

## **Consumer's Behavior in Sharing Economy in Tourism: a study on CouchSurfing and Airbnb<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This article aims to understand the motivations of people to adopt sharing practices and collaborative consumption in tourism, specifically in two platforms with different proposals – Airbnb and CouchSurfing. To achieve this objective, a qualitative study was carried out, using in-depth interviews with 20 consumers of Airbnb and CouchSurfing, and content analysis. The results indicated that cost savings, expectation of building social bonds, expectation of shared cultural experiences, trust, reviews, utility, and search for learning and knowledge were positive motivational factors for using the platforms of shared hosting economy. The fear of suffering some kind of violence or harassment, the fear of being inconvenient with the host and the fear of lack of privacy emerged from the interviews as restrictive factors to the consumption. Such aspects had not yet been explored in the literature.

**Keywords:** Sharing economy; Sharing; Collaborative consumption; Motivations of consumption; Tourism.

### **Resumo**

#### **Comportamento do consumidor na economia compartilhada no turismo: um estudo sobre o CouchSurfing e o Airbnb**

Este artigo tem o objetivo de entender as motivações das pessoas para adotarem práticas de compartilhamento e consumo colaborativo no âmbito do turismo, especificamente em duas plataformas com propostas distintas – o Airbnb e o CouchSurfing. Para isso, foi realizado um estudo qualitativo, empregando entrevistas em profundidade com vinte consumidores do Airbnb e do CouchSurfing, e uma análise de conteúdo. Os resultados apontaram que a economia de custos, a expectativa de construção de vínculos sociais, a expectativa de experiências culturais compartilhadas, a confiança, os *reviews*, a utilidade e a busca por aprendizado e conhecimento foram fatores motivadores positivos para o uso das plataformas de economia compartilhada de hospedagem. O medo de sofrer algum tipo de violência ou assédio, o receio de ser inconveniente com o anfitrião e o receio de falta de privacidade emergiram das entrevistas como fatores restritivos ao consumo, sendo que tais aspectos ainda não haviam sido explorados pela literatura.

**Palavras-chave:** Economia compartilhada; Compartilhamento; Consumo colaborativo; Motivações de consumo; Turismo.

1. This article resulted from the doctoral thesis by Luciana Alves Rodas Vera, under the mentoring of Marlusa de Sevilha Gosling.

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## Resumen

### Comportamiento del consumidor en la economía compartida en el turismo: un estudio sobre el CouchSurfing y el AirBnb

El objetivo de este artículo es entender las motivaciones de las personas para adoptar prácticas de intercambio y consumo colaborativo en el ámbito del turismo, específicamente en dos plataformas con propuestas distintas –el AirBnb y el CouchSurfing–. Para alcanzar este objetivo, se realizó un estudio cualitativo, empleando entrevistas en profundidad a veinte consumidores de AirBnb y CouchSurfing, y un análisis de contenido. Los resultados apuntaron que la economía de costos, la expectativa de construcción de vínculos sociales, la expectativa de experiencias culturales compartidas, la confianza, los comentarios, la utilidad y la búsqueda del aprendizaje y conocimiento fueron los factores motivadores positivos para el uso de las plataformas de economía compartida de alojamiento. El temor a sufrir algún tipo de violencia o acoso, el temor a ser inconveniente con el anfitrión y el temor a la falta de privacidad surgieron de las entrevistas como los factores restrictivos al consumo, siendo que tales aspectos aún no habían sido analizados por la literatura.

**Palabras clave:** Economía compartida; Compartir; Consumo colaborativo; Motivaciones de consumo; Turismo.

## INTRODUCTION

Theoretical discussions about practices described as sharing practices and collaborative consumption have grown due to the increase in the number of profitable and non-profitable organizations that have emerged thanks to the so-called sharing economy (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2010; Belk, 2014a; Botsman & Rogers, 2011). Belk (2010) defines sharing as the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use. For the author, collaborative consumption refers to the coordinated events among consumers for the acquisition and distribution of a resource from a fee or other form of remuneration, such as barter, trade and exchanges involving non-monetary compensation (Belk, 2014a). The difference between the two concepts would rely on the fact that collaborative consumption involves fees or other forms of remuneration whereas the sharing does not involve fee. These two consumer's behaviors are inserted within the sharing economy context (Rifkin, 2016).

