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ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION MOTIVES OF AIRBNB HOSTS IN THE CONTEXT OF SHARING ECONOMY

Bachelor's thesis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to define the degree of Airbnb usage by professional hosts and to find out the nature of their hosting behavior. The research questions are: what are the hosts' motives that encourage Airbnb participation and what are the hosts' attitudes concerning their hosting experience and Airbnb platform. The online survey is conducted in order to answer these questions. The results show that economic motives are dominating among hosts, however, hosting activity is not, generally, a main source of income for Airbnb hosts. Secondly, the study shows that some hosts tend to expand their hosting activity over time and create additional listings to attain greater economic output. The study also reveals that a significant part of hosts are unconcerned by environmental issues. Furthermore, the study indicates problems around protection as well as regulation issues related to employment, taxation, and limitations associated with rent terms. The main findings show that professional hosting is evident in more than one property in the ownership and usage of third-party assistance for listing management. The activity of hosts with professional attitudes is small scaled at the moment, but requires attention since the increasing trend towards professional relationships on the platform may considerably shift customer motives and attitudes entailed in probable changes in regulations.

Keywords: sharing economy, collaborative consumption, peer-to-peer marketplace, Airbnb

INTRODUCTION

Sharing economy business models have become immensely popular in recent years. This can be confirmed by the rapid growth of companies in various sectors that position themselves as sharing economy intermediaries as well as increased public and academic interest in the issue. The topic provokes intensive debates and becomes increasingly imperative in relation of global time-critical economic, social and ecological problems. Sharing economy ideas are often associated with impending shifts in consumption patterns and changes in the ownership structure. The listed concerns reinforce the need of greater awareness and deeper consideration of such conspicuous phenomenon as sharing economy.

A number of matters related to the sharing economy model applicability in its present form to the full extent is under discussion. The growing tensions around safety and regulation issues have divided participants and observers into camps of sharing economy supporters and opponents. The contradictions between consumer perceptions and the fact that sharing economy, headed by Airbnb, the leading company in lodging sector, can noticeably change attitudes towards consumption and ownership in the nearest future make the present research topical.

Airbnb has been conceived as a place where individuals may add listings and host when the living space is not used by them. However, there is evidence of platform usage by people with professional attitudes. The extensive presence of professional hosts on Airbnb platform has potential consequences that would change participant's perception and Airbnb applied practices under the influence of regulatory changes adopted by policy makers. The research aim is to define the degree of Aibnb usage by professional hosts and find out the nature of their hosting behavior in general terms. In order to fulfil the aim the following research questions are formulated:

Q1: What are hosts' motives that encourage Airbnb participation?
Q2: What are hosts' attitudes concerning their hosting experience and Airbnb platform?

The research problem is approached from the perspective of active Airbnb hosts. In the empirical research the quantitative research methods are applied. The survey is conducted via Google Forms and distributed through several hosting forums and Facebook groups with high concentration of active Airbnb hosts.

The thesis consists of two chapters. In the first chapter a theoretical overview of sharing economy concept is provided along with the outline of Airbnb model. The theoretical background consideration also includes discussion of participation motives, challenges, hotel industry influence, economic and environmental impact, further growth potential. The second chapter relates to empirical research, where research methodology and research results together with analysis, and recommendations are presented. The chapters are followed by the conclusions.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In 2014 the value of the sharing economy worldwide was estimated at 15 billion US dollars and figures are predicted to overcome the mark of 335 billion by 2025 (Value of … 2017). Such enhanced industry capacity forces paying particular attention to the phenomenon of sharing economy, having considered basic constituents and connections between them in the theoretical chapter.

1.1. Concept of sharing economy

Although the term of sharing economy is increasingly discussed and used in various business and academic circles, there is still no unambiguous definition of the phenomenon. It is also problematic to define the concrete author of the concept since such ideas as collaboration, exchange, barter and rent existed over the centuries in diverse forms. Therefore, it turns out that the authorship of the up-to-date sharing economy vision could be debated in terms of the current status referring to recent publications. The authors who examine this problem often refer to Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers, who expressed ideas of sharing economy in the contemporary form in the book «What's Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption» (Botsman, Rogers 2010) and popularised the thinking further through public activities. According to the authors, sharing economy represents an umbrella term which can be defined as a scheme that facilitates free of charge or for a fee sharing of underused tangible and intangible assets. The main sharing economy idea is usually appealed to the notion that people are inclined to pay for temporary access to the product instead of permanent ownership. So, in other words, the one provides available assets and rents needed things at the same time. The provisional access implies more efficient recourse usage and no need to accumulate finances a long time in order to buy and then spend resources for asset maintenance (Teubner 2014; Botsman 2015).

Even though the lodging is discussed in the current paper to a greater extent, sharing economy activities are not limited to accommodation, but also apply to other goods and services which can be shared including transportation, education, travel, loans, software, information etc. However, the idea of sharing in the category of high value goods, namely housing and cars, is particularly popular nowadays, which can be explained by acquisition complexity. With respect to other goods, the lack of need for frequent use may be the determining factor entering into sharing economy. The popularity of sharing particular class of goods or services is also conditioned by the willingness to share.

The term of sharing economy is often related to a number of terms such as collaborative economy, access economy, peer-to-peer economy and other expressions with similar meaning introduced by researchers. These terms usually do not involve precise boundaries and there is no single opinion how to categorize and link them. Nevertheless, a number of frequently encountered aspects can be highlighted that are inherent in the sharing economy. These aspects include, but are not limited to such components as access over ownership, elevated asset utilization and recirculation. Businesses in the sharing economy, for its part, can be generally divided into two groups. The first type involves owning assets and short-term rent of them to those who need resources. Usually these operations are small scaled or embedded into second model, which is associated with emergence and development peer-to-peer marketplaces, where the platform revenue is generated in virtue of commissions charged from users (The rise … 2015).

With the development of technologies, a lot of internet marketplace businesses appeared last decades, which, as some authors note, has become an integral part of peer-to-peer services. The establishment and expansion of such decentralised companies has a positive effect on the overall improvement of peer-to-peer relationships for several reasons. Such websites increase the trust among buyers and sellers, simplify exchanges and offer low-level fees or no fee solutions. (Abele *et al.* 2015). To date there is a quantity of web based platforms of different size in various sectors that are considered to be related with the sharing economy to a greater or lesser extent. As a rule, such platforms connect those who own assets with those who are ready to rent.

Among criticism causes towards sharing economy implementation can be distinguished the declaration by such platforms as introducing something fundamentally new, implicating and disseminating message that their activity should be subject to other regulations or be out of normal regulation completely. In fact, the activity of majority sharing economy platforms, according to critics, does not merit having rights other than traditional economic activity since platforms use the rhetoric of changing attitudes towards society and consumption patterns solely for pecuniary purposes, forcing consumers to perceive this as a competitive advantage (Stemler 2016).

1.2. Airbnb's business model overview

Airbnb was founded in 2008 and became a sharing economy pioneer in lodging sector. As of October 2018, the platform suggests over 5 million listings in more than 191 countries and 81000 cities worldwide. More than 300 million guests have already found accommodation through the platform, and every night about 2 million people stay in lodging listed on the website (About … 2018; Fast … 2018).

Airbnb represents a short-term accommodation platform that connects people who own an unused living space with people who are ready to rent lodging during their stay, either partially or entirely. The owner registers on the platform and creates a listing. The platform earning model is based on the following model: the normal host service fee is 3%, however if may differ depending on the area and cancellation policy followed by an owner. The commission is automatically deducted from the payout sum. Guests are also obliged to pay a commission that ranges from 0% to 20% and depends on more factors, namely features of the listing, stay length and total cost (What is …).

According to the model represented in MIS Quarterly Executive journal, every sharing economy platform can be described on the scale of control and rivalry. The control can be depicted as a loose (minimum guidelines and standards in relation to participants from platform owner) or tight (clear regulations, high standardization and constant monitoring). The rivalry in this model has two dimensions: high (real-time price changes, market mechanisms) and low (stable prices, compensation of the costs). Considering this model, Airbnb has managed to create a system with a relatively high customer autonomy allowing flexible price formations, which increases the rivalry between participants at the same time. It can be also observed that Airbnb prefers to educate and provide recommendation more than sticking precise norms and pointing codified rules. So, the established relationships between Airbnb and users are arranged closer to interrelations between decentralised company and community members who share platform values instead of employees (Constantiou *et al.* 2017).

There are several sections on Airbnb website dedicated to host instruction and recommendations. As it specified on the website, all hosts are expected to meet fundamental requirements that include response rate, acceptance rate, cancellation rate and overall rating. The response rate is directly related on how quickly and often a host responds to incoming requests from potential or pending guests. The next element is inquiry acceptance that may be reduced due to fact of rejection from a host's side. The more accurate information about the availability for certain dates in the calendar, the better the acceptance indicator is affected. The platform's policy regarding cancellations is the most rigorous and generally measures are taken towards hosts, including monetary penalties. The guest will be entitled to ask a full refund in this occasion. The last aspect is reviews that can be placed by guests within 14 days after departure. The stay is evaluated by the number of parameters: accuracy, communication, cleanliness, location, check-in and value. Hosts, in turn, can also leave feedback about visitors, and if a certain guest is constantly marked by hosts as problematic, then sanctions can be applied (Hosting on … 2018).

With regard to increasing customer satisfaction and receiving positive reviews Airbnb presents some common recommendations on general parameters that are separately evaluated in reviews and affect overall rating. First of all it is important to maintain cleanliness and Airbnb recommends planning check-in in the way that space is appropriately prepared before each arrival and guests are provided with basic cleaning utensils. The cleaning fee is indicated severally, in addition to the total base price. Every listing has a list of amenities and Airbnb recommends providing at least basic hygiene items, linens, sheets and towels. Then the listing accuracy is mentioned, all description details and photos should be relevant. For comfortable check-in it is recommended to provide check-in guidance for visitors and necessary contact information. The remaining point is guest support during the stay. Guests should be able to contact host at any time and get a prompt response. (Hosting on … 2018).

1.3. Airbnb sharing activity participation motives

One of the purposes for the current study is to determine attitudes and participation motives of Airbnb hosts. In this regard it is substantial to take into consideration previous researches. In spite the vast majority of them is related to guest experiences, they deserve the attention for better understanding of the research object.

For example, the results of extensive study carried out in 2013-2014, where residents of the United States, Canada and United Kingdom participated, indicate that the most important factor in deciding whether to use a platform is the convenience of the website or application. Secondary, but significant weight belongs to cost, however, such corresponding to the sharing economy aspects as sustained growth and access instead of ownership were not marked by the respondents as important in most cases (Felländer *et al.* 2015).

