# ATTITUDE AND PREFERENCES TOWARDS SHARING ACCOMMODATION: THE IMPACT OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AMONG CHINESE GEN Z ADULTS

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**Abstract:**

Sharing accommodation is a new accommodation type and has rapid development in recent years. Since Generation Z will be the core consumers in the future, this study explored the attitudes of Generation Z tourists towards sharing accommodation products and the impact of their stay experiences and demographic characteristics on their attitudes. This study takes Chinese Gen Z adults as the target population for the boost of sharing accommodation industry in China, the SPSS was utilised to conduct an empirical examination of the identified relationships. The study conducted descriptive analysis, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA. The result showed a slight preference towards sharing accommodation products compared with traditional accommodation for young Gen Z tourists. The independent samples t-test and ANOVA analysis showed that previous experience positively influenced tourists' attitude preference to sharing accommodation. The study also found that gender and income have no significant effect on attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z tourists; however, the education level and occupation factors showed significant impacts on tourists' attitudes towards sharing accommodation.

**Keywords:**

Sharing Accommodation, Gen Z, Demographic Characteristics, Attitude Preference

## Introduction

As part of a broader set of sharing economy practices, sharing accommodation has grown enormously in recent years, creating a model of sharing access to underutilised resources through online platforms, represented by the American sharing economy companies Airbnb. The company has experienced greater than 100% growth in supply year-over-year for over a decade (Dogru et al., 2019), offering 5.6 million active listings as of June 2021 and serving over 100,000 cities in over 220 countries and regions around the world. Sharing accommodation is also called shared accommodation, peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation, home-sharing lodging, or short-term rentals by different organisations and researchers (Qi et al.,2024). People can now rent their homes and apartments to travellers, offering a cost-effective and often more authentic experience than a traditional hotel.

China also holds a prominent position in the sharing accommodation industry, with a growing number of entrants giving rise to leading companies like Xiaozhu, Airbnb, and Tujia. The most popular calling or term in sharing accommodation area are *Minsu* and *short-rental* in China. The emergence and growth of the sharing accommodation have paralleled the increase in Generation Z tourists. They are emerging as the core demographic group (Parulis-Cook, 2021). Data from the China Tourism Academy and China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed that 28% of Chinese outbound tourists 2018 were aged 24 or younger. In 2019, Gen Z accounted for 21% of outbound travellers on OTA Trip.com Group. Generation Z is widely regarded as the future driver for numerous industries, including tourism (Wee, 2019).

Accordingly, peer-to-peer accommodation (P2P) mediated by sharing economy platforms is expected to challenge forms of traditional accommodation and revolutionise the tourism and hospitality industry (Kuhzady et al., 2022). Ye et al.(2023) found older tourists tend to favor hotels and younger ones prefer P2P accommodation. In the European context, some studies found that lower age determined whether inhabitants of these countries used sharing economy services (Cansoy & Schor, 2016). This study stands on the view of Chinese Gen Z tourist consumers to explore whether they have a preference in attitude toward the new type of lodging industry, sharing accommodation.

Young Gen Z people have never lived without an Internet connection or digital devices. Therefore, their perspective differs completely from older generations, including Millennials (Whitmore, 2019). Digitalisation has affected Gen Z more than cultural, identity, race, or language aspects making them the most homogeneous generation of the modern era (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Because of the unique personality of Gen Z people, this study is interested in whether demographic indicators have impacts on attitudinal preferences for sharing accommodation.

## Literature Review And Hypotheses Development

### *Preference For Sharing Accommodation*

From previous literature, now consumers have to form preferences and choose between two lodging product categories (hotels vs sharing accommodation) before deciding which accommodation unit to stay in (Ye et al.,2023). Hence, more scholars paid attention to the advantages and options preference of sharing accommodation compared with traditional accommodation. For example, Li and Sun (2019) found peer-to-peer accommodation weakened the stage of the hospitality industry in the business environment, and tourists could realize their appeals for the authenticity of the tourist lodging experience. Compared with

hotels, the advantage of sharing accommodation is houses and apartments, like homes with living rooms, kitchens and other facilities, which are convenient for bigger families (Ye et al., 2023). Many people started participating in sharing economy platforms because of the economic and financial benefits it provided consumers and suppliers (Dogru & Pekin,2017). Compared with traditional hotels, sharing accommodation had significant advantages in the extreme market condition: based on existing housing stock and lower entry costs, which show higher elasticity and flexibility in supply time and service level (Farronato & Fradkin,2018; Gyódi,2022).

