YUVIN PILLAI

INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

ACCOMMODATION NETWORKS AND MULTI-FAMILY TRAVEL MARKET (VOL 2)

International Hospitality Industry: Accommodation Networks and Multi-family Travel Market (Vol 2)

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Peer-to-Peer Accommodation Networks as Price Drivers

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Peer-to-peer accommodation networks have been described as disruptive innovations, as revolutions in tourist accommodation, where demand is driven by new factors such as living like a local, authenticity and meeting new people. If indeed reasons for trading on these networks are so fundamentally different, prices should reflect that. This chapter investigates what drives the price of Airbnb listings in Vienna, and asks whether these price drivers are indeed new, or whether they reflect those in established commercial accommodation.

The emergence of and high demand for peer-to-peer accommodation has received a lot of attention, not only from the tourism industry, but also from the population as a whole. While selling space to tourists for a short term is nothing new, many aspects of how peer-to-peer accommodations platforms structure trading have transformed the hospitality sector. As a consequence, cities and states have faced challenges they have never before faced in relation to commercial tourism accommodation: their residents have found themselves competing with tourists for housing, and areas with high tourism demand have become unaffordable to live in (Chapter 11). It is difficult to deny, therefore, that there is something different about peer-to-peer accommodation networks.

Studies into motivations for becoming an active member of peer-to-peer accommodation network, be it as a host or as a guest, have also revealed motivations which – while not entirely new – are not so prominent in the context of established commercial accommodation. While many hosts trade space to earn some extra money, they are also driven by the enjoyment of meeting new people, and sharing the beauty of the place in which they live (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016). Guests have always liked cheap accommodation, but in relation to peer-to-peer networks, they emphasize the benefit of living like a local, in an authentic space, rather than in a standardized hotel room (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016; and Chapter 15). Tourists commonly use reviews when choosing accommodation. But in peer-to-peer networks, reviews are the central piece of information that allows both hosts and guests to assess the risk of the proposed trade. Consequently, people's profiles on the network have become more important than ever (Ert et al., 2016; Karlsson et al., 2017). Hosts and guests actively build their peer-to-peer accommodation network curriculum vitae (P2P-CV, Chapter 1) and use reviews to impress other network members and increase the chances of trading successfully on the network platform.

It is not obvious, therefore, if peer-to-peer accommodation networks are a new phenomenon or not. And if they represent an incremental development from established commercial accommodation, how different are they really? One objective measure of what matters in terms of the demand for a product is the price. Drivers of price provide insights into what people are willing to pay for, and what makes a product attractive to them. If peer-to-peer accommodation networks are nothing new, we would expect price drivers to reflect the price drivers in established commercial accommodation. If it is indeed radically different, we would expect this to manifest in new drivers of price.

This chapter aims to determine which of these two scenarios holds in reality through a study of the price drivers of Airbnb listings in Vienna.

Price drivers of established commercial accommodation

Price drivers have been studied extensively in the context of the established commercial tourism accommodation sector. There is general agreement that the location of the accommodation plays a key role. It has to be close to the key attraction point of the destination, which could be the city center or main shopping area for a city (Andersson, 2010; Thrane, 2007; Chen and Rothschild, 2010) or the beach for a sun and sea destination. Proximity to the beach increases price (Espinet et al., 2003; Thrane, 2005; Rigall-I-Torrent et al., 2011). Other locations of interest include business precincts (Lee and Jang, 2011) and airports

(Lee and Jang, 2011; Pawlicz and Napierala, 2017).

The availability of a range of amenities also increases accommodation price. Prices are higher if guests are able to connect to the internet from their hotel rooms (Chen and Rothschild, 2010); if the room is air conditioned (Espinet et al., 2003); if it is equipped with a safe (Andersson, 2010) and a minibar (Espinet et al., 2003; Thrane, 2007); and if there is a TV (Espinet et al., 2003; Thrane, 2005; Chen and Rothschild, 2010) and a hairdryer (Thrane, 2007).

Features at the hotel – rather than room – which are associated with higher prices, include pools, balconies, sport facilities (Andersson, 2010; Chen and Rothschild, 2010; Rigall-I-Torrent et al., 2011), free parking (Thrane, 2007) as well as shuttle services (Chen and Rothschild, 2010), and restaurants, conference facilities, and bars being located in the hotel (Thrane, 2005; Chen and Rothschild, 2010).

Prior work leads to inconclusive results with respect to the association of room service with price; some studies conclude room service increases price (Rigall-I-Torrent et al., 2011), while others conclude that it reduces price (Thrane, 2007).

Price drivers on peer-to-peer networks

The complete set of features presented in a peer-to-peer accommodation networks listing has not been used to study the effect of each of those on price to date. But a number of studies have investigated subsets of drivers, others have formulated hypotheses about what they believe would drive price on peer-to-peer accommodation networks. Based on this prior work, it can be assumed that higher prices are associated with:

- proximity to city center (Teubner et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- space for more guests (Edelman and Luca, 2014; Kakar et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- more bedrooms (Edelman and Luca, 2014; Ert et al., 2016; Kakar et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- more bathrooms (Kakar et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- a higher fraction of the property being available for rent (Edelman and Luca, 2014; Ert et al., 2016; Kakar et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- more photos (Teubner et al., 2016)
- higher than average total ratings (Teubner et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- higher than average location ratings (Edelman and Luca, 2014)
- higher than average cleanliness and communication ratings (Kakar et al., 2016)

- lower than average value-for-money ratings (Kakar et al., 2016)
- longer network membership of the hosts (Teubner et al., 2016)
- Superhost status (Kakar et al., 2016; Teubner et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- more listings offered by the host (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- a verified host telephone number (Edelman and Luca, 2014)
- a verified host identity (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- appealing host photos (Edelman and Luca, 2014)
- host presence on social media platforms (Edelman and Luca, 2014)
- fewer available reviews (Teubner et al., 2016; Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- a lack of permission to smoke (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- a lack of availability of instant booking (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- no breakfast (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- availability of free parking (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- availability of wi-fi (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- availability of a real bed (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- a lack of a host's profile picture (Wang and Nicolau, 2017)
- the requirement of guest's phone verification for booking (Wang and Nicolau, 2017).

Drivers of price on entire properties in Vienna

As opposed to prior work, we study the effect on price of 56 features of all listings in Vienna of entire properties. Vienna is one of the most visited city destinations in the world, ranking 18th internationally and 8th within Europe (Mastercard, 2017). Vienna is also very meaningful to the authors of this chapter: we either live there, have grown up there, or both.

We used web-scraping to collect that data. This is automated data collection from publicly accessible parts of the internet. We used the package RSelenium (Harrison, 2016) within the statistical software R (R Core Team, 2016).

First, we identified all 6049 spaces listed on Airbnb in Vienna in January 2017. Then we selected only properties listed in their entirety, because sharing the same space at the same time is not comparable with the proposition made by established commercial accommodation providers. This left 4265 listings. After data cleaning, the full profiles of 3877 listings were available for analysis.

For these properties, we extracted 56 pieces of information which served as independent variables, and included: host information; ratings and reviews; conditions for renting the property; and information about physical characteristics of the listing including amenities. The base price per night in euro

served as dependent variable. The base price is the price shown on the Airbnb platform. It does not account for extras, surcharges, or seasonal fluctuations.

We calculated an ordinary least squares linear regression analysis without variable selection, using price as dependent and the 56 descriptors of each listing as the independent variables. Figure 12.1 and Table 12.1 show results. Figure 12.1 plots t-values resulting from the regression for all coefficients; Table 12.1 shows the direction of each effect and its statistical significance level.

Figure 12.1 sorts t-values into the four groups of variables. Within the groups, the absolute size of the t-value determines the order of presentation. Black bars depict significant price drivers at the 5% significance level. Price drivers decreasing the price point to the left; price drivers increasing the price point to the right. Bars are comparable across price drivers; they depict relative impact on price within the model.

Host information

Superhost status and length of Airbnb membership of the host increase the price. Both factors also positively affect reservations (Xie and Mao, 2017). The length of the P2P-CV (Chapter 1), ID verification and hosts owning or not owning a pet did not significantly affect price. Note that this is likely to be a consequence of including properties in their entirety only. We expect the host P2P-CV to be extremely important in situations where the host is present at the property while the guest stays, in line with findings by Tussyadiah (2016).

Ratings and reviews

Low ratings for location and cleanliness have a negative effect on price, as does a higher number of reviews of the property. Listings with a low rating on location yield on average €8.29 less than listings with the highest rating. For the cleanliness rating, a low rating lowers the price by €2.93 on average. For each additional review, price decreases on average by €0.06. While the host's P2P-CV does not seem to be influential for entire properties, the property's P2P-CV clearly is. The ratings for the categories check-in, accuracy, communication, and total do not significantly affect price.

Conditions for renting the property

Logically, the inclusion of a cleaning fee drives the price up. Not so logical is the positive effect on price of the weekly discount. One explanation may be that hosts whose properties have a relatively high base price use weekly discounts more actively than hosts who rent out their spaces at a low price. No significant effects are detected for 24-hour check in, monthly booking, and the possibility of instant booking, meaning that the host cannot deny the guest permission to stay after having inspected the booking inquiry (Karlsson et al., 2017).

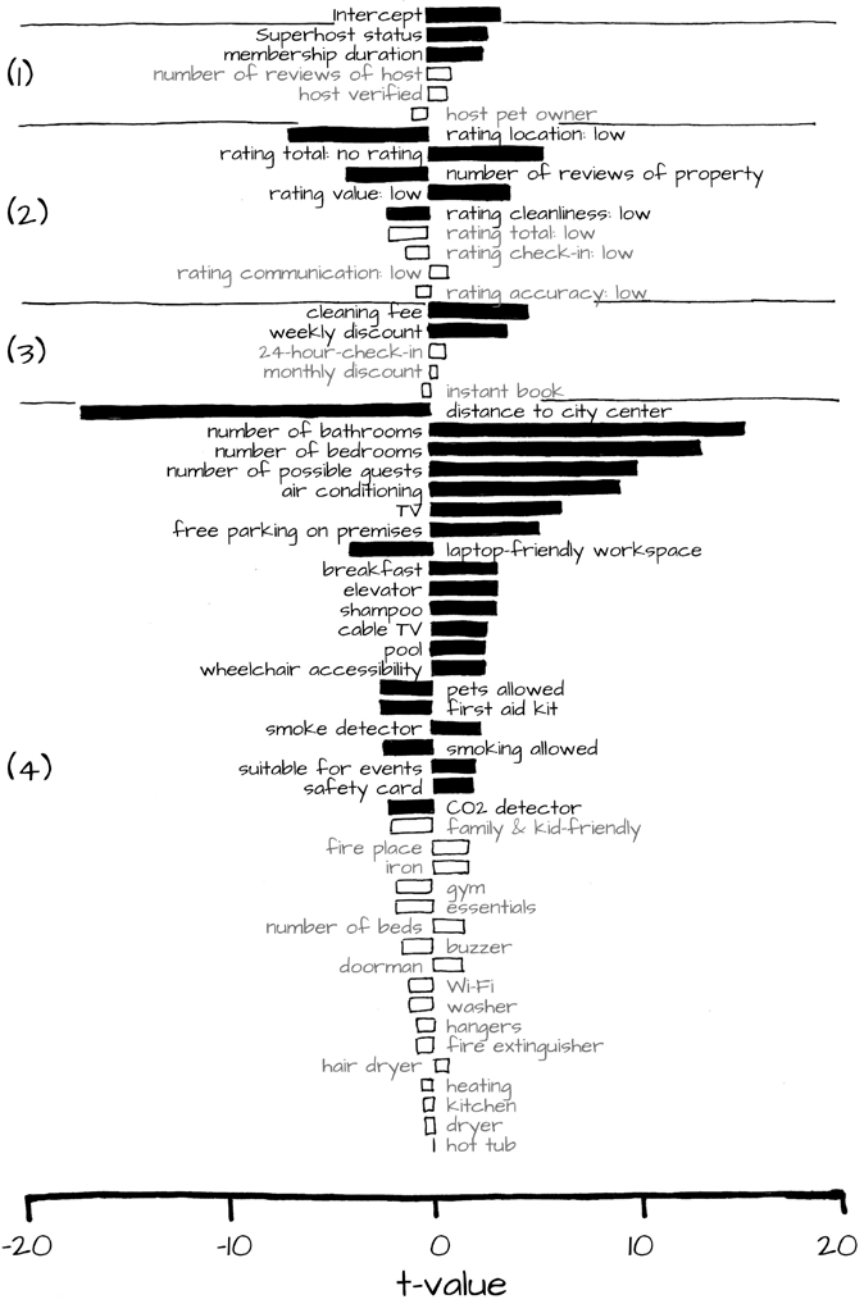

Figure 12.1: Relative price effects for Airbnb properties in Vienna (Austria). Significant price drivers shown in black bars; price drivers which decrease the price point to the left; price drivers which increase the price point to the right; bars show relative impact on price; (1) host information, (2) ratings and reviews, (3) conditions for renting the property, (4) physical characteristics of the listing and amenities.

Table 12.1: Directions and significance of price effects of features

	Highly significant ($p \leq .01$)	Significant ($.01 < p \leq .05$)	Not significant ($.05 < p$)[c]
positive	no. of bathrooms (int)[b] no. of bedrooms (int)[b] no. of possible guests (int)[b] air condition TV rating total: no rating[a] free parking on premises cleaning fee (euro)[b] rating value: low[a] weekly discount [b] breakfast elevator shampoo Superhost status cable TV pool membership duration (months)[b]	wheelchair accessibility smoke detector suitable for events safety card	24-hour check-in buzzer doorman dryer essentials family- & kid-friendly fire extinguisher fireplace gym hair dryer hangers heating host pet owner host verified hot tub instant book iron
negative	distance to city center (km)[b] rating location: low[a] number of reviews of property laptop-friendly workspace	pets allowed first aid kit smoking allowed CO detector rating cleanliness: low[a]	kitchen monthly discount (%)[b] no. of beds (int) no. of reviews of host (int) rating accuracy: low[a] rating check-in: low[a] rating communication: low[a] rating total: low[a] washer wi-fi

[a] Rating dummy variable; reference category: 'high rating'

[b] Units of numeric variables in parentheses (int = integer valued)
Other variables are binary (0 = feature is not present/not true; 1 = feature is present/true)

[c] Alphabetically ordered, since direction is not interpretable due to lack of statistical significance

Physical property characteristics

Location matters a lot, and Airbnb locations outperform hotel locations in terms of proximity to the city center (Gutiérrez et al., 2017). The further the space is from the city center, the lower the price. More precisely: if the property is one kilometer further away it costs – on average – €5.09 less. Higher prices are achieved if the property has more bathrooms, more bedrooms, and space for a higher number of guests. Air conditioning, TV, free parking, breakfast, an

elevator, shampoo, cable TV, a pool, wheelchair accessibility, and suitability for events also increase the price. Properties with a TV are – on average – €8.05 more expensive. Offering laptop-friendly workspace, allowing pets and allowing smoking reduce the price. This may be due to those features being typical for less attractive listings to increase demand by being more generous in those aspects. The price is also higher if the property has a smoke detector and a safety card. The price is lower if the property has a first aid kit and a CO detector.

Table 12.1 shows the direction and significance of all price drivers.

The regression model explains about 43% of the variance of the base price of Airbnb listings in Vienna. This is not surprising, given that many aspects tourists use to assess a listing are not captured by the 56 formal descriptors, including style and quality of furnishings and the condition of the general areas of the building.

Conclusions

This study offers a few key insights for Airbnb listings in Vienna: first of all, location is still the primary driver of price in cities, very much in line with drivers of price in the established commercial tourism accommodation sector (Espinet et al., 2003; Thrane, 2005; Thrane, 2007; Andersson, 2010; Chen and Rothschild, 2010; Lee and Jang, 2011; Rigall-I-Torrent et al., 2011) and results from other Airbnb pricing studies (Chen and Xie, 2017; Gibbs et al., 2017). Second, properties with more amenities can and do charge a higher price. Third, mixed results emerge from the analysis of price effects of ratings. High ratings for location, cleanliness and low value for money affect price positively, whereas the rating of the total listing as well as checkout, accuracy and communication do not. This finding lends support to the conclusion drawn by Gutt and Herrmann (2015) that ratings matter. In their study, the price of a listing increased by €2.69 on average as soon as ratings become available. Finally, the credibility of the host affects price. Superhost status (Chapters 16 and 20) and length of the host's Airbnb membership signal host credibility. Both factors are associated with a higher price in our study, in line with prior research findings (Teubner et al., 2016). Clearly, guests feel that more experienced hosts with proven positive performance reduce their risk of booking accommodation with them. Guests are willing to pay for this risk reduction.

What does this mean in terms of the initial question whether peer-to-peer accommodation networks are radically new, or whether they are just a slight variation on the theme of tourism accommodation more generally? Overall, it appears, the price drivers for properties where guests are not staying at

the same time as the host in major city destinations are very similar to those of commercial tourism accommodation: the price increases with increasing proximity of the accommodation to the center of town, with its size, the range of services and amenities offers, as well as positive reviews from other tourists with respect to important aspects of the accommodation. Yet two unique drivers of price emerge from this study: the length of the host's membership with Airbnb, which serves as a proxy for hosting experience; and the status of Superhost, which serves as a proxy of proven provision of quality service.

Hosting experience and proven hosting quality can be interpreted as new characteristics of short-term accommodation provision, in which case it has to be concluded that the price drivers of Airbnb listings are new. But hosting experience and proven hosting quality can also be interpreted as quality signifiers, the same kind that are communicated to guests through hotel brand names or hotel star ratings. If this is the chosen interpretation, then there is not much new about the price drivers of Airbnb listings for entire properties in major city destinations. This latter interpretation is in line with the view that consumer evaluation of Airbnb listings is very similar to that of hotel listings, and that functionality is more important than interpersonal factors (Chen and Xie, 2017).

This study has two practical implications: first, established commercial tourism accommodation providers may want to increase the amount of information they provide about their accommodation offers to ensure that guests are able to assess all aspects that matter to them. Currently, few accommodation businesses would portray their offer using 56 attributes. Second, this information can guide hosts in how they can make their space as attractive as possible for guests on peer-to-peer accommodation networks.

Questions for future research

The study of listings in Vienna is limited to one single case and, more broadly, to the category of city destinations. It is critically important to conduct replication studies including a larger set of destinations with systematically different characteristics. It is quite possible that price drivers in rural and regional locations are different from those in cities. In terms of methodology, replications should use experimental designs where hosts change settings and the impact on demand and price is observed, allowing causal conclusions of the effects of price drivers. Another line of inquiry is to study price drivers for listings where guests genuinely share space with the host. We predict that the importance of any information about the host, in such instances, will increase dramatically.

Acknowledgments

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China and Peer-to-Peer Accommodation Networks

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China is not like most other countries around the world. The Chinese market has not embraced Airbnb whole-heartedly. There are a number of explanations: Chinese people prefer online platforms in Chinese language, and have available to them several platforms, many of which they perceive to have advantages over Airbnb: these are more flexible and better cater to the needs of the Chinese market. And Chinese people feel that their home is only for the use of their family. In traditional culture, homes are not places shared with strangers.

Airbnb has conquered markets all around the world. Why not China? China is a unique market because Chinese people do not use the same social media as the rest of the world, thus reducing the credibility of verification processes on international peer-to-peer networks. Chinese people have a traditional sense of their home being only for their use and the use of their relatives and friends, not for strangers. Furthermore, Chinese people looking for short-term accommodation within China prefer to do so in the Chinese language. Consequently, many of the features of the Airbnb platform driving international market success are not effective in enticing Chinese people into this particular network as hosts. Chinese tourists – especially young tourists – have, however, adopted peer-to-peer accommodation networks during their international travels.

This chapter explores peer-to-peer accommodation networks in China using two sources of information accessible to the first author: Chinese media reports published since 2009, and 277 academic journal articles written by Chinese authors. Five primary areas of investigation emerged:

1 the concept and its introduction to China
2 the business model underlying the networks
3 challenges faced by these networks in China
4 market strategies used by the networks in China
5 recommendations for survival and growth.

The introduction of the concept to China

Airbnb was introduced to Chinese consumers shortly after its establishment in the US in 2008 (Douban Group, 2009). The message spread across China in 2009 via the Douban Forum, an online social community used by young people to share knowledge and ideas. A 2009 post discussed the flexibility of Airbnb in terms of checking in and checking out (Douban Forum, 2009). Chinese tourists who traveled or lived outside China were early adopters.

The Chinese government saw value in the sharing economy more generally – a contribution to GDP, the increased tax income, and increased employment (Cai and Li, 2016) – and embraced it with a national strategy to encourage public entrepreneurship and innovation (Analysis, 2016). The Chinese government supports peer-to-peer accommodation networks through policies and regulatory frameworks (Iresearch, 2017).

Industry professionals and investors identified the business opportunity and implemented Chinese versions of Airbnb (Cai and Li, 2016). Local peer-to-peer networks – copying Airbnb's idea – were set up before Airbnb opened their first branch in China. One of these, Airizu, was financed by a German venture capital investment, and operated by a team of Chinese businesspeople. Airizu declared bankruptcy in 2013 after spending a substantial amount of money on online promotion, marketing and day-to-day operations. Four reasons explain its failure (Lei, 2013):

1 When Airizu was established, the Chinese market was not ready to embrace peer-to-peer accommodation networks. With the potential of the sharing economy not clearly identified in China, Airizu had difficulties finding enough guest and hosts, a key prerequisite for the success of a multi-platform business (Chapter 3). In the Chinese culture, the groom's parents usually provide accommodation – preferably a *new* house or apartment – for the newlyweds. Renting space out to strangers does not align with this tradition. People who own many investment properties can earn more money from trading real estate than from short-term rental.
2 Airizu was attractive to small businesses with 20–30 dwellings. Only about 200,000 such businesses operated across China, proving insuf-

ficient to build a successful multi-platform business. In addition, quality assuring these spaces was not affordable.

3 Using venture capital compromized the ability of the founders of Airizu to make business decisions; the sale of Airizu failed.

4 Online travel agents saw how attractive the short-term rental market was and entered this space, representing strong competition to peer-to-peer accommodation networks.

Other Chinese peer-to-peer accommodation networks were set up by Chinese entrepreneurs, and only later leveraged international venture capital to grow and expand. Table 13.1 shows the top ten at the time of writing this book. Most have initially copied the Airbnb idea. Their advantage over Airbnb, however, was their familiarity with the Chinese market; their primary target market were domestic and outbound Chinese tourists

1.	Tujia	www.tujia.com
2.	Mayi	www.mayi.com
3.	Xiaozhu	www.xiaozhu.com
4.	Muniao	www.muniao.com
5.	Belvedor	www.zhubaijia.com
6.	Onehome	www.onehome.me
7.	Fishtrip	www.fishtrip.cn
8.	Youtianxia	www.youtx.com
9.	Ziroomstay	www.ziroomstay.com
10.	Zizaike	www.zizaike.com

Table 13.1: Top 10 local Chinese peer-to-peer accommodation networks. Source: Iresearch (2017); Analysis (2016)

Tujia has most successfully implemented the Airbnb model in China. Tujia merged with Mayi in June 2016, making Mayi a branch company (Sina.com, 2016). In the same year, Tujia acquired the business sectors of 'apartment short-term rent' of both Ctrip (the biggest online travel agent in China) and Qunaer (a popular online travel booking network similar to Ctrip), establishing a strategic alliance with both (Ifeng.com, 2016). In so doing, Tujia achieved resource integration and consolidation of competitiveness of its network platform (Iresearch, 2017). Today, Tujia has more than 4000 employees across 1347 domestic and international destinations, and features more than 400,000 listings on their online platform. Listings offered on Tujia may be owned by Tujia; or hotel beds distributed through Tujia; or spare spaces offered by 'ordinary people' (Iresearch, 2017). To ensure a suitable standard, Tujia offers home renovation and housekeeping services. While Airbnb maintains that it primarily focuses on peer-to-peer accommodation, Tujia has openly diversified to ensure its survival in the competitive short-term rental market in China.

Peer-to-peer accommodation listings of properties located within China, however, are not the only market opportunity. According to the World Tourism Organization (199it, 2015), 109 million Chinese traveled outside of China in 2013, spending more than $100 billion; an increase of 40% from 2011. Growth continues with 107 million Chinese outbound tourists in 2014, 117 million in 2015, and 122 million in 2016 (China Tourism Academy, 2017).The large number of Chinese outbound tourists represents a major market opportunity for peer-to-peer accommodation networks. From 2012 to 2013 Airbnb bookings from Chinese outbound tourists increased by 700% (Qiu et al., 2016). Well aware of this opportunity, Airbnb developed a Chinese language platform in 2014. In August 2015, Airbnb officially announced the establishment of a Chinese company in Beijing.

Figure 13.2 shows the growth of peer-to-peer accommodation in China.

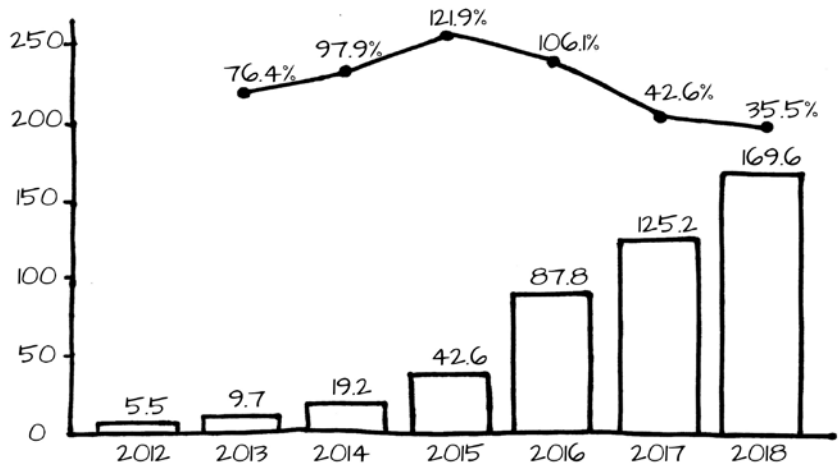

Figure13.2: (Predicted) revenues in 100 million RMB from short-terms rentals and (predicted) growth rate of peer-to-peer accommodation in China. Source: Iresearch (2017)

The business model

The business model underlying peer-to-peer accommodation networks is discussed in detail in Chapters 3–5. Within the Chinese body of work, Wang (2013) argues that Airbnb brought new rules and patterns to tourism accommodation in China by providing a consumer-to-consumer platform that effectively connects demand and supply with the network facilitator serving as arbitrator for a commission fee.

A comparison of network platforms (Xu et al., 2017) concludes that Airbnb is at a competitive disadvantage in China because of low brand recognition, and its inability to effectively reach a larger proportion of the Chinese market

due to the language barrier; the insecurity of Chinese customers about the safety of accommodation offered on peer-to-peer accommodation networks; the fact that Chinese will typically use hotels for short-term accommodation; and the relatively good service offered in China by cheap hotels. At the time of writing this book, Airbnb has 80,000 listings in China, its competitors Tujia has 400,000; Mayi 300,000; Belvedor 250,000; and Xiaozhu 140,000 (Iresearch, 2017; Sina.com, 2017).

The challenges

Peer-to-peer accommodation networks face a number of challenges in China: lack of credibility; lack of both supply and demand; strong competition; non-compliance with Chinese government policy; and the different sense of 'home' and sharing one's home with strangers in Chinese culture.

Lack of credibility

The biggest challenge Airbnb faces in China is lack of credibility (Qiu et al., 2016). In most countries, people share information online using their real name from a registered and verified account linked to social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. In China, online channels available for sharing information are quite different from those used in most other countries. WeChat is the most popular social media platform, but this does not require formal registration with one's real name and personal identity. As a consequence, some of the key features on Airbnb – reciprocal reviewing and the development of network track records or P2P-CVs (Chapter 1) – are not as effective in regulating demand and supply and ensuring that network members perceive the platform as credible. Chinese peer-to-peer accommodation networks face the same challenge.

