



IDENTIFYING *AIRBNB* ENTREPRENEURS' ROLES AND COMPETENCIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTITIONERS

Liwen Chen
Department of Technology Management,
Chung-Hua University, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Tung-Liang Chen^{*}
Department of Technology Management,
Chung-Hua University, Taiwan, R.O.C.

^{*} Corresponding Author: ryanshim2000@yahoo.com.tw

Hsu-Kuan Liu
³ Department of Tourism, I-Shou University, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the way in which Airbnb entrepreneurs perceive their roles and competencies. The data was collected from the Airbnb host international online forum and semi-structured interviews of seven Airbnb entrepreneurs from Taiwan and South Korea. A qualitative analysis was applied using Leximancer software and eight major textual themes were identified, as well as their relationship with each other. In order of importance, these themes were guests, people, host, Airbnb, property, look, information and city, which consist of eight roles and 26 competencies. The findings provide useful insights for tourism education programs, since they are considered to be essential roles and competencies for Airbnb practitioners.

Keywords: Airbnb, competencies, entrepreneur, micro-entrepreneurship, user-generated content.

Introduction

The world-wide popularity of the shared economy has led to the emergence of Airbnb as an alternative pro-

vider of products and services that were traditionally supplied by the long-established tourism industry (Ert, Fleischer, & Magen, 2016; Fang, Ye, & Law, 2016; Guttentag, 2015). Airbnb is a peer-to-peer online rental service, which enables

individuals to rent their houses or rooms to guests with the assistance of advanced technology. Airbnb users can enter the city, arrival/departure date, and number of occupants onto the Airbnb website and search for relevant listings based on their preferred rating, price, and location. Then, a short-term rental can be confirmed and arranged with the host via a user-friendly platform (Ribbers & Kapadia, 2014; Varma, Jukic, Pestek, Shultz, & Nestorove, 2016).

Airbnb has hosted more than 60 million people in more than 34,000 cities in 190 countries in less than ten years (Liu & Mattila, 2016) and is valued at over US\$25 billion, which exceeds the value of major hotel chains, such as Hyatt. The growth and international reach of Airbnb is supreme and it is rapidly reshaping the way people travel around the globe. More than six million individuals used Airbnb in 2013 (Ribbers & Kapadia, 2014) and, according to the Airbnb website, 320,000 foreign travelers to Taiwan used this peer-to-peer rental platform in 2015. 190,000 users and 10,000 homeowners in Taiwan, primarily located in Yilan, Hualien, Pingtung, and Penghu, are currently listed on Airbnb, and more and more business travelers are beginning to use it, especially those in the Tech industry (“Large increase in business,” 2016). Since Airbnb appears to cater for a new generation of travelers who are seeking unique lodgings that feature a high level of cultural immersion, increasing the understanding of Airbnb entrepreneurs may lead to improving the quality of guests’ experience.

Although many researchers have studied the competencies of employees in the hospitality industry (Horng, Hsu, Liu, Lin, & Tsai, 2010; Kalargyrou &

Woods, 2010), few have examined the competencies of Airbnb startups in the informal tourist accommodation sector. According to previous research, competency can refer to three aspects: (1) individual characteristics, (2) observable performance, and (3) the standard or quality of the outcome of a person’s performance. In this study, competency will be defined as the “demonstrable characteristics of a person, including knowledge, skills and behavior that enable performance” (Ledford, 1995, p.56).

Hence, the purpose of this study is to identify the experience of Airbnb entrepreneurs in an attempt to understand their competencies from their own perspective in order to provide some implications to educate micro-entrepreneurs. Since the identification of these competencies may facilitate the planning and development of a curriculum for micro-entrepreneurship training programs, the results of the study will be imperative for the creation of effective training and development programs in the field of hospitality and tourism education. This may result in increasing job satisfaction, thereby leading to better customer service and repeat business in the hospitality industry.

The research is divided into five parts: (1) The theoretical and empirical background of the study; (2) A review of the relevant existing literature; (3) Details of the methodological approach used to complete the study; (4) Results of the study; and (5) Discussion of the results. The limitations of the study are also highlighted in the final part and implications are made in this field based on those limitations before concluding the study.

Literature Review

Two aspects of the literature are reviewed based on the purpose of the study: (1) Airbnb and its impact and (2) the use of big data analytics in User-Generated Content (UGC).

