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**Article**

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Article

# Analysis of the Impact of Airbnb Brand Personality on Consumer Involvement and Institutional Trust

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**Abstract:** In this study, Airbnb's brand personality is explored in relation to its effects on consumer involvement and institutional trust. The objective of this paper is to fill a gap in marketing research by building up a solid understanding of the relationship between those constructs in the context of hospitality brands. The results of the study revealed that Airbnb's brand personality is mostly associated with excitement, sincerity, and competence. Brand personality was shown to have effects on both consumer involvement and institutional trust, with competence having the biggest impact on consumer involvement, and institutional trust being under the most significant influence of sincerity. The results of this study present meaningful implications not only for the academic community, but also for marketing specialists focusing on branding strategies in the innovative context of sharing economy businesses.

**Keywords:** Airbnb; brand personality; consumer involvement; institutional trust; brand trust



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## 1. Introduction

Airbnb is one of the leading businesses in the hospitality industry, and is one of the fastest growing corporations in sharing economy services. The brand operates on a marketplace platform, and connects travelers with hosts all over the world. Trust is essential for purchase intentions, particularly online, and the degree of involvement determines whether or not the brand is committed to its promises. In the context of Airbnb, users pay for their services online, and are allowed to present reviews for future travelers. Unlike other business models, Airbnb has to preserve its image by providing innovative and quality services for travelers, especially in the hospitality industry, where the product attributes only differ slightly [1]. With Airbnb's rapid growth, the aspects of brand personality become critical when establishing a positive brand image and positioning the company as a platform that provides unique experiences to its users and possesses a distinct identity [2,3]. For that matter, the examination of Airbnb's brand personality and other behavioral factors can contribute to maintaining the prestige of the brand and enhancing the quality of its services [4,5] through open innovation processes. The case study of Airbnb developed by Schivinski et al. (2020) [6] about social media brand engagement in the context of collaborative consumption reveal that a hedonic brand image influences behavioral engagement on social media, and brand equity mediates the relationship between the functional brand image, consumption, contribution, and creation of social media brand-related content.

This study fills a gap in marketing research and marketing communications regarding the relationship between brand personality, brand trust, and consumer involvement in the context of Airbnb. It can also be applied for other brands within the hospitality industry, as well as economy-sharing businesses and community-based services. The paper is organized as follows: the next section reviews the theoretical background of the brand and the selected constructs, and Section 3 describes the research model, hypotheses development, the research methodology, and the questionnaire design. Data analysis and results are presented in Section 4, which is followed by discussion and conclusions (including implications and research limitations)

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Airbnb Corporate Model and Business Strategy

Airbnb is one of the growing companies in the hospitality industry that relies on sharing economy to conduct business, and to connect hosts to travelers [6]. As one of the leading companies in this industry, Airbnb operates on an innovative marketplace platform as an intermediary to serve the needs of travelers. A previous study on Airbnb stated that the brand “describes itself as a trusted community marketplace for travelers to list, discover, and book distinctive accommodations all over the globe” [1].

Prior research has been conducted to understand how travelers perceive Airbnb, and to describe the impact of involvement in regard to brand personality. The study revealed that “Airbnb brand personality is perceived differently depending on travelers’ accommodation involvement” [1]. Additionally, the study also indicated that the level of involvement affects consumers’ perception and purchasing behaviors [2,3], which are the main factors that contribute to the success of the Airbnb business strategy.

As the brand mainly communicates with its users virtually, trust might greatly influence customers and affect profitability [6]. An article about Airbnb indicated that trust has direct and indirect effects on customer satisfaction and repurchase intention [7,8]. Progressively, many other studies have explored the mediating effect of brand trust on consumers—it was proved to be crucial particularly for a business that operates on a marketplace platform. Some recent research has sought to assess the phenomenon of co-creation and business models in the shared economy (based on the open innovation model), particularly in the tourism sector, as is the case with Airbnb [4,9,10], in which the strength of the brand depends on the creation of trust between people who do not know each other [11,12], being a social and innovative process based on the social co-creation process, the result of lived experience, and sharing on online platforms and social networks [4,5,13]. The results of other research have shown that “institutional trust has a positive influence on product trust and interpersonal trust, and that product trust has a positive influence on interpersonal trust as well” [14]. The model of trust introduced in the same research was built accordingly to the principles of sharing economy, which explains the degree of importance of trust in this particular industry.

### 2.2. Brand Personality

Brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics that consumers ascribe to a certain brand [15]. Managing brand personality is considered to be of great importance to marketers, since it affects consumer responses [1,11,12]. Consumers tend to view brands as public figures who possess humanlike personality traits; thus, brand personality is derived in a similar way to how human personality is derived [1]. By ascribing human characteristics to brands, consumers can build strong, lasting relationships with them [16]. A study by Lee et al. (2009) [17] showed that brand personality influences consumers’ emotions, and has an effect on consumers’ consumption behavior. Furthermore, similar studies indicated several other possible effects of brand personality relevant to marketers: consistency between consumer personality and brand personality, for instance, is linked to an increase in brand attachment [18]; in addition to that, research by Ghantous (2016) [19] showed that brand personality has an impact on the quality of consumer–brand relationships.

