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A win-win situation: Enhancing sharing economy platform brand equity by engaging business owners in CSR using gamification

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of gamification elements in engaging suppliers of sharing economy platforms in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. We expected that engaging business owners in CSR would improve the brand equity of these platforms by leveraging the business owners' brand loyalty and brand association. The statistical population of the study is owners of Iranian accommodation who use sharing economy platforms. The size of the sample was 323 accommodation owners. The hypotheses of this study were tested using Smart PLS-3. The study confirmed all the research hypotheses and showed that engaging business owners in social responsibility activities using gamification elements on sharing economy platforms can lead to an increase in the brand equity of the sharing economy platforms. These results will reinforce the synergy between the platforms and their users by making both parties aware of it.

1. Introduction

The sharing economy (SE) is where customers and business owners (suppliers) are brought together by an online platform. It is a means by which individuals may leverage their assets, such as their cars, their property and, of course, their time so that these assets may be utilized more thoroughly. This increases the efficiency of society as a whole while either increasing the wealth of participating business owners, or increasing their work flexibility, or both (Kuhzady et al., 2021). Advocates of the SE have often painted a picture of a utopia where business owners will be set free from the shackles of employment while their customers would be able to take advantage of the lower prices (Belk, 2007). Well known examples of SE platforms are Uber in the ride sharing (taxi substitute) field and Airbnb in the accommodation sharing (hotel substitute) field, though there are also imitators of these platforms which have different degrees of market presence in different parts of the

world.

However, the vision presented by SE tends to place its emphasis on the freedom of individuals, whether customers or business owners, while ignoring the fact that one of the reasons for the lower costs and prices of the SE compared with traditional businesses is the lack of regulation designed to counteract some negative consequences. Criticisms of the SE approach (Kuhzady et al., 2021) have included negative social and environmental impacts (Ma et al., 2018), limited safety and security (Birinci et al., 2018) and lack of certainty caused by unknown parties (Hossain, 2020) that contradict the vision of SE platforms of being sustainable and socially responsible. Consumers demand social responsibility from SE platforms and therefore business owners must also adopt sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles in their businesses (Mi and Coffman, 2019). Consequently, sustaining the SE requires the engagement of all stakeholders where platforms, consumers and business owners are stakeholders in making a

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sustainable and responsible SE.

Gamification has been found to be a useful tool for influencing people's behaviour (Hsu and Chen, 2018; Souza et al., 2020) and motivating business owners to engage in sustainability and CSR activities (Koroleva and Novak, 2020; Maltseva et al., 2019; Souza et al., 2020). These activities may lead to positive outcomes such as customer loyalty (Latif et al., 2020), trust (Ahn et al., 2021) and customer satisfaction (Park and Kim, 2019), which may lead to an increase in brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Usually, they have access to over 1000 hosts and these platforms have grown significantly in tourism and hospitality sectors (Maldonado-Guzmán, 2020) so they have increasing influence.

This study focuses on the role that gamification (using badges, leader board, points and rewards) can have in helping SE business owners build their brand equity by engaging business owners in CSR activities. Since SE platforms act as intermediaries between hosts and guests they can play a significant role in sustainable tourism, by encouraging hosts to act responsibly. Gamification can motivate hosts to engage in SEs' CSR activities (e.g., employ local people, energy reduction, educational programs, altruism, and donations) by game elements (e.g., ranking, rewards, avatar) (Koroleva and Novak, 2020). So, as the hosts participate in CSR activities, they will act more responsibly and, as they engage, their levels of satisfaction and trust escalates in turn resulting in higher brand loyalty. Increasing brand loyalty enhances the brand equity of the SE thus making a win-win situation for the SE and the tourism industry. As a result, it is crucial to preserve owner loyalty to the SE to generate enough shared capacity to meet the demands of end users (Fang et al., 2020). However, the owner turnover rate in SEs is still high, for instance, according to Efrati's (2017) study of Uber drivers only 25% of new drivers still remain on the Uber platform a year later (Rossmannek et al., 2022). Simultaneously, gamification stimulates enjoyment and excitement, boosting the hosts' positive experience and leads to an affirmative brand association which augments the SE platforms' brand equity.

Reviewing the studies made on sharing economy in hospitality sectors reveals a scarcity of research on service providers' perspective (Kuhzady et al., 2021). More precisely, three specific research gaps persist along this line of research.

First is research into engaging business owners in their CSR activities and its effect on their behavioural outcomes toward the company. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct more research on this subject because to make the SE sustainable, owners need to be aware and actively involved in CSR activities. A few studies have demonstrated that engaging customers as influential stakeholders in CSR activities may lead to positive behavioural outcomes (Ahn, 2021) such as increased brand loyalty (Lo, 2020). In addition, the willingness of customers to engage with CSR initiatives influences customer loyalty in non-profit organizations (Jarvis et al., 2017; O'Brien et al., 2020).

Second, there is a lack of studies which have investigated how using gamification elements could potentially motivate business owners to engage positively in CSR activities while they have economic obligations and concerns. There have been studies that show gamification can be a useful tool to change people's behaviour (Hsu and Chen, 2018; Souza et al., 2020) and motivate end users to engage in sustainability and CSR activities (Koroleva and Novak, 2020; Maltseva et al., 2019; Souza et al., 2020).

Third, there has been a limited number of studies that investigate how gamification elements can affect business owners' experiences in sharing economy platforms and whether this can result in brand equity and brand association for the SE. On the other hand, according to Hsu and Chen (2018), and Jami Pour et al. (2021), gamification can improve the end users' online experience.

This study helps to fill these three gaps by proposing and empirically testing a conceptual model that incorporates gamification elements, business owners' engagement in CSR, business owners' experience and, as users of SE platforms, SE's brand association, satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and brand equity. It does this in the context of accommodation

sharing. Given the relative scarcity of research in this field, this paper presents a newly adapted construct based on SE platform users' engagement and CSR variables: *Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities*. Therefore, this study contributes to stakeholder theory and social determination theory by integrating these theories and examines gamification's effect on engaging business owners in CSR activities. Additionally, this paper evaluates the effect of engaging business owners in CSR activities leading to the business owners' satisfaction and trust which, in turn, leads to brand equity for SE platforms.

Previous empirical studies of SE platforms have not examined the impact of gamification elements on business owners' experience. Consequently, there is still a limited understanding of how to improve this. Our study contributes to the literature by exploring the impact of gamification elements on business owners' experience and indicates that the impact of their experience on brand association leads to brand equity. Finally, this study demonstrates that SE platform owners can increase the brand equity of their platforms and engage the business owners in CSR activities by developing a gamification system.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Self-determination theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), formulated by Deci and Ryan (1985), presents a theoretical framework that underscores the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Understanding the mechanisms of motivation and engagement within SDT leads to a deeper insight into the psychological drivers of user engagement. As a result of this deeper understanding stemming from SDT, valuable insights emerge to inform brand strategies, subsequently enhancing the prediction of brand equity. In essence, the application of SDT in brand equity analysis unlocks a richer understanding of the factors that drive consumer engagement and loyalty. This understanding, rooted in psychological principles, provides a solid foundation for optimizing brand strategies and accurately predicting brand equity.