Phillips et al. (2002) found that attitudes and preferences were generally consistent and similar, the term preference is often used informally to mean attitude. As the sharing accommodation sector continues to compete with hotels, the key to winning the competition lies in developing effective strategies that shape consumer preference and choice (Ye et al.,2023). And comparing how consumers choose between hotel and home-sharing offerings is critical to obtaining a more comprehensive and realistic understanding of consumer behaviour in the accommodation sector (Mody et al.,2023). Hence, this study explored the tourists' attitude preference on the view of comparison with traditional accommodation.

Although previous much literature explored the influence factors or reasons for customer choice preference for sharing accommodation, some evidence suggested that hotels' professional competencies offer consumers the assurance they need to choose a hotel room rather than sharing accommodation like Airbnb(Ozdemir et al.,2021). Especially after COVID-19, the experience with the sharing accommodation demonstrates negative effects on preference (Ye et al.,2023). However, statistics (Lvzhi Technology,2023) showed that in 2022, Chinese young Minsu customers of post-95 and post-00 had increased, meaning 51.2% of Chinese customers in Minsu were Gen Z, occupying over half of all customers. Similar results showed on different distributions, such as the Feizhu platform, reported that 70% of customers were post-90s on the National Day holiday in 2021. Hence, this study raises the hypothesis that Gen Z consumers in China supplied stronger support to sharing accommodation products.

H1: Gen Z adult tourists have an attitude preference on sharing accommodation compared with traditional accommodation in China.

Airbnb was reported to have key advantages over hotels, one of them is offering authentic experiences (Zhang et al.,2020). Mahadevan (2018) regarded local experience and social experience as influencing satisfaction for peer-to-peer accommodation users. The social appeal included interacting with the hosts and local people and getting insiders tips on local attractions; staying in private homes and getting insiders tips contributed to the authentic local experience of Airbnb guests, which was not an attribute that people would consider for hotels before peer-to-peer accommodation (Marques & Gondim Matos, 2020; Poon & Huang, 2017). The result showed that in the accommodation-sharing setting, traveler's past experience of sharing accommodation services would have a significant impact on their choice on the type of services for the next stay (Xie et al.,2020). From previous literature, some studies supported that the tourist experience has positive effects on consumers' preference and choice for sharing accommodation. But there is still no conclusion that proves sharing accommodation has distinctive advantages in attracting young people compared to traditional accommodation.

Besides, sharing accommodation is a relatively new consumption type introduced to tourists, many consumers may still have limited knowledge about this alternative accommodation in

China, especially during the past three years' epidemic period, many young Gen Z people had no staying experience in sharing accommodation by far. Considering the above reasons, this study collected tourist previous experience on sharing accommodation to test the impact on tourist attitude preference, no matter whether they have real staying experience or not. Observing whether the variable of previous experience significantly influences tourist attitude preference could provide a truer attitude of current and future consumers.

H2: Tourist previous experience in sharing accommodation has a positive impact on tourist attitude preference.

### Demographic Characteristics

Research has shown that consumers' attitudes and buying behavior preferences to tourism products can be influenced by their demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education, occupation and income. Makanyeza et al.(2021) found some demographic characteristics have moderating effects on both consumer attitude and behavioural intention in hotel industry. Otoo et al.(2020) found some socio-demographic features like gender and marital status had significant differences on senior tourists' preferences across overseas travel. Mukhamadalieva et al.(2020) tourists' demographic variables such as gender, income, and travel distance influenced the tourism route choice behavior.

In this study, the target respondents are Gen Z adults, so age was designed as an essential prerequisite, not an independent variable. Excepting age, gender, occupation, education level, and disposable income were taken as independent variables to test the impacts on tourist attitude preference in Chinese background.

Su et al.(2020) indicated that female consumers are more likely to book an Airbnb property hosted by a female (vs. a male). Farmaki (2022) highlighted the importance of gender in determining the host-guest relationship within P2P accommodation. Ye et al.(2023) found female tourists have preference for hotels rather than P2P accommodation. Tiamiyu et al.(2022) found that gender plays a moderating role on guests' intention to book accommodation on the Airbnb platform. The research showed that compared with those with high school education, tourists with college and graduate educations prefer sharing accommodation; and compared with students, people with jobs prefer sharing accommodation (Ye et al.,2023). Cansoy and Schor(2016) also pointed that Airbnb listings being more prevalent in highly educated census areas. Although not many studies showed the distinct difference between consumers' gender, occupation and education level in sharing accommodation preferences by far, this study tested the impact of these demographic characteristics in the Chinese background and the proposed hypotheses:

H3: Gender has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults.
H4: Education level has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults.
H5: Occupation has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults.