Airbnb and Its Impact

Founded in 2008, Airbnb defines itself as ‘a trusted community marketplace for people to list, discover and book unique accommodation around the world’ (www.Airbnb.com). Airbnb owners have two hosting options: (1) remote hospitality (i.e., whereby hosts do not physically share their home with guests) and (2) on-site hospitality (viz., whereby hosts are physically present and share their accommodation with guests). Guests are charged a fee of 6-12% by Airbnb and hosts pay a fee of 3% on completion of the booking. Based on the notion of a shared economy, Airbnb provides a rating system for guests and hosts to rate each other in the user’s profile section via a transparent recommendation system. This is visible to all network members in order to build trust among users by word-of-mouth on this easy-to-access platform.

Although Airbnb has several advantages for the tourism industry, it also has disadvantages (Fang, Ye, & Law, 2016). Firstly, the offer of accommodation may be unsafe for hosts and/or guests. Secondly, although Zervas, Proserpio, and Byers (2017) assert that Airbnb accommodation is different from that of hotels, Ribbers and Kapadia (2014) observe that some hotels are still suffering from a loss of business due to this innovation. For example, the revenue of vulnerable hotels in popular Airbnb areas has declined by about

8-10% over the past five years, and it has been found that each additional 10% increase in the size of the Airbnb market in Texas causes a 0.37% decrease in hotel room revenue. According to Zervas, Proserpio and Byers (2017), Airbnb is replacing low-end hotels. Thirdly, Airbnb accommodation may not be liable for occupancy tax in some cities and this is generally the primary source of revenue for the global tourism industry (Ribbers & Kapadia, 2014). Fourthly, although Airbnb remains the undisputed front runner of peer-to-peer rentals, these kinds of rentals are still illegal in some countries, such as Taiwan, with which Airbnb has been negotiating in recent years. According to company officials, apart from the legal issue, Airbnb has grown four times faster in Taiwan in 2015 than in previous years (Chou, 2015). Since the growing awareness of a shared economy is creating a major change in the fundamental concept of the world and the role of people in it, there appears to be a need for specific regulations and an investigation into the collection of hotel tax or income tax from Airbnb hosts’ revenue in order to promote the local tourism industry and enhance regional economic development.

Use of Big Data Analytics in User-Generated Content

Researchers have begun to use big data in user-generated content (UGC) on social media platforms. Big data is usually distinguished by three features: (1) volume (which refers to the quantity of the data), (2) speed (which refers to the speed of processing the data), and (3) diversity (which refers to the type of data). UGC, which is part of big data, is explained as a work of creation published on a publicly reachable website

that is not directly related to financial or commercial gain. (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). UGC is also known as an electronic form of word-of-mouth, which generates both positive and negative digital information. It is deemed to be unbiased and capable of representing real voices and providing insightful implications from the perspective of insiders. As a result, it is extensively used by both tourists and hospitality providers as a source of information for making decisions (Song & Yoo, 2016). With the rapid development of information and communication technologies in the digital era, individuals can easily access huge volumes of information and increasingly participate in two-way communication. Hence, an analysis of social media posts can provide a number of insights into various aspects of the hospitality and tourism industry (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013). Previous researchers have found that the opinions expressed in UGC are trusted more by travelers than commercial tourism information sources (e.g. travel agents or accommodation operators). UGC is also beneficial for researchers due to its speed, availability of data, and simple data collection process. The huge volume of UGC is a significant source of data for researchers to collect and analyze valuable tourist insights and behavior (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015).

Method

Data Collection

A qualitative approach was chosen as the methodology for this research, since it is deemed to strengthen the understanding and interpretation of meanings, as well as the intentions underlying human interaction. Qualitative semi-structured interviews and an online

forum dataset were used to collect the data for this study. Online data is referred to as digital data, community data or big data (Platanou, Mäkelä, Beletskiy, & Colicev, 2018). Online forums are usually used by diverse groups for elective emotional and informational support and have been advocated as an excellent option to accompany the qualitative approach. It was also possible to collect richer data from a more diverse sample than from traditional smaller-scale samples due to the number of hosts who have generated large volumes of data online. As a result, the integration of data from these two sources facilitated a comparison and triangulation of rich and relevant data.