In relation to Airbnb, good management of brand personality can have a meaningful impact on the brand. As pointed out by Lee and Kim (2017) [1], due to minimal product differences in the hospitality industry, brand personality is essential for Airbnb to differentiate from other brands. Symbolic and emotional values are more difficult to copy than product features, and are, therefore, useful to differentiate service brands [19]. Ghantous (2016) [19] also pointed out that brand personality is very important to service brands, such as Airbnb, because it offers the opportunity to position the brands' services as an emotional experience, and thus cater to consumers' emotional needs. Furthermore, service brands such as Airbnb could use their brand personality to go beyond the value-for-money logic and instead focus on ethical, social, and environmental values [19]. By doing so, Airbnb can elevate their brand and distinguish it from other brands in the hospitality industry. The present study utilizes the brand personality scale, developed by Aaker (1997) [15]. The scale distinguishes between five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. These dimensions all consist of several underlying personality traits that can be assigned to brands. All these dimensions carry different associations and, therefore, yield different managerial implications [20].

Aaker's scale is probably the most widely used brand personality scale. However, some scholars have criticized the scale (e.g., Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2017) [21]: the biggest criticism is that the scale is less suitable for research in a non-United-States-based demographic, since personality dimensions tend to differ across cultures. Some other brand personality scales have been developed for use in specific cultures instead. Nevertheless, the study at hand still uses Aaker's scale due to several reasons. Firstly, the other brand personality scales are also geared toward specific cultures, so since the target demographic in this study is quite international, there is no reason to assume that other scales would be better suited. Secondly, compared to some other existing scales, Aaker's scale is concise and thus practical to use. Thirdly, due to the widespread use of Aaker's scale, using this scale makes the results of this study more readily comparable to similar studies on brand personality. Even though the limitations to Aaker's scale have to be acknowledged, it can be concluded that this scale is best suited for the research.

### 2.3. Consumer Involvement

Consumer involvement has long been the subject of research to predict attitudes and behaviors of a certain group of people toward a particular product or service. Zaichowsky describes involvement as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" [22]. Although the role of consumer involvement differs from one research field to another, high and low involvement represent the personal relevance dedicated to a brand through experience or other attributes. For this reason, the stated definition combines cognitive and affective involvement. The initial scale constructed by Zaichowsky included twenty items that were later reduced to ten descriptive elements combining affective and cognitive subscales [22].

In a previous study intended to determine travelers' perceptions about Airbnb, involvement was measured through a four-item scale by Mittal. The proposed measurement scale of purchase involvement includes the degree of caring, the brand differences, significance of the selected brand, and the outcome [23]. The results revealed that there is an effect of involvement on brand personality: users with a high involvement rate claimed the three first dimensions of personality to be important [1].

Other research has compared the consumer involvement scales of Zaichowsky and Mittal by identifying the internal reliability of the scales using means of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  scores and correlations. The sample included participants who had already purchased financial services, and were familiar with the industry. The results confirmed that "the internal reliability of both tests reaches high levels, and the RPII achieves Cronbach's  $\alpha$  scores of between 0.85 for buyers of mortgages, and 0.95 non-buyers of pensions" [24]. Thus, both of the scales were validated and proved to have significance. However, after evaluating both of the scales, it was decided to utilize Zaichowsky's involvement scale, since it is believed

to be more suitable for understanding the importance of trust for Airbnb, and underlying users' perceptions on Airbnb brand personality traits. Therefore, it was concluded that the latter scale serves the aim and objectives of the research better.

#### 2.4. Institutional Trust

In the context of relationship marketing, trust has been conceptualized as an important factor of success [25]. Since brand personality is maintained in the minds of consumers as a reflection of the perception of the brand, it has been previously reported to have a meaningful and significant impact on brand trust [26]. Trust is reported to be extremely important in socially distant relationships (in digital environments), especially when those relationships involve online payments, company reliability, and privacy policies [14]. Thus, in order to facilitate online interactions, the need for consumers to trust the brand increases. In the context of Airbnb, such interactions are more complex, since they involve sharing a private property for a limited amount of time, and involve multiple parties (the brand, the host, and the guest). The fact that the premise of the platform was designed around trust (trust in the platform itself, hosts trusting guests, and guests trusting hosts) is critical when trying to understand the behavioral patterns of Airbnb consumers [8]. An important element of building and enhancing trust between hosts and guests often concerns collecting online reviews and rating scores [27]. However, since the platform acts as a mediator between hosts and guests, trust in the institution has a significant value, especially when it comes to privacy concerns, payment security, or the overall quality of the website [14,28].

Building trustworthy relationships between hosts and guests involves more interpersonal communication, and depends on separate encounters (since every host and guest experience is unique and sometimes does not involve or concern the trustworthiness of the brand), thus the focus in this research will be directed toward trust with the brand itself, or the so-called "institutional trust". According to Wu and Shen, institutional trust "could drive adoption of more social and economic sustainable practices because platform operators seek a favorable organizational reputation" [28]. Thus, in the case of Airbnb, institutional trust is important when trying to enhance and maintain the company's reputation, loyalty, and position in the market.

