

CHAPTER 12

A Stakeholders' Analysis of Airbnb in London and Barcelona

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Abstract

Airbnb not only has transformed the hospitality industry but also has created wider economic change in adjacent industries and in society in general. Because of this, many stakeholders are now trying to proactively shape the evolution of such platforms, as reflected by numerous actions by policymakers, industry representatives, media outlets and the public across the world. This chapter reports on a city-based case study (London and Barcelona) and examines the experiences and views of relevant stakeholders in the Airbnb sphere: hosts, guests, Airbnb public policy managers, rental apartment companies, council representatives and other local authorities. The barriers and opportunities for ethical practice were also identified and reported according to the views of these stakeholders. By using in-depth interviews and focus groups, this chapter gathers perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders on the perceived impact of Airbnb in two European cities that are major tourist destinations.

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Introduction

The sharing economy business models are driving, changing, and transforming traditional business practice (Binninger, Ourahmoune & Robert, 2015). They present several opportunities to reshape the role and nature of business and society in the digital age. The sharing economy is defined by Martos-Carrión and Miguel (2022) as a global socio-economic system based on the redistribution and management of underused goods, services (e.g., accommodation), and knowledge among peers via decentralized online platforms. As a digital disruptor, the sharing economy has changed the balance of the business-society relationship and plays a key role in guaranteeing the wellbeing or otherwise of the communities where such platforms operate. In particular, peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation implies a number of opportunities (e.g., empowerment of individuals to generate revenue with existing assets, the democratisation of tourism) and challenges (e.g., contribution to the gentrification of cities, regulatory issues) (Farmaki & Miguel, 2022). Optimistic and utopian narratives have been increasingly challenged by the discussion of problems such as a shortage of affordable long-term housing, tax avoidance and safety. Malhotra and Van Alstyne (2014) labelled these and similar issues the ‘*dark side of the sharing economy*’.

A number of studies evaluate actual impacts of Airbnb, such as gentrification and lower occupancy rates in hotels (e.g., Fang, Ye & Law, 2016; Zervas, Proserpio & Byers, 2017; Barron, Kung & Proserpio, 2018). However, real knowledge about *perceived impacts* of the Airbnb model in the community and the accommodation sector in Europe is limited (e.g., Jordan & Moore, 2018; Nieuwland & van Melik, 2020; Miguel et al., 2022b). This is an important issue to study since, as Nieuwland and van Melik (2020: 12) highlight, ‘the perceived impact is more important than the actual, absolute impact’. We agree with this statement, since beliefs of the perceived impact of sharing economy platforms among communities shape their attitudes more than actual facts. Our study aims to cover this gap and assesses the perceived impacts of Airbnb holistically by conducting a qualitative analysis of the phenomenon in London and Barcelona.

This chapter presents an ethnographic multiple case study that examines the perceived (positive and negative) impact of Airbnb in London and Barcelona. We chose Airbnb’s original business model (peer-to-peer accommodation marketplace) as the platform is often used as an example of the success and risks associated with the sharing economy. Although originally designed as a P2P accommodation service, in recent years the activity has been professionalised and extended to advertise traditional hospitality services (e.g., hostels, bed and breakfast or boutique hotels) (Načinović Braje et al., 2021; Miguel et al., 2022a).

Factors Underpinning the Growth of Airbnb as Part of the Sharing Economy and an Examination of Impact

The sharing economy is an idealised state characterised by the movement from ownership to renting, bartering or gifting (Gansky, 2010). One of the main arguments that sharing economy companies use to promote their sustainable ethos relates to the empowerment of individuals to generate revenue with existing assets. It can be argued that accessing and sharing Airbnb rental properties help deliver greater market efficiencies and innovations in service delivery. By enabling regular homeowners to lease unused space (e.g., a room or a whole house), and by providing a marketplace where consumers can easily reach this space, the company has disrupted the hospitality market and given rise to an informal tourism accommodation sector (Sans & Quagliari, 2016). Airbnb's business model also provides several competitive advantages over traditional hospitality alternatives. The first is cost, which is one of the most important factors that consumers take into account when deciding a place to stay (Chu & Choi, 2000). Airbnb hosts are able to provide competitive pricing due to having limited additional labour costs since the platform facilitates the booking and payment process (Guttentag, 2015).

