

Chapter 5

Hospitality and Older Tourists: A Focus on Accommodation Choices

Abstract Hospitality and accommodation services play a crucial role in the tourist experience. After defining hospitality and presenting a broad classification of accommodations, the chapter provides an overview of the types of accommodation used by older tourists. Next, it describes some models of service quality and satisfaction that have been used in hospitality studies. Since extant studies have shown that hotels represent a preferred type of accommodation for older tourists, the second part of the chapter addresses the importance of hotel attributes for improving customer satisfaction and obtaining customer delight. Finally, the potentialities of peer-to-peer accommodation offered by online platforms such as Airbnb are discussed.

5.1 Defining Hospitality

The concept of hospitality has been much debated in the literature. Hence, before addressing older tourist behavior with regard to hospitality preferences, it is worth recalling how scholars define hospitality to provide a conceptual background for this chapter. Brotherton (1999) contributed a critical review of the main interpretations of hospitality. For example, Cassee (1983, p. 14) supplied a holistic definition of hospitality, intended as a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as “food, beverages, beds, ambience and environment, and behavior of staff.” Hepple et al. (1990) proposed from their review of the literature that hospitality has four distinct characteristics:

- It is provided by a host to a guest who is away from home.
- It is interactive—in hospitality, provider and receiver are simultaneously together.
- It includes both tangible and intangible factors.
- The host provides for the guest’s security, psychological and physiological comfort.

King (1995, quoted in Kandampully et al. 2014), suggested that hospitality broadly spans three overlapping spheres: private, commercial, and social. While the private domain refers to hospitality in one's home to friends and family, the commercial domain represents the transition of hospitality from an unconditional offering to one where profit plays the prevailing role. Finally, the social domain emphasizes hospitableness and the generous provisions of food, beverage, and shelter to travelers.

According to Brotherton (1999, p. 167), these authors (Cassee 1983; Hepple et al. 1990; King 1995) fail to adequately define hospitality because:

... they confuse hospitable behavior, or hospitableness, with hospitality and fall into the trap of suggesting that one of the important features of hospitality is making the guest "feel at home."

Brotherton (1999) also criticized some definitions of hospitality that are strongly weighted on the supply-side (e.g., Pfeifer 1983; Jones 1996) because they concentrate exclusively on one side of the hospitality exchange. Brotherton (1999) rather proposed a concept of hospitality that is based on what is defined as the "holy trinity" of hospitality: accommodation, food, and drink, with a focus on the priority of accommodation. Accordingly, hospitality is defined as a contemporaneous human exchange designed to be mutually beneficial for the parties involved (Brotherton 1999). Accommodation is to be intended not strictly as traditional accommodation forms, such as hotels, but rather as any type of accommodation where hospitality is provided, such as public restaurants or cafes, as well as any domestic accommodation. Therefore, Brotherton (1999) defined accommodation *per se* rather than the accommodation industry.

Slattery criticized Brotherton (1999) and other scholars for their definition of hospitality and argued that in the hospitality industry the critical relationship is not between host and guest, but rather between sellers and buyers or customers. In addition, according to Slattery (2002), defining hospitality as providing accommodation food and drink is reductive because customers do not buy only products, but also services and facilities that must be carefully designed and organized by the hospitality industry. Instead, Slattery (2002) highlighted the diversity and complexity of the hospitality industry, which includes for example a wide range of venues whose primary function is not hospitality. For example, Las Vegas casinos include facilities such as rooms, restaurants, theaters, a conference and exhibition center, a shopping mall, and a health club.

Other scholars focused more on the service and customer dimension of hospitality. In this regard, Hemmington (2007) considered hospitality as a commercial phenomenon and concluded that hospitality businesses must concentrate on the host-guest relationship and strive to deliver memorable service experiences. Moreover, Kandampully et al. (2014) viewed hospitality as a special type of service industry, "where service is vital but where the emphasis on service dimensions can be quite different from other service sectors." In a broad sense, Barrows et al. (2015) argued that, in the literature, hospitality refers to any kind of institution that offers

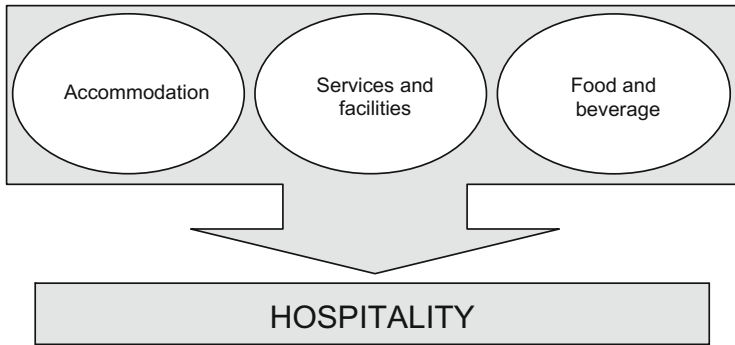


Fig. 5.1 The hospitality concept. *Source* Author's elaboration on Barrows et al. (2015)

shelter, food, or other types of service to people away from home, as represented in Fig. 5.1.

