

Peer-to-peer Services in the Field of Accommodation: Finland vs. Latin America

Sonja Kosunen

Sofia Tuominen

Author(s) Sonja Kosunen, Sofia Tuominen	
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<p>This thesis focuses on peer-to-peer services in the field of accommodation, more closely Airbnb. The thesis aims at researching the differences of the use of Airbnb in Finland and Latin America with the main focus on Mexico. The thesis is commissioned by SMAL (Association of Finnish Travel Agents).</p> <p>The thesis will consist of eight parts. The first part presents an overall introduction of the topic, aims, commissioner, methods and hypotheses. The second part presents the sharing economy phenomenon itself. The third part focuses on presenting different types of accommodation and taking a closer look to Airbnb and other similar peer-to-peer services. In the fourth part, an introduction and analysis of the research countries and cultures, as well as Airbnb's popularity and situation in each country are presented.</p> <p>The methods of the thesis are presented followed by the results; the analysis and discussions based on the questionnaire answers and experiences are introduced. The research for the thesis was conducted as a questionnaire, which was distributed through email and social networks. There were two different questionnaires for our target audience, one in Finnish for Finnish people and one in Spanish for Latin American people. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions. The questions were multiple answer questions and open-ended questions. The data was gathered between May 9th and August 14th 2016. Altogether 73 Finnish travellers and 3 professionals and 37 Latin American travellers and 2 professionals answered the questionnaire.</p> <p>Lastly, the final conclusions and suggestions for future are presented. The results show that Airbnb is more common among Finnish people and not everyone is aware nor tried Airbnb. However, many respondents showed interest towards Airbnb even though they had not used it before. Most of the respondents who have tried Airbnb belong to the younger generation, which is not surprising since young people are more familiar with technology and all the new apps and trends. Additionally, youngsters are usually budget travellers.</p> <p>People are not willing to give up hotels entirely, but they still expect to have several options when choosing accommodation. There should always be something that will challenge the already existing markets.</p> <p>Although Airbnb has been succeeding well, it still should increase its visibility. For companies, it would be beneficial to allow the employees to stay at Airbnb accommodation during business trips. In some companies, this has already been introduced, but more widely companies are still preferring hotels.</p>	
Keywords Airbnb, sharing economy, peer-to-peer services, accommodation, Finland, Latin America	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Commissioner	1
1.2	Field – sharing economy	1
1.3	Research aims and hypotheses	1
1.4	Methods	2
1.5	Structure of the thesis	2
2	Sharing Economy	4
2.1	What is sharing economy?	4
2.2	The future of sharing economy	6
2.3	Impact of sharing economy in tourism	7
3	Accommodation	9
3.1	Airbnb	9
3.2	Hotel	12
3.3	Hostel	13
3.4	Other types of accommodation	13
3.5	Other peer-to-peer accommodation services	14
3.5.1	Couchsurfing & HomeAway	15
4	Finland and Latin America	16
4.1	Finland as a tourist destination	16
4.2	Hospitality and accommodation	16
4.3	Airbnb in Finland	17
4.4	Accommodation statistics	17
4.5	Mexico	19
4.5.1	Hospitality and accommodation	20
4.6	Other Latin America	23
4.6.1	Brazil	23
4.6.2	Argentina	24
4.6.3	Colombia	24
4.7	Future of Airbnb in Latin America	25
5	Methods	27
5.1	Quantitative research	27
5.2	Questionnaire	28
5.3	Mystery shopping case	29
6	Results	32
6.1	Finland	32
6.1.1	The experiences of using Airbnb	33

6.1.2	Why have you not used Airbnb?.....	35
6.1.3	Airbnb vs. hotel	36
6.1.4	Renting an Airbnb accommodation and becoming a host.....	37
6.1.5	Can Airbnb replace hotels?	38
6.2	Latin America	39
6.2.1	The experiences of using Airbnb	40
6.2.2	Why have you not used Airbnb?.....	40
6.2.3	Airbnb vs. hotel	41
6.2.4	Renting an Airbnb accommodation and becoming a host.....	42
6.2.5	Can Airbnb replace hotels?	43
6.3	Comparison	43
7	Discussion.....	45
7.1	Limitations.....	45
7.2	Reliability and validity.....	45
7.3	Evaluation of the thesis process.....	46
8	Conclusions & suggestions	49
	References	51
	Appendices.....	56
	Appendix 1. Questionnaire for travellers.....	56
	Appendix 2. Questionnaire for professionals	61

1 Introduction

The first chapter presents an introduction to the thesis. The introduction is divided into five parts. The first part of the introduction presents the commissioner SMAL. Next, the field of the thesis, sharing economy, is presented shortly. Sharing economy is explained wider in the chapter two. The third part focuses on the aims and hypotheses of the thesis. The research methods used in the research are presented shortly in the fourth part. The research methods are introduced more precisely in chapter 5. Last, the structure of the thesis is presented.

1.1 Commissioner

This thesis is commissioned by SMAL/AFTA (Association of Finnish Travel Agents). SMAL offers legal advice and other advisory services to members, such as consumer protection, consultancy specializing in the terms of sale and value added taxation. The travel experts will help the members free of charge whenever needed. In addition, members are given advice in relation to, for example, marketing or contract disputes with service providers or similar to the current problem. Additionally, SMAL offers training on topical subjects of the travel agency industry and procedure instructions for exceptional circumstances. All the members of SMAL are part of a trust-based network. (SMAL 2016.)

1.2 Field – sharing economy

Sharing economy is quite a new phenomenon. It is a combination of communal procedures and technology. The main idea of sharing economy is to connect services and goods with people who need them at that moment. People, who are taking part in sharing economy, are more interested in renting goods than buying them. The services and goods are shared through platforms, which act as intermediaries. Sharing economy has a significant impact on economy. It is a threat to traditional actors since new sharing economy platforms are emerging all the time. Sharing economy is not just a passing trend, it will most likely expand rather quickly. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013.)

1.3 Research aims and hypotheses

Our research aim is to compare the different markets and opinions of Airbnb in Finland and Latin America. We aim at finding significant differences between the different cultures and countries and to have benefit of this information. We compare the overall Airbnb share and situation but also the consumer opinions and experiences about Airbnb. We aim at finding out whether Airbnb is more popular in Finland or Latin America.

We assume that the market in Latin America is more significant and growing more than in Finland. It is important to bear in mind Finland's geographical location, amount of visiting foreign tourists and its relative small own population. We expect people to have mainly positive experiences of the use of Airbnb. Additionally, we expect that people are quite open minded towards using Airbnb's services in the future if they have not used it already. Furthermore, we expect there to be some cultural differences between Finnish and Latin American people with their expectations, experiences, and readiness to try Airbnb when renting accommodation or giving their own home for rent.

1.4 Methods

This research uses a quantitative research method. A survey in Finland and Latin America will be conducted. The survey will be carried out as a questionnaire, which will have 22 questions. The questions will be exactly the same in both surveys. The questionnaires will be distributed through email and social networks. The data will be gathered between May 9th and August 14th 2016.

In Finland, the questionnaire will be in Finnish. The Latin American version will be in Spanish since not many people know English in Latin American countries, and answering in their native language is easier for them. The questionnaire has open-ended questions and multiple answer questions. In addition, a bit of basic information will be asked, for example gender and age in order to see if there are any differences in the answers between the genders or age groups.

Additionally, we will send another questionnaire for a few professionals in the accommodation sector in Finland and Latin America. The questionnaire for professionals in the hotel industry is a bit longer and has more specific questions about the industry than the one for travellers. The questionnaires will be sent by email.

Furthermore, we will try mystery shopping in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in order to know how Airbnb works in practice. We plan to do the mystery shopping in May 2016. We will rent an apartment for six days. For both of the authors, it will be the first time to try Airbnb platform for booking accommodation.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis will contain eight main parts. The first part of the thesis consists of overall introduction of all the subjects presented in the thesis. The second part presents the

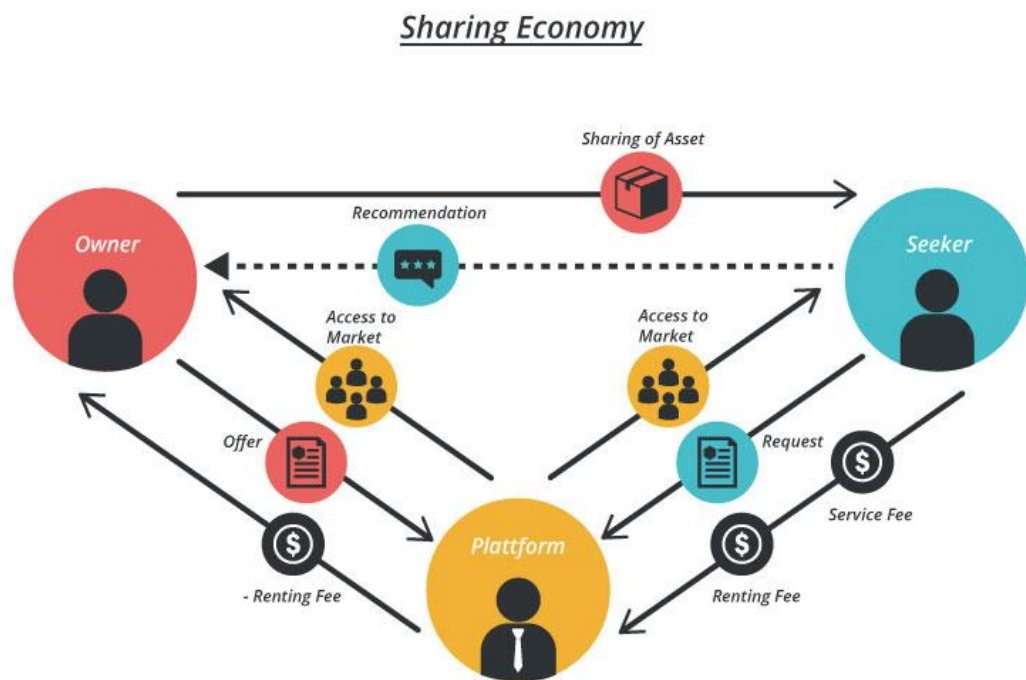
sharing economy phenomenon itself. The third part focuses on taking a closer look to Airbnb and presenting different common forms of accommodation. In the fourth part, an introduction and analysis of the research countries and cultures, as well as Airbnb's popularity and situation in each country are presented. Next, the methods of the thesis are presented followed by the results and analyses. The seventh chapter discusses the limitations, reliability and validity, and our own evaluation of the thesis process. Lastly, the final conclusions and suggestions for the future are presented.

2 Sharing Economy

This chapter explains more about rather new phenomenon called sharing economy. The chapter presents what sharing economy is and how does its future look like. Additionally, its effects on tourism will be presented.

2.1 What is sharing economy?

Sharing economy, also known as collaborative consumption, is an economic and social ecosystem. (Matofska 2016.) In other words, sharing economy means sharing services and goods with other people through a platform, which serves as intermediary. According to Lahti & Selosmaa (2013, 13), the word “sharing” of the term sharing economy refers to communal consumption, use and production. Sharing economy is a combination of eternal communal procedures and modern ways of communication, which are enabled by the technology of today. Sharing economy is booming in the North America, the Great Britain, Australia and the Central Europe. However, it is getting more popular in other countries too, including Finland. (Lahti 2015.)



Business Model Toolbox

Figure 1: Sharing Economy. (Business Model Toolbox 2016.)

Sharing economy is somewhat a recent term since it has been widely used merely since 2010. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 40.) Sharing economy has developed from the cooperative action of consumption behaviour, the improvement of technology, ecological

sustainability, economic crises and the new generation of entrepreneurs. Nowadays, people are appreciating more to have access rights to a certain service or product than to own it completely. Technology has improved a lot and many online applications have become common. This has allowed new social networks and market places for consumers to arise. Additionally, people have become more concerned about the environment, which has led to recycling and wise use of resources. Because of economic crises, people have faced a pressure to give up hyper consumption. People are now more willing to recycle nearly everything that can be recycled, for example clothes, goods and substances. Living a more conserve way and inventing new ways of earning money have become more valuable. Furthermore, the entrepreneurs and investors of the new generation have seen the chances of business activities that are made possible by the Internet. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 14.)

Sharing economy would not have expanded as quickly without technology and social media. Sharing economy usually involves online transactions, and the Internet has made the payment process quite easy. One of the reasons why sharing economy is popular is that people nowadays do not like to be dependent on large, global companies. Through sharing economy, people feel more communal. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 15-16.)

During the last couple of years, especially, sharing economy has taken a bigger market not only in the accommodation sector but also on other sectors like transportation. The most well-known examples of sharing economy nowadays are Airbnb and Uber. After applications and platforms like Uber and Blabla Car were published, it looks like they are here to stay. Most people choose them due to the much lower price but also because the quality of service in general is considered to be good. (Sánchez Onofre 2016.)

