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Introduction

The sharing economy, and Airbnb in particular, has emerged as one of the most contentious issues of recent times. The company has experienced rapid growth in its decade of operation, supported by strong consumer demand that is increasingly substituting that for the conventional hotel product (Guttentag & Smith, 2017; Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2017), and supply side drivers such as hosts' desire to make extra money, meet new people, and share under-utilized resources (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016). Consequently, Airbnb has become a major disruptor to a global hospitality and tourism industry that remained relatively static for decades, and has elicited sharp criticism, particularly in the United States.

The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) has been most vociferous in its opposition to Airbnb, initiating a multipronged, national campaign at the local, state, and federal levels to thwart Airbnb, which includes extensive lobbying and funding anti-Airbnb research to demonstrate the company's negative socio-economic impacts (Benner, 2017). Relatedly, much extant media discourse has reinforced Airbnb's negative impacts on destinations, specifically on unwilling residents who do not host themselves using Airbnb but are often neighbors to those who do. Stories in the media have highlighted a host of resident complaints and concerns pertaining to Airbnb, on issues ranging from the security threat posed by strangers in their backyard to inadequate parking ("Airbnb Has Come to a Vermont Town and Some Residents Are Worried," 2017), increases in rental and housing costs, an undermining of job growth ("Illegal Hotels," 2017), the disruption caused by "party houses" ("Nashville Residents Grapple With Their Own Airbnb Challenges," 2017), unruly behavior by Airbnb guests towards

neighbors (Burdeau, 2016), to the *museumization* of neighborhoods that endangers their very character (Anderson, 2016). Many of these stories thus emphasize the negative impacts of Airbnb on residents' quality of life in destinations across the world (Shankman, 2017). In the only direct academic research on this topic, Jordan and Moore (2018) found that residents in Oahu, Hawaii perceived more negative than positive impacts of transient vacation rentals like Airbnb, which, in accordance with the tenets of social exchange theory, detracted from residents' quality of life and lead to a subsequent lack of support for this type of tourism by residents. In a multi-stakeholder study in Sydney, Gurran and Phibbs (2017) found that Airbnb had differential impacts by neighborhood, with resident complaints reflecting "a more general disquiet about the increasing presence of visitors in the neighborhood, rather than tangible noise or nuisances" (p. 87).

While some of this discourse is perhaps warranted, it can also be subject to claims of being anecdotal and/or selective in its representation of how residents at large feel about Airbnb. Despite the fact that "local residents' attitude toward tourism development has been a popular topic in tourism research and abundant research has been conducted to find various factors influencing residents' attitudes toward tourism" (Heo, 2016, p. 168), there is little empirical evidence to date to make generalizable assertions of residents' perceptions of Airbnb (Jordan & Moore, 2018). Specifically, there is a need for research that delineates the attitudes of local residents who provide sharing economy services to tourists from those residents who are not involved in such provision (Heo, 2016).

To address this gap, we examined how the general resident in the United States perceives Airbnb's positive and negative impacts, and how these perceptions impact residents' support, or

lack thereof, for Airbnb. We define residents as those individuals who have never hosted using Airbnb themselves, but have and are aware of Airbnb activity in their neighborhoods.

Our hypotheses are grounded in extant media discourse, (the scant) empirical evidence on this topic, and the tenets of social exchange theory (SET). SET is the most widely used theoretical framework to examine resident attitudes towards tourism (e.g. Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014; Chi, Ouyang, & Xu, 2018; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), and informs the operationalization of our variables and the rationale underlying our hypotheses. SET posits that residents perceive both positive and negative impacts of tourism; if the positive impacts outweigh the negative, then residents will be supportive of tourism development, however, if the negative impacts outweigh the positive, then this will detract from residents' support for tourism development. In the present context of Airbnb, extant media discourse and empirical evidence allude to the latter relationship, leading us to hypothesize:

H₁: Residents perceive higher negative than positive impacts of Airbnb.

H₂: Airbnb's negative impacts reduce residents' support for Airbnb more than Airbnb's positive impacts increase residents' support for Airbnb.

Method

The sample for the study was drawn from an extensive panel provided by the online research company Qualtrics. An online survey was used to collect responses from residents who have never hosted using Airbnb themselves, but have and are aware of Airbnb activity in their neighborhoods. We collected a total of 525 usable responses from residents across the United States, including those who reside in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

The constructs of Airbnb's perceived positive and negative impacts, and residents'

support for Airbnb, were measured using existing scales in the academic literature, indicated in the final column of Table 2. We used the overlapping items from these studies to measure the various constructs i.e. we used items that were included in all the studies cited in Table 2, thus selecting measures with high reliability and validity. We adapted the items to the context of the present study. Instead of responding to the scale items with reference to tourism more generally, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the items applied to Airbnb within a community, including their own neighborhoods. Moreover, that our sample comprised only of those who are not Airbnb hosts themselves but have and are aware of Airbnb activity in their neighborhoods allowed respondents to readily evaluate Airbnb's positive and negative impacts and their support for the company; thus, our items have contextual validity. Table 2 lists the exact items used in the survey.