In their study on bicycle-sharing Chi et al. (2020) explains that the evolution of sustainable behaviours in the sharing economy may be understood using self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework. In a more recent study, Behl et al. (2022) use self-determination theory to explain how gamification can increase the intrinsic motivation of white-collar gig workers to perform creatively.

Many frameworks of gamification are based on SDT (Mora et al., 2017). For example, Behl et al. (2022) found that through the lens of SDT it is possible to understand the motivational mechanism of gamification and how the use of game design components to meet people's psychological needs and increase their intrinsic motivation can result in sustained engagement and behaviour change. In this study we used the *kaleidoscope of effective gamification* by Kappen and Nacke (2013), which is based on SDT and considers both intrinsic and external motivations.

2.2. Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory explains the relationships between a company and any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the company's performance in achieving its goals (Freeman, 1984). The integration of this theory into the analysis of brand equity expands our knowledge of the elements that influence brand value. This theory provides a more holistic view of brand equity by recognizing the importance of multiple stakeholders and their expectations, and it goes beyond customer-centric models, offering all stakeholders in the brand a more accurate and nuanced view of its value. This theory raises an important question: *what responsibility does management have to stakeholders?* (Freeman, 2015). Stakeholder theory holds that businesses have responsibilities to all of parties who could be influenced by their choices. This theory supports a company's CSR activities and dominates CSR research as it highlights the necessity of considering the impact of a

company on a wide range of stakeholders, such as the environment (Latif et al., 2020).

In Waheed and Yang's (2019) study, stakeholder theory is used to analyze the relationship between OSP and CSR activities in Pakistan. The study highlights the need to value all stakeholders, not just shareholders, for sustainability. The authors stress the importance of engaging with stakeholders and integrating CSR practices into organizational strategy for long-term success.

This study combined these two theories to offer a nuanced approach to predicting brand equity. SDT, with its focus on the psychological drivers of user engagement, highlights the intrinsic factors influencing brand equity. Meanwhile, stakeholder theory emphasizes relationships with diverse entities, including business owners on sharing-economy platforms. By synergizing these theories and engaging business owners in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, there is a significant potential to enhance the brand equity of sharing-economy platforms. This integrated approach addresses both the internal motivations of business owners and the broader stakeholder influences, ensuring a robust brand equity rooted in social responsibility and engagement.

3. Literature review and hypotheses developments

3.1. Sharing-economy in hospitality sector

Iran has a rich history of tourism and hospitality, and both domestic and foreign visitors enjoy the country's various historical, cultural, and natural attractions. In 2019, Iran's tourism and hospitality industry made a significant contribution to the country's economy accounting for 5.8% (USD 62.5 BN) of its GDP, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) 2020 analysis (Aminifar et al., 2022). However, the industry faced a severe setback due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with its GDP contribution dropping to 3.1% (USD 34.4 BN) in the wake of the outbreak. Despite some recovery in 2021, the industry still struggled to bounce back fully, partly due to existing sanctions, and only managed to account for 4.1% (USD 48.1 BN) of the country's GDP (WTTC, 2022). The development of Iran's tourism sector has been hampered by political considerations such as the sanctions imposed by several international organizations and countries. There is a dearth of high-quality lodging that complies with international standards as a result of the 1979 revolution, which caused the majority of international hotel brands to leave the country (Euromonitor International, 2015; Nazarian et al., 2020).

To address the rising demand for lodging in Iran, the sharing economy has emerged as an appealing choice. It has quickly expanded thanks to the internet and a variety of business models that make it possible to share underutilized assets through websites like Airbnb and BlaBlaCar. These platforms have had significant effects on the economy, the environment, and society, giving Iran's hotel sector a chance to grow and satisfy customer demand (Taheri et al., 2022). The global sharing economy was worth \$149.9 billion in 2022, and it is expected to increase significantly to reach \$793.7 billion by 2028, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 32% (Industry Research, 2023). However, the World Bank does not provide specific data on the size or growth of the sharing economy in Iran. Its average GDP growth is expected to remain moderate in the medium term due to the continued impact of the pandemic, sanctions, and climate change. As a result, the sharing economy may encounter challenges from high inflation, food insecurity, and social grievances. Therefore, the development of sharing-economy platforms that encourage responsible business practices is more important than ever for the survival of these businesses (The World Bank Group, 2021).

The extant literature on sharing-economy platforms in the context of hospitality management exhibits a distinct Western bias, with a paucity of research exploring the diversity of contexts in this field (Mody et al., 2021). Although some scholarship has emerged on ride-sharing services in Iran, such as the work of Akbari et al. (2020) on consumer intentions

to utilize such services, no studies have investigated the prevalence or usage of sharing economy platforms in the Iranian hospitality sector.

As a mediator between service suppliers and clients, sharing-economy platforms (SEs) provide a different consumption paradigm that prioritizes sharing over ownership (Belk, 2007). The sharing economy (SE) phenomenon, whereby people share their resources with tourists to produce affordable and genuine experiences, has grown in popularity in the hospitality and tourism sector. Therefore, as a result the SE has made opportunities for microbusinesses (Kuhzady et al., 2021) and this is especially pertinent in the context of sustainability and CSR, as SEs provide fresh opportunities to advance sustainable practices and minimize waste (Wang and Ho, 2017). Yet, issues including the casualization of work, uncontrolled markets, the erosion of safety and privacy, and quality standards have been raised (Kuhzady et al., 2021). It is important to implement measures to avoid problems such as overcrowding, increased housing costs, reduced quality of life for locals, and the risk of losing the unique charm that draws tourists to these places (Taheri et al., 2022). SEs must offer their users sustainable services and accurate information to uphold their social duty by playing a significant role in establishing a more sustainable future by supporting sustainable behaviours and minimizing resource usage (Mi and Coffman, 2019).

3.1.1. Gamification elements

Gamification has been defined as: *using game domain lessons in order to alter people's behaviour outside the gaming context* (Deterding and Dixon, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2014) and *creating a goal-orientated environment for solving problems* (Liebenson, 2018). Overall, the characteristics of gamification are: using a gaming device (Huotari and Hamari, 2017), game thinking (Uskov and Sekar, 2014), game design elements and methods (Hofacker et al., 2016), a gameful experience (Huotari and Hamari, 2017, 2012), and substantially using lessons from the gaming domain (Robson et al., 2015) to increase engagement (Huotari and Hamari, 2017), motivate desired behaviours (Robson et al., 2015), and enhance experience in non-gaming contexts (Domínguez et al., 2013). In this study gamification uses lessons from the gaming domain to engage hosts on sharing accommodation platforms in their own business CSR activities and enhance their experience through the game design.

Gamification research in the hospitality and tourist industries may be divided into five areas based on a systematic review by Pasca et al. (2021): edutainment, sustainable behaviour, engagement factors, service provider-generated content, and user-generated content. According to this review, studies on the topic of sustainable behaviour, gamification may influence user behaviour in a way that is both utilitarian and hedonistic, changing it for the better. Similarly, research on the issue of engagement variables has shown that changing user behaviour for the better results in social, utilitarian, and hedonistic advantages.

While some academics have examined the impact of the "superhost" badge on Airbnb and how it encourages accommodation providers to deliver better services, it is crucial to highlight that there is a dearth of studies on getting them involved in CSR initiatives on sharing-economy platforms like Airbnb. The review also discovered that most of the articles only examined the engagement, perceptions, interactions, behaviours, and advantages from the users' point of view, ignoring the dynamics, impacts, and outcomes from the service provider's standpoint. This imbalance is particularly prominent in empirical papers (Pasca et al., 2021).