Firstly, the data for this study comprised the online reviews of Airbnb hosts, which contain detailed information of their experience. These were published in the All Discussion Rooms of the official Airbnb Community Center (including Community Center Updates, Hosting, Help, Tips & Tutorials, Interests, Airbnb Open, and Host Newsletters). The reason for selecting this site is that the messages were publicly displayed; furthermore, it appeared to be active with at least 830,095 members, at least 7,602 online users, and a total of 1,076,376 posts (community.withairbnb.com). The site was split into sections, in which messages were posted under headings and subheadings. The Hosting section of the All Discussion Rooms, which consists of 33,002 conversations, was chosen for this study and the data, which consisted of one month's questions and replies to the site, was collected from February to March 2019. This research was based on hosts' entries written in English, specifically about their work. Valid questions and replies were saved per week in separate

Microsoft .docx files.

The application of two research methods tended to broaden the scope of the results and their interpretation; hence,

the data was also collected from seven Airbnb entrepreneurs (five Taiwanese and two South Koreans), two of whom were listed as super-hosts (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic and background characteristics of participants

| ID | Education | Age | Experiences/ years | Location |
|----|-------------|-------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| A | M.A. | 41-45 | 6 | Hsinchu, Taiwan |
| B | B.A. | 41-45 | 5 | Pintung, Taiwan |
| C | M.A. | 56-60 | 5 | Pusan, South Korea |
| D | High School | 36-40 | 3 | Yilan, Taiwan |
| E | B.A. | 51-55 | 1 | Pusan, South Korea |
| F | B.A. | 21-25 | 1 | Taipei, Taiwan |
| G | B.A. | 36-40 | 2 | Taichung, Taiwan |

The participants were recruited by snowball sampling. Face-to-face and online interviews were conducted in South Korea and Taiwan to identify the participants' cross-cultural experience after assuring them that their confidentiality and anonymity would be respected. Each transcript was read and re-read many times in order to become familiar with the data before merging the responses of a number of participants. The data was obtained from audio-taped semi-structured individual interviews. The main questions asked in the interviews were as follows; (1) What is it like to be an Airbnb host? (2) What is the best work experience you have ever had? and (3) What is the greatest challenge you have ever encountered? Probing questions were asked to obtain a detailed description of how they viewed their competence at work, such as (1) Tell me about your Airbnb, (2) How/when did you start this business? (3) What are your responsibilities during a normal working day as a host? (4) How could you perform more effectively? (5) What and who make it the

best? and (6) What was the most terrible thing you did the first time in this job? The participants were asked to describe their working day and expand the points they made for a better understanding. Follow-up questions were asked based on the information they provided and the data continued to be collected until no new categories emerged. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a copy was returned to each participant for verification of the content and confirmation of consent before the data was analyzed.

Data Analysis

The data was collected from the Airbnb host forum and interviews. The interview transcript contained a total of 14,045 words. There was a total of 983,716 words in the online forum database from February 18, 2019 to March 18, 2019. 496 Questions (i.e.183 in the first week, 95 in the second, 152 in the third, and 66 in the fourth) and 9,674

replies (i.e. 3,823 in the first week, 1,667 in the second, 3,124 in the third, and 1,060 in the fourth) were listed (see Table 2). Then, all the .docx files (viz. interview transcripts and online forum datasets) were transferred into .txt files for the Leximancer analysis and a deeper understanding of the concepts and themes was facilitated via the textual data. Working with its own algorithms to conduct a quantitative content analysis using a machine learning tech-

nique, Leximancer was applied to analyze the meanings within passages of the text by extracting the major concepts and themes, while visual concept maps and statistical outputs were generated to provide greater insights and comprehension of linguistic communication. The connectivity rate percentages from Leximancer calculated the connection between the concepts within the themes and reflected the importance of each theme.

Table 2. Number of comments per week (from February 18, 2019 to March 18, 2019)

| Date of Posts | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Questions | 183 | 95 | 152 | 66 |
| Replies | 3823 | 1667 | 3124 | 1060 |

Results

The themes and their associated concepts are demonstrated in Figure 1. Twenty-nine concepts were identified by Leximancer. The more concepts there are identified within a theme, the richer is the meaning the theme expresses. The smaller gray nodes are the concepts and these are grouped with different rainbow-colored themes in the output of the Leximancer. The most important theme in this research was assigned the color red, and the remaining themes were identified by orange, yellow, green, blue and violet as their importance decreased. Eight themes were discovered, namely, guests, people, host, Airbnb, property, look, information, and city in order of relative importance and they were each assigned a role (see Figure 1).