To test hypothesis 1, we used a paired sample t-test procedure to determine whether residents perceived higher positive or negative impacts from Airbnb. To test hypothesis 2, we used regression analysis, with support for Airbnb as the dependent variable, and Airbnb's positive and negative impacts as independent variables. We used the mean scores for these constructs to calculate the dependent and independent variables used in the regression computation. Before combining the various items into a single score, we tested for the reliability and validity of the constructs to ensure successful adaption from previous studies. The three constructs—perceived positive impacts, perceived negative impacts, and support for Airbnb—had Cronbach's α values of .95, .95, and .92 respectively, indicating their reliability. Moreover, the items for the perceived positive impacts had significant ($p < .001$) standardized factor loadings that ranged from .704 to .825, the loadings for the perceived negative impacts ranged from .737 to .836, while those for support for Airbnb ranged from .804 to .868, indicating

convergent validity. The AVE for the perceived positive impacts, perceived negative impacts, and support for Airbnb were .58, .61, and .69 respectively, further demonstrating convergent validity, while the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than inter-construct correlations, demonstrating discriminant validity. These tests allowed us to combine the various items into a mean score for the construct for subsequent use in the regression computation.

We also calculated a second regression equation, in which we added a number of key control variables, namely the four *demographic* variables of age, gender, education, and income, and four *situational* variables: whether the respondent had previously stayed with Airbnb, their perception of the number of Airbnb hosts in their neighborhoods (too few, the right number, or too many), whether the respondent resides in an urban, suburban or rural setting, and whether they own or rent the accommodation in which they reside.

Findings

The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The sample was evenly split in terms of gender (50.9% female), a proportion that is not significantly different ($p = .9635$) than that of the U.S. general population (50.8% female). Moreover, the distribution of sample across age, education, and income is also consistent with that of the general U.S. population (“2010 Census,” n.d.) [Note: we could not conduct direct statistical comparisons due to differing intervals for these demographic criteria between our survey and the data reported by the U.S. census].

Particularly relevant to the context of the present study, a majority (62.5%) of the sample owned the accommodation in which they currently live, with nearly half of the respondents (48.2%) living in suburban settings. Most respondents (92.4%) indicated that they were aware of

between 1 and 5 active Airbnb hosts in their neighborhoods; relatedly, more than two-thirds (67.2%) felt that this was the *right number* of neighbors hosting on Airbnb, with only 9.3% feeling that there were *too many* Airbnb hosts in their neighborhoods. Also, two-thirds (66.5%) of the sample had never stayed with Airbnb as guests themselves; these numbers are consistent with research reported by Morgan Stanley (Ting, 2017). These findings have two implications in the context of the present study. First, despite high awareness levels of Airbnb, its adoption rates continue to be relatively slow (Ting, 2017). Second, in addition to the representativeness of our sample to the U.S. general population, the sample for the present study is likely to be representative of the general resident who is not overly biased towards Airbnb, either positively due to having used the service extensively themselves, or negatively through a perception that there is too much Airbnb activity in their neighborhoods.

Table 1
Respondent Profile.

Demographic Category	n = 525	%
<i>Age</i>		
18-25	89	17.0
26-34	114	21.7
35-54	206	39.2
55-64	77	14.7
65 and over	39	7.4
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	258	49.1
Female	267	50.9
<i>Education</i>		
High school	122	23.2
Some college	157	29.9
College	169	32.2
Graduate school	75	14.3
<i>Income</i>		
Less than \$15,000	48	9.1
\$15,000-\$29,999	101	19.2
\$30,000-\$59,999	163	31

\$60,000-\$89,999	101	19.3
\$90,000-\$119,999	62	11.8
\$120,000 or more	50	9.6
<i>Ownership Status</i>		
Rent	197	37.5
Own	328	62.5
<i>Neighborhood Setting</i>		
Urban	147	28.0
Suburban	253	48.2
Rural	125	23.8
<i>Airbnb Hosts in the Neighborhood (Attitudinal)</i>		
Too few	123	23.5
About the right number of neighbors	353	67.2
Too many	49	9.3
<i>Airbnb Stays (as Guests)</i>		
0	349	66.5
1 or more	176	33.5

Table 2 presents the summary statistics for the items used to measure Airbnb’s positive and negative impacts, and residents’ support for Airbnb. It is interesting to note that each of the individual items for the positive impacts are higher than each of the individual items for the negative impacts.