It is crucial to minimize the unfavourable consequences since tourism stakeholders may have a major impact on the areas in which they operate. Scholars contend that gamification can be a useful strategy for encouraging people to participate in CSR initiatives and act ethically to address this problem (Koroleva and Novak, 2020; Liang et al., 2017; Maltseva et al., 2019; Souza et al., 2020). Gamification is also well-known in the travel and tourism sector for its capacity to raise engagement and brand equity, enhance experiences, attract new leads, and boost brand recognition (Hsu and Chen, 2018; Xu et al., 2016). In addition, this technology is helpful for encouraging ethical and

environmentally friendly travel (Negruşa et al., 2015; Souza et al., 2020).

Gamification can have a big influence on how Airbnb hosts behave, how they view their working environment, and how motivated they are. Their performance at work and productivity can be improved as a result (Sigala et al., 2019). However, there are too few studies on using gamification in the sustainability and CSR areas and empirical research is needed (Maltseva et al., 2019). Also, to comprehend the use of gamification to encourage and promote sustainable behaviour and CSR in the hospitality and tourist industries (Souza et al., 2020), there is a need to study other tourism stakeholders as well, rather than focusing only on tourists.

There have been several conceptual frameworks employed to analyse the effect of gamification on business behaviour. In this study we have used the *kaleidoscope of effective gamification* framework proposed by Kappen and Nacke (2013) as it is based on self-determination theory and its main purpose is to change behaviours. This framework is based on game design, self-determination theory, and the principles of systems design. It aims to guide game designers and evaluate the effectiveness of games. To assess the impact of the gamification framework developed in this study on business owners' involvement in CSR activities, we conceptualized gamification as a unidimensional construct based on Högberg et al.'s (2019) work. To measure the effectiveness of the gamification framework, we examined the extent to which it influenced business owners' sense of achievement, level of challenge, competitive drive, immersion, playfulness, and social experience in relation to CSR activities. Through this approach, we evaluated the efficacy of the gamification framework in motivating business owners to engage more comprehensively in CSR activities.

3.1.2. Gamification elements and engaging business owners in CSR activities

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an essential component of the hospitality industry due to its significant socio-cultural and environmental impacts. Guzzo et al. (2020) argue that hospitality businesses can use CSR to reduce their environmental and social impact while prioritizing job creation and reducing social inequalities in local communities. A systematic review on CSR in the hospitality industry suggests that while the field is relatively young, there is evidence of a positive impact of CSR on firm performance in specific dimensions such as environmental impact, operating profitability, and customer and product market performance (Rhou and Singal, 2020). However, the relationship between overall CSR and stock market performance is complex, and the impact of CSR on employees and communities is not yet fully established. In addition, in their systematic review of responsible tourism and hospitality, Gao et al. (2022) highlight the importance of addressing the social impact of the industry in addition to its environmental sustainability. They argue that a tourism destination's social responsibility can affect residents' perceived quality of life and suggest that future research should expand the scope of responsible tourism and hospitality to include social responsibilities such as diversity and inclusion, poverty and health, education, and justice.

Elkington (2020) explores his concept of "Green Swans" and their connection to technology. These unexpected and partially anticipated events arise in response to previous "black" or "grey" swans, but unlike their darker counterparts, Green Swans bring about positive, exponential change, leading to a regenerative breakthrough and building resilience. Elkington is critical of the use of the triple bottom line, which includes economic, social, and environmental impact, as a potentially ineffective "placebo button." He argues that CSR has limited impact on systemic challenges and must be integrated into core business strategy. Despite progress in discussing ethical, social, and environmental issues with companies, the impact of CSR remains limited. Nonetheless, some leaders are recognizing the role of social and environmental factors in driving disruptive change and committing their organizations to "business-to-impact" strategies. Elkington emphasizes that criticizing the

triple bottom line does not mean it has no value but rather that companies need to approach it differently and integrate it into their business models more carefully.

In this study, we extend the CSR concept, which is the economic, environmental and social obligations of companies toward the main stakeholders by adding *customer engagement* which is inclination toward engagement through changing the level of cognitive, affective and behavioural expressions. This construct was developed by combining different variables used in previous studies such as CSR and customer engagement. This combination creates the construct *Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities* in this study. Hence, for the purposes of this study, *Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities* is defined as "the state that reflects owners' individual dispositions toward engagement in organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioural manifestations" (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Dessart et al., 2016).

To effectively implement CSR in the activities and strategies of business owners in the hospitality industry, it is essential to consider a range of activities across the three bottom line aspects of sustainability. Specifically, in the environmental aspect, key activities include reducing natural resource consumption, implementing programs to reduce consumption of disposable goods, equipping facilities with water-saving devices, implementing automatic systems to disconnect air-conditioning when doors and windows are open, promoting customer awareness of environmental commitments and encouraging small gestures, providing information on good environmental practices in guest rooms, using renewable and clean energy sources, reducing water and soil pollution through the use of biodegradable products and reducing noise pollution, among others (Ahn et al., 2021; Theodoulidis et al., 2017; Wut et al., 2022).

In terms of the social aspect, the hospitality industry can promote CSR by prioritizing client rights, supporting non-governmental organizations working in problematic areas, investing in creating a better life for future generations, providing accurate information about products and services to customers, promoting local customs and social activities, buying regional products and services, offering locally manufactured products, having an ethical code of conduct that respects human rights, providing facilities for the disabled, making economic donations to good causes, raising awareness and involvement of employees, customers, and the public in sustainable development and health issues, providing a healthy and safe work environment, and conserving the cultural heritage and traditional values of local communities (Ahn et al., 2021; Theodoulidis et al., 2017; Wut et al., 2022).

Finally, in the economic aspect, activities that can be pursued by the hospitality industry to promote CSR include creating jobs, striving to reduce operational costs, guaranteeing economic success in the long term, and contributing to local prosperity through the encouragement of local employment, hiring top managers from the local community, and using local suppliers. Thus, by implementing these activities, the hospitality industry can go beyond surface-level CSR and truly integrate sustainability practices into its core business strategy (Ahn et al., 2021; Theodoulidis et al., 2017; Wut et al., 2022).

Researchers have concluded that gamification is a useful tool when it comes to motivating people to engage in particular activities, influence their behaviour, and change their habits (Hsu and Chen, 2018; Liang et al., 2017; Ro et al., 2017). In a study on ecogamification, Souza et al. (2020) have shown that, through gamification, not only tourists but also other stakeholders, including the local community and the hosts (accommodation providers) can be involved in green tourism and sustainable activities. In another study, Koroleva and Novak (2020) showed that gamification elements, in an awareness-raising platform, can motivate users to engage in sustainability-related activities. Having said that, Maltseva et al. (2019) found negative, positive, and insignificant effects of gamification on CSR and pro-environmental attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. Given these inconclusive findings, it suggests

more research is needed in this area. Almost no research includes business owners using SE platforms engaging in their own business CSR, and there are only a few studies of the relationship between gamification and *Engaging owner in CSR activities*. Finding the relationship between these variables can help sharing economy platforms increase owners' level of social responsibility, especially in hospitality sector which has great impact on its surroundings. Therefore, using our novel construct of *CSR and customer engagement* in this study, this hypothesis is proposed based on self-determination theory:

H 1. : The gamification elements have a significant effect on the Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities.