The overall results of the reviews of cosmetic procedures revealed eight themes in the concept map generated by Leximancer. This map included concepts

shown as small gray dots that were grouped into themes indicated by the larger colored spheres. The dominant themes in terms of connectivity and importance were “Guests” (12,773 hits), “People” (9,321 hits), “Host” (8,783 hits), “Airbnb” (7,937 hits), “Property” (6,346 hits), “Look” (1,066 hits), “Information” (893 hits), and “City” (682 hits) (see Figure 2). These were also the main themes representing the roles of Airbnb hosts. Each theme was linked to a list of associated concepts. For example, the theme of “guests” was linked to “stay”, “listing”, “guests”, and “reviews”, while the theme of “people” was linked to “cleaning”, “different”, “person”, “home”, and “room”. The concepts of “host”, “problem”, “cancel”, “refund”, “rules”, “bookings”, and “experience” constituted the theme of “host”, while the theme of “Airbnb” was linked to “rental”, “policy”, “pay”, and “platform”. The concepts of “service”, “property”, “listing”, and “company” were linked to the theme of “property.”

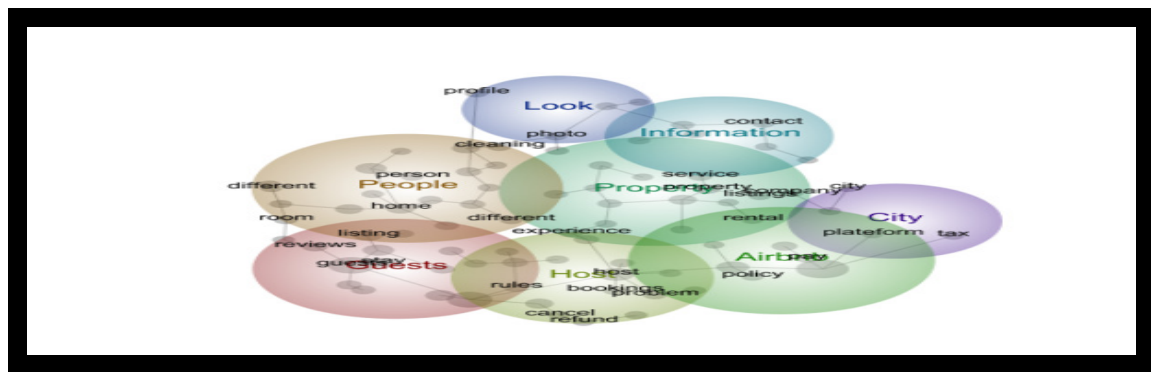


Figure 1. Leximancer mapping with concepts and themes

The theme of “look” was linked to “profile” and “photo”, while the theme of “information” was associated with the concept of “contact”, and the theme of “city” was related to “city” and “tax” (see Figure 1 and Figure 3).

Leximancer was useful for starting the qualitative analysis by facilitating the familiarization of the initial coding of the large textual data. Leximancer was employed as a tool to facilitate the computer-generated themes and concepts for researcher-led interpretive work in this research, as opposed to a tool to replace judgment, inference, and interpretation. The findings of the Leximancer analysis provide a fresh lens for the initial inductive step in the analysis process and assign data for further exploration. Led by the researcher's contextual knowledge, it transforms lines of inquiry into meaningful insights (Haynes, Green, Garside, Kelly, & Guell, 2019). Eight roles and 26 competencies of Airbnb entrepreneurs were discovered.

The eight roles of Airbnb hosts found to be as follows: (1) engaged guest liaison (i.e. Theme 1-Guest), (2) home away from home provider (i.e. Theme 2- People), (3) short-term rental accommodator (i.e. Theme 3-Host), (4)

innovative lodging micro-entrepreneur (i.e. Theme 4-Airbnb), (5) guest-friendly space supplier (i.e. Theme 5-Property), (6) aesthetic space creator (i.e. Theme 6-Look), (7) effective online and offline communicator (i.e. Theme 7- Information), and (8) friendly city and neighborhood partner (i.e. Theme 8-City) (see Figure 3).