Some studies showed hints that the younger age of the market may cause the preference for the cost-effective attribute of sharing accommodation. The finding of Qiu et al. (2021) indicated that hosts' affinity is more effective on guests' behavioural intentions only for economic

homestays below USD300, with no significant impact on higher-level guests on Airbnb. Results indicated consumer preference shifts from hotels to Airbnb and back to hotels as consumers move from lower-end to luxury accommodation (Mody et al.,2023). Similar to the above study, Sui et al.(2021) found that Chinese tourists' preference for short-term rental accommodation, 92.11% of respondents consider affordable and cost-effective as the primary reason for their choices. To explore the impact of disposable income on their attitude preference for Chinese Gen Z adults, the hypothesis was raised.

H6: Disposable income has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults.

**Methodology**

*Sampling and Data Collection*
Gen Z adults in China are the target respondents in this study. According to data from the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2019, the scale of Chinese Generation Z which born from 1995 to 200 is about 264 million. The huge potential of Gen Z young consumers in sharing accommodation field has distinctively appeared. Regarding 2023 as the survey period, the youngers are over 18 years old, who were born from 1997 to 2005 were selected during the questionnaire survey. The survey questionnaires were used to collect respondents online. In this study, stratified sampling is adopted and the population of Chinese Gen Z consumers is stratified into two parts by the state of study or work.

The respondents who feed themselves will be sampled by simple random sampling from social channels; the other type- student respondents- will be further stratified in order to cover more geographic areas in mainland of China. Considering the distinctive income difference between on-campus students and somebody who graduates from school with work, this survey collected their disposable income, no matter whether the money was supported by their families or earned by themselves, to get real behaviour intentions.

The data were screened first to guarantee that the dataset was suitable for investigation, the author used SPSS to remove obvious errors. Finally, 1170 respondents were collected, and only 747 effective respondents were kept because of the age region screening and some obvious errors, the total effectiveness is 63.8%.

Tourist attitude is a latent dependent variable in this study, the items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale indicating participants' agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Table 1 show the items and the source. The author accepted the mainstream items in attitude measurement, which were normally used in tourist research; and two items that emphasize preference were added to embody the comparison of sharing and traditional accommodation.

**Table 1: Items And Sources Of Tourist Attitude Scale**

| Variables | Code | Items | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ATT1 | Compare with traditional accommodation, I prefer sharing accommodation. | Louis & Lombart (2010) ; Charton-Vachet et al., (2020) |
| **Tourist Attitude** | ATT2 | When I have to choose between sharing accommodation and traditional | |

|      | accommodation, I prefer to buy sharing accommodation. |                          |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ATT3 | I find sharing accommodation is more pleasant.         | Spears & Singh (2004);   |
| ATT4 | I find sharing accommodation is more likable.          | Charton-Vachet et al., (2020) |
| ATT5 | I find sharing accommodation is more appealing.        |                          |

## *Statistical Analysis*
To analyze data, the SPSS Statistical Software Version 27.0 was applied. The study conducted a descriptive analysis to measure mean value and standard deviation of tourist attitude toward sharing accommodation preference, and the independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were applied to examine the significance of relationships of variables.

## **Findings And Discussion**

### *Descriptive Analysis*
Table 2 is the demographic characteristics of the 747 respondents that participated in the study. In this group of samples, 28.4% are male, and 71.6% are female. Most respondents are students over 18 years old, representing more than half of the study population, which occupy 69.5%, and 16.5% are corporate employees. The two types are the mainstream respondents, which show a reasonable percentage of mature Gen Z youngers currently. Most of the respondents are Gen Z people with college level or higher, although the result to some extent related to the certain collection channel, however, the lower effectiveness of questionnaires among lower educational level respondents is also one of the reasons.

From the result, 58.6% of Gen Z consumers with disposable income below 2000 yuan showed a normal level in China, another 28.5% of respondents have 2000-4000 yuan to be disposed. In addition, in this survey, the data of their sharing accommodation previous staying experience during their travel was collected, 58.6% of respondents have the experience, occupied over half of the whole group, which is more helpful to explore their attitude preference to sharing accommodation.

Tourist attitude factor showed total mean value of 4.196, with SD 1.38, all the means to different demographic groups are over 4 which represents the mutual attitude of the respondents except one group (income=4000-6000) with a value of 3.849. The result showed that sharing accommodation got a middle-high level acceptance level compared with traditional accommodation, implying a slight preference for sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z tourists and H1 was supported.