Without elaborating on these definitions, what emerges is a great variety of positions toward hospitality. In this chapter, a specific element of hospitality will be addressed for its relevance to the nature of the tourist experience: accommodation. In fact, while hospitality services such as restaurants or cafes are used both by residents and by tourists, accommodations are typically used by travelers, that is, individuals spending a night away from their usual residence. Accommodation therefore represents a crucial element from a tourism perspective.

5.2 Older Tourists' Preferred Types of Accommodation: An Overview

Although to a lesser extent than for hospitality, definitional issues also arise when referring to accommodation. Scholars distinguish between traditional or mainstream accommodation (such as hotels, motels, resorts, campsites, and trailer and recreational vehicle (RV)¹ parks) and specialist accommodation (Morrison et al. 1996; McIntosh and Siggs 2005), also known as the parahotel business (Schwaninger 1989) or the supplementary accommodation sector (Seekings 1989). Specialist accommodation includes a variety of solutions whose prices range from the budget to the expensive ends, such as bed-and-breakfast, guesthouses, country inns, stately homes and mansions, country cottages, farms, ranches, wilderness and nature retreats, and boutique hotels (Liu et al. 2015).

¹The majority of RVs are travel trailers and caravans, even though motorhomes, van campers, fifth-wheel trailers, and tent trailers are also utilized by RV tourists (Brooker and Joppe 2013).

In addition, some scholars distinguish between formal and informal accommodation. The first covers regular, taxed, registered activities, while the latter includes legal activities that are unregulated by the public authorities for tax, social security and/or labor law purposes. Informal accommodation includes both registered companies (e.g., hotels not declaring their full activity) and unregistered entities carrying out economic activities, often small-scale enterprises such as small guesthouses or bed and breakfasts (Horodnic et al. 2016). With technology development, in addition to these “traditional” informal competitors, new forms of informal accommodation have emerged, as will be discussed in Sect. 5.5 (Guttentag 2015). A classification of accommodation is proposed in Fig. 5.2.

Concerning older tourists’ preferences for types of accommodation, several scholars found that the older tourist prefers traditional accommodation and especially hotels (Romsa and Blenman 1989; Batra 2009; Bokberger and Laesser 2009; Alén et al. 2016). In particular, travelers attracted to places of historical or artistic interest show a greater predisposition to stay in hotels than they do in more economical alternatives, such as hostels or family accommodation (Lieux et al. 1994). The preference of older tourists for hotel accommodation is confirmed by a recent study by Alén et al. (2016), who explored accommodation choices among Spanish individuals aged 55-plus. The most preferred accommodation by far was the hotel (70.9%), followed at a great distance by family and friends’ house (17.4%). Holiday apartments (3.1%) and rural establishments (1.4%) were the least preferred options.

Other scholars (e.g., Bai et al. 1999; Blazey 1992) found that older tourists favor the home of friends and/or family as their accommodation option, although this inclination is influenced by the individual’s age (Bai et al. 1999; Batra 2009) and by the attractiveness of the destination’s attributes (Lieux et al. 1994). In relation to this, a recent study among older Australians conducted by Backer and King (2016) found that older people (aged 65 and above) represent a high proportion (23.9%) of travelers visiting friends and relatives (VFRs), compared with 14.8% of non-VFRs.

Laesser et al. (2009) explored the travel preferences of solo travelers. Based on a conceptual model, the authors divided Swiss travelers into four groups and found significant differences between the groups in terms of accommodation choice. The characteristics of each group are described below:

- Single-solo: Tourists who come from single households and travel alone; their favorite accommodation is either with friends or with relatives.
- Single-group: Tourists who come from single households but travel with a group of other people; they choose to stay at hotels.
- Collective solo: Tourists who do not live alone but they travel alone; they prefer to stay at holiday residences.
- Collective group: Tourists who come from collective households but they decide to travel by themselves as part of a group; they opt to stay at hotels.

Other studies emphasized the preferences of older tourists for camping. Over time, this concept has developed from basic tenting to caravanning, RVs and luxury offerings. Camping accommodation is referred to with several terms in different

