (i.e., a triadic relationship); (ii) the nature of the exchange between the three actors (i.e., there is no exchange of ownership in comparison with a traditional exchange model); and (iii) the fact that this relationship is mediated by a market-based mechanism. These characteristics highlight the key importance of comprehending the way customers perceive and experience service delivery in such a context. Specifically, transactions in a hospitality CC environment involve a wide range of touchpoints among these three actors where the customer goes through a virtual exchange with the CC digital platform, mostly face-to-face interactions with the host alone, and an immersion in the accommodation's physical environment. When customers experience a service delivery through the Airbnb platform, for instance, it is the host, who is not an Airbnb employee, who gives access to the accommodation to the guests. Yet, customers still anticipate a high-quality service provision that they expect from the Airbnb brand and they evaluate the platform accordingly. Their overall experience is likely to influence the reputation of the digital platform that consumers use to book, pay, and review the accommodations they stayed at, such as Airbnb. As well, all the CC hospitality industry can therefore be affected by each interaction through the service experience, including the service delivery experienced with a variety of hosts who advertise their accommodations using this platform ([Ert, Fleischer & Magen, 2016](#)).

Customer experience “involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical response to the entity, product, and service” ([Verhoef \*et al.\*, 2009](#)). It has both utilitarian and hedonic purposes ([Schlosser, Mick & Deighton, 2003](#)). While the utilitarian purpose refers to a cognitive, goal-directed, and performance delivery as assessed by service quality evaluation, the hedonic one is characterized by an affective state where the consumer is seeking a fun and enjoyable service experience ([Schlosser, Mick & Deighton, 2003](#)). Accordingly, we conceptualize CC customer experience as a global construct comprised of two main dimensions, which are hospitality service experience and service quality. We view the overall customer experience as a multilayered construct that does not only include the customer's evaluation of service quality, but also the more experiential aspects of the service.

Specifically, service quality captures the evaluation of goal-oriented cognitive aspects of the customer experience, such as the functional and technical aspects of service delivery, while service experience encompasses the assessment of its subjective aspects, such as the hedonic and social content of the customer experience. This conceptualization is in line with the holistic nature of the total customer experience as described and defined by Verhoef *et al.* (2009), which encompasses aspects that the service provider can control (e.g., platform design, accommodations assortment, price), and those that are outside of its control (e.g., interactions and social influence).

## Service quality in a collaborative consumption hospitality context

Past research has shown the key role of service quality in a CC hospitality context, as this concept has been directly linked with customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2016). Service quality has been defined in the literature as the extent to which a service meets or exceeds customers' expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1998) and was initially measured using Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry's (1988) SERVQUAL scale. Former research has demonstrated that the traditional SERVQUAL scale is inadequate in a peer-to-peer context due to the triadic nature of the CC relationships, among other reasons (Marimon *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, Marimon *et al.* (2019) proposed and validated an adapted scale, named CC-Qual, that is specifically designed to measure the quality of service provided through a CC model. Based on this conceptualization, CC service quality consists of five dimensions, three of which are related to the interaction with the platform and two pertain to the perceived quality of the host. The first dimension of CC-Qual, site organization, assesses how easy it is for customers to find information on the website and how easy it is for them to interact with this platform. The second dimension, platform responsiveness and agility, refers to how the platform provides quick feedback to customers' inquiries and complaints. The third dimension, legal protection and trustworthiness, measures to what extent the platform ensures the protection of customers' personal information and provides a safe environment for customers to conduct online transactions. The fourth dimension, the quality of interaction with the host, assesses the customer-perceived professionalism, competence, trustworthiness, and honesty of the host. Finally, the fifth dimension, social interaction, evaluates the quality of the customer's social interaction with both the other users and with the host. Given its specific development for a service-based CC context, this is the conceptualization of service quality that we adopt in the current paper.

## Hospitality service experience in a collaborative consumption context

Among all services, hospitality has been characterized by its promise and delivery of something beyond ordinary to its consumers (Xu & Chan, 2010). Whilst most services typically

aim to satisfy the functional needs of customers through service quality, hospitality service aims to satisfy their experiential needs too (Xu & Chan, 2010). Otto & Ritchie (1996) showed the importance of adapting service experience measures to the characteristics of the specific service it refers to, a tourism service experience being different from the banking service experience, for instance. In a hospitality CC context, customers often experience more frequent and more intimate service encounters with the service provider than in the conventional hospitality sector. Not only does the peer-to-peer nature of the service add a supplementary actor, which is the host, in the service delivery with whom customers interact, but the typically less formal nature of these interactions is likely to trigger stronger emotional and subjective reactions. These specificities highlight the need to conceptualize service experience in a unique manner in a CC context.