Mexico and Latin America are following this trend in the transportation sector, but are a step behind in the accommodation. Most people who use Airbnb for accommodation are often foreigners, even though the hosts are Mexican. Mexicans in general are quite cautious about the whole idea of giving their house or apartment for rent or, on the other hand, to rent one from someone either. Unlike in Finland where everyone thinks the general safety is in a very high level and there are almost no risks for giving or renting a house, in Mexico it is exactly the safety issue that worries people. Many consider it rather risky to give their apartment for rent for strangers or even tourists who they do not personally know in advance. That is caused by the general safety there is and the high level of criminality that does not exist in such high level in western countries like Finland. (Sánchez Onofre 2016.)

2.2 The future of sharing economy

The best possibilities for the growth of the future of sharing economy is where there are large amounts of people willing to share but where are not any service providers yet. Another favorable ground for the expand of sharing economy is the places where new functional mobile services are evolving. In the U.S., sharing economy is in a passionate state of growth, but in Europe, the language barriers and more fragment market area makes the expansion of sharing economy slower. However, English has become the main language of all the consumers online. Because of large amounts of inhabitants in Europe, sharing economy has a chance to expand quickly. Only time will show how much time this will take. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 154-155.)

Sharing economy is still not completely accepted by everyone. However, technology is improving all the time, and so is sharing economy. When sharing economy is expanding notably, the challenges and risks are also growing. All the innovators must be on their toes all the time coming up with new ideas. The balance of the supply and demand must be maintained constantly. (Cleverism 2015.)

In Finland, there are not many sharing economy service providers yet. Since the services are not known widely yet, the amount of people using sharing economy services is rather small. Sharing economy needs definitely more marketing and publicity in Finland. A small and restricted market area such as Finland would need a web page that would allow to search different sharing economy services at the same time. For example, there are many services that provide carpool, but since there are too many services, it can be difficult to find a suitable one. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 156.)

Some sharing economy companies have received investments, which has affected people's behavior. The consumers have become more careful. When accepting investments, it changes the idea of sharing economy. It is not anymore about helping others, but to get more income. This can affect the prices of sharing economy services. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 157-158.)

All around the world, some public sectors have realized the importance of sharing economy. For example, in March 2012, the city of San Francisco established a working committee of sharing economy. Additionally, in September 2012, Seoul in South Korea started 20 different projects, such as carpooling and recycling of children's clothes. The public sector in Finland should follow the lead and invest in making sharing economy more well-known. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 162.)

Many countries have made several changes in order to invest in sharing economy, and the rest should follow their lead. The legislation should be revised, the norms should be clarified and some new alignments should be made. Additionally, the awareness of sharing economy should be raised. A good communication will bring more consumers. Furthermore, Finland should follow the lead of the Great Britain and invest in new financing and business models. The physical infrastructure and the use of public premises should be improved. In addition, the common use of cars should be advanced. This should be taken into account especially in bigger cities. (Lahti & Selosmaa 2013, 162-163.)

Sharing economy will have, and already has, a significant impact on economy. It is already a threat to traditional actors since new sharing economy platforms are emerging all the time. Nevertheless, sharing economy is not just a passing trend. It will surely stay around for years and develop remarkably. It will be interesting to see how it changes over time. (Cleverism 2015.)

2.3 Impact of sharing economy in tourism

Sharing economy affects tourism industry all the time. Traveling has changed a lot since sharing economy became popular among people. Travel industry is the sector that has affected by sharing economy the most. (Trivett 2013.)

It has not been that long since when traveling somewhere, travelers would stay at large hotels, for example at some hotel chain hotels. Currently it is not that obvious anymore. Airbnb and other similar accommodation services have become so popular that they inevitably steal some customers from hotels. Travelers want options where to choose from, they do not want to settle for less than they have to. Not many travelers choose the first hotel or flight; it takes time and effort to find the best possible option. (Trivett 2013.)

Nowadays travelers are more eager to feel like locals during their vacation. They may stay at strangers' homes, be driven by some local person in his/her car, go for dinner to some stranger's home and even explore the city and sights with the locals. That is the best part of taking part in collaborative consumption. (Trivett 2013.) Travelers want to make connections all over the world.

Sharing economy can be a win-win situation for travelers and for those who serves the goods and services. If you have an apartment, which is empty at that time, why not rent it

to someone who needs a place to stay? Additionally, if you own a car and have nothing to do, why not to give a ride to people who need a ride and earn some extra income?

Despite the positive impact of sharing economy to tourism, there is also a negative impact. Critics claim that sharing economy decreases job security and poses threats to safety and health. Additionally, sharing economy is claimed to avoid taxes and to provide unfair competition. (Juul 2015.)

Hoteliers are not satisfied with the situation. They claim that they have lost revenue because of all the other accommodation options. Hoteliers have to deal with many different things, for example various taxes, consumer and environmental protection and labour law whereas many of the hosts in different sharing economy platforms do not obey the same rules. (Juul 2015.) A report, which focuses on Airbnb in New York City, reveals that over 72% of Airbnb rentals in NYC violated some law. (Schneiderman 2014.)

3 Accommodation

This thesis concentrates mostly on Airbnb from all the peer-to-peer accommodation services, so this chapter will take a closer look to Airbnb. There are various types of accommodation available all around the world. Despite of all the peer-to-peer accommodation services, there are still several common types of accommodation. Some of the different types of accommodation will be presented. Furthermore, some of the effects that Airbnb or other peer-to-peer accommodation services have on the traditional forms of accommodation will be analysed.

3.1 Airbnb

Airbnb was founded in August 2008. (Airbnb 2016.) It is one of the most discussed examples of sharing economy – an e-commerce business and online platform where people can book accommodation. It is a customer-to-customer kind of service since anyone can rent their house for anyone. Thus, it differs a lot from the more traditional hotels and hostels that are business-to-customer.

The basic idea behind Airbnb is not new: it helps those who want to provide short-term rentals to get in touch with those who want to rent these spaces, for example tourists and people who have just moved to a new city. What is new is the speed and scale at which the peer-to-peer business model together with the development of high-speed internet has made short-term home rentals a common practice. (Juul 2015.)

Airbnb itself does not own, rent, manage or control the properties that are rented out on its website. Its tasks are limited to listing spaces, processing payments, acting as an intermediary and offering damage insurance to hosts. The company takes a 9-12% service fee for each reservation. (Juul 2015.) Airbnb has over 2 million listings in over 191 countries. Travelers can find Airbnb accommodation in more than 34,000 cities. Over 60 million people have used Airbnb so far, and it is expanding all the time. (Airbnb 2016.)

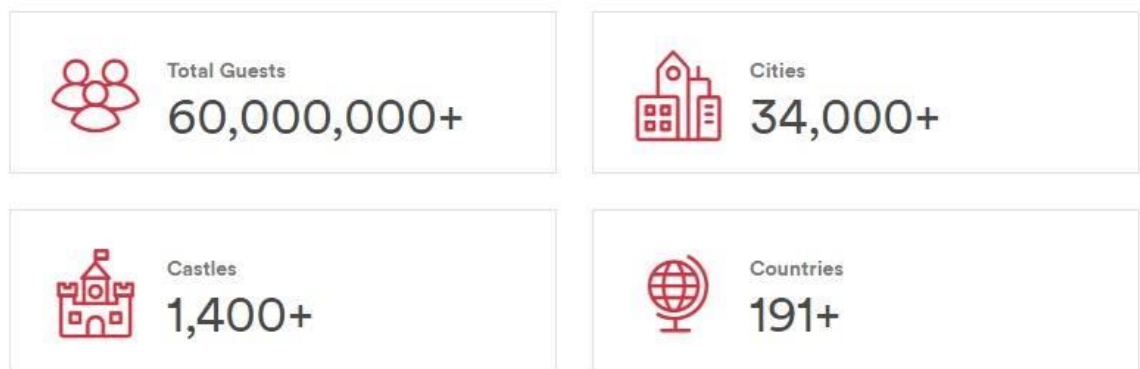


Figure 2: Airbnb in numbers. (Airbnb 2016.)



Figure 3: Listings Worldwide. (Airbnb 2016.)

The main point of Airbnb is to experience the destinations like locals. Airbnb is offering something you cannot buy with money; an ultimate experience of getting in there and to live like a local, be one of them. Maybe outside of all the tourist masses nowadays people already long for peace even though they would have rent their apartment in NYC or Mexico City, which are enormous metropolises. However, the things is that even in a city of 22 million people, tourists want to be isolated from other tourists. Staying at an Airbnb accommodation gives a feeling that you actually live there among all the other locals around you. Before, when people used to book a hotel or resort full of other tourists, they did not get this feeling. Tourists did not get the local touch and did not experience and see all the interesting places that could be seen since they stayed in very central hotels.

Airbnb travel credit is a loyalty program that Airbnb offers for its users. It encourages the users to invite their friends to use Airbnb. After a friend has used Airbnb, it will give the user travel credit (also known as points like most airlines call their frequent flyer programmes) that can be used for renting another Airbnb accommodation. (Airbnb 2016.) It is a wise option for the ones who use Airbnb a lot since it gets quite a good credit and discount. Airbnb also gives credit if the invited friends become hosts and have their first guest. (Airbnb 2016.) Therefore, the idea is quite tempting since by inviting many people the amount of credit can become easily quite high. It also has a huge benefit for Airbnb since many new users will be invited and they will get easily hooked using it again.

Airbnb has also created a corporate business travel program for business traveling purposes. If a company that sends their employees to the business trips has signed a contract with Airbnb, they can charge trips immediately. The company needs to have an interline agreement in their travel policies to allow the use of Airbnb in the business trips, of course. According to the Airbnb webpage, there are certain hosts who have customized their apartments and services to serve better the ones who travel for business. They also claim to have amenities that business travellers may have use for. Again, Airbnb offers a loyalty deal also for the business travellers. For their first business trip in Airbnb, Airbnb promises to send a coupon worth of 47 euros after the first stay. (Airbnb 2016.)

Many companies have already adapted Airbnb to their business travel programs and agreements. One of the most important might be Google and it surely has encouraged other companies to do the same. Surely in the future, many companies might think about the option of Airbnb for business travels seriously since the amount of good properties is increasing and they offer more value also for the business customers. The benefit of Airbnb is also that the company can book a larger apartment or even villa to have all their employees in the same place so that they can easily communicate and reach each other and work. Airbnb also says that they have a proper call-line for business travellers or their agents so that they can be reached any time of the day without any hustle. (Airbnb 2016.) At least the company Google and its traveling employees have had positive experiences of the use of Airbnb in their business trips. According to the global manager Darragh Ormsby: "Our employees appreciate the choice and flexibility that Airbnb listings provide them when they're on the road—whether for conferences, meetings, or team off-sites." (Airbnb 2016.)

3.2 Hotel

Hotels are the best-known type of accommodation. Hotels are usually meant for short time accommodation, however some people stay in hotels longer, and some even live in a hotel. Hotels are more private than for example hostels, since you do not need to share your hotel room with anyone unknown. Hotel room should have at least a bed and bathroom. Usually the rooms also have a TV, sofa or chairs and a desk. In some hotels, breakfast is included in the price. Some hotels also have for example saunas, conference rooms and a gym. The hotel prices vary a lot. The price depends on the size of the room, the amount of guests, time of the year, day of the week and the location of the hotel. When willing to go a bit further from the city centre, the hotel prices will go down.

Hotels are different all around the world, and the rating of a certain hotel can be totally different in another country. Hotels are rated by stars, five stars being the best. For example, a Finnish one-star hotel could be a five-star hotel in Africa. When wanted to get pampered, a hotel is a good choice. In a hotel you do not need to worry about anything. Breakfast will be served in the morning and the room will be cleaned for you.

Usually, the business travellers stay at hotels. However, since peer-to-peer services have become more popular, many companies now allow their employees to stay for example in an Airbnb apartment. It can even be beneficial for the company, since the price can be notably lower. Airbnb has also launched their business traveller program that searches apartments with better facilities for the business travellers. Additionally, the business traveller program includes other more personalized and customised details and service. It is a good option for companies since renting an Airbnb accommodation is usually cheaper even though most hotels do have agreements with the companies that use them a lot. Another advantage is to have good facilities to all employees to stay together and make working together easier. (Airbnb 2016.)

Airbnb's impact and coming to the industry has hit the hotels and the hotel industry the hardest. The main factor, cheaper price, has stolen many customers and since Airbnb keeps improving the value the customer gets, the hotels have really needed to rethink their plans to keep getting customers who are always more and more aware of the prices. Additionally, nowadays the customers know exactly what they want. One negative experience or even a comment about a hotel or previous trip might cause that the customers want to try something else and something new. If they have had positive experiences of Airbnb, they might not even consider to stay in traditional hotels anymore. There many hotels need to think what kind of added value and personality they could

input in order to keep attracting the customers. Being decent or just ok is not enough anymore, there has to be something unique and special and preferably some kind of a wow-factor as well.

3.3 Hostel

Hostels are meant for budget-oriented people. In hostels, the accommodation is offered in shared-rooms with other people. Most of the guests in hostels are youngsters, backpackers, groups or people who travel alone. Typically, hostels provide short-term accommodation, but it is possible to stay in a hostel for a longer period of time, too. (Hostel Management 2016.)

When travelling alone, staying in a hostel is a good way to meet new people. The rooms in hostels can be mixed or only for a certain gender. There can be many beds in one room, so there is not any privacy. The bathrooms are shared with everyone and usually they are located in the corridors. Some hostels also have lounges and kitchens, which are also shared. However, some hostels offer single rooms and rooms that have an own bathroom. (Hostel Management 2016.)