Media reports of short-term rentals ending badly – for example, the article 'A student of STA ruined my home' (Southcn, 2016a) – regularly ignite heated public debates about the need for effective regulation. Typical arguments relating to safety concerns include that Airbnb's systems of quality and safety control are insufficient; that the Chinese government has not set in place adequate regulations to protect hosts and guests (Shi et al., 2017); and that safety issues warrant restricting the development and growth of Airbnb's business in China. Although there have been no media shock stories about renting on Chinese peer-to-peer accommodation networks, these networks are under the same pressure as Airbnb in terms of compliance with safety regulations.

Lack of supply and demand

Real-estate prices are increasing continuously in China, making it more attractive for investors to buy and sell dwellings than to rent them out (Qiu et al.,

2016). Chinese people who own unused space are typically not facing financial difficulties; they prefer for the space to stay empty. Among those owners who choose to make unused space available for rent, the preference is to hire professional real-estate agents who manage them as long-term rentals. Owners prefer not to manage rentals personally (Cai and Li, 2016).

On the demand side, Chinese people are used to staying in inexpensive express hotels offering standardized service, convenience and a sense of safety (Cai and Li, 2016). Business travelers need an invoice to be reimbursed by their employers, but Chinese peer-to-peer networks hosts typically do not provide these. Finally, Chinese travelers are concerned about the quality of accommodation for rent on these networks, given that facilitators do not take an active role in quality management and control (Cui, 2015). However, in terms of motivations to book, Chinese consumers do not appear to differ substantially from consumers in other countries (Wu et al., 2017).

Because of the difficulties in growing the pool of hosts and guests, Airbnb is focusing primarily on Chinese outbound tourists. Within China, the focus is on attracting non-Chinese inbound tourists in first tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Xiamen (Guan and Bai, 2016). Chinese networks are not pursuing a strategy of capturing overseas travelers primarily.

Fierce competition

The 'apprentices' of Airbnb in China (Guan and Bai, 2016), such as Xiaozhu, Mayi, and Tujia have developed to become strong competitors to their 'master', competing fiercely for market share. Currently, 80,000 spaces in China are available for rent on Airbnb in China. Tujia provides access to more than 400,000 listings, making it the market leader in China. Local network facilitators have leveraged their understanding of the Chinese market effectively, and deviate from the Airbnb model by trading commercial accommodation, including accommodation owned by them. Tujia purchases and constructs dwellings for inclusion on the network. As such, Tujia is not merely the facilitator, but rather takes the role of both host and facilitator.

Non-compliance with Chinese government regulations

Chinese government rental regulations classify peer-to-peer accommodation networks as hotels. This has major implications on the responsibilities of network facilitators, who are responsible for food hygiene, industrial and commercial taxation, fire safety and regular inspections of the property by police. Airbnb and Chinese facilitators are in breach of those regulations, but – because of the rapid increase in listings – government regulators cannot enforce them. Radical solutions, such as prohibiting peer-to-peer accommodation networks,

are not in the interest of the Chinese government. As a result, peer-to-peer networks in China find themselves operating in a grey area (Li, 2016). Although there is much public discussion for the need of regulation and enforcement of regulations, the Chinese government has not taken decisive action to date.

A culturally different understanding of one's home

The traditional perception of one's home in the Confucian philosophy is that it is a private space for the family, not for strangers (Li, 2016). This understanding has major consequences for peer-to-peer accommodation networks. It implies that – unless the space is an investment property – renting it out to strangers is not acceptable under many Chinese people's conventional thinking.

Airbnb's market strategy for China

Airbnb's strategy in China is to focus primarily on the Chinese outbound market and inbound international visitors familiar with Airbnb. Airbnb has taken a number of steps to customize the platform to increase acceptance in the Chinese market: Airbnb developed an official Chinese name to express that it is genuinely embracing the Chinese market. Before this official Chinese name, Airbnb used the Chinese translation *Kong Zhong Shi Su* (空中食宿) which literally means 'food and accommodation in the air'. The new translation of Airbnb is *Ai-bi-ying* (爱彼迎) has a very positive meaning: 'Love (enables us) to welcome you'. *Ai* (爱) means 'love'; *Bi*（彼）means 'you' in Ancient Chinese; and *Ying* (迎) means 'welcome'. According to the official interpretation of Airbnb China, *Ai-bi-ying* means 'Let love embrace each other' (Airbnb, 2017). The webpage of Airbnb also includes a new feature – called *Story* – which allows the Chinese Airbnb users to share travel stories, and facilitates communication within the Chinese Airbnb community. This is also an in-circle marketing and promotion strategy. Furthermore, Airbnb signed strategic collaboration agreements with major cities in China; obtained venture investment in China; and entered a partnership with Alipay, the most popular online payment platform. The *Airbnb Traveling Save* interface enables guests to pay using Alipay and use a planning tool that calculates how much guests need to save per day to afford their next trip. The partnership with Alipay targets young Chinese customers (Guan and Wang, 2017).

Recommendations for survival and growth

To succeed in China, facilitators such as Airbnb need to ensure a number of things (Wang and Yang, 2017):

Understand guest needs

Network facilitators need to have an in-depth understanding of guest needs (Wang and Yang, 2017), including security needs and the need for respect and friendliness, which can be achieved through sharing photos and stories via social media platforms independent of the peer-to-peer network. For example, in 2015 Airbnb China registered an account on Douban, a popular social network platform. Airbnb set up a discussion group where it updates content such as Airbnb news and coupons, responds to inquiries, and encourages network members to share their experiences (Douban Forum, 2015). Existing social network platforms in China such as WeChat, Weibo, Douban, Baidu Post Bar, Renren, Tianya, and Zhihu are all effective channels to learn about guest needs.

Grow supply

Network facilitators need to grow supply in second- and third-tier cities popular with tourists because a larger pool of unused spaces is available in such locations (Wang and Yang, 2017). Currently, 75% of listings are in first-tier or semi-first-tier cities (Analysis, 2016; Sootoo Research, 2015). To grow supply, owners have to be convinced to make space available and welcome strangers to their homes. This is particularly challenging in smaller, more conservative cities (MPCAFF, 2016). The inconvenience of having to manage short-term rentals, and the fear of damage to the house, represent major obstacles for owners to turn long-term rentals to short-term rentals, although short-term rental is more profitable (Ikanchai, 2016). To overcome these hurdles, Tujia offers a housekeeping service (Yicai, 2014). Another obstacle is the belief in Chinese traditional culture that private space is for exclusive use by family. But with younger generations owning more properties, and with the sharing economy being embraced in the Chinese society, a growing supply side will be nurtured, and this cultural obstacle will fade away (MPCAFF, 2016).

Grow demand

Pricing, accommodation use habit, sense of safety, and service quality are the major challenges to demand growth (Analysis, 2016; Ikanchai, 2016; MPCAFF, 2016). The low price remains one of the key competitive advantages of peer-to-peer accommodation networks over hotel accommodation. Keeping the price low while providing additional value represents a key challenge. A survey of backpackers (Traveldaily, 2017) revealed that providing tips for local tours, local product shopping, and car rental were highly appreciated. As for use habit, research reveals that younger people born in the 1980s and 1990s are becoming the major market for peer-to-peer accommodation networks. This generation demands personalized products and services (Traveldaily, 2017;

Iresearch, 2017). Winning them and keeping them as loyal customers will be the key to future success. The confidence in the safely of the accommodation is essential to ensure demand. Xiaozhu introduced a smart door lock – using a numerical keycode send to the guest's phone before arrival – which increases security while reducing the inconvenience of physical key exchanges. Xiaozhu installs this device free of charge at listed properties.

Improving platform credibility

Network facilitators need to continue to improve their systems to ensure credibility of the platform and the network. Xiaozhu, for example, teamed up with Sesame credit, an independent third-party credit agency. Through cloud computing, machine learning and other technical solutions, Sesame can establish people's credit status. This credit system has been used for credit cards, consumer finance, financial lease, hotel, house renting, travel, marriage, information classification, student services, and public services. This collaboration allows setting up honesty and credibility files for hosts and guests, thus increasing credibility of the platform (Southcn, 2016b).

Conclusions

Airbnb has successfully entered most markets around the globe, making it the international market leader in commercial peer-to-peer network accommodation. China is not like other markets. Airbnb entered the Chinese market relatively early. Yet local companies imitating Airbnb's business model have developed to become strong competitors and offer travelers many more accommodation options to choose from than Airbnb. Airbnb has reacted by focusing on outbound Chinese travelers as well as international travelers to China.

To be successful in China, a peer-to-peer accommodation network needs good brand recognition and to offer localized product and service. This, in turn, requires a strong local team to assist with this customized development. Credibility is a major issue in China and may require the introduction of quality controls by facilitators. Some Chinese peer-to-peer accommodation networks achieve this by not only facilitating hosting, but also by serving as hosts themselves, giving them more control. They also provide professional housekeeping services to ensure quality. Collaboration with both local governments and local competitors is critical to the success of international peer-to-peer accommodation networks entering the Chinese market. Finally, a localized marketing strategy needs to be deployed which leverages local social media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat and other online platforms such as Douban and Zhihu, all of which are heavily used by young educated Chinese people.

Questions for future research

Within the Chinese traditions, the concept of sharing personal space with strangers is even more foreign than it is in the Western context, leading to many research questions for the future. How can sharing private space with strangers be reconciled with Chinese tradition? How can Chinese property owners be enticed to host? What role could peer-to-peer accommodation networks play in poverty alleviation? What role could networks play in increasing tourism activity in rural and regional areas of China? How can networks – which are by very definition highly decentralized – align with the centrally controlled nature of the Chinese economy? Will the 'master' learn from its 'apprentices' in China and copy some of the successful strategies introduced by Chinese peer-to-peer accommodation networks, including the provision of house-keeping services and taking on a direct hosting role?

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14

Effect on Employment

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Contingent (just-in-time, or gig) employment is on the rise in tourism and hospitality. People in contingent employment are not offered long-term contracts, but are called upon when needed. This chapter explores whether peer-to-peer accommodation networks are part of the problem or part of the solution. They create new challenges by increasing the competitive pressure on the established commercial sector, which leads to a reduction in jobs and a conversion of full-time to contingent employment. But they also offer new employment opportunities: without entry barriers, people can earn additional income by renting out spare space, and other opportunities – especially for a workforce trained in hospitality – are emerging as listing managers for hosts. These jobs may be particularly suitable to people traditionally struggling with full-time employment arrangements.

Work as we know it in tourism and hospitality is changing. The supply-and-demand dynamics of the labor market are shifting. Some highly skilled fields are experiencing dramatic labor shortages. Examples include revenue management (needing more revenue analysts, managers and directors of revenue) and data management (needing more 'big data' analysts, predictive analytics and data managers; Business.com, 2017). Other skilled fields experiencing labor shortages include website maintenance and design, customer engagement using social media, content marketing, digital marketing campaign design and distribution strategy. At the same time, the tourism and hospitality industry has an oversupply of low-skilled workers, such as bartenders, guest service

agents, housekeepers, door attendants, and parking attendants. For every such position becoming available, hundreds of applicants are not hired. This asymmetry in labor demand and supply in the tourism and hospitality industry has broad societal implications as workers close to minimum wage become financially constrained and experience serious poverty issues.

In addition, the relative number of long-tenured full-time employees is decreasing, while the number of occasional/part-time/seasonal workers is increasing. According to the US Government Accountability Office '40.4% of the U.S. workforce is now made up of contingent workers—that is, people who don't have what we traditionally consider secure jobs' (Pofeldt, 2015). Of those, 8% are on-call workers or agency temps. In comparison, the proportion of contingent workers in 2005 was only 31% (Pofeldt, 2015). Contingent workers are more likely to not have completed high school, to be younger and of Hispanic background. They do not enjoy the same workforce protections as full-time employed staff; earn less; enjoy fewer benefits; and consequently, rely more on public assistance (US Government Accountability Office, 2015).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the role of peer-to-peer accommodation networks in this changing employment environment in tourism and hospitality, which is increasingly characterized by contingent work, by just-in-time employment. Specifically, the question is asked whether peer-to-peer accommodation networks are part of the problem, part of the solution, or both.

Workforce trends in hospitality and tourism

Because of the increased proportion of people in just-in-time employment, the nature of the relationship between employers and employees is changing. Occasional/part-time/seasonal workers are not as loyal or as well trained and do not form an integral part of corporate culture. Consider Mary, a room attendant at an upscale hotel, and Sue, a part-time housekeeper at the same hotel. Mary has been employed for over a decade working as a house cleaner on the same floor. She knows the rooms like the back of her hand, the regular guests' quirks, needs, and wants; she is familiar with the new bedding systems with memory foam mattresses and hypoallergenic pillows; and she is current with all the subtle changes in procedures with the new turndown service. Mary also attends all the department meetings and training sessions. She does the afternoon turndown service that involves the removal of the bedspread, drawing the curtain, filling up the ice bucket with fresh ice, turning up mood lighting, and setting the radio on a specific soft music station, plus the thermostat on low fan setting in each occupied room. Sue is a part-timer called to fill in for room attendants if someone calls in sick, takes a vacation, or a section is short

staffed temporarily. She works different floors and different shifts as needed, and she cleans common areas such as the lobby or the locker rooms of the fitness center as well. She needs detailed instructions and close supervision. Sue does not participate in training or product and procedure updates; she does not attend workplace volunteer activities because she has another part-time job as caregiver at a retirement home.

Corporate structures are also experiencing a transformation. Hierarchical structures are becoming flatter as 'unnecessary' layers disappear because fewer staff work on a full-time basis with benefit packages. Based on a survey of 7000 human resource and business leaders, Deloitte (2017) derived a number of key trends, including the replacement of traditional hierarchies with teams. Particularly interesting is the contrast between the trend referred to as the 'gig economy' requiring managers to achieve outcomes with a workforce that is not on staff, and employees craving purpose in their workplace and needing to be 're-engaged and re-recruited' every day (Deloitte, 2017: 1).

The need to increase payroll efficiency and ensure maximum flexibility to respond to market changes leads to fewer staff. The model of flatter hierarchies with fewer long-term employees becomes viable because technological innovations and high connectivity enable offshoring, outsourcing, and automation of services. For example, a UK hotel chain's call center may be located in India or a US airline may have its 800 number answered in New Brunswick, Canada. Reservation calls and customer inquiries are handled more frequently by automated systems as voice recognition software has improved in recent years. Automated concierge, web check-in, and apps replacing humans for simple tasks – such as booking a restaurant table, finding out hours of operations – are growing, fuelled by the ubiquitous use of smartphones and tablets. Apps can enable a smartphone to become a room key, replacing front desk personnel who would check-in a new arrival, code and issue a key card, open a guestroom account and change a room status from vacant to occupied. All these tasks are automatic once the arriving guest grabs their smartphone and activates a code sent to them via text message. These examples of outsourcing, offshoring, and automation are consistent with corporate efforts to increase productivity, cost-efficiency, and as answers to growing pressures from investors to drive profitability. Further increases in productivity are due to improved forecasting tools that enable hotels, resorts, and restaurants to fine-tune staff scheduling to be in line with precise demand predictions. Work schedules are optimized by the hour, resulting in fewer working hours for staff, as well as fewer shifts and overall a smaller number of employees generating comparable revenue.

In parallel to these developments within organizations, new personal income generation models have also emerged which offer an alternative to

the traditional model of full-time employment. Today, a person can drive for Uber occasionally, rent out their spare room a few times a year, work on short-term contracts, and be on call if some extra assistance is required at an event. Entering the term 'earn money' in an online search engine leads to a wealth of suggestions for entrepreneurial individuals. Maragna (2014) shares ten unusual ways of earning some additional income: selling unneeded items on eBay; selling skills – anything that results in an electronic output that can be sent by email – on eBay; selling home-made art on iStockPhoto; creating a website or blog; renting out a spare room; selling things you make on markets; becoming a virtual assistant; becoming a mystery shopper; getting another job. Most of those recommendations rely heavily on the internet as a trading platform, suggesting that online trading platforms, including peer-to-peer accommodation networks, may offer a solution to the large contingent workforce. But do they really? Do peer-to-peer accommodation networks contribute to the problem of just-in-time employment? Or do they offer a solution?

Networks as part of the problem

The emergence and popularity of peer-to-peer accommodation networks is having a significant effect on the established commercial tourism accommodation sector. Competition is nothing new to commercial providers of short-term accommodation; it is part of their everyday business. Over the past few decades, hotels that offer reliable standardized products and services have increasingly faced competition from boutique providers of accommodation that offer more unique experiences to niche tourism markets. Yet competition by these traditional competitors had no major structural effect on the short-term accommodation sector because everyone still played by the same rules: all accommodation providers were businesses aiming at profit generation forced to comply with the relevant government regulations.

Peer-to-peer accommodation networks changed the rules. Efficient online trading platforms now enable individuals who are not commercial accommodation providers to make space available for rent. While this situation is common in the long-term rental market, it has – over the past decades – been a marginal phenomenon in tourism accommodation provision: holiday homes rented out by private people existed, but not on a scale representing a competitive challenge to the established commercial short-term accommodation sector (Chapter 6). Enabling individuals to make space available for rent easily and efficiently led to a rapid and sharp increase in the availability of alternative tourist accommodation options. According to Google data (Paolo, 2017) one in 10 leisure tourists used private accommodation in 2011; in 2015, every third did so. The business travel market is starting to embrace peer-to-peer network

accommodation, with 31% of Airbnb guests in the last two years having used it for business travel (Paolo, 2017). The rapid increase in both supply and demand of peer-to-peer accommodation has led to significant regulatory challenges for public policy makers who are concerned primarily with issues of fairness of competition, safety for guests, and protection of the long-term rental market for locals (Chapter 11).

The implications on employment in tourism and hospitality have not been a big part of public debate in the context of the emergence of peer-to-peer accommodation networks. They have also not been a major driver for public policy makers to change the regulatory framework under which the networks operate. Yet the potential negative consequences on employment in tourism and hospitality are significant:

1. Peer-to-peer accommodation networks compete with the established commercial sector at a growing number of locations. In some, the average hotel occupancy stays high (above 80%) even as networks flourish. In other locations, hotels struggle to increase occupancy, while statistics reveal that visitor numbers are growing and peer-to-peer networks are thriving. Under-served and well-supplied markets tend to show different impacts. As the competitive pressure moves from being limited to low-cost/low-standard to the entire range of commercial short-term accommodation, it is inevitable that some commercial providers will struggle to maintain their market share or may even lose share. Less business, in turn, may result in hiring freezes, less seasonal work, less or no overtime work, and smaller numbers of part-time positions.
2. Market uncertainly caused by the emergence and success of peer-to-peer accommodation networks increases the pressure of established commercial providers to keep their operations as flexible as possible to be able to react quickly to market changes. This, in turn, may lead to fewer full-time jobs and more causal employment in times of high demand. Although hotels require a base level of staff to keep operating and maintaining the service level hotel guests expect, minor downward adjustments are still possible. For example, the lifeguard at the pool can be replaced with a 'Pool Unsupervised' sign and the number of cleaners can be reduced by moving to models where bedlinen is only changed or rooms cleaned upon request. The challenge for established providers will be to identify in which areas replacing a permanent with a contingent workforce will not have major negative implications for guest satisfaction.
3. Hotels in certain locations and of a certain quality standard will be outcompeted by peer-to-peer accommodation networks. Especially at risk are, for example, economy hotels in downtown locations, which will be forced either to close down or to adjust capacity. Some hotels in

Toronto, Ontario, Canada have already converted entire floors or – in some cases – the entire hotel (the former Colony Hotel) to become student residences because downtown university residence capacity was insufficient. Another example is that of The Bradgate Arms hotel, which is now a retirement home. A Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Toronto has been closed and knocked down, to be rebuilt as a condominium residence building. Such transformations are likely to lead to job losses, especially if the alternative accommodation type is less labor-intensive and positions are eliminated as a result.

4 Hotels choosing to compete with the pricing of short-term accommodation available on peer-to-peer networks may have no option but to achieve this by reducing staffing levels to remain profitable. Some of the services currently provided may no longer be offered, others may be replaced by technological solutions such as self-service in-room amenities (e.g., coffee makers, safety deposit boxes); self-service food and beverage (e.g., vending machines for snack and beverage sales); or robotic concierges to assist with basic inquiries at reception.

O'Regan and Choe (2017:166) argue 'the Airbnb marketplace … undermined hard-fought protections and regulatory frameworks for those working in the accommodation sector'.

Networks as part of the solution

Some of the benefits of peer-to-peer accommodation networks include that tourists have more choice when booking a place to stay; the number of unique places to stay has increased; multi-generation travel – where a few families spend their vacation at the same accommodation together – has become more viable both in terms of the spaces available and the affordability of those spaces (Chapter 18); tourists – and with them tourism revenues – can be brought to regional and rural areas in which it is not profitable for hotels and motels to develop tourist accommodation; tourists may be able to experience the destination in a more authentic way given their close interaction with locals; and social benefits reported by both guests and hosts (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016) of meeting and interacting with interesting new people.

While the potential of peer-to-peer accommodation networks for stimulating entrepreneurship both at the global and local level has been pointed out (Chapter 7), the potential positive effects on employment in the tourism and hospitality industry have not been discussed in detail to date. A few such positive impacts may be the following:

1 Peer-to-peer accommodation networks offer a simple way to supplement income. The barriers to entry are low and, currently, most countries do

not require an accreditation process or impose other burdensome regulatory requirements on renting out private space. As such, peer-to-peer accommodation networks have the potential of serving as a security net for the increasingly large contingent workforce. In a comparison of the '10 most lucrative side-gigs' Airbnb emerged in leading position, earning hosts in the US who had applied for a loan, $925 per month on average (Draper, 2017).

2 As a consequence of structural changes across a range of industries, many middle-class jobs were lost. People who worked in low-skilled jobs all their life were close to the last decades of their income-earning years, but found themselves unemployed (for example, because of their factory closing down) have significant difficulties finding new employment. Monetizing a spare room or a whole house can become a lifeline.

3 Graduates of hospitality colleges may have difficulties finding suitable jobs. Without practical on-the-job experience, graduates will not find employment at supervisory or junior management level. Becoming entrepreneurial is a possible solution. Instead of looking for corporate positions, they can become hosts or make available their knowledge and skills in hospitality to the growing number of individual and commercial hosts on peer-to-peer networks. Some individual hosts like earning extra money by renting out spare space, but do not like administrating this process. Examples include a gentleman from Spain who managed 25 units at a resort town; a couple who had a successful home rental business in the mid-west and a retired lady from Canada who already had a vacation property and was considering buying more for renting out, among others. These are retired people the first author met at a conference. They welcomed the peer-to-peer accommodation rental opportunity as a way to earn supplemental income and stay socially active. They loved meeting people from other places and helping them to make their visit memorable by offering their local knowledge (Chapter 15). Despite welcoming the opportunity to rent out their properties, they did not necessarily enjoy the burdensome tasks associated with it. Consequently, they were willing to pay for outsourcing this work (Chapter 7). The commercial investors market has even more potential. Purpose-built accommodation for distribution on peer-to-peer accommodation networks is becoming more common and, with it, the need of investors to have staff to manage rental operations. The opportunities in this rapidly developing niche market are significant as investors generally employ managers to coordinate and supervise multiple units for one or – on occasion – more hosts. Managers oversee bookings, arrivals, turnovers, cleaning, and re-supplying, as well as coordinating repair and maintenance needs of the properties listed on peer-to-peer accommodation networks.

Conclusions

The emergence and success of peer-to-peer accommodation networks have had a profound effect on the tourism accommodation sector. Given that the sector is highly labor-intensive, this has major flow-on effects on employment in hospitality and tourism. This chapter explored whether peer-to-peer accommodation networks are villains or whether they are merely change agents creating challenges and offering solutions.

Key challenges created by peer-to-peer accommodation networks in terms of tourism and hospitality employment include fewer employment opportunities in the established commercial accommodation sector due to: reduced demand for these services; short-term accommodation providers being unable to compete with peer-to-peer networks moving out of the business; providers trying to match peer-to-peer accommodation pricing and cutting expenses to protect profits by reducing the service level or replacing staff with technological solutions; and replacement of full-time permanent positions with demand-dependent contingent-employment.

Key opportunities resulting from peer-to-peer accommodation networks include an avenue for earning money without entry barriers. This may be of particular benefit to the aging workforce which has loyally worked in full-time employment in industries such as manufacturing, but also tourism and hospitality. With more and more factories shutting down, and technology replacing humans for the provision of standardized tasks, peer-to-peer accommodation could become a lifeline for some. The emerging demand for managers of rentals listed on peer-to-peer accommodation also offers significant opportunities to graduates of hospitality colleges and universities that have the knowledge and skills required to run hospitality services, but may find it challenging to enter at managerial level in the hotel industry. Finally, people whose life circumstances make it challenging to fit into the rigid structures of organizational employment (for example, primary carers of little children) may find that the money earning opportunities offered by peer-to-peer accommodation networks – be it as host, supplier to hosts, or manager of listings for hosts – make it easier for them to actively participate in the workforce.

Questions for future research

A number of research questions in the area of employment in the hospitality and tourism industry emerge from this chapter. What is the extent to which established operations offering short-term accommodation have to downsize or close down because peer-to-peer networks? Which types of short-term accommodations in which locations are most affected? How many employees

lose employment? How many hosts are currently outsourcing support services and – with it – offering employment opportunities? How many hosts would consider doing this in future? Is the growth in multi-unit ownership and/or management substantial enough to become a viable self-employment model in its own right? Is the nature of these jobs, which are effectively support services for peer-to-peer accommodation network hosts (Chapter 7), more suited to groups within society that have traditionally struggled with rigid full-time employment models, such as primary carers of young children? Is the nature of these jobs particularly well suited for the younger, tech-savvy generations who have grown up connected, communicating and transacting mostly online? Is public perception of the desirability of different kinds of employment shifting: do people still desire full-time employments which comes with an expectation of permanence, or do they increasingly prefer money earning opportunities which allow them maximum flexibility and freedom in terms of when and where they work? Is it necessary to reconsider career planning for students of hospitality and tourism programs in light of the emergence of peer-to-peer trading and the lack of stability of employment in the traditional hospitality sector? Do educators need to introduce more entrepreneurship and innovation focused courses into the hospitality and tourism curriculum?

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15

Members in Peer-to-Peer Accomodation Networks

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Not all guests are the same. Not all hosts are the same. In this chapter, typologies of hosts and guests are proposed. The key dimensions of classifying hosts are how important earning money, befriending people, and living an ethical life are. The key dimensions for guests are saving money, meeting people, having an authentic experience, and finding accommodation that caters to their unique needs. We suggest that each host or guest is a mixture of those pure types and, optimally, compatible hosts and guests can be matched.

Members of peer-to-peer accommodation networks are called *guests* – when they are seeking short-term accommodation – or *hosts* – when they are making space available for short-term rental. Networks do not differentiate between different types of hosts and guests. Yet variability is one of the defining features of peer-to-peer accommodation networks (Chapter 1). Variability among guests means that people searching for short-term accommodation have different needs and, consequently, different offers are required. Variability among hosts means that facilitators of peer-to-peer accommodation – such as Airbnb and its competitors – need to interact with hosts differently: some just want to use the trading platform, others want to engage with other hosts and are grateful for the facilitator giving them recommendations about how to become a better host.

This chapter explores variability among hosts and guests. Using key characteristics, we develop typologies and derive implications for network members, facilitators, or networks.

Reasons for hosting

A number of studies have investigated the reasons for trading on peer-to-peer accommodation networks. Financial motives have repeatedly been identified as key drivers of hosting (IPSOS, 2013; Holte and Stene, 2014; Hamari et al., 2015; Glind, 2013; Stors and Kagermeoier, 2015). Deale and Crawford (2016) found that respect between guests and hosts, meaningful relationships, and having access to resources required to participate on peer-to-peer platforms were of key importance to hosts. A study of Australian hosts (Karlsson and Dolnicar, 2016) asked hosts the following question: ''Please tell us your main reasons for renting out your property?' Three key areas emerged: income, social interaction, and sharing. Many hosts mentioned income, although they did not formulate it in the same way a commercial enterprise would formulate it. Instead of talking about profit or return on investment, Airbnb hosts in Australia talked about what the additional income could help them with, including paying their bills, making ends meet, paying off an investment property, but also affording a little bit of luxury they could not usually afford. Social interaction also played a key role for many hosts, who mentioned that they enjoyed meeting people as well as the social interaction. And, although most peer-to-peer accommodation networks are about trading, not sharing space (Chapter 2), many hosts mentioned sharing as a driver for hosting, listing reasons such as using space that would otherwise be wasted, but also sharing the beauty of the place in which they live.