In recent years, issues of trust and loyalty have gained the attention of many academics and professionals in the business world [29]. In fact, this interest is related to the progressive need to reduce costs and return on investment, in order to achieve business competitiveness through the creation and increase of the intangible capital of brands [29,30]. This development is only achieved by the correct management of levels of trust, reputation, and loyalty [31] in the sense of stimulating personal, group, or collective involvement. Several studies highlight the importance of concepts such as trust and loyalty for the continuity of the long-term relationship between the customer and the company [32]. Relationship success leads to loyalty based on trust and commitment [25]. Thus, customer retention depends on the company's ability to fulfill its promises (a factor related to trust), which arises from the moment both parties share mutual trust [33].

A central theme for the development of strong brands is innovation [34], with various benefits of the product, namely, improving product quality, building the brand image, and increasing product loyalty [35,36]. Currently, both innovation and open innovation are critical assets for organizational development and success. Hinz and Spann (2008) [37] even argue that global brand innovation leads customers to develop more powerful motives for consumption, and drive purchase attitudes and behaviors. In the case of Airbnb, innovation around the brand is essential because it enhances its identity and brand personality [38], as it is increasingly prevalent and resident in the consumer's mind.

The identity characteristics of the brand stored in the consumer's memory are molded into attitudes that can be converted into pre-dispositions that guide purchase behavior. The Airbnb business project as a tool, platform, and relational context is living proof that user action creates or destroys value in the offer, although the platform is relatively immune to brand devaluations due to a series of prerequisites and requirements for operators to

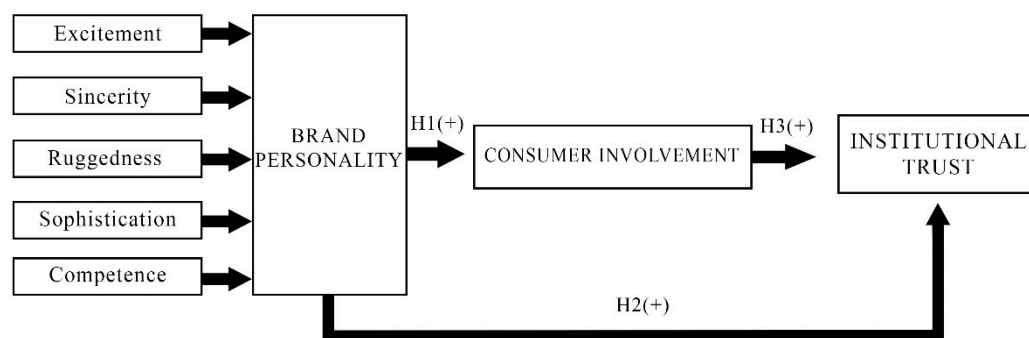
be part of the platform. On the other hand, the project itself is permanently involved in constant innovation processes, based on the needs of users, or on the detection of new opportunities to promote the offer. The identity and personality of the Airbnb brand has been an exercise in constant co-creation between supply, demand, and the company, resulting in the competitive development of the brand. The participation of the different stakeholders is essential for the establishment of new concepts, and for values to be inserted in the brand, which are added by continuity or association with the mental spectrum present and suggested by the brand. We believe that broad and cooperative development from the consumer’s point of view makes it possible to rationalize the perception of brand value and increase satisfaction, trust, and loyalty with the brand.

### 3. Methodology

The research problem was defined by the following question: How does the brand personality of Airbnb affect consumer involvement and institutional trust? This research aims to analyze how brand personality (and its separate dimensions) is related to consumer involvement and brand trust. Directly related to this general objective, the following specific objectives were defined: (1) Examine the corporate model and the business strategy of Airbnb; (2) Investigate the brand personality and its effect on consumer involvement in the Airbnb context; (3) Evaluate how brand personality can affect institutional trust in the context of Airbnb; (4) Inspect the relationship between consumer involvement with the Airbnb brand and consumers’ institutional trust.

In order to carry out a comprehensive analysis, theoretical and empirical research methods will be used. The selected marketing research methodology is quantitative research, and its aim is to analyze the relationships between the three constructs: the brand personality of Airbnb, consumer involvement with the brand, and institutional trust.

The conceptual model proposed in this paper is composed of the following variables (Figure 1): consumer involvement and brand personality are the independent variables in the model; thus, they influence the institutional trust toward Airbnb (therefore, institutional trust is the dependent construct in the model). Furthermore, different brand personality dimensions (excitement, sincerity, ruggedness, sophistication, and competence) can have different effects toward either consumer involvement or institutional trust.