Although the sharing economy has been more established in countries of the European continent and in the United States after the economic crisis of 2008, and being in the initial process in Brazil, there is a positive scenario for the development of collective practices in the country (Maurer, Figueiró, Campos, Silva, & Barcellos, 2015; Scheffler, Verschoore, & Silva, 2014). However, according to Rohden, Durayski, Teixeira, Montelongo Flores and Rossi (2015), there are few studies that analyze the collaborative consumption and its developments in the Brazilian context.

The field of tourism has also been inserted in these new collaborative consumption and sharing practices by organizations focused on hosting such as CouchSurfing and AirBnb. CouchSurfing corresponds to a free worldwide website that puts travelers in contact with local people in more than 235 countries and territories and is currently one of the most visited "hospitality services" on the

Internet (Botsman & Rogers, 2011). This website enables its members to create an online profile and offer free stays in their homes to other people (registered on the site) around the whole world or to be hosted by another user (Belk, 2014b). CouchSurfing would be an empirical example of the concept of sharing.

On the other hand, although Airbnb offers a service similar to that of Couchsurfing and operates through online profiles, there are some differences between them, such as the fact that it is necessary to pay for the stay on Airbnb, despite being often cheaper than a hotel, and in some cases the host shares the same living space with the guest. Since its foundation in 2008, Airbnb has experienced rapid growth, with more than 30 million guests who have used their services until the end of 2014 (Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2015). For Belk (2014b), charging for the utilization rate on Airbnb can make the hosts look more like hotel owners and therefore, does not contribute to a sense of community, which is something stronger in CouchSurfing. Airbnb would represent an empirical concept of collaborative consumption.

The research question that guided the work was: "What are the consumers' motivations to engage in sharing practices and collaborative consumption?". Therefore, the main objective was to understand the motivations of people to adopt sharing practices and collaborative consumption in the field of tourism, specifically in CouchSurfing and Airbnb. For this, a qualitative study was conducted, employing in-depth interviews with people (guests) who adopt these consumption practices in tourism through the Airbnb and CouchSurfing platforms in Brazil, and content analysis. This study did not cover the hosts' perspective.

Researching the motivations of tourists who stay in houses of previously unknown people by sharing economy platforms is relevant because it is a current phenomenon that has affected the traditional hotel sector, as well as the real estate sector. In some cities, such as Berlin and Lisbon, people – mainly university students – have faced difficulties in finding housing for rent because the best apartments are being rented by day or by season in Airbnb for tourist accommodation, which consequently increased the price (Andrade, 2017). Studying motivations in tourism is important because, according to Fodness (1994), motivation is one of the many variables that can contribute to explain tourists' behavior and consumption decisions. For the author, the motivation is a critical variable since it is the driving force behind all behavior.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

### **Sharing economy in tourism**

The new technologies have significantly changed the field of tourism and, consequently, the tourist experiences (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2014). Tourism has spent many decades holding hands with technology and has embraced the inherent potential of its latest developments (Buhalis & Law, 2008). However, the main change is that technology has not only become an integral part of tourism, but has also revolutionized the way that the trip is planned (Buhalis, 2003), the business is conducted (Buhalis & Licata, 2002) and the services and tourism experiences are consumed (Neuhofer et al., 2014).

Tourism is one of the most impacted areas by platforms and applications of sharing economy due to the fact that residents share houses, cars, tours and food with tourists (Heo, 2016). The tourist services, which were traditionally offered only by business such as hotels, taxis or tour operators, have been expanded and also provided by individuals who propose themselves to temporarily share what they have – such as houses or cars – or what they do, for example, food or excursions. The sharing economy contributes to the rupture of traditional forms of transaction services, especially in the case of the mediums of hosting (Pinotti & Moretti, 2018). Thus, alternative tourism practices have been formed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by new social networking technologies, such as the CouchSurfing (Molz, 2013).

Molz (2013) states that alternative tourism refers to a growing desire among tourists to have more authentic and individualized experiences with the people and places they visit. This desire to connect in deeper ways with local people and places reflects a dissatisfaction among primarily middle-class tourists who are tired of “plasticized” experiences and the consecutive reproduction of culture. Forno and Garibaldi (2015) have a similar perspective and believe that the new trends of sharing practices and collaborative consumption in tourism differ from traditional travel options, since they enable a high level of customization in the tourist experience. For example, people who participate in CouchSurfing have the opportunity to learn more about the local culture by directly experiencing a resident’s daily life, something that would be difficult to achieve in a more traditional tourism model. For the authors, the forms of peer-to-peer tourism are based on the principles of reciprocity and mutual collaboration.