From the perspective of Airbnb guests, besides community adherence and sharing activity values consecution, it has several tangible distinctive features that can be perceived by guests as advantages and incline them towards Airbnb. The common opinion among consumers is that booking a house through Airbnb is cheaper than a hotel. This view can be partially confirmed by the studies comparing Airbnb versus hotel average prices in different cities. According to the Statista report, average Airbnb prices in selected eight major cities worldwide were more competitive comparing with hotels. The average price difference was 35% in all cities in favour of Airbnb while in some cities the difference was more significant and amounted 50% or higher (Is Airbnb … 2018). This is not the only study and it is possible to refer another example. According to the results of the Busbud study, Airbnb rates in USA cities were lower in seven out of twelve reviewed cities. The allocation of prices in European cities is more apparent, in eight out of nine cases average Airbnb rates were lower, excepting one city – Barcelona. The average Airbnb rent rates in Barcelona significantly exceeded average hotel costs. One of the reasons of such big difference is the increased demand and liabilities host should accept in response of tightening regulations. In general it can be concluded that all else being equal, Airbnb prices are more competitive for average consumer (Comparing Airbnb … 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that certain client segments prefer Airbnb over traditional types of accommodation.

Basically Airbnb prices does not reflect the number of guests, so in cases of travelling by group it can be more reasonable. This allows not only to save budget, but also to live in one space, which is usually impossible in hotels. One more reason why guests prefer Airbnb is an exclusive experience of living like a local. Airbnb hosts offer unusual types of housing, such as castles, houses on private islands or tree houses. That is clearly contrasting with standardized hotel rooms. There are also explicit drawbacks related to Airbnb use. Hotels can be more convenient to short-term trips since Airbnb check-in and check-out may require effort which may be incompatible with plans of some guests. In general hotels offer more certified service with lower level of uncertainty, more thorough service and easier accessibility to amenities. Indeed, some studies indicate that household amenities have a pivotal role when giving preferences to Airbnb instead of hotels and compromise the satisfaction level to a large extent (Wang, Jeong 2018).

The point researchers agree, in one way or another, is that guests choose to use Airbnb housing due to practical benefits: low cost, location and amenities. The local experience and communication opportunities with host cannot be marked unanimously as a central motive (Guttentag *et al.* 2017; Rimer 2017). In this regard, it is worthwhile to consider whether similar perception of preferring more tangible benefits is prevailing among hosts.

1.4. Challenges of further sharing economy platform development

The reasons for rapid sharing economy growth can be justified by changing attitudes towards consumption, concerns for environmental issues, as well as changes in the vision regarding area and relocation, when it becomes possible to overcome large distances in short periods of time. In such environment people tend to be more mobile and demand having mobile homes and workplaces, which favourably increases the interest in sharing activities, enabling to resolve several problems. In the meantime, along with the strong growth and obvious benefits, issues related to subsequent challenges and constraints cannot stand aside.

1.4.1. The problem of building trust in the case of Airbnb

As mentioned previously, web based marketplaces have become the core of sharing economy. It has positive effects on the industry growth, but does not address inevitable challenges. One of key issues that require attention is trust. Since a person who provides services is usually not personally familiar with a person to whom the service is provided, both sides can basically rely on platform reliability, since while making decisions the information provided by a mediator is taken into account. These may include profile data, online reviews or other online activities which do not always reflect the actual situation.

Consequently, measures should be introduced to increase peer-to-peer relationship trust and protection, and ensure a certain level of service quality, which in the case of short-term accommodation implies the correctness of the listings and description compliance with housing conditions. Hosts, in its turn, should be also protected and their residence rules must be respected. In addition, the effective mechanisms should be established for solving disputable situations and compensation for damages.

For instance, on the way to overcome mistrust, attract more loyal customers and help guests avoid common problems, Airbnb introduced Airbnb plus program. The inspection is taken in order to ascertain that lodging matches stated criteria and the premium support during the stay is promised (Introducing … 2018). Airbnb also practices some checking procedures. Guests are required to provide their photo, confirm phone number and email. In some cases host may ask arriving guests to provide identity document and complete Airbnb verification process (Airbnb Host 2018).

There is no guest protection program on Airbnb, but Airbnb offers two safety programs for hosts: Host Guarantee and Host Protection Insurance. The first implies the property damage protection. Although property damage claims from third parties and guest injury indemnities are excluded from this program, the protection insurance provides liability coverage intended to solve listed problems. The program comes into force if common areas outside the listing are damaged or guest is injured during a stay and files a complaint against a host. This is especially actual in cases of subleasing. In both cases the sum of compensation is up to one million dollars and all Airbnb listings are covered when property owner acts as Airbnb host. Nevertheless, this protection measures are not suitable to every listing since there may be items in the house the total amount of that exceeds guarantee amount and there is a need in additional insurance (Airbnb’s Host … 2018; Host Protection … 2018).

Obviously, at this stage, the lack of information about the service provider affects the level of trust that cannot be ensured by the review system unless there is complete trust towards review system itself. It is assumed that Aibnb review system can fulfil a self-governance function, as an alternative to top-down directive regulation mechanisms. Owing to the internal rating system both guests and hosts can inquire information about the owner and person who rents a living space, and information obtained via verified reviews is practically a primary source for decision making.

In order to create environment where guests can trust the accommodation provider, confidential attitudes towards review system must be established. The Airbnb review system, in turn, should be operating in the way of stimulating placing all relevant reviews regardless the positive or negative experience. Superficially considering Airbnb listings, it can be mentioned that almost all hosts have a rating above 4.5 and there are no listings with lower than 3.5 rating. It is severely contrasted with different online platforms who provide accommodation services. The rating variation of other service providers is usually more substantial and average scores an order of magnitude lower the Airbnb's average of 4.7 (Zervas *et al.* 2015). At the same time, there are third-party review websites where dissatisfied customers share their negative Airbnb experiences. Some reviews are not addressed to the exact host and emphasize the disadvantages of the platform, but others describe the living space without disclosing personal information of the host. It turns out that these feedbacks are not taken into account by the internal Airbnb system, and website visitors have no idea about the possible problems may be faced. The general trend is that previous guests generally post a review only when they are satisfied and prefer to give a feedback on other platforms or do not leave a review at all in cases of negative experiences.

There is obvious evidence Airbnb review system do not reflect real attitudes by not reporting topical information that can affect guest decisions. This can be confirmed by empirical observations. According to the study, among guests with negative experiences over half of them are not reported in the review system. The authors also presume that review system improvements may lead to conducive environment increasing Airbnb’s performance. The enhancements can include review process simplification or making providing feedback obligatory. These measures are important not only for securing future guests, but also protecting hosts with a small number of reviews and lower score, since guests basically are less inclined to choose such listings in the general array (Fradkin *et al.* 2018).

1.4.2. Impact of regulation implementation on Airbnb

Another problem under consideration is legal aspects and issues related to regulations that can significantly predetermine the future of online peer-to-peer businesses. The remaining question of how to make sure that regulation helps to protect the user during the interaction, but not harm development of sharing economy at the same time, and avoid harming interests of certain groups by putting others in a privileged position.

The accentuated concerns about safety of participants in transactions can be emphasised. There are positions whereby risk and costs are not eliminated, but transferred from the mediator to individuals that do not always possess a full range of knowledge and skills for decision-making, which makes sharing activities even more uncontrollable. This is the cause why regulation makers starting to oblige expanding companies to take the responsibility for their activity and require strengthening protection measures (Felländer *et al.* 2015).

Along with the growth of the company, tensions between shareholders together with Airbnb participants and local authorities increase. The modification of legislation lately observed in some cities significantly inhibits new customer joining and existing member retention in some large cities. These regulations can serve to different aspects, for example, requirement of permission obtaining or limiting the maximum number of days the property can be rented per year. Usually the limits are set not higher than 90 or 120 days, but in some cases the term is even less. For instance, in Amsterdam, the entire home or apartment listings are limited to 60 days annually, and will be reduced to 30 days starting from 2019. Airbnb platform automatically prevents the violation of these rules not allowing hosts to exceed limits and commits booking cancellations when laws are changing. This makes it not beneficial for hosts to use the platform in some cities, and they are forced to abandon further activity or provide services in the way that cannot provide them higher output. Airbnb guests, in its turn, are forced to look for alternatives (Jones 2018). On the other hand, these policy measures can protect market from commercial groups aiming at using Airbnb as a tool bringing more customers to the vast network of property in the possession, which may undermine the principles of the sharing activity and impair the structure of peer-to-peer platforms, reducing it to conditions of further effective use impossibility.

Another concern relates to the employment policies. The majority of platforms position themselves as a matchmaker, who are not responsible to employment security, but simultaneously demand the fulfilment of certain performance requirements, therefore it is difficult to distinct exactly the status of participants as employed or self-employed. Anyway, it is known that people, who treat the sharing activity as an income article, are not provided by social benefits and insurance. Moreover, their earnings are not fixed and guaranteed, therefore, only for a small part of hosts such activity becomes the main source of earnings, and it is still ambiguous whether such operations should be subject to the same labour regulations as traditional work. In spite of seeming benefits, changes in labour structure can lead to some unpredictable consequences where workplaces become short-term and unstable, with comparatively low wages and negative effects on productivity that was previously raised because of greater specialization. This combination of circumstances, according to some authors, may eventually facilitate social inequality (Felländer *et al.* 2015).

Taxation policies should take into account the motives of sharing economy participants. As it was previously mentioned, for the majority of participants hosting is not the main income source and by imposing additional obligations their willingness to participate can be significantly reduced. Basically service providers suppose that they are not required to pay tax until their earnings are not high enough, and some hosts with no experience expect that sharing economy income is not liable for tax deductions. In respect of that non-taxable income or other similar measures can be introduced to increase participation rates (Rahim *et al.* 2017).

Meanwhile, the regulation is the imperative threat to Airbnb growth. In spite of pressure growth between policymakers and sharing economy participants in some cities, a number of authors claim that there is no cause to expect pervasive exclusionary measures against individual hosts that would negatively affect Airbnb participation (Guttentag 2013). Summarizing, it could be mentioned that in order to aid the sharing economy growth, the implemented regulation system should be able to find a balance between excessive rigidity and flexibility close to autonomy.

1.5. Airbnb's impact on hotel industry growth

Today accommodation is one of the sectors that have more potential for the sharing economy development and the scale of progress is already substantial. Airbnb is the leader among companies who successfully applied the business model of the sharing economy in lodging. The company was valued at 31 billion US dollars as at 2017 year (Company value … 2017).