Role 1: Engaged Guest Liaison

As the broadest concept, Role 1 includes two competencies: (1) interpersonal skills and (2) foreign language skills. The items of the competencies are to choose guest(s), to interact with guests, to get five star ratings, to update calendar regularly, to get more positive reviews and overall satisfaction, and to monitor the listing

The following comments serve as good examples;

Quote: “All guests looking at your accommodation will see that review as the top review no matter how much you have done to improve your listing. I was curious to know what marketing efforts you could make to augment your listing. You will be

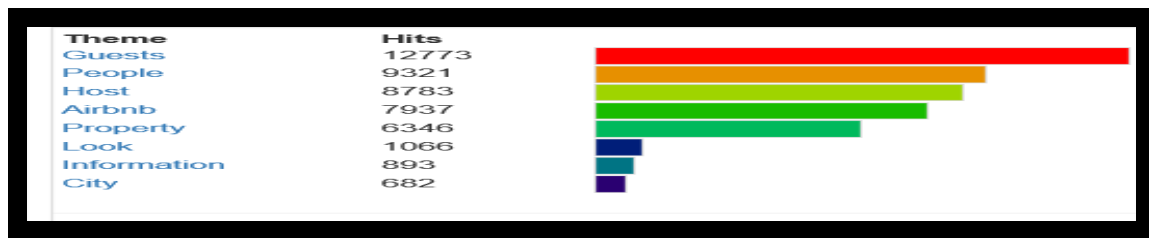


Figure 2. Distribution of themes related to hosts' competencies

| Theme | Concepts | Roles |
|-------------|--|---|
| Guests | stay, listing, guests, reviews | Engaged guest liaison |
| People | cleaning, different, person, home, room | Home away from home provider |
| Host | host, problem, cancel, refund, rules, bookings, experience | Short-term rental accommodator |
| Airbnb | rental, policy, pay, platform | Innovative lodging micro-entrepreneur |
| Property | service, property, listing, company | Guest-friendly space supplier |
| Look | profile, photo | Aesthetic space creator |
| Information | contact | Effective online and offline communicator |
| City | city, tax | Friendly city and neighborhood partner |

Figure 3. The themes, concepts, and roles

rated against guests' presumptions and prior experience, not your listing description, so it's best to provide a hotel level of service and price yourself accordingly."

Role 2: Home Away From Home Provider

Role 2 includes six competencies: (1) digital marketing skills, (2) sales skills, (3) business ethics skills, (4) house-keeping and sanitation skills, (5) food and beverage management skills, and (6) detail-oriented skills. The items of the competencies are to ensure a guest-friendly space, to prepare the amenities, to prepare the equipment

and facilities, to outsource the services, to clean routinely, to prepare food and beverages, and to entertain your guests.

As the second broadest concept, the following comments are a typical example;

Quote: "That's what it was based on: respect, honesty, trust, a sharing of knowledge, culture and diversity of household styles and accommodation."

Role 3: Short-term Rental Accommodator

Role 3 includes five competencies: (1) business awareness abilities, (2)

problem solving skills, (3) controlling skills, (4) numerical and analytical skills, and (5) safety and security skills. The items of the competencies are as to determine the target market, to prioritize guests' and hosts' own safety and verification, to set the house rules and cancelation policies, to manage the costs, to provide unique experiences/ selling point, to plan Events/tour, to increase bookings, to become a super-host, to use Search Engine Optimizer (SEO) techniques, to determine the pricing strategies, to check-ins and Check-outs, and to provide key(less) to access the house. As a broader concept, the following is a typical example;

Quote: "You might add in your House Rules / Additional Rules that you will only accept Booking Requests and Instant Bookings from guests with complete profiles, including first and last name and photo ID. Then, if they do not provide this information, you have good cause to ask Airbnb to cancel the reservation on your behalf."

Role 4: Innovative Lodging Micro-entrepreneur

Role 4 includes two competencies: (1) planning and organizational abilities and (2) community-sharing skills. The items of the competencies are to learn from the Airbnb community, to network with other hosts, to manage short-term rental account(s), and to use the Airbnb or the third party pricing tools. The following comments serve as a good example;

Quote: "Each service, Airbnb, Everbooked, Beyond Pricing, etc. uses whatever data it has available, and does its own

data mining using their own algorithms. You can adjust the price accordingly. Having the same price for both high and low seasons doesn't sound like a good idea."