On the other hand, Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016) call attention to an important implication of the sharing economy in tourism: the consumers of these services can be exposed to risks that are beyond the monetary issue. The authors exemplify such risks by citing the case of a consumer who was attacked by the dog of the owner in an Airbnb house during his stay in Argentina, and who needed to spend two nights in a hospital for recovery (Lieber, 2015a). In addition, Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016) cite the example of a 19-year-old girl who suffered sexual abuse from an Airbnb host during her stay in Madrid (Lieber, 2015b). Such examples indicate the possible negative side of the sharing economy in tourism.

For Pinotti and Moretti (2018), companies in the sharing economy that exploit the private property leasing sector, such as Airbnb, were able to innovate and generate value in a sector that was then dominated by hotel groups and countless independent hotels worldwide. In their study on the subject, the authors concluded that the platforms of alternative lodging present increasing rates of consumers willing to repeat the experiences in this modality.

According to Lima (2010), collaborative initiatives in tourism are essentially dynamic and cyclical in their processes and demand constant renewal of communication channels and proposals taken. Thus, the continuity of this kind of initiatives will depend on the willingness of actors involved, conditions for this to occur, and prerogatives of individual and collective gains (Lima, 2010). Therefore, it is important to study this emerging phenomenon of the sharing economy and its impact on the tourism area.

## Sharing, collaborative consumption and consumption motivations indicated by the literature

Sharing is conceived by Price (1975) as an allocation of economic goods and services without calculating returns, within an intimate social group, and modeled by the general role of this group's structure. In a complementary way, Belk (2007) suggests that sharing involves the act and the distribution process of what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use. Price's (1975) definition, as well as Belk's (2007), concentrates on the set as something opposite to the individual property, but the anthropologist does this under the resource allocation heading. In both definitions, the sharing activity tries to distribute resources so that all individuals within the dyad or small group are benefited and the individual or joint entity retains the ownership. Krush, Pennington, Fowler and Mittelstaedt (2015) describe sharing as a non-monetary transfer of goods between actors.

Collaborative consumption is defined by Botsman and Rogers (2011) as a concept that includes traditional sharing, barter, loan, negotiation, lease, donation and exchange, reconfigured by technology and communities between peers. Belk (2014a), criticizes the concept of collaborative consumption brought by the aforementioned authors because he believes that this vision is greatly broad and mixes market exchanges, acts of gifting and sharing. The author brings a definition of collaborative consumption, which differs slightly from that of Botsman and Rogers (2011). This adopts the definition of Belk (2014a), who differs sharing practice from collaborative consumption.

According to Belk (2014a), collaborative consumption takes place in coordinated events between consumers for the acquisition and distribution of a resource from a fee or other form of remuneration such as barter, trade and exchanges involving non-monetary compensation. The difference between sharing and collaborative consumption lies on the fact that collaborative consumption involves a fee or another form of remuneration and the sharing does not involve such fee.

As this is a recent phenomenon that is beginning to be explored by the Academy, there is no consolidated literature on the consumers' motivations to use such platforms. However, there are debates and initial exploratory studies discussing such aspects. Thus, these studies show that the cost savings was indicated by some authors as a motivational factor for people opting for the sharing economy. Belk and Sobh (2007) point out that sharing enables people to consume a larger and more varied set of things than they could afford and that, because of this, cost savings can correspond to a motivation. The authors call attention to the possible fact that there might be a risk of loss or damage depending on how the share is done, but they expose that, if all parties act according to the rules, it is possible that everyone will win. Following this logic, cost savings would be a motivation that would overcome, for example, fear of loss or damage. Lamberton and Rose (2012), suggest that collaborative consumption systems, such as car sharing platforms (e.g. Zipcar), can be preferred because they enable access to the desired product/service at a low cost. Cost savings would be a consistent factor with rational models, in which consumers seek products that offer the greatest amount of benefits at the lowest possible cost.



Belk (2014a) states that another motivation can have a more functional and utilitarian character, such as survival. In Lamberton's perspective (2016), collaboration can enable individuals to maximize their personal usefulness compared to exclusive property. In a common set of resources, individuals divide their "assets" between themselves and a shared public account, of which they and other individuals can benefit from. Lamberton and Rose (2012) state that the concept of utility has four dimensions: "Transaction utility", "sources of utility related to flexibility", "social utility" and "moral utility". The "transaction utility" corresponds to the value of the perceived deal in a sharing system, similar to the transaction utility made available by the property owner. "Source of utility related to flexibility" refers to the absence of limitations on the use of products within a sharing system. The "social utility" refers to the gains that participants may have from sharing in the form of approval by reference groups. "Moral utility" is related to consumers' interest in sustainable or pro-social behavior, recognized as a way to protect the environment or reduce waste.