Hostels are not considered as safe option as hotels, since you need to share the room with strangers. Since prices are in general already relatively low Airbnb might not take so big share of the customers than for example with the traditional hotels. In addition, most people choose hostels due to the atmosphere there is and they want to get to know more same-minded people, which is not possible in Airbnb.

3.4 Other types of accommodation

Resorts are accommodation establishments that offer almost anything you can imagine. Resorts offer for example lodging, food, drinks, sports, all kinds of entertainment and shopping. The main idea is that you do not need to leave from the resort since everything is close to you. The guests in resorts get to relax properly. There are different kind of resorts around the world. The most common resorts may be all-inclusive resorts, where everything, or almost everything, is included in the price. All the foods and drinks at the resort are free to you.

Some of the other resorts are island resorts, seaside resorts, ski resorts, spa resorts, destination resorts, for example the Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Florida, USA, and sports resorts. All resorts are not typical beach or sports resorts. In Lapland, Finland there is a resort called Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort. It is told to be the world's

most enchanting arctic resorts. In Kakslauttanen, the guests are able to sleep in glass igloos. Since it is possible to see through the ceiling, it is possible to admire the stars and even the northern lights without freezing outside. (Kakslauttanen 2016.)

Since the people who go for resorts usually long for entertainment, lots of activities, shows, pampering, luxury and unique experience it might not be very likely that those people would suddenly chance to Airbnb, which is pretty much based on self-service and does not yet have the option for any activities. (Airbnb 2016) Especially in Mexico, most incoming tourists come from Europe and North America and take the ready-made packet tours that include flights and an all-inclusive resort near the beach. Even though the trend is settling down a bit already, the amount of these tourists is still huge and growing. (World Travel & Tourism Council 2015, 6.)

A bed and breakfast, shortened to B&B, is an accommodation establishment that offers accommodation and breakfast. There is nothing excessive, just a place to sleep and breakfast. Bed and breakfasts are usually owned by private families and offer personal service. The B&Bs do not have many rooms, typically there are from four to eleven rooms available. The rooms are different than hotel rooms since they are more unique and there may be a rustic feeling all around the building. (Bedandbreakfast.eu 2016.)

Since B&Bs are small, the atmosphere differs from the atmosphere in hotels. B&Bs are cosy and you feel welcomed there. Since there are not many other guests, you will be taken care of in a different way than in a hotel. The owners of the B&B will have time to tell you about the attractions in the area or answer to all of your questions. Additionally, the meals are more of a home style. (Bedandbreakfast.eu 2016.) In B&Bs, it is possible to feel like a local the same way as in Airbnb accommodation.

3.5 Other peer-to-peer accommodation services

A study done by the University of Eastern Finland and Washington State University (2015) states that peer-to-peer accommodation services have affected the travel patterns. The study indicates that travellers are into peer-to-peer accommodation services because of financial and social reasons. Furthermore, the study points out that when travellers use peer-to-peer accommodation services, they make financial savings, which allows them to travel more often and broaden the choice of destinations. Additionally, the social aspects of peer-to-peer services make people want to travel more and spend more time in their destination. (The University of Eastern Finland 2015.)

The study concentrated on the subject also from the viewpoint of the destinations. When there are peer-to-peer accommodation services available in a destination, it tempts more travellers to come there. Additionally, it makes the travellers to stay longer. Moreover, the demand for tourism-related activities and services will grow. (The University of Eastern Finland 2015.) Before Airbnb, many other similar peer-to-peer accommodation services had been launched. Examples of the most successful similar services are for example Couchsurfing and HomeAway.

3.5.1 Couchsurfing & HomeAway

Couchsurfing was launched in 2004 and is one of the first forms of sharing economy. The principal idea is letting strangers to stay on your couch and share their home with strangers. There are more than 10 million people using this service so it really has got to get its share in more than 200 000 cities. (Couchsurfing 2016.)

HomeAway was founded in 2005. Its mission is to give the same access to all vacation rental places around the world for everyone. HomeAway has over 1,2 million listings in 190 countries. (HomeAway 2016.)

4 Finland and Latin America

The fourth chapter focuses on the research countries. First, Finland is introduced as a tourist destination. Additionally, some hospitality and accommodation facts are shared together with accommodation statistics. Furthermore, Airbnb's situation in Finland is presented. Then, different Latin American countries are presented with basic information as well as Airbnb's popularity in each country.

4.1 Finland as a tourist destination

Finland is a country of approximately 5,5 million habitants. It is located in the Northern Europe. Finland is known as the land of a thousand lakes and it attracts tourists all year round since there you can experience all four seasons. In summer, the green nature, blue lakes and all Finnish cities are showing their best sides. During autumn, the autumn foliage makes Finland look very different and even more beautiful. The busiest tourism season in the Northern Finland is during winter. For example, the tourists get to visit Santa Clause and admire the northern lights. Finland is a good destination for tourists, since almost everyone speaks English. (Visit Finland 2016.)

When one wants to experience something different from typical exotic beach resort, he/she should travel to Finland. There are many beautiful cities, villages and nature attractions in Finland. Typically, Finland is famous for its nature. The nightless nights are a new experience for most of the tourists as well as the snowy and cold winters, and not to forget the core of Finnishness, sauna.

Finland has a beautiful archipelago, and the beauty of Lapland will astound you. There are many hills that tourists can climb and get to admire the view from top. In Finland, it is possible to go on a hike or to the beach. Finland has so much to offer. There is something interesting and fascinating to do all around year.

4.2 Hospitality and accommodation

There are multiple accommodation options for tourists to choose from when they come to Finland. The tourists can choose to stay in a normal hotel or do something very different, for example stay in a glass igloo under the stars. It may even be possible to see the Northern lights straight from the bed. It is a great way to experience the magic of Lapland properly.

The accommodation choices in Finland vary a lot, so there should be something to everyone. There are normal hotels, hostels, guest houses, resorts, rental apartments and B&Bs alongside cabins and farms. For tourists who want to have a wellness holiday, there are for example spa hotels. There is also an option to stay at a camping site in a caravan or in a tent. (Discovering Finland 2016.) Additionally, tourists can choose to stay at an Airbnb accommodation. Besides Airbnb, for example HomeAway and Couchsurfing are operating in Finland.

In 2015, there were 1392 accommodation establishments in Finland. 651 of them were hotels, 42 hostels, 126 guest houses and 236 campsites. Altogether the accommodation establishments had over 65 000 rooms. Additionally, there were almost 21 000 caravan pitches with electricity connection available. (Statistics Finland 2016.)

4.3 Airbnb in Finland

Airbnb is getting more popular in Finland every day. In 2015, there were 2500 Airbnb listings in Finland, which had already doubled from 2013. By July 2016, the amount of listings was over 5500. (STT, Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 2016.) Most of the listings are located in Helsinki, which is where the tourists usually travel. Compared to the year before, the amount of listings in Helsinki increased by 71% being 2100 now. (Koivisto 2016.) According to the Finnish Hospitality Association MaRa there are approximately 8700 hotel rooms in Helsinki, which means that only the amount of Airbnb listings in Helsinki is already a quarter of the hotel capacity in Helsinki. (Koivisto 2016.)

In 2015, 80% of the people using Airbnb in Finland were from Finland or other European countries, such as Germany, France, the Great Britain, Spain, Switzerland or Russia. 9% of the users came from North America, 6% from Asia, 3% from Australia, 1% from Latin America and 1% from the Middle East. (Visit Finland 2015.) If Airbnb keeps getting more popular as quickly as it has gotten so far, it will expand all around Finland soon.

4.4 Accommodation statistics

Last year Finland received approximately 7,4 million foreign visitors. Finnish accommodation establishments recorded nearly 19.8 million overnight stays last year. 14.2 million of them were accounted by domestic tourists and 5.5 million by foreign tourists. The foreign demand for accommodation services declined by 3.5%, while the domestic demand grew by 1.1% compared to 2014. (Visit Finland 2016.)

Tourism and income flows to Finland

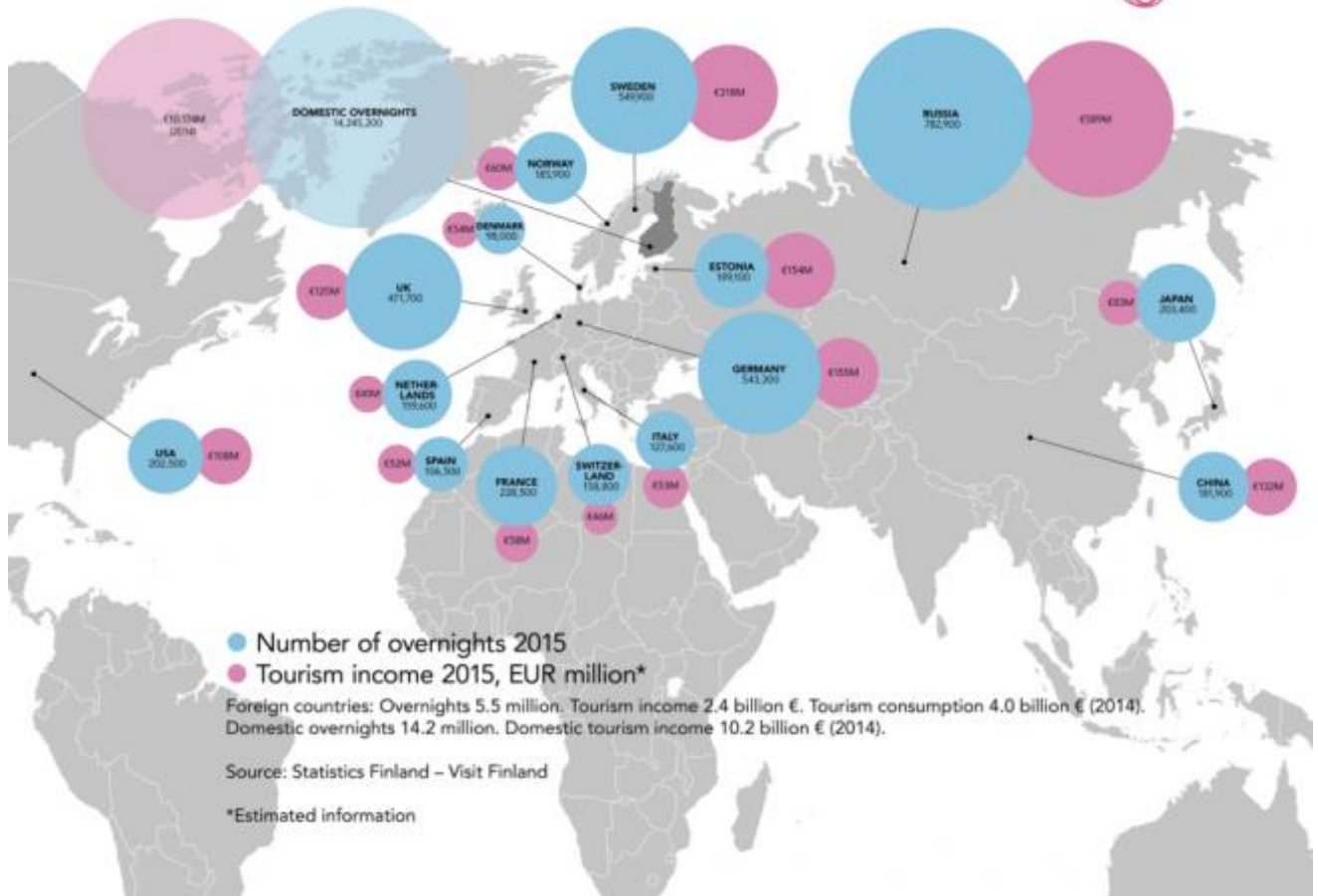


Figure 4: Tourism and income flows to Finland. (Visit Finland 2016.)

Most of the tourists staying overnight in Finland were from Russia and Sweden, followed by the United Kingdom and Germany. The amount of overnight stays increased the most by Chinese visitors. Chinese visitors spent approximately 182 000 nights in Finland, which is 41,3% more than the year before. (Visit Finland 2016.)

Russians were the largest group of foreigners staying in Finland overnight. However, the amount of overnight stays by Russians decreased by 41,6% compared to the year before. If leaving the Russians out of calculation, the amount of overnight stays by all foreign visitors increased by approximately 8%. (Visit Finland 2016.)

If examining by continent, the amount of visitors from Asia recorded the biggest growth. Japanese and Chinese tourists recorded 729 000 overnight stays, which had a growth of 23%. European visitors recorded 2,9 million overnight stays whereas the African visitors recorded 25 000. More specifically, 846 000 stays were recorded by travelers from Nordic countries. The amount of American tourists coming to Finland increased by 4,8% making it 294 000 overnight stays. (Visit Finland 2016.)

The occupancy rate in Finnish hotels last year was 52.3%. The amount of nights spent in hotels was 15.8 million of which 11.2 million nights were spent by resident tourists and 4.6 million by foreign tourists. (Statistics Finland 2016.)