Role 5: Guest-friendly Space Supplier

Role 5 includes two competencies: (1) decision making and initiative skills and (2) property management skills. The items of the competencies are to choose the location of the property, to get the property/unit ready, to initiate property listing description, to repair/maintain the property/unit, to develop the accommodation unit(s), and to save energy bill. The following comments serve as a good example;

Quote: "It would be great if we are able to add something to our listing on Airbnb that indicates we are a "green" property. I don't know how it would work or what the criteria should be. I do know that it shouldn't ever be anything a guest can rate us on. They already have no idea how the ratings works for the most basic concepts of Location and Value. Many of our guests are utterly confused about what being "green" and eco-friendly means let alone understanding being off-grid and sustainable, but it is clear that they are interested in learning more and seeking out properties like ours."

Role 6: Aesthetic Space Creator

Role 6 includes four competencies: (1) home decorating skills, (2) photograph skills, (3) visual and non-verbal communication skills, and (4) aesthetic skills. The items of the

competencies are to decorate the place, to take/edit high-quality photos, to creating attention-grabbing profile description and information, to pay attention to house smell and presentation, and to present your personal photo and symbol. The following comments serve as a good examples of creating an aesthetic space;

Quote 12: “DECOR: It might not be the case for every Airbnb, but I believe it's one of the main reasons guests book my place. The guest rooms are decorated and furnished with as much care, if not more, than I would my own bedroom. I make the beds up as nicely as I can and have extra thick mattress toppers to make them super comfy. The rooms are practical, but everything in them is also pretty!”

Role 7: Effective Online and Offline Communicator

Role 7 includes three competencies: (1) technical expertise, (2) verbal (written and oral) communication skills, and (3) computer-mediated communication skills. The items of the competencies are to use desktop and mobile devices, to encourage two-way communication, to handle/prevent bad reviews, to react feedback and reviews, to respond promptly, to negotiate with Airbnb/ guests, to communicate pre-booking and post-booking, to interact during guests' stay. As the least limited concept, an example of effective online and offline communicators are demonstrated in the following quote;

Quote 18: “Travelers can navigate all the listings whenever they like, but they have to create an Airbnb profile to make a reservation. Once they have found the right type of property, they can go ahead and submit the reservation form by clicking ‘Book It’. They also can contact the host by filling in an online form that can be found on every listing page.”

Role 8: Friendly City and Neighborhood Partner

Role 8 includes two competencies: (1) legal and regulatory knowledge and (2) local cultural knowledge. The items of the competencies are to introducing the house and neighborhoods, to work with local tourism centers, to create a customized guidebook, and to follow regulations and tax laws. As the most limited concept, the following comments are evidence of Airbnb hosts being friendly city cultural representatives;

Quote: “The thing that should really interest you is not the title of super-host, but welcoming guests to the fullest. You are the mirror of the city that welcomes them.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Academic Implications

Despite the regulations, some hosts take advantage of the degree of anonymity online and illegally provide accommodation for a short-term rental. Overall, the findings suggest that there is a need to deepen the Airbnb value co-created by guests, hosts and the lo-

cal community in the context of the sharing economy. Besides the utilitarian perspective of Airbnb micro-entrepreneurs' skills, the findings of this study highlight the sharing dimension of their skill set, which may be a notable area for future research. Similar to earlier findings (Đurkin & Perić, 2017; Ruiz-Ballesteros & Caceres-Feria, 2016; Vikneswaran & Amran, 2015), the results of this study confirm the potential of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a community development tool to build the capacity of the host community. The results of this study imply that these similarities and differences are guidelines that can be used to plan and develop a curriculum for hospitality and tourism education. The findings indicate that some hosts are aware of the importance of scrutinizing big data and statistics (e.g. reports from Airbnb official websites of AirDNA) before launching their business. They evaluate the size of the potential segment and carefully choose their target marketing strategies. This process is essential, especially since today's Airbnb guests have extremely high expectations that the products and services on offer will meet their personal needs. Therefore, hosts need to create customer value in order to strive for a superhost badge. The participants in this study emphasized tailoring and customized marketing, which is similar to those in the study of Horng et al. (2011), in which they identified field management, business and marketing, financial management, information competency and human resources as the technical competencies required by top managers in the hotel industry in Taiwan. However, the results of this study showed that human resource competencies are less important in this new form of micro- entrepreneurship

in the sharing economy.