Following the conceptualization of Marimon *et al.* (2019) of a peer-to-peer context, we propose that hospitality service experience in a CC context is built through various touchpoints during the service delivery process: 1) when customers interact with the platform to browse, rent, and review the accommodation, which shapes the platform brand experience; 2) when they interact with the physical environment in the rented accommodation, which leads to the accommodation sensory experience; and 3) when they interact with the host, thus developing the social experience with the host. Accordingly, we propose that CC hospitality service experience is composed of three underlying dimensions: 1) the platform brand experience; 2) the accommodation sensory experience; and 3) the social experience with the host.

### Platform brand experience

Brand experience has been defined as “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are a part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communication, and environments” (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009, p. 52). Four dimensions of brand experience have arisen from Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello’s (2009) research, which are the sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual experience aspects. Nysveen, Pedersen & Skard (2013) added the relational experience to the scale as a fifth dimension of brand experience. In this research, we aim to investigate the platform brand experience, a new conceptualization pertaining to customers’ experience with the CC digital platform they are using, such as Airbnb. Including platform brand experience as a component of hospitality service experience in a CC context is coherent with its specific three-way interaction (see Marimon *et al.*, 2019). It is also in line with Ha & Perks’ (2005) conceptualization and results with regard to web-based brand experience, which they showed as a key antecedent to satisfaction and brand trust.

## Accommodation sensory experience

The concept of sensory experience has recently emerged as a key concept in the tourism and hospitality literature, where the transformation of consumer experience into something tangible and meaningful is crucial ([Ditoiu et al., 2014](#)). In a hospitality context, aspects of the physical environment or the servicescape ([Bitner, 1992](#)) have a significant potential to trigger experiential reactions among consumers ([Otto & Ritchie, 1996](#)). In a CC hospitality context, the qualitative study undertaken by Lyu and her colleagues ([2019](#)) using Airbnb as a setting has demonstrated the importance of sensory experience in a peer-to-peer context, where aspects such as the homelike feeling and warmth of the accommodation were particularly cited by consumers. A satisfying multisensory experience creates a more positive and vivid experience, which will become part of the consumer's long-term memory and have an impact on his/her subsequent behaviour, such as a stronger intention to revisit or to recommend it to others ([Agapito, Pinto & Mendes, 2017](#); [Chua et al., 2019](#), [Kim & Perdue, 2013](#)).

Based on Bitner ([1992](#)) and Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello ([2009](#)), we conceptualize sensory experience as the effect of both tangible elements of a physical environment (e.g., atmospherics, physical design and decor elements), which engage customers' senses, and the way they interact with the sensory stimuli of the setting (e.g., the view of the landscape or the taste of local food).

## Social experience with the host

Social experience is an important asset in CC contexts where peer-to-peer interactions *per se* have been identified as significant underlying motives for choosing that type of accommodation over the conventional one ([Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015](#)). The desire to socialize with new people, to build relationships, and to feel part of a community are social needs that are met through CC and the sharing behaviour it is associated with ([Tussyadiah, 2016](#)).

Social experience with the host is conceptualized in this paper as the relationship development with the host and the enjoyment associated with such ties ([Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015](#)). It evaluates the host's competence, such as whether he or she is perceived by customers as hospitable, thus interested in the guests staying in the accommodation and concerned that their experience is positive from a social standpoint ([Lalicic & Weismayer, 2018](#)). In line with this conceptualization, a hospitable behaviour has been defined as an "authentic desire to entertain and care for the guests and should not be provided to deliberately impress the guest or with the expectation of reward" ([Lugosi, 2008](#)).