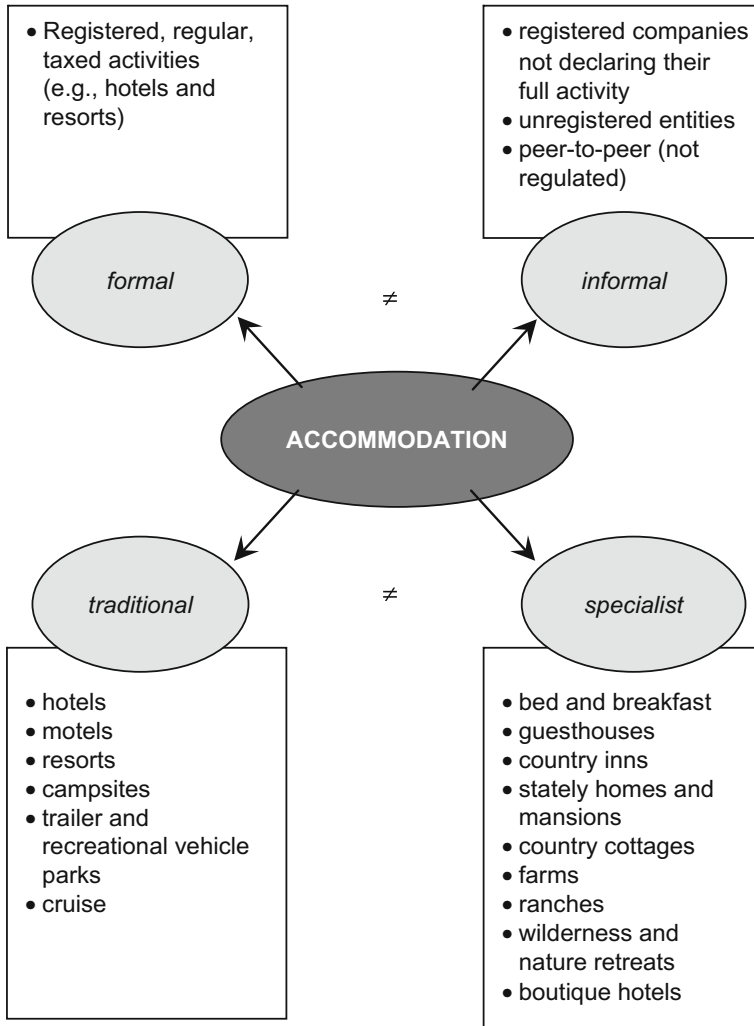


Fig. 5.2 A classification of accommodation *Source* Author's elaboration

countries, including, for instance, caravan parks, holiday parks, and tourist parks. For example, while North Americans incline toward terms such as campground, trailer park, travel park, RV park, or RV resort, in Europe the word campsite is favored. RV use is widespread among older tourists in certain countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and South Africa. The RVs are used in drive tourism, in which the vehicle serves both as a transport means and as accommodation, as explained by Patterson et al. (2015, p. 540):

Today caravans have become more than just a “bedroom on wheels” as they were in the past, and now feature well-appointed kitchen spaces, internal shower and toilet features, and comfortable living areas, often focused around flat-screen televisions connected to the global media by satellite dishes.

In a broad sense, camping is supported by outdoor hospitality (Brooker and Joppe 2013), which includes campgrounds, caravan parks, RV parks, and glamping.² Outdoor hospitality can refer to several forms of accommodation, for example camping and caravanning in rural areas with no services as well as camping in commercial parks (or outdoor hospitality parks) with luxury facilities such as saunas, massages, outdoor and indoor pools, beauty treatments, steam baths, gym/fitness facilities, Jacuzzis, and solariums (Brooker and Joppe 2014). As reported by Brooker and Joppe (2013), outdoor hospitality is widespread in Australia and New Zealand where more than 86% of persons have visited a caravan or holiday park at least once in their lifetime. These tourists are mainly older tourists, called gray nomads in Australia or snowbirds in the United States and Western Europe (Sullivan and Stevens 1982). They are defined as people aged 55 years and older, who travel independently for extended periods of time by caravan or campervan (Patterson et al. 2011). In addition, there is an emerging trend of short-stay caravan travelers, referred to as “gray caravanners” (Patterson et al. 2015), who are usually 75-plus and prefer to go on shorter visits.

Mahadevan (2014) highlighted the importance of improving the number of accommodation facilities for gray nomads to increase future visits. In addition, he stressed that gray nomads also utilize noncommercial accommodation, such as bush camping, free camps, rest areas, and national parks, which are often provided free or at low cost because they have limited facilities.

A few studies also reported the preference of older tourists for cruise travel (Javalgi et al. 1992; Callan et al. 2000; Muller and Cleaver 2000), particularly among older age groups. In this regard, Lehto et al. (2008) found that the silent generation (individuals born between 1925 and 1945) are more likely to take a cruise vacation than are baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964). The cruise is also a preferred type of travel accommodation among collective solo tourists (Boksberg and Laesser 2009). In their study conducted on international cruise travelers who disembarked at a Greek port, Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis (2010) found that the 56-plus age group represented about 35% of the total passengers.

Le Serre and Chevalier (2012) argued that cruise ships are particularly attractive for older women belonging to the relaxed intellectual traveler segment, because cruises often combine cultural stimuli with tranquility and the opportunity for social interaction. A recent study has shown cruise tourism in Asia is rapidly growing among older tourist (Patuelli and Nijkamp 2016).