Furthermore, the Airbnb hosts in this study emphasized the importance of useful insights to respond appropriately to linguistic and cultural diversity. Similarly, previous researchers have found that problem solving, communication, foreign languages, and culture are of growing importance for hospitality managers' generic competencies (Horng et al., 2011). These competencies are possessed by Airbnb hosts, who need to be caring, attentive, effective, aesthetic and friendly, while the Airbnb homes in the local community need to be cozy, stylish, clean and with all the essentials needed for a home away from home. As indicated by the hosts in this study, the notion of designing, styling and photographing their Airbnb is evidence of the emphasis on aesthetic interior décor and photographic skills.

In terms of the importance of using technical expertise (e.g. computer skills) effectively for hospitality management, Sisson and Adams (2013) confirm that this is generally considered to be a hard competency. Hence, it is suggested that the development of computer-mediated communication skills (as both a hard and soft competency) needs to be embedded in training and development programs in order to overcome language and communication barriers. The importance of being a good online narrative writer and communicator should be emphasized in order to accumulate positive reviews, since e-word-of mouth will affect the perceived trust in this sharing economy platform. The findings of this study imply that hospitality and tourism education programs should pay more attention to eight priorities, as the KSAs

considered by Airbnb practitioners to be essential competencies-specifically, what they must be competent to do. Similarly, Sthapit (2018) suggests that Airbnb should clearly define the hosts' tasks and responsibilities in order to minimize customers' negative experience and enhance service quality and satisfaction.

Managerial Implications

Airbnb start-ups tend to participate in the sharing economy, having considered the economic benefits as well as the societal implications, such as social relationships and sustainability. The results of this study confirm the capacity of the Airbnb host community to pave the way to a more sustainable global society. From a managerial perspective, Airbnb should invest more in the concept of sustainability and conservation. It could also start an effective initiative and highlight the criteria for listings' sustainable features. It could establish a green host badge like a superhost badge and help environmentally-conscious hosts to make their listings more sustainable and eco-friendly. Although the superhost badge is now universally recognized by both guests and hosts alike, more hosts deserve recognition for more competencies and badges can help to fill that gap. Liang, Schuckert, Law, and Chen (2017) suggest that accommodation with a "Superhost" badge is more likely to receive good reviews and higher ratings; hence, guests will be willing to pay more for such accommodation. Some of the hosts in this study explained that Airbnb may focus on the gamification design of badges related to hosts' achievement or competencies in future. It could not only award hosts a "Superhost" badge, but also offer

"Green" badges to incorporate green practices into hosting.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to identify the competencies of Airbnb hosts based on interviews and narratives found on the official Airbnb host community forum. Eight themes (i.e. city, Airbnb, host, guests, people, property, information, and look) that describe the main elements of the knowledge, skills and abilities that enable their performance were identified in the content analysis. Eight roles and 26 competencies were distinguished in this study. The findings of this study emphasize more on "how" the hosts actually accomplish their work. It focuses on what the hosts must be capable of doing, rather than on a list of the job duties they must perform. This research also has implications for educators who are developing a cross-nation micro-entrepreneurship program curriculum. The findings imply that designers of hospitality and tourism education programs should focus more on developing aesthetic, computer-mediated communication, and digital marketing skills, since these skills have been less emphasized in previous literature. It is imperative to identify this distinction and maintain these competencies at various skill levels during the curriculum design, instruction, assessment and evaluation of programs to educate professional entrepreneurs. The enhancement of the curriculum in this way would help to bridge the gap between what is needed in practice and what is learned in theory in university business management programs.

Limitations and Future Research

The strengths of the study include the variation of human experience and

rich data generated by semi-structured interviews and the large sample size from the online forum so that insights into the participants' subjective experience were obtained. The limitations include a lack of follow-up by measuring the longer-term relationship between Airbnb start-ups' skills and business performance. Another major limitation is that the online forums were all written in English, whereas the hosts' nationalities were evenly distributed globally. The third limitation was that all the online forum interviewees were self-selected, which may have led to an element of bias. The fourth limitation was the use of snowball sampling, which meant that the participants were selected based on initially identifying members of the related population and the fifth limitation was the sole focus on Airbnb. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution and they cannot be generalized to the entire peer-to-peer accommodation sector. Lastly, since only face-to-face interviews and online generated contents were used to collect the data, it is suggested that a longitudinal study would be useful based on participant observation or work diaries/logs as an anecdotal record by Airbnb owners in order to capture their daily tasks.

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