There are also non-economic factors that favour informal tourism accommodation models like Airbnb. For example, some guests value having access to traditional amenities (e.g., full kitchen, washing machines) and having a local host who is able to provide valuable information even before the guest arrives at the location (Yglesias, 2012). Along with economic motives, studies showed the strong effect of other motivations including meeting new people (Lutz & Newlands 2018; Zhu et al., 2019), a range of 'practical' benefits such as having a kitchen or a washing machine (Belarmino et al., 2019; Tran & Filimonau, 2020), and the desire to get authentic and/or so-called 'local' experience (Bucher et al., 2018; Sung, Kim & Lee, 2018). On the other hand, Pasquale (2016) posits that the neoliberal narrative of platform competition lionizes currently dominant sharing economy firms, such as Uber and Airbnb, which takes them far away from the initial sustainable ethos of the sharing economy. For instance, a negative impact of platforms like Airbnb on the hospitality industry is starting to emerge. The hotel industry claims that Airbnb has damaged their business. The study conducted by Dogru, Mody and Suess (2019) shows that hotel room revenue is negatively impacted by Airbnb.

The impact of the adoption of the Airbnb model has also had a wider effect in society. Local neighbourhoods have been transformed by the spending of increasing numbers of visitors (Sans & Quagliari, 2016). Visitors who choose Airbnb accommodation benefit from lower prices and can spend more money in the tourism sector (Fang et al., 2016). The study conducted by Garau-Vadell, Gutiérrez-Taño and Díaz-Armas (2019) shows residents' support for Airbnb as

they perceive that the presence of short-term rentals in their neighbourhoods offers positive social and cultural impacts, and especially positive economic impacts. However, on the downside, local people seeking accommodation in their own neighbourhoods encounter increasing difficulties and this impacts on delivery of local services such as schools, leisure and healthcare. There is some evidence that this is already occurring in some of the markets where platforms like Airbnb have been widely adopted (Wachsmuth & Weisler, 2018; Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020). Local residents who are unable to gain property in their own neighbourhoods are likely to look further afield, and this can make it more difficult and more expensive for them to access the cultural and historic assets that were once nearby. Furthermore, by removing property from the long-term rental market, Airbnb contributes to rents increasing as supply and demand diverge.

Methodology

Research Design

The case study (based in the cities of London and Barcelona) seeks to compare and analyse different stakeholders' perspectives on the workings, impact and regulation of Airbnb in these two popular touristic cities. We used qualitative methods (interviews and focus groups) to identify the different ways that diverse stakeholders perceive and understand Airbnb and its impact on the economy and society. All the researchers are or have been Airbnb hosts, guests or both. These insights were particularly useful in the first stages of the project in order to contextualize the phenomenon and design the interviews and focus group questions. A total of four focus groups were run (a focus group with guests and another focus group with hosts in each city) plus two pilot focus groups: one with hosts and one with guests. Ten interviews (six in Barcelona and four in London) were conducted with relevant stakeholders (people from the industry and policy makers) to provide richer qualitative insights. The fieldwork took place in Barcelona between January and May 2018 and in London between July 2018 and May 2019. The next section covers the process of sampling in more depth. Later the process of conducting both focus groups and interviews is analysed.

Sampling

The participants in the focus groups and the interviews were selected based on purposeful sampling, a sampling technique where participants are selected based on pre-selected criteria that take into consideration the qualities of the participants (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Purposeful sampling allows

the researchers to choose information-rich participants who can and are willing to provide the information needed by virtue of knowledge or experience (Patton, 2005). Because our research aimed to compare the views of different stakeholders in two locations, using this type of sampling allowed us to choose stakeholders in each location, but also to try to choose participants from equivalent organizations in London and Barcelona.