²This word, which is a mixture of “glamorous” and “camping,” is used to define a type of camping that includes more comfortable and luxurious accommodation than does traditional camping (Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com).

5.3 Models of Service Quality and Satisfaction

The hospitality industry competes to provide high service quality and customer satisfaction. While many studies have addressed customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry, little research has been conducted with specific regard to older customers (e.g., Callan and Bowman 2000; Caber and Albayrak 2014). This section will present some models that can be used to measure quality and satisfaction in the accommodation industry. Although they were initially developed for other service contexts, these models have been frequently used in the hospitality literature and some have been applied with a particular focus on exploring the perceptions and attitudes of older tourists in the hotel industry, as will be presented in Sect. 5.4.

In the marketing literature, service quality is considered an important component of customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al. 2006). Specifically, it has been claimed that accommodation services differ from most other services (Crick and Spencer 2011) because the service is provided for prolonged periods of time (Brochado et al. 2015). Some scholars argued that customer satisfaction depends on the (dis)confirmation paradigm (e.g., Oliver 2000; Wirtz and Mattila 2001)—that is, the results of the evaluative discrepancy between customers' perceptions and their expectations of service (Oliver 1980). The SERVQUAL model, which is based on the disconfirmation paradigm, is one of the most frequently used models to measure service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1988); it has also been applied to hospitality and adapted in particular to measure the service quality of hotels. For instance, Brochado et al. (2015) recall the LODGSERV (Knutson et al. 1990) and the HOLSERV (Wei et al. 1999) scales.

To investigate customers' quality perceptions, some scholars have recommended using an attribute-level approach (Marković and Raspor Janković 2013; Parasuraman et al. 1988). In this regard, Kano et al. (1984) focused on the evaluation of service attributes, specifically the relationship between the performance of an attribute and the degree of attribute satisfaction. In particular, Kano et al. (1984) emphasized the non-symmetric relation between service attributes performance and customer satisfaction (see Fig. 5.3). They classified "must-have" and performance attributes as essential attributes, and attractive attributes as differentiating attributes. Kano et al. found that the must-have attributes meet implicit (or indifferent) needs and satisfy a minimum acceptable service level. Such attributes are essential to any service and should always be guaranteed and closely monitored by companies. They do not lead to customer satisfaction; however, if neglected, they determine a negative quality judgment by customers, even if core services were provided with precision and expertise. Performance attributes lead to customer satisfaction if the performance is high. Attractive attributes exceed customer's expectations, stimulating or re-awakening latent needs that, once satisfied, generate a high satisfaction level and a greater possibility of loyalty toward companies (Torres and Kline 2006; Goswami and Sarma 2011). Further, attractive attributes can lead to customer delight (see Sect. 5.4.2).

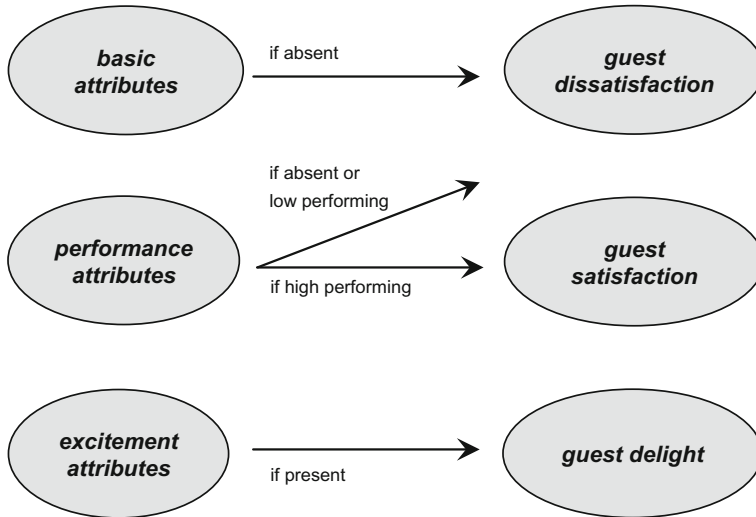


Fig. 5.3 Non-symmetric relationships between product attributes' performance and customer satisfaction. *Source* Author's elaboration on Vavra (1997) and Albayrak et al. (2016)

Kano's model inspired subsequent research. For example, Vavra (1997) further explored the non-symmetric relationship between attributes and satisfaction. He developed the importance grid, which uses the importance of a product or service attribute to classify attributes as "basic," "performance," and "excitement" (i.e., attractive) through regression analysis or partial correlation. The importance of an attribute may differ according to whether customers are asked about it directly or whether the information is offered implicitly. Hence, importance grid customers are asked to evaluate the performance and importance of attributes explicitly, whereas the implicit importance is usually derived through regression analysis. The evaluation of attributes is used as the independent variable, and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable. Finally, each attribute is positioned on a matrix where the explicit importance value is placed on the x and the implicit (derived) importance is placed on the y axis. The matrix is divided into four quadrants and attributes are classified as follows:

- basic factors, which have low implicit and high explicit importance values
- excitement factors, which have low explicit and high implicit importance
- important performance factors, which have both high implicit and high explicit importance values
- unimportant performance factors, which have low explicit and low implicit importance values.