Another possible motivation signaled by the literature would be the expectation of building social bonds, which corresponds to the expectation of connection with other people and the creation of a solidarity sense and bonds with people from different worldviews. It includes expectation of gains in relational wealth, community construction and affection among individuals (Belk & Sobh, 2007; Belk, 2010). Following the logic of Swarbrooke and Horner (2002), this concept corresponds to a motivating factor of personal nature, since the authors indicate that making new friends is a motivational factor in the consumer's behavior of the tourist.

For Heo (2016), the quality of social interaction and the relationship with the host can be important factors for the perceived value and the satisfaction of tourists who use the sharing economy platforms. In addition to Heo (2016), Bialski and Batorski (2007) show in their study that the intense trading activities of Couchsurfing help to transform online relationships into offline. Forno and Garibaldi (2015) emphasize that the relational aspect is more central in this type of platform, since it is an option based on a peer-to-peer arrangement between private owners, which does not involve monetary exchanges. Therefore, all these aspects indicate that people seeking lodging on such platforms can have expectations of building social bonds, friendships and relationships.

Heo (2016) points out that the desire to connect with the local community can be a contributing factor to the popularity of the sharing economy in tourism. In addition, Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015) state that participating in these platforms enables people to create and maintain social connections, have direct interactions with the hosts and enables connection with the local communities and a unique local experience. Thus, the expectation of shared cultural experiences can be a factor that has a positive relationship with the propensity to use sharing economy platforms. The expectation of shared cultural experiences corresponds to the desire to connect with the local community and to have unique and authentic experiences. Following Swarbrooke and Horner's (2002) line of reasoning, this would represent a cultural factor of the tourist's motivation, since the authors state that the life experience of other cultures and visits to places of interest are motivating factors of cultural nature.

Sharing economy platforms operate from the idea of relationship between peers who do not know each other. In this sense, impressions regarding the attributes

of hosts attributes and services described in the platform and made available on social media play an important role in the establishment of trust. For Cohen, Prayag and Moital (2014), as the volume of content on the Internet and social media have increased and the display of information has become more creative and friendly, the tourists' confidence in online sources is probably increasing.

Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016) argue that trust is a subjective feeling in which the administrator will behave in a certain manner, according to the implicit or explicit promise that he/she has made. It is a key element for online peer-to-peer transactions, since two strangers are not likely to engage in a monetary transaction without relying on each other (Bonsón Bridge, Carvajal-Trujillo, & Escobar-Rodríguez, 2015; Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011). Thus, one of the main paths to facilitate trust in the peer-to-peer context is the formation of reputation mechanisms through online assessments.

According to Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016), on sharing economy platforms like AirBnb, the consumer's confidence is influenced by the host's personal photo. For them, the human face is a source of social information and can offer a sense of social contact that is absent in e-commerce relations, for example. On the other hand, the authors suggest that when individuals see personal photos of others, they can make hasty judgments about their social attributes. Kunz and Seshadri (2015) corroborate Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016) when stating that trust and sympathy among members are also central mediators for the relationship development. Thus, it is possible to conclude, based on the authors' arguments, that trust and these impressions have a positive relation with the consumer's decision to use sharing economy platforms.

## METHODOLOGY

This study followed a qualitative approach with the objective of understanding consumers' behavior related to their motivations for using sharing economy platforms in the tourism context. The study was conducted by in-depth interviews with a semi-structured script. The in-depth interview, according to Belk, Fischer and Kozinets (2013), corresponds to one of the main forms to collect data in a qualitative research and seeks a deeper understanding of a topic about which the researched informant is able to speak. Regarding the semi-structured interview script, the study followed the recommendation of Belk, Fischer and Kozinets (2013) about starting with broader questions and then asking more specific questions. The work used an interview script with 15 questions.

Regarding the research subjects, respondents who had already used CouchSurfing and AirBnb in the role of guest at least once in their lives were sought. The hosts' perspective was not studied. After this first contact, in which the subjects' consent was obtained, they were asked to indicate other people of their knowledge, who had also engaged in practices of collaborative consumption and sharing, inducing a "snowball" effect (Malhotra, 2004).