3.1.3. *Engaging business owners in CSR activities and brand loyalty*

Customer satisfaction determines the extent to which a customer's expectations for a particular service or product are met and to what extent it has met their needs and wants (Abbas et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020) which leads to brand loyalty (Chumpitaz Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Latif et al., 2020). CSR may lead to brand loyalty by increasing customer satisfaction (Park and Kim, 2019). A study of sustainable behaviour demonstrates that hotels' sustainable behaviour has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction (Koch et al., 2020). In addition, a study of the hospitality sector found that the relationship between CSR and customer satisfaction is a significant relationship and that this satisfaction will eventually lead to customer loyalty (Akbari et al., 2019). A key factor for long-term success in any business is satisfaction of its customers (Nam et al., 2011) and it is the main indicator of performance in the hospitality industry (Koch et al., 2020). However, there has been few studies of the relationship between customer satisfaction and Engaging Business Owner in CSR activities. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 2. : Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through the satisfaction of owners.

Encouraging people to trust sharing economy platforms is challenging, because there is usually a third party involved in transactions (Wagner et al., 2019). Trust can be defined as "an actor's expectation of the other party's competence and goodwill" (Blomqvist, 1997) and trusting a brand may lead to brand loyalty (Han et al., 2020). A way for companies to create trust is through CSR (Akbari et al., 2019; Sung et al., 2020) and this has been found to specifically apply in the hotel industry (Ahn and Kwon, 2020). A study of SE platforms concluded that perceiving brand social responsibility can build and mend end users' trust (Fatma et al., 2020). Building brand trust enables a business to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and thus increase business performance. Users of a SE platform must trust each other to act in good faith (Wagner et al., 2019). Still, only a few studies have been conducted of the relationship between trust and Engaging Owner in CSR activities. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 3. : Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through the Trust of owners.

3.1.4. *Brand loyalty and brand equity*

Brand Loyalty is consumer's commitment to a particular brand or service. This commitment results in repurchasing the same brand or using the same service despite the marketing efforts of competitors to change this behaviour (Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty is the core of brand equity (Aaker, 1991) which is defined in terms of the positive outcomes that accrue to a brand because of the regard in which the customers hold it (Keller, 1993). Brand equity is a significant asset for a company (Ding and Tseng, 2015). When a brand introduces itself as environmentally friendly, it acquires a significant brand equity (Ishtiaq et al., 2019). Previous studies have shown a direct impact of customer loyalty on brand equity (Nam et al., 2011).

Only a few studies have been conducted of the relationship between loyalty, that is produced by Engaging Business Owner in CSR activities,

and brand equity. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 4. : Loyalty that is caused by Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities has a significant effect on brand equity.

3.1.5. *Gamification elements and business owners' experience*

Customer experience is a multi-dimensional concept including customers' emotional, affective, cognitive, social, and physical responses (Verhoef et al., 2010). Hedonic emotions are triggered by behaviours that are motivated intrinsically such as games and can be triggered by using game elements or, in other words, gamification (Ding and Tseng, 2015). A study of how gamification can improve users' experience showed that hedonistic emotions improve it, so users' experience of online platforms is important for their success (Hsu and Chen, 2018). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 5. : The gamification elements have a significant effect on Business Owner's Experience.

3.1.6. *Business Owner's Experience, Brand Association and Brand equity*

Brand association is anything related to a brand that is in the customers' minds and it is one of the dimensions of brand equity (Aaker, 1991). In a study on hedonic emotions and brand equity it has been shown that brand experience influences brand equity (Ding and Tseng, 2015). Research in gamification has shown a positive relationship between brand experience and brand association (Hsu and Chen, 2018; Jeon and Yoo, 2021). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 6. : Business Owner's Experience has an indirect effect on brand equity through the Brand Association.

4. Methodology

4.1. *Sample and data collection*

In 2021 almost two-thirds of the world's population used the internet, with an estimated 5.3 billion users in 2022. The digital economy, which contributed 15.5% of global GDP in 2021 and is predicted to increase by 9.7% year through 2025, is primarily fuelled by e-commerce, digital services, and platforms. As of January 2021, there were 59.16 million internet users in Iran, representing 70% of the country's total population, a growth of 739,000 users from the previous year (KEMP, 2021; Petrosyan, 2023). However, the current state of research on sharing-economy platforms within the hospitality management field exhibits a marked Western orientation. This tendency has resulted in a lack of diversity in the research undertaken in this field (Mody et al., 2021).

Despite this, the SE has become a compelling reason to address the growing demand for lodging in Iran. This particular market facilitates the exchange of products and services between users of online marketplaces, generating significant interest in this context. Consequently, we selected Iran as our case study. To test our research hypotheses, we approached a sample of accommodation owners who operate on SE platforms in Iran. After approaching several companies, three companies volunteered to distribute our questionnaire to accommodation owners who have profiles on their platforms.

A total of 1000 online questionnaires were distributed using the purposive sampling technique from August to September 2021 and we received 353 questionnaires from which 323 yielded usable data. The technique was employed to avoid possible bias regarding the validity and generalizability of the scales (Bell and Bryman, 2007). The "ten times rule" was used to determine the sample size. That is, in PLS-SEM, the sample size should be ten times the number of arrows pointing at a variable in the conceptual model of the study (Hair et al., 2017). Hence, the sample size was adequate. Table 1 shows that 254 respondents (78.6%) were male while 69 respondents (21.4%) were female, and the mean age was approximately 34.

Table 1
Demographic profile.

Gender	Male	Frequency	Percent
	Female	69	254
age	18–24	22	6.8
	25–34	107	33.1
	35–44	117	36.2
	45–54	54	16.7
	55 or above	23	7.1
Degree	Diploma or below	62	19.2
	University first degree	148	45.8
	Postgraduate	98	30.3
	PhD	15	4.6
Accommodation type	Hotel	31	7.85
	Hotel apartment	15	3.80
	Hostel	5	1.27
	Boutiques and Lodges	7	1.77
	Apartment	79	20.00
	Ecotourism Resort	119	30.13
	Villa	92	23.29
	Motel	17	4.30
	Others	30	7.59

4.2. Instrument

The questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Farsi (local language) using the four steps of the back-translation technique (Brislin, 1986). In the first part of the questionnaire, a video of a simulated gamified sharing accommodation platform (Fig. 2) was shown to transfer the experience of using this type of platform. The video was first shared randomly with 30 users, and they were asked to comment. After reviewing the comments, it was decided that the written scenario had the ability to convey the intended concept to the viewer. The video was then edited based on the evaluation and was shown again to 5 users. The results showed that the relevant video,⁸ had the ability to convey the concept to the average viewer. In the second part, demographic questions were asked including city, age, gender, and accommodation type and respondents were asked to choose three types. Finally, items of Engaging Owners in CSR Activities, gamification elements, satisfaction of owners, brand loyalty, trust of owners, owner's experience, brand association and brand equity were included.