Our interviews with hosts revealed a variety of reasons for engaging in Airbnb, mostly confirming motivations revealed in prior studies. Many hosts listed a small number of key reasons for hosting. Long-term hosts often reported that their initial reasons for engaging in hosting shifted over time as the platform or their experiences changed. Three main categories of reasons emerged: money, people, and ethical reasons. The following quotes illustrate how hosts view money as a driver of hosting:

> I built my first Airbnb on my property as I did my homework and worked out it would be a great source of income for my family. It went so well we bought the block. I cashed in my superannuation to do it. Now I am building eco-friendly accommodation up there. I have bought it to help me in my retirement.

> Money is the primary reason, but it is closely followed by the opportunity to meet people from different countries, cultures and race, and introducing them to our way of life. As former homestay hosts (1999–2009) of international students, we've always found the experience a positive one.

For many hosts – often those aged in their 40s or 50s who lived alone or who had recently been through a life change such as a divorce or children leaving home – people were a main driver for hosting. Friendship and the opportunity to connect with people played a central role:

> I started after I returned from walking the Camino de Santiago in 2011, when I was 51 - I had met so many wonderful people from across the world on there, that I wanted to welcome people into my own home and city to help them discover it at a personal level, and I also wanted to keep connected with travelers and people living different lives... The money was a small part as I kept my rates very low.

For some hosts, the original vision of the Airbnb platform aligned with their own ethical beliefs around the use of underutilized resources and formed a primary reason for them to engage in this peer-to-peer network:

> Initially this was my number one motivation… an ethical or political motivation, to support the sharing economy, sharing assets and facilitating lower cost travel in recognition that our economy is bound to slow down.

Overall, it can be concluded that a wide range of factors motivates hosts, and that each one of the factors has a different importance to different hosts. This insight forms the basis our proposed host typology.

A typology of hosts

The most obvious grouping of hosts is into purely commercial providers and 'ordinary people' who make unused or underutilized space in their homes available to other 'ordinary people'. Some peer-to-peer accommodation network platforms – such as Couchsurfing – accept only hosts who are genuine peers of their guests. Others – such as Airbnb – allow hosts who are not peers to the guests to offer space on their platforms, enabling commercial providers to use the network as a distribution channel. The European accommodation network facilitators 9flats and Wimdu reported in 2014 that about one-third of their hosts were professional real estate agents or hospitality service providers. This third of commercial hosts accounted for the majority – approximately 80% – of 9flat's revenues (Böschen, 2014). The differences between these two types of hosts are significant: professional hosts – those offering more than one property on Airbnb – earn 17% more in daily revenue, have 16% higher occupancy even if the price and the number of days the space if available for rental are the same (Li, Moreno and Zhang, 2015).

This dichotomous host typology does not capture the full variation between hosts. Using three of the key factors motivating hosting, we propose that there

are three core types of peer-to-peer accommodation networks hosts – illustrated in Figure 15.1: *Capitalists, Befrienders,* and *Ethicists.*

Figure 15.1: Pure host types: *Capitalist*, *Befriender* and *Ethicist*

Pure *Capitalist* hosts want profit; they want maximum return on investment. They use peer-to-peer networks as distribution channels. Their hosting behavior focuses on maximizing profit margins for long- and short-term financial gain. They are not attached to the spaces they are renting out and view damage as a business expense. They have no interest in socializing with guests; they are not interested in communicating with other hosts. *Capitalists* are not concerned about assessing the risk of individual booking requests before confirming them.

Pure *Befrienders* have a desire to socialize. They like to meet people and extend their social circle. They may welcome the money, but are likely to host independently of whether or not they are receiving a payment in exchange. They want to interact with guests before the booking is confirmed, meet them upon arrival, and maybe catch up and chat with them during their stay. It is important to them that the needs of their guests are met, and they are more than happy to provide information and recommendations to guests. *Befrienders* may also enjoy interactions with other hosts, although this is not necessarily the case, socializing with guests stands at the center.

Pure *Ethicists* desire to live an ethical lifestyle. Their behavior is guided by the principle of ensuring sustainability through all facets of their life, including space utilization. They feel strongly about their membership on peer-to-peer accommodation networks and get quite upset if the actions of the facilitator do not align with their value system. *Ethicists* are likely to interact with other like-minded hosts, and the most likely of all host types to form neo-tribes around their hosting activity (see Chapter 20).

Of course, the pure types as illustrated in Figure 15.1 and described above are not common. Usually, hosts are a mixture of each of those pure types. Chapter 17 provides insight into the thinking of a *Capitalist-Ethicist* host; typical

Couchsurfing hosts appear to be *Befriender-Ethicist* hosts (Decrop et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2017); and the quote below is from a *Capitalist-Befriender* host:

> Question: What are the reasons that you are hosting on Airbnb?
>
> Response: Reaching other markets, potentially overseas customers, to our holiday home.
>
> Question: What is the primary reason?
>
> Response: More customers.
>
> Question: If earning money is one of your reasons, what do you use the money for?
>
> Response: Paying rates and other bills on the property, as well as the mortgage, and general income for the family.
>
> Question: Do you get enjoyment from hosting on Airbnb? In which way?
>
> Response: Yes, I like the personal connection to 'strangers' and hearing about their trip.

The typology above relates to the primary driver of participating in peer-to-peer accommodation trading. But there are also other aspects which differentiate between different types of hosts, such as the way in which they manage tasks relating to hosting. Some hosts are happy to take recommendations from the network facilitator about settings, such as the minimum number of nights guests have to stay or the recommended price, and are willing to accept *Instant Book* (Chapter 1) which allows guests to book without an assessment of the booking request by the host. Other hosts like to maintain full control over all aspects of their listing.

Reasons for using peer-to-peer accommodation

Just as with hosting, people who search for tourist accommodation and choose peer-to-peer accommodation do so for a number of reasons. Tussyadiah and Pesonon (2016) argue that travelers use it because of two primary reasons: desire to meet people and a desire to save money (Liang, 2015). Offering accommodation at a lower price than established commercial providers is possible for hosts because fixed costs are already covered, labor cost for providing the space is low, and peer-to-peer accommodation networks typically only charge if a booking is made (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). Tourists who use network accommodation also like to live like locals, to experience an 'authentic' homestay style experience, and to feel welcome (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2017). At the center of Airbnb's marketing strategy stand uniqueness and belonging (Liu and Mattila, 2017), which is reflected in online discussions:

> It's like staying with relatives rather than going to a hotel- it takes away from the traditional touristy places and lets us see the real Tasmania.
>
> I travel a lot and I get bored of generic hotels. I like the idiosyncrasies of different Airbnb places that changes between properties and countries.

Our research revealed another driver of using peer-to-peer networks: the possibility to find a space that is suitable for one's unique accommodation needs. For example, multi-family travel (see Chapter 18) requires a substantial amount of space which has both common areas and private areas for individuals of individual families to retreat. Such travel needs are not catered for by the established commercial accommodation sector. Here is how a user summarizes the advantages of using peer-to-peer network accommodation (To Travel & Beyond, 2016):

> **Traveling with a group.** When you are going somewhere with a group of people, or even 4+ it is really nice to all be in the same place. It can be frustrating to book several hotel rooms, and hope that you are all nearby or on the same floor
>
> **Great for unique places.** If you are traveling somewhere that has the option for a really unique listing, I would be more inclined to go for it. For example when Annie stayed in a treehouse…
>
> **See a different part of town**.… often nice to stay in a lesser known area…
>
> **Price but only sometimes.**… you might find a really good deal if you look hard enough. In relation to traveling with a group, it will likely be cheaper for everyone to share the price of a house.
>
> **Location.**…These are locations where people are more likely to live...

Consequently, we see four key factors motivating guests: saving money; meeting people; wanting to have an authentic experience rather than staying in a generic hotel room; and finding accommodation that caters to the unique needs of the travel party. These drivers form the basis of our guest typology.

A typology of guests

Using key factors that have emerged as drivers of guests using peer-to-peer accommodation networks, we propose that four core types of guests – illustrated in Figure 15.2 – exist: *Cost savers*; *Socializers; Localizers*; and *Utilitarians*.

Pure *Cost savers* want to save money. They use peer-to-peer networks as an avenue for booking low-cost accommodation and keep their vacation budget

low. They are willing to stay a little further away from the main attractions, and are willing to forego luxury and surplus utilities in the accommodation, if that reduces accommodation cost. *Cost savers* are not interested in meeting people; have no special requirements in terms of the nature of the accommodation; and do not care about having an authentic vacation experience. They are heavy users of filtering functions on peer-to-peer accommodation network platforms because they allow them to identify the cheapest place to stay. They have no particular loyalty to the network. If a hotel or motel is cheaper, they book that instead.

Figure 15.2: Pure guest types: *Cost saver, Socializer, Localizer* and *Utilitarian*.

Pure *Socializers* want to meet people. They may be traveling alone using peer-to-peer networks as a means to stay with other people in order to feel safe. Or they may be driven to stay with others in order to feel like they have met local people and therefore understand the culture in more detail. Highly social, these guests chat via the peer-to-peer platforms prior to their arrival and spend time with their hosts during their stay. Money, amenities, and utilities are not key drivers for these guests. They may use free platforms such as Couchsurfing.

Pure *Localizers* want an authentic experience. While they may be interested in meeting local people, their strongest desire is to stay in a place that is truly representative of the way that people live in the culture they are visiting. They want to immerse themselves in the local culture, assimilate, and become one of the locals for the duration of their stay. The architectural look and feel of the place they are staying in is integral for these guests. Their desire to stay in an authentic place takes priority over meeting their host or the cost of the accommodation they are using.

Pure *Utilitarians* want accommodation that suits their specific needs. Large family groups or multi-generational travel parties (Chapter 18) are prototypical *Utilitarians.* They want to spend some quality time together. To do that they need a large property with a joint central living area and enough bedrooms and bathrooms to ensure the desired level of privacy. But they could also be travelers who bring their pets along; travelers who are committed to keeping their

vacation as environmentally sustainable as possible (Chapter 24); or travelers who have a disability and need an accommodation that has all the features they require to make it usable and safe for them (Chapter 22). *Utilitarians* choose accommodation that fits their purpose. Other factors, including price, authenticity, and the potential to meet people, are secondary to them.

Like hosts, the pure guest types illustrated above are not common. Usually, guests are a mixture of each of those pure types.

The perfect match

The benefit of understanding differences between hosts and differences between guests is that it allows better targeting of messages from the facilitator of the network to those guests and hosts most interested in the relevant aspects. Another benefit is the possibility of matching hosts and guests. Complaints of guests against hosts or hosts against guests are very common and often due to different understanding of what trading space on peer-to-peer networks means, as the following quotes from two different hosts illustrate (Quora, 2017):

> Yes, in some cases hosts would rather leave a lock box with the keys rather than meet in person with the guests.
>
> Talking takes time and people… most hosts like talking to interesting, personable people.

Neither of the two approaches is right or wrong, but a host not interested in meeting guests will disappoint guests who enjoy meeting new people as a central feature of their peer-to-peer accommodation network booking experience. Equally, very chatty hosts may annoy guests who want nothing else but a safe place to sleep. Optimally, we are hoping for a good match between host and guest. Some of the dimensions used to construct the typologies are relevant to both hosts and guests, such as money and people. Others cannot be directly matched because the need of the guest is reflected not in host characteristics but in the features of the space available for rent. Figure 15.3 proposes a possible way of matching hosts and guests.

As can be seen in Figure 15.3, we have a guest (solid line) looking for authentic accommodation with some unique features. Money is not a priority and they like meeting people, but this is not critically important to them. We can also see two hosts (dashed and dotted line) and the spaces they are listing. Host #1 is not a *Capitalist* and rates medium high as a *Befriender*. Their space is unique and highly authentic. Host #2 is a pure *Capitalist* and does not care about any other aspect of trading on peer-to-peer accommodation networks other than money. Their space is not unique and not authentic. In this hypothetical scenario, the match of the guest with host #1 is much better than that with host #2.

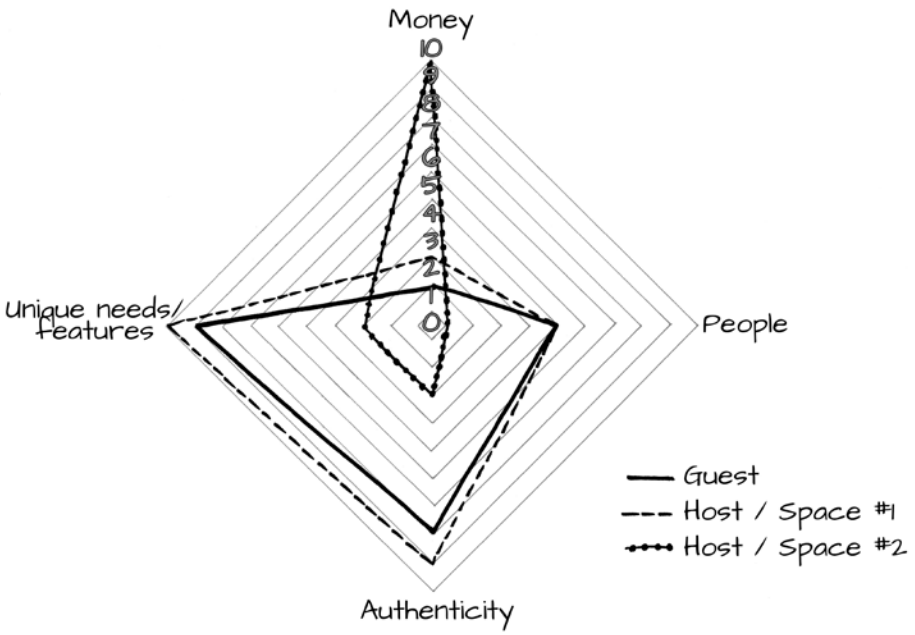

Figure 15.3: Finding the perfect guest–host match

Of course, peer-to-peer accommodation networks use very sophisticated approaches to offering guests what their past booking and searching behavior suggest they will be interested in. These algorithms are likely to be limited to attributes captured automatically on the platform. Yet a good match of host and guest at the level of their motivations is likely to increase the experience of both when trading on peer-to-peer networks. The match could be based on a few questions network members answer. The type could be displayed using a symbol on the profile, similar to the Superhost status symbol. So when a *Socializer* looks for accommodation they may want to look for *Befriender* hosts.

Conclusions

Unlike traditional hotels that offer generic products to specific travel segments, peer-to-peer networks offer a wide variety of products to their potential guests. While this diversity caters to a much broader range of travelers, the risk of a dissatisfying experience is far higher amongst peer-to-peer networks, if the type of host differs from the type of guest they are catering to. This chapter has introduced a variety of guest and host types trading on peer-to-peer networks. The perfect match will occur when guests stay in places offered by hosts with similar motivations and offerings.

However, this is not as easy as it sounds, because not all hosts and guests have singular motivations. Guests may be primarily seeking to save money, but also have a desire to stay in an authentically designed accommodation, and have contact with hosts. Large family groups may require many rooms, may like it to be authentic, yet may need affordable accommodation. These multiple desires of both hosts and guests complicate the ability to engineer a perfect match, and consequently have the potential to create unsatisfactory peer-to-peer network experiences.

The key for hosts and guests, therefore, is to communicate their style of hosting and 'guesting' in their profiles to mitigate this issue. Facilitators of peer-to-peer networks could ask their guests and hosts to indicate their value along the matching criteria in Figure 13.3, or a more comprehensive list of motives, to allow guests and hosts to check whether the profile is a good fit or not.

Questions for future research

This chapter proposed a simple framework to classify peer-to-peer accommodation network members. The guest and host types in this chapter are auto-ethnographical; they resulted to a large degree from the authors' hosting experiences. The framework can serve as a basis for survey research exploring the relevance and importance of the factors proposed in our typologies. Based on data from such a survey study, an empirical taxonomy could be derived which would provide insight into which of the theoretically possible types of guests and hosts actually exist and how high their share is among members of peer-to-peer accommodation network members.

Understanding host and guest types and their frequency of occurrence could serve as basis for a better matching algorithm offered by the facilitators of online platforms enabling peer-to-peer trading. It could also be used by facilitators to target their direct communication to both guests and hosts. A host who wishes to maintain full control over all aspects of their booking, for example, is unlikely to appreciate offers such as automatic pricing and *Instant Book*. On the contrary: it is likely that such direct messages would upset this kind of host who may, ultimately, choose to switch platform.

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16

Love-Hate Relationship between Hosts and Airbnb

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This chapter explores the love-hate relationship of some hosts with Airbnb. The Airbnb Host Forum in Tasmania (Australia) serves as the case study. The hosts who participate in this forum are passionate about their involvement on Airbnb, and advocate for it and its deregulation in their home state. But their passion goes well beyond vocally advocating for peer-to-peer accommodation networks. Like tiger salamanders, these hosts will turn on the facilitators of the online platform and attack them just as quickly as they will support them. This chapter explores this love-hate relationship and asks why hosts bite the hand that feeds them.

'I love AirBnB'(Lok, 2017)
'Omg i hate airbnb' (Natalie, 2016)

Peer-to-peer accommodation networks would not exist without facilitators of online platforms such as Airbnb. A large number of facilitators have tried to establish peer-to-peer accommodation networks, but Airbnb has claimed market leadership in most countries, with the exception of China (Chapter 13). The success of Airbnb is due to a range of unique features its platform offers, which distinguishes it from those of its competitors (Chapter 1). Among these unique features are support communities or support forums which are hosted on the Airbnb webpage and enable hosts to meet, share their experiences, and help one another. Forums are designed around specific topics, such as

improving the guest experience; dealing with guests who are troublesome; introducing new products; and environmental sustainability.

In addition to these topic-centered forums, support communities have also been set up for hosts whose listings are in the same geographical region. Just like Apple's Support Communities, host forums were probably established to strengthen the host community while reducing the need for (costly) Airbnb staff to assist. The reliance on this mechanism is substantial. To date there is no publicly available Airbnb help desk phone number for hosts or guests to call if they have a problem. Forums have therefore become crucial for hosts being able to resolve issues and share information.

However, some forums have taken on a life of their own. This chapter follows the Tasmanian Airbnb Host Forum that was originally located on the Airbnb app and is now located on Facebook as a closed group. Our observations of this group have allowed us to witness both intense passion and support for Airbnb, as well as a 'rage against the machine' mentality playing out in reaction to some aspects of Airbnb management. The intensity of these emotions and cohesive strength of this online community – a neo-tribe in its own right (Chapter 20) – is evidenced by its continued existence despite significant disruptions.

Members of host forums

It is important to remember that not all Airbnb hosts join support forums. Rather, hosts who are members of host support forums represent a highly specialized group of hosts; they are particularly dedicated hosts who are frequently the *Ethicist* type as described in Chapter 15: hosting on peer-to-peer accommodation networks is a central activity in their lives, they manage their own listings and typically interact with guests. Consequently, for these hosts, the Facebook forum provides a safe and relatively non-public environment where they can read, share information or coalesce as group when they perceive advocacy to be required. Many forum members have hosted accommodation on peer-to-peer networks for a long time, and are the pioneers of Airbnb in Australia. The presence of long-term hosts on forums has allowed these individuals to assume leadership roles, acting as administrators and advocates for Airbnb; leaders of resistance to change; and advocates for a return to what they regarded as the original, more accessible Airbnb.

The high level of emotions that hosts on support forums display in their discussions aligns with previous research findings that early adopters often feel strong emotions in the use of innovations (Wood and Moreau, 2006). Within these forums, it is important to note that not all members are highly vocal and passionate early adopters. Some members assume the role of listen-

ers (Crawford, 2009). These are forum members who read the posts and pay attention to the content, but do not comment on posts and do not have a public presence. Our research used a combination of netnography – observing and recording forums posts (Kozinets, 2002) – and in-depth interviews of hosts to elicit the reasoning behind their intense love and hate of Airbnb.

Love

The positive emotions hosts feel towards Airbnb is often strong and stems from many years of involvement in hosting on peer-to-peer accommodation networks. To some hosts, Airbnb now represents a key activity in their lives; their love is not just the result of Airbnb providing additional income which allows hosts to pay bills and take holidays themselves. For many, Airbnb has become a vocation and passion that provides a means through which they can meet people:

> I live by myself… I love meeting interesting people, the pocket money, love using it when I travel to stay in wonderfully rich and different and local places.

> Gaining perspective from another individual from a different walk of life is insightful. You get to realize how different, yet how similar everyone is. Airbnb is helping create friendships that would have never existed, and very few social platforms allow you to create a personal and meaningful connection with someone who lives 10,000 miles away.

For other hosts, whose motivations may be more entrepreneurial, their love of the platform is driven primarily by financial reasons:

> I love the income. I have bought a second investment property as my superannuation so I love Airbnb because it gives my family an extra income stream.

These differing reasons for their love of the platform are explored as motivations for hosting in Chapter 15.

The Tasmanian Airbnb forum illustrates the role a group of hosts can play when advocating for the continued protection of peer-to-peer accommodation networks. During 2016, as the Tasmanian government debated the legalization and regulation of Airbnb, the host support group encouraged other members to rally together and oppose regulation. During this time, many posts updated members on debates in the media, alerted them to press releases and public meetings and called for assistance when needed.

> Hi Hosts, so we are working intensively on getting submission lodged…and any help counts.

This advocacy was supported by Airbnb – which actively encouraged network members to lobby for favorable legislation (O'Regan and Choe, 2017) – and ultimately resulted in the government shifting the Tasmanian draft policy from limiting Airbnb hosts to rent out the properties for more than 42 days to a more generous policy, which required only properties with more than four rooms in the hosts house and listings which were not the hosts primary residence to be accredited (see Chapter 11 for details).

Through this forum, hosts have also advocated for the acceptance of Airbnb as an integral part of the mainstream tourism industry. In early 2017, the group lobbied Tourism Tasmania for an increased presence on the state government's marketing website. This process was successful and resulted in Airbnb hosts being allowed to list their accommodation on traditional tourism websites, such as Discover Tasmania:

> Ok as they say in the vernacular here: total result from Discover Tasmania .we can now list!!

In addition to acting as an advocacy group, the forum can also take the role of a protector of Airbnb, particularly when threatened by other network facilitators. It is not uncommon for discussions to emerge over the relative merits and pitfalls of competing online booking platforms which facilitate peer-to-peer hosting, such as Stayz, and Booking.com. But almost without fail, there is evidence of a strong allegiance to Airbnb.

> I only use Airbnb as I do it in line with its initial intentions as a sharing platform – not as an accommodation business.

The forum also acts as a watchdog for the business performance of Airbnb in Tasmania. Occupancy is a common topic of conversation. Often around Christmas or Easter, hosts will compare their occupancy rates across regions. Members who have positioned themselves as spokespeople for the group often ask for updates on occupancy, either out of interest or to pass onto media.

> Hi Folks. Urgent feedback required please. ABC Journo has called asking how Airbnb is going during Dark Mofo, essentially are we full?... I said I'd get back to her having 'taken the pulse' of your feedback. Thanks, guys.

The strong emotional connection hosts feel with the Airbnb brand are evident, particularly amongst the pioneer Airbnb hosts who originally met online when the forum was located on the Airbnb app. These strong connections are likely to be the result of a deliberate campaign by Airbnb to actively foster

brand connection, because fostering of brand connection via support communities has proven to be an exceptionally successful strategy used by large companies such as Apple and Microsoft.

The subsequent migration of the forum members to Facebook in defiance of the changes made to forums by Airbnb in 2015 was most certainly not a development Airbnb would have actively encouraged. Airbnb would most likely have preferred Tasmanian hosts to interact with one another using the Airbnb-managed website. Yet the fact that Airbnb hosts have continued to interact, support each other, share experiences, and lobby to protect interests of Airbnb is a sign of a very strong community or neo-tribe (Chapter 20), as are the high levels of emotions that are displayed on the forum. Hosts on the Tasmanian Facebook Airbnb Forum love hosting, they love Airbnb, and they love being part of the forum.

However, the level of emotions is not only high at the positive end of the emotional spectrum. Emotions run just as high at the negative end: when hosts who feel that hosting on peer-to-peer accommodation networks is central to their life get upset about something, they get really upset, and their love can quickly turn into hate.

Hate

The Tasmanian Airbnb Host Facebook forum at the center of this chapter has developed into a hotbed of resistance. A 'rage against the machine' mentality regularly shines through posted comments. The genesis for this may have been reactions against two Airbnb initiatives: censorship and closing down an app.

Censorship

The first Airbnb initiative which prompted a reaction of defiance among hosts on the forum was automated censorship of forum content. On the original host forums which were accessible through the Airbnb app, hosts were prevented from sharing phone numbers, such as that of the Airbnb headquarters. To overcome this, hosts on the forum devised a system to bypass what they perceived as an increasingly impenetrable organization. For example, the phone number 6222 0049 would be described as 'Six Three number Twos, Zero and that again plus a four and nine'. Similarly, if forum members wanted to refer to social media platforms whose names were also censored, they would use codes to alert other members to their existence. Facebook, for example, would be referred to as 'the platform beginning with an F'. Once the Tasmanian group migrated to Facebook, automated censorship was no longer an issue. This was celebrated by the new group members:

> … being frank in an Air BnB forum is going to be difficult since it would no doubt be content moderated – we can voice our opinions freely here without fear or favor.

Closing down forums on the app

The second act of defiance was in 2015 when Airbnb closed down all host forums on their app and moved them to a separate webpage. Hosts on the group we follow did not support this decision, perceiving it as an attempt by Airbnb to exclude their voices. In defiance of this move, they created a closed Facebook group for hosts in Tasmania. The independent platform enabled hosts to continue their discussion and relationships with fellow hosts.

Since migrating to a Facebook forum, rebellion has reignited for other reasons. Many pioneer hosts feel that Airbnb has become increasingly inaccessible. For these pioneer hosts, Airbnb is a community, a neo-tribe that they are part of (Chapter 20). This community, in their view, is made up of like-minded people. Hosts are just as important as the founders of Airbnb and all the paid staff at Airbnb. With Airbnb growing exponentially, the neo-tribe is expanding too fast for the founders or even staff to be able to play the role of peers to all hosts. Hosts on the Tasmanian Airbnb Host Forum are very upset about this; they feel Airbnb has lost its distinct identity which they were so much attracted to initially. And it is this very distinct identity which drives many hosts – not only those who are members of forums – to make available space to strangers. Hosts we talked to commented that most of the things they hate about Airbnb relate to how Airbnb has changed over the years.

> I am concerned about the scale they are now reaching, and the reduced level of attention/personal support that the Host community now seems to receive from the company.

Moreover, many long-term hosts do not feel the love from Airbnb, instead feeling that their efforts of offering unique tourism experiences are not appreciated and not recognized:

> There seems to be little recognition of having been longtime host … the floodgates have opened and there are pretty shonky operators out there now, many properties managed by agents etc, ...[it is] becoming something it was never intended to be (i.e.it started as rooms in a person house, with the person there - but now seems to be holiday apartment letting).

A common theme on the host forum is that of returning to the origins of Airbnb when founders, hosts and guests were a tight-knit community. This is a sentiment Airbnb may have acted upon when announcing the development of

more than 1000 host clubs around the world by the end of 2018 (Airbnb, 2017). Host clubs are led by hosts for hosts and allow the local host community or local Airbnb neo-tribe (see Chapter 20) to physically connect to one another. The introduction of clubs is welcomed by members of the host forum, who view it as an opportunity to revise some of the aspects of hosting on Airbnb which they used to enjoy so very much:

> The latest announcement from Airbnb re Host Clubs and their new commitment to hosts in general. Very positive. They are trying to get back to where they listen to us.

The forum's reaction to this perceived decline in accessibility was to create pinned posts on the Facebook forum that share the direct contact details for Airbnb. Normally, if hosts have a problem with their listing or with a guest, they cannot simply call Airbnb. Rather, they must either direct message Airbnb via Twitter or use the Help Centre on the Airnb app that directs the user to FAQs and encourages them to take action that does not involve direct contact with Airbnb.