4.5 Mexico

Mexico is a big country with more than 120 million habitants. Due to the big growth of population, especially in the poor areas without specific health care, there is not even a way to measure all the population. Mexico has a central location between South and North America, especially the USA. Due to its close location to the US and Canada the majority of the tourists visiting Mexico come from these two countries. By October 2015, 25.8 million international tourists visited Mexico that year, increasing 9.7% from 2014. American passengers by air were confirmed as the main market. A total amount of 6 855 624 tourists visited the country from January to October 2015. (Sector Turístico en México 2014.)

It is important to remember that Mexico as well as the whole Latin America are expanding markets. In 2015, Mexico was positioned as the second in e-commerce and is also the second country in generation of retail trade via Internet in Latin America. In total 1.67 trillion dollars worldwide, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina leading the regional market. The statistics show enormous growth during the past years, not only in Mexico but also exactly in Argentina and Brazil. During the whole year 2015 Mexico had a 59% growth in e-commerce which has been more than even before.

The applications of services like Uber or Airbnb are those that have driven this growth in Mexico. It can be seen in the purchase of taxis and lodging services. Moneywise they are transactions of rather little amount, but it is a big amount of transactions that are made in total. Despite this growth which was higher than the levels of 2014 when it rebounded by 34%, the fact is that the country's online commerce is still incipient. However, the growth potential of electronic commerce is excellent given the economic relationship with the United States. (Sánchez Onofre 2016.)

Pasajeros Internacionales participación ene-mar 2015



Fuente: Unidad de Política Migratoria, SEGOB.

7

Figure 5: Unidad de Política Migratoria. (SEGOB 2015.)

4.5.1 Hospitality and accommodation

Generally, Airbnb is not the first option for the Mexican travelers. The security and safety situation in Mexico is not at the same level than in many western countries and therefore not many people are willing to share their homes for accommodation and vice versa. They do not even consider it as an option; to stay at someone else's home instead of a hostel, hotel, or a resort.

Whereas another peer-to-peer based platform service Uber has a huge role and impact in the transportation, Airbnb has not succeeded to reach such high amount of users. For example, many local faculties, like universities in Mexico encourage people to use Uber instead of the normal taxis. In Mexico, the Uber taxis are considered to be of course cheaper but also a lot safer option. The drivers go through strict tests in order to be able to be Uber drivers and therefore they are really reliable drivers. Of course, the price factor cannot be forgotten either when talking about Uber's great success.

Airbnb has not been equally lobbied by the universities and companies. Where chiefs and directors normally encourage their workers or students to use Uber as it is a safer option, there is no common encouragement to use Airbnb instead of hotels. Instead, they consider it as an unsafe and risky option. The general opinion also shows people's worry

about it; they do not think it is safe since someone could use it as a way to rob or steal or commit other crimes in their home.

However, the amount of tourists gives a little and significant push for Mexico. Three cities in Mexico have made it into the top 10 in listing the most popular accommodation in Latin America. Playa del Carmen is ranked fourth in the list of 10 cities in Latin America with the most accommodation offers of Airbnb, below Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo. Mexico City is in the sixth place and Puerto Vallarta in eighth. (CNN Expansión 2015.)

The American origin company already has more than 20 000 units spread throughout Mexico. There are approximately 5 000 properties/hosts found in the city of Playa del Carmen. The second most popular destination is Mexico City with 3 500 accommodations, while Puerto Vallarta, Cancun and Cabo San Lucas round out the list of the five most lodgings are getting through the application. (CNN Expansión 2015.)

In Mexico, the use of Airbnb and the offer of rental apartments is based on mainly two areas; the capital area Mexico City and the federal district, and the most significant tourist area Mayan Riviera on the peninsula in the northeast of Mexico. In those areas the growth of Airbnb has been surprisingly immense, altogether there are more than 11 000 properties for rental on those areas. According to Jordi Torres, the general manager of Latin American Airbnb, there was a growth of 200% in the last year of activity, and that is in those who travel from Mexico and use the service and those who come from abroad to stay. The amount of Airbnb accommodation options correlates the safety of the area. For example, in the most dangerous and restless states near the US border, e.g. in Tamaulipas and Sonora, there are not so many accommodations offered than in the capital area D.F. or in the tourism peninsula. (Dinero En Imagen 2015.)

In general, the people who rent their homes or properties for the Airbnb use, see it as a good method to get some extra income. Since the economic situation in Mexico is not very stable and lots of people suffer from the lack of economic resources, Airbnb has been adapted by people and that's one reason why it has so many users. Torres stresses the importance of implementing all the security recommendations of Airbnb and ensures there have been only a very few cases where the company has had to interfere to a problem between guest and host. (CNN Expansión 2015.)

In the future as people are searching more and more value for their money and are a bit more adaptive with the new applications and options like Airbnb, for sure the amount will

be growing even more. In addition, the people who already have great experiences of Airbnb accommodation in Mexico most likely continue using it since hotels and holiday resorts especially in the most common and popular tourist areas are rather expensive. Whereas the hotels rank their prices relatively high during the high seasons, Airbnb does have its share there since it can offer reasonably good price with excellent locations and friendly hosts.

In November 2016, the Ministry of Tourism of the state of Colima in Mexico and Airbnb made an agreement about lobbying Airbnb in Mexico. It aims at increasing the level of its use for tourist purposes and to promote Colima as a travel destination. Colima will also be a host of F1 Champ Series 2016 which will be hold in Manzanillo, Mexico. Therefore, both parties want to increase the customer experience and due to the increase of the tourists there will also be much more demand for accommodation than normally. (Airbnb 2016.)

The agreement Airbnb made with Colima has its focus on mutual cooperation. The key point of the agreement is to make Airbnb more known among the locals as well as promote Colima itself as a tourist destination. In 2015, there were already more than 300 Airbnb hosts and around 3 000 travelers who stayed in Airbnb accommodation in the state of Colima. The average earning per night the hosts got was 92 USD. (Airbnb 2016.)

For the locals and the local community, it brings also plenty of advantages since the tourists Airbnb brings consume local products and services while staying there and, therefore, the economic impact is very important. In addition, due to the bigger event that the F1 Champ Series is, the volume of inbounding tourists will of course make a huge profit economically for the whole state and all its local people. Airbnb agreed also on promoting the event itself and raise the awareness of it. Another important factor for the state of Colima was to improve its infrastructure in cooperation with Airbnb. Due to the cooperation, the state of Colima's accommodation options and scope will multiply and there will be more unique options to choose from. This kind of official cooperation is the first so far in Mexico and it is an excellent vanguard for other states and countries as well, especially in a country like Mexico that has not introduced and adapted that much modern technology in this area. Earlier Mexico has preferred more traditional business models and, therefore, the example of the state of Colima will be very crucial as a leading model for everyone else. (Airbnb 2016.)

4.6 Other Latin America

It seems that e-commerce and Airbnb will not stop expanding globally, and Latin America is one of the regions driving this growth. Although the major markets for Airbnb are the United States and Europe, Latin America and Asia represent significant growth opportunities in the coming years, according to the regional manager of Airbnb. Within the region, Mexico, Cuba and Brazil are the countries in which the company plans to concentrate its efforts in the coming times due to the tourism capacity of these areas. (CNN Expansión 2015.)

In the last decade, the rapid growth of new technologies in emerging countries opened up the possibility of a new business. With the penetration of devices such as smartphones and tablets diluted to some extent, the border between regulated initiatives and not creating parallel services seem to have met the needs of a large segment of users. (Marketing Directo 2014.)

4.6.1 Brazil

There was a huge increase in the amount of accommodation options in Airbnb before the start of the football World Cup 2014 held in Brazil. The country experienced a huge growth in the number of people who chose to rent a room or apartment through these services to enjoy the sporting event. Airbnb was one of the companies that had launched various campaigns for attendees to the 12 cities where World Cup matches were played using their services to find accommodation. (Marketing Directo 2014.) Airbnb hosts in the twelve host cities of the World Cup earned an average of 4 000 USD over three weeks during the World Cup. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.)

Broken down by country, the results showed that internet users in Brazil were the most prone when renting a room or apartment through a service like this. 40% of Brazilian respondents claimed to have rented a room or apartment against 24% who said the same in Indonesia and the Philippines and 19% in Thailand and Malaysia. (Marketing Directo 2014.)

Thanks to the impact of the World Cup 2014, today the third largest city with more places to use Airbnb in the world is Rio de Janeiro. With 21 000 properties in the city, it was left behind only by Paris and New York, the two great meccas of world tourism. Therefore, since September 2013 Airbnb has had a special division of 30 people for Latin America, led by the Catalan Jordi Torres Malloí. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.)

4.6.2 Argentina

In Argentina, there are more than 7 300 registered properties; 5 500 of them are in Buenos Aires. The second city is Córdoba, with 400, and the third Bariloche, with 300. There are many domestic destinations that must explode, watching the dynamics of travel, such as Mar del Plata. Mar del Plata has grown 300% since last year, but it needs to be given one more marketing push. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.) More than 30 000 Argentinians have used the service for their travels. (Clarín 2013.)

The domain will be adapted to punto.com.ar and they'll have to see which payment methods work best in Argentina. Airbnb also wants to get in touch with public and private organizations. They have talked to the mayors because the service has a strong economic impact. 70% of Airbnb homes are outside the tourist area. That means more income for homeowners who are not on the tourist circuit and more expenses in the area. (Clarín 2013.)

According to Airbnb's Spain and Latin American director Kay Kuehne, in the most important markets in the world Airbnb has a guarantee for the hosts covering up to one million dollars of damage in the house. The idea is about to be launched in Argentina as well. (Clarín 2014.)

Latin America is still a young market, but it represents many opportunities. People are accepting the business model in the region and trusting it more and more. This is not a new concept, the new is the way how technology is used to facilitate this exchange in Airbnb. In turn, Latin American and Argentine punctually have a culture of welcoming the stranger, receive and give them a good deal, so this model fits very well in the way how Argentina and Latin are. The aim is to continue working closely with the hosts and official institutions. Argentina has achieved a growth of 200%, and the goal is to continue on this path. In Argentina, in particular, Airbnb is in contact with several government teams of the city of Buenos Aires. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.)

4.6.3 Colombia

The most attractive markets in the region of Latin America are Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Playa del Carmen, with regard to Colombia are Bogotá, Medellín and Cartagena. To Colombia Airbnb arrived in 2013. (El Espectador 2013.) Ever since Airbnb has been adapted with open arms and it has led to a success.

Airbnb decided to expand to Colombia because it was a growing tourism market and an important hub in Latin America. In addition, they saw an opportunity: the apartment market was very fragmented. There was no centralized online booking and payment system. That's was the principal problem and one reason to its success in Colombia according to Kuehne. (Enter 2013.)

Although there is no similar service in the country, there are several other platforms that have worked for a long time in Colombia. CouchSurfing, for example, allows users to offer and find free spaces to accommodate travellers; and WeHostels is a database of hostels that was created in Colombia, and it has been well received ever since its launch. Together with Airbnb, supply and affordable options are expected to expand tourism. (Enter 2013.)

In Colombia, the rate of tourists using Airbnb's services grew 170% last year. Most visitors come mainly from the United States, Canada, England and Australia. The most visited cities in Colombia are Bogota, Medellin and Cartagena. The average charge per night is 60 USD. (La Republica 2015.)

On the demographic profile of Colombian users was revealed that 55% are women and the average age of travellers was 33 years. For those who provide hosting services, the average age was 40 years. Among the destinations where Colombians most used Airbnb were e.g. United States, Spain, France, Italy, Brazil, Argentina and Germany. (La Republica 2015.)

4.7 Future of Airbnb in Latin America

Airbnb's base is to create a community market confidence. This platform is already entrenched, the ability to offer new services on the same platform exists and would be simple to implement. Could they, in the future, sell your database to other companies, or develop new business oriented wealth of data? What are these new businesses? Airbnb says they will not sell user data or plan to guide the business to that direction. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.)

Airbnb announced that it was associated with Concur, a leading provider of solutions and services in expenditure management. Business travellers who use Concur TripLink services can book directly Airbnb and have their reports automatically in Concur ensuring that all their business requirements are met. In addition, Airbnb has partnered directly with

companies to enter business in Airbnb, providing search business. They work closely with Salesforce to shape its approach to business and there are now more than 30 companies registered to work with Airbnb, including Evernote, Eventbrite, and Lyft. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.)

The business traveller is more conventional than the traditional, but since 10% of their customers are on that segment, and payment cycle and billing, they give it body. There are many new services that Airbnb could plan to offer. Maybe in the future, besides the already launched business and corporate travel base there could be services for cleaning, transportation, tourism services and catering. There are still no news of new services to be launched on the platform but, as it is said, it is a possibility, which can happen in the future. (Consumo Colaborativo 2014.)

5 Methods

This chapter presents the methods that were used in the research. A quantitative research method was used since it was the best option for this kind of research. The research was conducted as a questionnaire. Additionally, one method of the research was mystery shopping, which took place in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in May 2016.

5.1 Quantitative research

According to Dawson, C. (2009, 14.), the first thing to do when starting a research is to think about the research methodology. It should be remembered that research methodology is not the same as research methods. Research methods are the tools that are used to gather data, such as interviews and questionnaires whereas the research methodology is the general principle or philosophy that guides the research. (Dawson 2009, 14.)