The selection criteria to identify participants for the focus groups were twofold. First for the focus group with guests, the selection criterion was any individual resident in either Barcelona or London who had used the Airbnb platform to book accommodation at least once. Second, for the focus groups with hosts, the selection criterion was individuals who had used the Airbnb platform to rent either a room or an entire property in Barcelona or London. To recruit participants, we relied on several online social media platforms. Although we were aiming to attract different types of hosts that rented either their whole property or only a room, we were not successful in attracting hosts that rented their whole property. All the participants, both in Barcelona and London, rented rooms in their properties, with the exception of one participant in London who only hosted when he was on holiday since his apartment had only one bedroom. Another type of host that we were not able to recruit was participants managing different properties on Airbnb as a business. Therefore, the more professional activity of using the Airbnb platform – the majority of the listings in many cities in Europe (Gyódi, 2019) – is not documented in this study, and this constitutes a limitation.

Another challenge when recruiting participants in two national settings was to identify the relevant stakeholders to interview. We aimed to interview participants in organisations where Airbnb had an impact (i.e., hotel association representatives to represent the hotel sector, short-term accommodation associations to represent the short-term rental sector). We were also interested in interviewing those in charge of policy (e.g., city councils' housing/environment representatives to investigate the position of the local government, competition and markets authority representatives, etc.). However, equivalent organisations were not always present in both settings, and some research was needed in order to understand the type of organisations that would be similar in both places.

At the end of our project, the interviewees included six types of participants:

1. Airbnb's heads of public policy and campaign managers (Spain & Portugal and UK & Ireland).
2. City councils' representatives: Director of the Inspection Services (Urban Ecology Management – Barcelona City Council) and Housing Policy Officer from the Greater London Authority. Interestingly, in the interview with the city council representative in Barcelona, the person responsible for monitoring short-term accommodation platforms was also present and answered some of the questions.

3. Professional bodies that represent the whole sharing economy market: Sharing Spain and Sharing UK's managers.
4. Short-term rentals associations: Director of APARTUR (touristic apartments association in Spain), Chair of STAA (Short Term Accommodation Association in the UK).
5. Competition legislator: Director of the Catalan Competition Authority. In addition, a Freedom of Information Act request was sent to the Competition and Markets Authority in the UK (which briefly replied to the questions via email) since it was not possible to schedule an interview.
6. Hotel associations: Innovation and Ecommerce Manager from a Catalan hotel association, and a public policy manager of a hospitality association in the UK. This last interview could not be used since the interviewee did not want to sign the consent form. It seems they were concerned about how the answers they gave could be too positive for the position they were supposed to hold within their organisation.

Reaching some of the interviewees was challenging. We contacted most of them through professional social networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn) and then continued the conversation through email. Building a relationship with the participants after the first contact was important. Sometimes, the person in the organisation we wanted to interview changed (e.g. Airbnb's public policy manager in Spain) and we had to start over with the new contact. Interviews with Airbnb Spain and Barcelona City Council took four to five months to be scheduled. Follow-up phone calls and emails were used to arrange all the interviews. Our learning from this process was that as more participants agreed to take part in the study, a snowball effect facilitated the process of further recruitment. Once participants heard that other organisations were already taking part, it became evident that they also wanted to have a say in the discussion. In the initial contacts, mentioning that researchers were participating in the COST Action 'From Sharing to Caring: Examining Socio-Technical Aspects of the Collaborative Economy', an EU-funded research network the authors participate in, proved helpful.