4.3. Measurement

The research measurement items were based on identified scales from prior literature, which were confirmed to be psychometrically sound (Hair et al., 2009, p. 9). For the purpose of this study we have used a 5-point Likert-scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To measure engaging Owners in CSR this study adopted seven items borrowed from Dessart et al. (2016). Similarly, to measure gamification this study adopted seven items borrowed from Högberg et al. (2019). Questions for satisfaction of owners were included four items borrowed from Ha et al. (2010), Park and Kim (2019) and Wu (2011). Brand loyalty was measured using three items, after removing one item, that was adapted from Palacios-Florencio et al. (2018). Trust of Owners was measured with four items based on the works of Han et al. (2020) and Akbari et al. (2020). Owner's Experience and Brand Association were measured using four items each that were adapted from Hsu and Chen (2018). Finally, to measure brand equity this study adopted four items, borrowed from Chen (2010). The preliminary questionnaire was then pilot tested on 40 respondents to verify adequate reliability and validity. The questionnaire had content validity in the view of experts. The internal reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. Usually, a Cronbach's alpha of less than 0.6

indicates poor reliability, and the closer this number is to one, the more reliable the questionnaire (Cortina, 1993; Cronbach, 1951). The Cronbach's alpha displayed good to excellent reliability for all scales used after removing question 4 of brand loyalty. Table 2 provides details of items for each variable.

4.4. Data analysis and results

To analyse the questionnaires' data, IBM STATISTIC SPSS 26 software was used to generate descriptive statistics. Furthermore, to test the hypotheses proposed for this study, it was decided to use Smart PLS-3 as PLS-SEM must be used when there is a complex cause-effect-relationship model presented (Gudergan et al., 2008).

4.5. Common method bias

To test the common method bias we have adopted both Harman's single factor test and the full collinearity assessment approach. The results from Harman's single factor show that a single factor solution is only responsible for 42.326% of the total variance, which according to Podsakoff and Organ (1986) is below the threshold value of 50%. Therefore, we can conclude that common method bias does not exist here. Accordingly, the results from the full collinearity assessment approach show that all variance inflation factors (VIFs) for each latent variable is equal to or lower than 3.3; hence, our findings are free of common method bias (Kock, 2015).

4.6. Reliability and validity

To test the reliability of the variables this study used different methods including Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Outer Loadings. Our results demonstrate that the construct is reliable because the CR value is greater than 0.7, Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.6, AVE value is greater than 0.5 and Outer Loadings are greater than 0.7. (Cortina, 1993; Cronbach, 1951; Hair et al., 2017). The result of CR, Cronbach's Alpha and AVE are shown in Table 3. Outer loadings are shown in Table 4.

Consistency across items was examined with a convergent validity test, as the CRA values were higher than the recommended value of 0.7 and greater than AVE. As AVE is higher than the recommended value of 0.5, the construct has convergent validity (Hair et al., 2012). Discriminant validity was assessed through cross-loadings, the Fornell-Lacker Criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Method (HTMT). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is achieved in this model as is demonstrated in Table 5. The square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than the correlation values between the construct being analysed and all other constructs. Cross-Loadings test shows that the factor load of each explicit variable on the corresponding hidden variable is at least 0.1 more than the factor load of that explicit variable on the other latent variables as it shows in Table 4. This indicates the existence of discriminant validity in the model (Hair et al., 2012). The HTMT test which is shown in Table 6 shows that all the values are less than 0.9 which supports the result of the other tests (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.7. Hypotheses testing

The next step in the analysis was to assess the direct relationship between variables. The values of path coefficient (β) are more than 0.2 and the values of t-statistic are more than 1.96, indicating that all the relationships are significant at the error level of 0.05. After that, to analyse mediation relationships, we assessed total effect relationships and indirect effect relationships. Attention was paid to the three values of total impacts, direct impacts and indirect impacts. If both direct and indirect effects are significant, our median variable is quite significant. The value of the total impact path coefficient is obtained from the sum of

⁸ <https://youtu.be/zZoQVE00qzk> (Subtitled version)