In 2017, 20 people were interviewed in person, 10 corresponded to CouchSurfing consumers and 10 to AirBnb consumers. In general, the interviews lasted from 40 minutes to over 1 hour. The interviews ceased when reaching the "saturation point", i.e. when the observations provided no more new relevant

information (Thiry-Cherques, 2009). The saturation is, according to Thiry-Cherques (2009), the epistemological instrument that determines when the observations are no longer necessary, since no new element enables enlargement in the number of properties of the investigated object. In the case of AirBnb, the study focused on people who paid only for the bedroom space and not the whole house/apartment, having some coexistence with the host.

To analyze the collected data, the content analysis technique was adopted, which, according to Bardin (1977), represents a set of techniques for analyzing communications to obtain indicators/categories by systematic and objective procedures to describe the messages content. The first objective of this categorization is to provide a simplified representation of the raw data. However, the final inferences are made from the reconstructed material. Therefore, it is assumed that the decomposition-reconstruction plays a certain function in the indication of correspondence between the messages and the underlying reality (Bardin, 1977). In this study, the categories were defined *a priori* based on the literature previously indicated, although, during the interviews analysis, the existence of important questions to be categorized was noted and, thus, other categories were defined *a posteriori*. The categories defined *a priori* were: cost savings, the expectation of shared cultural experiences, the expectation of building social bonds and trust. The content analysis was done with the support of the qualitative data analysis software Atlas TI.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### Characterization of the respondents' profile

Chart 1 shows the socioeconomic profile of respondents who have already used CouchSurfing.

**Chart 1** – Socioeconomic profile of CouchSurfing respondents

Respondent	Age	Sex	Marital status	Schooling level	Monthly household income
Respondent 1	23	M	Single	Some College	Could not inform
Respondent 2	23	F	Single	Some College	7 minimum wages – 10 minimum wages
Respondent 3	29	M	Single	Some College	7 minimum wages – 10 minimum wages
Respondent 4	24	M	Single	Some College	7 minimum wages – 10 minimum wages
Respondent 5	23	M	Single	Some College	1 minimum wage – 3 minimum wages
Respondent 6	33	M	Single	Master's Degree	4 minimum wages – 6 minimum wages
Respondent 7	35	F	Single	Academic Specialization	1 minimum wage – 3 minimum wages

(continues...)



**Chart 1** – Continuation

Respondent	Age	Sex	Marital status	Schooling level	Monthly household income
Respondent 8	32	M	Single	Some College	1 minimum wage – 3 minimum wages
Respondent 9	33	F	Single	Academic specialization	4 minimum wages – 6 minimum wages
Respondent 10	32	F	Single	Academic specialization	4 minimum wages – 6 minimum wages

Source – study data (2018)

From the ten subjects who used CouchSurfing, six were men and four were women. The respondents' age ranged between 23 and 35 years and all informed being single as for marital status. Most participants were students with some higher education. Among the 10 participants, the majority (seven) also claimed to have had the experience with CouchSurfing not only as a guest, but also as a host.

In relation to AirBnb, Chart 2 shows the profile of respondents who have already used it. The respondents' age ranged between 23 and 36 years. Most of them are men, corresponding to six respondents. Seven people declared themselves single, two married and one divorced. Regarding the education levels, one person that had incomplete higher education, three had complete higher education, one was post-graduated, four had a Master's degree, and one had a doctorate. Most of them have a monthly household income above 7 minimum wages.

**Chart 2** – Socioeconomic profile of AirBnb respondents

Respondent	Age	Sex	Marital status	Schooling level	Monthly household income
Respondent 1	23	F	Single	Some College	More than 20 minimum wages
Respondent 2	34	F	Married	Master's Degree	Could not inform
Respondent 3	32	M	Single	Master's Degree	1 minimum wage – 3 minimum wages
Respondent 4	36	F	Married	Doctorate	Could not inform
Respondent 5	33	M	Single	Post-Graduation (specialization)	More than 20 minimum wages
Respondent 6	27	F	Single	Complete Higher Education	7 minimum wages – 10 minimum wages
Respondent 7	24	M	Single	Complete Higher Education	4 minimum wages – 6 minimum wages
Respondent 8	24	M	Single	Complete Higher Education	1 minimum wage – 3 minimum wages
Respondent 7	24	M	Single	Master's Degree	7 minimum wages – 10 minimum wages
Respondent 10	33	M	Divorced	Master's Degree	7 minimum wages – 10 minimum wages

Source – study data (2018)

It is noteworthy that, unlike the CouchSurfing outcome, all the Airbnb users who answered the questions had never had the experience as a host. From this information, it is possible to infer that CouchSurfing respondents have a greater engagement in relation to the concept of sharing brought by Belk (2007), since it involves the act and the process of distributing our belongings to others for use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use.