When deciding upon the methodology, the differences between qualitative and quantitative researches must be known. Qualitative research is a method that explores experiences, attitudes and behavior through for example interviews or focus groups. There are not that many people taking part in the research since qualitative research aims to get an in-depth opinion from the participants. Hereby, the contact with the participants lasts longer. (Dawson 2009, 15.)

For our research, a quantitative research method was chosen. Quantitative survey uses methods such as questionnaires or structured interviews in order to generate statistics through large-scale survey research. Most likely many people have been stopped on a street and been asked to fill in a questionnaire. This is one type of a quantitative survey. Quantitative research reaches more people, but the contact with the participants is much faster. (Dawson 2009, 15.)

One of the pros of quantitative research is the speed that data can be collected. The speed is rather fast as well as the analyzing of the data can be done quite quickly. Quantitative research can be conducted anonymously, which is beneficial if the research deals with sensitive topics. (Sheragy 2016.) On the contrary, a large sample of people must be studied since the larger the sample, the more statistically accurate the results will be. (Jones 2016.)

Validity is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative researches. In quantitative research, validity can be improved by careful sampling and appropriate instrumentation and statistical treatments of the data. The aim of every research is to be 100% valid, which is possible but rare. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007, 133.)

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, 146.) "Reliability in quantitative research is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents." Reliability in quantitative research is concerned with precision and accuracy. For example, some features such as weight can be measured accurately, while some features such as musical ability cannot. A research is reliable if similar results are found when conducting the research again. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007, 146.)

5.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a good tool for collecting survey information and providing structured numerical data. Additionally, the results of a questionnaire are rather easy to analyze. No-one can ever be forced to complete a questionnaire. Everyone is free to withdraw from the research. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007, 317-318.)

The survey for our thesis was conducted as a questionnaire. There were two different questionnaires for our target audience, one in Finnish for Finnish people and the other one in Spanish for Latin American people. The questionnaires were sent to travelers and to a few professionals in the tourism industry, especially in the accommodation sector. The questionnaires were distributed through email and social networks between the time period of May 9th and August 14th 2016.

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions. The questions were multiple answer questions and open-ended questions. In the beginning of the questionnaire, some basic information about the respondents was asked, for example gender, age and how many times they travel in a year.

First, we tried to find out whether Airbnb is familiar to the respondents or not. If the respondents had tried Airbnb, we asked them to list the places where they have tried Airbnb. Then, we took a closer look to their experiences. The respondents could freely comment whether their experiences have been positive or negative, and what were the reasons for a good or a bad experience. After hearing about the experiences, we concentrated on the future, whether the respondents will continue using Airbnb.

Additionally, we asked whether they would still stay at hotels or only use Airbnb from now on.

The ones who answered in the beginning that they have not tried Airbnb, were told to skip a few questions and move straight to question number 9. Then, we simply asked them why they have not used Airbnb. That was an open-ended question, so they could write all the reasons. After finding out why they have not stayed in an Airbnb accommodation, we asked them whether they could imagine trying Airbnb someday. In addition, we wanted to know if they know someone who has tried Airbnb.

The next part of the questionnaire focused on finding out what affects respondents' decision to choose Airbnb over hotel. We asked the respondents if other people's feedback and comments affect their decision. Furthermore, we wanted to know where they have heard about Airbnb for the first time and if there is a place where they would definitely not use Airbnb. The next question was about what the respondents expect to have in their Airbnb accommodation. There were not any options given since then we would not have necessarily gotten truthful answers.

Next, the respondents were asked whether they consider Airbnb reliable and safe or not. As mentioned earlier, it is possible to book only a bedroom in Airbnb. We wanted to find out if the respondents were willing to book only a bedroom or do they long for privacy and could not imagine booking only a bedroom and sharing the rest of the house with strangers. Then, we questioned if the respondents could become hosts themselves.

The last questions focused on the co-operation of Airbnb and travel agencies and whether the respondents think that Airbnb will replace hotels in the future. We asked the respondents about their opinions about being able to book Airbnb accommodation and hotels in the same place, for example a web page, and whether they would like to book Airbnb accommodation through travel agencies.

5.3 Mystery shopping case

Mystery shopping is a tool, which is used to measure the quality of service of a certain company or to research specific products or services. (Wikipedia 2016.) The customer's identity is a mystery, so no one can affect the outcome of the results.

For our thesis, we rented an apartment in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico via Airbnb platform in order to try how it works in practice. We stayed five nights in a private apartment owned

by a Mexican man. One month before the trip, we searched for different options in airbnb.com in order to find a perfect one for us and see the prices. There were many options available in all price categories from cheap to really expensive luxurious apartments and villas.

Our apartment was a studio apartment in a bigger complex of vacation apartments. Like often in Mexico, these apartments have kind of an officer and actual office for registration and keys. Altogether, the block house had around 30 apartments, mostly owned by Mexicans for holiday use or by foreigners like retired Americans who had moved to Mexico.

Using the Airbnb platform, we had to request availability directly from the host by sending them a message. Our host, Juan Pablo Mendoza, gave us a very quick response and acceptance. We needed to scan our documents in order to verify we were real people. After his acceptance, Airbnb charged the whole price from the reservation's credit card information, which we had put to the profile. The host contacted us several times before arriving to the destination in order to give information and other tips.

In the destination, a worker gave us the keys and showed us the apartment. We needed to register and fill in our basic information in a registration form, like in the hotels. This, however, was because the apartment was part of the holiday home complex and all outsiders (not owners) had to register upon arrival.

All in all, we were very happy with the value for money we got in that place. The price was cheaper than a similar stay in a hotel would have been and the location was great near the beach and old town. We had a short walking distance everywhere we wanted to go. Its location was actually better than some hotels had. There were no hotels in the nearby blocks, but many similar private owned vacation home complexes.

We felt like locals while living there. There were almost no tourists besides us; the only ones we ran across with that building were some Americans who would be there for six weeks. Besides them, we did not see anyone else, so the rooftop pool was empty almost all times we went there. That would not have been possible in a hotel where there could have been hundreds of other people. From these Americans we also got very useful restaurant tips to visit real Mexican and very cheap restaurant that we otherwise had probably never found or tried on our own.

During the stay, our host kept contacting us and if we had any problems, he was willing to fix them and help us immediately. He was very friendly and attending during our whole stay and even after it. He wrote a review about us to the Airbnb webpage and we had to review our stay and him, too.

Overall, we were extremely satisfied with the apartment and our stay. Everything was well organised and we did not have any mayor problems. The place and location were excellent, and in the apartment there was everything we needed during our stay, and even more. It would have been suitable for a longer stay, too.

After this positive Airbnb experience, we will most likely use Airbnb again. Our experience was very positive and actually, we were surprised how smoothly and well everything went with the whole process. During our stay in the apartment, we never felt unsafe or uncomfortable, instead the whole experience felt like as if we had been in our home or holiday apartment. As if it had been ours, since we could move freely and do exactly what we wanted. After this positive surprise, we totally recommend Airbnb to everyone.

6 Results

This chapter presents the results of the survey. First, the results of the Finnish and Latin American questionnaires are presented separately. Then, the results are being compared.

6.1 Finland

Overall, 73 Finnish travellers answered the questionnaire. The Finns were willing to help and they had rather much experience of Airbnb. Ten of the Finnish respondents were males and 62 were females. One of the respondents did not mention his/her gender.

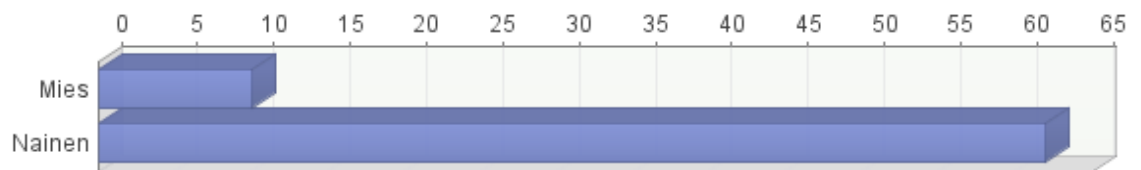


Figure 6: Gender (N=72)

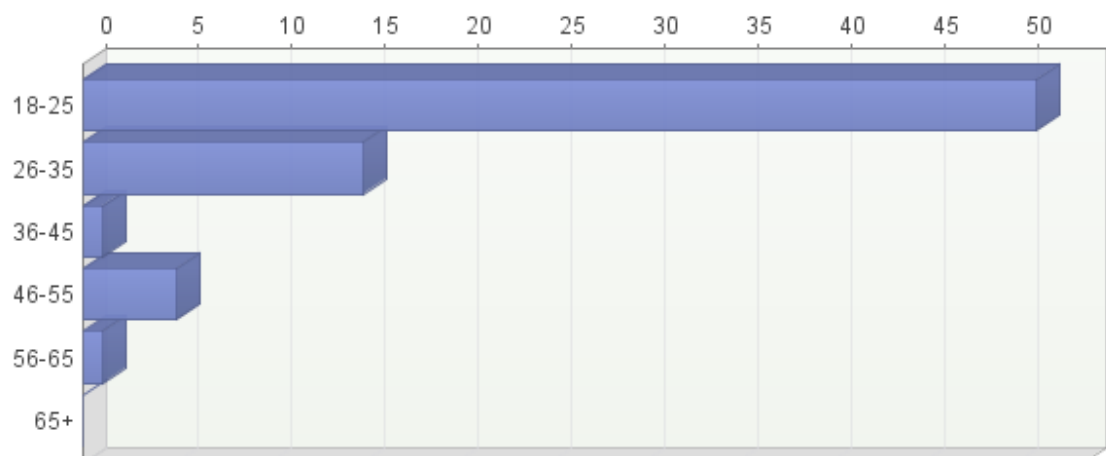


Figure 7: Age (N=73)

Nearly 70% of the respondents, 51, were aged between 18-25. 45 of them were women. 15 of the respondents (20,55%) were aged between 26-36 whereas only one respondent (1,37%) were aged between 36-45. Five of the respondents (6,85%) were aged between 46-55. One of the respondents was a woman aged between 56-65. None of the respondents was over 65 years old.

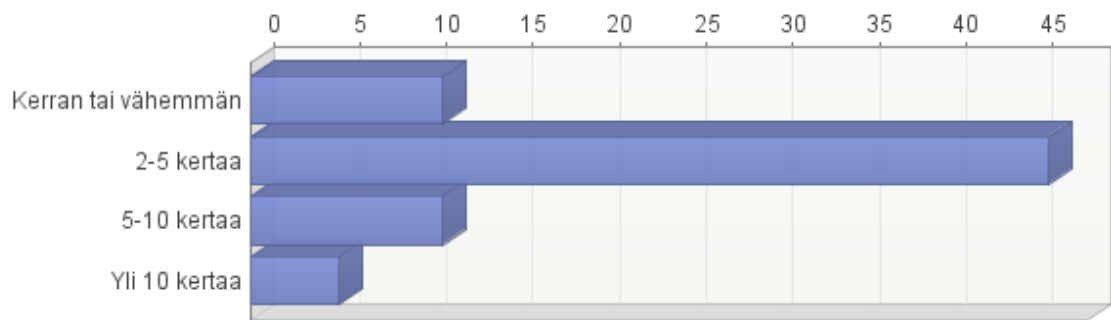


Figure 8: How often do you travel in a year? (N=73)

Approximately 63% of the respondents (46) travel 2-5 times per year, which is a quite high percent. Only 11 people travel only once or less a year. Additionally, 11 people (15,07%) answered that they travel even 5-10 times per year. Five of the respondents travel over 10 times per year.



Figure 9: Are you familiar with Airbnb? (N=73)

61 of the respondents (83,56%) were familiar with Airbnb before answering the questionnaire. The rest 12 (16,44%) were not familiar with Airbnb. Nearly all of the respondents have heard of Airbnb from someone they know.

6.1.1 The experiences of using Airbnb

36 of the respondents have never used Airbnb whereas 34 have. 28 of those who have tried Airbnb were women. Slightly over half of the women have never tried Airbnb. The respondents have been using Airbnb all around the world, even in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Chile, South Korea, Australia, the US, and New Zealand. Some of them have also tried Airbnb in Finland, for example in Turku. Many of the respondents have stayed in an Airbnb accommodation in France, Germany and Italy.