Data collection techniques

Focus groups

Focus groups usually include six to 10 participants with common characteristics relating to a discussion topic (Curran, Lochrie & O'Gorman, 2014). A focus group is a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions of a defined interest area and it addresses research questions that require depth of understanding (Goss & Leinbach, 1996). We chose focus groups because they are a helpful instrument: they offer distinctive information as authentic interactions are

introduced and the researcher is able to appreciate the participants' opinions, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions (Mann & Stewart, 2000). We scheduled a focus group with guests in London that no participant attended; also we had a focus group with hosts in Barcelona with only three participants. Therefore, we decided to use the first non-successful focus group with hosts as a pilot and run another pilot with guests. The pilot focus groups were used to adapt the questions and introduce explanations to clarify some concepts. We ran four focus groups: two with hosts and two with guests, one of each type in both Barcelona and London. The focus groups included between five and 10 participants and they lasted between one hour and more than two hours. Focus groups are guided by a facilitator (Goss & Leinbach, 1996). In this case, the authors of this chapter acted as facilitators and, in particular, we were both present in the focus group with hosts in London. This helped to create consistency in the way of running the focus groups. In both cities there was a rich discussion in the focus groups.

Interviews

Elite in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 stakeholders in Barcelona (six) and London (four) ('elite' indicates that those members hold a significant amount of power within a group (Harvey, 2011). Because of the role and power that elite members hold in society or in an organization, interviewing them poses several methodological challenges for social researchers in terms of access, expectations during the interviews, and the design of the data collection method (Ostrander, 1993). In order to address these challenges, we used several of the strategies recommended by Harvey (2011), which include building strong relationships with elite members over time, being transparent, and adapting the interview style to the style of the elite member. For us it was very important to interview elite members due to the nature of this research, which aims to identify the perspective and perceived impact of Airbnb.

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. Half of the interviews were conducted face to face and the other half through Skype. Interviewees received information sheets and consent forms before interviews. Some participants asked questions in relation to anonymity and it was explained to them that, except for when specified otherwise, the information would be anonymized and no real names or any information that could lead to identifying them would be disclosed in follow-up publications. Despite this, we encountered some resistance from some elite interviewees to taking part in this research. For example, the representative from one hospitality association decided to withdraw from the study after answering several questions. This illustrates the degree of sensitivity that sharing economy platforms like Airbnb have in certain industry circles.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered through focus groups and interviews. Thematic analysis is a method that aims to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). We followed Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases approach for thematic analysis. First, we familiarised ourselves with the data, and this was particularly important since data collection and data transcription were not always conducted by the same researcher. The second step involved coding the entire data set. Then codes were combined into broader patterns where the themes started to emerge. We used Nvivo for the coding and analysis processes. Two people (one of the researchers and a research assistant) looked at two different focus groups' dataset (the pilot with guests and one focus group with hosts) and coded them in order to ensure more consistency. Having two researchers involved in the coding also helped with consistency and to refine the themes. Finally, the information collected from focus groups and elite interviews was combined and compared. The primary purpose of using triangulation in qualitative research is to reduce biases and increase the consistency and reliability of the analysis (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). This triangulation refers to 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (Denzin, 1978: 294).

Stakeholder Perspectives

This section provides an analysis of the stakeholders identified in our data. Stakeholder analysis is a common analysis method used by policy makers, regulators, governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses and the media (Friedman & Miles, 2006). Stakeholder analysis (1) allows us to define aspects of a social and natural phenomenon affected by a decision or action; (2) allows us to identify individuals, groups and organizations who are affected by or can affect those parts of the phenomenon; and (3) helps prioritize these individuals and groups for involvement in the decision-making process (Reed et al., 2009).

Guests

The guests expressed that some of the advantages of P2P accommodations are that they augment their experience when visiting a new place, this mainly being driven by the recommendations that they receive from their host in a direct manner or by the information provided by hosts in the locations being let. For instance, Participant 3 (a guest from Barcelona) expressed how their host went out of their way to provide additional recommendations of places to visit, and the host was perceived as almost taking on the role of a tourist guide:

She (the host) was always very considerate. She wrote a list with recommended things ... Places to visit ... I do not know, like if she was a tourist guide. She was very helpful (P3, Focus Group (FG) Guests, Barcelona).