In today's highly competitive and dynamic market, the existence of certain "attractive" qualities (Kano et al. 1984) or excitement factors (Vavra 1997) is crucial to the accommodation industry. Leaving customers simply satisfied is not enough to obtain customer preference and customer loyalty (Bonfanti and Brunetti 2015).

5.4 The Importance of Hotel Attributes for Older Tourists' Satisfaction

Despite some early studies (e.g., Ananth 1992; Gustin and Weaver 1993; Callan and Bowman 2000), the hospitality literature has only recently started to investigate the importance of hotel attributes to older tourists. As recommended by Caber and Albayrak (2014), hotel attributes are important for the selection of hotels and the evaluation of service quality. In addition, some studies have shown the existence of a gap between the services provided by operators and the services considered important by customers (Chen et al. 2013a, b; Nysveen 2003). Therefore, exploring and understanding customers' priorities with regard to hotel attributes is strategically important.

Ananth (1992) examined the attributes that older travelers consider when selecting a hotel. In a study conducted among the alumni of the Pennsylvania State University, the findings revealed that older customers (aged 59+) have certain needs and expectations that influence them to ignore certain marketing promotions that may well be successful with younger travelers, and vice versa. Specifically, some attributes are considered very important to older travelers yet are not promoted in hotels' marketing campaigns, such as grab bars, night lights, extra blankets, and medical facilities.

Wuest et al. (1996) explored the importance of services provided by hotels and motels by adopting the SERVQUAL model. The study was conducted among older Texans and the findings revealed that customer services related to assurance and reliability were considered highly important. "Assurance" included the courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence, whereas "reliability" referred to the hotels' ability to perform the service dependably and accurately. The importance of staff attitudes also emerged in a subsequent study conducted by Wei et al. (1999) in Australia. The authors compared the perceptions of attributes of three- to five-star hotels between marketing managers and older tourists (aged 60+) who would return to a hotel with which they were satisfied. The attributes examined were price, location, facilities, hotel restaurant, room furnishings, front-desk efficiency, and staff attitude. Results showed that both older tourists and marketing managers considered hotel facilities to be the most important attribute, followed by room furnishings. Marketing managers and older tourists agreed on the importance of staff attitude, front-desk efficiency, hotel facilities, and price (room rates).

However, the findings also revealed some mismatches between professionals and customers. Specifically, marketing managers underestimated the importance of room furnishings and hotel location, and overestimated the importance of food in the hotel restaurant. In fact, comfortable and pleasant room furnishings were considered highly important by older customers, only second after hotel facilities.

Callan and Bowman (2000) investigated the salient attributes of hotels for British travelers aged 55-plus when selecting a hotel or judging its quality. The findings revealed that older customers place great emphasis on value for money and are not particularly attracted by low prices and discounting. Nevertheless, they might be discouraged by perceived high prices. In addition, ease of maneuverability around the hotel was considered an important attribute, even though this type of information is not generally included in hotel advertising. In addition, about 44% of respondents looked for at least one specific access feature in hotels, such as ramps and lifts, because of mobility limitations. Finally, service, and staff attitude and behavior were a very important component of service quality.

In a different study, Major and McLeay (2013) conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews to identify which elements contributed to the package holiday experience of older British tourists in Tenerife. Six key categories emerged, namely the preholiday experience, travel and transit experience, self-made experience, provided experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. With regard to the provided experience, several elements concerning hotel service were considered important:

- being greeted by friendly management and recognized as repeat customers
- the experience of no children under 16 years being permitted in the hotel
- tea-making facilities in the accommodation
- the atmosphere of “feeling at home” and the security provided by staff.

Further, Chen et al. (2014) used a field experiment to investigate whether older-friendly facilities in a hotel affected the satisfaction levels of older package tourists in Taiwan. The research also explored the staff explanation effect with respect to tourists’ satisfaction. The findings revealed that a room with facilities could significantly increase customers’ satisfaction regarding cleanliness, comfort, decoration, illumination, and overall satisfaction. However, staff explanations did not have an effect on customers’ satisfaction regarding friendly facilities.