**Table 2. Descriptive Indicators of The Variables in the Sample (n =747)**

| Variables | N | % | ATT Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Male | 212 | 28.4 | 4.226 | 0.11 |
| Female | 535 | 71.6 | 4.184 | 0.06 |
| **Occupation** | | | | |
| Student | 519 | 69.5 | 4.11 | 0.06 |
| Corporate employee | 123 | 16.5 | 4.383 | 0.15 |
| Civil servant | 10 | 1.3 | 4 | 0.54 |
| Freelancer | 42 | 5.6 | 4.458 | 0.26 |
| Others | 53 | 7.1 | 4.714 | 0.26 |
| **Education** | | | | |
| Graduate/postgraduate degree | 31 | 4.1 | 4.433 | 0.29 |
| College | 631 | 84.5 | 4.123 | 0.05 |
| High school or below | 85 | 11.4 | 5.133 | 0.22 |
| **Disposable Income (Chinese RMB/month)** | | | | |
| Below 2000 | 438 | 58.6 | 4.16 | 0.06 |
| 2000-4000 | 213 | 28.5 | 4.348 | 0.09 |
| 4000-6000 | 53 | 7.1 | 3.849 | 0.22 |
| 6000-8000 | 20 | 2.7 | 4.032 | 0.36 |
| Over 8000 | 23 | 3.1 | 4.357 | 0.40 |
| **Previous Staying Experience** | | | | |
| Yes | 422 | 56.5 | 4.506 | 0.07 |
| No | 325 | 43.5 | 3.798 | 0.07 |
| **Tourist Attitude** | | | 4.196 | 1.38 |

*Reliability Analysis*
The reliability test was performed to provide accurate and consistent results in the information collected from the respondents. The alpha coefficient for tourist attitude is 0.963, showing very good reliability of the 5 items in tourist attitude variable in Table 3.

**Table 3. Reliability Analysis of Tourist Attitude Preference**

| Variable | Cronbach's alpha | Items numbers |
|---|---|---|
| Tourist attitude | 0.963 | 5 |

*T-test and ANOVA Analysis*
Subsequently, one-way ANOVA and independent t-test were used to examine the relationship of variables, elucidating the impact of independent variables, previous staying experience and demographic factors on tourists' attitudes, the dependent variable.

The independent t-test was applied to measure the two categories of variables, previous staying experience and gender. Table 4 shows the results. Levene's test (F=12.338, P = 0.000) for previous staying experience indicated that variances between the groups were statistically equal. At equal variances assumed, independent samples t-test (p = 0.000) (p<0.05) indicated that the means of the respondent's group with and without staying experience in sharing accommodation were significantly different. Besides, mean ATT and SD of the group with staying experience were $4.506 \pm 0.07$, and group without staying experience were $3.798 \pm 0.07$

respectively (Table 2). Tourist previous staying experience in sharing accommodation has a positive impact on tourist attitude preference, H2 was supported.

Gender variable got a significance level of p=.010 (p < 0.05) in Levene's test, unequal variances are assumed between the groups, and independent samples t-test (p = 0.730) (p>0.05) indicated that there's no statistically significant difference between the means of male and female groups. Gender has no significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults, H3 was not supported.

**Table 4. Dependent T-test Result Of Gender And Previous Staying Experience**

| Variable | Levene-test | | T-test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | P | t | Sig |
| Previous Staying Experience | 12.338 | .000 | 7.306 | .000 |
| Gender | 6.667 | .010 | 0.345 | .730 |

One-way ANOVA analysis was used to compare among three or more independent groups, the variables of education level, occupation and income were measured in this study. A significant P value of this test refers to multiple comparisons test to identify the significant pair(s). Table 5 shows the analysis results of three demographic variables, education, occupation and income.

**Table 5. ANOVA Analysis of Education, Occupation and Income**

| Variable | F | P | M difference | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Education** | 12.158 | .000 | | |
| High school or below | | | | |
| College | | | 1.01071* | .029 |
| Graduate/postgraduate degree | | | .70000* | .000 |
| **Occupation** | 2.89 | .022 | | |
| others | | | | |
| student | | | .60533* | .006 |
| corporate employee | | | 0.33095 | .185 |
| civil servant | | | 0.71429 | .177 |
| freelancer | | | 0.25622 | .430 |
| **Income** | 1.735 | .140 | | |
| blow 2000 | | | | |
| 2000-4000 | | | -0.18788 | .099 |
| 4000-6000 | | | 0.31057 | .121 |
| 6000-8000 | | | 0.12805 | .691 |
| above 8000 | | | -0.19689 | .504 |

* significance level is <0.05.

The test result for education level was found statistically significant (p =.000). Comparing with high school or below group, both college group and graduate/postgraduate degree group showed significant differences respectively (p=.029<0.05, p=.000<0.05). The result indicated

that education level has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults, H4 was supported.

