

Is AirBnb hosts' socially responsible behaviour reflected by visitors?

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Abstract

Airbnb is one of the global companies that include clear feedback loops in their services. Both, hosts and their visitors provide feedback on their experience. We are interested in determining if the host affinity towards a socially responsible behaviour is reflected in tourist sentiment reviews.

In this paper we elaborate on the methods of acquiring data, analysing the affinity towards social responsibility (SR) concepts using text analysis of residences and local environment descriptions, and conducting a sentiment analysis of visitor reviews.

Up to now, a research, examining the hospitality hosts' and visitors' SR behaviour, based on a comparative text analysis, has not been thoroughly conducted. Therefore, the proposed method would provide new means of providing insight into complex social behaviour of hospitality services hosts and their visitors.

If the relations between the SR behaviour of hosts and the visitor reviews can be identified, it can directly drive towards supporting a more SR behaviour. Additionally, the local community and regulators, such as Smart Cities regulators, could use the data to support their activities in order to provide a more sustainable environment for residents and hosts.



Keywords: Airbnb, Hospitality, Text mining, Sentiment analysis, Social responsibility

Ali obiskovalci cenijo družbeno odgovorno obnašanje Airbnb gostiteljev?

Povzetek

Airbnb je eno od svetovnih podjetij, ki v svoje storitve vključujejo jasne povratne zanke. Gostitelji in njihovi obiskovalci dajejo povratne informacije o svojih izkušnjah. Zanima nas, ali se gostiteljev odnos do družbeno odgovornega vedenja odraža v odzivih turistov.

V prispevku obravnavamo metode pridobivanja podatkov, analiziramo odnos do konceptov družbene odgovornosti s pomočjo analize besedil o stanovanjih in opisov lokalnega okolja ter razpoloženje obiskovalcev.

Doslej obravnava družbeno odgovornega vedenja gostiteljev, gostov in obiskovalcev ni bila temeljito raziskana z uporabo primerjalne analize besedila. Zato bi predlagana metoda zagotovila nova sredstva za vpogled v kompleksno družbeno obnašanje gostiteljev gostinskih storitev in njihovih obiskovalcev.

Če je mogoče ugotoviti razmerja med vedenjem gostiteljev in pregledom obiskovalcev, se to lahko neposredno usmeri v podporo izboljšanju vedenja. Poleg tega bi lahko lokalna skupnost in regulatorji, kot so na primer upravljavci pametnih mest, uporabili podatke za podporo svojim dejavnostim, da bi zagotovili bolj trajnostno okolje za prebivalce in gostitelje.

Ključne besede: Airbnb, Turizem, Analize besedil, Analize razpoloženja, Družbena odgovornost

1 Introduction and Background

SR behaviour applies to all subjects in the society at all levels (Mulej et al., 2017). The integral perspective advances the bipolar perspective presented by Fisher (2004), where personal ethics was claimed to be in the conflict with the profitability of the company. According to Mulej et al. (2017) acknowledging the complexity of the relations between people, organisations, society and the environment is the key element of acting truly SR.

The original SR concepts were expanded by invoking Society and environment to form a "Triple P" bottom line: Profit + Planet + People (Elkington, 1998). The expanded understanding of the SR is in line with the basic concepts of systems thinking, explaining that the system is, what it does (Beer, 1979), and that it guarantees its place in the environment with its activities.

SR is a human attribute that matters for individuals, organisations, and societies; young people should therefore internalise this value to comprehend the triangle of the essence of SR; responsibility for one's impacts over society, interdependence and holism. In ISO 26000 (ISO, 2010), seven principles of SR cited are listed:



1. Accountability
2. Transparency
3. Ethical behaviour
4. Respect for stakeholder interests
5. Respect for the rule of law
6. Respect for international norms of behaviour
7. Respect for human rights

Conforming to Triple P the eight principle is added

8. Respect for the environment.

The declarative form of SR principles can and should be transferred in imperative behaviour patterns, not only addressing some principles, but moreover combine them. Only by their combined application a higher meta level, management can be achieved. It is though argued that SR management is more successful in the developed environment that understands and appreciates the organisational efforts (Wang et al., 2016).