Another topic that is regularly discussed on the forum is that of the Airbnb market being saturated. Forum members with a long history of hosting on Airbnb often discuss declining occupancy as more and more Tasmanians use or invest in space for Airbnb.

> Saturation...mentioned in a post today… you bet! It has literally died… like a switch being turned off. Oh well it was good whilst it lasted. I wonder how Airbnb will react to this.

The issues that draw the most emotive responses, however, are changes made by Airbnb to their platform. Airbnb regularly adapts aspects of its platform, as well as offering new support services to hosts. These can include price tips or individualized alerts to hosts, letting them know that they could attract more bookings if they would reduce the price or make the space available for shorter bookings. These services are communicated to hosts via email. Hosts on the forum generally do not perceive these tips as helpful. Rather, they view them as attempts by Airbnb to control them and reduce their power:

> So here's the thing: with zero new bookings on the horizon I tried the price tips (not sure if it is the smart pricing setting my floor price so that it wouldn't be silly as their suggested pricing is) and lo and behold I got an 8 day booking in March, which gave them my weekly price anyway. Coincidence? I think not my fellow landladies/landlords.

Interestingly, host support services even elicit emotions among hosts who do not have as high an emotional attachment to their peer-to-peer accom-

modation network. A common reason for resisting the Airbnb suggestion is that hosts have made a conscious and reasoned decision for setting their own price and minimum booking nights, so the offers of support by Airbnb are regarded as a nuisance and spam. Many hosts – especially those who have a strong attachment to the space they are making available for rent – like to be in the positions to choose the guest that will be staying at their place and know exactly which booking characteristics they need to look out for to protect their property (Karlsson et al., 2017). They do not like to hand over control to automated systems on the peer-to-peer accommodation network platform.

Glitches also prompt highly emotive responses, particularly when they cause process failure. In one case, the automatic function on the Airbnb app that prevents same-day bookings failed, meaning that hosts had to accept instant bookings with as little as two hours' notice. This caused considerable angst amongst hosts, who aired their frustrations on the forum.

Such posts are often followed by other hosts on the forum offering suggestions on how the problem could be addressed. Occasionally, however, frustrations escalate and hosts attempt to draw in Airbnb employees to voice their concerns, by tagging them in posts. In most cases, tagging Airbnb staff does not result in a direct response from the Airbnb staff member, further fueling the rage against the machine.

The seeds of hosts' love and hate for Airbnb in Tasmania

Tasmania is a small island with a population of only 519,000 and is widely known to be a very tight-knit community (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In recent years, tourism has grown rapidly in the state, and it is now a major tourist destination, welcoming 1.26 million visitors each year (Tourism Tasmania, 2017). Tasmania's popularity as a tourist destination has led to considerable accommodation shortages in recent times; much like the situation experienced in Slovenia (Chapter 9). Airbnb has played a significant role in alleviating these shortages, explaining its rapid growth in Tasmania. Since its genesis in 2008, Airbnb has grown to having 777 listings managed by 564 hosts in 2017. The rapid growth has had positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, the possibility of listing underutilized space on Airbnb for short-term rental has created great opportunities for micro-entrepreneurship and employment (Chapters 7 and 14) which, in turn, has had a significant impact in a small regional state where unemployment is high.

For established commercial accommodation operators, the market entry of Airbnb represents a less positive development. These operators have to pay accreditation fees, insurance premiums, and comply with accommodation

regulations. The emergence of an unregulated platform that enables anyone to list space for short-term tourist accommodation continues to pose a significant threat to the hospitality sector. Much antagonism now exists between the traditional tourism industry and new businesses that have emerged by leveraging peer-to-peer accommodation networks such as Airbnb.

In addition to challenges to the tourism industry, the high demand for peer-to-peer accommodation has created difficulties for the long-term rental market in Tasmania, which has suffered a shortage of affordable accommodation in recent years, like many other locations around the world (Chapter 11). Airbnb has been accused of being the key reason for the shortage, triggering emotional discussions among the general public and in the media (Eccleston, 2017). As a consequence, regulations have been put in place in Tasmania which require council approval for listing stand-alone properties on Airbnb (Chapter 11).

As a result of this highly emotional and widely publicized debate, there is a certain amount of trepidation in declaring oneself as a host on a peer-to-peer accommodation network, with many reporting negative feedback from friends:

> Every time I say I am doing Airbnb people say to me 'you and the rest of the world'.

The negative reaction from the general public further strengthens the connection and solidarity among hosts on the Tasmanian Airbnb Facebook host forum, and explains the strong emotions this neo-tribe experiences when matters relating to Airbnb are being discussed. It also explains the very negative feelings hosts on this forum have when they perceive Airbnb to not be supporting them. In their view, Airbnb would not work without their efforts, they have to defend themselves for hosting on Airbnb, and are perceived as part of the 'dark side' of the tourism industry; and consequently, they publicly defend and fight for Airbnb. Inevitably, they feel let down when Airbnb does not support them and emotions run high.

Love and hate by individual hosts

A very specific forum of Airbnb hosts stood at the center of this chapter. This last section looks beyond highly involved and engaged hosts and illustrates how emotions run high also among the general population of hosts. Most of the negative emotions expressed are related to the perception that the peer-to-peer accommodation network has not treated the host fairly:

> I am extraordinarily unhappy and feel unprotected and violated by Airbnb during my last few resolution calls. (Airbnbhell, 2017a)

The level of emotion perceived in such situations seems even higher when hosts feel that they have always done the right thing by the network and all its members. Maybe the most painful experience is when status signifiers, such as Superhost status, are being taken away (see Chapter 20 for the critical role of status signifiers in neo-tribes) as illustrated in the following quote:

> I have been a quiet, law-abiding Airbnb host for quite a few years now. I have tolerated, after agreeing to an Instant Booking, being warned that I shouldn't say 'no' again (I only did once) and, if it happened again, I would be listed lower in the search results and potentially scrapped altogether. I have also quietly accepted being told with great fanfare that I was suddenly a Superhost complete with virtual badge and then told I was no longer a Superhost essentially because of one iffy review by a very difficult man who arrived very late, left very early, and hadn't read or realized that we were rurally located. (Airbnbhell, 2017b)

> I'm an Airbnb host and I'm falling out of love with Airbnb. I'm an Airbnb host – a recently crowned 'Superhost' if you don't mind – and I have a relationship problem. After being smitten with Airbnb for years, I'm considering breaking up with the global travel behemoth. (Ham, 2017)

But hosts who are not organized in forums do not only express negative emotions about peer-to-peer accommodation networks. A lot of love exists also among individual hosts, as these quotes illustrate:

> My love for Airbnb excites me to talk and share more about them. (Chandak, 2017)

> My love for Airbnb began a few years ago when I began renting out my spare bedroom to a bevy of travelers hailing from Russia to Italy and beyond. We shared stories, laughs and talked travel. With the proceeds I had my own adventures, often staying in other Airbnbs. I loved that you could still trust people with your home, and vice versa. (Ham, 2017)

Not only do individual hosts feel similar emotions about peer-to-peer accommodation networks, they also engage in advocacy. Below is the introduction to a host essay on why Airbnb is so lovable:

> I've recommended AirBnB to family, friends and travelers alike, but I still get questions from people who seem dubious of the whole concept, so today I thought I'd write about my experiences using AirBnB and why I love it as a host. (Chandak, 2017)

Conclusions

Peer-to-peer accommodation networks have opened the door to anyone in the world being able to make their spare room or holiday home available for short-term rental; this may include a spare room, a treehouse in the backyard or just a piece of land for tourists to put a tent on. This phenomenon has developed beyond the marginal to the mainstream. And with its rise, emotions have also risen: emotions by established commercial accommodation providers who feel let down by policy makers; emotions by residents who find themselves competing with tourists when looking for a long-term rental; emotions by the general public; and emotions by the pioneering peer-to-peer accommodation hosts who love hosting, yet struggle with the speed with which the nature of hosting is changing. Such emotions represent yet another area where peer-to-peer accommodation networks push the boundaries.

Questions for future research

Peer-to-peer accommodation network hosts forums have not been studied much to date, yet they offer deep insight into all aspects relating to hosting on such networks. Hosts on these forums are experts; they know their network inside out; they single-handedly manage their properties, and, as a consequence, know all the positives and all the negatives better than anyone else. They also know exactly how every little aspect of the network platform works and, therefore, represent a rich source of feedback for improvement. Future research should study more forums; investigate whether the nature of discussions among hosts on forums differs across geographical regions and across platforms hosting these, especially Airbnb-operated versus independent platforms. Another questions is how small the community of these extremely involved hosts is, and whether – with commercial operators entering peer-to-peer accommodation networks at a rapid rate – these hosts may end up feeling so disenfranchised with their current networks that they may choose to de-list and instead make their space available for short-term rental with an alternative network that better reflects their values as a host; the values of what they remember as 'the good old Airbnb'. If this happens, will large, successful peer-to-peer accommodation networks turn into one-stop online travel shops (Chapter 8), while other peer-to-peer network facilitators will fill the gap of an 'idealistic' neo-tribe which – while trading space for money – enjoys the social aspect and the fact that vacant space can be put to good use?

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17

New Guests and the Socialization Process

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One of the key reasons hosts are willing to make available their spaces to total strangers on peer-to-peer accommodation networks is that they can assess the risk of each booking before confirming it. A key aspect of the risk assessment is the evaluation of the guest's peer-to-peer accommodation network curriculum vitae (P2P-CV, Chapter 1) which consists of the full set of reviews hosts have written about the guest. Having a strong P2P-CV increases the chances of successfully booking space on peer-to-peer platforms. But how do people who have just signed up – newcomers, rookies, 'Airbnbabies' – get their first review? How are they socialized as members of a network that relies so heavily on the personal evaluation of one another? This question stands at the center of this chapter.

I was sitting in an airport lounge in China waiting for my flight when I received a text message telling me that someone – let's call him Kevin – wanted to book our family's beach shack. My first thought was the same as always when I get a booking inquiry: 'Oh, no, not now, the timing of this is just horrible!' I was waiting for my flight. The flight takes nine hours. I was going to land at home on Saturday morning and was looking forward to spending some quality time with my family. I really did not want to deal with booking inquiries right then. But the inquiry came though the Airbnb platform, and Airbnb forces me to make a decision within 24 hours. My 24-hour window was going to close in the middle of my Saturday family dinner. If I did not accept or decline the booking inquiry by then, I would be punished because my calendar would be blocked, preventing other people from booking during that particular time. 'All right then,' I thought while I got myself another drink and some peanuts, 'I will be a good girl and obey Airbnb.' I launched the Airbnb website to have a look at

Kevin's inquiry. The first thing I saw was Kevin's profile photo that looked much like the one in Figure 17.1: three happy young men drinking beer.

Figure 17.1: Kevin's Airbnb profile picture as I recall it

'Oh boy', I thought. 'It's not looking good for Kevin!' I do not have any prejudice against young people, men or beer, or the combination of all three. I am most certainly not a person who would discriminate against anyone. But I could not help thinking of our lovely holiday shack by the beach where we have spent so many happy holidays with our kids and hosted so many family reunions. Would those young men treat our much-loved beach shack with the respect it deserves? Then I thought to myself: 'I should really not judge the book by its cover,' and moved on to the written booking inquiry:

> Hi Sara. My friends and I are looking for a week away near the beach and close enough to the stadium as we are going to the Cricket Test Match. We have done a few trips together and have never had any issues. Looking forward to hearing from you. Kevin :)

The booking inquiry did not really help Kevin. He was suggesting that he would come with seven (SEVEN!) of his mates to attend a sporting event, making the profile picture with the young men and beer bottles look tame in comparison. I know that peer-to-peer accommodation networks are a preferred provider for large groups of friends (Poon and Huang, 2017), but I felt I could not take the risk. I could not risk damage to our shack. I did not expect them to cause damage maliciously, but when people have enough beers things happen. I could also not risk straining my relationship with the neighbors. A few months ago my neighbors had to call the police when the 'family with two children' which booked the house turned out to be a large group of young adults with a significant supply of alcohol and a very large stereo. Having refreshed this memory, I decided to decline Kevin's request because I had no information that would give me confidence that Kevin and his friends would treat our house with care and our neighbors with respect:

> Hi Kevin, Airbnb forces me to accept or decline in 24 hours. I could not find any reviews about you as a guest and we have unfortunately had bad experiences with large groups of students in the past. Once the police had to be called and the neighbors were pretty upset. I just cannot take the risk of this happening again, I am very sorry. Best wishes, Sara.

I did not feel good about sending this email. After all, Kevin was new to Airbnb, he probably had no idea what he was doing, and he most certainly had no idea how I felt. Kevin had no host reviews, no P2P-CV (Chapter 1). He had not even made the effort to introduce himself in his brand new Airbnb profile. I had nothing to base my risk assessment on (Karlsson et al., 2017), except a picture of three guys drinking beer and the information that eight young male guests would spend a week watching the cricket. I just could not risk it. I decided to let it go, when I received the following email from Kevin:

> Hi Sara, We aren't studying. We all work full time but respect your decision nonetheless. Thanks, Kevin.

He respects my decision? Wow, nobody ever respects my decisions! I tried to convince myself that I had made the rationally correct call on this booking and that I am not going to let a little bit of respect change my mind. He respects my decision? And he tells me that *after* I rejected his booking request? Most people would not respond at all. Or they would write something rude. But Kevin told me he respected my decision. I was really impressed. Maybe I had misjudged Kevin. Maybe he was a really nice guy who was just new to Airbnb and had no idea how to interact with other network members. It was just not fair to punish him for being an Airbnb rookie. 'OK,' I thought, 'I have to give him the benefit of the doubt'. I replied:

> Hi Kevin, You have been so polite in your emails I cannot not respond. Unless I did not fully resolve my Chinese internet issues, you must be new to Airbnb. If so, just a bit of feedback: there were no reviews about you as guest and you did not include any information about yourself in the profile. So all I could go by was the picture. The house is our family's holiday home so we are protective of it. I suspect many others renting out homes on Airbnb feel the same. You would increase your chances of booking requests being successful if you provided a bit more background about yourself and your travel party. Maybe a different photo would help also… I am afraid the photo affected me a lot because it was all I could go on. Best wishes, Sara.

Sure enough, only a few minutes later I received Kevin's reply:

> Hi Sara, Thanks for the advice, I have already updated my profile. First time user clearly. Cracking photo though! Thanks again and obviously if you change your mind please let me know. Kevin.

Updated the profile? Let's check it out! Well, Kevin had not really updated his profile. I still could not read anything about him, but I did see that he had a university degree. He also updated his profile picture, which now looked a lot like that shown in Figure 17.2 featuring Kevin and his girlfriend without beers. What a lovely photo!

Figure 17.2: Kevin's new Airbnb profile as I recall it.

He might be a good guy after all. But I still did not know for sure. After all, he would not spend time at our beach shack with his lovely girlfriend. But he was very polite for a young man. I am a middle-aged women and am generally intrigued by the way young people interact with one another. I am impressed if young people are polite, respectful, and can write a few sentences without any typos, grammatical errors or acronyms. Clearly, I was warming to Kevin. He had let me know that he was still keen to come, but he was not being pushy. Very impressive. Despite the fact that the conversation had taken a turn for the better, my perceived risk had still not decreased. But I felt Kevin really deserved another chance to convince me that my fears were not justified, so I wrote:

> That's a much better picture, Kevin! Why don't you put a bit of information about yourself in the profile. You've finished your degree, what are you doing now? Do you love cricket? You can write text into your profile so Airbnb hosts learn a bit more about you and develop trust. Once you have a first good review from a host your profile will not matter so much anymore, but now that's the only source of information about you for hosts.
>
> In terms of our house: …Did you read all the information? By default you bring bedlinen. Can I trust that you will enjoy beers with your mates without annoying the neighbors or damaging anything?

Boarding a plane now, will check emails again when I am back in Australia. Best wishes, Sara.

That was the end of that conversation for me. I really did have to board my flight then. I was not unhappy about that; it gave me a bit of time to rethink the booking inquiry. I am the type of host (Chapter 15) who rents out the family holiday home in order to be able to afford having it. The income from renting out the house does not cover the mortgage repayments, but it does cover operating costs, such as council rates and insurance, as well as general maintenance and repairs. So using the typology proposed in Chapter 15, I am probably a *Capitalist* host with an irrationally high amount of *Ethicist* in me. I really have no interest in befriending guests; I keep interaction to the bare minimum required to make a risk assessment.

My perfect match is the *Utilitarian* guest type (Chapter 15) who is not keen on interacting with me either, specifically families with many children or multi-family travelers. Hosting this type of guest satisfies my capitalist needs of earning enough money to be able to afford our holiday home. It also satisfies my ethicist needs because it makes me feel all warm and fuzzy that our beach shack – which is all about happy family times – will make another family happy and enable them to spend quality time together at affordable cost. When I receive bookings of this kind, I hardly communicate with the guests at all. I only make sure it is clear to them that we are not a commercial accommodation provider. That is important to state, because some people arrive with unreasonable expectations: a few years ago we built a little cubby house. Nothing special, just a few pallets nailed together, a few flat stones as a floor, and an old bench inside. Our children loved it; they spent hours decorating it and setting it up as a coffee shop where they were serving the most delicious pretend coffee with pretend cake. Years later, our children still love their coffee shop, but some families were unimpressed because the cubby house had not been professionally constructed. As a host, I cannot influence people's perceptions of the house. What I can do, however, is to manage their expectations before they arrive.

Anyway, Kevin was clearly not the perfect match, given the host type that I am. But that's where my ethicist host tendencies stands in the way of rational business decisions: it just did not seem fair that I would decline Kevin's booking just because he was young, male, wanted to spend some time with his friends and liked cricket and beer.

After my nine-hour flight I arrived at home, enjoyed some quality family time and eventually checked my emails. I was not under time pressure any more because I had officially declined Kevin's booking. I could reactivate it, but

I felt no sense of urgency. Booking accommodation is not a matter of life and death, after all. Kevin wrote:

> Hi Sara, Haha the Mrs will be pleased to know. I've added a brief description about myself. I currently do internal sales for an electrical wholesaler. Basically selling products to electricians in a nut shell. But management is what I'll be trying to make a career of.
>
> I'll be with 7 other friends I met at university. We all separated a bit after we graduated because some went interstate and even internationally for work but we always meet together for a week away at the end of the year. And we are all cricket fans so we booked tickets to the Test match …
>
> Yeah we have had a really good look at it and it looks beautiful. We will easily accommodate bedding and can bring our own linen. This is our fourth trip away and we have never had any issues so I can guarantee this one won't be any different. We have all lived out of home since we left high school so we are used to living in houses with close neighbors.
>
> Really appreciate the reconsideration though Sara. Kevin.

The ethicist in me was delighted. 'Sure,' I thought,' I will never be able to know with absolute certainty that nothing will go wrong.' I remembered the neighbors calling the police. You just never know for sure, do you? Kevin seemed like a good guy. He did not lie to me about who is traveling with. He did not lie to me about the purpose of his visit. He did not even attempt to hide the fact that he and his mates love drinking beer. It was just not right to decline his booking.

> Hi Kevin, Happy for you guys to stay at our beach shack. I will send you some more information on Tuesday and then we can go ahead and lock it in formally. Best wishes, Sara.
>
> Hi Sara, Thank you so much for the opportunity! My friends and I are so excited to be able to used your house for the week! Really appreciate it! Kevin.

Socialization

I learned a lot from my interaction with Kevin. Peer-to-peer accommodation networks are a form of neo-tribe (Chapter 20), where people follow certain social conventions (Sundararajan, 2014). Kevin made me realize that not all network members have the same understanding of those social conventions.

People who have only just entered the network, who are knocking on the door of the neo-tribe, know very little about unspoken rules and rituals. They do not understand what is going on in the host's head when they assess a booking inquiry. They may totally misjudge the interaction and treat is as a purely commercial exchange. Most in danger of not complying with unspoken rules are new members. They enter untrained. Nobody explains to them how to behave, how to interact, how to communicate.

I am not the first one to have identified this phenomenon, of course. It is called *socialization,* and the Oxford Dictionary defines it as the 'process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society' (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). Society can refer to society as a whole. But families, neo-tribes and organizations are also social structures in which socialization occurs.

Organisational socialization 'focuses on how newcomers adjust to their new surroundings and learn the behaviors, attitudes, and skills necessary to fulfill their new roles and function effectively as a member of an organization' (Saks et al., 2007: 414). A number of socialization tactics have been proposed which managers can use to help newcomers adjust to their new workplace (Van Maanen and Schein, 1977). They are classified using six bipolar criteria: the collective versus individual criterion specifies whether the socialization of a newcomer occurs in isolation from others or in a group setting; the sequential versus random criterion specifies whether there is a set process which newcomers follow step by step or whether socialization occurs randomly; the fixed versus variable criterion specifies if socialization follows a time schedule or not; the serial versus disjunctive criterion specifies whether the newcomer is assigned a mentor who guides and serves as a role model or not; and the investiture versus divestiture criterion specifies whether the uniqueness of the newcomers is embraced by the organization or whether the organization wishes to remove uniqueness from newcomers as they join. The current socialization process on Airbnb can be described as individual, random, variable, disjunctive, and investiture.

But how does the way in which a newcomer is socialized affect their functioning as a member of the neo-tribe or organization they are entering? A large number of studies have investigated this question empirically (e.g., Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Morrison, 2002; Allen, 2006). According to a meta-analysis of 30 studies that investigated the effect of a range of socialization tactics on indicators of adjustment by new staff members, institutionalized socialization has a number of positive effects: it reduces role ambiguity, role conflict and intentions to resign, while increasing job satisfaction, the perception of fitting with the organization, commitment to the organization, performance in the job, and inclination to preserve the status quo (Saks et al., 2007).

It could be concluded from the theoretical body of work into organizational socialization that peer-to-peer accommodation networks should be much more proactive in socializing new members. Rather than hoping that a host will take pity on a new members and explain to them the social expectations around peer-to-peer trading, the network could take on that role. In so doing, the random, variable and disjunctive socialization could be transformed into a sequential, fixed and serial process. The potential benefits of such a process would be substantial: vigorous socialization leads to a better fit of the new-comer's value system with that of the organization (Chatman, 1989), increases commitment to and the likelihood to stay with the organization and work satisfaction (Saks et al., 2007) and socialization through mentoring improves performance as well as developing positive and satisfying relationships with other network members (Allen et al., 1999). The lack of socialization of new members in peer-to-peer accommodation networks, on the other hand, can lead to substantial frustrations among hosts.

Host reactions to 'Airbnbabies'

Host reactions to new network members vary. Since Kevin, I communicate differently with guests who have no P2P-CV (Chapter 1). I explain the rules to them, train them, help with their socialization into the neo-tribe by explaining who I am, why we as a family host and welcome strangers into our much-loved family holiday home, and what I am worried about when I let strangers stay in our house. I also explain that the house is not commercial accommodation and that the cubby house has not been constructed by a builder. Here is what I wrote recently to a couple who wanted to stay with their children and grandchildren:

> I noticed that you have not booked using Airbnb before. So I just want to make sure you know how it works: we are NOT commercial accommodation providers. We are just an ordinary family. The house is our family holiday home, it is very dear to our hearts. We only rent it out so we can cover the annual expenses associated with the house, such as council rates, maintenance, insurance etc. It is important for us to have confidence that guests will treat it with the same care they would treat their own holiday home. Also, this means that we do not provide hotel-like services. So the garden and the house will be cleaned before you arrive, but not during your stay. The cubby house you see on the pictures is not professionally constructed; we built it ourselves together with our children.
>
> I am raising all of this upfront because I want to make sure that you understand how this works so you are not disappointed in any way

when you arrive. After all it's a very special time with your family, you want it to be perfect!

I should say that we are particularly happy to host families like yours because our beach shack is also the place where our kids spend their special time with their grandparents, aunties, uncles, and cousins.

Please do let me know if you have any other questions at all.

Maybe I have the luxury of socializing new members because I only accept about ten bookings a year. Getting the house ready for a booking takes a lot of time. I have to communicate with potential guests and then – before each check in – I have to organize for a gardener, and a cleaner, and a local maintenance man to ensure everything is working. That takes time and money. Weekend bookings would cost me more than I earn renting them out, which is why I only accept bookings for four days or more. And during the winter months – despite that fact that the price drops by 50% – nobody goes to the beach. So, on average, I get ten week-long bookings. Other hosts have back-to-back bookings all year; they may not be as attached to the property they are renting out, or it may be at their premises, so they can make sure when the guest arrives that they will behave themselves. In any case, not all hosts react to new network members in the same way I do. In fact, people who have just signed up to peer-to-peer accommodation networks are the topic of an ongoing conversation on Airbnb discussion groups, where one host wrote the following:

I am soooooo over newbie guests on Air Bnb. They do not even have the courtesy to read anything you send them to give them vital info, explore the site, look at anything. Would be great (not holding my breath of course) if Air Bnb sent them a mail the instant that they book giving them a guide to being a good GUEST!!!

This host has clearly had a number of bad experiences with new network members. They feel disadvantaged by new network members not understanding the rules of engagement. They feel it is the responsibility of the network facilitator to socialize new members and explain what is expected of them. Another reason hosts dislike 'Airbnbabies' is that they treat the review process similarly to that of reviewing commercial accommodation. But the review system in these networks is fundamentally different (Chapter 1). Here is how another host describes the challenge:

it's official ... I hate First Timers. They are great when they first arrive, they 'oooh' and 'ahhh' at all the wonderful things you have set up for them to ensure their comfort, they wax lyrical about the amazing apartment and how you went out of your way to make them

> and their children's trip… the best ever and there is NOTHING you could do to improve the experience and then they give you a 4 STAR rating because a) 'i don't give 5 stars to anything' or b) 'It's not a 5 Star Hotel'.

This host also feels that they are paying the price for letting new network members – who do not understand behavioral expectations on the network – stay at their place. In their view, the facilitator should put in place processes to protect them from this exposure. A negative review can have a major impact on future bookings. Hosts are reluctant to let anyone book who has a high *a priori* likelihood of writing a bad review. Accepting a booking request from a new network member comes at a very high risk of a review that is unreasonably negative due to the guest's misunderstanding of the role the review process plays in the network. Other hosts, while understanding the risks, are more positive:

> There is a level of trust involved when hosting newbies, and one keeps their fingers crossed. We just ask a few more questions about them and where they've traveled to and how many people are coming to stay. We definitely would help with setting newbies up with Airbnb and make it a positive experience for them as well. Again, it's a sharing economy and we like to 'share the love'.

Conclusions

A peer-to-peer accommodation network is a neo-tribe (Chapter 20), a social entity which has formal processes, but also unwritten rules of engagement. Network members expect to interact with one another in a certain way. Breaking with these conventions upsets those members whose behavior is most aligned with neo-tribal expectations. New members are most likely to break conventions. Host reactions vary substantially. Some take the time to socialize new members by explaining to them some of the rules of engagement. Others refuse to accept bookings from new members as a matter of principle, leaving it to other members or the facilitator to induct them into the neo-tribe. Yet another group of hosts, those who are most involved, call for the network facilitator to make structural changes to improve the induction of new members. They feel that network processes and procedures should help new members learn how to behave in the network before they lodge their first booking inquiry.

There are substantial potential benefits in introducing a more formalized socialization process that is: sequential in nature; follows a predetermined time schedule, ending before the first booking inquiry is lodged; involves an experienced network members as mentor; yet remains investiture in that it does not

expect the newcomer to blend in at the expense of giving up individuality. It could lead to the network maintaining its character to a higher degree, and to members enjoying interactions more and developing a higher sense of commitment and loyalty to the network. These would be desirable outcomes not only for the network facilitator, but also for the existing and new members.

Questions for future research

This chapter was primarily introspective. But with more and more neo-tribes emerging as a consequence of a wider range of online platforms, the induction of new members becomes a major issue and a central topic for future research. Does the way in which a new member gets inducted determine their attachment and loyalty? Can weak processes of inducting new members lead to hosts getting so frustrated with the network that they move to a different platform? Can network facilitators put processes in place that make the induction of new members automatic, preventing them from lodging their first booking request before knowing what other network members' behavioral expectations are? Does the induction of members determine the very nature of how the network will develop in future? For example, if the induction emphasizes the community and ethical aspects of the network, will purely capitalist host members exit? Do network members actually agree on behavioral expectations in networks?