In this study, the lower education level, high school or below group, showed highest mean value of 5.133, have distinctively attitude preference than higher education level group. This result looks contrary to the findings of previous research such as Ye et al.(2023). The author believes that this phenomenon may be related to the fact that highly educated people have more critical and logical thinking skills, enabling them to find more problems and shortcomings exist in the development of sharing accommodation business currently in China.

The comparison of occupation groups was found statistically significant (p = .022). The tourist attitude preference showed a significant difference between one pair of students group and someone with other jobs outside corporate employee, civil servant and freelancer(p=0.006<0.05); other pairs had no significant difference. The result indicated that occupation has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults, H5 was supported.

In this study, most respondents are students and corporate employees who comprised over 85% population in the sample, but there's no significant difference in attitude preference on sharing accommodation among these mainstream respondents. However, only 7.1% of respondents with other occupations showed a significant difference with 69.5% of students group. The others group showed the highest mean value in 5 occupation groups, indicating the highest attitude preference among all groups. The result may imply the occupation factor is not an ideal benchmark to classify the target Gen Z market in sharing accommodation industry in Chinese background.

The test to disposable income was found statistically insignificant (p =.140>0.05). There's no significant difference among all the five income groups. The result indicated that disposable income has no significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults, H6 was not supported.

*Summary of Hypothesis*

**Table 6. Results of Hypotheses**

| Hypothesis | Result |
|---|---|
| H1: Gen Z adult tourists have an attitude preference on sharing accommodation compared with traditional accommodation in China. | Supported |
| H2: Tourist previous experience in sharing accommodation has a positive impact on tourist attitude preference. | Supported |
| H3: Gender has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults, | Not supported |
| H4: Education level has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults | Supported |
| H5: Occupation has a significant effect on tourist attitude preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults | Supported |

H6: Disposable income has a significant effect on tourist attitude    Not supported
preference towards sharing accommodation for Chinese Gen Z adults

## Implication and Limitation

### Implication

The significant preference for sharing accommodation of Gen Z tourists with previous staying experience implied the importance and core distinguishment of real experience for sharing accommodation compared with traditional accommodation. Taking demographic factors as independent variables could identify some basic discriminators when we consider marketing strategies and industry policies on sharing accommodation field. Hence, this study supplies some references on product targeting and market promotion to future consumers.

Moreover, the significant preference for sharing accommodation among Gen Z tourists who have previous staying experience suggests a crucial emphasis on genuine encounters compared to conventional lodging options. This inclination shows that the intrinsic value of firsthand involvement in shared living arrangements, indicating a shift towards more immersive and communal travel experiences. As the sharing accommodation sector continues to evolve, this preference highlights the need for tailored marketing approaches that prioritize authenticity and personal engagement, resonating with the values and expectations of this demographic segment.

Furthermore, by examining demographic factors as independent variables, this study offers valuable insights into the fundamental distinctions within the sharing accommodation landscape. These insights can inform targeted marketing strategies and industry policies aimed at optimizing the appeal and accessibility of shared lodging options. Understanding the nuanced preferences and requirements of different demographic groups enables stakeholders to tailor their offerings effectively, fostering greater inclusivity and competitiveness in the sharing accommodation market. As such, this research serves as a practical resource for shaping product targeting initiatives and devising strategic market promotions tailored to the evolving preferences of future consumers.

### Limitation

This study is a primary exploration of tourist attitude towards sharing accommodation of young Gen Z consumers who are the mainstream of future consumption in the world, it's not a deep analysis to get core factors to develop sharing accommodation industry or imply marketing segmentation. It's only a brief overview of the future consumers' attitudes toward the new accommodation type, which could supply some value for reference to future research. For example, how the previous experience influences the attitudes of Gen Z tourists, factors that deserve to be explored; and what causes the different preferences on accommodation for various groups of Gen Z tourists could be further studied.

While this study represents an initial investigation into the attitudes of young Gen Z consumers towards sharing accommodation, it does not investigate deeply into identifying the core factors necessary for the development of the sharing accommodation industry or imply comprehensive marketing segmentation strategies. Rather, it provides a preliminary overview of future consumers' perspectives on this emerging accommodation paradigm, offering valuable insights for subsequent research endeavors. Future studies could explore into the other mechanisms

through which previous experiences shape the attitudes of Gen Z tourists, exploring factors deserving of further examination. Additionally, understanding the root causes of divergent preferences for accommodation among different segments of Gen Z tourists warrants deeper exploration. By undertaking more comprehensive analyses, researchers can unlock deeper insights into the evolving landscape of shared lodging preferences, informing strategic decision-making and fostering continued innovation within the accommodation industry, specifically in China.

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