Nevertheless, it is relatively small number comparing with hotel industry leaders. The current total market capitalisation of three industry leaders Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide and Intercontinental Hotels Group is more than 74 billion US dollars (Yahoo Finance 2018). Considering connections between Airbnb marketplace and hotel industry businesses is important for the identification of perceived advantages that may affect sharing economy attitudes and participation motives.

Measuring Airbnb's expansion impact on hotel industry is difficult. The statistics designates Airbnb as a leader in the list of the largest lodging companies worldwide, having more than 3 million listings worldwide. This is at least several times greater than the number of rooms in existence of any single hotel chain in the hospitality sector (Haywood *et al.* 2017). However, this data implies very little about the appreciable impact on the hotel industry or domestic rental markets. The attempts were made to assess the influence by recent researchers who have moved towards the consensus. The key findings in this direction reveal the negative impact of Airbnb penetration on hotel occupancy rates in the market, but beneficial effect on the total revenue (Coyle, Yeung 2016). Some studies show that the hotel growth performance has not diminished with increasing Airbnb rentals. Moreover, interviewed hotel operators do not perceive Airbnb as a competitor and therefore does not consider Airbnb as a threat that can disrupt their activities (Fissha, Shrestha 2017).

The empirical study of hotel star rating dependence on the price level demonstrates the positive correlation and shall be deemed by consumers as important decision-making factor. Nevertheless, this pattern is reflected moderately when considering the correlation between Airbnb listing reviews and prices set by hosts. This can signify other decision-making criteria (Aznar *et al.* 2018).

The former study indicates the increased competition vulnerability of hotels with prices below the average whereas high price segment is not exposed by Airbnb market capturing. Threats may be exacerbated in relation to the hotel market on the horizon to some extent, but the differentiated product Airbnb provides may be mitigating factor in the competition between sharing economy mediators and hospitality businesses. An additional element which can equalize growth rates and put two spheres in a more equal position is the establishment of similar functioning terms. This, in turn, may become an impediment and, in the worst case, harm the development of sharing economy ideas making certain markets uncompetitive (Ytreberg 2016).

Some authors mention that Airbnb has influenced the increase in real estate prices in Amsterdam since people viewed the growth as a new lucrative income opportunity. The Canadian rental market had been also influenced by Airbnb expansion that led to consequences of vast housing removal from local rental markets in large cities. There is also an evidence of rent price growth in some US cities that are attributed to Airbnb impact (Fissha, Shrestha 2017).

Among possible scenarios can be distinguished the ubiquitous innovations growth in the hotel industry in response to Airbnb elements introduced as an experimental and perceived as a breakthrough. These include additional prominence on customisation and personalisation, extensive utilisation of repurposed buildings and common spaces resettlement, community building and other aspects successfully imposed by Airbnb to a certain degree to date. Hotels may utilise technological innovations and ideas of the sharing activity to respond the evolving requests maintaining its positions in the market (Oskam, Boswijk 2016).

The sharing economy can also become an experimental field of application of the dynamic pricing model through the construction of algorithms that equalise the demand and supply and serve as a system of incentives for service providers. Such model can be widely applied and already has examples of successful application. For example, Airbnb has built the algorithm that gives hosts recommendations concerning price that considers multiple factors including location, season, novelty. Thus, the sharing economy becomes an opportunity for testing different pricing mechanisms that would be common practise in hospitality sector in the future (The rise … 2015). All these may ultimately deprive Airbnb its distinguishing feature and negatively affect customer demand which, in turn, can change attitudes of hosts whose participation is heavily dependent on the current principles.

1.6. The scale of peer-to-peer platforms influence on the economy

It is still uncertain how well sharing economy companies will manage to compete with traditional business models in economic terms. The influence of sharing practices to gross domestic product is complicated by unregistered and ambiguous procedures, but as some previous researches indicate, its contribution to the economy remains insignificant, possibly due to relatively low costs and a small range of goods and services in exchange, or can even have negative impact since more favourable market options are avoided. However, at the same time, more funds may be saved for further spending. Another aspect relates to the fact that some components does not have value added and excluded from the gross domestic product indicator having zero monetary value, for example, providing free accommodation by an individual. However, one of the methods how the influence of sharing activities to gross domestic product (GDP) can be calculated is sector approach. The total GDP is divided into segments in order to compute the approximate percentage of the sharing activity in particular sector since some sectors excel others is terms of sharing scale and engagement intensity. In accordance with studies, the overall impact of sharing activities on GDP is equals about 0.25% of GDP which is relatively small, which can be explained either by small size of industry where sharing is prevalent, or by minor influence of sharing in sectors that account for major part of GDP. The sharing economy has the unaccounted advantages beyond GDP and in the future in the case of increasing importance of sharing activities, a revision of the GDP measurement may be taken in order to adjust it in accordance with the less obvious, but crucial indicators (Abele *et al.* 2015).

The consequences of the sharing economy evolution, according to some authors, may include the inflation reduction due to decline of transactional and marginal costs, platform transparency and disappearance of intermediaries. Such trends can already be observed on an example of leading companies, such as Airbnb, Uber and others. These companies do not create something breakthrough in the sense of satisfying customers, but become practical suppliers of information, as a result reducing transactional costs (search and information costs, bargaining costs, and policing and enforcement costs), which leads them to the global growth. Among other probable outcomes of thriving sharing economy it is possible to distinguish lowering demand for capital, competition elevation, productivity growth in areas with large digitalisation and automatisation potential, major changes in labour market structure (Felländer *et al.* 2015).

The latter, however, has been an issue of great interest among researchers. The study held in United Kingdom provides no reason to regard sharing economy as a soon reason of significant shifts in employment. Since the state of affairs in other economically developed countries is comparable with the sharing economy condition in United Kingdom, it can be assumed that the situation in not unique and prevails in other European countries. The key findings of the research indicate not only a small population involvement into sharing economy (a little more than 10% of the total population), but also the insignificant income generated by the sharing economy providers. The annual mean individual sharing activity income equals less than 2000 British Pounds. It is also interesting that the typical sharing economy participant is a young person living in the city and having an annual income below 40000 British Pounds. Therefore participation in the sharing economy can be basically described as a motive for additional earnings along with attractiveness of flexible job opportunities (Rahim *et al.* 2017).

According to the overwhelming majority of the participants, sharing economy activity is not the main source of income. So, discussing the mass switch to the sharing economy in purpose of income is not topical yet. If sharing economy appears as a full-time work, then only absolutely small number of people can take advantage of it. More often the total income received providing sharing services was less than 250 British Pounds. Activities that are connected with renting accommodation or temporary job performance generated the highest income along all categories and amounted more than 10000 British Pounds on average. The survey participants who name their sharing economy activity as the primary income source are heterogeneous. Namely, providers who earned over 11000 British Pounds annually think of themselves as self-employed and claim that participation was necessary for economic reasons. The average category was mainly engaged into activity related to delivery, selling crafts and different sorts of short-term work. Among the providers earning between up to 2000 British Pounds there was just one person who perceived the activity as a main income source. On the whole, results indicate the sharing economy activity remains secondary in terms of income (Rahim *et al.* 2017). The subject of income in terms of Airbnb hosts is considered in details in the empirical part of the research.

Therefore, it is too early to claim that participating in sharing economy can replace full-time jobs as only a small part of the population are involved at the moment and it cannot provide the conforming income at the overall level. Moreover, some researchers argue that sharing economy business is developing mainly due to professionals with several listings placed on the platform all the time. In the hospitality sector, there are usually property owners, for which this is the main activity, and the use of such services as Airbnb gives a number of advantages due to weak regulation. That undermines sharing economy principle of capacity surplus utilisation, where the main participants are ordinary local people who have the temporary opportunity to host tourists arrived in the city (Stemler 2016). This problem is also especially important for the current research and will be addressed in empirical part.

1.7. Ecological consequences of sharing activity

The positive ecological aftermaths are often noted by advocates of sharing economy. According to such view, on-demand platforms perform the task of matching supply with demand more efficiently because of quick adaptation to the changes. In perfect situation assets are used to the full extent, the resource utilisation increases and capacity does not idle. For example, the car sharing, according to the study, can replace from nine to thirteen vehicles and affect the ecology in the form of significant reduction of vehicle miles travelled and greenhouse gas emissions decline. In the accommodation sector, the reduction in construction of new buildings and the increased use of existing ones may also be favourable for the environment (The rise … 2015; Shaheen, Chan 2015).

As past experience has shown, peer-to-peer accommodation platforms perform a momentous function in cases of sharp increase in demand, which basically occurs during major international events. As a rule, hotels are not able to accommodate all visitors in peak in these cases. Since the demand is temporary, a few days or weeks, it may be not reasonable to build new accommodation complexes. In such cases, alternative short-term housing becomes significant. During the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, around 85000 tourists had found the accommodation through Airbnb that comprises almost 20% of the total visitor number during the event. In fact, in order to serve such a number of guests, more than 250 hotels should have been built, which definitely requires large resources and would be rather controversial from perspective of economic and environmental outputs. In this case the demand temporarily increased, but since homeowners were aware of that, they took advantage of situation. Within six months the number of listings on Airbnb in Rio almost doubled, and in a few months after the Olympics there was a small decline in the number of listing, which characterises the nature of hosts' motives. In addition, according to the survey, Airbnb guests from Europe use almost 80% less energy, consume almost half less water and produce a relatively less pollution compared to guests in hotels, which is remarkable in terms of reviewing ecological benefits of the sharing activity (Gawel *et al.* 2016).

However, Airbnb occupancy rates, according to the research, are significantly less in comparison with hotels, where high Airbnb occupancy rates can be seen in markets with corresponding high hotel occupancy (Haywood *et al.* 2017). So, there is still room for idle capacity utilisation improvement.

1.8. Further sharing economy growth potential and trends

According to the studies, the rapid growth of sharing economy is ensured by several factors: technological growth, penetration of the Internet and smartphones all over the world recent decade, as well as the emergence of information technology platforms and innovative solutions of information processing and storage methods, reducing barriers for digital product creation, simplification of financial transactions by creating digital payment platforms. Last, but not least is the altering consumption patterns (Felländer *et al.* 2015).

Recent studies indicate that Iceland, Turks and Caicos Islands, Malta, Montenegro and New Zealand account for the top five countries with the largest size of sharing economies. According to the authors, all these seemingly different countries can be united by the developed state of the Internet and the tourism orientation. In this list Iceland is leading with a significant margin. This country is distinguished by its high Internet penetration, prompt introduction of technologies, and high level of social capital, and has one of the highest GDP per capita (Timbro … 2018).