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18

Peer-to-Peer Accomodation Networks and Multi-Family Travel Groups

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This chapter explores the potential of peer-to-peer accommodation networks to cater to a market segment with very specific requirements in terms of the size and setup of short-term tourism accommodation: multi-family travel. Hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and even resorts typically offer rooms of different sizes, but rarely spaces large enough to allow two or three families to spend their holidays together. Many listings on peer-to-peer accommodation networks have not been developed for tourists; they have been developed for families. As such, they are uniquely suited to cater to this market segment.

'Family vacations are becoming a multi-generational affair' (Airbnb, 2017)

A recent survey of family travelers commissioned by Airbnb found that 34% of family travelers – parents with children under 18 – travel with grandparents, making the family vacation a multi-generational family vacation; 20% go on family vacations with friends and their families (Airbnb, 2017). Multi-family travel – be it with grandparents, aunts and uncles, or friends and their children – have one thing in common: the need for large spaces. In fact, half of the family travelers who participated in this particular survey indicated that they required accommodation that allowed multiple families to stay together in one place (Martin, 2017).

In the 2011 TripAdvisor survey of US travelers, 37% of respondents indicated that they planned to take a multi-generational family trip in 2011 (TripAdvisor, 2011). According to Preferred Hotel Group (2014), multi-generational travel represents half of all vacations taken by both grandparents

and parents. Expedia reports that one-third of Australian travelers have undertaken a multi-generational trip, and observes that there has been a dramatic increase in searches for family hotel rooms online (Expedia, 2016). According to a survey in 2003 by Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown, and Russell – a travel-marketing agency in Orlando – eight out of ten vacationers took at least one trip with extended family or friends during the past five years (Hospitality Trends, 2003). Some argue multi-generational travel is the number one travel trend of 2017 (Virtuoso, 2016; Williams, 2017).

This chapter explores the market segment of multi-family travelers and assesses the potential of peer-to-peer accommodation networks to cater uniquely well to this segment. Multi-family travel here refers to more than one family traveling together. The families can be related, but do not have to be (Kluin and Lehto, 2012). They could also be, for example, two couples traveling together with their children.

Multi-family travel

In the academic literature, multi-family travel has been investigated and discussed under different names including: *multi-generational travel* (Lago and Poffley, 1993; Kleeman, 2014), *family reunion travel* (Lago and Poffley, 1993; Yun and Lehto, 2009), *intergenerational travel* (Kang et al., 2003), and *extended family travel* (Schänzel and Yeoman, 2014).

Multi-generational travel – where parents, grandparents and children travel together – is growing rapidly (Kleeman, 2014). The growth is due to changes in demographics, including migration, longevity and lower birth rates (Pederson, 1994; Schänzel and Yeoman, 2015). With more families living geographically apart because of migration, and more healthy and mobile baby boomers becoming grandparents, and with children at the center of attention, there is an increased desire to spend quality vacation time together (Lago and Poffley, 1993; Schänzel and Yeoman, 2015).

Family resorts are observing an increase in extended families using resort facilities for reconnecting the family during vacation time (Brey and Lehto, 2008). As a consequence of this trend, family resorts have been modifying amenities to cater specifically to the needs of this market segment (Brey and Lehto, 2008). Yet overall, tourism businesses could cater better to the demands of family reunion trips (Schänzel and Yeoman, 2014).

Family reunion travelers are driven by four motivations (Yun and Lehto, 2009): to enhance family interconnections (to feel close to each other); to enhance family communication (to spend time with immediate and extended family); to improve family adaptability (to share experiences and understand

other members' roles); and to improve the stability of family relationships. A family reunion travel motivation scale has been developed on the basis of these insights (Kluin and Lehto, 2012). The scale measures the following dimensions: family history and togetherness; immediate family cohesion; family communication; and family adaptability. Values on this scale, as well as the size of the travel party are associated with the leisure activities families engage in on their reunion trip; larger travel parties participate in more organized activities (Yun and Lehto, 2009).

Multi-generational travel parties want accommodation that is 'sensibly priced, and furnished with a large common area with four, five, even six sleeping rooms clustered about' (Lago and Poffley, 1993: 37); 64% want wireless internet; 49% want a pool or a spa bath; and 40% want the place they rent to have a kitchen (Airbnb, 2017). Another thing that is central to a multi-generational trip is to create memories. Families want 'a reunion memento without leaving out any member of the family to produce it' (Lago and Poffley, 1993: 37).

A profile of multi-family travelers

We conducted a survey study to learn more about multi-family travel in order to assess the role of peer-to-peer accommodation networks in catering to this market segment. We collected data from 506 Australian residents who had either been on a multi-family trip in the past (n = 447) or wanted to undertake one in the future (n = 59). Respondents were accessed through an online research panel company; invitations went to a representative sample of the Australian adult population.

People who have been on a multi-family trip before

Of those respondents who had been on a multi-family trip before, the largest fraction (59%) reported that leisure and recreation was the most important purpose, followed by spending time with family and friends they are traveling with (47%), and with those living at their destination (31%). Only a few respondents mentioned other purposes, such as health and medical care, education and training, and business. Less than 1% mentioned that attending a family event – such as a wedding, birthday, or funeral – was the primary purpose of their multi-family trip.

Most respondents (42%) reported that the multi-family trip they took had a duration of between one and two weeks; 37% stayed for less than one week; 10% between two and three weeks, and 11% longer than three weeks. The average number of people in the travel party was 7.4 (median = 6), and 28% of respondents indicated that the travel party on their last multi-family trip included children.

Examples of travel party composition provided by respondents include: 'my daughter and her boyfriend', 'mum, step dad, best friend, kids', 'parent, brother, sister, nieces & nephews & their respective partners', 'daughters, son in laws and grandchildren', 'sister and her family', 'husband, daughter, cousins', 'my parents, my uncles, my aunties, and my cousins', 'myself & my wife plus my son & his family', 'my husband, two married children and 5 grandchildren', 'husband, mother, father, brother, my children, nephew', 'wife, sons, their partners, brother and sister in law', 'myself, partner, 2 kids, my best friend and her husband and 3 kids'.

Table 18.1 shows the travel motivations relating to the multi-family trip in order of frequency. The top travel motivations are to rest and relax and to spend quality time with the other families in the travel party. This confirms the central importance of strengthening connections among family members (Yun and Lehto, 2009) on multi-family trips.

Table 18.1: Travel motivations

Motivation	Important to
To rest and relax.	90%
To spend quality time with the families I am traveling with.	90%
To create life-long memories joint with the families I am traveling with.	82%
To feel safe.	80%
A variety of fun and entertainment.	79%
To feel closer to my immediate family.	77%
Change to my usual surroundings.	74%
Cosiness and a familiar atmosphere.	60%
Not to exceed my planned budget for this holiday.	59%
Excitement, a challenge, a special experience.	57%
Unspoilt nature and a natural landscape.	56%
Many entertainment facilities.	48%
Not paying attention to prices and money.	48%
For everything to be organized so I do not have to worry about anything.	47%
Cultural offerings and sights.	45%
Catering to my children's needs.	44%
Luxury and being spoilt.	35%
Learning about local people.	35%
An intense experience of nature.	33%
Meeting new people.	27%
The health and beauty of my body.	21%
To do sports.	18%
A romantic atmosphere.	14%

When asked about the perfect accommodation for their last multi-family trip in an open-ended question, the majority of respondents mentioned a large, shared self-contained house or apartment or villa which has multiple rooms, separate bedrooms for each family, and multiple king beds. Some also mentioned hotel rooms located close together. The two key factors, however, are that the accommodation needs to have a large shared common area and multiple rooms offering some privacy.

When asked which type of accommodations they stayed at during their last multi-family trip, 24% indicated that they stayed in a four-star or five-star hotel; 23% stayed in a holiday home; 16% on a cruise ship, in a cabin or a resort; 14% stayed at a camping site; 13% in a one-, two- or three-star hotel; 5% booked using Airbnb and 4% stayed in a bed and breakfast. Most used a car to get to the accommodation (67%); 40% used a plane, 5% a train, and 3% a bus or ship. Respondents could indicate multiple means of transport.

Table 18.2 shows the travel activities multi-family travelers engage in.

Table 18.2: Vacation activities.

Activity	Yes	A lot	Sometimes	Never (No)
Relaxing / doing nothing	95%	41%	54%	5%
Taking family photos and videos	93%	43%	50%	7%
Going for walks	90%	33%	57%	10%
Sightseeing	89%	38%	51%	10%
Going out for dinner	85%	36%	48%	15%
Shopping	83%	18%	64%	17%
Swimming / bathing	73%	27%	46%	27%
Visiting local and regional events	67%	14%	54%	32%
Cooking	62%	14%	48%	38%
Posting pictures, status updates on Facebook, Twitter or any other social media website	51%	12%	39%	48%
Boat trips	48%	8%	40%	51%
Going to museums / exhibitions	45%	8%	37%	55%
Hiking	39%	6%	33%	60%
Visiting a theme park	35%	8%	28%	65%
Going to a spa / Using health facilities	29%	3%	25%	71%
Going to discos / bars	28%	6%	22%	72%
Visiting a farm	26%	4%	22%	74%
Going to the theatre, musical, opera	24%	4%	20%	76%
Cycling	20%	3%	16%	80%
Sailing / surfing	18%	4%	14%	82%
Playing golf	14%	3%	11%	86%

The second column in Table 18.2 indicates what percentage of the respondents engaged in each of the activities. The three columns to the right provide more detailed information about how frequently each of the activities is undertaken. As can be seen from the table, relaxing and doing nothing is what most multi-family travelers engage in. In second place – and this is a major distinguishing criterion of this market segment – is taking family photos and videos, the creation of memories. Going for walks and sightseeing are the next most frequently reported activities, followed by going out for dinner and shopping.

Overall, the inspection of activities paints a picture of laid-back travel parties, which primary want to enjoy each other's company. Any activities they engage in are relatively low key.

The suitability of Airbnb for multi-family travel

All respondents – those who undertook a multi-family trip in the past and those who intend to undertake one in future – assessed the suitability of eight accommodation options for their multi-family travel on a 100-point slider scale, where 100 represented maximum suitability. Figure 18.1 shows the results. The differences among accommodation options are statistically significant (Friedman chi-squared = 1117.9, p-value = 0).

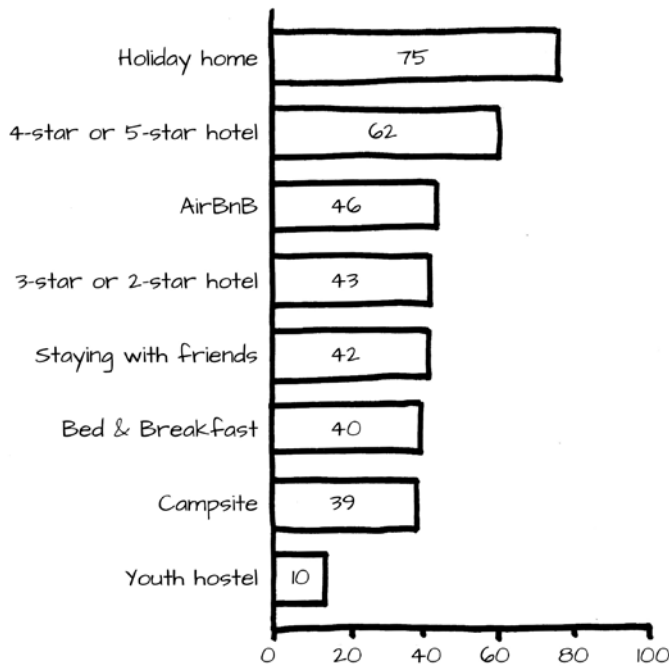

Figure 18.1: Average perceived suitability of different accommodation types for multi-family travel

As can be seen from Figure 18.1, holiday homes achieve the best scores in terms of perceived suitability, followed by high-end hotels and Airbnb. Of course, Airbnb could include all the other categories – you can book a holiday home on Airbnb – making the direct comparison impossible. But the key insight from Figure 18.1 is that holiday homes are seen as the most suitable accommodation type and that Airbnb ranks reasonably well. Respondents offer the following explanations for the suitability rating of Airbnb:

> Cheaper option for large groups.
>
> Usually find places with multiple rooms and multiple bathrooms.
>
> What we wanted and what we got was perfect. We had a lot of choices and could pick the features we most wanted.
>
> A variety of types of accommodation is available. I'm sure we could find something appropriate.
>
> I love Airbnb and with kids a whole house is easier.

Overall, respondents giving Airbnb a good rating did so because they think it offered a wide range of accommodation options; that it was spacious and cheaper for large groups; and had multiple rooms and bathrooms, enabling everyone to be close to each other. Respondents who rated Airbnb low did so because they had no prior experience using Airbnb, felt that hotels were safer and more trustworthy and were concerned that their children may break something in someone else's home. A few examples of explanations include:

> I've heard too many stories about restrictions that hosts have placed on guests and the actual accommodation not living up to the advertising. I think it's safer to go with a hotel.
>
> I have never used Airbnb so I don't know much about it.
>
> Because I like not to have to do housework on holidays, would be afraid the kids would break something.
>
> Not familiar with it, worried about last minute cancellations by owner.
>
> With having kids there I find it a big responsibility to look after someone else's house without something happening to it.
>
> Not sure what you are getting at the destination and worry about kids damaging home.
>
> No guarantees of quality on arrival.

Respondents ranked 14 accommodation features from 1 to 14, where 1 was the most important and 14 was the least important for their multi-family trip. Friedman rank sum test indicated that differences among accommodation

features are statistically significant (chi-squared = 3224.4, p-value = 0). The most important accommodation feature was the number of bedrooms (with a mean rank of 3.23), followed by the number of beds (3.69), the price (4.16), the number of bathrooms (5.14), kitchen and cooking facilities (5.92), air conditioning (6.49), TV (7.65), wi-fi (7.84), parking (8.20), pool (8.56), washing machine (9.03), child safety (stair gates, window guards, pool gate, 10.64), gym (11.92), and children's toys (12.51).

Conclusions

The present analysis shows the huge potential of peer-to-peer accommodation to cater for the market segment of multi-family travelers. Many – not all – listings offered on peer-to-peer networks are someone's primary residence (made available when the host is on holiday) or someone's holiday home. These kinds of listings are, by their very nature, different from spaces typically offered for short-term rental to tourists. If they are the primary residences or second homes of people with children, they are perfectly set up for families: they have more bedrooms; more beds; more bathrooms; good kitchen and cooking facilities; a washing machine; child safety features; and toys. They are naturally equipped with everything an average family needs, making them particularly suitable for hosting multi-family travel parties.

This conclusion in relation to multi-family travel reflects the huge variation of accommodation offered by peer-to-peer accommodation networks, which enables a perfect match without any engineering, and without the development of spaces for specific market segments. Rather, the pool of accommodation offers is so large and diverse, and the search interface on the facilitator's platform – such as stayz.com or Airbnb.com – is so easy to navigate, that guests can find the perfect house for their needs. In this chapter the match related to the aspect of family homes being larger and equipped with all features a family needs. In other chapters the same case is made for people with special needs (Chapter 22), as well as people who are particularly concerned about the environmental footprint of their vacation being very low (Chapter 24). If tourists feel strongly about very specific features of their holiday accommodation not well aligned with standardized characteristics of commercial accommodation, peer-to-peer accommodation offers an attractive alternative, putting commercial providers under pressure either not to target these market segments or to take action to modify a subset of their offerings to satisfy those special requirements.

Questions for future research

How can peer-to-peer accommodation networks best harvest the potential of multi-family travel? Currently, they provide information in the profile of the accommodation about family friendliness and a number of child specific items, such as baby monitor, high chair, crib, etc. These are not the main selling points from the perspective of multi-family travelers. Maybe providing a floorplan and a free photo-shoot for longer stays would entice multi-family travelers to try using peer-to-peer networks instead of traditional distribution channels for holiday homes. What is the effect of the increased pool of multi-family friendly accommodation being available? Will more multi-family travel occur? Will it occur more frequently? Will it occur in more combinations of travel parties?

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19

Discrimination by Hosts

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On most peer-to-peer accommodation networks, people have to set up personal profiles, including a photo and some basic information about themselves. Typically, people wanting to book accommodation (guests) send a request to those offering it (hosts). Hosts assess the booking request and either decline or accept it. This chapter investigates factors that are associated with higher levels of declining booking requests by Airbnb hosts. Results suggest that declining requests is not associated with personal characteristics of the guest or host. Rather, hosts appear to be aware of the potential risks involved in letting strangers stay in their house (or room), and attempt to reduce this risk by assessing each guest inquiry at the booking level. These findings do not support recent claims of systematic discrimination on peer-to-peer accommodation networks.

Edelman et al. (2017) claim that there is an asymmetry in the rejection of booking requests on Airbnb. In their study, they found booking requests from guests with distinctively African-American names to be approximately 16% less likely to be accepted than identical booking requests from guests with distinctively white names. Although Edelman and colleagues state that they 'cannot identify the mechanism causing worse outcomes for guests with distinctively African-American names' (Edelman et al., 2017: 17), they imply foul play and call for measures to be taken to reduce discrimination.

But Edelman et al.'s study – which has received a substantial amount of public attention (Moss, 2014; McPhate, 2015; Carson, 2015; Clarke, 2016; Parkinson, 2016; Martin, 2017; McGee, 2017) – did not study the complete picture. Two of the most important features on peer-to-peer accommodation

networks are mutual reviewing (Chapter 1) and the profile of the network members which includes their photo (Ert et al., 2016; Karlsson et al., 2017). Neither of those two features was included in the Edelman et al. experiment, making the study highly hypothetical, given that all booking inquiries sent were from guests with no peer-to-peer curriculum vitae (P2P-CV, Chapter 1). Not surprisingly, therefore, a later study that included reviews in the study design (Cui et al., 2016) comes to a different conclusion: as soon as a guest has a positive review, acceptance rates of guest accounts with distinctively white and African-American names are statistically indistinguishable. The authors conclude: 'when lacking perfect information, hosts infer the quality of a guest by race and make rental decisions based on the average predicted quality of each racial group; when enough information is shared, hosts do not need to infer guests' quality from their race, and discrimination is eliminated' (Cui et al., 2016: 1).

Looking at it from the host perspective, a study conducted in 19 cities in North America and Europe (Laouénan and Rathelot, 2017) reveals that hosts from minority ethnic groups charge 3.2% less for their properties than other hosts in the same cities. Hispanic and Asian hosts in San Francisco charge between 9.6 and 9.3% less than their white counterparts who list equivalent properties (Kakar et al., 2016). Occupancy rates, however, do not differ. A possible explanation may be that minority hosts charge lower prices not because of lack of demand due to racial discrimination, but either because of an economic motive to maximize occupancy and revenue, or because of a social motive to maximize the number of interested guests from which they can pick those they are most comfortable with (Kakar et al., 2016). Airbnb hosts in those areas of the US with the highest proportion of non-white people charge lower prices for their listings and generate less income – despite higher rates of participation (Cansoy and Schor, 2017). The authors argue that, while this is in itself not proof of discrimination against hosts in these areas, it shows that benefits from participation in Airbnb are patterned by race.

The media has been reporting extensively on alleged discrimination on Airbnb. Examples include an Airbnb host canceling a gay guest's booking after he disclosed that the purpose of his trip was to attend the Pride festival (Ring, 2016); and a Californian host cancelling a reservation because the guest was Asian. The host was fined $5000 by California Department of Fair Employment and Housing and had to attend a course in Asian-American studies and do community service (Finn, 2017). Colored Airbnb users report their experiences of racial discrimination. They reported that hosts rejected their booking requests, saying that their space was not available, but later accepted their request for the same dates when they changed their profile to a white person. The hashtag

#AirBnBWhileBlack trended on social media highlighting potential racial bias by users of Airbnb (Parkinson, 2016).

All of this resulted in the creation of inclusive platforms such as Noirbnb and Innclusive (Guynn, 2016, Oluo, 2016). These platforms specifically target minorities who have experienced discrimination when using Airbnb (Jan, 2017). The creator of Innclusive started the new platform after he was rejected by Airbnb hosts repeatedly while his white friend was able to book a space immediately (Innclusive, 2017). Platforms have also been created specifically for LGBTI travelers with LGBTI or LGBTI-friendly hosts such as Wimbify, Gay Homestays and misterbnb (Nichols, 2015; Pirolli, 2015; Dillet, 2017).

In response to claims of discrimination (Glusac, 2016), Airbnb introduced a number of measures (Murphy, 2016): hosts and guests must agree to the following community commitment: 'I agree to treat everyone in the Airbnb community—regardless of their race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or age—with respect, and without judgement or bias.' Other measures include reducing the prominence of guest photos; enhancing other parts of host and guest profiles with objective information; and encouraging the growth of *Instant Book* listings (Murphy, 2016). *Instant Book* listings do not require host approval. Airbnb also introduced a new policy that guarantees alternative space for guests unable to book on Airbnb because of discrimination (Jan, 2017). The adequacy of these measures has been questioned by critics who see profile pictures – no matter how prominent – as a major source of discrimination (Todisco, 2014; Melton, 2016).

In 2017, Airbnb agreed to allow the Californian government to test for racial discrimination by its hosts. This agreement is the first of its kind, permitting a regulatory body to conduct a ten-month investigation on racial discrimination (Levin, 2017). In other efforts, Airbnb removed from its platform users who were connected to 'Unite the Right', a far-right rally in Charlottesville (Virginia) because such behavior would be antithetical to the Airbnb community commitment (Park and Boyette, 2017). Airbnb collaborated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to educate communities of color on the economic benefits of hosting and tourism in their neighborhoods. Airbnb will share 20% of its earning from this partnership with the NAACP (NAACP, 2017). Another commitment in this partnership is increasing the diversity of Airbnb employees and suppliers to include a higher proportion of under-represented communities, women, veterans, and members of the LGBTI community (NAACP, 2017).

The present chapter contributes to the current debate on the potential of discrimination by peer-to-peer accommodation networks by investigating factors associated with higher levels of declining of booking requests.

Political orientation and booking rejection

In July 2015, 189 Airbnb hosts offering properties in Australia participated in a survey study via the *Airbnb Host Newsletter*. Of the hosts who participated, 26% were male, 74% female; 44% full-time employed, 22% part-time employed, and 20% retired; 59% had children, 41% did not have children; 48% rented out an entire property, 52% rented out only parts of their property; and 70% had declined at least one booking request in the past despite vacancy.

Information about the general risk aversion of hosts was collected using the scale developed by Nicholson et al. (2005). In addition, hosts provided their assessment of how many Airbnb guests displayed the following behaviors: lying about the number of people staying at the property; breaking the house rules; stealing items; not declaring damage they have caused; lying about the reason for their trip; disturbing the neighbors; doing dangerous things (e.g., lighting an open fire). These behaviors emerged from a qualitative research phase conducted in preparation of the survey study. Hosts also answered questions about bad experiences with hosting guests.

The political orientation of hosts was measured using Everett's (2013) scale. This serves as an indirect way of assessing the inclination to discriminate against certain guests due to their personal characteristics. An indirect approach was necessary because answers to a direct question (e.g., 'Do you prefer guests who are female/old/of Anglo-Saxon origin?') would be affected by social desirability bias. Discrimination based on people's personal characteristics and independent of an objective risk assessment taking place has been repeatedly shown to be significantly associated with the conservative end of the political orientation spectrum (Henley and Pincus, 1978; Hiel and Mervielde, 2005).

Airbnb hosts declared whether they rented out the entire property or only parts of the property. Hosts who rented out only parts of their property were likely to decline more bookings because of the higher personal risk associated with guests staying in the house while the host was also present.

One metric variable results for each of the constructs under study by summing up the values for all responses within the construct. For example, six items measure risk aversion on a five-point ordinal answer format 0–4). The sum of responses produces an overall risk aversion score of between 0 and 24.

The rate of declining booking requests serves as dependent variable. Each host indicated the approximate percentage of booking requests they had declined, despite vacancy, in the past. Responses ranged from 0% (all booking requests accepted) to 100% (not a single booking request accepted).

If the assumption of taste-based discrimination is correct, we would expect declining booking requests to be associated with the political orientation of the

host. We would also expect no association between declining booking requests and the risk aversion of the host; the host's risk perceptions relating to hosting; the host's prior experience of guests misbehaving; the fraction of the property rented. Rather, such associations would point to hosts attempting to minimize short-term rental risk by selecting 'safe' booking requests.

Drivers of host rejection

Table 19.1 shows the results of the linear regression analysis.

Table 19.1: Regression results

Variables	Estimate	Std. error	p-value
Intercept	2.13	2.71	.433
Negative prior experience	5.54	2.14	.010*
Low risk aversion	0.03	0.28	.903
High perceived hosting risk	0.03	0.01	.017*
Conservative political orientation	0.00	0.00	.131
Only parts of property rented	3.93	2.14	.068

Figure 19.1 shows a bar chart containing standardized regression coefficients that indicate the strength and the direction of the association. Bars to the right indicate higher rates of declining booking requests. Bars to the left indicate lower rates of declining booking requests.

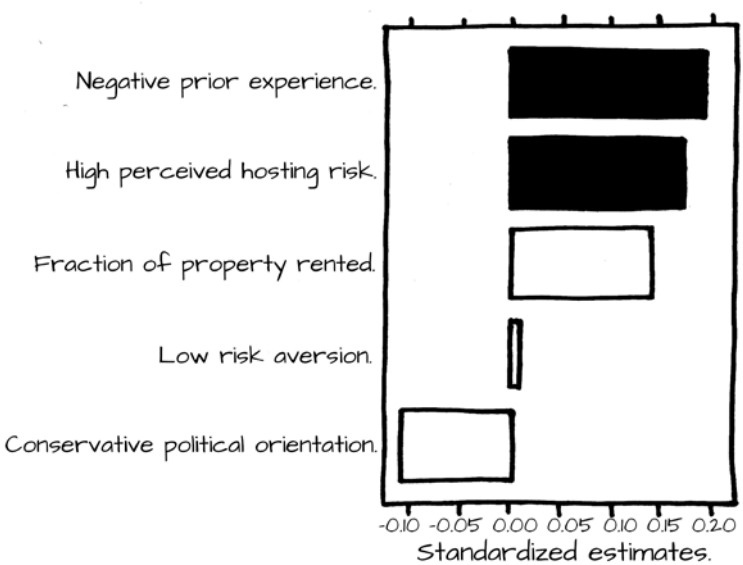

Figure 19.1: Drivers of host rejections of booking requests. Significant constructs in black; bars pointing to the right are associated with more declined booking inquiries

As can be seen, risk-proneness and risk-aversion of the host are not associated with declining more booking requests. Neither are the fraction of the property on offer for short-term rental and political orientation. However, prior experiences with guest behavior not aligning with host expectations, as well as higher levels of perception that guests do misbehave at times, are significantly associated with higher rates of declining booking requests. The adjusted R^2 of the regression model is 0.06, indicating that the model does not explain much of the variance in declining booking requests. This is not unexpected, given the many factors that drive acceptance or rejection, many of which cannot be reliably measured. For example, if a couple hosts, it could be both husband and wife assessing booking requests. One may be more inclined to reject, the other more inclined to accept.

Conclusions

While individual cases of discrimination can occur in any marketplace where humans interact, results from our study do not support the notion that personal characteristics of either the guest or the host play a major role in hosts declining booking requests. Rather, results point to hosts being aware of risks associated with letting strangers stay in their house or room and attempting to reduce this risk by assessing the specific risk associated with each booking request before making a decision on whether to confirm the booking or not. Findings from the present study are in line with results from the studies by Cui et al. (2016), Karlsson et al. (2017), and Xie and Mao (2017), which conclude that trip-related factors such as travel party and the purpose of the trip affect the likelihood of getting permission to book to a higher degree than personal factors such as gender or age of the guest. The study by Cui et al. (2016) shows that there is no difference in acceptance of booking requests depending on the name suggesting a certain cultural background as soon as reviews are available for guests. The P2P CV (Chapter 1) serves as a more powerful source of information for risk assessment by the hosts than other information about the guest, which is less directly linked to the potential booking transaction.