**Figure 1.** Research model and hypotheses.

The brand personality scale used in this study was developed by Aaker (1997) [15]. As explained in the theoretical background, brand personality is based on consumers’ perception of the brand. Lee and Kim (2017) [1] argued that involvement influences the level of attention consumers give toward a certain product or brand. It is to be expected that a more interesting brand personality can cause consumers to pay more attention to the brand. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H1.** *The brand personality of Airbnb has an influence on consumer involvement with the brand.*

This study utilizes the institution-based trust construct by Liang et al. (2018) [8], which explored the effect of institutional trust toward satisfaction with the brand and

repurchase intention. Since trust has previously been confirmed to have a relationship with brand personality [39], it is believed that institutional trust can be affected by brand personality; moreover, different brand personality dimensions can have different effects toward institutional trust. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2.** *The brand personality of Airbnb has a positive effect on institutional trust.*

This study uses the consumer involvement scale by Zaichkowsky (1985) [22], which contains descriptive items to characterize users’ involvement in regard to Airbnb. Since consumer involvement has been proved to have a relation to the degree of trust toward a brand [40], the latter concept is considered to be a prominent variable in the context of Airbnb. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

**H3.** *There is a relationship between consumer involvement with the Airbnb brand and institutional trust.*

In order to carry out a comprehensive analysis, theoretical and empirical research methods are being used in this paper. The selected marketing research methodology is quantitative research, and its aim is to analyze the relationships between the brand personality of Airbnb, consumer involvement, and institutional trust. The research has been conducted to reach the specific objectives and to prove the initial hypotheses. After thoughtfully exploring the existing sampling methods, convenience sampling is the most suitable one for the research. Convenience sampling is defined as a “research design where the researcher chooses available subjects for the study conducted” [41]. The primary data collection in this paper is carried out through an online survey. This method was chosen in order to get more comprehensive and orientated opinions from a broader audience. It is important to acknowledge that the response rate for online surveys is relatively low; however, compared to other types of data gathering, this method is highly efficient in terms of accessing different audiences around the globe at a low cost, thus forming a broader opinion on the topic.

The target population for the survey is adult users of Airbnb services. The estimated number of registered users on Airbnb in 2018 was around 150 million users [42]. Considering the globalization in the Western world, the number of Airbnb users in continents such as Europe or North America is expected to be similar. Since the scope of the research is mostly directed toward European consumers, taking the total number of the European population, which is almost 742.9 million people [43], the number of Airbnb users in Europe would be around 15 million people (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the sample.

Population	Male or Female Airbnb Users (Total Perceived Number of Users Is 150 Million, Which Is Equal to Around 15 Million Airbnb Users in Europe)
Sampling Unit	Adult Airbnb users
Scope	European countries and the U.S. (with the possibility to expand the research to other continents as well)
Moment	January 2020

The sampling plan for this research is quota sample (non-probability), focusing on the final users (Airbnb users). The reason behind choosing a non-probability method is time and cost efficiency, although it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations, such as the low level of accuracy and inability to calculate errors. The aim of this study was to collect 100 answers—it is small-scale research; however, it is believed that this sample size is valid enough to receive appropriate results, especially considering the scope of Airbnb usage. Thus, after being launched in January 2020, it was stopped in one week due to achieving the goal of 100 answers, with 124 answers in total. The research tool used for the online survey was *SurveyMonkey*, and the completed survey was sent out for pre-testing for 5 people. In order to reach the target population, the survey was shared among fellow travelers and internationally, so the survey respondents were expected to be mainly Europe-based, with

a few answers from the U.S. and North Africa. It was also likely to receive answers from other continents.

The survey was conducted in accordance with the objectives. It included items for the constructs specified in the conceptual model, and was used to test the research hypotheses. The items were developed based on prior research of the literature involving brand personality, consumer involvement, and brand trust, mostly in the contexts of Airbnb or related matters (e.g., hospitality services). The scales used in this study have numerous items from which those with the highest factor loadings were selected (three variables each for respective brand personality dimensions, six variables for consumer involvement, and three variables for institutional trust), also taking into consideration the variables that best represented the respective constructs. Besides the first question, which is aimed at filtering out the non-users, and the demographic data at the end of the survey, the constructs were measured with a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”. The questionnaire was conducted in English, and it was tested and approved with a small pilot study in order to gather feedback and modify the questionnaire if necessary.

The questionnaire design (presented below in the Table 2) includes items for the constructs specified in the conceptual research model, and the survey was conducted to collect data that can be used to empirically test the research hypotheses.

**Table 2.** Questionnaire design.

Construct	Dimension	Item	Description	Reference
FILTER	-	-	I have used Airbnb services before	-
BRAND PERSONALITY	Excitement	E1	Trendy	Aaker, 1997 [15]
		E2	Unique	
		E3	Exciting	
	Sincerity	SI1	Sincere	
		SI2	Reliable	
		SI3	Honest	
	Ruggedness	R1	Masculine	
		R2	Rugged	
		R3	Tough	
	Sophistication	SO1	Glamorous	
		SO2	Upper-class	
		SO3	Charming	
Competence	C1	Leader		
	C2	Confident		
	C3	Successful		
CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT	-	CI1	Important	Zaichowsky, 1994 [22]
		CI2	Valuable	
		CI3	Interesting	
		CI4	Involving	
		CI5	Fascinating	
		CI6	Appealing	
INSTITUTIONAL TRUST	-	IT1	Airbnb is trustworthy.	Liang, Choi and Joppe, 2018 [8]
		IT2	Airbnb gives the impression that it keeps promises and commitments.	
		IT3	I believe Airbnb has my best interests in mind.	
	Demographics	-	What is your gender? Please specify your age. Please specify the country you live in at the moment.	-



#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

The survey had a total of 124 respondents, out of which, 70 were female (56.5%), 53 were male (42.7%), and one respondent identified themselves as other ( $n = 1$ ). Thus, the genders in the study are rather equally distributed.