Based on the literature review and in coherence with Verhoef *et al.*'s ([2009](#)) holistic view of experience, we hypothesize that overall CC customer experience in hospitality is composed of two main dimensions: 1) CC hospitality service experience, which includes three

subdimensions: i) platform brand experience; ii) accommodation sensory experience; and iii) social experience with the host; and 2) CC service quality, which is composed of five subdimensions: i) website organization; ii) platform responsiveness; iii) website legal protection; iv) quality of interaction with the host; and v) quality of social interaction with peers (see Figure 1). Based on this conceptualization, the CC customer experience scale was constructed as described in the following method and results section.

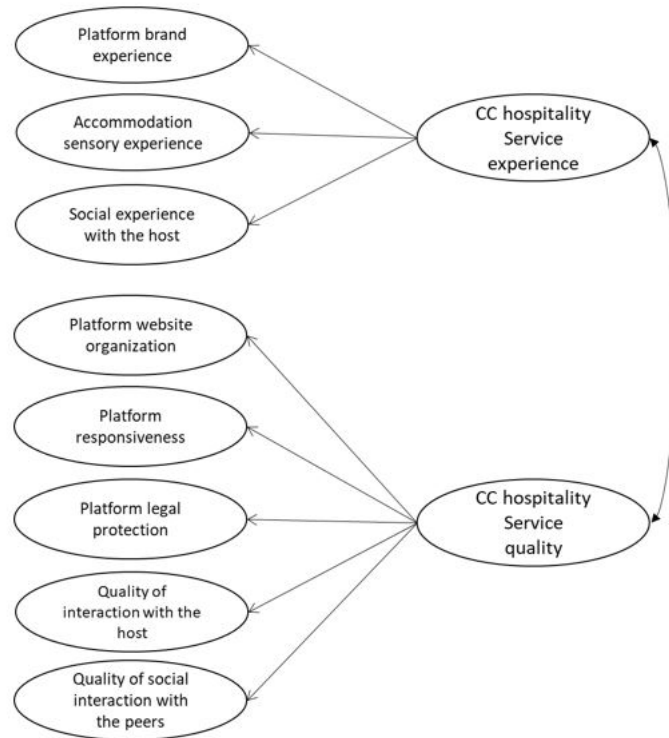


Figure 1. The proposed scale for the CC overall customer experience in hospitality

## Method and Results

### Construct domain specification

Churchill's (1979) framework for scale development has been adopted. This framework has been widely used in past research, despite being revised and criticized (Rossiter, 2011), particularly in terms of content validity. Given the richness of past literature on the customer experience construct, the original Churchill (1979) scheme will be used in this research. The first step is domain specification where constructs are conceptually defined. Accordingly, Table 1 presents a list of the dimensions included in our preliminary model, their definitions, and the references to past research on which these definitions are based.

Table 1. Constructs and their dimensions based on past literature

Construct/Dimension		Definition	Sources
Platform brand experience	Brand sensory experience	The way the platform brand (e.g., Airbnb) is perceived by the customer's senses.	Adapted from Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009) and Iglesias, Markovic & Rialp (2019).
	Brand affective experience	The customer's perception of the emotions triggered by the platform brand.	
	Brand behavioural experience	The customer's perception of the type of action (active or passive) that the platform brand appeals to. It accounts for bodily experiences and physical actions.	
	Brand intellectual experience	The customer's perception of whether the platform brand encourages its customers to think or take part in an intellectual activity.	
	Brand relational experience	The customer's perception of feelings of belonging to a community thanks to the platform brand.	Adapted from Nysveen, Pedersen & Skard (2013) and Nysveen, Oklevik & Pedersen (2018).
Accommodation sensory experience		The way the accommodation s/he rented is perceived by the customer's senses.	Adapted from Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009).
Social experience with the host		The customer's perception of the enjoyment of interacting with the host and the development of social ties with him/her.	Adapted from Smith, Rippe & Dubinsky (2018).
CC service quality	Website organization	The customer's perception of the quality of information organization on the platform's website. It refers to the website's perceived ability to make navigation and transactions easy and intuitive.	Marimon <i>et al.</i> (2019)
	Platform responsiveness	The customer's perception of the platform's efficiency, i.e., whether it can respond to customer questions or complaints quickly and satisfactorily.	
	Legal protection	The customer's perception of the platform's safety and adequate handling of personal information.	
	Quality of interaction with the host	The customer's perception of the host's willingness to help and his/her intention to act in the customer's best interest.	
	Social interaction with the peers	The customer's perception of the quality of the social interaction in this P2P context. It assesses the quality of interaction as a whole, including with other customers.	