Despite the United States is the origin of modern sharing economy concept and many globally successful projects were launched there, the market is not the biggest in terms of consumption in this country. This can be explained by the relatively low willingness to share. The same low popularity is observed in some developed European countries because of issues related to government regulations as well as cultural traits, for example, strong attachment to privacy. As noted Europe, except few countries, is not the place of sharing economy popularity for now due to adverse policies. According to some authors, it becomes an obstacle in order to gain economically from the sharing economy (Petropoulos 2017). It is also important to mention that age is crucial factor on which depends the willingness to share in such countries as United States, United Kingdom, Germany and France. Younger generations cognise more opportunities and benefits in sharing economy ideas. The Chinese market, on the contrary, has a large spread domestically with the highest degree of population involvement whereby participants of all ages are equally engaged in the sharing economy. This fact confirms that the sharing economy development occurs unevenly both among different groups within the country and between different parts of the world (Walsh, Evans 2018).

It is difficult to predict in what form the sharing economy will be existing later and what impact it will have on specific industries. It is also difficult to state the degree of transition smoothness from a traditional model to sharing economy, and it is quite possible that for a while both paradigms will be existing simultaneously long time. Anyway, the justified assumption can be made that in various parts of the world, changes will occur at noticeably different pace.

2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In this chapter the research methodology is described, research results along with analysis are presented, and recommendations on the basis of research are provided thereafter.

2.1. Research methodology

The aim of this study is to define the degree of Aibnb usage by professional hosts and find out the nature of their hosting behavior. Consequently, two research questions were intended for accomplishing survey aim:

Q1: What are hosts' motives that encourage Airbnb participation?
Q2: What are hosts' attitudes concerning their hosting experience and Airbnb platform?

In order to answer these research questions quantitative research methods were applied. The method was preferred over qualitative research because of need for a relatively large number full-spectrum data for more precise comparison and generalization (Creswell 1997).

The questionnaire was designed to attract Airbnb hosts and collect responses that would assist answering research questions. The questionnaire has the structure that aimed to be clear for participants and finally increase their willingness to participate. The survey begins with short introduction that contains brief survey topic and purposes description. The questionnaire consists of 17 compulsory questions. It starts with simple general questions that are important from the perspective of further interpretation in relation with other questions and may help to ensure additional insights. Then more specific questions related to participation motives and attitudes towards sharing activity follow. Three most common motive categories mentioned by previous authors were highlighted: economic, social and environmental, each of which is examined more detailed in the main part in order to detect the real participation motives. Host attitudes towards sharing activity also examined in this part and concern such topics as trust, protection, regulation, community. The sensitive demographic questions are placed in the end of the questionnaire.

For data gathering purposes the online questionnaire in Google Forms was created. The respondents were recruited through several hosting forums and Facebook groups with high concentration of active Airbnb hosts. The questionnaire was open for participating from 12.11 to 22.11.

The host contact information is not disclosed by Airbnb and there are difficulties in reaching the right person. This is the main reason why non-probability sampling method was applied. Moreover, the choice of sampling technique is due to cost and time effectiveness. However, there are some limitations associated with given data collection method. Namely, the questionnaire is distributed through the sites where hosts may be more loyal than average Airbnb host and may represent only a certain segment among comprehensive participant diversity. So, unavoidable sample bias may occur to some extent.

During the data collection period 90 people participated in the survey in total. The gender distribution is equitable, with 50% male and 50% female participants. Based on the obtained data about participant's age, five age groups are formed (Figure 1). Since the minimum participant's age is 27 years old, the first group is composed of people aged in the interval between 25 and 34 years old, and 8% of the participants fall into that age category. The second group with the participants attached to the 35-44 age group amounts 21%. The third group consisting of the participants in the age between 45 and 54 constitutes 32%, and the same number of the participants is attributed to the 55-64 age group. The last category with only 7% of the participants includes people over 65 years old. Meanwhile, the average participant's age is 50 years old.

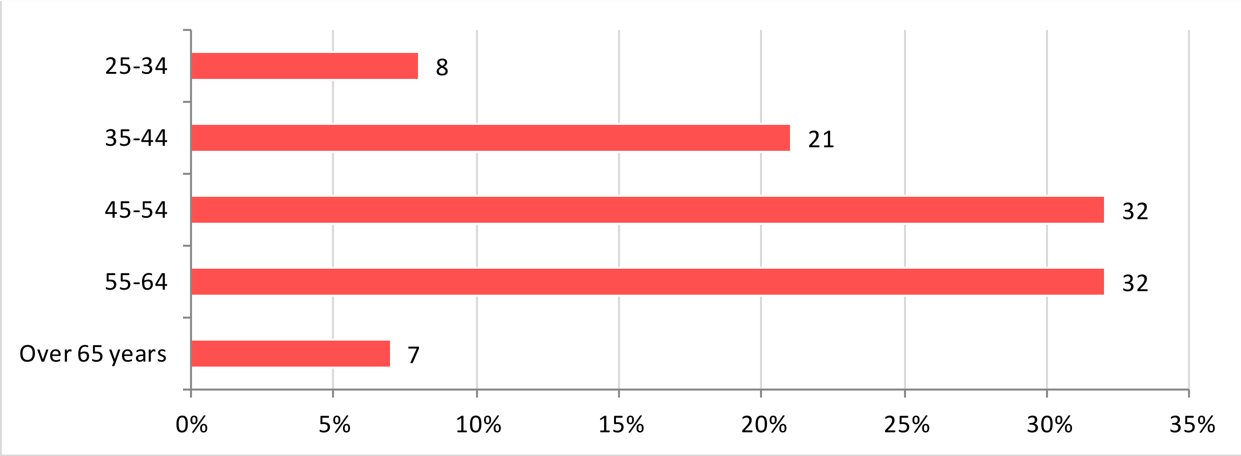

Figure 1. Distribution of the respondents by age, n = 90.

Source: Author's research.

The next demographic question relates to academic background. The survey participants were asked to choose the highest educational level they have completed (Figure 2). First two categories, less than high school diploma and high school diploma as the highest education level are rather rare among respondents, with the share of 1% and 3% respectively. More substantial level is college or equivalent institution which was selected by 24% of the respondents. This is followed by 44% of the respondents who selected undergraduate degree, which forms the most tangible category. The remaining 27% of the respondents selected graduate degree as the highest completed level of education.

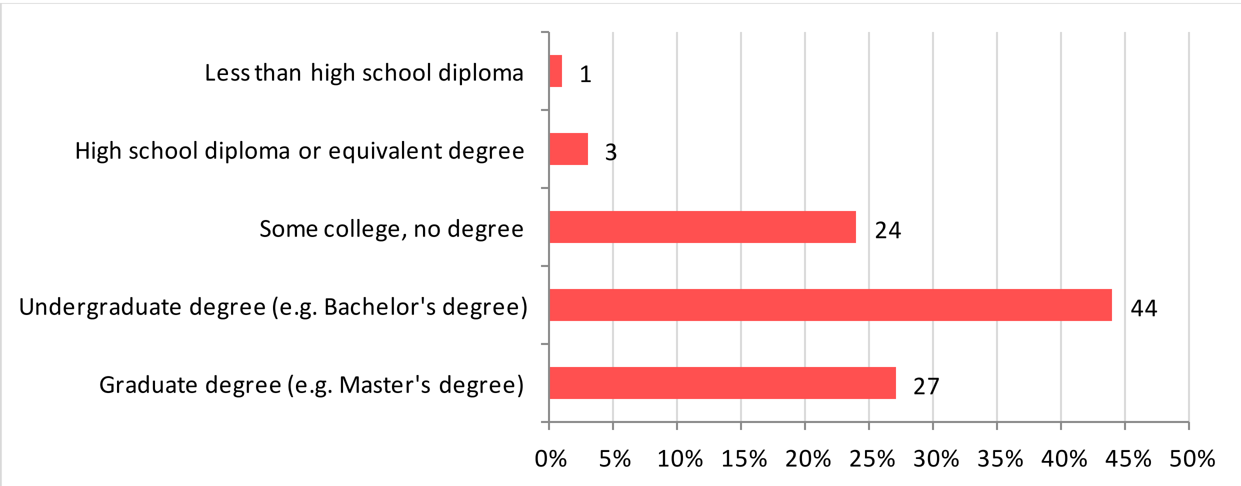

Figure 2. Distribution of the respondents by highest education level, n = 90.

Source: Author's research.

The last demographic question, which is relevant to current research, refers to employments status. The participants were asked to choose the option that describes their employment status more precisely (Figure 3). The most common employment status is full-time and it is linked with 46% of the respondents, while part-time employment status is negligible. The respondents that claimed themselves as self-employed comprise 26% from the total number of the participants. The portion of not working respondents stood at 13%. It can be assumed that some of these people are retired since the «retired» category was not included into initial list of answer options. However, 9% of the respondents preferred to indicate their status as retired in the text field, and some of them added a commentary specifying that they are partially employed or involved into some business despite they consider themselves as retired.

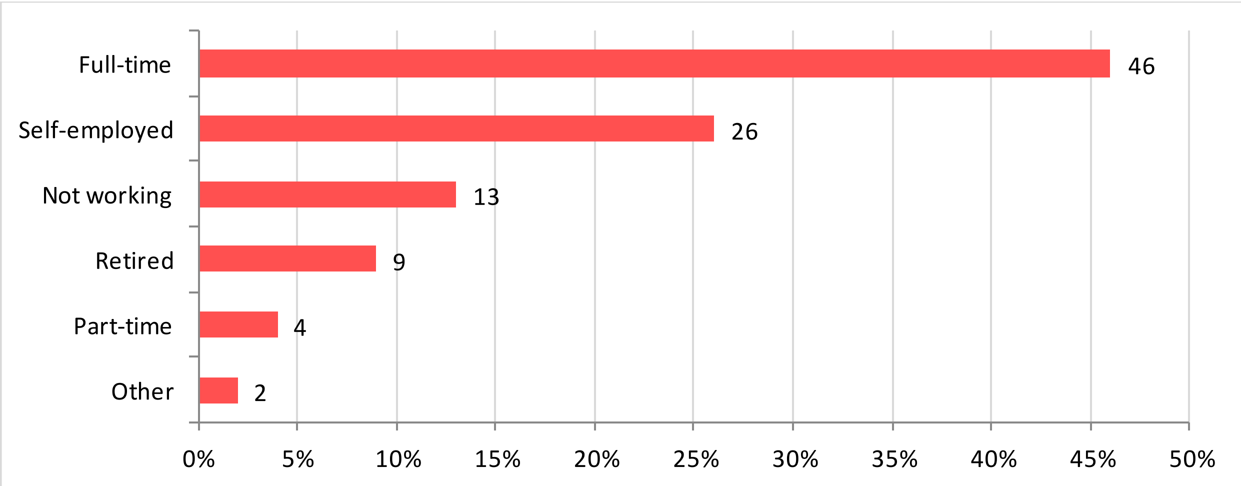

Figure 3. Distribution of the respondents by employment status, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

After the responses were received the author applied descriptive analysis for data processing. Based on the obtained information figures were generated for visual representation and further results analysis. The survey results along with analysis are presented in the next subchapter.