In tourism and hospitality, direct, IT based (Rodriguez-Rodriguez et al., 2013) global communication enabled the emergence of personal hospitality-offers on the global market that modified some of the concepts of the hospitality industry and is slowly transforming it to the tourism sector (Guttentag, 2015).

The **SR principles** from the perspective of tourism and hospitality are widely addressed. Zupan and Milfelner (2014) for instance elaborate on the guest perception of SR in small hotels.

Accountability is closely related to keeping track of the SR efforts as depicted by Chung and Parker (2010). Hosts and tourists are accountable for their activities that may well reach beyond the facility. The effects of private Airbnb activities to the community are widely addressed by posting positive and negative effects to the involved parties (Sans and Quaglieri, 2016).

Transparency in hospitality is extensively disputed. On one hand is the desire of the hospitality providers to present the best perspective on the services and their backgrounds (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014), on the other hand there is the capacity of the tourists to share the experience they had, using multiple channels, for instance social media (Sigala et al., 2012). The picture we get is quite often distorted - not only the hosts' descriptions, but also the tourists' reviews are reported to be biased (Bulchand-Gidumal and Melián-González, 2019).

Ethical behaviour is a much disputed topic (Becker and Gao, 2010), since it is omnipresent in every situation. Critically observing behaviour of hosts and guests, the assessment of ethicality in a situation depends greatly on the perspective of the observer. Thereby, to raise the absolute level of the ethical behaviour, the observers' potentials to correctly address the ethicality should be enhanced to include the important ethical aspects. Generally, all parties conceive the behaviour as ethically correct if they share the ethical norms. The tourist feedback on environmental attitude of hotels is elaborated by Tilikidou et al. (2014).

Regretfully, the **Respecting for stakeholders interests** is often misinterpreted as formal financial reporting the stockholders (Perez and del Bosque, 2014), which exclude collaboration with the people and organisations directly or indirectly connected with the hosts. To correctly address the stakeholders interests, these are first to be identified, then their incentives analysed,



to form common initiatives that lead to activities, invoking all the interested stakeholders (Morsing and Schultz, 2006).

Respect for the rule of law enhances the close-at-hand stakeholders to the community, bound together by the norms, formalised as the law (Su et al., 2017). The capacity to comply is limited for the local hospitality services providers, while the global players easily fine-tune their operations with local legislations and additionally utilise the options provided by international law (Gear, 2016).