## Items generation

In this second step, items that best capture the defined domain were generated. Based on the literature review and the constructs definitions, items were collected and grouped to represent each dimension and subdimension of the hypothesized model, thus leading to a first version of the hypothesized scale. The Airbnb platform has been chosen as a setting for this research. While several competing platforms have emerged in the last years, Airbnb is recognised as a pioneer and leader in this industry worldwide, with over 150 million users and 4 million hosts worldwide in 2020 ([Bustamante, 2021](#)). Moreover, Airbnb provides an interesting study context not only due to its wide utilization as such by researchers (e.g., [Benoit et al., 2017](#); [Ert, Fleischer & Magen, 2016](#); [Tussyadiah 2016](#)), but also to the rich customer experience it aims to deliver, which makes it a very relevant setting for our research that is focusing on the latter.

## Scale validation

To validate the proposed scale, a sample of 204 completed questionnaires was collected. The targeted population consisted of Spanish Airbnb customers who have booked a stay using this platform in the last 24 months. The questionnaire consisted of 36 generated items followed by sociodemographic questions. All responses were recorded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “completely disagree” to “completely agree”. A double back-translation process was applied to the questionnaire to translate the items into Spanish, which was the language in which the survey was carried out. The sample was mostly but not predominantly composed of male consumers (59.80%). Participants were all between 19 and 35 years old, which is in line with the target population of the CC hospitality accommodations. It is also important to note that the vast majority (84.31%) of the respondents rented the full accommodation without sharing it with the host or peer customers. This sample was used both for exploratory purposes and for the final model confirmation analysis.

## Exploratory factor analyses

### Subdimensions of CC hospitality service experience

#### *Platform brand experience*

Platform brand experience (15 items) was analyzed through an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), thorough principal component analysis method. The Kaiser-Meier-Olkin statistic of 0.919 indicated a good result for this analysis. A Barlett test also provided the same conclusion ( $\chi^2 = 3.045$  with 435 degrees of freedom and  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). These results confirmed the existence of a linear dependence between the variables. The scale was analyzed using a strict criterion where only items with a factor loading greater than 0.7 were selected and only factors

with more than one item corresponding to this criterion. Thus, the items selected were intended to be explanatory of the dimension they represent. Only three items, one pertaining to the brand affective experience (BAE1) and two to the brand intellectual experience (BIE1, BIE2) corresponded to these criteria and led to the formation of one platform brand experience factor representing a cumulative total of 56.85% of the variance.

#### *Accommodation sensory experience*

The same criteria were applied to the EFA for this construct and all three items were considered representative and corresponded to the criteria. Their loadings ranged between 0.766 and 0.881.

#### *Social experience with the host*

In this EFA, out of the three items analyzed, two items exceeded by far the 0.7 loading (0.891 for SEH2 and 0.825 for SEH3), whereas the third (SEH1) was at 0.512. Considering the importance of having three items forming this construct, it was decided to keep the latter as well, even though it did not meet the stricter initial conditions.

#### *Subdimensions of the CC hospitality service quality*

The fourth EFA showed that CC hospitality service quality is composed of two dimensions instead of the five originally hypothesized. Four items compose the first subdimension, renamed “Quality of interaction with the host” (26.35% of the variance), while four items represent the second dimension, renamed “Platform response capacity” (18.23% of the variance).

## Reliability and confirmatory factor analysis

Based on the EFAs, we propose that the following five subdimensions allow to assess overall CC customer experience in a hospitality context:

- Three subdimensions of CC hospitality service experience:
  - i. (PBE) platform brand experience (items BAE1, BIE1, and BIE2);
  - ii. (ASE) accommodation sensory experience (items ASE1, ASE2, and ASE3);
  - iii. (SEH) social experience with the host (items SEH1, SEH2, and SEH3);
- Two subdimensions of CC hospitality service quality:
  - i. (PR) platform response capacity (items PRE1, PRE2, PRE3, and LPR2);
  - ii. (QIH) quality of interaction with the host (items SIN2, QIH1, QIH2, and QIH3).