2.2. Survey results and analysis

Before consideration of questions related to hosting motives and attitudes, the short overview of participant's hosting experience precedes (Figure 4). Half of the respondents stated that they provide hosting service through Airbnb from 1 to 3 years, and such large share might be the consequence of exponential Airbnb growth last years with considerable number of users who decided to become hosts. However, it can also display that hosts with such temporal experience tend to be increasingly included in discussions compared with beginners and more experiences hosts. In contrast, only 4% of the respondents have less than 6 months of hosting experience, and 18% of the respondents have 6 to 12 hosting experience. Other 28% of the respondents indicate that they use Airbnb for hosting for more than 3 years. Most notably, among survey participants who have an experience over three years, the number of hosts with more than one listing comprises around 75%, and all but one rent entire home or apartment. Moreover, their earnings generated through hosting activity exceed the average values. This may reflect the fact that significant part of Airbnb hosts may expand their hosting activity over time and create additional listings to attain the greater economic output. Probably this category of hosts had changed their attitudes towards more professional approach, and besides idle capacity utilisation, they seek to additional rental opportunities to be able to make more revenues.

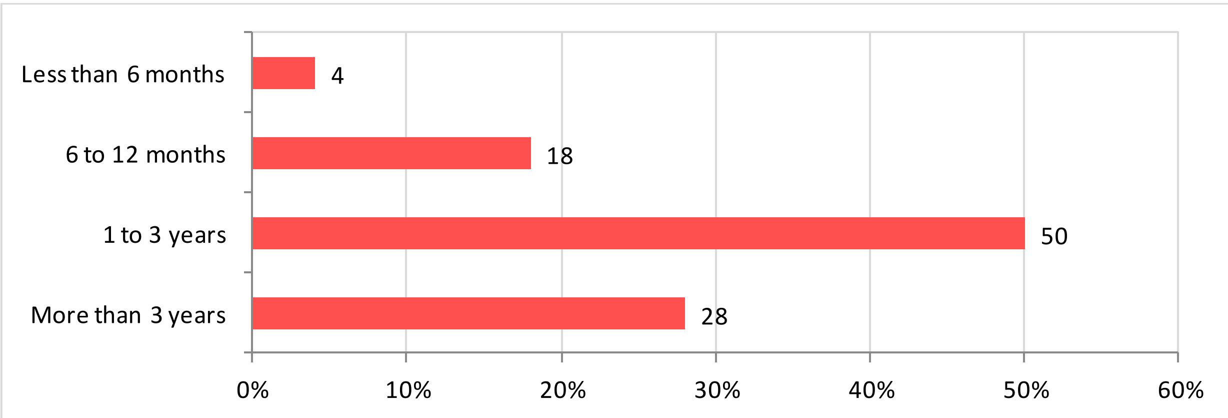

Figure 4. Respondent's Airbnb hosting experience, n = 90.
Source: Author’s research.

For answering research questions it was important to obtain additional information about hosts’ assets. In order to identify the multiple listing activity survey participants were asked to specify the number of Airbnb listings they are dealing (Figure 5). Almost one third of the respondents indicated only one listing in the ownership, 18% of the respondents place two listings on the platform, 9% of the respondents have three listings available, and the rest of the responses may be assigned to the number of listings of four or more.

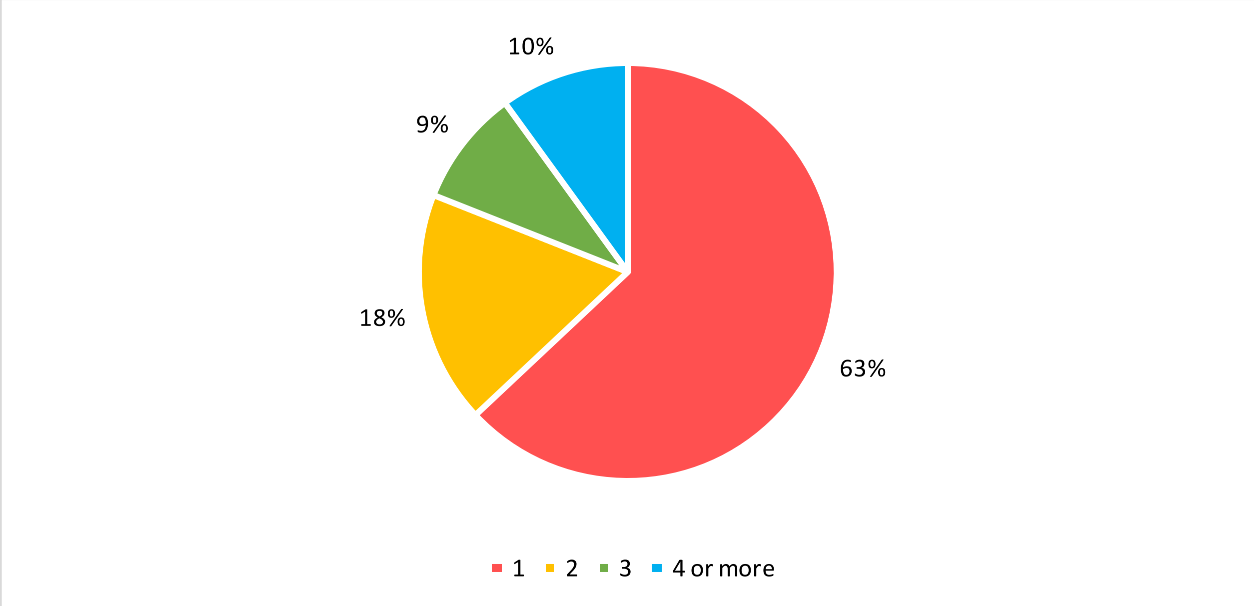

Figure 5. Number of Airbnb listings by host, n = 90.

Source: Author's research.

The next question aiming at similar goals is related to the listing type. In general, there are three listing types and the participants were asked to choose the corresponding one or the most common if the number of their listings exceeds one (Figure 6). The results show that the vast majority, namely 79% of the respondents rent entire home or apartment, 20% of the respondents rent private room and just 1% rents shared room. Such composition quite closely displays the average ratio of property types in US and Europe. For example, in the majority of big European cities there is an evidence of a heavy prevalence of listings suggesting to rent entire home or apartment, with significantly smaller number of private rooms and almost no shared rooms. For instance, in Amsterdam, Athens, Copenhagen, Vienna the percentage of entire home or apartment listings exceeds 70% (How is … 2018). When considering hosts that rent private and shared rooms it can be mentioned that for almost 80% of these respondents hosting activity is occasional extra earnings and the most popular income categories among them are $1,000 to $5,000 and $5,000 to $15,000.

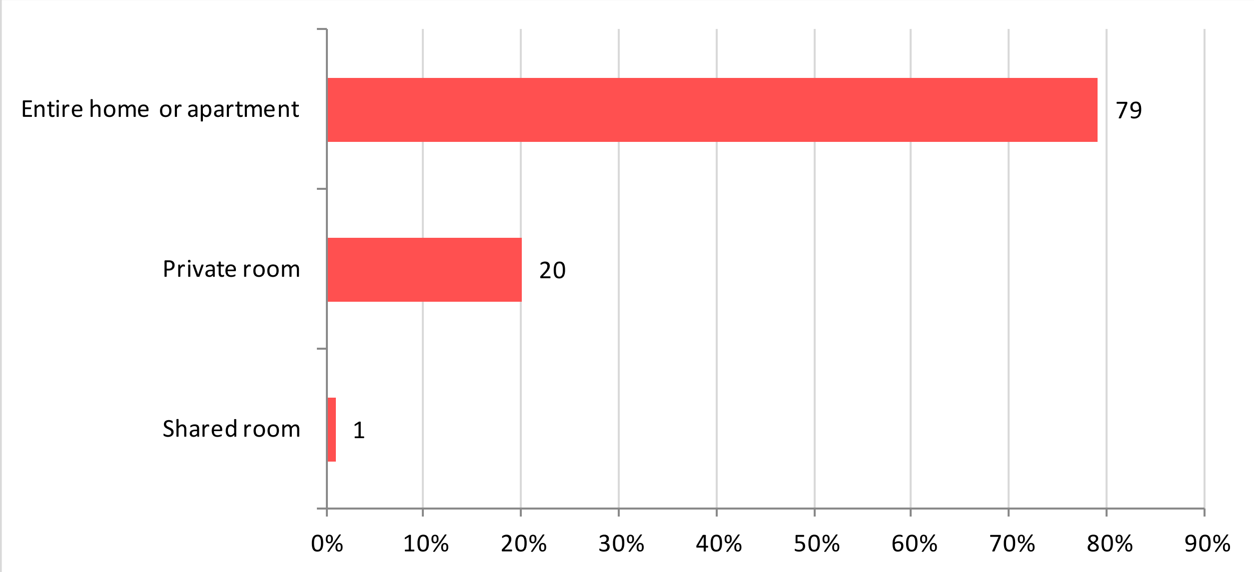

Figure 6. Type of listing by host, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

After a number of introductory questions, the participants were asked to answer the question related to predominating motives to become a host. Despite the fact that three options were suggested: economic (e.g. earning money, saving money), social (e.g. meeting new people, belonging to a community) and environmental (e.g. protecting the environment, maintaining sustainability), only first two were cited by the respondents. At the same time, however, the economic reasons have been selected by virtually all respondents, except 10% who named social aspect as a prevailing driver to start hosting activity.

Then clarification questions follow that focus on identifying hosting intentions. Firstly, it was necessary to find out time frames the listing is available for booking on the platform, and results show that 83% of the respondents make their living space available for booking more than 120 days annually, which could signal a high probability that renting property is not occupied by the owners during the year. It could be also mentioned that among 17% of the respondents, who make the space available for rent less than 120 days per year, almost half rents private room. As a rule, this is reflected on relatively low earnings, since $1,000 to $5,000 income category is dominant among them. This fact could designate that in general these people are not professionals and probably practice hosting relatively short periods of time when room in house or apartment they reside becomes temporarily available for some reason. It is also noteworthy that one third of 17% of these respondents name social motives as predominating to become a host. The described indicators demonstrate differences between Airbnb hosts and allow addressing different customer groups based on their attitudes displayed by their hosting activity.