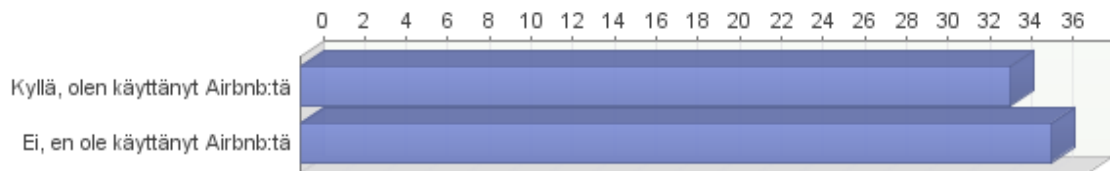


Figure 10: Do you have any experience on Airbnb? (N=70)

alankomaissa amsterdam andorrassa auckland australia bangkok
 barcelona bryssel budapest budapestissä chile espanja espanjassa
 etelä-koreassa helsingissä irlanti islannissa italia italiassa itävalta
 juuri käyttänyt madridista majoittunut majoituksen meksikossa
 melbourne milano mutten nizzassa **pariisi** pietari pohjoi
 prahassa **ranskassa** roomassa **saksa** sanfrancisco
 seoul singapore sloveniassa **suomi** tanskassa tel-aviv tokio
 tokiossa turussa uusi-seelanti varasin vielä yhdysvallat zagrebissa

Figure 11: Destinations where Finnish respondents have used Airbnb (N=70)

Only one of the respondents told that his experience of using Airbnb was negative. However, nothing was wrong with the apartment or the booking system. That type of accommodation just was not for him. Two of the respondents have had both positive and negative experiences. All the rest have had only positive experiences, which shows that Airbnb is a good choice for accommodation as well.

Many of the respondents mentioned that the booking system was easy and fast to use, Airbnb was a cheaper option than hotel and the hosts have always been nice and helpful. Additionally, the apartments and houses have been clean and exactly what was described in the description. The hosts have been willing to give tips what to do in the city or where to eat, and the whole experience of using Airbnb has given a closer look to the city and its inhabitants.

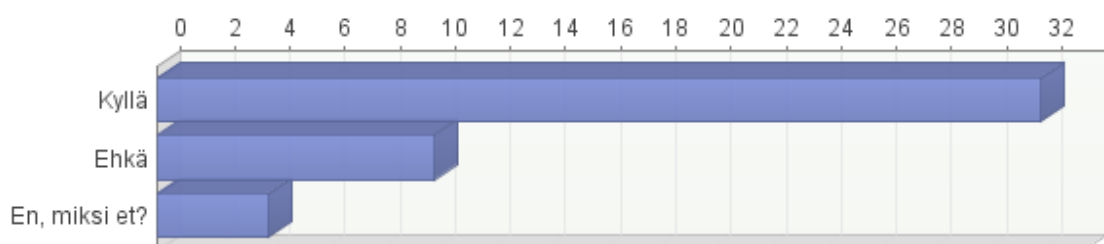


Figure 12: Will you continue using Airbnb in the future? (N=46)

Since almost all the answers were positive, it is quite surprising that only 32 respondents answered that they will use Airbnb in the future. 10 of the respondents were not sure yet whether they will try Airbnb again or not, whereas 4 were certainly sure that they will not use Airbnb again. This question was meant for those who have tried Airbnb, but apparently, some of the respondents who have not tried it yet have answered this question, too.

One of the respondents was wondering how to eliminate all the dangerous and disturbed hosts. However, when booking an Airbnb accommodation, there is a chance to get to know the host. Usually, a photo and some information and feedback of the host are provided.

When asking about the probability of still using hotels, all the respondents nearly agreed. Only one answered that he will not stay in hotels anymore since staying at an Airbnb accommodation is cheaper. All the rest will still stay in hotels as well. Hotel is told to be an easier option.

When wanting to get pampered, hotel is a good option. Breakfast is served every morning and your hotel room will be cleaned for you. Even though it is more expensive to stay in a hotel, many of the respondents agreed that it is worth it. In addition, in some places it is safer to stay in a hotel.

6.1.2 Why have you not used Airbnb?

As mentioned above, 34 of the respondents have not tried Airbnb. Many of the respondents did not have any good reasons for that, they just simply have not had any need for trying Airbnb. Finnish people are known to be in need of their own space. Finns are not comfortable with sharing an apartment with strangers, or even sitting next to a stranger on a bus. That is why it is easier for Finns to choose a hotel since there they can enjoy their own privacy. Additionally, it is mentioned that it is easier and more reliable to book a hotel room.

Many of the respondents have not used Airbnb because they have not heard of it. Airbnb is more common among younger people. Some were a bit sceptic about Airbnb, whether it is trustworthy or not.

When travelling, there are many options how and where to book your trip. Many travellers who travel a lot, book separately flights and accommodation. The ones who do not travel

that much, usually book a package tour, which includes the flights and accommodation. Therefore, there is not a chance to try Airbnb.

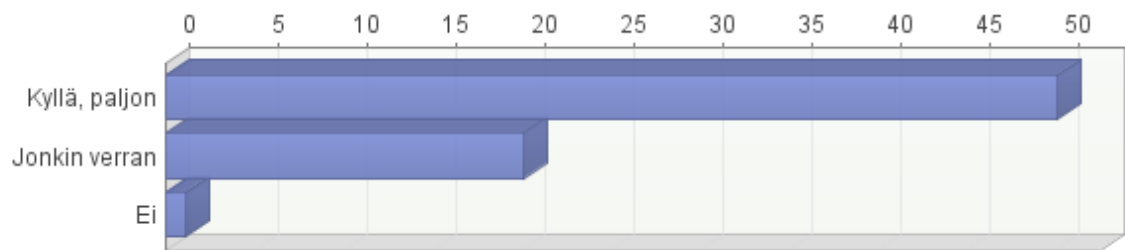


Figure 13: Do other people’s reviews and opinions affect your decision? (N=71)

Finnish people seem to be eager to try out new things since 39 of 40 are willing to try Airbnb someday. Airbnb is a good option especially when traveling with a larger group or staying in a same city for a longer period of time. However, some of the respondents are not willing to try Airbnb unless they hear some positive feedback from their friends or relatives. Half of the respondents admit that the feedback they hear or read online affects their decision. Luckily, 31 people knew someone who has tried Airbnb, so hopefully they will share their experiences so more people will have the courage to try Airbnb.

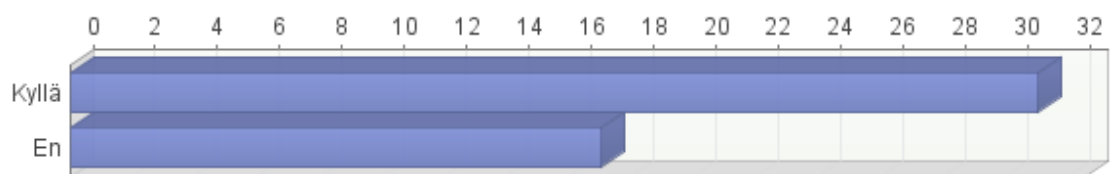


Figure 14: Do you know anyone who has used Airbnb? (N=48)

6.1.3 Airbnb vs. hotel

One of the questions in the questionnaire concentrated on finding out what affects the decision to choose Airbnb over hotel. The two most common answers were price and location. Airbnb apartments and houses can be located anywhere, which gives a wide range of options to choose from. As stated, Airbnb accommodation can be cheaper than hotel. It is not always cheaper, but it can be. Especially if having a longer vacation, Airbnb is a cheaper option. However, if going on a road trip and staying only for one night in a same place, hotel will be a better option. Many Airbnb accommodations have a minimum amount of nights you need to stay in.

The respondents expect to have mainly basic things in their Airbnb accommodation, for example a bed, Wi-Fi, shower, fridge and some kitchen equipment. The only difference to hotels is that there are not kitchens in hotel rooms. The main point is to have a place to sleep and shower, everything else will be a positive surprise. It is important that the accommodation meets the expectations which were created while booking the accommodation.

6.1.4 Renting an Airbnb accommodation and becoming a host

36 of 71 consider Airbnb to be reliable and safe. Many people are only willing to rent a whole apartment or house, and some people are eager to get to know new people and rent only a bedroom. 34 of the respondents could rent only a bedroom, but for 22 people it would not be the first option. 21 respondents could not imagine sharing the accommodation with strangers, which shows that Finns long for privacy.

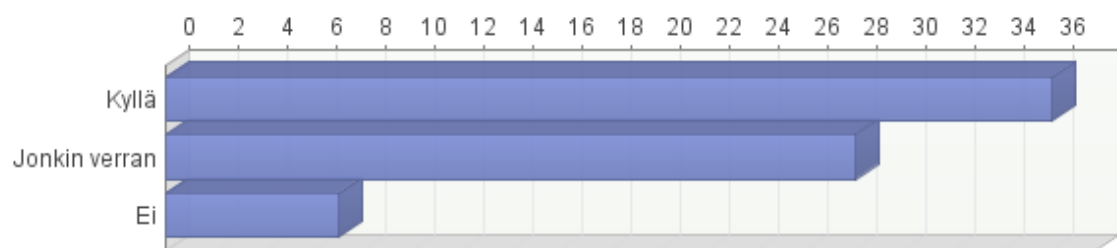


Figure 15: Do you consider Airbnb as a reliable and safe option for accommodation? (N=71)

Anyone can become a host. Approximately 68% of the respondents could rent their own houses for strangers. The rest would not rent their houses since they do not trust strangers enough.

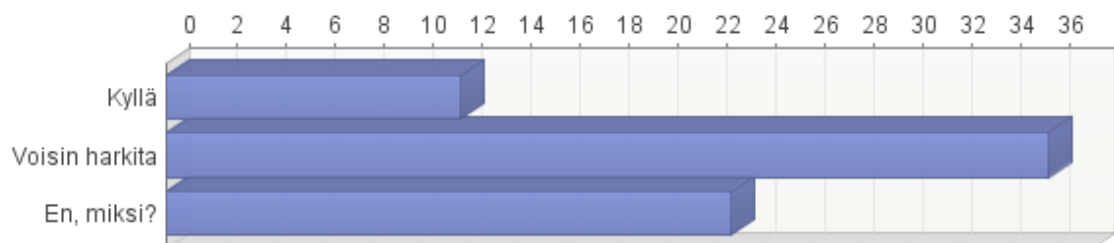


Figure 16: Could you consider becoming a host and rent out your home? (N=71)

Slightly over half of the respondents, 36, would like to be able to book Airbnb and hotel accommodations in a same place, for example through a same web page. It would be easy to compare the prices when all the options would be listed on the same page.

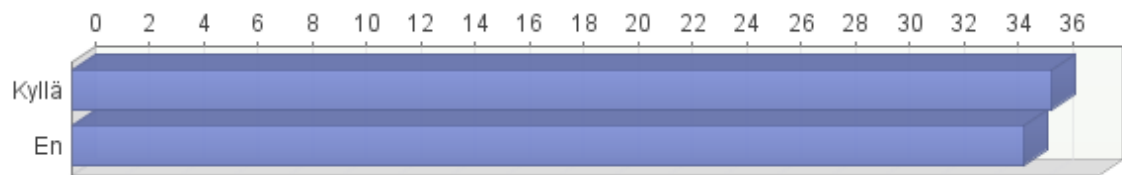


Figure 17: Would you like to be able to book hotels and Airbnb from the same place? (N=71)

Not many people uses travel agencies nowadays since it is so easy to book a trip by yourself. Additionally, it costs extra when using a travel agency. 43 respondents do not think that Airbnb accommodation should be possible to book through travel agencies.

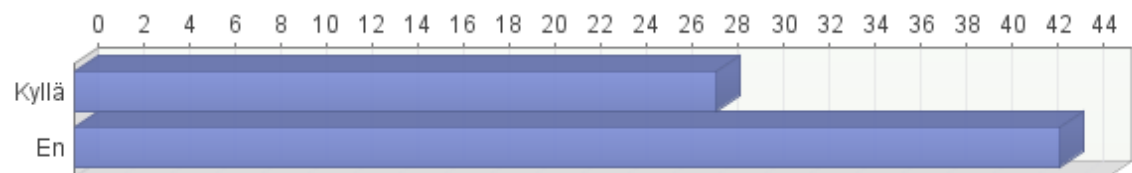


Figure 18: Would you like to book Airbnb accommodation through travel agency? (N=71)

6.1.5 Can Airbnb replace hotels?

None of the respondents thought that Airbnb will replace hotels. Airbnb will become a competitor to hotels, and it already is, but it will not replace hotels entirely.

There should always be options to choose from, something to everyone. That is why hotels and Airbnb should both stay strong and alive. For a certain vacation hotel can be a better option, and for another vacation Airbnb can be the right choice. Hereby, the type of accommodation is usually chosen depending on the type of vacation and the needs of the customer.

6.2 Latin America

Altogether 37 Latin American travellers answered the questionnaire. The respondents were mainly from Mexico but also from Argentina and Uruguay. About 62% of them were men and more than 50% of all the respondents belonged to the age group 18-25. Three of the respondents did not mention his/her gender. Most of the respondents had heard about Airbnb the first time by someone they know. Additionally, many of the respondents heard or read about it in the internet.