The age of the respondents varied between 18 and 54. As can be seen in Figure 2, 89.5% of the respondents were of an age between 19 and 35. The majority of the respondents (70.16%) were between 19 and 24 years of age. Due to the overwhelming majority of the respondents being younger than 30 years old, it is clear that the age of the respondents was non-normally distributed.

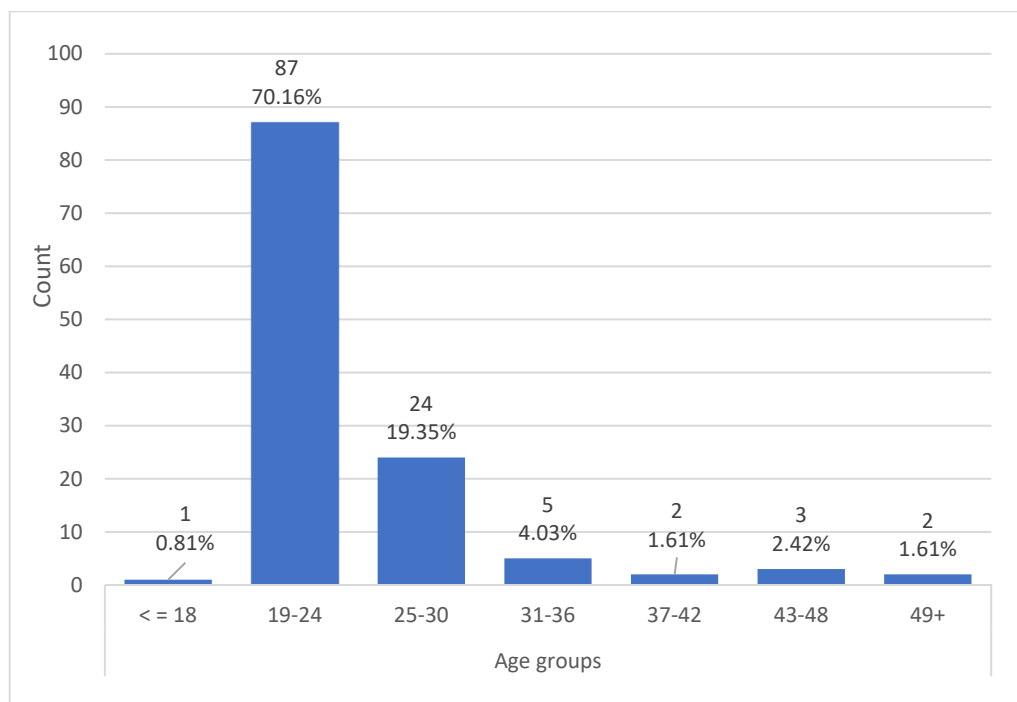


Figure 2. Age groups.

Regarding the country of residence, the respondents lived in a total of 19 different countries. The country that was home to the most respondents was Portugal ( $n = 34$ ) with 27.4% of the respondents living there, followed by the Netherlands ( $n = 16$ ) with 12.9% of the respondents, Italy ( $n = 14$ ) with 11.3% of the respondents, the United States ( $n = 11$ ) with 8.9% of the respondents, Morocco ( $n = 10$ ) with 8.1% of the respondents, and Belgium ( $n = 9$ ) and Lithuania ( $n = 9$ ) both with 7.3% of the respondents. The respondents were distributed over five different continents, with the biggest group (79.0%) living in Europe ( $n = 98$ ). Based on this distribution, it is fair to say that the results of the study are quite culturally diverse.

The scales were tested for reliability using Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ . The recommended value of Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is 0.7 [44], and the brand personality dimensions proved to be reliable with Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ , ranging from 0.721 to 0.885. The consumer involvement scale proved to be reliable, with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.872. The institutional trust scale proved to be reliable, with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.825 (Table 3). Table 3 demonstrates that all the values meet the recommendations for construct reliability.

**Table 3.** Construct reliability.

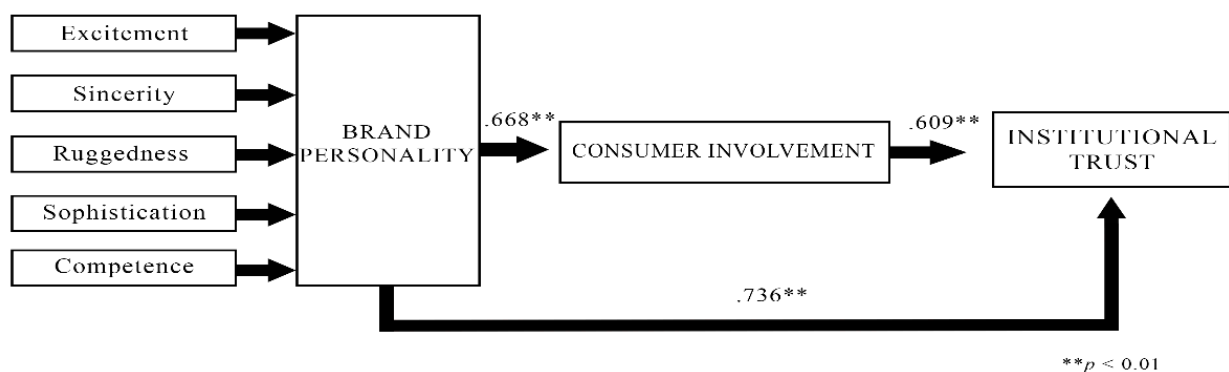
Construct	Variables	Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$	
BRAND PERSONALITY	Trendy	Trendy	E1	
		Unique	E2	
		Exciting	E3	
	Unique	Sincere	SI1	
		Reliable	SI2	
Honest		SI3		
Exciting	Masculine	R1		
	Rugged	R2		
	Tough	R3		
Sincere	Glamorous	SO1		
	Upper-class	SO2		
	Charming	SO3		
Reliable	Leader	C1		
	Confident	C2		
	Successful	C3		
CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT	Honest	CI1	0.872	
		CI2		
		CI3		
		CI4		
		CI5		
		CI6		
INSTITUTIONAL TRUST	Masculine	IT1	0.825	
		Rugged		IT2
		Tough		IT3