Another question evaluating host intentions refers to placing listings on other websites. The participants were asked if they place short-term rental listings on other websites. The 39% of the respondents marked that listings are regularly placed by them on websites besides Airbnb. Slightly larger number, 46% of the respondents, never place listings on another websites. However, 16% of the respondents practice placing listings on other websites sometimes. It can be observed that among respondents who place listings on other websites, the number of hosts within income category over $30,000 is quite large. Based on this, the assumption can be made that hosts who place listings on other websites tend to have more professional attitudes towards hosting activity and can use Airbnb only as a secondary or one of the number sales channels. On the other hand, some hosts may face problems in reaching high occupancy rates and therefore forced to search additional opportunities.

The survey is followed by two questions relating to earnings generated through Airbnb hosting activity (Figure 7). The results indicate that for 57% of the respondents hosting is the secondary source of income, while 26% of the respondents consider these earnings as occasional and extra, and only 16% of the respondents name their hosting activity as the main source of income. It is worth noting that the average host's age who deem hosting activity as the main source of income is 56 years old, and half of these hosts either retired or not working. This may signify that, in a greater degree, the hosting activity as the main source of income can take place in case of retirement or lack of employment in many instances.

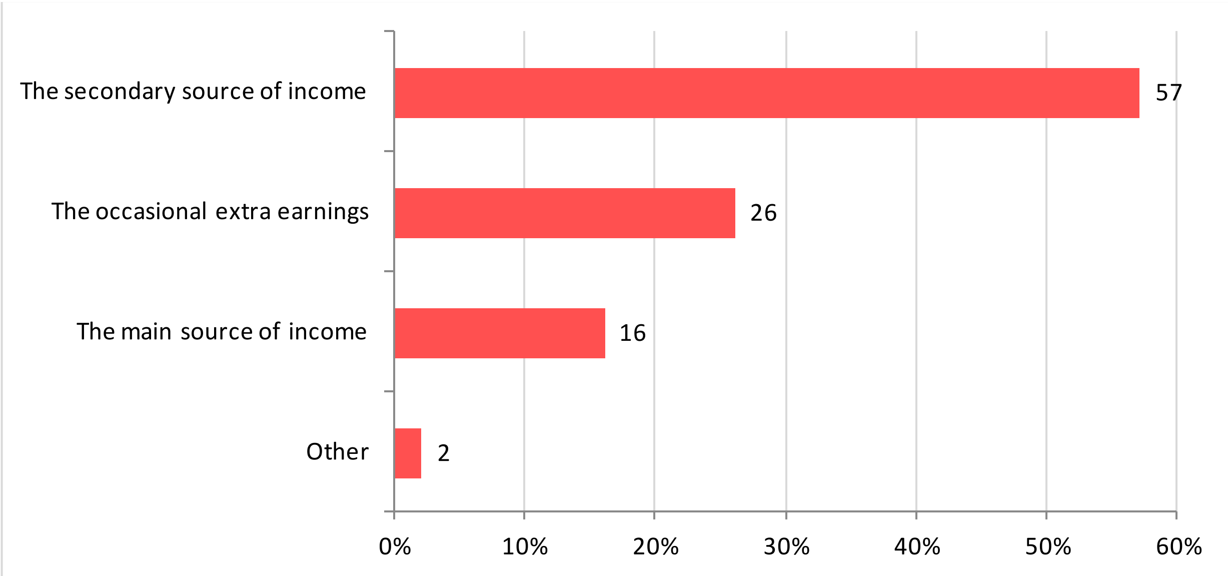

Figure 7. Hosting activity in terms of earnings, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

With regard to income, only 3% of the respondents possess the average annual income less than $1,000 (Figure 8). Earnings between $1,000 and $5,000 were outlined by 16% of the respondents. The next categories, from $5,000 to $15,000, from $15,000 to $30,000 and over $30,000 were distributed among respondents more evenly, 30%, 27% and 24%, respectively.

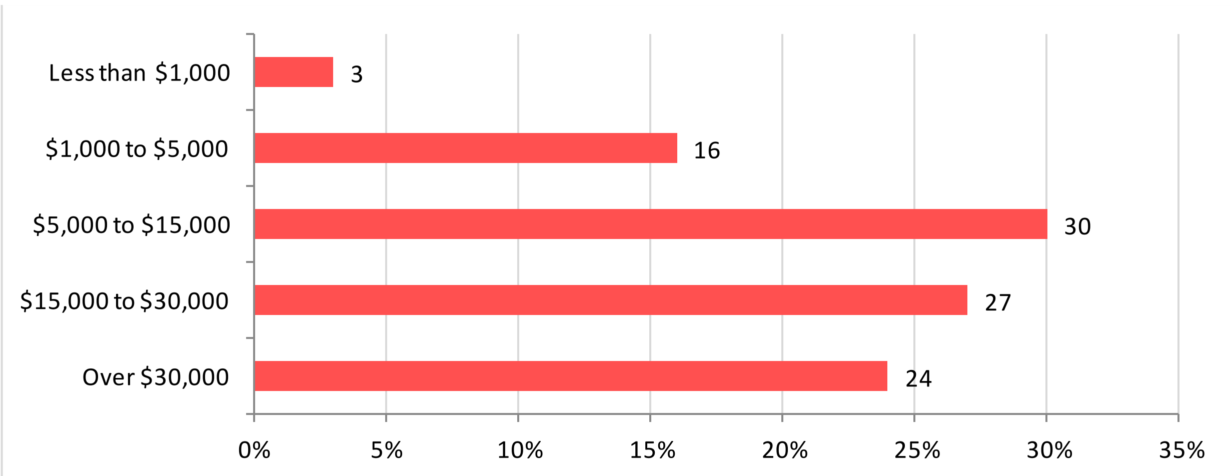

Figure 8. Average annual income generated through Airbnb, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

The figure below reflects respondent's behaviour towards interaction with guests (Figure 9). The participants were asked to evaluate the frequency of certain actions. One of such actions is personal meeting guests on arrival which aimed at defining the level of professional attitude towards hosting activity. The subject of particular interest was the category of hosts who never meet guests at arrival personally. In this case 20% of the respondents belong to this category and it is remarkable that nearly two-thirds of them stated their average annual income above $30,000. This may imply that very probably these hosts treat their hosting activity as a business and give preference to delegate guest servicing tasks to third-party companies or persons. At the same time it is noteworthy that quite significant number of the respondents provides recommendations during guest's stay and communicates with them at varying periodicities. Meanwhile, when it comes to common activities, the larger part of the respondents is never involved in a common activity with guests, but hosts who rent private room are more likely to do shared activities with guests. It is also notable that 73% of the respondents never use third party listing assistance. However, around one fourth of the respondents, resort to such third-party services. This is quite appreciable share and, in this connection, a certain contradiction can be observed. In spite of such actions are not prohibited, they are poorly adapted to the sharing economy principles, which imply personal involvement of the host in the provision of services.

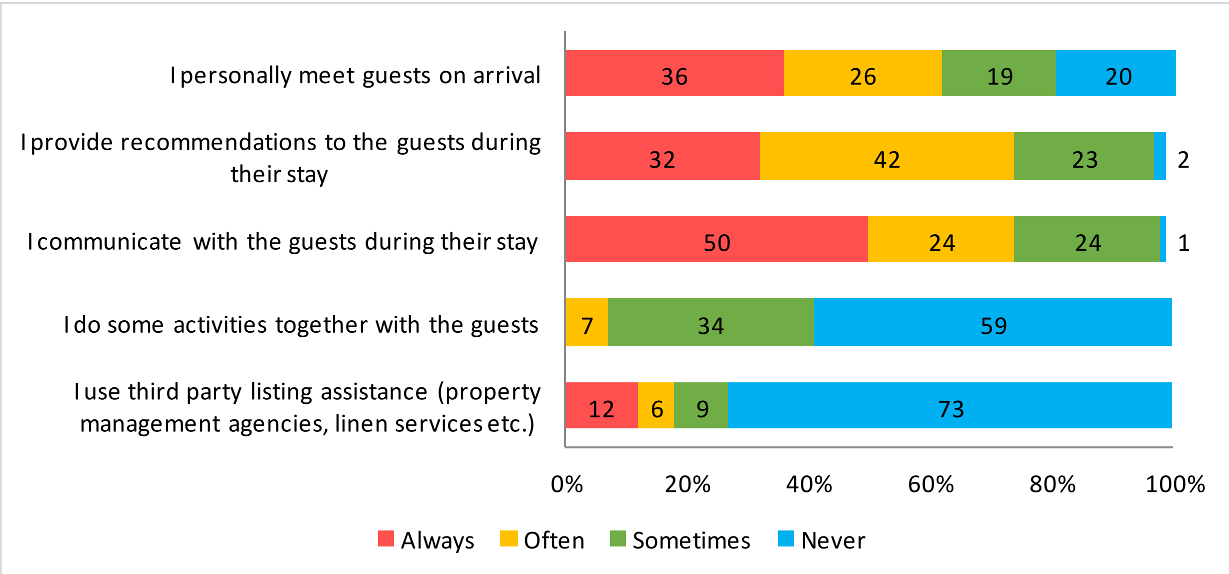

Figure 9. Host's interaction with guests, n = 90.

Source: Author's research.

Then the participants were asked to assess the number of statements related to trust and security (Figure 10). In relation to feeling of safety when hosting the respondents display a high level of agreement, although there are enough hosts who have chosen to stay neutral. In terms of trust towards guests, the results to some extent are different. In most cases either modest agreement can be observed, or neutrality. The hosts' satisfaction of checking procedures Airbnb offers is more equal. Neither clear satisfaction nor dissatisfaction trend can be mentioned as a whole. The aspect that, in general, does not inspire trust or confidence is Airbnb's review system. The amount of the respondents who consider review system lacks credibility is rather large.