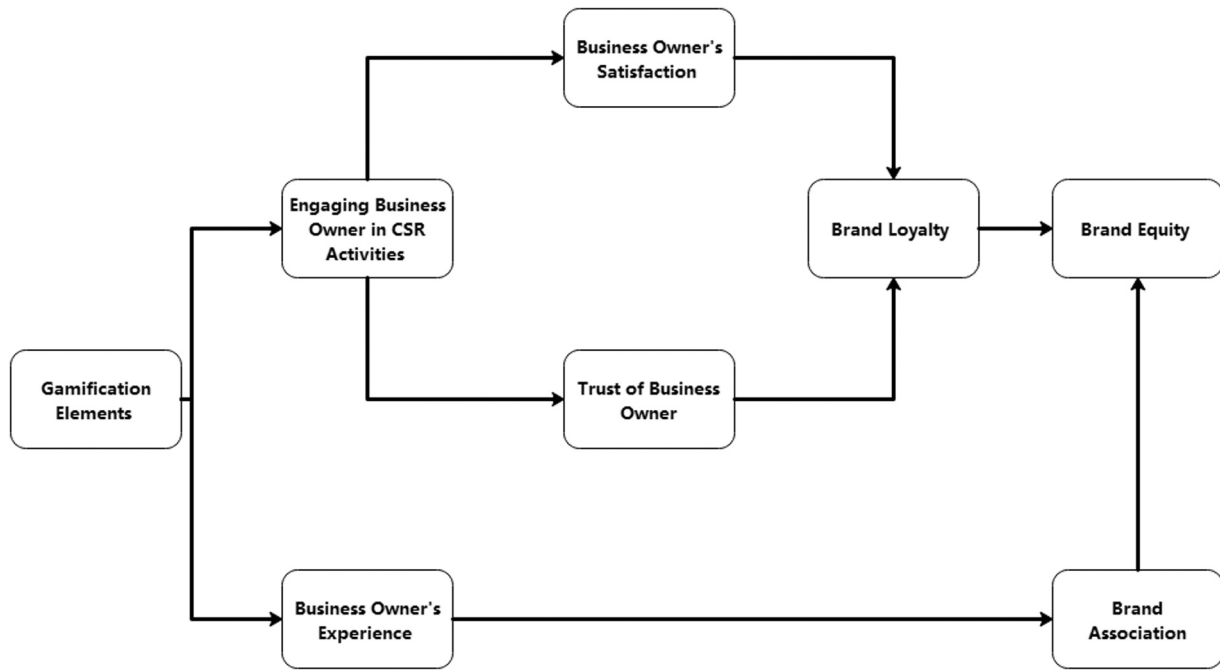


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

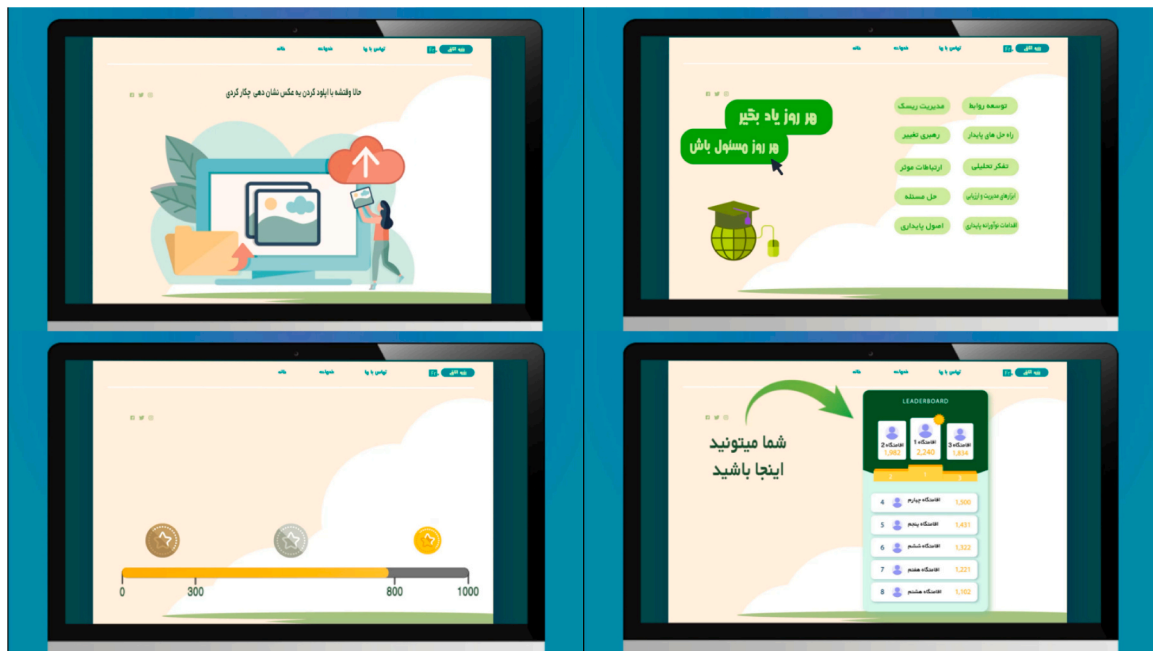


Fig. 2. The platform.

the direct and indirect impact paths. Smart-PLS is a strong tool for mediation analysis in structural equation modelling since it employs bootstrapping to estimate the indirect influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator. In contrast to previous methods, bootstrapping provides estimates of the sampling distribution that can be used to compute confidence intervals and test hypotheses without assuming a normal distribution of data. It is a flexible and reliable strategy for researchers of all levels because it can handle more complicated models with various mediators or moderators (Henseler et al., 2015).

According to our results (Table 7) all the six hypotheses are supported. Hypothesis 1 suggests that the gamification elements have a

positive correlation with engaging owners in CSR activities. The findings support this relationship ($\beta = 0.720, t = 24.690, p = 0$). According to the partial least square findings hypothesis 2 is supported and Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities has a significant effect on brand loyalty through the satisfaction of owners ($\beta = 0.298, t = 6.476, p = 0$). Also, hypothesis 3 is supported and Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities has a significant effect on brand loyalty through the Trust of owners ($\beta = 0.185, t = 4.903, p = 0$). The analysis of hypothesis 4 demonstrates a positive relationship between loyalty and brand equity of the sharing economy platform ($\beta = 0.275, t = 4.359, p = 0$). Furthermore, the analysis of hypothesis 5 supports the relationship between gamification elements and owner's Experience ($\beta = 0.669,$

Table 2
Variable items.

Number	Question	Variable	Item	Source
1	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, makes me feel that I need to complete CSR activities	Gamification	G1	(Högberg et al., 2019)
2	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, motivates me to progress and get better	Gamification	G2	(Högberg et al., 2019)
3	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, makes me feel like I need to continuously improve in order to do well in platform	Gamification	G3	(Högberg et al., 2019)
4	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, makes me want to be in the first place	Gamification	G4	(Högberg et al., 2019)
5	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, makes me fully emotionally involved	Gamification	G5	(Högberg et al., 2019)
6	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, makes me feel like I am discovering new things	Gamification	G6	(Högberg et al., 2019)
7	The specific sharing-economy platform that was displayed in a video, gives me a sense of being noticed for what I have achieved	Gamification	G7	(Högberg et al., 2019)
8	I find CSR activities interesting for my resident	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR1	(Dessart et al., 2016)
9	I get pleasure from interacting with the	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR2	(Dessart et al., 2016)

Table 2 (continued)

Number	Question	Variable	Item	Source
10	platform's CSR demands I make time to think about CSR activities that I can run in my resident	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR3	(Dessart et al., 2016)
11	When I'm interacting with the platform, it is difficult to detach myself	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR4	(Dessart et al., 2016)
12	I share interesting content about CSR with the platform	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR5	(Dessart et al., 2016)
13	I seek ideas or information from the platform about CSR activities that I can run in my resident	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR6	(Dessart et al., 2016)
14	I try to make other Hosts and my employees interested in CSR activities	Engaging Business owners in CSR activities	CSR7	(Dessart et al., 2016)
15	Overall, I am satisfied with the platform's specific experiences	Satisfaction	SAT1	(Ha et al., 2010)
16	I am satisfied with my decision to use this platform	Satisfaction	SAT2	(Ha et al., 2010)
17	My choice of current platform service was a wise one	Satisfaction	SAT3	(Park and Kim, 2019)
18	I think this platform's performance is very close to an ideal platform	Satisfaction	SAT4	(Wu, 2011)
19	I think a platform that actively practices and promotes CSR activities is reliable	Trust of Business owners	T1	(Han et al., 2020)
20	I have confidence in a platform that actively practices and promotes CSR activities	Trust of Business owners	T2	(Han et al., 2020)
21	I think that a platform that actively practices and promotes CSR activities has high integrity	Trust of Business owners	T3	(Han et al., 2020)
22	The platform is interested in its customers	Trust of Business owners	T4	(Akbari et al., 2020)
23	I will continue using this platform's services in the coming years	Loyalty	BL1	(Palacios-Florencio et al., 2018)

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Number	Question	Variable	Item	Source
24	I will recommend this platform to anyone who asks my advice	Loyalty	BL2	(Palacios-Florencio et al., 2018)
25	I would use a different platform if I had a problem	Loyalty	BL3 (Removed)	(Palacios-Florencio et al., 2018)
26	If I had a bad experience. I would tell other hosts what happened	Loyalty	BL4 (Removed)	(Palacios-Florencio et al., 2018)
27	It makes sense to use this platform instead of other brands because of its social/ environmental commitments, even if they are the same	Brand Equity	BE1	(Chen, 2010)
28	Even if another brand has the same social/ environmental features as this brand, you would prefer to use this platform	Brand Equity	BE2	(Chen, 2010)
29	If there is another brand with social/ environmental performance as good as this platform brand's, you prefer to use this brand	Brand Equity	BE3	(Chen, 2010)
30	If the social/ environmental concern of another brand is not different from that of this brand in any way, it seems smarter to purchase this brand	Brand Equity	BE4	(Chen, 2010)
31	This gamified experience was truly a joy	Business Owner's Experience	OE1	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)
32	I felt the gamified activities was exciting	Business Owner's Experience	OE2	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)
33	This gamified activity causes me to think creatively	Business Owner's Experience	OE3	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)
34	This gamified activity tries to remind me of what I can do	Business Owner's Experience	OE4	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)
35	"responsible" is one of the words that describes this platform's business philosophy	Brand association	BA1	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)
36	"Joyful" is one of the words that describes this	Brand association	BA2	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)

Table 2 (continued)

Number	Question	Variable	Item	Source
37	platform's business philosophy "sustainable" is one of the words that describes this platform's business philosophy	Brand association	BA3	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)
38	"exciting" is one of the words that describes this platform's business philosophy	Brand association	BA4	(Hsu and Chen, 2018)

Table 3

CR, Cronbach's Alpha and AVE.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Association	0.864	0.908	0.712
Brand Equity	0.793	0.865	0.618
Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities	0.850	0.889	0.571
Gamification elements	0.868	0.899	0.559
Business Owner's Experience	0.864	0.907	0.710
Brand Loyalty	0.793	0.878	0.708
Satisfaction of Business Owners	0.883	0.928	0.811
Trust of Business Owners	0.884	0.920	0.743

t = 20.444, p = 0). Finally, the findings of this study support the idea of hypothesis 6 that the owner's experience has a significant effect on brand equity through the brand association ($\beta = 0.323$, $t = 7.343$, $p = 0$).

