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Selection Criteria of Sharing Accommodation

— Host-Guest Relationship in Airbnb —

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The hotel industry has a very ancient history. Before the internet was invented customers had only limited information about the service quality of hotels. They had either to rely on word of mouth or make the experience by themselves. The introduction of information technology and growth of the internet had a tremendous impact on the hotel industry. With the introduction of sharing accommodation platforms the seeds were laid for a new trend in the hospitality industry. The traditional hotel industry draws upon a pure financial business model with two main actors: the customer and the enterprise. Latter aims to offer services in order to make profit. However, in the sharing economy the enterprise acts as an intermediary between two parties who co-create value, in case of Airbnb the guest and the host. The willingness to share is crucial.

Sharing economy used to be a niche phenomenon which has received a little attention in the past. But in the last few years sharing services emerged to a relevant economic topic. From service science perspective the service dominant logic provides theoretical foundation for a better understanding of sharing economy business models and consumer behavior.

This master thesis investigates on guest and host motivation to participate in sharing accommodation and explains how customer satisfaction is formed using the case of Airbnb. The research is based on qualitative methods and hence data driven. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with Airbnb guests and hosts.

Overall we could convince 8 parties to give an interview. All guest interviewees are the Students of JAIST and most of the time they use Airbnb rather than any other online hotel portal to organize their accommodation. The interviewed host couple was Japanese with 2 children, the single person was from Germany and lives since long time in Japan. The results enabled me to develop a model which explains how customer satisfaction is formed in sharing accommodation.

The interviews with guests and hosts aiming to understand motivation to participate in sharing accommodation that has confirmed most of the motivational aspects mentioned in theory. Motivational aspects are amongst others monetization, social interaction, environmentally friendly behavior, and word of mouth. In order to explain how customer satisfaction is formed this research draws upon the Kano model and investigates on the relationships between the actors. By analyzing guest and host interviews four types of groups with different evaluation criteria on sharing accommodation could be identified: guest with low expectation, guest with high expectation, host with low expectation, and host with high expectation. Low expectation guests see Airbnb mainly as an opportunity to save travelling costs, while low expectation hosts want to increase their income by sharing their accommodation. However, high expectation guests and hosts have expectations that go beyond the financial aspect towards social oriented behavior. Socially-oriented activities determine their satisfaction. Four possible relationships between the actors were identified which serve as a basis to explain how customer satisfaction is formed.

A special case is the high expectation guest and host. In this case the financial transaction and sharing accommodation serve as an environment for both high expectation guest and host to get involved in social interactions. People do something for each other without having a direct money benefit, but instead of that they get a social benefit. This is the main difference between customer satisfaction in traditional hotel industry and in sharing economy. The highest satisfaction can be achieved in a situation where individuals collaborate on a voluntary basis, rather driven by intrinsic motivation than by profit.