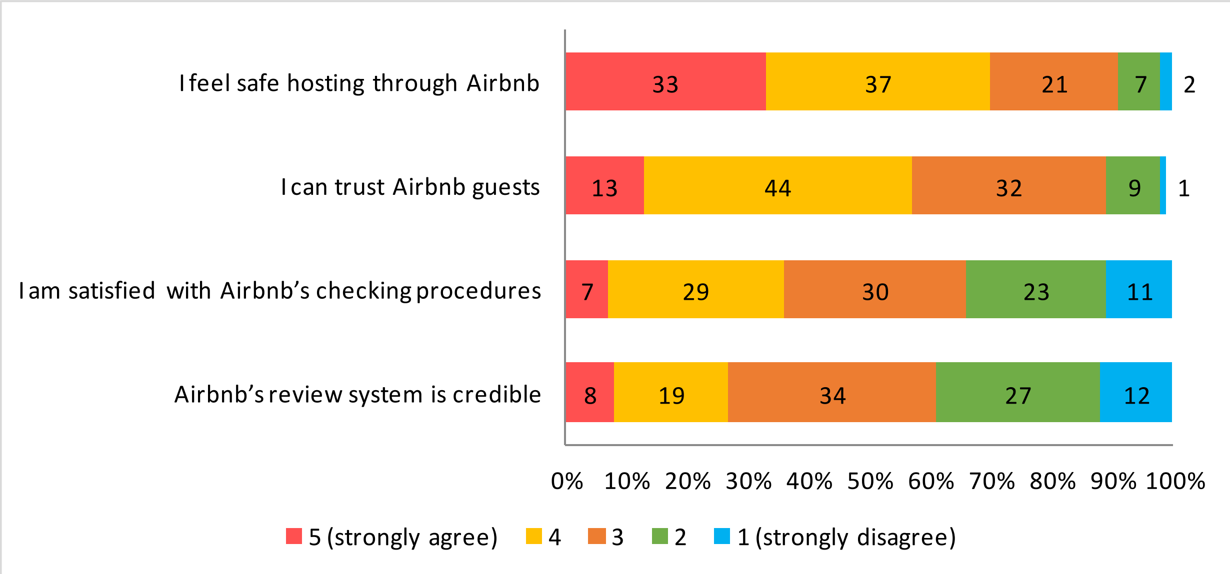

Figure 10. Hosts' attitudes towards trust and security, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

Next two statements were introduced to identify hosts' attitudes towards Airbnb's impact on the environment (Figure 11). Firstly, the participants were asked if Airbnb helps to ensure the efficient use of resources. The majority of the respondents remained neutral, and there was a large proportion of people who disagreed this position. The second statement related to the point that Airbnb helps to reduce the negative impact on the environment reveals more disagreement among respondents. The number of the respondents who remain neutral is substantial as in previous case, but the number of the respondents who disagree the statement is three times larger than those who agree. This may be the sign that the majority of hosts are unconcerned by environmental issues and do not mind to continue hosting activity in spite of associated negative effects. The discrepancy can be pointed out here, since common opinion among authors is that environmental aspect is significant motive for participation in sharing economy and higher level of participant's awareness and responsibility is reported by them. In fact, the substantial part of hosts remains skeptical about these statements, and environmental advantages of sharing economy are not accepted by them.

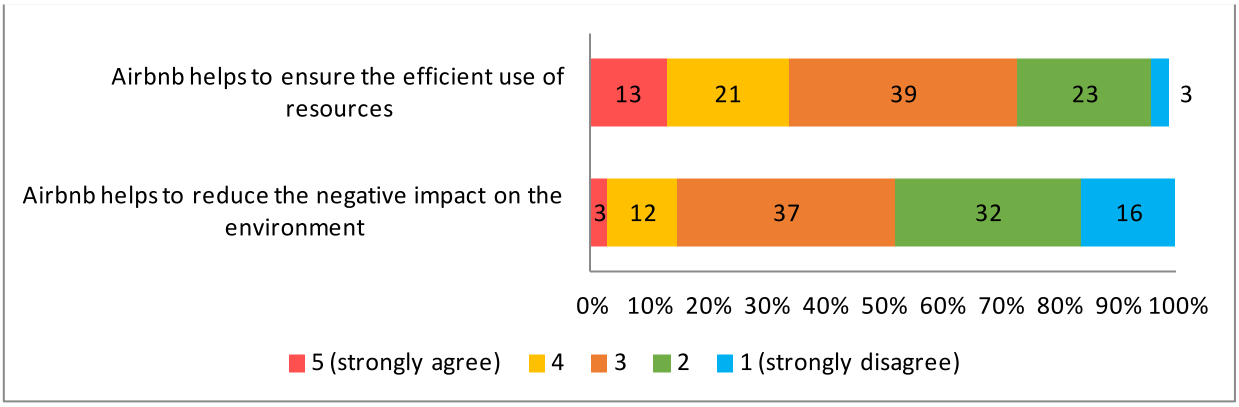

Figure 11. Host's attitudes towards Airbnb's impact on the environment, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

The next step is introduced to consider hosts' motives in greater detail. A number of statements concerning possible problems that can force hosts to suspend hosting activity are established for this purpose and the respondents were asked to indicate how likely they stop being Airbnb host due to mentioned reasons (Figure 12). The statements are concerned with various issues including economic factors, trust, protection, regulation, community. Some conclusions after a closer look at the results can be pointed out. Such elements as increased platform commissions and decline in the demand that can be perceived crucial at first glance, but was not identified as the key reason to stop being a host by some respondents. This may occur due to several causes, including the fact that hosting activity is not a primary income source for the majority of the respondents, or having opportunities to benefit from alternative platforms. The emergence of new platforms is also not the main reason to stop hosting for most of the respondents. Airbnb does not adopt exclusive relationships and hosts are able to decide to what extent their listing is available on Airbnb, therefore hosts may continue using Airbnb on an equal basis with another websites. There is no distinct trends in the majority of the cases towards entire sample except the statement related to the host protection, namely 82% of the respondents indicated the high likelihood of platform usage rejection due to poor host protection. This is closely connected with trust and security issues mentioned previously. The last two aspects refer to regulation: requirement of permission obtaining and annual rent day limitations, wherein the latest is heavily dependent on hosts' motives. The results show that the respondents who expressed the likelihood of discontinue hosting due to limitations of the days the space can be rented, in most cases, earn $15,000 to $30,000 or over $30,000 annually. So, hosting is probably their main or secondary source of income, and they may be especially sensitive about such constraints.

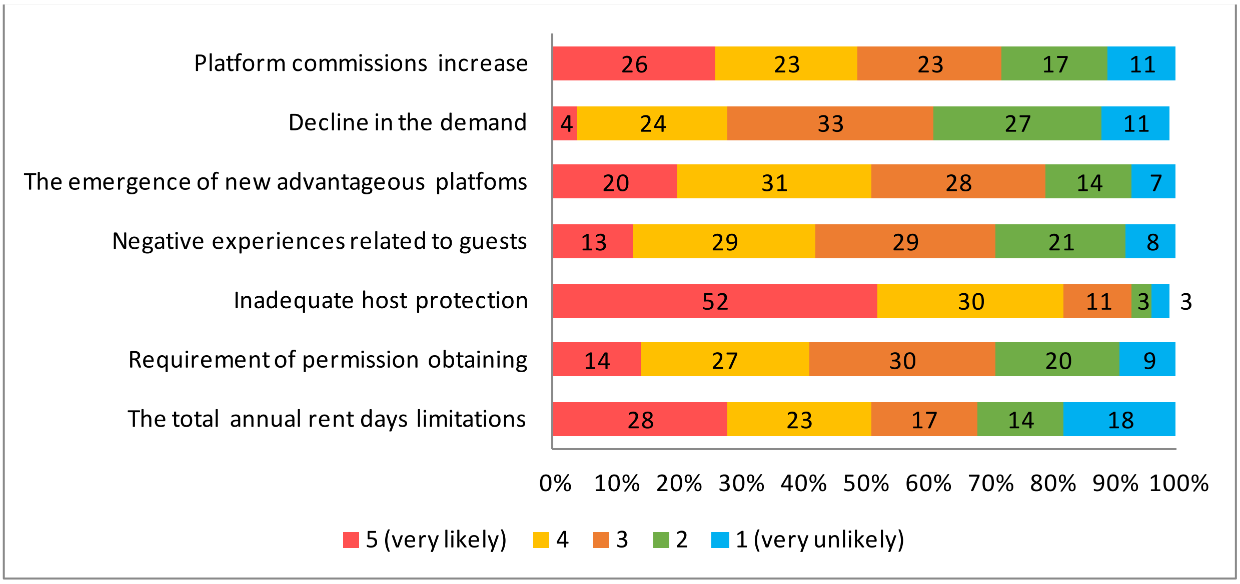

Figure 12. Potential reasons to stop being Airbnb host, n = 90.
Source: Author's research.

The last part of statements brings together issues referred to hosts' attitudes towards Airbnb platform and its core values (Figure 13). The participants were asked to express their level of agreement towards a number of statements. Firstly, they were asked about Airbnb usage satisfaction, and the overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed positive attitudes. Then such element as sense of belonging is addressed, and answers were distributed quite evenly, without clear agreement or disagreement. The questionnaire also contains the question related to participant's guest experience in order to determine hosts' attitudes in relation to Airbnb community adherence, but the preference of booking accommodation through Airbnb over hotels cannot be confirmed. The next statement asks if Airbnb helps to create connections between like-minded people and more agreement comparing with previous two statements can be found here. Then it is inquired if Airbnb will become the main accommodation booking platform in the future. Even the considerable part of the respondents remains neutral, the number of the respondents who agree the statement is slightly larger. The last statement is a circulated expression among sharing economy theorists which can be formulated as «access is better than ownership». Practically half of the respondents do not lean toward agreement or disagreement here, which may be attributed to lack of awareness or unformed opinion regarding this issue, or strong ownership tendencies.

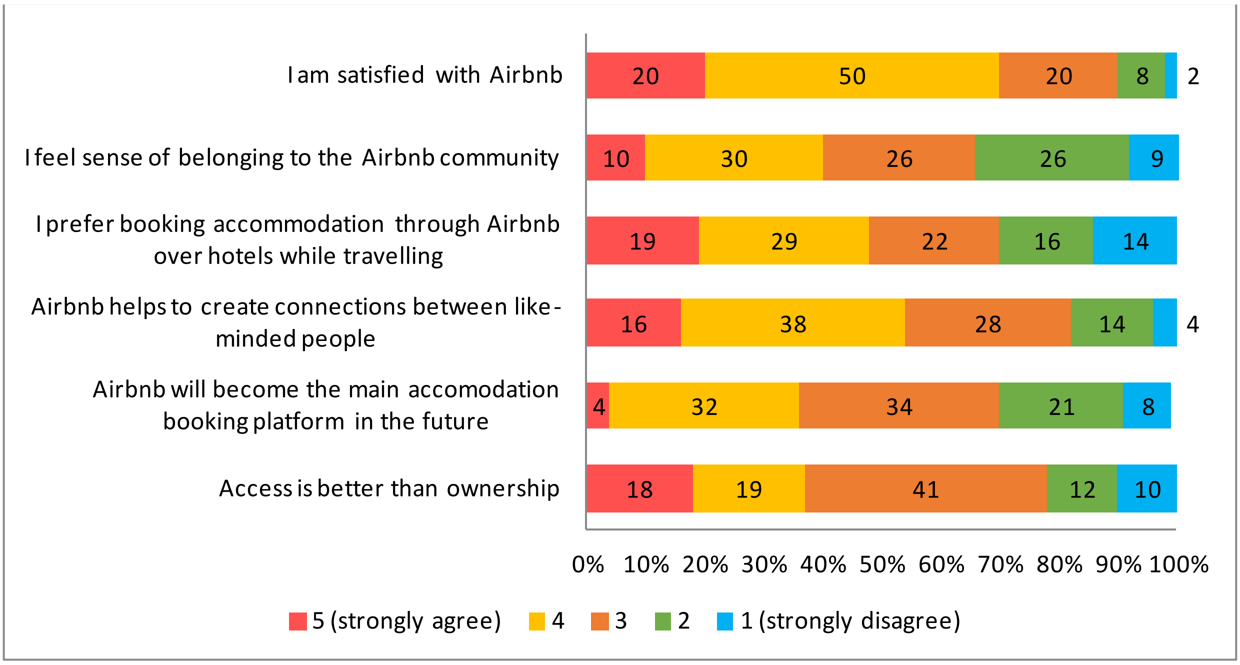

Figure 13. Hosts' attitudes towards Airbnb platform and its core values, n = 90.