To examine the unidimensionality of the new and definitive five constructs that the initial EFAs yielded, five new independent EFAs were conducted. The five analyses extracted only one factor each. Table 2 shows the statistics for reliability and convergent validity of these five factors. Their high individual items loadings vouched for their reliability. Cronbach’s alpha

coefficient and composite reliability in each case exceeded the threshold value of 0.7, thus confirming their internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In addition, the variance extracted for each factor was greater than 0.5, which corresponds to the recommended threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Cronbach’s alpha values did not improve when any of the items were removed from the scales of each dimension, and the correlations between each item and all the total corrected scales exceeded 0.5. Convergent validity was confirmed for all the analyzed factors and all the items were shown to have significant loadings ( $t > 2.58$ ).

**Table 2. Reliability analysis for the proposed subdimensions**

	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>Platform brand experience</b>	<b>Accommodation sensory experience</b>	<b>Social experience with the host</b>	<b>Platform responsiveness</b>	<b>Quality of interaction with the host</b>
	BAE1 0.837	ASE1 0.801	SEH2 0.891	PRE2 0.775	SIN2 0.827
	BIE1 0.793	ASE3 0.787	SEH3 0.825	PRE3 0.746	QIH1 0.801
	BIE2 0.777	ASE2 0.766	SEH1 0.512	PRE1 0.705	QIH3 0.793
				LPR2 0.699	QIH2 0.730
<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	0.815	0.687	0.558	0.793	0.867
<b>Composite Reliability</b>	0.844	0.828	0.797	0.822	0.868
<b>Average Variance Extracted</b>	0.644	0.616	0.578	0.536	0.622

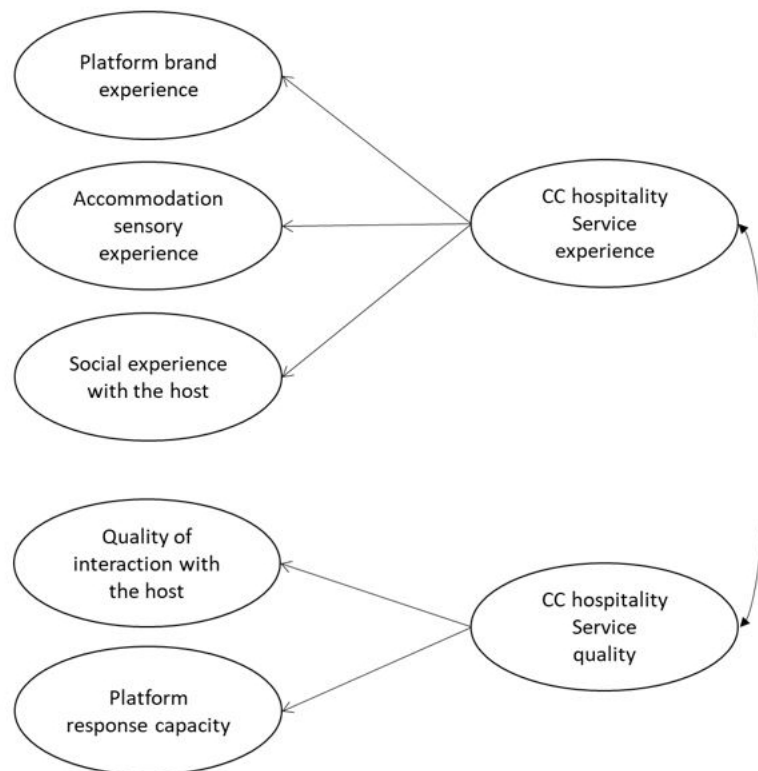
Table 3 presents the results for the discriminant validity analysis, which was conducted using linear correlations or standardized covariances between latent factors by examining whether the inter-factor correlations were less than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 3, the square roots of each AVE were greater than the off-diagonal items, thus demonstrating discriminant validity.

**Table 3. Discriminant analysis for the proposed subdimensions**

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Platform brand experience	0.803				
2 Accommodation sensory experience	0.346	0.785			
3 Social experience with the host	0.263	0.529	0.761		
4 Platform responsiveness	0.442	0.431	0.448	0.732	
5 Quality of interaction with the host	0.200	0.612	0.821	0.457	0.789

To determine the final scale, the next and last step was to analyze these five subdimensions as dimensions of a second-order CFA, where they were associated with the respective dimensions of the overall CC hospitality customer experience construct, which are CC hospitality service

experience and CC hospitality service quality (see Figure 2 for the proposed construct structure).