After assessing the reliability of the measurement model, the hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4 and the structural model (Figure 3).

**Table 4.** Hypotheses testing results.

No.	Path	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-Tailed)
H1 (+)	Brand Personality → Consumer Involvement	0.668 **	0.000
H2 (+)	Brand Personality → Institutional Trust	0.736 **	0.000
H3 (+)	Consumer Involvement → Institutional Trust	0.609 **	0.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



**Figure 3.** Structural model. Hypotheses testing results.

The first test was conducted to examine whether brand personality has an effect on consumer involvement. A high correlation level of 0.668 ( $p = 0.000$ ) was found; thus, the

respondents with a high involvement rated Airbnb higher on the brand personality scales. Therefore, H1 is supported.

To test H2, the correlation between brand personality and institutional trust was examined. A Pearson correlation test revealed that a high correlation of 0.736 ( $p = 0.000$ ) exists between brand personality and institutional trust. This result indicates that a stronger perceived brand personality results in a higher institutional trust in the consumer. Thus, H2 is supported.

To test the relation between consumer involvement and institutional trust, a Pearson correlation test was carried out. Consumer involvement and institutional trust are strongly correlated, with a value of 0.609 ( $p = 0.000$ ). Therefore, H3 is supported.

To further understand the relation between the variables, a linear multiple regression test was performed. The adjusted  $r$  square has a value of 0.559. This means that 55.9% of the variance of institutional trust is explained by brand personality and consumer involvement. Table 5 gives more insights into how strong the effects of brand personality and consumer involvement are on institutional trust. The standardized coefficient betas of brand personality and consumer involvement are 0.596 and 0.211, respectively—this indicates that the effect of brand personality on institutional trust is stronger than the effect of consumer involvement on institutional trust.

**Table 5.** Regression testing results. Relationship between the constructs.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F. Change
1	0.753 <sup>a</sup>	0.567	0.559	0.73454	0.567	79.091	2	121	0.000
Coefficients <sup>b</sup>									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	0.361	0.405		0.892	0.374			
	Brand_Personality	0.773	0.104	0.596	7.402	0.000	0.553	1.807	
	Consumer_involvement	0.237	0.091	0.211	2.617	0.010	0.553	1.807	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Consumer\_Involvement, Brand\_Personality. b. Dependent Variable: Institutional\_Trust.

This study further investigated the perceived brand personality of Airbnb. Figure 4 depicts the brand personality dimensions of Airbnb according to respondents' ratings: excitement ( $M = 5.34$ ), sincerity ( $M = 5.15$ ), ruggedness ( $M = 3.31$ ), sophistication ( $M = 4.04$ ), and competence ( $M = 5.48$ ). Thus, excitement, sincerity, and competence are the brand personality dimensions that are perceived by the respondents to be most strongly associated with Airbnb.

To gain a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the constructs, the brand personality dimensions of Airbnb were further examined in relation to trust and involvement. Linear multiple regression tests were conducted to test which of the dimensions of brand personality influenced consumer involvement and institutional trust the most. Table 6 shows the results of the linear multiple regression test on the effects of the dimensions of brand personality on consumer involvement. The adjusted  $r$  square shows that 57.6% of the variance of consumer involvement is explained by the dimensions of brand personality. The dimensions of excitement, sincerity, and competence have significance influence ( $p < 0.05$ ) on consumer involvement, whereas the dimensions of ruggedness and sophistication do not ( $p > 0.05$ ). Competence has the greatest influence on consumer involvement, with a standardized coefficient beta of 0.454.