R-squared statistics are used to quantify the proportion of variance in the endogenous variable that can be explained by the exogenous variable. There is ongoing debate about what constitutes an adequate R-squared value for endogenous constructs in statistical modeling. Falk and Miller (1992) recommended a minimum of 0.10, while Cohen (1988) proposed a different assessment criterion, wherein R-squared values for endogenous latent variables are evaluated as substantial (0.26), moderate (0.13), or weak (0.02). Chin and Marcoulides (1998) further elaborated on this issue by recommending different R-squared values, namely substantial (0.67), moderate (0.33), and weak (0.19). In marketing research, Hair et al. (2012) provided rough guidelines, stating that R-squared values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. However, the adequacy of R-squared values depends on the research context and specific constructs analyzed. In the current study, the R-squared values of the variables ranged from 0.319 to 0.557, indicating a moderate level of explanation of the endogenous variable by the exogenous variable (Table 8).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The study examined the role of gamification elements in engaging accommodation owners in CSR activities and enhancing their experience on SE platforms and how it leads to enriching brand equity through mediating effects of accommodation owners' satisfaction and trust that leads to brand loyalty and brand association.

The gamification elements have a significant effect on engaging accommodation owners in CSR activities on SE platforms based on self-determination theory. Analysis of the collected data showed that gamification can have a significant and strong effect on engaging

Table 4
Outer Loadings- Cross Loadings.

	Brand Association	Brand Equity	Engaging Owners in CSR Activities	Gamification elements	Owner's Experience	Brand Loyalty	Satisfaction of Owners	Trust of Owners
BA1	0.791	0.480	0.484	0.469	0.509	0.592	0.518	0.442
BA2	0.889	0.521	0.472	0.512	0.491	0.664	0.540	0.523
BA3	0.820	0.484	0.515	0.516	0.529	0.617	0.557	0.517
BA4	0.871	0.538	0.511	0.552	0.537	0.643	0.569	0.549
BE1	0.371	0.706	0.433	0.393	0.361	0.412	0.448	0.463
BE2	0.459	0.779	0.346	0.337	0.463	0.375	0.433	0.398
BE3	0.495	0.839	0.409	0.391	0.438	0.490	0.570	0.481
BE4	0.544	0.813	0.428	0.413	0.428	0.525	0.475	0.454
CSR1	0.383	0.334	0.701	0.472	0.337	0.461	0.382	0.326
CSR2	0.452	0.368	0.764	0.600	0.412	0.507	0.516	0.426
CSR3	0.439	0.333	0.773	0.590	0.421	0.523	0.528	0.428
CSR4	0.507	0.498	0.753	0.533	0.432	0.550	0.512	0.525
CSR5	0.426	0.404	0.781	0.545	0.458	0.567	0.558	0.435
CSR6	0.442	0.367	0.759	0.508	0.336	0.485	0.428	0.397
G1	0.460	0.313	0.540	0.758	0.417	0.547	0.416	0.436
G2	0.500	0.403	0.542	0.786	0.465	0.561	0.507	0.458
G3	0.459	0.341	0.520	0.765	0.500	0.517	0.511	0.543
G4	0.408	0.362	0.485	0.725	0.441	0.459	0.458	0.479
G5	0.459	0.410	0.463	0.709	0.371	0.475	0.425	0.487
G6	0.451	0.360	0.613	0.738	0.382	0.452	0.407	0.402
G7	0.441	0.363	0.592	0.751	0.430	0.487	0.503	0.439
OE1	0.657	0.524	0.572	0.529	0.491	0.811	0.602	0.588
OE2	0.624	0.491	0.555	0.512	0.533	0.847	0.572	0.524
OE3	0.625	0.450	0.573	0.586	0.481	0.854	0.549	0.558
OE4	0.611	0.475	0.606	0.626	0.496	0.859	0.580	0.516
LOY1	0.610	0.504	0.475	0.517	0.901	0.561	0.654	0.620
LOY2	0.528	0.478	0.514	0.551	0.874	0.535	0.577	0.558
LOY3	0.374	0.365	0.336	0.360	0.741	0.376	0.453	0.388
SAT1	0.583	0.538	0.607	0.558	0.590	0.622	0.901	0.598
SAT2	0.599	0.542	0.602	0.568	0.618	0.637	0.914	0.626
SAT3	0.565	0.576	0.550	0.539	0.618	0.585	0.887	0.575
TRUST1	0.566	0.444	0.516	0.551	0.524	0.601	0.556	0.853
TRUST2	0.508	0.485	0.511	0.509	0.569	0.578	0.619	0.890
TRUST3	0.489	0.518	0.466	0.511	0.476	0.493	0.540	0.884
TRUST4	0.511	0.514	0.449	0.555	0.601	0.554	0.575	0.818

Table 5
Fornell-Lacker criteria.

	Brand Association	Brand Equity	Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities	Gamification elements	Brand Loyalty	Owner's Experience	Satisfaction of Business Owners	Trust of Business Owners
Brand Association	0.844							
Brand Equity	0.600	0.786						
Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities	0.586	0.511	0.756					
Gamification elements	0.608	0.486	0.720	0.748				
Brand Loyalty	0.611	0.539	0.533	0.575	0.841			
Business Owner's Experience	0.746	0.575	0.684	0.669	0.593	0.843		
Satisfaction of Business Owners	0.647	0.613	0.651	0.617	0.676	0.683	0.901	
Trust of Business Owners	0.603	0.569	0.565	0.618	0.633	0.648	0.666	0.862

accommodation owners in CSR activities on accommodation sharing platforms. This is consistent with previous research on the power of gamification. Researchers have shown that gamification can be used to transfer complex information and promote green behaviour among users (Souza et al., 2020). In this study, it was shown that gamification elements can be used, not only for customers, but also for the accommodation owners and can engage them in behaving sustainably and responsibly. Analysing the collected data indicates a significant effect of gamification elements on the experience of accommodation owners on SE platforms. This also is consistent with previous studies which indicate that gamification can activate hedonic emotions and ultimately enhance the user experience (Hsu and Chen, 2018). It was also concluded that this hedonic experience is not limited to customers but also includes the business owners.

The analysis reveals a noteworthy connection between engaging accommodation owners in CSR activities and their satisfaction, potentially leading to increased loyalty. This finding is significant as loyalty plays a crucial role in the success of any business. However, prior research has shown mixed results regarding the relationship between social responsibility, satisfaction, and loyalty. For instance, a study on hotel customers did not find a significant relationship between social responsibility and satisfaction, nor did it find a link between satisfaction and loyalty (Akbari et al., 2020). On the other hand, other research suggests that social responsibility has a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Koch et al., 2020). Despite the inclusion of social responsibility and perceived social responsibility in previous studies, the variable *Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities* was not seen. This study shows that by involving accommodation owners as suppliers and

Table 6
Heterotrait-Monotrait method.