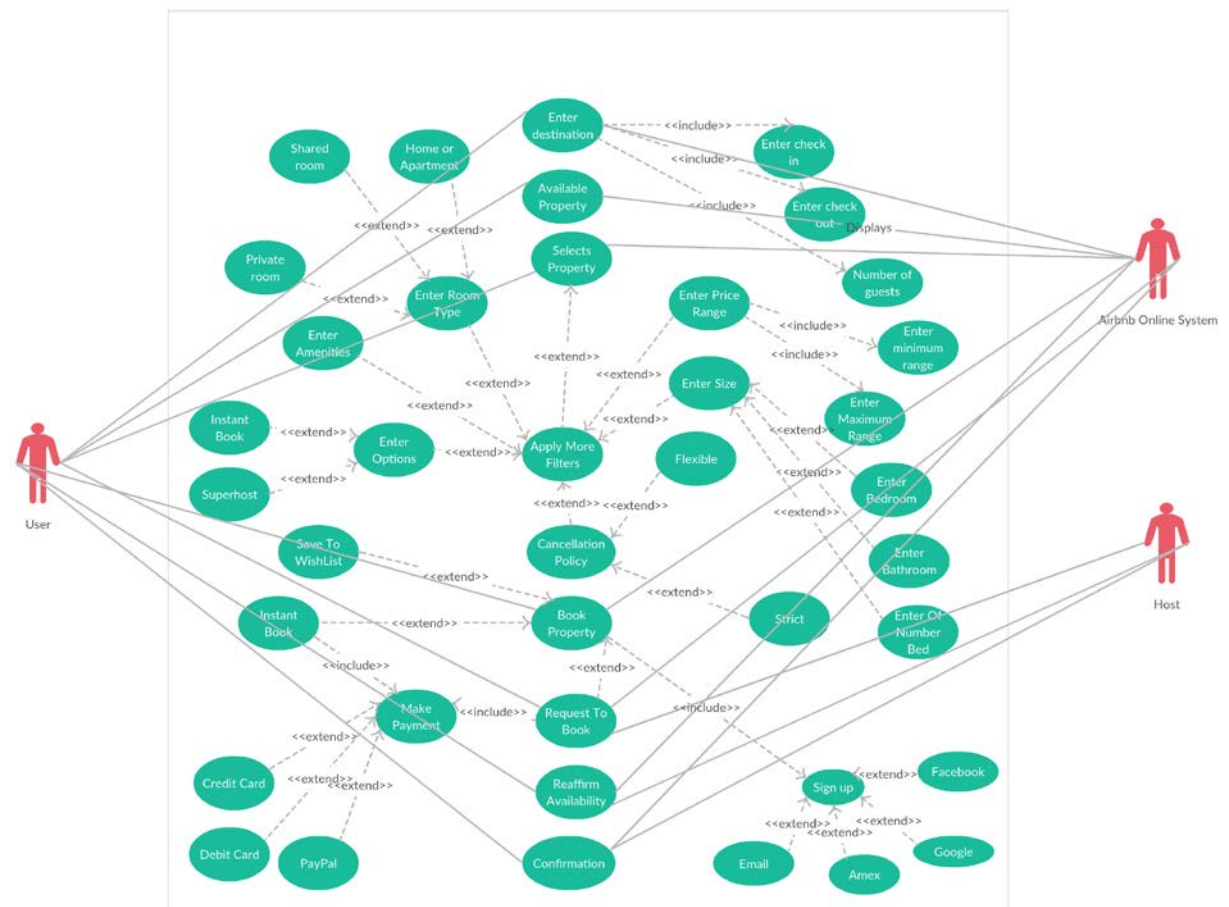
Respect for international norms of behaviour. Hospitality is internationally bound. Hosts' and tourists' backgrounds are fundamentally different and thereby post significant imprint on each other (Doğan, 1989). Respecting the differences, and at the same time raising expectation for complying to each other's norms may be challenging for both parties.

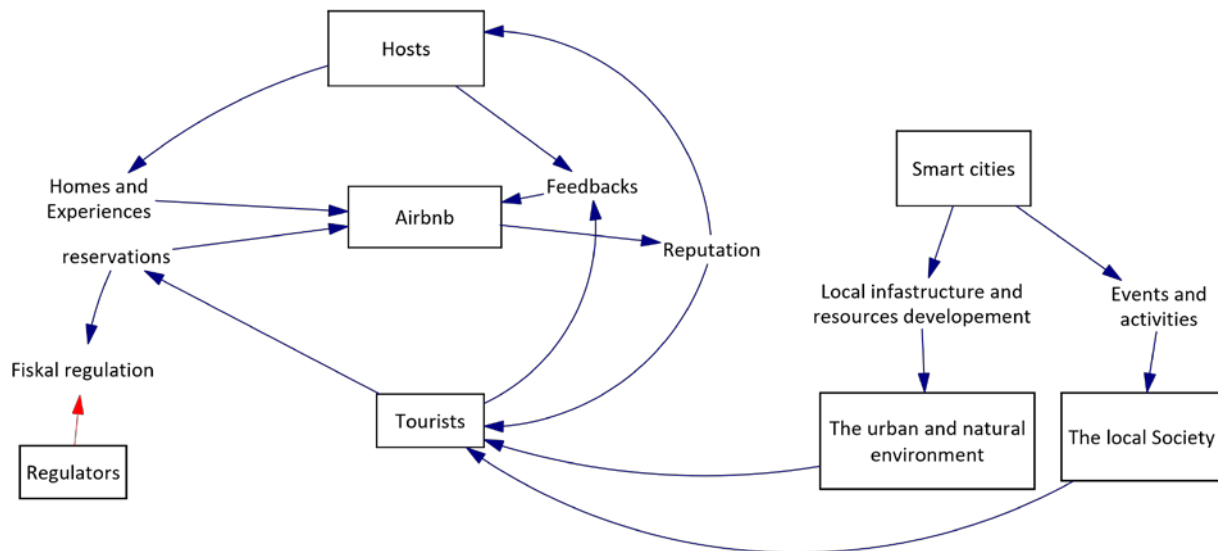
Respect for human rights clearly states to go beyond the law limitations in designing an environment where everybody in the process is well thought of, focusing especially in protecting the interests of people with limited activity capacity. Airbnb is a disruptive technology, redefining social relations among not only hosts and tourists, but the whole community (O'Regan and Choe, 2017), thereby it is imperative to consider the effects of their action on all parties.

