

Chapter 11

Airbnb and Collaborative Housing: From Anti-Consumerism to a New Way to Democratize Vacation Consumption

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to identify the variables that influence the demand for a product or service considered as collaborative consumption, particularly, which are the factors that most affect the choice of a hosting or another in AirBnB. The chapter starts with an overview of collaborative consumption and how it is positioned in the sharing economy as a technological phenomenon. Then the authors present the role of digital platforms in this context, and finally, they present the theoretical model with the aim to identify what variables influence the demand of a product or service considered as collaborative. To validate the model, a logistic regression analysis was performed. The results obtained show how some of the predictors have a significant importance in consumer purchase. The chapter ends by presenting some conclusions of interest to those web users, who decide to use it as a platform to advertise their accommodations.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, the current situation is largely a result of two phenomena: on the one hand, the worldwide economic crisis situation since 2008 and, on the other hand, the technological progress that has allowed us to move from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0. The economic and social model that until now characterized the developed societies was now in crisis, stating the need to seek new models that allow the development and growth of the territory, sustainable at an economic, social and environmental level.

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Economic and social change has been accompanied by intense technological development, especially in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT's) when it goes from the called Web 2.0 –or social software at the end of 90's) to the Web 3.0 at the start of the present decade. Web 3.0 is characterized both by: (1) increasing storage capacity and speed of information processing by the existing software and (2) the development of the cloud with the consequent cost savings and improving access to the information that this entails. The scope of business has not remained untouched by this change, so that both the agents involved in the process of exchange and the process itself have been affected.

As for the consumer, in recent years we have seen a significant change in their behavior. Both the way they buy and consume, and more importantly, the attitude towards buying and consumption, and the type of benefits they seek (or needs to be met) through this process are modified (Scaraboto, 2015). There is a more demanding and informed consumer, who participates directly in the processes of value creation, and who has the capacity to influence the behavior and actions of other agents in the environment.

The evolution of ICT is largely responsible for this situation. In a saturated market, ICT provides us with a set of tools that allow: (a) easy and fast access to large amounts of information, (b) communicate, dialogue and collaborate with the company in different processes and, (c) creating, developing and disseminating content on the network (Houdek, 2016). All this, applied to the purchase and consumption process, allows the individual to easily have information about the company's products or services, to be in permanent contact with the organization and to collaborate in the creation of value and, finally, to express throughout the network -and social media- opinions and experiences that have the potential to influence other potential consumers.

Regarding the companies, these changes have favored a change both in the business philosophy and in the business models. Market orientation, learning and innovation puts the customer at the center of business strategy, making ICT - and in particular the internet - a key tool for achieving its strategic objectives. Thus, organizations find in ICT an environment of communication, dialogue and relationship between them and their clients, in which they can develop their businesses. In this context, it is easy to understand how the new social tendencies - more when they arise as a response or rejection to previous situations - achieve a strong impact and reach a fast and high diffusion at world-wide level. Thus, let us take as an example the social movements known under the name of the Arab Spring and observe how ICT played a key role in its diffusion.

We can find a phenomenon of equal importance in the economic and consumption field known as ***Sharing economy***, that can be interpreted as a form of people's economic behavior, that implies going beyond the proper individual interest considering human and social values. This type of behavior is easily observable in the family context, or among individuals whom there is some type of affective attachment, since it is usually considered an altruistic or goodwill act. However, as Belk (2007) points out, we can share with strangers, so this type of behavior can be generalized socially and economically. However, in this context, it is considered that the altruistic character that characterizes it is motivated by the convenience, or the expectation of reciprocity in the relation (request sharing).

According to Turban et al. (2015) and Hamari et al. (2016), sharing economy can be defined as an emerging economic-technological phenomenon, that is fueled by developments in ICT, growing consumer awareness, proliferation of collaborative web communities as well as social commerce/sharing. As a reflection of this, we observe how, from the point of view of the consumer, we can speak of the emergence of a new consumer profile: a responsible consumer, which, besides taking into account the price and quantity of the products, makes its purchase decision considering the social and labor characteristics of the production environment and the subsequent environmental consequences (Berne-Manero

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