Other scholars (Caber and Albayrak 2014; Albayrak et al. 2016) adopted Callan and Bowman’s (2000) scale to explore the importance of hotel attributes among different markets. The survey was conducted among customers accommodated in 13 five-star hotels in Antalya, Turkey. Specifically, Caber and Albayrak (2014) selected three segments of older tourists (German, Dutch, and British). Tourists were divided into two groups based on their age: “senior tourists” (65+), and “pre-senior tourists” (between 50 and 64 years). The findings revealed that value for money and availability of organized entertainment in the hotel were important attributes for older British tourists when compared with other participants. Besides slight differences among the segments, overall the study showed that basic attributes such as cleanliness and staff attitude had the highest importance ratings

among respondents of all nationalities. Conversely, Albayrak et al. (2016) explored the importance of hotel attributes among German and British tourists (aged 65+). Using Vavra's (1997) importance grid, they classified attributes in four categories: basic factors, importance factors, performance factors, and excitement factors. The results indicated that some of the basic hotel attributes greatly differed between German and British tourists. For example, price and location were basic factors for older Germans, whereas appearance and attentiveness of staff, security, and value for money were basic attributes for British customers. Neither group gave importance to certain attributes, such as the availability of large print signs or special dietary menus. Interestingly, no excitement factors emerged.

Lee and King (2016) extended the perspective of analysis and investigated the factors that determine the attractiveness of tourist destinations for older travelers drawing upon an expert panel. In line with previous studies (e.g., Callan and Bowman 2000), barrier-free accommodation facilities were the most important sector-specific attribute for older tourists. These represent the additional tangible aspects of safety-related physical design features in hotel rooms or in public areas.

To summarize, the most important hotel attributes for satisfying older tourists are cleanliness (Chen et al. 2014), room furnishings, décor, and facilities (Wei et al. 1999; Wuest et al. 1996; Chen et al. 2014), staff attitude (Wuest et al. 1996; Wei et al. 1999; Callan and Bowman 2000; Caber and Albayrak 2014), convenience of location (Wei et al. 1989; Albayrak et al. 2016), safety and security (Chen et al. 2013a; Major and McLeay 2013), accessibility (Callan and Bowman 2000; Lee and King 2016), medical facilities (Ananth 1992), price (Wei et al. 1999; Albayrak et al. 2016), and value for money (Callan and Bowman 2000; Caber and Albayrak 2014).

5.4.1 A Focus on Hot Spring Hotels

Extant studies emphasized that health and wellness are crucial travel motivations among older tourists (e.g., Guinn 1980; Horneman et al. 2002). Such tourists travel to health resorts and spas seeking the benefits of natural resources combined with recreational facilities (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper 2009). Wellness tourism activities are pursued by individuals who want to maintain and enhance their personal health and well-being (Smith and Puczko 2014). In this sense, wellness tourism does not focus on medical treatment, which is the core of medical tourism (Canestrino et al. 2015), but rather on promoting health through tourism activities (Mueller and Kaufmann 2001; Voigt and Pforr 2013). The concept of wellness can thus be extended to include the "harmony between the body, mind, and spirit" (Mueller and Kaufmann 2001). In addition, Mueller and Kaufmann (2001, p. 7) emphasized the role of hospitality in wellness tourism, intended as:

... the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey or residence by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health. They stay in specialized hotels that provide appropriate professional knowledge and individual care.

There is general agreement that the older-adult segment offers great opportunities for the wellness industry (Chen et al. 2013b). In particular, for wellness tourists, hotels represent not only an accommodation, but also the place where wellness activities are provided. Regarding wellness tourism, Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) emphasized that wellness tourists choose an accommodation specializing in wellness, such as a hotel with a wellness center at or near its premises and/or with an offer of wellness services and treatments. Despite the relevance of older people to wellness tourism, and the central role of hotels in this type of tourism, very few studies have investigated the importance of hotel attributes for older tourists in this specific industry (Chen et al. 2013a, b). For example, Chen et al. (2013a) focused on customer service factors for wellness tourism in Taiwan, from both the service providers' and the customers' perspectives. The authors interviewed experts in the hot spring hotel industry and hotel guests aged 50 years and older. Respondents were divided into two groups: "old older adults" (65 years and up) and "young older adults" (50–64 years). The findings identified eight crucial customer service factors: personnel services, environments, healthy diet, relaxation, health promotion treatments, unique tourism resources, social activities, and mental learning. The findings suggest that the most important factor for both age groups is personnel services, followed by internal and external environments, which include items such as cleanliness and safety, safety of the destination, and location of accommodation. In addition, Chen et al. (2013b) specifically focused on customer service factors for older visitors (aged 50+) engaging in wellness tourism based at hot springs hotels in Taiwan. The results identified seven factors: health promotion treatments, mental learning, unique tourism resources, complementary therapies, relaxation, healthy diet, and social activities. In addition, respondents were classified the three groups: (1) "holistic group," (2) "physiotherapy group," and (3) "leisure and recreation group." The first group showed a higher regard for all the customer service factors. The second group had higher concern for complementary therapies and health promotion treatments than the third group, which, in turn, showed a higher regard for service factors (such as relaxation and social activities) than the second group.