Limitations of the study include that it was conducted in Australia only, and that data used in this study does not provide insight into the nature of booking requests which have been declined or accepted. Despite these limitations, the results are important because they contradict the claim that discrimination occurs regularly on peer-to-peer accommodation networks, calling for caution in declaring these networks discriminatory.

Questions for future research

How to prevent people from behaving in a way that may disadvantage certain sections of the population is the key research question, but this question goes well beyond the issue of peer-to-peer accommodation networks. In the context of peer-to-peer trading, it would be interesting to test a range of alternative approaches to removing bias. For example, Airbnb has previously fined people. Maybe this is insufficient to deter people from behaving inappropriately. Maybe the prospect of immediate exclusion from the network would send a stronger signal and be more effective in aligning network members' behaviors with the behavioral expectations of the network facilitator.

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20

Social Interactions in Peer-to-Peer Accomodation Networks

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Peer-to-peer accommodation networks are considered a relatively new phenomenon. But how new are they really? This chapter explores social interactions on these networks and draws parallels to people whose existence has been dated back 65,000 years: Australian Indigenous communities. Despite their very different appearance, rules of engagement and context, traditional communities have far more in common with modern day neo-tribes that may have been thought.

Peer-to-peer accommodation networks are still considered a relatively new phenomenon in tourism accommodation, and one that challenges existing structures of the sector. At the core of peer-to-peer networks stand interpersonal relationships that develop between strangers. These relationships between 'ordinary people' – as opposed to the highly standardized business interactions between tourists and commercial accommodation providers – drive the success of peer-to-peer accommodation networks. The most successful networks – such as Airbnb – place interpersonal communication at the center of their platform. Without this, it is virtually impossible to make space available for trading on a peer-to-peer network or to rent accommodation on such networks (Chapter 3).

In this respect, peer-to-peer accommodation networks are similar to some of the oldest societies on our planet: Indigenous Australians. Peer-to-peer accommodation networks act as modern day neo-tribes. The functioning of neo-tribes relies heavily on personal transfer of information between individuals.

This chapter explores the parallels between peer-to-peer accommodation networks and Indigenous Australian communities using auto-ethnography and netnography. Auto-ethnography is a qualitative approach that allows the nuances, details, and meanings of a culture to be explored from an insider's perspective (Patton, 2001; Hughson, 2007; Greenacre et al., 2013). Here, auto-ethnographies from a member of a traditional Australian Indigenous community and two members of a modern neo-tribe are used. The first author of this chapter – Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow – was adopted into an Aboriginal family by a Larrakia elder in 1983. Denise's son – at the age of three – became a 'little daddy' to a newborn boy and his sister (Goodfellow, 2007). Denise's insights serve as the primary source of information about the role of interpersonal communication in the functioning of Indigenous Australian society, particularly the Kunwinjku family, to which she belongs. The second and third authors serve as the data sources for the second auto-ethnography; they are both hosts on peer-to-peer accommodation networks and are able to draw on their personal experiences of host and guest behaviors in neo-tribes. A netnography of a statewide Facebook Airbnb hosting forum (Chapter 16) complements the research. Netnography is the process of gathering data via computer-mediated communication to inform insights into the interactions and workings of a community (Kozinets, 2002).

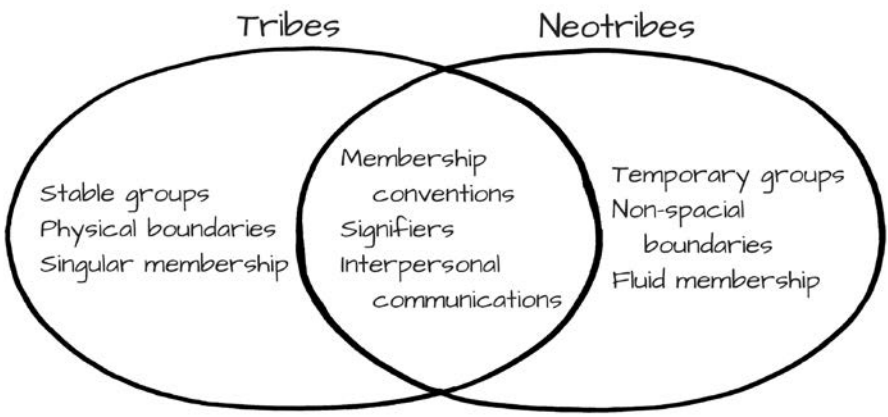

Figure 20.1: Tribes, neo-tribes and what they have in common

Figure 20.1 shows key characteristics of traditional tribes and neo-tribes (Maffesoli, 1996; Cova and Cova, 2002; Hardy and Robards, 2015): neo-tribes are temporary, rather than permanent, and stable in nature. They do not have

defined physical boundaries, and coalesce temporarily in virtual or physical meeting spaces; members can move geographically without having to give up membership of a neo-tribe. Even on peer-to-peer accommodation networks, which offer space at a particular geographical location, it is not necessary for members of the network to disclose their place of residence. Conversely, tribes are very much bound to the geographical boundaries of their land. Tribes typically demand exclusivity of membership; neo-tribes do not (Cova & Cova, 2002). A member of Airbnb can also be a member of a forum of Airbnb hosts (see Chapter 16) and even a member of another peer-to-peer accommodation network that competes with Airbnb (see Chapter 6).

The three things both tribes and neo-tribes have in common are that they: have membership conventions, including behavioral conventions attached to status; use signifiers to indicate status; and rely heavily on interpersonal communication for the very functioning of the community. This chapter explores these common characteristics in detail, and in doing so, draws parallels between peer-to-peer networks and Indigenous Australian communities.

Membership conventions

Membership stands at the center of communities. To understand the functioning of both tribes and neo-tribes, it is critically important to know how people become members, stay members, or lose membership.

In 1983, Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow was an alderman on the Darwin City Council. Bagot Aboriginal Reserve was within her ward, and Denise wanted to represent the interests of the local Larrakia residents, but members did not trust her because she was 'white' and not part of their community. The Bagot Council president (Mrs. Thompson) asked her to catch a snake to test her resolve to represent the residents. To do this, Denise waded around a crocodile-infested lagoon for four hours. She undertook this challenge, although she was unsure whether the Aboriginal people present would help her, should she be attacked by a crocodile. She was not attacked and returned with a python, proving her commitment and trustworthiness to the community. However, upon her return, rather than being celebrated by the wider Darwin community, Denise was threatened with prosecution by the Conservation Commission for catching protected wildlife. To protect her from prosecution, Mrs. Thompson adopted her, making her a member of a Kunwinjku clan. This incredible process resulted in Denise's family members being given 'skin names' and 'dreamings'. As members of the clan, they were also expected to abide by the community's rules of behavioral standards. News of Denise's adoption spread quickly through word of mouth and Mrs. Thompson brought many relatives (Larrakia, Kunwinjku, and others) to Denise's home to meet her.

Becoming a member of a peer-to-peer accommodation network does not involve catching pythons. In fact, it is not even obvious that there are any hurdles at all to becoming a member, given that anyone with an internet connection can sign up. But – while signing up allows you to be on the platform and interact with others there – you are not taken seriously as a member before you have your first review, both as a host and as a guest. Chapter 17 illustrates one example of someone who wishes to become a member but misjudges the importance of this initiation ritual. Chapter 16 illustrates how new members who are unaware of the social conventions of the community are disrespected by other members. Reviews are the glue between strangers on peer-to-peer accommodation networks. The credibility of members depends on their peer-to-peer network curriculum vitae (P2P-CV, Chapter 1), the sum of all reviews written about them. The first confirmed booking initiates members into the community.

Within peer-to-peer networks we can also see the formation of 'sub-tribes', whose existence is centerd on particular issues, interests or destinations, many of which have distinctive membership conventions. Our netnographic research explored an Airbnb Facebook forum for a particular destination, where hosts share their experiences with one another, offer advice, and lobby for the rights of Airbnb hosts (Chapter 16). The forum has an 'introduction' convention whereby hosts new to it introduce their listings to fellow members and ask for feedback, as means to have their new membership validated. For example:

> So, I uploaded my two rooms at 4.30 pm and by 6 pm I had a booking. I now have three Germans in my Margate home. Auto price set was $60. Is that reasonable for Margate?

This question elicited many responses from fellow host forum members, who offered suggestions, such as ensuring that cleaning costs and time were included, as well as suggestions on alternative, particularly higher, pricing.

Of course, there are major differences between traditional communities and neo-tribes in terms of how one becomes a member. In Indigenous Australian communities, the primary pathway into membership is birth. You cannot be born into a neo-tribe. If you have not been born or married into an Indigenous Australian community, you cannot sign up or apply for membership; you have to be invited. To become a member of a neo-tribe you can simply sign up, which gives the impression that it is very easy to become a member. But the true initiation comes later, and may not even be identified as such by many. However, both tribes and neo-tribes use a process of confirmation to accept new members and affirmations commonly follow once new members arrive.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, membership status can also be removed if network members do not display behaviors in line with the neo-tribe's expectations. On the Airbnb host forum that we followed, badly behaved guests have their profiles made into a screenshot and are named, shamed, and outed amongst hosts who detail their misdemeanours:

> Beware! Good evening today I had a fake booking (3 days) – this is how it reads:

In addition to this, peer-to-peer network facilitators can also punish and remove members from the network. Airbnb is doing this regularly if there is evidence of members not behaving in line with Airbnb's behavioral expectations.

Exclusion also occurs in Indigenous Australian communities, although the approach to expressing that someone is no longer welcome as part of the community is less black and white than it is on peer-to-peer networks. Denise's ex-husband, for example, was not viewed very favorably by her Aboriginal family for various comments he made. The way the family handled this challenge was to 'sing' to Denise (cast spells) to make her fall out of love with him.

The feeling among remaining members that these excluded people are no longer part of their community can last beyond their lifetimes. In the case of Denise's older sister, people actively avoided attending the funeral of her daughter, a 'long-grass' dweller who died in Darwin. Another sister called out to neighbors over the back fence to attend the funeral. They did not.

Signifiers

The highest status in Indigenous Australian communities is that of an Elder. There are no restrictions on who becomes an Elder. Elders can be women or men, and they do not have to be of a certain age. Rather, it is their actions as a community member that earn the respect of other community members, leading to them becoming an Elder. Elders display skills, knowledge and wisdom, and are seen as leaders in their community. The term 'old lady' is one of respect and honor rather than a slight, as it is often regarded in Western societies.

A similar signifier is used by peer-to-peer accommodation network facilitator Airbnb: that of the Superhost. Superhosts status – like that of Elders – does not depend on age, gender, or even length of membership in the neo-tribe. Rather, it depends solely on behaviors displayed as a community member. To become a Superhost, hosts must have a five-star rating by at least 80% of their guests; they must have at least ten bookings in a year; they must not have canceled any bookings; and must have responded to 90% of all booking enquiries within 24 hours of an enquiry. If all of these criteria are met, a signifier – a Superhost badge – appears on the host's profile picture, and this is visible to

all network members. Superhost status affects price (Chapter 12) and future bookings (Xie and Mao, 2017).

Figure 20.2: Example of what the Superhost signifier looks like

As well as displaying Superhost badges, some hosts go to great lengths to assert their authority by being very active on networks, sharing their experiences and offering their opinions, to illustrate their status as experienced hosts. They update fellow hosts on policy changes, offer advice on the best cleaners and ancillary services, and tag Airbnb managers into conversations when trying to advocate for change. This behavior reinforces their power and status within the neo-tribe. But even among regular guests and hosts – those without Superhost status – signifiers from their online profiles can be used to assess their commitment to the community and the alignment of their behavior with the expectations of the network. The P2P-CV – the total listing of all reviews about a member – reveals everything worth noting about the member from the perspective of other members.

A similar signifier in Indigenous Australian communities are names given to people. Denise Goodfellow, for example, was named Lawungkurr by the Elders after an ancestral woman still respected for her mediation skills. The meaning of the name is well understood within the community, thus serving as a signifier of Denise's particular ability in a certain area.

Interpersonal communication

In addition to signifiers that both Aboriginal communities and Airbnb neo-tribes have in common, there is evidence that both use interpersonal communication and collaboration to shape the way in which outsiders view the community.

In the case of the Aboriginal communities, the Baby Dreaming Project serves as a good example of this occurring. It developed serendipitously because Denise – a birdwatching guide – hosted birdwatchers in her garden. Initially, her Aboriginal relatives were unsure about the visitors and avoided interacting with them. But from 1983, the date of Denise's adoption, the Kunwinjku

Elders of Western Arnhem Land came to stay at her home, where they met the birdwatchers, mostly senior American couples. The Elders expressed that they liked the birdwatchers, and in 1988 asked Denise for her assistance in starting a small tourism project. But 'Kunwinjku relatives only wanted visitors with whom they felt comfortable' (Goodfellow, 2017: 5). Reverend P. Nganjmirra, a Kunwinjku Elder, reported that – within weeks – Bininj (northwestern Top End Aboriginal people) throughout the region knew about the project and were interested. It took much longer for those members of the clans who had not been to Denise's home to meet the birdwatchers to approve.

Visitors started arriving. While the tourists' camping sites were not co-located with the Aboriginal community's homes, tourists and Aboriginal people cooked and ate together. Often it was unplanned moments that brought people together and developed trust in one another. For example, when a couple of Kunwinjku people at the outstation Kudjekbinj had health difficulties, two medical specialists who were part of a tour group treated them. This gesture, and word spreading about this gesture, connected community and visitors, and many more Aboriginal people came to see the doctors with their own medical problems. The Baby Dreaming Project serves as an example of the efficiency of interpersonal communication and how the sharing of experiences achieved positive outcomes in Aboriginal communities.

On peer-to-peer accommodation networks, interpersonal communication is also regularly used to share information amongst hosts and to assist one another in the provision of a unique and authentic experience that reflects their destination. This non-monetary exchange of information regularly occurs on the Facebook Airbnb host forum which we followed. Like Aboriginal communities, we witnessed stories being shared to assist hosts in improving their experiences. It was not unusual to see hosts seeking advice on how to provide unique experiences for unusual guests.

> Post: We have our first honeymoon couple coming on 6 August for 5 nights. Suggestions for something nice to do for them – I was thinking a bottle of bubble and few goodies – bearing in mind we are budget and only charge $55 per night.

In this instance, hosts suggested ideas such as offering them home-made biscuits, flowers, and/or a decorative candle to celebrate the occasion.

Perhaps the most powerful occurrence on interpersonal communication within the Airbnb neo-tribe is the feedback given to hosts from guests. Airbnb relies on reviews to improve experiences and to build trust between network members. Feedback is given in two ways: private feedback accessible only to the host, and public feedback visible to all network members. Feedback can be

very detailed, as the example below shows. This was private feedback given to the second author – Anne Hardy – by one of her guests.

> Only a couple of recommendations. The beautiful flowers you provided had a very, very strong fragrance, my friends were overpowered. I would recommend maybe a smaller bunch of the flowers as it was quite over powering. I would recommend putting extra sheets and blankets in the cupboard as we only had the fitted sheet for the futon. We didn't discover we were short until it was late and didn't want to disturb. Maybe a thin mattress to lay on top of the futon as it was a little uncomfortable. Oh and one other thing, when we arrived we were a little confused if we were at the right property as there was a sign out front which I thought may have been the name of another property. We did enjoy our stay and will be back – we've just bought a home in North Tassie :)
>
> Moving the shoes from the stairwell would give the feeling of more of a private rather than shared entry point, it's a small thing but I think it would make a difference.

This detailed feedback, when publicly visible, allows hosts to respond. If the feedback is negative, there is a community expectation that the host will respond. Not responding is punished by the community because potential future guests are not sure if they can trust that the particular host will offer a positive experience. What network members say about one another affects how the network functions.

This is very similar to Australian Indigenous communities. Because the spoken word is of critical importance for information transfer in Aboriginal communities, it functions as a key regulatory mechanism. If members of Indigenous Australian communities are seen not to be sharing or not behaving in line with community expectations, they are talked about. And Bininj women sometimes express their anger about others who spread rumors about them on Facebook, a medium that has been embraced by Aboriginal communities, possibly because it offers a more effective way of maintaining essentially the same traditional communication patterns.

Another example is that of untrue information spread about a female white art dealer, who was accused of selling Aboriginal art for her personal benefit. It was rumored that all the money she earned selling Aboriginal art allowed her to build an apartment block, which she named after an ancestral Kunwinjku. If the spoken word is untrue, the spoken word is also used to correct information. Speaking about the irresponsible behavior or tourists and tour operators is also common. The Mirrar, traditional owners of western Kakadu National Park, for

example, warned the Kunwinjku about becoming involved in tourism because of the way tourists and tour operators behaved.

Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated that, despite traditional communities and modern neo-tribes appearing to be very different, they both rely on membership conventions, signifiers and interpersonal communication to regulate community functioning. In the case of Airbnb, the initiation as a true member of the network includes receiving one's first review; and the status signifier of Superhost. Similarly, traditional communities have rituals for new members; signifiers of status such as being an Elder; and verbal communication regulates the behavior in the everyday context, and is used to punish misbehavior.

These examples illustrate that – while boundaries, longevity and performance spaces may differ amongst tribes and neo-tribes – the urge to merge is an age-old phenomenon. Our desire to feel a sense of fellowship, have a sense of belonging, and be amongst like-minded people transcends time and space. And at the heart of this stands interpersonal communication that acts as the glue that binds these factors together.

Questions for future research

This chapter represents an initial investigation into the parallels that exist between the functioning of tribes and neo-tribes. Many more parallels are likely to exist which have not been explored yet, but would be interesting to investigate in future. In addition, it would be interesting to study whether people who are members of traditional tribes, such as Indigenous Australian communities, are attracted to neo-tribes because they are possibly more familiar with the rules in such social structures. Indigenous Australian communities have wholeheartedly embraced Facebook, which may serve as an indicator that they feel comfortable engaging in neo-tribes. Another key question of significance to Indigenous Aboriginal communities is whether they could harvest peer-to-peer accommodation networks to their benefit by hosting. This may be particularly promising because the host has control over who to accept; birdwatching couples may represent an excellent target segment. The experiences offered would be unique and would most certainly attract significant demand. The question, however, is how well the reality of guests who may not be willing to adjust to the community lifestyle would work. The Baby Dreaming Project is evidence that it can work, if managed carefully.

Acknowledgments

We thank Denise's Bininj family. Relatives like Reverend P. Nganjmirra (now deceased) and his wife, Stephanie Thompson Nganjmirra, set the benchmark in courage and decent behavior at times when others around her (including the government) did not. Now a new generation of Bininj speak up – much in contradiction to their traditions – against injustice being experienced by their people. Anthropologist Colin Turnbull wrote that for the hunter-gatherer peoples in Africa 'kindness, generosity, consideration, ... honesty ... compassion, charity and other (characteristics)' are not virtues but 'necessities for survival' (1972: 31). Denise found all those 'necessities' within Bininj members of her family. However, as the neo-tribes have shown, they also apply to the wider society!

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21

Role of Peer-to-Peer Accomodation Networks During Disasters

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Large-scale natural disasters and man-made crises, such as terrorist attacks, can lead to substantial drops in tourism demand in the affected destination, thus threatening the local tourism industry. Demand can fall further if the disaster has reduced the supply of accommodation. This chapter explores the potential of peer-to-peer networks assisting destinations in the immediate emergency, and in the recovery stage. Airbnb has, on a number of occasions, made accommodation available at no cost when people were in need as the consequence of an unexpected event. But even among residents who are not currently members of a network, willingness to help is substantial, pointing to the potential of a new – much more decentralized – approach to disaster recovery at tourism destinations.

One of the biggest threats to the tourism industry is that of a disaster hitting a destination. Disasters can be natural – including earthquakes, cyclones, and bushfires – or man-made – such as terrorist attacks. Disasters hitting a destination typically result in substantial trip cancelations by tourists.

Examples of natural disasters that resulted in drops in tourism demand, include the 2015 Nepal earthquake and the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. Of international trips to Nepal, 90% were cancelled immediately after the 2015 earthquake and a further 40% drop in international arrivals was forecast for the following 12 months (Government of Nepal, 2015). The 2011 Christchurch

earthquake caused a 73% drop in international guest nights in the Canterbury region (Orchiston et al., 2016).

Examples of man-made disasters which led to drops in tourism demand are the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2011 political instability in Egypt, and the 2016 political unrest in Turkey. The number of tourist arrivals in the six months following the 2002 Bali bombings declined to less than half of the number in the previous six months (Pambudi et al., 2009). Political tensions in Egypt led to a 45% drop in international tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2011 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2011). Turkey's tourism industry was negatively affected following political unrest and a coup attempt in 2016. Hotel occupancy dropped 50% for July and August and a loss of revenue between £2b and £2.5b was estimated for 2016 (Letsch, 2016).

Cancelations and drops in tourism demand lead to a loss of revenues for tourism industry as well as local, regional and federal governments. Disasters can also cause significant damage to tourism infrastructure, including accommodation. In such situations – even if tourists wish to remain at or travel to the affected area – lack of accommodation supply can result in cancelations and demand drops until the damaged infrastructure is rebuilt. Not surprisingly, therefore, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2009: 1) describes the position of the tourism industry facing the possibility of disasters hitting their destinations as follows:

> If we reflect on our experience in recent years facing the challenges brought on by large-scale natural disasters and man-made crises, the vulnerability of the tourism sector becomes clear. Tourism is one of the most sensitive economic activities and usually among the first to be affected in an emergency.

The tourism industry is extremely vulnerable to unexpected disasters. In addition to the immediate crisis that follows a disaster hitting a destination, recovery can take a long time. During this stage, substantial funding is required to rebuild infrastructure. Rebuilding is necessary, but it represents a low-speed solution, which does not help the affected tourism destinations on the short-term (Johnson, 2009). Immediate action is needed to assist displaced tourists in a disaster region and to ensure the smallest possible loss of revenues to the local tourism industry. Can peer-to-peer accommodation networks come to the rescue of tourists, tourism industry and destinations?

Heo (2016) discusses the impacts of the sharing economy on destination management. Sharing economy businesses are new stakeholders for the tourism industry, and it is important to understand their role and influence on other stakeholders (Heo, 2016). The sharing economy has blurred the boundaries between consumers and service providers, as well as local residents and

business entities at the destination. A local resident providing any type of sharing economy service to tourists may have a different attitude toward tourism development from a normal local resident (Heo, 2016).

Fang et al. (2016) suggest that Airbnb benefits destinations by generating new jobs as more tourists may travel due to lower accommodation cost. However, as low-end hotels are being replaced by Airbnb (Zervas et al., 2017; Hajibaba and Dolnicar, 2017) and employees in low-end hotels lose their jobs, the positive effect of Airbnb on employment decreases as the number of Airbnb listings increases.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the benefit of peer-to-peer networks to destinations, especially in times when an unexpected crisis hits the destination.

Can peer-to-peer networks help in emergencies?

Hajibaba et al. (2017) conducted two survey studies to investigate the potential of peer-to-peer accommodation networks to assist tourists, destinations, and the tourism industry when a disaster hits. They asked 480 adult Australians who had traveled in the past 12 months to imagine being on holiday when a disaster hits the destination, leaving them without accommodation. The cases of the immediate emergency stage as well as the recovery stage were investigated. After having read the scenario, study participants indicated whether they would be willing to stay in the homes of local residents. Figure 21.1 shows the results. As can be seen, about half of the study participants were willing to take residents up on their offer. The likelihood is higher in the emergency than in the recovery situation. The likelihood is also higher if the price is lower.

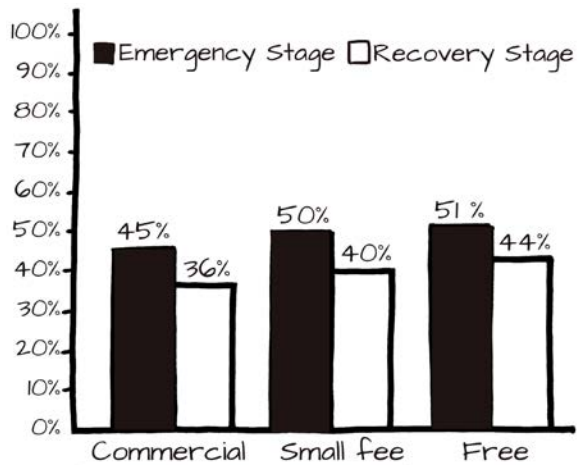

Figure 21.1: Stated willingness of tourists to stay in residents' homes after a disaster hit the destination (based on data from Hajibaba et al., 2017)

In the second survey study, 995 Australian residents living in highly tourism-dependent areas read a similar disaster scenario, and indicated if they would assist in one of three ways: by sharing their home with displaced tourists; by sharing information; and by offering their assistance to keep tourists safe. Again, both the emergency situation immediately after the disaster hit and the recovery situation were investigated.

Figure 21.2 shows results. As can be seen, the willingness of residents to open their homes to tourists is substantially higher than tourists' willingness to stay in residents' homes in the immediate emergency, and the willingness increases with the price they are able to charge. Resident willingness to share their homes drops substantially in the recovery phase. Only about half of the residents would still open their doors at a commercial accommodation rate; only 20% if they would be receiving no payment at all.

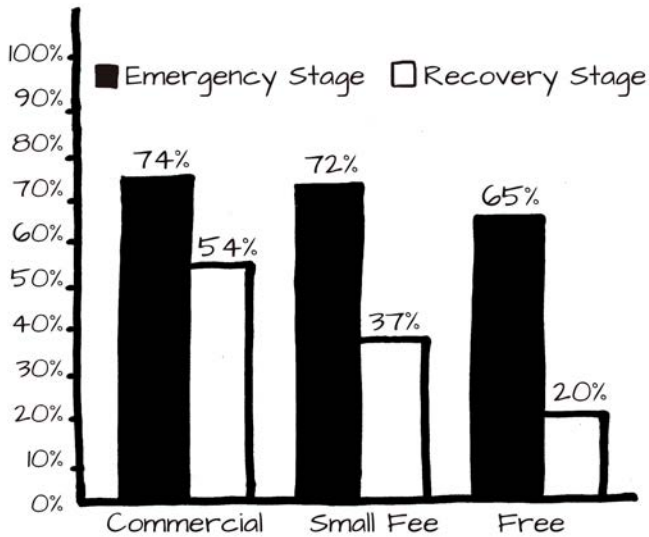

Figure 21.2: Stated willingness of residents of tourism-dependent areas to allow tourists to stay in their home after a disaster hit the destination (based on data from Hajibaba et al., 2017)

Peer-to-peer networks activating accommodation for people who find themselves in desperate need for a place to stay due to some unexpected event is not unprecedented. Airbnb – currently the leading peer-to-peer accommodation network – has activated more than 3000 listings during and directly after 47 global emergencies to facilitate housing individuals, families, and relief workers (Airbnb, 2017a). When disasters strike, Airbnb contacts hosts in the impacted and surrounding areas asking if they have extra space to share with their displaced neighbors. Hosts who respond choose to list their spaces free of charge, and Airbnb waives all booking fees (Airbnb Citizen, 2017). Airbnb

and their hosts have donated more than 3590 nights during disasters (Airbnb Citizen, 2017). Examples of recent disasters where Airbnb facilitated provision of free accommodation for people affected by the disaster include London's Grenfell Tower Fire (between 18 June 2017 and 9 July 2017) and the Portugal wildfires (between 18 June 2017 and 11 July 2017).

How best to leverage peer-to-peer networks

Reasons preventing residents from sharing their home with tourists and reasons preventing tourists from staying in the homes of residents emerge from the survey study by Hajibaba et al. (2017). One survey investigated residents' willingness to help tourists. The other investigated tourists' willingness to accept help from residents.

The residents study (n = 995) was conducted in areas in Australia which are highly dependent on tourism. This was done because – at most tourism destinations – residents are likely to not only assist for purely altruistic reasons, but also because their livelihood and that of their family would be negatively affected by a drop in tourism demand. Participating residents were presented with two disaster scenarios (emergency and recovery stages) and then asked about their willingness to share their home with tourists. Residents not willing to share their home answered the following open-ended questions: 'What would prevent you from sharing your home with displaced tourists / tourists arriving after the disaster?', 'What could convince you to share your home with displaced tourists / tourists arriving after the disaster?', and 'In what other ways would you be able to help your local tourism industry during or after this disaster?'