Table 2
Summary Statistics and Literature Sources.

Constructs and Measurement Items ^a	Sample Size (n = 525)		Adapted from
	Mean	SD	
<i>Perceived positive impacts of Airbnb:</i>			
<i>“Please indicate the extent to which you feel Airbnb has the following impacts on a community (including your own neighborhood)”</i>			
Creates opportunities for residents to participate in	3.63	.97	

local culture			(Dyer,
Fosters community pride	3.54	.97	Gursoy,
Fosters a feeling of belonging to the community	3.46	.97	Sharma, &
Enables an understanding of different cultures	3.63	.95	Carter, 2007;
Contributes to an improvement in neighborhood/housing appearance	3.63	.94	McGehee &
Improves the local economy	3.82	.90	Andereck,
Provides more business for local people and small businesses	3.83	.87	2004;
Creates more job opportunities for local residents	3.63	.95	Nunkoo,
Provides opportunities for cultural exchange between tourists and residents	3.71	.92	2015)
Improves image of the community and culture	3.58	.960	
Helps improve the quality of community services such as local police, utilities, roads etc.	3.46	.980	
Provides incentives for the preservation/restoration of local/historic buildings	3.60	.94	
Positively impacts the cultural identity of the community	3.56	.95	
Tourism through Airbnb encourages development of a variety of cultural activities by local residents	3.64	.95	

Perceived negative impacts of Airbnb:

“Please indicate the extent to which you feel Airbnb has the following impacts on a community (including your own neighborhood)”

Leads to improper zoning/land use	2.85	1.11	(Dyer et al.,
Makes the community less safe	2.70	1.13	2007;
Increases the crime rate in the community	2.64	1.11	McGehee &
Contributes to an increase in the cost of living	2.90	1.15	Andereck,
Results in more vandalism	2.63	1.11	2004;
Creates traffic problems in the community	2.87	1.13	Nunkoo,
Increase in the number of Airbnb visitors	2.92	1.15	2015)
Results in noise and pollution/litter			
Negatively affects the community's way of life	2.65	1.15	
Results in overcrowding and congestion	2.83	1.13	
Puts a burden on community services such as local police, utilities, roads etc.	2.80	1.11	
Makes the community too expensive to live in	2.67	1.10	
Leads to friction between local residents and visitors	2.76	1.09	

Increases the prices of buying and renting homes in the community, making it too expensive to live in	2.87	1.09
Local residents are the ones who suffer from the development of Airbnb	2.81	1.11
Airbnb visitors have little consideration for the local population	2.78	1.12

Support for Airbnb:

“Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your support for Airbnb in your neighborhood”

Airbnb helps my neighborhood grow in the right direction	3.47	.91	(Nunkoo & So, 2016)
I am proud that Airbnb visitors are coming to my neighborhood	3.53	.93	
Airbnb will continue to play an important economic role in my neighborhood	3.57	.96	
I support the development of Airbnb as it is vital to my neighborhood	3.52	1.00	
My neighborhood should attract more Airbnb visitors	3.46	1.00	

^aMeasured on a 5 point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree

Hypothesis 1 Testing

The sample mean for Airbnb’s positive impacts, as perceived by residents, was higher than Airbnb’s perceived negative impacts (Positive impacts: $\bar{x} = 3.62$; Negative impacts: $\bar{x} = 2.78$). This difference in means between Airbnb’s positive and negative impacts ($\bar{x} = .84$) was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Thus, we found evidence to contradict hypothesis 1; overall, residents perceive higher positive than negative impacts of Airbnb, a finding that is the opposite of what is often portrayed in the media.

Hypothesis 2 Testing

Table 3 presents the results of the first regression equation, in which the dependent

variable i.e. residents' support for Airbnb, was regressed on Airbnb's positive and negative impacts. Table 4 presents the results of the second regression equation, in which the dependent variable i.e. residents' support for Airbnb, was regressed on Airbnb's positive and negative impacts, while also including the demographic and situational control variables.

Table 3

Results of Regression 1: DV – Support for Airbnb.

	Coefficient	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.574	.140		4.112	.000
Positive Impacts	.877	.029	.788	30.215	.000
Negative Impacts	-.087	.024	-.094	-3.606	.000

n= 525; R² = .667; Adjusted R² = .666

Table 4

Results of Regression 2 (including control variables): DV – Support for Airbnb.