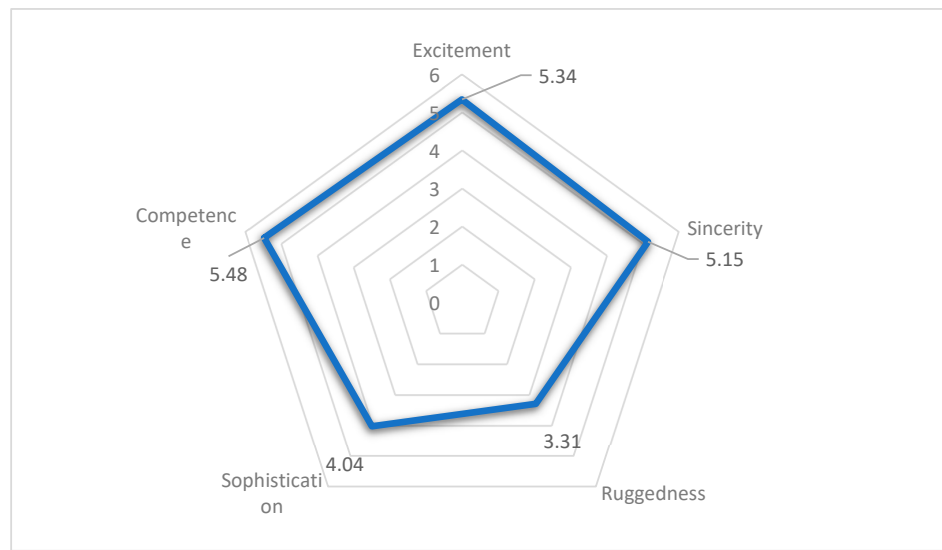


Figure 4. Airbnb brand personality dimensions.

Table 6. Regression testing results. Brand personality dimensions and consumer involvement.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F. Change
1	0.770 <sup>a</sup>	0.593	0.576	0.63925	0.593	34.416	5	118	0.000
Coefficients <sup>b</sup>									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	0.757	0.366		2.066	0.041			
	Excitement	0.182	0.079	0.188	2.291	0.024	0.514	1.945	
	Sincerity	0.179	0.067	0.213	2.684	0.008	0.549	1.820	
	Ruggedness	−0.018	0.044	−0.027	−0.400	0.690	0.772	1.295	
	Sophistication	0.074	0.060	0.092	1.229	0.221	0.614	1.629	
	Competence	0.466	0.077	0.454	6.058	0.000	0.615	1.627	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competence, Ruggedness, Sophistication, Sincerity, Excitement. b. Dependent Variable: Consumer\_involvement.

Table 7 shows the results of the linear multiple regression test on the effects of the dimensions of brand personality on institutional trust. The adjusted *r* square shows that 71.1% of the variance of institutional trust is explained by the dimensions of brand personality. Sincerity and competence are shown to have a significant effect on institutional trust ( $p < 0.05$ ). Ruggedness and sophistication do not yield any significant effects. Excitement does not show significant effect on institutional trust, but since the result is close to significance, a Pearson correlation test was used to better examine this relation (the results of this test are presented in Table 8). The results of the Pearson correlation test show that excitement has a significant effect on institutional trust ( $p < 0.05$ ). The results of the linear multiple regression test show that sincerity has the biggest influence on institutional trust, with a standardized coefficient beta of 0.649.

**Table 7.** Regression testing results. Brand personality dimensions and institutional trust.

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.850 <sup>a</sup>	0.723	0.711	0.59496	0.723	61.507	5	118	0.000
Coefficients <sup>b</sup>									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	0.243	0.341		0.713	0.477			
	Excitement	0.135	0.074	0.124	1.832	0.070	0.514	1.945	
	Sincerity	0.616	0.062	0.649	9.929	0.000	0.549	1.820	
	Ruggedness	0.006	0.041	0.009	0.157	0.876	0.772	1.295	
	Sophistication	0.047	0.056	0.052	0.839	0.403	0.614	1.629	
	Competence	0.166	0.072	0.143	2.313	0.022	0.615	1.627	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competence, Ruggedness, Sophistication, Sincerity, Excitement. b. Dependent Variable: Institutional\_Trust.

**Table 8.** Correlation excitement and institutional.

Correlations.			
		Excitement	Institutional_Trust
Excitement	Pearson Correlation	1	0.619 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	124	124
Institutional_Trust	Pearson Correlation	0.619 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	124	124

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To see whether there are any differences in how men and women rated Airbnb’s brand personality, an independent t-test was conducted. The results of this test are displayed in Table 9. The results show that a significance difference only appears in how men and women rate the dimension of competence ( $p < 0.05$ ): women rated Airbnb higher on competence than men.

**Table 9.** Independent sample t-test. Brand personality types and genders.

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Brand_Personality	Equal variances assumed	1.498	0.223	-1.865	121	0.065	-0.28692	0.15381	-0.59143	0.01759	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.923	120.603	0.057	-0.28692	0.14918	-0.58227	0.00843	
Excitement	Equal variances assumed	0.642	0.425	-1.562	121	0.121	-0.28733	0.18396	-0.65153	0.07687	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.548	108.132	0.125	-0.28733	0.18562	-0.65527	0.08060	
Sincerity	Equal variances assumed	0.193	0.661	-1.643	121	0.103	-0.34708	0.21121	-0.76523	0.07107	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.660	115.985	0.100	-0.34708	0.20906	-0.76115	0.06699	
Ruggedness	Equal variances assumed	1.032	0.312	-1.024	121	0.308	-0.27592	0.26950	-0.80947	0.25763	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.058	120.838	0.292	-0.27592	0.26067	-0.79200	0.24106	
Sophistication	Equal variances assumed	4.455	0.037	-0.803	121	0.423	-0.17871	0.22250	-0.61921	0.26179	
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.845	119.767	0.400	-0.17871	0.21141	-0.59728	0.23987	
Competence	Equal variances assumed	0.164	0.686	-2.003	121	0.047	-0.34555	0.17254	-0.68714	-0.00396	
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.013	114.145	0.046	-0.34555	0.17166	-0.68561	-0.00549	