Furthermore, a positive impact also relates to the feeling of authenticity that guests have when living 'like a local' (Lalicic and Weismayer, 2017). It is common for P2P accommodation to be located in areas where other locals live, and not necessarily in the central areas where hotel facilities are usually found (Benner, 2016). This was also expressed by Participant 1 from the focus groups in London, placing additional value on the fact that living in a room in a P2P accommodation would enable them to have that local feeling.

Another aspect that was considered a positive outcome of P2P accommodation is price. There is the sense that this type of accommodation can be considerably more affordable than more traditional hospitality options. For example:

So last time we were in an Airbnb we were almost 10 friends. Yeah, we as a group booked a house in Marrakech near the old town. The house had a swimming pool and it was very cheap, you can't find that price in a hotel (P1, FG Guests, London).

In addition to price, there was perceived added value from using P2P accommodation platforms in terms of privacy and calmness:

This is a little bit more private, at least to me. From my point of view, if both would have the same price and I would have to choose I would take Airbnb. Because of that, because I do not want to be with 20,000 tourists from I do not know where ... very noisy ... and the huge swimming pool and everything ... all the atmosphere that you find in these mega hotels (P1, FG Guests, Barcelona).

For some guests, staying in a house brings additional benefits, such as having the facilities that one would normally expect in one's own home. Airbnb guests valued the fact that a P2P accommodation would enable them to cook their own food or use the washing machine and utilities.

Despite the advantages mentioned by the guests, there were aspects of P2P accommodations that were perceived more negatively. The first related to information asymmetry, which happens when one party in a relationship has more or better information than the other party (Bergh et al., 2019). In this case several guests perceived the existence of information asymmetry as it was not possible to assess from the outset how much a room would cost:

To get the final price in the first step, because it shows the price per night but then you see that it is 100€ per night for two persons, and then you

realize that for 4 nights it is 500€ because of the fee, plus cleaning fee, and so ... (P4, FG Guests, Barcelona).

Another perceived drawback from P2P accommodation was the perception that it leads to gentrification. Gentrification happens when a lower-income population is replaced by one of a higher status (Jover & Diaz-Parra, 2020). There is a perception that as the number of P2P accommodations increases, it is displacing people from lower income brackets from certain areas:

Like in the suburbs, for sure. The city centres are already, I guess, expensive enough in London and West London. Since people are going to be looking at like Airbnbs further out from the city centre because they think it's cheaper, then more will spring up, and then it can make the rents higher everywhere (P4, FG Guests, London).

Nevertheless, guests showed double standards since they consider that hosts contribute to gentrification in their own city but they do not consider that they contribute to the gentrification of the cities they visit when using Airbnb.

There was also the perception that safety standards in P2P accommodation were not the same as in a hotel. The fact that hotels tend to have several security mechanisms (e.g. 24/7 security, electronic keys) led to the impression that the security mechanisms in P2P accommodation were below those standards:

The point is that it is not a hotel, you assume that risk. If you take an Airbnb instead of a hotel is because it is cheaper, then the security is not going to be the same (P2, FG Guests, Barcelona).

Hosts

It was notable that the level of support that the platforms provide to their hosts was highlighted by several of them as a positive. The level of support has also been linked to the creation of a trusting relationship between the hosts and the platforms:

When we have had a problem, we have called Airbnb and they have done well so we could solve the problem (P3, FG Hosts, Barcelona).

The support you get from the platform side is great and that gives you a lot of trust (P1, FG Hosts, Barcelona).