In a different study, Vigolo and Bonfanti (2016) explored the functional attributes of hotels because of their key role in tourists' decision-making processes. Functional attributes include basic (i.e., must-have or expected) attributes, which often go unnoticed by most customers because customers expect these requirements to be met in the product or service. However, their absence can result in extreme dissatisfaction (Albayrak et al. 2016). Based on these premises, Vigolo and Bonfanti (2016) investigated the importance of basic hotel attributes for older tourists evaluating hot spring hotels. The top-five attributes, derived from the mean of responses, were staff friendliness and kindness, followed by staff efficiency, the presence of a swimming pool, staff reactivity, and the presence of a doctor at the hotel. In addition, they found that four dimensions underlying the hotel attributes emerged, as listed below:

- older-friendly facilities, including elements such as ramps, wide corridors and doors, grab bars in bathrooms, special dietary menus, availability of a doctor at the hotel, and staff promptness
- customer care, relating mainly to employees' attitudes toward the customers
- spa facilities, which represent a core facility for hot spring hotels
- servicescape, which include hotels' furnishing and staff's physical appearance.

The findings support the results of previous studies. For example, Caber and Albayrak (2014) highlighted that “politeness of staff” and “friendliness of staff” were positioned among the five most important hotel attributes in all nationality and age groups. It is interesting to note that the presence of a doctor at the hotel was considered extremely important by older tourists (Vigolo and Bonfanti 2016). This finding is in line with studies that identified health as a possible travel concern for older tourists (see Chap. 3). Moreover, in Vigolo and Bonfanti's (2016) study, older tourists are shown to be more concerned about the presence of medication consultation facilities than they are in Chen et al. (2013b).

5.4.2 From Satisfaction to Delight: The Creation of Memorable Service Experiences

To satisfy customers, hotels need to surprise their guests (Zeithaml et al. 2006) by creating memorable service experiences. Lynch (1993) argued that to satisfy customers hotels must provide experiences that go beyond normal standards of quality service. Further, it is necessary to provide an attractive service (Baccarani et al. 2010). For example, by including an element of surprise within the hotel service, the whole service experience becomes memorable (Ariffin and Maghzi 2012).

To delight customers, a problem-solving approach is not sufficient. The service should unexpectedly increase performance levels in such a way that customers perceive excitation (surprise or excitement) or a positive feeling (pleasure, joy, or happiness) (e.g., Oliver et al. 1997; Berman 2005; Vanhamme 2008). In this respect, Verma (2003) contended that joy (understood as a positive emotion), along with surprise, creates a feeling of delight (an arousal of positive emotion). In addition, Vanhamme (2008) argued that customer delight may also be defined as extreme satisfaction, that is, a psychological state dependent upon cognitive and affective elements in consumption processes. In this way, surprise is just one possible antecedent of delight.

In relation to the hospitality industry, Crick and Spencer (2011) argued that delighting customers enables businesses to generate excitement in their customers, which in turn produces memorable service experiences, positive word of mouth, customer retention, and higher profitability. In addition, customer delight offers the opportunity of a competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate (Torres and Kline 2006). However, this field is still under-researched with regard to older tourists, particularly their accommodation experiences. Tung and Ritchie (2011b) explored

the essence of memorable service experience to understand the cognitive processes that prevent individuals from paying attention to their experiences, as well as the conceptual processes of memory formation and retention. Based on in-depth interviews, four key dimensions of memorable experience emerged: affect, expectations, consequentiality, and recollection. The same authors (Tung and Ritchie 2011a) also investigated the characteristics of memorable experiences with specific regard to older tourists (55+) in a Canadian city. Overall, the findings revealed that memorable experiences were related to five characteristics. Specifically, they were linked to critical episodes in identity formation, or to family milestones, or to moments for relationship development with significant others. In some cases, memorable experiences encompassed traveling to relive past memories, such as returning to places where tourists had grown up or experienced a major life event. Finally, for some older tourists memorable experiences involved traveling for freedom pursuits, such as freedom from work, financial, and family obligations.

Other studies explored memorable experiences in hotels, though not addressing older customers in particular (e.g., Torres et al. 2014; Ariffin and Omar 2016; Chun Wang et al. 2016). Still, limited research has been dedicated to exploring the relationship between accommodations' attractive attributes and customer delight from an older tourist's perspective. In this regard, Vigolo and Bonfanti (2014) analyzed hotel service quality from the perspective of older tourists, with a specific focus on memorable service experiences. Through qualitative interviews with older tourists (aged 60+), the authors explored what hotel attributes generated customer delight and memorable experiences. Then, they attempted to relate these attractive attributes to customers' needs. The findings revealed that the attractive attributes described by the respondents can be related to some well-recognized needs typical of the tourist experience: the need for uniqueness, for novelty seeking, for knowledge seeking, and for an emotional atmosphere. By responding to these needs, hotels can evoke positive emotions that contribute to the creation of a memorable hotel experience (Tung and Ritchie 2011a, b).

As emphasized by Ariffin and Maghzi (2012, p. 191), in today's extremely competitive environment in the accommodation sector, only extraordinary levels of hospitality can help to retain tourists and encourage them to return.