The tourist study (n = 480) was conducted with Australian residents who had undertaken at least one personal holiday in the past 12 months. Participants received two disaster scenarios. For both scenarios, study participants indicated if they would travel as planned if they could stay in the home of residents far from the disaster. Those tourists not willing to stay with residents answered the following open-ended questions: 'What would prevent you from staying in the home of residents?' and 'What could convince you to stay in the home of residents?'

During the emergency situation, 12% of residents would not share their home with tourists. After the emergency and during the recovery situation, 43% were not willing to share their home. Residents who were not willing to share their home provided written answers as to what would prevent them from doing so.

Findings suggest that lack of space to accommodate extra people represents a key reason preventing residents from opening their homes to displaced tourists. Some residents mentioned that they care about their privacy and do not like the concept of sharing as understood in the sharing economy. Another theme that emerged was lack of trust and that they know nothing about tourists that are going to stay with them:

> In this day and age, I unfortunately do not trust people I don't know. And sharing my home is letting them in would require a high level of trust from me.
>
> I don't know these people from a bar of soap they could be anybody.
>
> I would have no way of knowing what these tourists would be like.

In response to what may persuade them to open their homes to displaced tourists, some residents pointed to the importance of verification of tourists before they allow them to their home:

> Someone has to filter/vouch for the strangers entering my home.

Looking at the tourist perspective, 39% of tourists would not be willing to stay with residents during the emergency stage, and 46% would not stay with them during the recovery stage, even if accommodation were available at no cost. These tourists provided written responses to the question of what would prevent them from staying in the home of residents. Several reasons emerged. Some tourists mentioned that their privacy was very important to them and that they did not like the idea of using non-commercial accommodation. Not knowing the people they would stay with emerged as a key barrier to peer-to-peer accommodation networks being able to maximize the impact of opening doors to displaced tourists in the case of an emergency hitting the destination:

> Do not know them [the residents] or what their home is like.
>
> I know nothing about the people I am staying with.

In response to what might persuade them to stay in the home of locals, some tourists identified the key role of the accommodation offered and the residents being verified or approved:

> A comprehensive brochure or web page illustrating the home and convincing us that we'd have a safe and enjoyable stay.
>
> I would need independent reviews or recommendations.
>
> I need references, photos, testimonials, ratings…
>
> An exchange of e-mails, pictures of their family would be ideal.

In response to the question of 'in what other ways would you be able to help your local tourism industry during or after this disaster?' residents nominated

different ways in which they were willing to help. They were willing to help tourists travel around the destination:

> If the roads were OK and petrol available, take the visitors to see the local sights.
>
> I would just get out and about in my bus and let people know we were still operating and taking things or people where they needed to go.

They are willing to provide updates and promote the destination:

> I would be available to provide information about things to do in the area and places to avoid.
>
> I would promote the area to others by word of mouth when the area is open again for business.

They were even offering to cook:

> As a member of a Lions club I am sure that as a group we would be able to feed these tourists with a BBQ, etc..

Conclusions

The present study builds on prior work that has demonstrated the potential of peer-to-peer accommodation networks to provide disaster relief in cases where existing tourist infrastructure – especially accommodation – has been damaged. The present study offers insight into reasons provided by tourists and residents of highly tourism-dependent areas for being willing or not to use peer-to-peer accommodation if a disaster hits a tourist destination.

Results indicate that, in some instances, the reason is very simple: residents do not have space to host anyone under their roof. This situation, obviously, cannot be changed. Others, however, can be addressed. One of the main reasons stated by residents who are not willing to open their homes to displaced tourists, and by tourists refusing to stay with residents, is not knowing enough about the potential guests and hosts and, consequently, feeling uncomfortable about living close to one another. Both residents and tourists suggest that a robust verification process might alleviate their concerns. Interestingly, the issue of trust is one that has always stood at the center of the success and failure of peer-to-peer accommodation networks (Hamari et al., 2015). As Airbnb puts it very prominently on their webpage: 'Trust is what makes it work' (Airbnb, 2017b).

The potential of peer-to-peer accommodation networks to assist tourists and residents of tourism destinations when a disaster hits is not limited to the provision of accommodation. With some peer-to-peer networks transitioning to one-stop travel shops (Chapter 8), their platform could also be used to

provide updates on the disaster to tourists, and to facilitate sharing of other services residents are willing to provide to help tourists, such as getting a ride, finding an open supermarket or an open eatery.

To conclude: involving residents in both the emergency response and longer-term destination recovery of the destination through peer-to-peer accommodation networks represents an economical high-speed solution because it does not depend on significant funding for the provision of buildings and infrastructure. To maximize on the benefits the use of this accommodation can offer in disaster situations, destination managers should be proactive in building relationships with peer-to-peer networks so they can activate them in an emergency. In addition, policy makers can educate their residents about the many ways they can provide assistance and familiarize them with peer-to-peer accommodation networks to enable them to use them effectively in a disaster situation.

Questions for future research

With peer-to-peer accommodation networks expanding services, they are becoming one-stop travel shops (Chapter 8). This will open many more opportunities for locals to offer support to tourists in need after an unexpected crisis: they will not only be able to open their doors to displaced tourists, they will be able to offer to drive them around, inform them of safe tourist activities which can still be undertaken, accompany them if they feel unsafe, etc. The main research question therefore is: how can this kind of local support be stimulated? Is it necessary to familiarize locals with the peer-to-peer trading platforms to ensure that – in an emergency – they know what they can do to help? Will only those who are already active on peer-to-peer accommodation networks be available to help, or is there potential for many more locals to join in emergency situations? Can services be expanded to those not typically related to tourism and hospitality, such as medical services, clothes distribution, and the provision of emergency food? What are the personal characteristics of locals who are willing to offer certain kinds of help? What marketing action can increase the pool of locals willing to assist?

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Travelers with Disabilities

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Peer-to-peer accommodation networks have been accused of not offering accommodation suitable for people with disabilities, both by commercial competitors who are obliged to comply with regulations regarding this, and by groups protecting the interests of people with disabilities. This chapter investigates the regulations commercial providers are required to comply with, and the efforts made by peer-to-peer networks to accommodate these groups. It also explores needs of travelers with disabilities and ask which tourism accommodation model might be best placed to cater to this market in the long term.

> I am both a host and a guest. I find it incredibly difficult to find truly accessible accommodation. When listing, owners tend to tick the box 'Wheelchair access' if they think a wheelchair can get through the back door. I'm not sure what we are supposed to do once we are there, if we can't get into the bathroom, toilet, or even the bedroom! (Airbnb Community Center, 2017)
>
> It is very frustrating to arrive at the host property, thousands of miles away from your home and after long hours of flight, and you find out you cannot even get into the building (stairs, etc.) or the bathroom (door not wide enough, etc.). (Airbnb Community Center, 2017)

Most Westernized countries have non-discrimination legislation that includes regulations around inclusion of vulnerable populations in public transport, public accommodation and employment. For example, in the US, commercial

short-term accommodation providers must comply with the 1990 Americans with Disability Act. But space available for rent which is 'located within a facility that contains not more than five rooms for rent or hire and that actually is occupied by the proprietor of the establishment as the residence of the proprietor' are exempt (US Department of Justice, 2010: 32). This means that many spaces available for rent via peer-to-peer accommodation networks platforms are not technically required to comply with the Americans with Disability Act. However, some question this and acknowledge it is unclear whether they should be required to comply. For example, using results of data analysis commissioned by *The Chronicle*, Said (2014) reports that two-thirds of hosts rent out entire premises rather than just a room, and more than 10% of hosts list multiple spaces, indicating that some premises are not the host's primary place of residence. McCarthy (2016) concludes that 10–40% of listings on Airbnb are commercial in nature, and Edwards (2016) calculates that only 381 Vancouver Airbnb hosts had listed more than 3500 different spaces, lending further support to the fact that the proportion of commercial listings is quite substantial on peer-to-peer networks. In countries where Airbnb is not the market leader, such as China, the proportion of commercial listings on peer-to-peer networks is even higher because network facilitators themselves buy or construct spaces.

This raises a number of questions: should all listings on peer-to-peer accommodation networks comply with national disability protection legislation? Should each peer-to-peer network in its entirety – or by location – be forced to have a minimum percentage of compliant listings? Or should it be left to market forces to produce peer-to-peer listings that better cater to people with disabilities than commercial spaces that meet the bare minimum legal requirements? The present chapter explores these questions.

The Americans with Disability Act

Many countries have legislation similar to that of the Americans with Disability Act in the US. The purpose of this chapter is not to compare national legislations, but rather, the aim is to gain insight into the intention of such legislation. We use the Americans with Disability Act as a case study for such insight.

According to the Americans with Disability Act, public accommodation must comply with Standards for Accessible Design. These standards are extensive and impose infrastructure requirements on providers of commercial short-term accommodation to ensure suitability and safety for people with disabilities. For example: signs must also be written in braille, and safety hazards have to be cane-detectable (for vision impaired or blind people); fire alarms must use visual signals rather than only sound (for people who are deaf or

hard of hearing); door hardware, air conditioning and heating control units and taps must not require tight pinching, twisting, or grasping (for people with limited use of arms and hands); paths must be free of steps and sudden changes in floor level; and doors must be at least 32 inches wide (for people with walkers or mobility aids).

According to the US Department of Justice (2001), accommodation providers must offer a certain number of accessible car parking spaces. The required number depends on the size of the accommodation, with the absolute minimum for accommodation with more than 1001 car spaces overall being 1%. The percentage of spaces required increases with decreasing total number of car spaces. Properties with between 1 and 25 spaces must have at least one accessible space suitable for a van. Furthermore, all sidewalks and walkways have to be free of steps and wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Entrance areas have to be flat, wide enough and either fitted with automatic doors or with appropriate door handles, and swipe card readers must be installed at a height suitable to be used by a person sitting in a wheelchair or of short stature. Inside spaces and corridors also have to be flat, wide enough, and without steps. Public bathrooms must be accessible, and interior signs must be reachable and readable by vision-impaired people. The number of rooms suitable for hearing-impaired guests depends on the total number of rooms offered by an accommodation provider. Properties with more than 1001 rooms have to provide an absolute minimum of 1%. If the accommodation has less than 25 rooms, one room must be suitable for hearing-impaired guests. The same ratio holds for accessible rooms. Rooms with roll-in showers do not have to be provided by accommodations with 50 or fewer rooms. Staff must be knowledgeable about the availability of accessible rooms so that they can provide guests with accurate information, and these rooms are not allowed to cost more than regular rooms.

The suitability of peer-to-peer accommodation for travelers with a disability

Although holiday homes have been available for rent for many decades, the issue of noncompliance with disability regulation has only now become a major topic of public debate, probably because the size of Airbnb has pushed short-term accommodation offered by 'ordinary people' to a level never before seen or anticipated. The argument against peer-to-peer networks is that – because they are largely exempt from the laws and regulations that protect people with disabilities – they discriminate against such people.

Some empirical evidence exists that supports this argument. In a randomized field experiment, researchers sent 3847 booking requests to Airbnb

hosts between June and November 2016 (Ameri et al., 2017). Bookings from travelers with a disability were rejected more frequently. For travelers who did not report having a disability, permission to book (Karlsson et al., 2017) was granted by hosts in 75% of cases. When reporting a disability, the percentage of people who were given permission to book dropped to 61% for dwarfism; 50% for blindness; 43% for cerebral palsy; and 25% for spinal cord injuries. For listings classified as wheelchair accessible, the difference in permissions was less. The introduction of Airbnb's non-discrimination policy in 2016, to which every host had to commit, made no difference to the gap in the rates of hosts giving permissions to book for people with a disability (Ameri et al, 2017).

While these results seem to indicate that discrimination is occurring, the experiment itself does not allow firm conclusions about the reasons for the difference in pre-approval rates. Discrimination is one of a number of possible explanations. Another one – put forward by the authors of the study – is that hosts would be willing to accommodate people with disabilities, but know that their property does not have the necessary features and is therefore not suitable for the person making the enquiry. The lack of suitability is often not obvious from the online listing. An alternative explanation is that hosts may be concerned about increased risks of injury putting them at a higher risk of liability.

Others are not as generous in their evaluation, arguing that the 'sharing economy is set up for people who are healthy and able-bodied' (Redmond, 2014) and, consequently, is in breach of the Americans with Disability Act. Quoting disability rights activist Bob Planthold, Redmond argues in relation to peer-to-peer accommodation networks specifically that: (1) many properties listed on such networks are public accommodation according to the Americans with Disability Act and should be fully accessible; (2) the Airbnb website is not accessible, which causes difficulties not only for people with disabilities looking for space, but also for those wanting to list space; and (3) there is insufficient information about features of the listing relevant to people with disabilities. As a consequence, people with disability feel uncomfortable using home-sharing services. In addition, (4) the lack of background checks on guests puts already vulnerable populations, such as people with disability, at greater risk of falling victim to potentially dangerous guests (Redmond, 2014).

Similarly, Heidman (2014) notes that the Airbnb website enables guests to search for wheelchair-accessible properties, but since the website redesign in 2014, the wheelchair-accessibility information is hard to find: 'It took me three separate attempts on Airbnb's site to locate the accessibility filter, by clicking the "More Filters" tab, then scrolling through the amenities list until we reached the very end'. An additional complication is that hosts rate wheelchair accessibility, but most lack experience and knowledge about the needs of wheelchair

users. A listing being classified as wheelchair accessible may, therefore, turn out not to be. Heidman also notes that the Airbnb website is incompatible with software used by vision-impaired people and concludes that it is 'clear these peer-to-peer services are here to stay. But it's also clear that, for these new sharing economy companies, you're no peer of theirs if you have a disability'.

Reactions by peer-to-peer networks

Most peer-to-peer accommodation networks have taken no action in improving accessibility for people with a disability because they have not been directly or publicly criticized. Airbnb, which has in recent times found itself in the firing line of public debate given its position as the internationally leading commercial peer-to-peer accommodation network, has commissioned a report on how to fight discrimination and build inclusion (Murphy, 2016) in response to the numerous claims it systematically discriminates against vulnerable populations including non-white ethnicities (Chapter 19), people from the LGBTQI community and people with disabilities. The report was relatively broad and spoke of generic company policies to promote acceptance and inclusion and not tolerate hosts who did not display these values.

In May 2017, Airbnb released a three-point plan to increase inclusion of people with disabilities (Airbnb, 2017). In this plan Airbnb claims it is 'committed to making sure everyone – including people of all abilities – can find and book travel experiences they love' (Airbnb, 2017). The initiatives in this plan include: (1) redesigning the Airbnb website to include assistive technology – such as keyboard navigation support and improvements to legibility and text color contrast – to make Airbnb more accessible to people with visual impairments. (2) Improving the search function in order to enable users to identify accommodation options that match their specific needs. This includes the ability of hosts to be more specific about the nature of accessibility features in their property (beyond just wheelchair accessibility as is currently the case) and enhanced filters that enable users to find accommodation options with the specific features they require. (3) Educating hosts about Airbnb's non-discrimination policy and their responsibility to accommodate guests with special needs, including assistance animals.

Accommodation needs of travelers with a disability

Discussing with people who have a disability their needs related to travel suggests that neither peer-to-peer networks, nor commercial accommodation providers forced to comply with rules and regulations relating to the protec-

tion of people with a disability, genuinely cater to the needs of travelers with a disability. The comments of travelers below illustrate this:

> There are so many disabilities, thus a large variety of needs for different people. If all the facts are presented then a person can decide if they can or can't manage. It doesn't have to be perfect but there are important issues. Are the doorways wide enough to take a wheelchair? Can the wheelchair access the toilet area? Is there a handle for support to transfer to the toilet? Is the shower accessible (wet floor, support handles, non slip flooring)? Can a wheelchair move to the side of the bed so a guest can transfer from the chair to the bed? If this information was presented to me, (and other disabled travelers) we could make an informed decision rather than having to ask the same questions over and over again. (Airbnb Community Center, 2017)

> Went to a listing with a handicapped family member that was ground floor. But there was step up and then down in the entrance, nothing to grab near the toilet, etc. We ended up leaving half the group there and went to a hotel. (Airbnb Community Center, 2017)

> We, as travelers with disabilities, have to ask numerous detailed questions, and we have to be prepared with plan B if a lodging turns out to be just too hard to manage. (New Mobility, 2017)

But it is not just about wheelchair access, although mobility issues affect around 60% of people with disability (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). With an aging population, other forms of disability are increasing, such as hearing and visual impairments. Specific modifications are required to make accommodation safe and suitable for people with these disabilities. For example, modifications for hearing loss might include making auditory sounds louder (e.g., telephones); instaling telecommunication devices for the deaf which allow hearing impaired people to communicate over the telephone; instaling signallers which alert guests when someone is at the door or if there is a fire, which usually includes some form of visual (e.g., flashing lights) or physical (e.g., shaking the bed) signal; instaling wide peepholes in doors to enable people to view visitors as they cannot hear people on the other side of the door; the use of thin flooring for people who rely on feeling vibrations in the home; or sound absorbent flooring if background noise is an issue.

The challenges associated with finding travel accommodation that has the specific features and facilities that perfectly match an individual's unique disability needs are illustrated by talking to the stepmother of a 12 year old girl, Kate. Kate has a progressive undiagnosed syndrome, is profoundly deaf and is living with a moderate intellectual disability. This means she functions at

the level of a 3–4 year old. She also has physical disabilities, which means that she needs assistance or aides to move around the house. She relies on a walker and wheelchair in school. The family, who also has two older children who do not have a disability, have tried to be proactive about taking vacations. They have traveled both nationally and internationally in the past, but this is becoming increasing difficult as the children have become older and both Kate's needs and the needs of other family members have changed. Based on their experience, finding suitable accommodation can be difficult, despite the legal obligations imposed on commercial providers. Over the years they have learnt that larger hotels or resort-style accommodation works best because they often offer ground-level accommodation or lifts and can easily be navigated with a wheelchair because they are spacious and often have ramps leading to different facilities within the hotel or resort. In the past, it has not been a problem if accommodation had a few stairs as they could carry Kate if necessary. But Kate is getting older and heavier and it is more difficult to lift her in and out of the wheelchair.

Kate's family has never booked on Airbnb, but they have booked a holiday house on Stayz.com, another online platform that facilitates trading of unused or underutilized spaces between peers (Chapter 6). The key concerns when booking other people's houses is safety. Because Kate has an intellectual disability, the normal setup of a house can be dangerous. For example, accessibility of appliances and utensils in the kitchen or non-secure parts of the house which would allow Kate to get outside or on to balconies which may not have adequate railings. Resorts and large hotels typically eliminate these types of hazards because they cater for families with small children.

Resorts and large hotels also offer other helpful services, such as room service, as an alternative to having to go out to eat. They also typically have better access to other facilities like pools, gyms, or other recreational activities which are important to meet the needs of Kate and other family members while on holidays.

When asked what kind of peer-to-peer accommodation would be suitable for a family holiday, Kate's stepmother expressed skepticism about finding something that is suitable. A house that would suit their needs would not only have to be genuinely wheelchair-friendly, but would also have to be very child and family-friendly. For example, this would include providing options for other activities on site (e.g., pool or other recreation) and for in-house dining or food services. In this sense, the family is looking for a 'destination stay', not just for accommodation. This is because getting out and about in the local neighborhood and environment whilst on holidays also requires the navigation of other obstacles (beyond the accommodation itself). For families or groups

traveling together, considering only the accommodation needs of the person with the disability is not helpful because it ignores the potential impact this has on the experience of other family or group members. Ultimately, holiday accommodation choices need to be considered within the broader context of the destination and everything it offers, such that they meet the needs of the person with the disability, but also the other people traveling,who may have specific needs of their own.

It is clear from reviewing comments travelers with disabilities make online, as well as our interviews with a number of travelers with disabilities, that their accommodation requirements are very specific. Even the commercial, regulated sector does not cater well to these needs. Peer-to-peer accommodation is perceived as even riskier, because the offerings are less standardized. Many users of peer-to-peer networks accommodation enjoy the aspect of being surprized when they come to a new property for the first time, as opposed to knowing exactly what the space will look like when booking in a hotel chain. For people with disabilities, surprises in short-term accommodations are not always a good thing, potentially making it impossible for them to spend a holiday in the space they booked.

Conclusions

It is challenging for travelers with a disability to find suitable accommodation. While the success of peer-to-peer networks has reignited discussion about discrimination against travelers with a disability, it becomes clear from accounts by travelers with a disability that the commercial accommodation sector – despite regulations – also frequently fails to cater to their specific needs. What, then, is the solution?

The most effective measure that both commercial providers and peer-to-peer network hosts can take is to provide much more detail on those features of the listing relevant to people with a disability. This could be achieved by developing a separate, very detailed list that needs to be completed by accommodation providers. This list does not have to be displayed to all guests, but it could appear when a 'More information for travelers with a disability' icon is clicked, thus providing critically important details to travelers with a disability while not distracting other travelers. Peer-to-peer accommodation networks committed to catering to travelers with disabilities could make it compulsory for people to complete this form as part of setting up the listing. The responses to the form would then determine whether the listing is suitable for travelers with certain disabilities. It would also have an educational benefit of raising awareness among hosts for the very specific needs of travelers with disabilities.

People with a disability have very specific and intricate requirements in terms of their short-term accommodation. Presumably, the only other people who understand these specific requirements are those who have them also. This opens up another solution, one that peer-to-peer accommodation networks are particularly suited to cater for individual needs because they thrive on variation, not standardization. If hosting were easier for people with a disability, supply of spaces set up for people with a disability to stay in may increase. Such spaces are likely to be much better equipped, given that they have been set up for a host with a disability. If the specific needs of one person are matched by a listing with similar specific features, these needs may be met over and above how they might otherwise be met by mainstream accommodation providers. This opens up an entrepreneurship opportunity to establish a new peer-to-peer accommodation network for trading of spaces suitable for people with disabilities. One such network already exists (https://www.accomable.com/) and has 1100 listings of both commercial and private nature in 60 countries. It also opens up the opportunity for established peer-to-peer accommodation providers to show their genuine commitment to inclusiveness. Airbnb positions itself as being able to connect people to unique travel experiences. Given the number of hosts and consumers now engaging with Airbnb, there is potential to take this to the next level. Numerous tourists with disability have been vocal about what they want and need from travel accommodation, which gives guidance as to how this could be achieved. Airbnb is in a unique position to do this, as it essentially provides unique accommodation options which can potentially vary on every aspect imaginable, as opposed to hotel chains, where standardization stands at the center. The sheer quantity of listings on Airbnb (over 3 million spaces *today*, more tomorrow) means it is in a unique position globally to cater to people who have specific and different (but not totally unique) needs and matching them with accommodations that meet these. A few current hosts are already proudly communicating their unique offers:

> I'm proud to say that our place… is fully accessible (Airbnb Community Center, 2017)

> We are proud to say the same: our place… is fully accessible. (Airbnb Community Center, 2017)

Questions for future research

Has the emergence of peer-to-peer accommodation networks been a great development because it has put requirements for travelers with disabilities back on the agenda, and has made it a topic of public conversation? Why is Airbnb held to higher account than other similar companies, such as Booking.com or HomeAway or even commercial accommodation providers offering the

bare minimum required by law? Will Airbnb's three-point plan make a difference? Will niche networks emerge, or will the major networks make a bigger effort to genuinely include travelers with disabilities? To what extent are the needs of people with disabilities currently met by different types of short-term accommodation providers? What can all types of providers do to better cater to this segment?

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Corporate Social Responsibility and Activism

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This chapter explores the engagement of peer-to-peer accommodation networks in activities not aligning directly with their corporate mission, including corporate social responsibility and activism. While corporate social responsibility aligns with societal values, activism often seeks to change them, thus potentially alienating customers. Yet Airbnb – the internationally leading commercial peer-to-peer accommodation network – is very proactively engaged in political activism, including fighting for marriage equality and against the tightening of US immigration law.

The ice cream shop Ben & Jerry's does not only sell ice cream. It also proactively engages in public debate around contentious issues nations face. In Australia, their 'Scoop ice cream not coal' campaign asks people to sign up to an action list to lobby against the biggest coalmine in Australia being developed (Ben & Jerry, 2017a). Similarly, Ben & Jerry's – in their 'Love comes in all flavours' campaign – invite people to pick up a postcard at one of their stores, write on it why they are in support of marriage equality and send them to their members of parliament (Ben & Jerry, 2017b). Customers may not order two scoops of the same ice cream until marriage equality is reality in Australia (Palazzo, 2017).

Businesses are increasingly becoming proactive and vocal about societal issues; they are engaging in political activism. Political activism is not the same as corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibly is tame; it does good without offending anyone. Not so activism. The Oxford Dictionary defines activism as 'policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change' (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). Such vigorous

campaigning on issues dividing societies can come at a high risk for businesses. In 2017, the CEO of the Australian airline Qantas was hit in the face with a pie by an audience member discontented with his support of marriage equality. And Australian tennis champion Margaret Court is publicly boycotting the airline for the same reason (Laurie, 2017). While nonprofit organizations act in line with their mission, businesses engaging in activism do not. It is not the purpose of their existence to bring about political and societal change. The purpose of their existence, typically, is to create profit and shareholder value. Activism could interfere with this mission if there is a consumer backlash against the positions taken by businesses. This is precisely how the pie-thrower felt, explaining his actions as follows: 'Alan Joyce is paid $13 million to run airlines, not bulldoze Australia socially against its will … Middle Australia completely rejects corporate bullying aimed at social engineering. Qantas is insulting many staff and passengers with their (same-sex marriage) propaganda' (Overington, 2017). Despite opposition, many businesses appear undeterred by the risk of upsetting potential customers. Alan Joyce, the CEO of Qantas, cleaned himself up, continued his speech and vowed to continue to fight for marriage equality.

The aim of this chapter is to explore activism by businesses with a commercial purpose; and to explore the role of peer-to-peer accommodation networks in activism and their power as facilitators of activism, as amplifiers of the voices of global citizens.

From corporate social responsibility to activism

Corporate social responsibility is defined broadly as 'business firms contributing in a positive way to society by going beyond a narrow focus on profit maximization' (McWilliams, 2015: 1). The idea of businesses having a responsibility beyond their core mission is not a new concept. Carroll (1999) traces the concept of corporate social responsibility back to the 1930s and points to *Fortune* magazine quizzing CEOs about their responsibility to society as early as 1946. The first definition of corporate social responsibility was proposed by Bowen (1953), who views it as an obligation of CEOs to behave in a way which is 'desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society' (Bowen, 1953: 6). Only in the early 1970s was corporate social responsibility seen as a vehicle to long-term profit maximization (Johnson, 1971), rather than altruism without an expectation of return on investment. Bowen's definition is still valid today. At its center, however, stands alignment with current societal values; the expectation that businesses will act in compliance with societal norms: 'The CSR firm should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen' (Carroll, 1991: 43).

Activism is not about compliance with social norms. On the contrary: activism is about changing societal norms. And 'some corporations do not simply follow powerful external expectations by complying with societal standards in legal and moral terms; they engage in discourses that aim at setting or redefining those standards and expectations in a changing, globalizing world and assume an enlarged political co-responsibility' (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007: 1109). Corporations engage in public health, education, and protection of human rights (Porter and Kramer, 2002).

The term corporate social responsibility in its original sense no longer captures the full range of activities businesses engage in, beyond their organizational mission. Consequently, a few alternative terms were defined to describe these activities. Scherer and Palazzo (2007) compare positivist and post-positivist schools of thought, arguing that – in modern societies – different stakeholders (managers, suppliers, customers) have conflicting moral ideas. According to the positivist conceptualization of corporate social responsibility, a company considers views that are economically or legally most beneficial. In contrast, non-positivist monological corporate social responsibility relies on philosophical methods of reasoning to examine, justify, or improve the moral quality of business behavior. Post-positivist approaches to corporate social responsibility assume that, in pluralistic societies, common ground on questions of right and wrong or fair and unfair can only be found through joint communicative processes between different actors (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007).

Scherer and Palazzo (2007) propose a post-positivist concept of corporate social responsibility which 'shifts focus from an analysis of corporate reaction to stakeholder pressure to an analysis of the corporation's role in the overarching processes of (national and transnational) public will formation and these processes' contribution to solving global environmental and social challenges' and 'the corporation is understood as a political actor' (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007: 1108). Scherer and Palazzo (2007) demonstrate that corporate social responsibility is increasingly displayed in corporate involvement in the political process of societal problems.