**Figure 2. The final validated scale of CC hospitality customer experience**

In order to select an appropriate SEM estimation technique, several tests were conducted to assess multivariate and univariate normality. To evaluate multivariate normality, Mardia's coefficient (Mardia, 1970) was calculated, obtaining a normalized estimate value of 22.8, which is a sign of multivariate non-normality (Bentler, 1995). Therefore, the estimation technique applied to the model was the Robust Maximum Likelihood from the asymptotic variance–covariance matrix, the Satorra–Bentler's scaled  $\chi^2$  (Satorra & Bentler, 2001) being used as an adjustment to the  $\chi^2$  test statistic. The software (EQS) used to conduct the CFA also corrects the extent of non-normality reflected in parameter estimates by adjusting the standard errors (Krishnaiah & Sarkar, 1985).

The outcomes of the Satorra-Bentler test are presented in Table 4, together with other goodness-of-fit parameters that were derived from it. The fit indices showed that the variables converged toward the factors established in the CFA.  $\chi^2$  Satorra-Bentler was 219,61, with 113 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000.  $\chi^2/df$  was 1.943, which was below the acceptable limit of 5, but RMSEA and CFI were 0.068 and 0.900, respectively. Considering the global indicators, the model fit was deemed acceptable. The final scale for CC hospitality overall customer experience is presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of CC Hospitality Overall Customer Experience

		CFA (sample N=204)		
Dimension	Items	Loading	t-value	r <sup>2</sup>
Platform brand experience	BAE1	0.818	4.640	0.576
	BIE1	0.735	6.290	0.679
	BIE2	0.780	5.460	0.625
Accommodation sensory experience	ASE1	0.660	6.320	0.751
	ASE3	0.715	5.220	0.699
	ASE2	0.623	5.539	0.782
Social experience with the host	SEH2	0.312	15.570	0.950
	SEH3	0.873	4.470	0.488
	SEH1	0.614	6.220	0.789
Platform responsiveness	PRE2	0.635	5.530	0.772
	PRE3	0.842	4.410	0.539
	PRE1	0.561	7.720	0.828
	LPR2	0.654	6.950	0.756
Quality of interaction with the host	SIN2	0.835	6.300	0.550
	QIH1	0.602	5.750	0.798
	QIH3	0.842	5.740	0.539
	QIH2	0.859	4.920	0.511
<b>Goodness of fit summary</b>				
Satorra-Bentler scaled $\chi^2$		219.609		
Degrees of freedom		113		
p-value		0.00000		
$\chi^2/df$		1.943		
Comparative fit index (CFI)		0.900		
Root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA)		0.068		
90% confidence interval of RMSEA		(0.055; 0.081)		

Table 5. The validated scale for CC hospitality customer experience

Subdimension	Item #	Code	Item
Platform brand experience	1	BAE1	Airbnb induces feelings and sentiments in me.
	2	BIE1	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter the Airbnb brand.
	3	BIE2	Airbnb makes me think.
Accommodation sensory experience	4	ASE1	This accommodation made a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.
	6	ASE2	I found this accommodation interesting in a sensory way.
	5	ASE3	This accommodation appealed to my senses.
Social experience with the host	7	SEH1	I spoke to the host about things other than my stay.
	8	SEH2	I have developed a relationship with my host.
	9	SEH3	I enjoyed talking to my host.
Platform responsive capacity	10	PRE1	Airbnb website makes it easy for me to conclude my transaction.
	11	PRE2	The information of the Airbnb website is well organized.
	12	PRE3	Airbnb website is easy to use.
	13	LPR2	I feel assured that legal structures adequately protect me from problems on Airbnb.
Quality of interaction with the host	14	SIN2	The experience helps me interact with the accommodation host.
	15	QIH1	The accommodation host is willing to help customers.

Subdimension	Item #	Code	Item
	16	QIH2	The accommodation host acts in the customer's best interest.
	17	QIH3	The accommodation host does their best to help.

Finally, nomological and predictive validity was tested by conducting additional models that include two dependent variables, which are “Loyalty” and “Satisfaction”. Although the goodness of fit for the expanded model is just below the acceptable threshold, the results show that the CC hospitality customer experience impacts significantly on these constructs, in the same sense that the literature suggests, thus vouching for predictive validity.