5.5 Emerging Forms of Hospitality: Peer-to-Peer Accommodation

In recent years, the tourism market, both on the supply—and on the demand-side, has been shaped by the increasingly important role of the sharing economy. As reported by Horodnic et al. (2016, p. 51), this term was introduced in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2015 and is defined as “an economic system in which assets or services are shared between private individuals, either for free or for a fee, typically by means of the Internet.” Even though sharing is an ancient practice,

collaborative consumption and the sharing economy are a product of the Internet age (Belk 2014). Through the sharing economy, markets that traditionally were not considered a source of profit have started to offer individuals new opportunities of generating income (Heo 2016).

The sharing economy is also called collaborative consumption, or the peer economy, and it refers to individual participation in the sharing of private possessions, such as renting, transport solutions, and swapping of goods and services (Kang et al. 2012; Horodnic et al. 2016). In the tourism industry, the sharing economy has changed the way people travel (Heo 2016; Guttentag 2015), boosting the phenomenon of informal accommodation. Guttentag (2015, p. 1200) described informal accommodation as:

...the production of goods and services that are concealed from or unregulated by public authorities, and it often exhibits characteristics such as low entry requirements and small-scale operations.

For example, Airbnb is now one of the most well-known peer-to-peer platforms that offers informal accommodation. Founded in 2008, Airbnb developed scalable platforms empowering individuals to share and distribute with one another their excess capacity of accommodation, such as spare rooms (i.e., peer-to-peer accommodation) (Heo 2016). Other peer-to-peer platforms include, for example, HouseTrip and FlipKey (both subsidiaries of TripAdvisor). This type of offering can be considered a source of disruptive innovation with tremendous effects on the traditional accommodation sector (Horodnic et al. 2016; Guttentag 2015). A recent study in the Texas market concludes that the sharing economy is gaining a market share from the traditional economy (Zervas et al. 2014). To seize the opportunity of this developing market, HomeAway and its subsidiaries VRBO and Homelidays were acquired in December 2015 by Expedia to rival the power of Airbnb. With the massive and rapid growth of informal accommodation, it is not surprising that traditional registered businesses (i.e., hotels) tend to see peer-to-peer accommodation as a threat, considering them as unfair competition since regulation in this market is still uncertain and not clearly defined (Heo 2016).

Airbnb enables hosts and guests to connect through profiles and effective messaging systems and it provides the possibility to post public reviews (ranging from one to five stars) about one another. These elements contribute to establishing trust between hosts and guests, as a person might understandably be cautious of hosting a stranger or staying in a stranger's home (Guttentag 2015). In addition, these types of information help both host and guests to establish their reputation and publicize their personalities, thus facilitating the process of finding the best match (Lu and Kandampully 2016). In a recent study, Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2016) used responses from travelers residing in the United States and Finland to investigate differences between users and non-users of peer-to-peer accommodation rentals (such as Airbnb). The findings revealed two drivers of use: social appeal (desire for community and sustainability) and economic appeal (cost savings). The barriers include issues of trust, efficacy, familiarity with the system, and cost. In addition, a significant correlation emerged between age and efficacy, indicating that older respondents are

associated with lack of knowledge and ability to use the platform. Moreover, older Finnish respondents who had not used peer-to-peer accommodation also stated that it was unlikely they would use it in the future. Therefore, Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2016) concluded that an increase in users' familiarity with and ease of use of the online platform, especially for older users, may reduce the barrier to peer-to-peer accommodation.

Despite some resistance deriving from technology adoption, older individuals are increasingly participating in the sharing economy. On the one hand, according to Airbnb (2016a), individuals aged 60 years and older represent the fastest growing host demographic. Older people offering a private room in their house are empty nesters who host to achieve extra income. Specifically, women aged 60 and older represent 64% of all older hosts on Airbnb in the United States. Similar trends are found in Europe (Airbnb 2016b). A recent report (Airbnb 2016a) claims that older women are the "golden hosts" of the Airbnb community because they receive a higher percentage of five-star reviews than do any other age group in the Airbnb community. In fact, the percentage of five-star reviews increases steadily with host age.

On the other hand, older individuals are also an attractive market segment as potential guests of peer-to-peer accommodations. This is true to the extent that recent years have seen the creation of peer-to-peer accommodation platforms solely targeting older guests. For example, the Freebird Club (www.thefreebirdclub.com) was established in 2015 as a social travel and home-stay club exclusively for individuals over 50 years of age. Like Airbnb, this platform offers the opportunity for members to become hosts and make their spare rooms available to guests for a set nightly rate, or to become guests looking for available accommodation. As argued by Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2016), the social appeal of peer-to-peer accommodation (i.e., social connection, intimacy of relationship, and authenticity) offers a valuable alternative to traditional accommodation solutions for older tourists.

To conclude, there is still great potential for research to explore the motivations of older tourists' choice with regard to accommodation types, perceived service quality, and drivers of customer satisfaction and customer delight.

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