Political corporate social responsibility is 'a movement of the corporation into the political sphere in order to respond to environmental and social challenges such as human rights, global warming, or deforestation' (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011: 910).

The term corporate political activity was introduced by Epstein (1969) and defined as 'firms' efforts to influence or manage political entities' (Lux et al., 2011: 223). It encompasses a wide range of possible actions, including lobbying and making donations to political campaigns. It is a non-market strategy aiming at influencing the context in which the business operates (Boddewyn, 2003). As

opposed to corporate social responsibility – which does good in line with societal norms – and activism – which aims at changing societal norms – corporate political activity is aimed at improving business performance (Mitchell et al., 1997; North, 1990) and understood as an investment which leads to a positive return (Baron, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1997; Lux et al., 2011).

Figure 23.1 consolidates the different approaches using as axes the extent to which the action taken by a business is in line with current societal norms and the extent to which the action taken is taken to improve business performance.

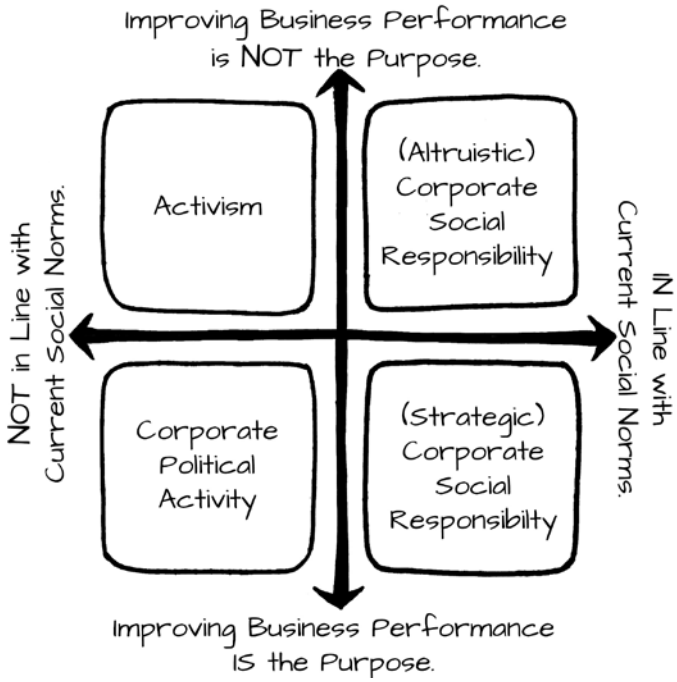

Figure 23.1: Framework of business activities not directly aligned with the organizational mission

When action taken by a business is in line with current societal norms and improving business performance is not the purpose, the business engages in *altruistic corporate social responsibility* which 'involves contributing to the common good at the possible, probable, or even definite expense of the business' (Lantos, 2001: 605). Businesses help alleviate public welfare deficiencies such as drug and alcohol problems, poverty, crime, and illiteracy without the profit-making motive (Lantos, 2001). This type of corporate social responsibility is rare because businesses are under pressure from investors to maximize profit (Porter and Kramer, 2002).

When action is in line with current social norms and improving business performance is the purpose of the action, the business engages in strategic cor-

porate social responsibility, which is the 'fulfillment of a firm's social welfare responsibilities' in a win-win situation in which both the business and society benefit (Lantos, 2001: 605). For example, the Cisco Networking Academy trains computer network administrators and, in so doing, alleviates a potential constraint on its growth (Porter and Kramer, 2002).

When the action taken by a business is not in line with current social norms and the purpose is not improving business performance, the business engages in *activism*. Examples of businesses engaging in activism are advertisements in 2017 Super Bowl by Google, Airbnb, Audi, 84 Lumber, and Budweiser taking stance regarding immigration and – racial, religious, and sexual – equality (Butler and Judkis, 2017).

When the action is not in line with current societal norms and the purpose is improving performance, the business involves in *corporate political activity*. Examples of political activities undertaken by businesses are political donations by property and construction companies to the Australian (conservative) Liberal Party to influence Australian politics – despite a New South Wales ban on donations from property developers (Hanrahan et al., 2017).

It can be concluded that businesses have available a wide range of initiatives which are not necessary to achieve their core mission. In some instances, such initiatives are taken out of genuine altruism and sense of obligation to society; in other instances they aim at influencing political parties to shape their economic environment and make it more advantageous for them. This chapter explores where along this continuum initiatives taken by peer-to-peer accommodation networks are located.

Peer-to-peer network activities not directly contributing to the mission

Businesses associated with what is referred to as the sharing economy (Chapter 2) have engaged in a number of activities not directly linked to their organizational mission. For example, the two ride-sharing services, Uber and Lyft, took opposite stances following Trump's executive order banning immigration and refugees from seven Muslim countries. Lyft sent an email to its users noting 'We stand firmly against these actions, and will not be silent on issues that threaten the values of our community.' Lyft also donated $1 million to the American Civil Liberties Union (Etherington, 2017). Uber, on the other hand, was perceived to seek profit from giving rides to airport customers during protests against Trump's immigration order. In addition, Uber CEO Travis Kalanick's ties to Trump led to a loss of more than 200,000 users after the #deleteUber protest on Twitter (Isaac, 2017).

Uber has engaged in corporate social responsibility efforts for gender equality by collaborating with UN Women to create one million jobs for women by 2020 (Uber, 2015). Uber also launched UberMilitary, a campaign to provide 50,000 members of the military with jobs to empower them as entrepreneurs and small business owners (Uber, 2014). One of Lyft's corporate social responsibility efforts is Round up & Donate program, where riders can opt in to Round Up & Donate and Lyft rounds up fares to the nearest dollar, then donates the difference to a charitable cause of the rider's choice (Lyft, 2017). Examples of sharing economy businesses' engagement in corporate political activity are Airbnb's and Uber's donations to political parties (Taylor, 2013).

Moving from the broader sharing economy to peer-to-peer accommodation networks, the world's leader in the field (Airbnb) led a joint initiative with Qantas, Fairfax Media, and Foxtel to progress the issue of marriage equality in Australia. The 'Until We Belong' campaign invited Australians to wear a custom designed Acceptance Ring to signal support with marriage equality. Qantas and Google Australia made the ring available to their staff at no cost (Urban, 2017). Airbnb contacted all their members in Australia inviting them to sign a petition and wear the Acceptance Ring – sold online at the cost of postage only – until marriage equality becomes reality in Australia (Airbnb, 2017a). If societal norms are defined as laws, this initiative stands in direct opposition as it calls for laws preventing gay couples from getting legally married to be abolished. If societal norms are defined as beliefs held by the population of a country, the initiative has a better alignment, given that the majority of Australians are in support of marriage equality. Yet many Australians are not. It is therefore not clear whether the 'Until We Belong' campaign will improve business performance or not. It may improve business performance because it serves as a powerful tool of positioning for Airbnb. Airbnb portrays itself as open-minded, non-discriminatory and accepting of everyone. This image may well have positive business performance outcomes as it helps to attract new members to the network who identify with these values. On the other hand, the initiative may negatively affect business performance because those people who are strongly opposed to marriage equality may boycott Airbnb or even mobilize a broader boycott of the network. Overall, the 'Until We Belong' campaign best falls into the activism quadrants in Figure 23.1: it does not fully comply with current societal norms and it cannot be expected that the business performance outcome will be positive.

If executive orders of the President of the United States of America can be seen as a societal norm, Airbnb has directly opposed it by offering free accommodation to people affected by Donald Trump's executive order blocking entry into the US for refugees and immigrants from seven Muslim countries

(Gallagher, 2017). This initiative stands in direct opposition to being a good corporate citizen – a key component of the definition of corporate social responsibility – representing instead powerful corporate criticism, corporate resistance. Airbnb's reaction to changing immigration rules in the US can be classified as activism: it stands in direct opposition to societal norms as defined by the views of a democratically elected president and it may lead to a backlash of consumers who voted for Trump, thus potentially negatively affecting business performance. For other market segments, of course, it is likely to have major reputational benefits.

Although activities by peer-to-peer accommodation networks falling into the category of activism are most visible and lead to public discourse about their actions, networks also engage in corporate social responsibility. An example is the Wimdu Scholarship Program, which recognizes the skills to create a successful marketing campaign in a fast-moving international economy. The scholarship supports promising students interested in pursuing a career in marketing and business related fields (Wimdu, 2017). Another example is Airbnb's disaster response program. Airbnb works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Ready campaign to better educate hosts on how to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters (Airbnb, 2017b). Airbnb also has a disaster response tool that can provide emergency accommodation within the first week of a disaster hitting a place (Airbnb, 2017c, see Chapter 21).

Conclusions

Among the many peer-to-peer accommodation networks in existence, only few engage in activities which do not contribute directly to the achievement of their corporate mission. Airbnb not only engages in corporate social responsibility, but also in large-scale political activism. Their corporate social responsibility activities are not well advertized, but include highly impactful activities, such as opening the homes of hosts willing to participate to people in need after a disaster has hit a place (Chapter 21). Airbnb's activities in the political activism space are much more visible, ranging from sending marriage equality rings to guests and hosts and asking them to pledge their support for marriage equality by wearing the ring and signing a petition, to expensive advertising campaigns expressing dismay with changed US immigration laws.

The implications are not obvious. On the one hand, this very strong positioning can have a positive effect in attracting attention and, with it, new network members as well as by attracting members who align well with the value system of the network. People who support marriage equality, for example,

may discriminate less against hosts or guests with specific personal characteristics. On the other hand, these activities can alienate other (potential) hosts and guests; those who disagree with those positions and, as a consequence, feel that they do not wish to belong to this community.

Questions for future research

Some of the future research questions relating to peer-to-peer accommodation networks are the following: What is the immediate effect of highly publicly visible political activism campaigns by networks on network membership? What are the long-term effects of highly publicly visible political activism campaigns by networks on membership? Do political activism campaigns help networks to ensure their members align with the corporate value system? Do hosts and guests self-select into or out of networks in view of activism? Does the strong positioning of Airbnb as a changer of society provide business opportunities for other peer-to-peer accommodation networks who do not push the boundaries of society?

Acknowledgments

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24

Peer-to-Peer Accomodation Networks and Environmental Sustainability

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The tourism industry causes significant environmental damage. With demand for peer-to-peer accommodation dramatically increasing and expected to further increase, the question arises whether the provision of accommodation via peer-to-peer networks places a higher burden on the environment or whether it reduces this burden. This question stands at the center of this chapter.

The accommodation sector has a range of negative environmental impacts: it uses and pollutes water, land and air, and contributes to global warming (Gössling, 2002; Gössling and Peeters, 2015). The precise environmental cost of tourist accommodation is difficult to assess because impacts vary by geographic location and type of accommodation. A few studies provide an indication of the harm done.

Water

Accommodation providers are the biggest users of water internationally (Gössling, 2002) and nationally (Becken et al., 2001; Gössling et al., 2012). The direct average water use per guest night amounts to 350 litres (Gössling, 2015). Indirect uses – such as pools, spas, and food preparation – require an additional 6205 litres per guest night. A four-star hotel in Spain uses 361 litres

of water per bed, about 187 litres more than a one-star hotel (Rico-Amoros et al., 2009). Gardening alone accounts for 70% of total water use in hotels in the Balearic Islands in Spain (Hoff and Schmitt, 2011). The daily average consumption of water in tourist apartments is 163 litres per day or 46 litres per person per day. Campsites report using about 84 litres of water per person per day (Rico-Amoros et al., 2009).

Land

Accommodation infrastructure contributes considerably to land use (Gössling, 2002). Self-catering accommodation and vacation homes have the smallest land footprint; hotels and campsites the highest (Gössling, 2002). Hotels account for 47% of the total accommodation land use in the world, campsites contribute 27%, pensions 12%, self-catering units 11%, holiday villages and homes 2%, (Gössling, 2002). However, hotels have the smallest land use per bed (only 30 m^2) and vacation homes the highest (200 m^2); campsites use 50 m^2, self-catered apartments 50 m^2, pensions 25 m^2, and holiday villages about 130 m^2 per bed.

Air and climate change

The tourism accommodation sector is responsible for about 20% of the total carbon emissions generated by the tourism industry (UNWTO and UNEP, 2008). Campsites use considerably less energy (Becken et al., 2001; Gössling, 2002) than hotels. As an example, hotels in Greece use between 17 and 42 kWh of energy per guest night (Gössling, 2015). The Hilton hotel chain uses about 90 kWh of energy per guest night (Bodhanowicz and Martinac, 2007). This corresponds to about 44 kg of CO_2 emissions for Hilton hotels (UNWTO and UNEP, 2012). Just one routine daily room clean in a Slovenian four-star hotel – which includes replacement of towels – uses 1.5 kWh of electricity (Dolnicar et al., in press).

A five-star hotel in the Seychelles using a diesel generator to produce electricity, produces 125 kg of CO_2 emissions per guest per night. A three-star hotel in Zanzibar, also using a diesel generator, produces 14.5 kg of CO_2 emissions per guest per night (UNWTO and UNEP, 2012). Sicilian hotels using the same source of energy produce between 4.7 and 15.8 kg of CO_2 emissions per guest per night (UNWTO and UNEP, 2012).

Airbnb commissioned a study into environmental aspects of peer-to-peer accommodation networks (Cleantech Group, 2014). This examined secondary data and conducted a survey with Airbnb guests and hosts, drawing the following conclusions:

1 Airbnb guests in North America use between 63% and 71% less energy than hotel guests in North America, thus generating 61–82% less CO_2

emissions. Airbnb guests in Europe use 78% to 84% less energy than hotel guests, thus generating at least 88% less CO_2 emissions.

2 Airbnb guests in North America use between 12% and 39% (59–170 litres) less water than hotel guests. Airbnb guests in Europe use between 48 and 57% (160–290 litres) less water than hotel guests.

3 Fewer than 2% of Airbnb hosts report washing bed sheets and towels daily.

4 Most Airbnb hosts (95% in North America and 89% in Europe) report that they are providing recycling facilities; 94% of Airbnb guests in North America and 90% of Airbnb guests in Europe say they recycle when they can.

5 Most Airbnb hosts (83% in North America and 79% in Europe) report that they provide energy efficient appliances.

Most of these conclusions are derived from survey responses, which are known to be biased when people are asked about topics with respect to which society as a whole holds certain views (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2016).

It can be concluded from this overview of studies into the comparative environmental damage caused by different types of tourist accommodation that higher quality accommodation comes at a higher environmental costs for land, water and air. This would suggest, *a priori*, that peer-to-peer accommodation networks may offer a solution to reducing the environmental burden of tourist accommodation. To explore whether or not this is the case is the aim of the present chapter.

Peer-to-peer accommodation infrastructure

The infrastructure-related negative environmental impact of listings in existing houses is smaller than that of commercial tourist accommodation in purpose-built dwellings; but peer-to-peer networks are also used as distribution channels by hotel-like providers which may have purpose-built the dwelling (Priceonomics, 2016). The information required to assess the comparative environmental impact therefore is: what is the proportion of listings offered in existing versus purpose-built dwellings? The lower this proportion, the lower is the relative negative environmental impact of peer-to-peer accommodation networks in their entirety.

Estimates of the proportion of commercial properties range from 6% (Schneiderman, 2014) to 40% (McCarthy, 2016), and higher in countries such as China where local network facilitators themselves develop purpose-built spaces for trading (Chapter 13).

In July 2017, we analyzed 90 Airbnb properties listed in selected European cities: Amsterdam, Berlin, Bratislava, Helsinki, Lisbon, Ljubljana, London, Madrid, Oslo, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna, and Zagreb. We identified the most frequently rented Airbnb properties in each of those cities. For each listing, we inspected infrastructure-related features based on the description of the property. Table 24.1 provides results.

Table 24.1: Sustainability-related characteristics of Airbnb listings in selected European cities

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Dwelling purpose		
Home	18	20
Tourism	9	10
Other	64	70
Dwelling type		
Apartment	51	57
Garden house	1	<1
House	3	3
Room	20	22
Studio	15	17
Service		
Air-conditioner	23	26
Bathtub	19	21
Hot tub	4	4
Coffee maker	4	4
Laundry dryer	19	21
Laundry machine	75	83
Other appliances (electric heater, electrical fireplace, pool, toaster, table fan, microwave)	12	13
Pool	1	>1

As can be seen in Table 24.1, only 20% of high-in-demand properties in the selected cities appear to be people's homes. This aligns with the fact that 22% of listings offered rooms only, rather than the entire dwelling. Of the analyzed properties, 70% are likely to be commercial properties because hosts explain they do not live there permanently. These properties could also be people's second or holiday homes, in which case, their purpose of existence is not short-term rental and the environmental cost of construction cannot be attributed to peer-to-peer accommodation networks.

Almost three-quarters (74%) of the listings are apartments and studios in apartment buildings. As such, they have a small land footprint per room per person because apartment buildings typically use less ground space than

hotels or houses. The smallest space listed has only 15 m^2; the largest 200 m^2. The average apartment size is 70 m^2; more than a typical hotel room. In the US, an average hotel room has 30 m^2 (O'Rourke Hospitality, 2017). Hotelstars (2017) criteria suggest that the minimum room size should be 14 m^2, but rooms can also be larger than 30 m^2. The estimated average space of Airbnb listing is similar to that in traditional hotels.

Prior work, as well as our own analysis for city destinations in Europe, indicates that a substantial proportion of properties on peer-to-peer networks are commercial in nature and thus likely to have been constructed specifically for the purpose of short-term rental. Yet this proportion is not 100% as it is for network-independent commercial providers, giving peer-to-peer networks a relative advantage in terms of infrastructure-related negative environmental impacts. Setting an upper limit for commercial listings on peer-to-peer networks could increase this advantage.

Other aspects which determine the relative infrastructure-related negative environmental impacts include land used (which is difficult to assess without detailed information of the nature of the dwelling in which spaces is located) and amenities. In terms of amenities it can be concluded that peer-to-peer network accommodation rarely offers the same resource-intensive amenities as hotels, such as large common areas, large swimming pools or manicured gardens (Bastic and Gojcic, 2012; Gossling et al., 2012).

Peer-to-peer accommodation services

The service level at accommodations listed on peer-to-peer networks is typically lower than that in commercial accommodation: bedlinen and towels are not replaced and the space is only cleaned before each arrival of new guests. This stands in direct contrast to the daily room-cleaning routine in hotels, with each room clean in a four-star hotel estimated to use 1.5 kWh of electricity, 35 litres of water and 100 mL of chemicals (Dolnicar et al., in press). In addition, fewer amenities and services are offered, leading to less energy and water use; less energy, water and chemicals are required to service common areas, such as gardens, reception areas and pool areas, because these spaces do not exist or are smaller in size, and because they do not need to be kept at the same standard as in hotels. This implies a substantially reduced environmental footprint compared to most commercial accommodation providers.

On the other hand, spaces listed on peer-to-peer accommodation networks typically contain fully equipped kitchens, which may lead to more water and electricity use for cooking. It is difficult to assess, however, whether the alternative of dining out leads to an overall smaller environmental footprint than

cooking at home. Also, spaces listed on peer-to-peer networks are typically equipped with energy and water use intensive amenities, as can be seen in Table 24.1: 26% have air conditioners, 13% other electrical appliances and 21% laundry dryers. All these devices use electricity – probably more than commercial systems in hotels – adding to the carbon footprint.

Overall, however, spaces listed on peer-to-peer accommodation networks are unlikely to cause more environmental damage than services offered in hotels when compared at the hotel, rather than the room level. The situation may be different for bed and breakfasts as well as low-end hotels, the environmental impact of which is likely to be more comparable with that of peer-to-peer network listings.

Tourists' perceptions of environmental footprints

We asked 378 adult Australian residents – who had undertaken at least one personal holiday in the last year and were aware of peer-to-peer network accommodation – about their perceptions of the comparative environmental friendliness of eight accommodation options: peer-to-peer; five-star or four-star hotels; three-star, two-star, one-star or unstarred hotels; beds and breakfasts; holiday apartments; youth hostels; camping sites; and staying with friends. Respondents were offered to explain their ratings in open-ended questions.

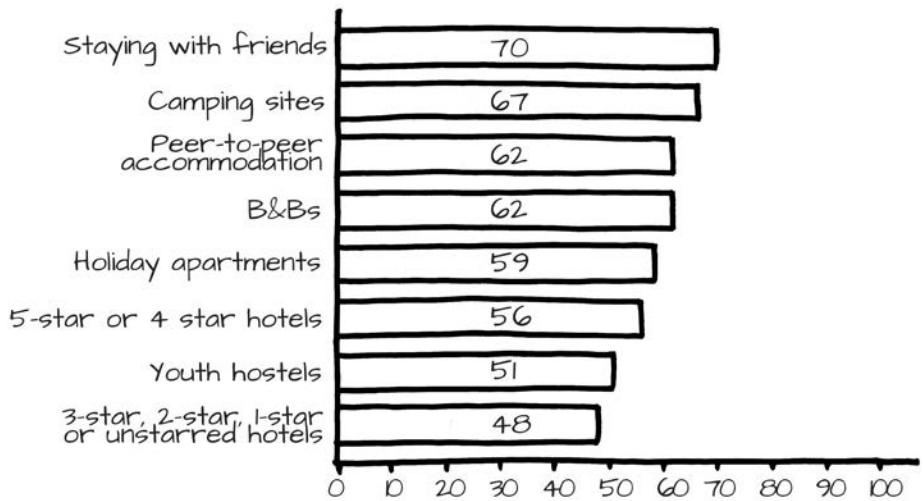

Figure 24.1: Perceived levels of environmental friendliness of accommodation options (0 = minimum, 100 = maximum)

Figure 24.1 shows the perceived levels of environmental friendliness. Differences between accommodation options are statistically significant

(Friedman chi-squared = 439.91, p-value = 0). As can be seen, respondents perceive staying with friends as the most environmentally friendly accommodation option, followed by camping sites. Peer-to-peer network accommodation ranks third, together with bed and breakfasts. Low-end hotels rank last.

When explaining the assessment of peer-to-peer network accommodation networks, responses fell into two groups: structural differences, and different levels of change of behavior from home, for example:

> I think I'd be as environmental friendly as I'm at home.
>
> It is probably like staying in your own house.
>
> I would treat their home as I would expect mine to be treated.

This is in line with findings of pro-environmental habits of people who use a home-swapping service as holiday accommodation (Forno and Garibaldi, 2015); they appear to display a high level of environmental sensitivity and prefer to cook using local food. Comments relating to structural differences include the following:

> People who rent out their own homes are more likely to have installed energy saving fittings and fixtures, appliances lights etc.
>
> Someone's personal property could have things like solar power, water tanks etc.
>
> You are able to keep the recycling going.
>
> You are essentially living in a house that is already occupied. Therefore, most things are only slightly additive to any sort of footprint rather than a whole room that is often empty and cleaned top to bottom every day.
>
> It's using existing buildings so there will be no building of new buildings just for temporary accommodation.
>
> It uses existing infrastructure, can connect well to public transport with the owner's help and allows self-catering which is low impact.

Some respondents mentioned that tourists would behave more environmentally friendly when using peer-to-peer accommodation because it is someone's home, not a corporation:

> I presume people would look after other people's homes.
>
> I think you take more care because it's not a big corporation.

A framework for assessing the environmental impact of peer-to-peer accommodation

Figure 24.2 offers a simple framework for the assessment – on a listing-by-listing basis, rather than a network basis – of the environmental footprint of the accommodation. It uses three criteria: the first criterion – plotted along the vertical axis – is whether the dwelling which is (entirely or partially) offered was built for the personal use of the host, or specifically for short-term rental. The latter option comes at a higher environmental cost. The second criterion – plotted along the horizontal axis – is the size of the space, with larger spaces being less environmentally friendly. The third criterion – plotted along the 45° angle for illustration purposes – is the pro-environmental setup of the space, which could include solar panels for electricity production; a solar hot water system; rainwater tanks; a greywater system; energy-efficient appliances; composting bins; recycling bins as well as recommendations for guest on how to keep their environmental footprint to a minimum. Optimally, a listing would have low values for all three dimensions, placing it in the light gray shaded area at the bottom left.

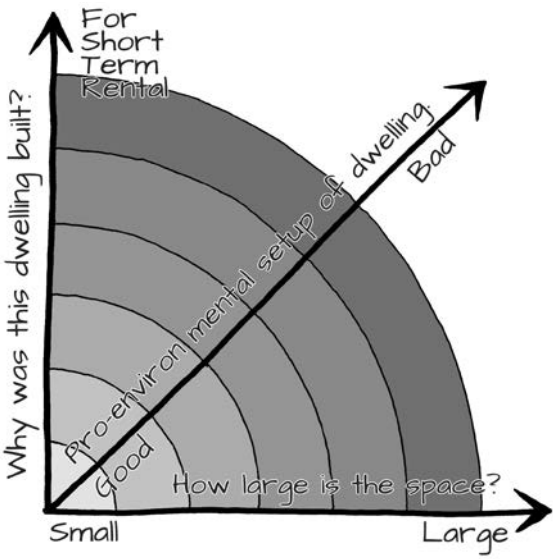

Figure 24.2: The environmental impact of listings on peer-to-peer accommodation networks

This framework can be used by guests to choose an environmentally friendly accommodation among all the options listed on their preferred network. It can also be used by hosts to improve the environmental sustainability of their spaces. It can be used by peer-to-peer network facilitators to develop a sustainability index that could be publicly displayed as part of the listing to offer

guests a single number summarizing the environmental cost of booking this accommodation. Such an internal environmental certification scheme would be unpopular among all those hosts with unfavorable environmental ratings, but in the long term it would encourage hosts to take action to ensure their listing has a high value, thus improving the overall environmental sustainability of the network. Such action would be in line with the call for businesses to 'set up their business models to encourage the right behaviors' (Bocken and Bocken, 2017: 92). It may also encourage hosts to be proactive in making recommendations to guests on how they can keep their environmental footprint to a minimum. Such recommendations are currently not common on peer-to-peer accommodations. A rare example is the following: 'We are a green household and appreciate you helping us with this by switching off lights, electrical appliances after use and unplug if possible. Using recycle bins provided.'

Conclusions

Constructing buildings and maintaining them comes at an environmental cost, as does using them to provide short-term accommodation services to tourists. Consequently, both established commercial providers and peer-to-peer networks harm the environment. The question is: what is the environmentally best of all the bad options? The answer is not clear cut. While high-end hotels and resorts offer relatively standardized services that allow the development of reasonably accurate estimates of their negative environmental impacts, peer-to-peer accommodation networks do not. By definition, these networks offer maximum variability ranging from accommodation equivalent to a five-star rated hotel to a modestly equipped room in someone's home. Consequently, the environmental impact of the network as a whole is difficult to estimate, given that the number and nature of listings changes by the minute. It is comparable to estimating the impacts of the entire tourism accommodation sector, including high-end hotels as well as beds and breakfasts, motels and campsites.

Overall, however, it can be concluded that peer-to-peer traded spaces in their original conceptualization – where 'ordinary people' make available to other 'ordinary people' unused space in their houses or their holiday homes – have a lower negative environmental impact because: (1) they already exist and were not constructed specifically for short-term rental; (2) most of them are small, especially rooms within the primary residence of the host; and (3) they are more likely to be equipped with infrastructure that enables people to display environmentally friendly behaviors such as recycling waste. Yet the proportion of commercial accommodations traded on peer-to-peer networks is increasing. The higher the proportion of accommodation similar to high-end hotels, the

higher the negative environmental impact of the networks as a whole.

In this chapter a simple framework was proposed which can be used as a guide for guests when they choose accommodation; by hosts when they set up the space for listing; and by network facilitators, such as Airbnb, to calculate an environmental sustainability index which may drive demand and, with it, offer an incentive for all hosts to make their spaces more environmentally friendly.

Questions for future research

What is the actual environmental footprint of a range of typical listings on peer-to-peer accommodation networks? Then, knowing the proportions of listings of different kinds, what is the network footprint? Why do some peer-to-peer accommodation networks offer information on the environmental sustainability of listings – even if subjective – and others do not? Does this information affect bookings? If Airbnb were to introduce an internal environmental indicator for their listing, would it encourage hosts to increase the environmental sustainability of their listing?

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