## Conclusions

### Discussion

This research led to the development of a scale measuring customer experience in a hospitality CC context. As hypothesized, this scale encompasses two main dimensions, which are CC service experience and service quality. As expected, the first dimension, CC service experience, includes three subdimensions, which are platform brand experience, accommodation sensory experience, and social experience with the host. On the other hand, the second dimension, CC service quality, appears to be composed of two subdimensions, which are platform responsiveness and the quality of interaction with the host.

The final measures of both accommodation sensory experience and social experience with the host, two subdimensions of CC service experience, included the initial three items used to assess them. However, only items pertaining to affective and intellectual brand experiences were found to represent its third subdimension, platform brand experience. In past research, brand experience has been typically investigated in a product and service brand setting (e.g., [Nysveen, Pedersen & Skard, 2013](#); [Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010](#)) rather than for an online platform, which is less associated with bodily experiences and physical behaviour, and less prone to providing sensory stimulation than a physical retail or service environment. On the other hand, the importance of the affective and intellectual aspects of the experience associated with the platform highlight the necessity of accounting for both the feelings and thinking a CC platform provoke among its users. When building their brand experience, CC platforms managers and strategists need to assess and put forward the platform aspects that favour not only positive feelings and sentiments, but also intellectual stimulation. They might consider, for instance, providing more information about the town and country where the accommodations are located or offer tools allowing for comparing the characteristics of different accommodations, so as to create a stimulating environment that enriches the CC

platform brand experience and allows it to differentiate itself from competing options, based on the aspects that their customers value most.

Besides, it appears that the sensory experience provided during the stay, as captured by the accommodation sensory experience subdimension, is more strongly imprinted in customers' minds and incorporated in their evaluation of the experience, rather than the sensory information they obtained through their interaction with the platform. This result might seem surprising, given the focus of Airbnb on the quality of the photos displayed on its website and the rich description typically provided by the peers who rent their accommodation through this platform ([Ert, Fleischer & Magen, 2016](#)). It is likely that the more vivid and multifaceted sensory stimulation that customers experience during their stay supplants the sensory experience associated with their navigation in the platform and their sensory assessment of the accommodation through it. Future research is needed to understand the phenomenon at play.

Similarly, based on our results, customers seem to perceive that relational experience is not of importance to develop with the platform, while relational and social ties are deemed essential when interacting with the host. In coherence with Ikkala & Lampinen's ([2015](#)) findings about the role of social interaction as a source of motivation for the hosts to monetize network hospitality, customers too appear to value social and relational ties in their assessment of CC customer experience.

For the second dimension, which is CC service quality, only two subdimensions were extracted. The first subdimension, social interaction, referred to the quality of a customer's social interaction with other customers and with the host. It represents a cognitive assessment of the interactions with both the host and with other customers, thus highlighting the value associated with the sense of community in the CC experience, in line with Möhlmann's ([2015](#)) and Marimon, Mas-Machuca & Llach's ([2020](#)) findings about the role of community belonging in the formation of satisfaction in such a context. The second subdimension, platform responsiveness, refers to the service delivery platform's rapidity and the quality of the reaction of the website to customer's inquiries and complaints ([Marimon et al., 2019](#)). These two subdimensions covered key aspects related to the quality of the interaction with the platform, the host, and other consumers, which reflects the multifaceted nature of CC and assesses them from different angles.

## Theoretical implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the literature on collaborative consumption, interaction with the platform, and customer experience. It sheds a new light on customer experience, a concept mostly studied using qualitative approaches in CC hospitality

research (e.g., [Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017](#); [Lyu, Li & Law, 2019](#)), by providing a specific and generalizable measure to assess it. The development of this scale was particularly important, given the lack of focus on conceptualization and the absence of adaptation of this construct to the CC specificities. Our scale provided a novel and insightful understanding of the experiential aspects of CC, while accounting for the multifaceted nature of the delivered service in hospitality, which includes interactions with the provider platform, the accommodation, and the host. By adapting this construct conceptualization and measure to the P-to-P context, this research aims to bring a new way for researchers and marketers to understand and evaluate customer experience in a context where it can stem from three different sources, two of them being less controllable by the service provider who owns and manages the platform. This perspective is in line with the adaptation of the service quality measure that led Marimon *et al.* ([2019](#)) to develop their CC-qual scale (i.e., the CC service quality scale).