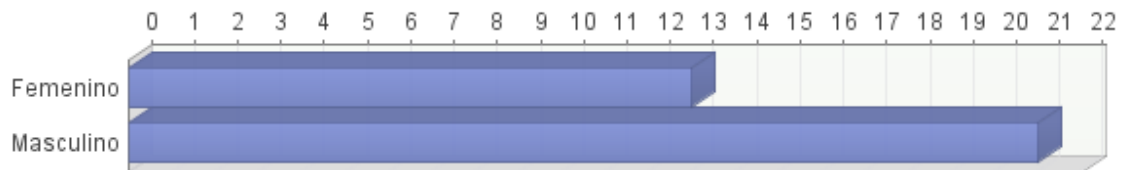


Figure 19: Gender (N=34)

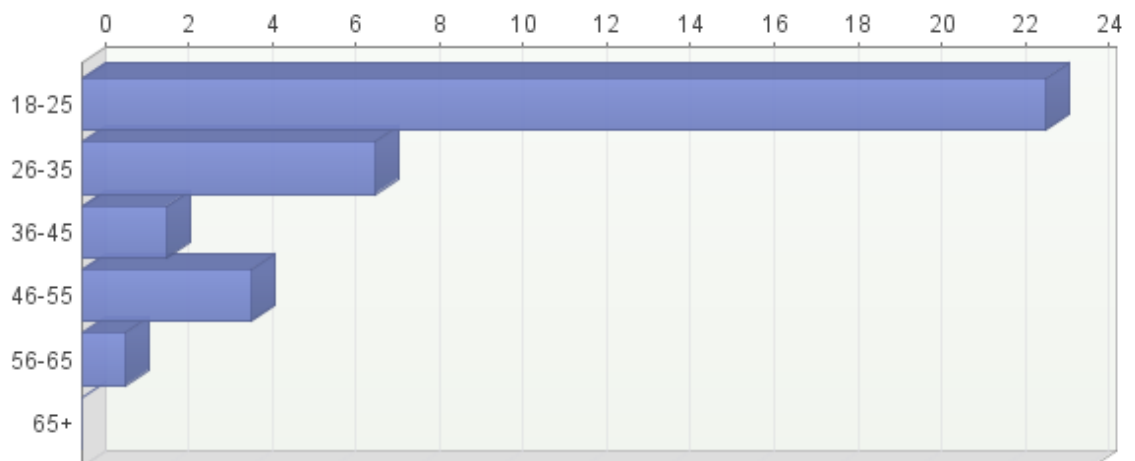


Figure 20: Age (N=37)

In general, people expect very basic things from their Airbnb accommodation. Things like a good bed, cleanliness, Wi-Fi connection and toilet with a shower, to mention some. Only a few mention more specific comments such as 24/7 service and discount for frequent users – things that most hotels normally offer for their frequent clients.

Latin Americans are willing to use Airbnb nearly anywhere. When asking where they would not use Airbnb, some people mention general aspects like generally unsafe areas or exotic places where it might not be that safe. Only two of the total amount of respondents mention a real place; one says in Texas and California because he/she already knows where to stay there; and the other says Central America because it could

be unsafe. Half of the respondents consider Airbnb as a safe and secure option for accommodation. Only 5% of all respondents do not consider it safe.

6.2.1 The experiences of using Airbnb

Most of the respondents had not used Airbnb before. Only 30% of the people who responded the questionnaire had used it. Of those ones who had used Airbnb, all had a positive experience when they had used it.



Figure 21: Do you have any experience on Airbnb? (N=32)

The respondents thought that it was more budget friendly and an excellent option for longer trips. Additionally, they were surprised by the security of the booking and, in general, by the low cost. Every one of them could at least consider continuing to use Airbnb.

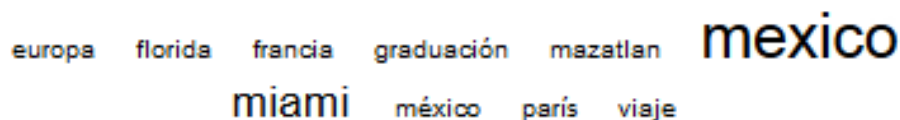


Figure 22: Destinations where Latin American respondents have used Airbnb (N=32)

6.2.2 Why have you not used Airbnb?

The majority of the respondents did not have any personal experience of using Airbnb so far. Therefore, many of them were a bit suspicious and cynical about it. In addition, many said they long for the service they get in a hotel. In general, many respondents said it depends on their motive of the trips whether they end up choosing Airbnb over hotel or vice versa.

The people who did not have any experience of Airbnb and had not used it ever before mostly did not know anyone who would have used it. That seemed to be very important for all of them who had not used it. They would have needed someone to tell them how it works in theory and how the whole process goes and if it is safe and easy. Therefore, if

anyone in their close circle had not used it, it seemed a bit dangerous and suspicious even as an idea since there was no one with a positive experience of it.

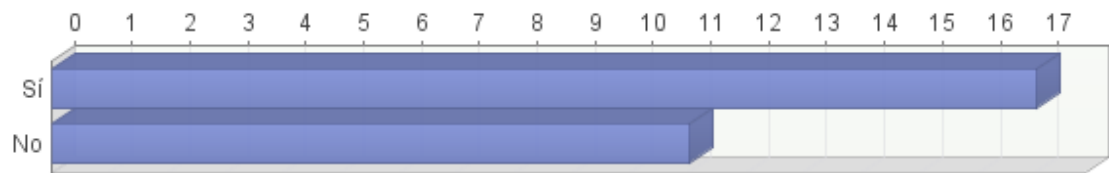


Figure 23: Do you know anyone who has used Airbnb? (N=28)

Additionally, many people in general did not know what Airbnb actually is. Some of them had a light idea what it might be as an accommodation service but were not quite sure. However, many of them see it possible that in the future they could use Airbnb. Almost every one of the respondents says they could consider it in the future if they had need for it.

6.2.3 Airbnb vs. hotel

The most important factors that affected the decision to choose Airbnb accommodation over hotel were the price and location. In addition, the service and cleanliness are important. Additionally, the amount of the travellers and the length of the trip affects their decision if they choose a hotel or Airbnb accommodation. Thus Airbnb totally has a share when people plan larger trips (especially with bigger groups) since hotels normally tend to rate very high when staying longer.

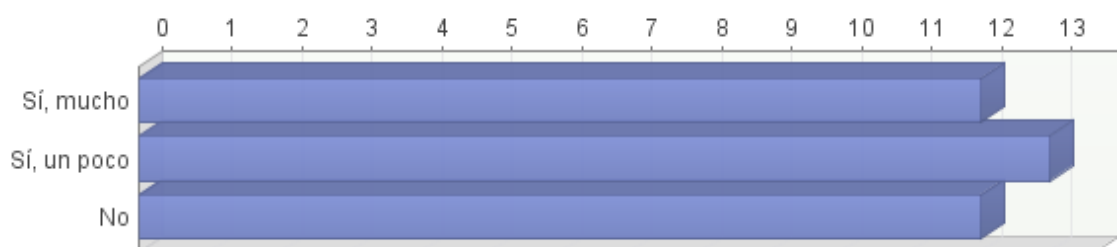


Figure 24: Do other people's reviews and opinions affect your decision? (N=37)

12 people say other people's comments affect a lot in their decision. Equally, 12 say comments do not affect their decision. The rest says that they have a little impact in their decision-making.

6.2.4 Renting an Airbnb accommodation and becoming a host

Almost all of the respondents could imagine renting only a room and not the whole apartment of an Airbnb accommodation. Probably that is since that way it usually is a lot cheaper and the price has a really important role in Latin America, where the people in general don't earn that much than in Europe nor Finland. Also, the more open and a lot more hospitable culture might have its part in it. In Latin America, it is very common that the whole family stays in a house or home of their relatives when they are visiting them or the city where the relatives live. People tend to lend their homes more easily also than in Finland. In Finland, people usually prefer to stay in a hotel since they have the mentality of being "disturbing" someone if the whole family or even a married couple would stay in their parents' house, for example. And maybe also, because the Finnish people long for more privacy as well.

Almost all the respondents could consider renting their home and becoming a host. Only a few would not and they justify their answers by saying it could be dangerous to let a stranger in their apartment and simply just by "the times that we live."

Almost all the respondents would like to be able to reserve Airbnb and hotel accommodations in a same place, e.g. through the same web page or search. Also, the majority would like to reserve it through a travel agency, too.

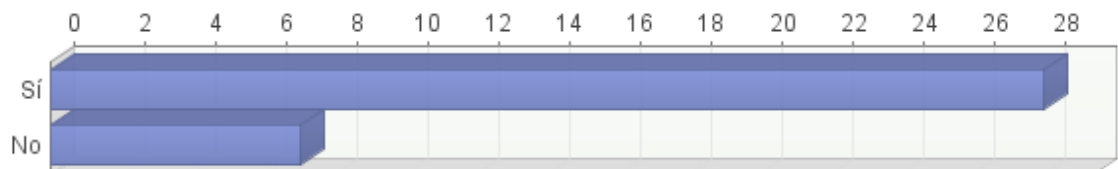


Figure 25: Would you like to be able to book hotels and Airbnb from the same place? (N=35)

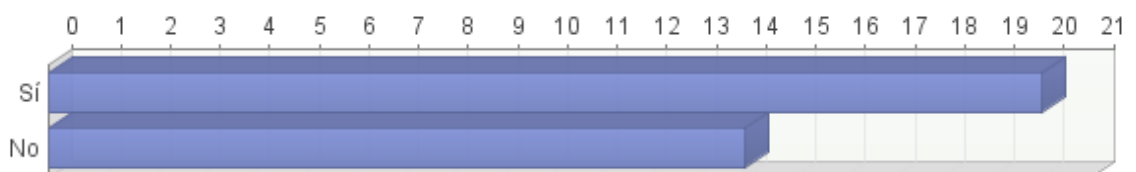


Figure 26: Would you like to book Airbnb accommodation through travel agency? (N=34)

6.2.5 Can Airbnb replace hotels?

All in all, the general opinion is that Airbnb cannot replace hotels. However, many of the respondents believe that Airbnb will affect the hotel industry somehow anyway. Some professionals who answered to the questionnaire for the professionals only, said that they already have seen the difference that Airbnb might have brought to the industry. For example, the one professional who works as an entertainment and animation manager in a 5 star resort in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, says the tourists who come to the hotel are less willing to consume and/or pay anything extra or get the excursions the hotel offers. He says he can see the difference with the guests they recently have had in comparison with the ones who came to the hotel e.g. 5 years ago. Of course, that might not be only because of Airbnb, but also the whole economic situation and awareness and paying attention in consuming and prices.

6.3 Comparison

Finnish people are more familiar with Airbnb than Latin Americans. 30% of the Latin American respondents have not tried Airbnb whereas nearly 50% of Finnish respondents have tried it. The Latin Americans, who have not tried Airbnb, were a bit sceptical towards it. Finns did not have any negative feelings towards Airbnb, they just did not have had a chance to try it yet. They were rather positive towards Airbnb.

The results would be better to analyse if the amounts of the responses were the same. 73 Finns answered the questionnaire whereas only 37 Latin Americans answered their questionnaire. Majority of the Finnish respondents were females while majority of the Latin American respondents were males. Of the Finnish respondents, only 10 were males whereas 70% of the Latin American respondents were males. Most of the respondents in both questionnaires were aged 18-25. In Finland, over 70% were that age and in Latin America over half, too. This is mostly because we are that age and most of our friends and classmates belong to that age group, too.

The Finnish respondents have used Airbnb all over the world in many countries and cities. The Latin Americans have used Airbnb mainly in Mexico and the USA. Since Finns are more aware of Airbnb, they have the courage to try it almost anywhere.

The results from both of the questionnaires show that it is important to hear some positive feedback from someone you know personally. According to some of the respondents, this affects the decision to choose Airbnb. Other reasons to choose Airbnb over hotel were

price and location. Additionally, in both results, some mentioned that if travelling with a larger group or family, Airbnb is a better option.

Although Latin Americans were a bit sceptical towards Airbnb, they were willing to try it in the future. Finns who have not tried Airbnb before were willing to try it, too, but the ones who have already tried it were not that eager. 10 of the respondents were not sure whether they would try it again or not and four were sure they will never try it again.

Finnish people need their own space and long for privacy. Only 34 of the Finnish respondents could rent only a bedroom whereas almost all the Latin Americans could rent only a bedroom. 21 of the Finns could never imagine sharing accommodation with strangers. Latin American culture is more hospitable and Latin Americans have gotten used to sharing house with many people. Additionally, almost all Latin American respondents could imagine becoming a host and renting their home. On the contrary, only half of the Finns could become hosts. Finnish people do not seem to trust strangers enough.

For travellers, it would be easy to book Airbnb and hotels in a same place. Almost all the Latin Americans and slightly over half of the Finns agree with this. Latin Americans would also like to book Airbnb through travel agencies whereas Finns do not consider this necessary. Not many people uses travel agencies anymore since booking by yourself is so easy nowadays. However, Finns seem to be more familiar with different booking sites and for Latin Americans, it may just be easier to use travel agencies. All the Finns and Latin Americans agreed that Airbnb will not replace hotels. However, many of the respondents believe that Airbnb will affect the hotel industry somehow.

7 Discussion

The first part of the chapter concentrates on the limitations we faced during our thesis process. Next, the reliability and validity of the thesis are discussed. Lastly, our own evaluation of the thesis process is presented.

7.1 Limitations

During the process, we found it quite or even very difficult to reach the travel professionals. Especially in Latin America, it turned out to be almost impossible since after sending a numerous amount of emails, not even single one responded. Overall, we tried to reach about 40 hotels in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Not even one responded to our contacts, so we did not succeed in that point very much. The only answers from professionals we got in Mexico were from people who we knew in person. Therefore, the travel professionals section of the questionnaire is not very reliable since there were only two answers all in all. In addition, due to the security reasons the most important and international hotel chains do not let anyone enter the hotel unless you are a guest of the hotel.