	Coefficient	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.976	.210		4.644	.000
Positive Impacts	.845	.030	.761	27.910	.000
Negative Impacts	-.091	.024	-.099	-3.770	.000
Age	-.040	.020	-.054	-2.022	.044
Gender	-.108	.042	-.065	-2.586	.010
Education	.013	.024	.016	.563	.574
Income	-.006	.009	-.020	-.662	.508
Airbnb stay	.128	.047	.073	2.732	.007
Number of Airbnb hosts (attitudinal)	-.053	.028	-.051	-1.915	.056
Urban	-.012	.059	-.006	-.199	.842

Suburban	.021	.054	.013	.392	.695
Own	.071	.049	.042	1.467	.143

accommodation

n= 525; R² = .684; Adjusted R² = .677

The results for both equations clearly indicate that the magnitude of the relationships between Airbnb's positive impacts and residents' support for Airbnb (Regression 1 coefficient = .877; Regression 2 coefficient = .845) is statistically significantly higher ($p < .001$) than that of the relationships between Airbnb's negative impacts and residents' support for Airbnb (Regression 1 coefficient = -.087; Regression 2 coefficient = -.091). These findings contradict hypothesis 2, and further highlight the general resident's generally positive disposition towards Airbnb, contrary to what is often portrayed in the media.

Table 4 also indicates that the resident's age, gender, and whether or not they have used Airbnb themselves as customers have a significant impact on their support for Airbnb. Older respondents and women tend to be less supportive of Airbnb, while those who have previously used Airbnb themselves show higher support for Airbnb. Interestingly, the magnitude of this latter relationship between having stayed at Airbnb and residents' support (Regression 2 Coefficient = .128) is higher than that of the negative relationship between Airbnb's negative impacts and residents' support for Airbnb (Regression 2 Coefficient = -.091). This indicates that even one stay with Airbnb is enough to alleviate the dampening effect of Airbnb's negative impacts on residents' support for tourism.

Discussion

This study addresses the lack of empirical research on the impact of Airbnb on residents, as perceived by the residents themselves (Cheng, 2016; Guttentag, 2015; Heo, 2016). In so

doing, we add to the limited body of academic research on this topic. The only previous empirical examination of resident attitudes towards Airbnb was conducted by Jordan and Moore (2018). However, their study was qualitative, and was conducted in the context of a mature tourism destination, in which residents experience a disproportionate extent of tourism's negative impacts. The present study is a more representative account of the general resident in the United States and sets the foundation for future research on this important issue.

We did not find any evidence to support the hypotheses that underlie the rhetoric portrayed in the media against Airbnb. Our findings are particularly interesting in the context of the anti-Airbnb propaganda of the hotel industry, and Airbnb's own public relations efforts, particularly through *Airbnb Citizen*, the company's platform to showcase the power of home sharing as a "solution" that promotes positive economic, social, and community impact across the world ("Airbnb Citizen," n.d.). As is the case with marketing to customers, perception is reality. To advance its agenda, the hotel industry must ramp up its PR efforts at a time when jurisdictions across the country and the world are trying to determine the best way to regulate Airbnb and the sharing economy. On the other hand, Airbnb must make a greater push to incentivize first-timers to experience its services; not only would this expand its customer base but also lead to more favorable attitudes towards the company as a neighbor impacted by home-sharing. Resident support can be a key factor in who wins the PR battle.

Relatedly, that Airbnb's perceived impacts are not as negative as suggested by current discourse indicates that regulators should consider a customer-based, microgeographic approach to regulation that is based on data and resident engagement (Wegmann & Jiao, 2017). Involving residents and citizen groups that can affect and be affected by decisions about Airbnb can help build consensus about how such rentals can be regulated in the context of the overall

accommodations segment of a destination, alleviating some of the conflicts surrounding the sharing economy and providing a higher quality tourism product for visitors (Jordan & Moore, 2018). A one-size-fits-all approach to regulating Airbnb is counterproductive, given that resident sentiment, which is moderated by the geographic concentration and subsequent impact of Airbnb, is likely to differ across and within destinations. This represents a promising area of future research on this topic. The present study is part of a larger inquiry into the antecedents and consequences of Airbnb's impacts using social exchange theory and does not explain why residents perceive positive or negative impacts or investigate the factors that mediate or moderate residents' perceptions of Airbnb. However, it adds much-needed empirical evidence to a debate that is often driven by anecdotal and selective discourse and lays the foundation for future research on this important issue.

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