The current research reveals how consumers view experience in a hospitality CC context. Our results are in line with Ribeiro and Prayag's ([2019](#)) and Walter and his colleagues' ([2010](#)) view of customer service experience in hospitality as a result of the social interaction, the physical environment, and the core service. These facets have been identified as key indicators of CC-customer experience in our research. First, two aspects of social interactions have been found to be integral components of each dimension of hospitality CC-customer experience in our scale, which are social experience and the quality of interaction with the host. Second, the accommodation sensory experience reflects the customer's evaluation of the physical environment. Third, the assessment of the core service is captured through platform responsiveness, which evaluates various elements related to the service, such as complaint handling, and platform brand experience, which refers to the way the customer feels and thinks about the platform brand.

## Managerial implications

From a managerial point of view, this research provides a useful tool for marketers in CC hospitality platforms who allow for measuring and monitoring their customers' experiences. As competition from both the conventional and the shared economy sectors is becoming fiercer than ever, deploying a targeted strategy to enhance customer experience is an increasingly shared view in the industry. Airbnb, for instance, disrupted the conventional hospitality industry by positioning itself as a provider of radically innovative customer experience. From hiring customer experience specialists to collaborating with a leading animation company such as Pixar to create story boards that depict their customers' journey



(Blust, 2019), Airbnb is capitalizing on customer experience and deploying a wide array of actions to keep all their employees focused on it as a common goal.

This research shows the specific aspects on which CC hospitality platforms need to focus if they aim to deliver a better customer experience, such as capitalizing on the affective and intellectual aspects to offer a valued platform brand experience. This work also demonstrates that providing an excellent customer experience in a CC context stems from effective teamwork and a customer-centred approach from all the involved parties. A better CC hospitality customer experience does not only arise from good service quality delivered by the platform and an effective platform brand experience. It also significantly arises from customers' enjoyment of their social experience with the host and their appreciation of the sensory experience at the accommodation. CC hospitality platforms, such as Airbnb, should not ignore these effects and must be aware of the potential detrimental effect of a bad selection of the advertised accommodation and hosts. While the current practice of offering "super host" badges is a good step toward an adequate accounting for these aspects, a specific partnership strategy with the hosts aiming to provide the best customer experience needs to be developed. Various incentives, such as priority display in searches, or additional types of badges highlighting specific aspects of the expected experience with the host, can accordingly be implemented. Besides, the inclusion of specific questions about the sensory evaluation of the accommodation and the relationship ties with the host in the usual post-stay customer evaluation survey must serve as a guideline to categorize the accommodation, given their importance in CC customer experience. Including descriptions of not only the visual, but also the auditory (quiet), olfactory (apartment and neighbourhood good smell), and gustatory (e.g., food gift basket) aspects of the accommodation need to be put forward in their descriptions on the platform in order to form realistic expectations regarding sensory experience. The same should apply to the social experience with the host to set adequate expectations with regards to this important aspect of CC customer experience in hospitality.

## Limitations and further research avenues

One limitation of this study is its young sample. It is, however, representative of the typical consumers of CC hospitality accommodations. An additional limitation stems from the fact that the same sample was used for both exploratory and confirmatory analyses. Moreover, the analysis has shown a potential lack of discriminant validity between "Social experience with the host" — a subdimension of the CC hospitality service experience — and "Quality of interaction with the host" — a subdimension of the CC hospitality service quality. Future research would gain by investigating the potential benefit of merging both constructs to

develop a specific measure for an overall CC social experience that would shed more light on the key role of the host in a CC context.

Moreover, given its importance in the P-to-P hospitality sector, Airbnb has been used as a context to provide to participants so they can all refer to the same provider when responding to the questionnaire. Further research may include other service providers in the hospitality sector in order to validate the consistency of the structure of our scale in a CC context. Besides, our scale has been specifically developed for the P-to-P hospitality context. Other CC platform contexts, such as transportation (e.g., Uber, Lyft), for instance, have specific issues affecting customer experience, such as the scepticism about customers' safety that has been raised in recent years, thus undermining the brand's effort to offer a better customer experience than its conventional competitors (e.g., taxis).

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