### 5. Conclusions

Due to difficulties for hospitality brands to distinguish themselves through product quality, brand personality is an important tool for Airbnb to differentiate itself from other brands. The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of brand personality on consumer involvement and institutional trust in the context of Airbnb. To accomplish this, a survey was conducted in which brand personality, consumer involvement, and institutional trust were examined in relation to Airbnb. The findings are expected to shed some light on the effects Airbnb's brand personality has on its customers, and are, therefore, expected to provide Airbnb marketers the knowledge of what dimensions of brand personality are most important to Airbnb.

The brand personality scale developed by Aaker (1997) [15] was used to establish what Airbnb's brand personality is. The results showed that the Airbnb brand was most readily associated with excitement, sincerity, and competence. The brand personality dimensions, ruggedness and sophistication, were not commonly associated with the Airbnb brand. Minimal differences between men and women were found to have an impact on the ratings of Airbnb's brand personality, and only the brand personality dimension, competence, was rated significantly higher by women than by men.

Data analysis showed that Airbnb's brand personality significantly influences both consumer involvement and institutional trust, confirming both H1 and H2. These findings suggest that brand personality can be a meaningful tool in the hospitality industry in increasing consumer involvement and institutional trust. Data analysis also revealed that consumer involvement has a significant influence on institutional trust, which confirms H3. This finding suggests that consumers who are highly involved with Airbnb also have more trust in the institution.

More specific analysis revealed that the brand personality dimensions, excitement, sincerity, and competence, all had a significant influence on consumer involvement, whereas

ruggedness and sophistication did not. The influence of competence on consumer involvement was found to be the biggest. This shows that in relation to consumer involvement, competence is the most important to manage. The brand personality dimensions, excitement, sincerity, and competence, also proved to have a significant influence on institutional trust, whereas ruggedness and sophistication again did not. Out of all the brand personality dimensions, sincerity proved to have the biggest impact on institutional trust. This result is not surprising, since sincerity incorporates the personality traits, sincere, honest, and reliable—these are all traits that connote trustworthiness. The results show that the three most prominent brand personality dimensions of Airbnb (excitement, sincerity, and competence) are, in relation to consumer involvement and institutional trust, also the most relevant ones.

The results of this study have several theoretical implications. This study further enhances the knowledge on the effects of brand personality in a general sense, and, more specifically, in the context of Airbnb and the hospitality industry. The results show that the constructs of brand personality, consumer involvement, and institutional trust are all related. Furthermore, they show what specific dimensions of brand personality are linked most strongly to consumer involvement and institutional trust. The results give insight into how consumers use psychological constructs, such as brand personality, to differentiate between brands that are normally difficult to differentiate between. This indicates that attributing human qualities to a brand can add value to the brand.

The results of the study also have some managerial implications. Understanding the effects of brand personality in the hospitality industry is vital for companies such as Airbnb when trying to distinguish their brand from their competitors. Proper management of brand personality offers a great opportunity to increase trust and consumer involvement with the brand. Managing institutional trust is especially essential for Airbnb, since Airbnb mainly operates and communicates with its customers online. As pointed out by Liang, Choi, and Joppe (2018) [8], trust may have direct and indirect effects on Airbnb's customers' satisfaction and repurchase intention. The results of this study show that brand personality is an important antecedent for institutional trust. Airbnb marketers, and marketers for similar companies, should focus on emphasizing the company's sincerity in their branding strategy to ensure their consumers trust the institution. Emphasizing the company's competence would lead to an increase in consumer involvement and brand trust.

This study has several limitations, and further research is needed. The first limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size of 124. A reproduction of this study on a larger sample size would give the results more validity. Likewise, a reproduction of this study with a culturally different demographic would be valuable, since Airbnb's brand personality dimensions might differ across various cultures. Another limitation is the non-normal distribution of age amongst the respondents. It would be valuable to replicate the study with different age groups to see if evaluations differ per age group. In particular, the brand personality dimension, excitement, might be subjective to being rated differently, due to its connotations with being young. In order to keep the survey concise and practical, some personality traits were omitted from the brand personality dimensions; similarly, dimensions of brand trust concerning the host were omitted, and some consumer involvement dimensions were left out of the survey. Future research could focus on other personality traits, dimensions of trust, and dimensions of consumer involvement, to see whether they would yield different results.

Another possible limitation is the use of the brand personality scale by Aaker (1997) [15]. As mentioned in the theoretical background, Aaker's brand personality scale is not perfect. Future research could explore Airbnb's brand personality using different brand personality scales. Future research should also explore Airbnb's brand personality in relation to other behavioral factors, such as brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction, among others. Likewise, other brands in the hospitality services should be researched, as well as other brands that rely on sharing economy and community-based services, in order to gain a more profound understanding of the role of brand personality in brands such as Airbnb.

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