Source: Author's research.

Based on the research results, recommendations can be given and conclusions can be made that follow further.

2.3. Recommendations

The current research reveals problematic areas inside the Airbnb platform as well as on the general level that require further investigation. One of the central and most extremely challenges is ensuring the high level of customer protection. The results of the research confirmed concerns about deficiency of measures in respect of guest and host safety. Even numerous loyal customers express their dissatisfaction with Airbnb's checking procedures and review system to an even larger extent. The need of review system revision and improvement in ensuring a higher level of confidence becomes apparent. It is also evident that the lack of member protection can reduce the pace of growth, forcing customers to stop using peer-to-peer marketplaces and favour hotels that may have fewer benefits, but considered substantially reliable. In short, the inadequate level of guest and host protection cannot be compensated by advantages sharing economy platforms provide. In order to overcome this problem Airbnb may pursue the path of tightening control and imposition of standards that may act as excessive restrictions in the relationship between individuals, which clearly has adverse implications and threats from a certain level, including large spendings for ensuring a high level of control. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between autonomy and tight control, first and foremost drawing attention to hosts' attitudes and their requests.

Another aspect that should be taken into account is regulation. As study shows, hosting activity remains secondary in terms of income as a rule. Therefore, a more accurate perspective on hosts' motives and attitudes should be taken into consideration when regulation, employment and taxation legislation are applied. The regulations may, to some extent, prevent entries of commercial groups by creating the barriers that make help keeping Airbnb on the scale of peer-to-peer relationships. For example, limitations related to the maximum number of days the space can be rented. The results of the research show, on the one hand, the overwhelming number of hosts who make their space available for rent more than 120 days annually and, on the other hand, that a significant part of hosts is likely to stop hosting is case of such limitations. So, such limitations can lead to the fact that there Airbnb presence in cities, where such policies are implemented, will be small. And although this has been increasingly happening in different parts of the world, there is no inclination for assume that such regulation will become ubiquitous in the nearest future.

CONCLUSION

The research aim is to define the degree of Aibnb usage by professional hosts and find out the nature of their hosting behavior. The theoretical and empirical research was examined in order to fulfil this aim. The survey addresses hosts' participation motives and attitudes, which is fundamental for achieving the aim of the research.

Q1: What are hosts' motives that encourage Airbnb participation?

Answering this question, it can be concluded that economic motives are dominating among hosts when deciding to pursue hosting activity, but the expected outcome in terms of earnings is quite different ranging from intention to compensate some maintenance costs to ensuring the level of earnings comparable to main source of income, and becoming a professional host.

Q2: What are hosts' attitudes concerning their hosting experience and Airbnb platform?

After analysing a whole set of questions and observation differences in hosting activity, two different host segments based on their attitudes can be distinguished. One of these groups that appear relatively minor in case of the survey, consists of hosts with professional attitudes. Hosts of this type often have more hosting experience, more than one property in the ownership, rent entire home or apartment full year, their income generated through hosting activity is generally higher, they tend to have less personal contact with guests and use assistance of other individuals or third-party companies. The second group consists of hosts that are largely characterised by the opposite approach. For this category of people hosting activity, in many cases, is confined to occasional extra earnings or secondary income and cannot become, in general, the main occupation. It can be also observed that hosting activity as a main source of income can take place in case of retirement or lack of employment in the part of instances.

Based on the research, it can be also assumed that hosts' attitudes towards hosting are changing over time. They may start hosting having certain motives, but then they realise that hosting activity can give opportunities to earn more than expected, their attitudes alter in favour of greater professionalism. These hosts may expand their hosting activity over time and create additional listings to benefit from extra rental opportunities and eventually attain greater economic output. However, according to the overwhelming majority of the participants, hosting activity is not close to becoming the main source of income. So, discussing the mass switch to professional hosting in purpose of profit-making is not topical yet.

It can be mentioned that some advantages of Airbnb platform are perceived by customers as elements with lower priority. For example, sense of Airbnb community belonging is discussed to a lesser extent among hosts. It becomes clear that many principles cannot exist separately, without having a strong base in the form of high platform quality.

The study also reveals notable findings relating to environmental issues. A significant part of hosts are unconcerned by environmental issues and do not mind to continue hosting activity in spite of associated negative environmental effects. Such perception contrasts with the common opinion among authors according to that environmental aspect is significant motive for participation in sharing economy.

The study discloses problem areas that require special consideration from both platform participants and executives. Numerous challenges are common to all peer-to-peer marketplaces, but they were discussed in the current paper with regard to Airbnb. Ensuring the high level of security is one of the major problems marked by previous researchers and hosts participated in the survey, and several comments and recommendations were provided throughout the paper. Despite the fact that Airbnb is taking actions to overcome mistrust and gaps in protection, the situation is quite far from perfect condition. Probably more decisive steps in the direction of higher degree of standardization and greater control are needed to cope with such problems.

In summing up the discourse, it can be concluded that the scale of Airbnb professional use is not significant yet, approximately less than one fourth of survey participants can be seen as professionals. Nevertheless, the problem requires attention since the increasing trend towards professional relationships may shift customer motives and attitudes entailed in regulation revision that would become necessary at some point. In case of becoming the subject of similar regulation and establishing functioning terms as hotels, the main current advantages of Airbnb will be eliminated. In order to prevent this, Airbnb should pay more attention to the preservation of relationship between individuals. Accordingly, creating entry barriers for groups with hospitality background should be also the area of Airbnb interest.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire results

1. How long have you been using Airbnb as a host?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than 6 months	4	4.4%
6 to 12 months	16	17.8%
1 to 3 years	45	50.0%
More than 3 years	25	27.8%

2. How many listings do you have on Airbnb?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
1	57	63.3%
2	16	17.8%
3	8	8.9%
4 or more	9	10.0%

3. What is the type of your listing?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Entire home or apartment	71	78.9%
Private room	18	20.0%
Shared room	1	1.1%

4. What were predominating motives for you to become a host?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Economic (e.g. earning money, saving money)	81	90.0%
Social (e.g. meeting new people, belonging to a community)	9	10.0%
Environmental (e.g. protecting the environment, maintaining sustainability	0	0.0%

5. How many days in a year, on average, your listing is available for booking?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than 30 days	1	1.1%
30 to 60 days	3	3.3%
60 to 120 days	11	12.2%
More than 120 days	75	83.4%

6. Do you place listings on other websites?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes, always	35	38.9%
Yes, sometimes	14	15.6%
No, never	41	45.5%

7. What is hosting activity for you in terms of earnings?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
The main source of income	14	15.6%
The secondary source of income	51	56.6%
The occasional extra earnings	23	25.6%
Other	2	2.2%

8. What is your average annual income generated through Airbnb?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than $1,000	3	3.3%
$1,000 to $5,000	14	15.6%
$5,000 to $15,000	27	30.0%
$15,000 to $30,000	24	26.7%
Over $30,000	22	24.4%

9. Please choose one answer for each question	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I personally meet guests on arrival	18	17	23	32
I provide recommendations to the guests during their stay	2	21	38	29
I communicate with the guests during their stay	1	22	22	45
I do some activities together with the guests	53	31	6	0
I use third party listing assistance (property management agencies, linen services etc.)	66	8	5	11

10. Please choose one answer for each question	1 (strongly disagree)	2	3	4	5 (strongly agree)
I feel safe hosting through Airbnb	2	6	19	33	30
I can trust Airbnb guests	1	8	29	40	12
I am satisfied with Airbnb's checking procedures	10	21	27	26	6
Airbnb's review system is credible	11	24	31	17	7

11. Please choose one answer for each question	1 (strongly disagree)	2	3	4	5 (strongly agree)
Airbnb helps to ensure the efficient use of resources	3	21	35	19	12
Airbnb helps to reduce the negative impact on the environment	14	29	33	11	3

12. How likely is that you stop being an Airbnb host for the following reasons?	1 (very unlikely)	2	3	4	5 (very likely)
Platform commissions increase	10	15	21	21	23
Decline in the demand	10	24	30	22	4
The emergence of new advantageous platforms	6	13	25	28	18
Negative experiences related to guests	7	19	26	26	12
Inadequate host protection	3	3	10	27	47
Requirement of permission obtaining	8	18	27	24	13
The total annual rent days limitations	16	13	15	21	25

13. Please choose one answer for each question	1 (strongly disagree)	2	3	4	5 (strongly agree)
I am satisfied with Airbnb	2	7	18	45	18
I feel sense of belonging to the Airbnb community	8	23	23	27	9
I prefer booking accommodation through Airbnb over hotels while travelling	13	14	20	26	17
Airbnb helps to create connections between like-minded people	4	13	25	34	14
Airbnb will become the main accommodation booking platform in the future	7	19	31	29	4
Access is better than ownership	9	11	37	17	16

14. What is your gender?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Male	45	50.0%
Female	45	50.0%

15. What is your age?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
25-34	7	7.8%
35-44	19	21.1%
45-54	29	32.2%
55-64	29	32.2%
Over 65 years	6	6.7%

16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than high school diploma	1	1.1%
High school diploma or equivalent degree	3	3.3%
Some college, no degree	22	24.4%
Undergraduate degree (e.g. Bachelor's degree)	40	44.5%
Graduate degree (e.g. Master's degree)	24	26.7%

17. Which of the following best describes your employment status?	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Full-time	41	45.6%
Part-time	4	4.4%
Self-employed	23	25.6%
Unemployed	2	2.2%
Not working	12	13.3%
Retired	8	8.9%