Respect for environment involves a principle beyond the initial ISO 26000 standard directives (ISO, 2010). The tourism impact on environment is well elaborated (Butler, 1991). The environment of the hosting destination is often the main reason for the visit. Since hosts and tourists post significant impact on natural and urban environment, it is worth considering both: impact from establishing hospitality resources and impact through their use by the tourists (Dolnicar and Leisch, 2008).

Effective data sharing among the system participants is a prerequisite for increase in the collaboration levels (Perko and Mlinaric, 2016) especially in tourism (Fodor and Werthner, 2004). Linking hosts and tourists through direct cloud based (Dominguez et al., 2016) information sharing on the premises and experiences enables individuals to offer their resources directly to the tourists (Paulauskaite et al., 2017). Although Airbnb claims to form communities, this is not reflected in the data. Moreover, it looks like Airbnb is focused in supporting delivering instant services to the hosts and tourists, thereby ignoring the need to the sustainability and development of the local environment and existing societies (Sans and Quaglieri, 2016).







The Airbnb policy is clear: provide a streamlined service, that excludes everybody that is not necessary in their strict line of operation. According to the SR principles, they show some signs of SR, but post open gaps on many:

1. Accountability: The Airbnb main processes are clear, furthermore they are raising the expectations on the service level on hosts and tourists.
 2. Transparency: in the basic line the Airbnb activities are transparent, but they do not clearly disclose their rates to the hosts or the tourist, and provide data for a correct fiscal management only reluctantly. Since the taxation issue was not clearly elaborated with the hosts, their calculations did not include paying the taxes.
 3. Ethical behaviour: with the trim line of services the Airbnb acts ethically, but in a case of unethical behaviour of the hosts, they do intervene only if it challenges their level of operation.
 4. Respect for stakeholder interests: The Airbnb clearly ignores stakeholders that are not part of their line of services. They ignore the fact that tourists often visit a place because of the urban and national environment or the events and activities provided by the local society. They additionally ignore the negative effects of overexposure of societies to Tourists.
 5. Respect for the rule of law: The Airbnb conforms to the law only after a strict reminder. Clear signs include many reported legal disputes with local authorities, especially regarding the tax regulations.
 6. Respect for international norms of behaviour: The Airbnb concept provided many internationally positive effects, since it offered regular people to host, and be hosted by, a foreigner.
 7. Respect for human rights: Regarding the two groups: hosts and tourists, the feedback effect provides a clear increase in the respect to each other. Ignoring the local society provides very negative effects.
- Respect for the environment: Urban and natural environment is clearly exploited. Airbnb uses them to support their line of business, it delivers no systemic input in supporting the development of those and does not supports the hosts or the tourists in doing so.

To test the proposed model, the analysis of the Airbnb Hosts descriptions and the tourist's feedback could be performed. Since the descriptions and the reviews are provided in text the use of text affinity analysis is preferable.



3 Summary

Measuring the SR behaviour and evaluation of its effects is difficult. The complexity of SR behaviour greatly exceeds the usual business profit oriented activities, since a trade-off between all stakeholder's interests has to be balanced at all times. The effects are even harder to measure, usually due to the delay over the behaviour and the perspectives of the observers.

In this paper, a disrupting concept, introduced by Airbnb is examined from the multiple SR perspectives. A model elaborating the relations among the stakeholders in the Airbnb ecosystem is proposed and examined from multiple SR perspectives.

Further research in the form of text analysis of hosts descriptions and tourist reviews would help examining the affinity towards SR behaviour of hosts and the sentiment of the tourists. The provided insight could help reforming the understanding of the hosts and tourists on the importance of the social and ecology environment and their role in preserving and upgrading it.

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