In Finland, an email with a link to the questionnaire was sent to multiple hotels, but only two responded. Arguably, the employees at the hotels are too busy to read all their emails or alternatively after reading the mail in a rush, they just forget it. We hoped to get more answers from the professionals, but we did not succeed. The questionnaire for professionals was supposed to be sent to our classmates, but after a confusion with the links, a wrong link was shared with them. We could have gotten more answers from professionals, since our classmates are professionals in this field.

7.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are closely related. However, they have different meanings. Reliability means the repeatability of the outcome. If the same research would be done again, the outcome should be the same in order the data to be reliable. Validity refers to whether the results of the research are valid and believable. (Shuttleworth 2008.)

As mentioned, we did not get as many answers from the professionals as we had hoped, so therefore, the results of the professionals' questionnaire are not too reliable. We did succeed to get quite many answers when we asked people in general to respond to the questionnaire. There also, unfortunately, the Latin Americans were not too eager to answer. It was a lot easier to collect answers in Finland and get more of them.

What it comes to the questionnaire held in Finland, we think that the distribution was quite good. There are people from each age group, which makes it easier to compare the results between the age categories. However, again in Mexico and Latin America, it was harder to get older people to answer the questionnaire even if it was in Spanish, so there we did not reach that much older people. The answers were mostly from the age group of 18-25.

If this research was conducted again, we are not sure whether the results would be the same. This research is based on personal views and opinions, and they can change. For example, some of the respondents who had not tried Airbnb when answering the questionnaire could now have tried it. Therefore, the results would be different. Additionally, not everyone wants to answer all of the questions or have time to write long answers. Hereby, some of the respondents may have answered lazily, which may affect the outcome.

7.3 Evaluation of the thesis process

Already earlier during our studies, we decided that we would do our bachelor thesis together. At the end of 2015, we were asked if we would be interested in joining a thesis group and doing a thesis for SMAL as an umbrella topic with three other students. In December 2015, we had a meeting with the commissioner. The commissioner told about their ideas what we could research and we shared our ideas with them. For us, it took a while to find a topic that would be both interesting and beneficial for our commissioner. Since one of the authors spent the spring 2016 in Mexico, we wanted the topic to be something related to Mexico, too.

During the thesis writing process, there are three seminars to attend. The seminars are meant for sharing the current state of the thesis with other students and receiving feedback, and to act as an opposite when other student is presenting his/her work. Our first thesis seminar took place in Porvoo Campus in December 2015.

We started the thesis writing process after Christmas in January 2016. First, we planned the thesis. We planned what chapters the thesis would include, and how many pages each chapter would be. Additionally, we discussed how we would get the data and how it would be analysed. After our plan was ready, we started to plan the questionnaire. We started thinking about the questions, and whether the questions would be multiple choice or open-ended questions. Approximately at the same time, we started writing the theory

part. We divided the chapters between us since we were in different countries. It was easier to write when we both had our own chapters. At the end of the thesis writing process, we were not that strict about our own chapters. Both of us helped each other and wrote what was needed.

Planning the questionnaire took more time than we had thought. It was not easy to come up with useful questions. Luckily, during spring 2016, we managed to complete the questionnaire and started to distribute it. Collecting data was a lot harder than we thought it was going to be. We tried to reach several hotels in Latin America and Finland, but only a few responded. We did not expect it to be that difficult to reach them. After realizing that we would not get enough answers from the professionals, we decided to concentrate on the travellers. Luckily, we managed to reach enough travellers although it was a bit demanding to reach the Latin Americans.

All in all, the process itself started quite smoothly and we had already around 25 pages written by summer 2016. However, after that we faced some motivational issues. Additionally, the time we had for writing the thesis was quite limited due to our working schedules. Later in the autumn, we were able to commit more time for writing. Towards the end of the year, our level of motivation increased a bit.

We were collecting the data from May 9th till August 14th. After that, we started analysing the data. Additionally, we continued writing the theory. The analysing itself did not took very long. We had took part in many researches before so we had experience on analysing data. However, it took more time to think how SMAL would benefit from the answers. We did not feel like the results we got would help them a lot since SMAL was more interested in the professional part and that one we were not so successful with.

We enjoyed writing the thesis together. Whenever we faced difficulties or lack of motivation, we could support each other. We had always someone who could give feedback when needed. Receiving feedback is important in order to know if there are some parts that should be improved. We wish we had had strict deadlines since without them this process took more time than we had planned. We could have set up our own deadlines, and we tried it, but we could not follow the deadlines.

During the thesis process, we learned new things about sharing economy, Airbnb, Finland and Latin America. Before starting this process, we did not know for example how many Airbnb listings there are in Finland or how popular Airbnb is in Finland or Mexico. We got more precise information about those subjects. It will be interesting to follow how sharing

economy expands over the upcoming years. Furthermore, we learned to search for reliable information and mark the references properly. We had not used citation in our academic writing before. Overall, we are rather pleased with the research and the results.

8 Conclusions & suggestions

This chapter offers a conclusion of the subject and suggestions for the future. Altogether, the research reached 110 travellers of whom 73 were Finnish and 37 Latin American. Finnish people were more familiar with Airbnb, but Latin Americans are following the lead. Sharing economy is still not accepted by everyone, but it is expanding all around the world constantly.

It seems very clear that even if people might be a bit afraid of the never-ending development of technology, they are interested in it, too. Many people showed interest towards Airbnb even when they had not used it before. They gave a chance for it even though it seemed a bit scary and unsecure as an idea. In Finland, people are a bit more open minded towards the technology maybe since there is just simply more of it in the everyday life and the people have already understood by their own experience that there is no need to be afraid of it or to try to avoid it forever. Especially the younger generation seems to be quite satisfied with it and shows interest in using it in the future.

In addition, people do show interest in the change. Most people still fancy the idea of the basic hotel but show some glimpses of the growing curiosity towards these kind of alternative options and services. It also is quite clear that they expect there to be several options in the future, and that they want there to be something that would challenge the already existing markets. Moreover, exactly there Airbnb has its share and the market niche at the moment. We believe that if Airbnb continues doing good work and even more promotion and marketing so that more people would simply be more aware of it, it could gain even bigger share in the future. Additionally, we believe that since more and more people have good and positive experiences of its use, they will use it again in the future, too, and possibly recommend it to several friends.

However, there is something Airbnb has not done yet. At the moment the only possibility or platform to book Airbnb accommodation is through their own web page or mobile app. There are people who show interest in booking it through a travel agency, for example. Alternatively, it could be an option to combine the possibility of booking Airbnb accommodation via a metasearch page such as Trivago. As a growing e-commerce market, Latin America would totally have the consumers to purchase it. Since the e-commerce and such platforms like Airbnb have already had their breakthrough, it just should not let be stopped or slowed down. The growth must be supported and since some of the users still prefer more traditional way, one option would be exactly widening the platforms where Airbnb can be booked. As long as it still is an emerging trend, it should be

marketed and lobbied among all the travellers, no matter if they come in for business or leisure. Simply, it is just not enough anymore to sell something really basic. All the things must be carefully thought and planned, and the customers want good value, and for them, the added value comes from uniqueness. During the times when one Instagram photo can reach millions of views fast, the challenge is creating something everyone will want. In the accommodation sector, Airbnb has gained foothold since it can offer something so unique and different that is hard to compete with – different and personalized experiences, the atmosphere and feeling of being a local and being at home wherever you travel.

Another growing trend is the use of Airbnb in the business traveling. Launching a proper site or office for the business travellers could gain even more users. Additionally, adding a bit of efficient marketing and campaigns and fixing all the legal issues and questions, Airbnb would most likely get many new companies to join their business travel program. There are big and international companies showing interest in it, and the platform and way of doing things are already in halfway. Given the facts that companies could easily save some money if their employees could choose an Airbnb instead of several hotel rooms and having them all together in one place plus the incredibly amazing unique experience, Airbnb would totally win it. It already has the platform done and in some companies, the employees are already allowed to stay at an Airbnb accommodation. However, the local tourism boards could start lobbying it seriously for companies whose employees need to travel a lot. It would simply be a win-win situation. The employer would save rather much money and the employees would be happy with more fluent and efficient bookings and modern technology and apartments. Furthermore, the local communities would also win economically as every tourist, even in duty, usually prefers to go wandering around in the nearby areas to grab some fast lunch, their morning coffee or have a get-together over a glass of wine after a successful meeting.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for travellers



The popularity of Airbnb

This survey is conducted as part of a Bachelor's thesis for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Answering the survey will only take around 5-10 minutes. All the answers will be kept anonymous.

Thank you for your participation!

Sonja Kosunen & Sofia Tuominen
DP in Tourism
Haaga-Helia UAS

1. Gender

☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ 65+

3. How often do you travel in a year?

- ☐ Once a year or less
- ☐ 2-5 times a year

- ☐ 5-10 times a year
- ☐ More than 10 times a year

4. Are you familiar with Airbnb?

Airbnb is an online marketplace, which connects people who are willing to rent their homes with people looking for accommodation.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Do you have any experience on Airbnb? If yes, where have you used Airbnb?

If you have not used Airbnb, move to question 9.

- ☐ Yes, I have used Airbnb in

- ☐ No, I have not used Airbnb

6. Has your Airbnb experience been positive or negative? Why?

7. Will you continue using Airbnb in the future?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No, why?

8. Will you stay at hotels anymore?

After this question, move to question 12.

- ☐ Yes, why?

☐ No, why?

9. Why have you not used Airbnb?

10. Is it possible that you would try Airbnb sometime? Why/why not?

11. Do you know anyone who has used Airbnb?

☐ Yes ☐ No

12. What affects/could affect your decision to choose Airbnb over hotel?

13. Do other people's reviews and opinions affect your decision?

- ☐ Yes, a lot
- ☐ Yes, a bit
- ☐ No

14. Where have you heard about Airbnb for the first time?

15. Is there a place where you would definitely not use Airbnb? (E.g. a certain city in Finland/Latin America)

☐ Yes

☐ No

16. Is there something you expect to have in your Airbnb accommodation?

17. Do you consider Airbnb as a reliable and safe option for accommodation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No

18. Could you imagine renting only a bedroom and sharing the rest of the house with strangers?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ It would not be my first option

19. Could you consider becoming a host and renting out your home?

☐ Yes
☐ Maybe
☐ Definitely not, why?

20. Would you like to be able to book hotels and Airbnb from the same place?

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. Would you like to book Airbnb accommodation through travel agency?

☐ Yes ☐ No

22. In your opinion, will Airbnb replace hotels in the future?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire for professionals



The popularity of Airbnb

This survey is conducted as part of a Bachelor's thesis for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Answering the survey will only take around 5-10 minutes. All the answers will be kept anonymous.

Thank you for your participation!

Sonja Kosunen & Sofia Tuominen
DP in Tourism
Haaga-Helia UAS

1. Gender

☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ 65+

3. How often do you travel in a year?

- ☐ Once a year or less
- ☐ 2-5 times a year
- ☐ 5-10 times a year
- ☐ More than 10 times a year

4. Are you familiar with Airbnb?

Airbnb is an online marketplace, which connects people who are willing to rent their homes with people looking for accommodation.

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Do you have any experience on Airbnb? If yes, where have you used Airbnb?

If you have not used Airbnb, move to question 9.

☐ Yes, I have used Airbnb in

☐ No, I have not used Airbnb

6. Has your Airbnb experience been positive or negative? Why?

7. Will you continue using Airbnb in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ Maybe

☐ No, why?

8. Will you stay at hotels anymore?

After this question, move to question 12.

☐ Yes, why?

☐ No, why?

9. Why have you not used Airbnb?

10. Is it possible that you would try Airbnb sometime? Why/why not?

11. Do you know anyone who has used Airbnb?

☐ Yes ☐ No

12. What affects/could affect your decision to choose Airbnb over hotel?

13. Do other people's reviews and opinions affect your decision?

☐ Yes, a lot
☐ Yes, a bit
☐ No

14. Where have you heard about Airbnb for the first time?

15. Is there a place where you would definitely not use Airbnb? (E.g. a certain city in Finland/Latin America)

☐ Yes

☐ No

16. Is there something you expect to have in your Airbnb accommodation?

17. Do you consider Airbnb as a reliable and safe option for accommodation?

☐ Yes

☐ Somewhat

☐ No

18. Could you imagine renting only a bedroom and sharing the rest of the house with strangers?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ It would not be my first option

19. Could you consider becoming a host and renting out your home?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Definitely not, why?

20. Would you like to be able to book hotels and Airbnb from the same place?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

21. Would you like to book Airbnb accommodation through travel agency?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

22. Do you think Airbnb will affect the future of travel agencies?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

23. In your opinion, will Airbnb replace hotels in the future?

24. Are you familiar with sharing economy? In your opinion, what is the future of sharing economy?

25. What will be the relation of travel agents and Airbnb? How could travel agents take Airbnb as a business opportunity?

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26. If you travel because of your work, are you allowed to stay at an Airbnb accommodation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, why?

27. If you work in a hotel, have you noticed any changes in the amounts or types of guests?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No