	Brand Association	Brand Equity	Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities	Gamification elements	Brand Loyalty	Business Owner's Experience	Satisfaction of Business Owners	Trust of Business Owners
Brand Association								
Brand Equity	0.719							
Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities	0.683	0.624						
Gamification elements	0.701	0.590	0.831					
Brand Loyalty	0.725	0.671	0.635	0.682				
Business Owner's Experience	0.864	0.694	0.795	0.770	0.705			
Satisfaction of Business Owners	0.741	0.733	0.744	0.704	0.797	0.782		
Trust of Business Owners	0.688	0.684	0.644	0.707	0.738	0.739	0.752	

Table 7
Results.

Hypotheses	Relationships	β	T Statistics	P Values
1	G -> CSR	0.720	24.690	0.000
2	CSR -> SAT -> BL	0.298	6.476	0.000
3	CSR -> T -> BL	0.185	4.903	0.000
4	BL -> BE	0.275	4.359	0.000
5	G -> OE	0.669	20.444	0.000
6	OE -> BA -> BE	0.323	7.343	0.000

Table 8
R-Square values.

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Association	0.557	0.555
Brand Equity	0.408	0.404
Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities	0.518	0.516
Brand Loyalty	0.516	0.513
Business Owner's Experience	0.448	0.446
Satisfaction of Business Owners	0.424	0.422
Trust of Business Owners	0.319	0.317

business owners in social responsibilities activities it is possible to increase their satisfaction and, as a result brand loyalty to SE platforms would increase.

The data analysis highlights the impact of engaging accommodation owners in CSR activities on their trust, which can ultimately affect their loyalty to SE platforms. Trust is a critical factor in the success of SE platforms, especially since business owners may find it challenging to trust where their financial interests are concerned. While the relationship between engaging in social responsibility activities and trust has been understudied, research on the impact of CSR and perceived CSR has shown a positive effect on trust (Ahn et al., 2021; Ahn and Kwon, 2020; Sung et al., 2020).

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the engagement of accommodation owners in social responsibility activities has a positive impact on brand equity through the mediation of loyalty resulting from increased satisfaction and trust. This finding is highly significant given the critical role that brand equity plays in the success of a business. Research has shown that brand equity can be positively influenced by customer loyalty (Nam et al., 2011). Therefore, the engagement of accommodation owners in CSR activities can create a virtuous cycle where increased loyalty results in higher brand equity, leading to increased revenue and customer acquisition.

The findings indicate that the positive experience of accommodation owners has a substantial impact on the brand association of SE platforms, ultimately leading to a positive effect on brand equity. This is in line with previous research that has established a positive relationship between a positive brand experience and brand association (Ding and

Tseng, 2015). The importance of brand equity cannot be overstated, as it is a key factor in a platform's success. By ensuring a positive experience for accommodation owners, SE platforms can enhance their brand association and improve their brand equity.

In conclusion, social responsibility is important in tourism for two of its dimensions. First, the existence of social responsibility in accommodation and encouraging accommodation owners to have social responsibility promotes responsible tourism. Many of the problems that accommodation guests complain about will not exist in a responsible accommodation. Therefore, in addition to helping the environment, social and economic experience will be better for tourists. Second, the existence of social responsibility will have a positive effect on brand loyalty and brand equity of not only sharing accommodation platforms but also of the accommodation itself. This issue has been considered very little in terms of engaging the owners of accommodations in these activities and only the effect of social responsibility in enterprises on the end customer has been considered. Therefore, in this study, a new variable based on social responsibility and customer engagement theories was introduced called *Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities*. This study also investigated the effect of gamification elements on the engagement of accommodation owners in participating in social responsibility activities on SE platforms and their experience. Using gamification to influence brand equity through engagement in CSR activities and experience is a new approach.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical implications

The main contribution of this research is related to expansion of our knowledge related to constructs used in this study which previously not been explored in SE literature related to gamification, CSR and engagement. Hence, introducing a new construct of *Engaging Business Owners in CSR Activities* can be considered as the main theoretical contribution of this study. This new construct contributes to CSR and customer engagement theories. In this regard, the results of our paper shows that the new construct has potential to be adopted and used in other studies in the tourism and hotel industry as well as paying attention to engagement using B2B lenses.

In addition, this study contributes to self-determination theory by exploring the new relationship between gamification elements and engaging business owners in CSR activities. Our study shows that, based on self-determination theory, gamification elements can stimulate motivation and engagement not only in customers but also in business owners and B2B customers. Whereas the effect of gamification elements on enhancing business owners' experience of SE platforms was rarely explored in the previous literature, this study contributes to user experience theory by exploring the relationship between gamification elements and the B2B experience of SE platforms showing that gamification

is a useful tool to enhance B2B experience, as well as that of customers.

6.2. Practical implications

The use of a smart gamification system can have positive managerial implications for sharing economy (SE) platforms. This system effectively engages accommodation owners in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, promoting responsible behaviour. By incorporating a well-designed gamification system, SE managers can encourage accommodation owners to participate in CSR activities. It is crucial to consider the variety of CSR activity options available, allowing owners to choose whether they want to participate or not, and select from a range of activities that match their interests, providing a sense of autonomy. Additionally, educating owners about CSR and how to implement it, along with providing a choice of courses, can increase their competence. Finally, participating owners would be known as responsible owners, building a sense of relatedness within the community that cares about social responsibility and sustainable tourism.

In addition to internal motivational factors, external motivational factors can also be employed. These may include badges (primary-bronze-silver-gold-platinum), leader boards (top 50 responsible hosts), rewards (discounts, top responsible hosts section, trophy), and points (report-based).

Implementing a smart gamification system has numerous advantages for SE platforms in the long run. Engaging accommodation owners in social responsibility activities enhances the customer experience, leading to increased satisfaction, more positive reviews, and an increase in revenue. It also builds brand equity and increases loyalty among accommodation owners, resulting in more income for the platform. As the loyalty of the owners grows, the SE platform's reputation improves, attracting potential customers and generating increased revenue. The increased revenue can be used to improve the platform's services, creating a virtuous cycle of revenue growth and enhanced brand equity.

The implementation of a smart gamification system also creates a good experience for accommodation owners, resulting in enhanced brand equity and increased revenue. By promoting social responsibility, the system can encourage more accommodation owners to join the platform, creating a larger customer base, and driving revenue growth.

In conclusion, the implementation of a smart gamification system can have positive implications for SE platforms. It promotes social responsibility, enhances customer experience, builds brand equity, and increases revenue. SE platforms should consider adopting a smart gamification system to leverage these numerous benefits.

6.3. Limitations and future studies

As presented this study focus solely on sharing accommodation platforms and accommodation owners' which could be considered as a limitation and for future studies there is a need to investigate the proposed constructs in different SE platforms such as ride sharing. Secondly, the conceptual model proposed for of this study does not include the business owners' personalities which also could be considered to be a limitation which for future studies should be considered. Finally, this model was only tested using data collected from a Middle Eastern country, and to compare the results we suggest that future researchers should consider data collection from other countries in other parts of the world, since cultural differences may have a significant impact on the results.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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