Hosts perceived the platform to be trustworthy, and this trustworthiness appears to be related to the brand recognition of the platforms used. Trust between the host and the guest, but also on the platform (institutional trust) are

important elements that have been found in the literature to drive usage of P2P accommodation platforms among guests (Reinhold & Dolnicar, 2017) and hosts (Park & Tussyadiah, 2020). One host from London was confident that the trust mechanisms set on the platform (e.g. ID verification, insurance) were sufficient for them to offer to host strangers. However, there was some scepticism in relation to the legal aspects of the reparation if something went wrong in terms of the host guarantee.

There is also the perception that P2P accommodation platforms offer a great level of flexibility to hosts. Some evidence has found that hosts perceived less flexibility about how the property is marketed (Farmaki, Christou & Saveriades, 2020). However, hosts perceived a high level of flexibility when deciding when the property is made available:

You control the calendar you know you can you make the availability as it suits you so therefore you're going on holiday you shut that calendar for that time. Weekends, whatever you know if you want to do something you can close the calendar (P2, FG Hosts, London).

In terms of disadvantages, similarly to the case of guests, gentrification appeared to be a concern among hosts. There was a perception among hosts that foreign investors with greater purchasing power were driving the prices up:

When rental prices go up because people are investing, let's think where the money comes from, it is from local people? Or is it from any other country? A foreigner who comes with money and pay for this. We need to ask ourselves about it, what is the origin of the fact that prices increase? People that come with a lot of money, they buy many flats in order to invest. They are free to do it but it is not our fault (P6, FG Hosts, Barcelona).

There is also the perception that P2P platforms like Airbnb have driven smaller hotels out of business, leading to price increases in chain hotels. This perception of unfair competition has been found not only in the hospitality sector but also in restaurants, transport and appliances (Frenken and Schor, 2019). In our study, a clear manifestation of this perceived unfairness is described by Participant 1:

The big counter argument against Airbnb is that they're a new competitor that decreases revenues for hotels, traditional hospitality industry, so to speak. And that might be one of the reasons why they become even more expensive because the small hotels, they can't exist anymore, because of Airbnb, I don't know the exact figures how big is Airbnb but it's huge, it's global (P1, FG Hosts, London).

Furthermore, among hosts there was awareness of some levels of unfairness between hotels and people offering rooms or property through P2P accommodation platforms, namely, the regulations in terms of licensing and other guidelines. This view was particularly strong for hosts in London.

There were also safety concerns among hosts regarding the security mechanisms that Airbnb has set in its platform:

They're supposed to take identities from the guest sometimes they only give a phone number and email which I think is wrong ... we've done it as a host but we find that some guests who haven't used it before no photograph and they've been given a phone number which could be anything and an email address neither of which is secure (P3, FG Hosts, London).

The STAA chair claimed that she did not consider it necessary to create a policy to enforce the registration of guests. In her opinion, it is a commercial choice of the host whether to request passport details: 'Every homeowner makes those choices when they choose who they want to work with, and how they want to work' (STAA Chair, UK). She referred to working with intermediaries, like UnderTheDoorMat, where passport verification is mandatory, or including ID verification as a prerequisite before booking the property via Airbnb, an option that already exists.

Policy makers

One of the advantages that policy makers expressed was how sharing economy platforms like Airbnb helped redistribute the economic benefits of tourism, even in cases where the owners of these properties were companies rather than individuals:

We see those two benefits; the empowerment of the peers and the redistribution of the wealth in local commerce that normally do not get tourist clients, small shops or supermarkets ... so tourists go to zones which a priori are not touristic, so it allows other zones to get some benefit from tourism (Sharing Spain, Chair).

Another benefit that policy makers identified in the context of London related to how platforms like Airbnb provided the city with more flexible options to accommodate a transient workforce.

There are people who want to come and stay in London again on an internship or for a project or whatever and they can't sign a six month lease or a 12 month lease which is a standard so Airbnb allows people to

find housing accommodation for short periods which didn't exist before and that's amazing so from a housing point of view, Airbnb actually helps to solve some housing challenges and that's great (STAA chair, UK).

In terms of health and safety, both STAA and Sharing Economy UK (SEUK) pointed out that P2P accommodation activity is helping to raise the health and safety standards of residences since intermediaries and platforms inform the hosts about good practices:

A platform like Airbnb actually does a lot of proactive steps to help things and mitigating health and safety risks for example they have partnerships with the Fire Chief Council and they produce a lot of guidance for the hosts (SEUK Chair, UK).

The theme of a distortion in competition for the hospitality industry also emerged among policy makers. The hospitality industry often makes claims about the unfair playing field, especially in terms of health and safety, since hotels must comply with strict measures (Frenken and Schor, 2019). Likewise, the Innovation and Ecommerce Manager from a Catalan Hotel Association complained about this issue:

If I want to open a hotel I have to wait two years ... emergency stairs ... everything protected from fire ... that absolutely means unfair competition.

SEUK and STAA agreed that the regulation should be proportionate to the type of accommodation, as is already the case for the regulation of different types of accommodation in the traditional hospitality industry (e.g., B&B is different to hotels). For example:

You cannot expect a home where someone lives in all year around to have the same standards as a hotel, where there are hundreds of guests staying in the same location at the same time, because it doesn't make sense. And the same way that a B&B doesn't have the same standards as a hotel (STAA Chair, UK).

Furthermore, there were some issues related to illegal premises being advertised on these platforms, which can raise some safety concerns for users. For instance, the Director of the Inspection Services at Urban Ecology Management, Barcelona City Council mentioned that illegal apartments are an issue in terms of public safety because terrorists and thieves may use them for accommodation.

In terms of regulatory issues, taxation emerged as one of the key aspects that raises important challenges for policy makers, in particular in relation to possible loopholes that may exist and that both platform and hosts take advantage

of (Guttentag, 2015). Industry reports highlight that the loss in tax revenue could be an estimated €800 million annually in Spain (Salces, 2016). This has several implications for how the matter of taxation is perceived by different stakeholders. The hospitality industry considers this aspect a crucial regulatory challenge. There are also challenges in relation to enforcing the law. For instance, in order to comply with the requirements of the 2015 Deregulation Act, Airbnb agreed to cap the listings once they arrived at 90 nights of occupation (Airbnb, 2019a). Nevertheless, hosts still can advertise their properties on other paid P2P accommodation platforms such as Booking.com or Homeaway. The Mayor's office (London Mayor, 2019) called for a 'registration system to enforce short term letting law'.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes by reflecting on some of the main challenges when conducting ethnographic studies with multiple stakeholders that include participants that are difficult to reach (e.g., certain types of hosts, and elite participants) in an international context where different languages and institutions exist. Finding participants for the focus group was one challenge that we faced when doing this study, because we aimed to gather very specific types of participants based on their involvement with the platform. To overcome this challenge, rewards had to be introduced to foster participation. Another challenge was interviewing high-profile elite participants in key Government positions, industry associations and platforms. Building relationships with those stakeholders was central to enabling the interviews to happen, and even then, the time scales to organise them were more difficult than with other types of interviews. In addition, identifying the different bodies that were affected by Airbnb in the two settings required some familiarisation with the local environment before an approach could be made.

The tension between stakeholders around the sharing economy in the hospitality sector continues to be driven by the impact that different stakeholders have. Our study has found that guests, hosts and policy makers acknowledge economic and social benefits of the growth of these platforms in both London and Barcelona. Nevertheless, concerns around safety, unfair competition and regulatory challenges continue to be in the minds of these stakeholders. Our study identified those positives and negatives in the context of two European cities that are highly affected by this phenomenon, but have taken different regulatory approaches when managing the continuous growth of these platforms. Including multiple stakeholders' perspectives also illustrated the complexity that users of these platforms (e.g., guest and hosts) and those looking to regulate them need to consider when looking to make improvement to the impacts that they are having in the contexts where they operate.

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