This indicates that the respondents of the sharing platform are more interested in receiving people for free in their homes, actually sharing experiences with unknown people, than the participants of the collaborative consumption platform which establishes monetary exchange. That is, the profile of the Brazilian participants in the sharing platform in this empirical study consists of people willing, at the same time, to stay and receive people, characterizing a two-way relationship. At this point, one can establish a relationship between the outcome of this study and what Belk (2014b) indicated when stating that Airbnb is closer to commercial hospitality, whereas CouchSurfing involves a stronger sense of community by members and an interest in social conviviality.

### Motivations for using tourism sharing platforms (Couchsurfing) from the guests' perspective

After analyzing the interviews with 10 CouchSurfing consumers, the following motivational factors for use were found: (1) cost savings; (2) expectation of shared cultural experiences; (3) expectation of building social bonds; (4) expectation of learning and knowledge; (5) utility; and (6) trust. On the other hand, one of the research results was that some categories absent from the literature emerged, but proved to be very important for the study. These categories were related to restrictive consumption factors such as (7) fear of suffering some kind of violence or harassment; (8) fear of being inconvenient with the host; and (9) fear of lack of privacy.

#### Category 1: cost savings

Cost savings was cited as one of the main motivators for using CouchSurfing. Of the 10 respondents, nine mentioned this aspect in their statements, to a lesser or greater degree. However, only five people emphasized that the first reason to use CouchSurfing was to save money.

Saving money too, because then it's for free. Even the residents try to offer you food, these things, and you end up not spending as much on a stay as if you were staying in a particular hotel. (Respondent 1 CouchSurfing, 2017)

Other people mentioned that the financial part was important, but they indicated that it was not the main reason. Respondent 9 did not affirm that this was a great motivation, but rather that the fact that the lodging is for free contributes to a more economical and "quiet" journey. This result corroborates the statements by Belk and Sobh (2007), and Lamberton and Rose (2012) about cost savings being a motivation for people to engage in consumption practices linked to the sharing economy.

## Category 2: expectation for shared cultural experiences

In addition to cost savings, the most cited category by the respondents as a motivator for using CouchSurfing was the expectation for shared cultural experiences, i.e. the search for a tourist experience from the dweller's perspective. All respondents, except for participant 6, demonstrated that they sought a more realistic view of the place where they were traveling, from the experience shared with the dweller. This motivation indicated in the interviews confirms Heo's (2016) explanation about the possibility of the growing desire to connect tourists with the local community as a factor that contributes with the popularity of the sharing economy in tourism. Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015) also state that participation in sharing economy platforms in tourism allows people to create and maintain social connections, enabling bonds with local communities and a unique local experience. This affirmation of the authors is in agreement with the respondents' answers regarding the search for a more realistic view of the city, by meeting people and sharing cultures.

## Category 3: expectation of building social bonds

The analysis of interviews showed that five respondents demonstrated an expectation of constructing new friendships through CouchSurfing hosting and this was one of the antecedents for using this platforms in their case. The expectation of building social bonds corresponds to the expectation of connection with other people and the creation of a sense of solidarity and bonds with people from different worldviews (Belk, 2010).

The respondents' reports are related to Belk's (2014b) exposition about the visits enabling friendships that can last longer than the visit, and can create a feeling of generosity and human warmth among the members of the community. This is also in tune with what Bialski and Batorski (2007) showed about the intense trading activities of Couchsurfing to help online relationships become offline. The possibility of building social bonds between the host and the guest indicates that consumers' relations in this type of platform can extrapolate interests of utilities solely or need for money savings. The construction of social bonds tends to be a stronger feature of sharing, since according to Belk (2010), sharing tends to be a communal act that connects people to each other.

## Category 4: trust

Another category mentioned repeatedly was trust, which can be indicated as an important motivation for the propensity to use CouchSurfing. According to Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016), trust is a subjective feeling in which the administrator will behave in a certain sense according to the implicit or explicit promise that he/she has made. It was noted that trust is closely related to the reading of the reviews made by the platform users, which have had experiences with the hosts. In the research subjects' view, the reviews transmit more security on the platform and the host, generating more confidence. The statements showed that the trust deposited in the platform and host contributed to the decision to

lodge by Couchsurfing. Intrinsically connected to trust is the general impression concerning the host's attributes, which also contributes to the creation of trust. Based on the analysis of the interviews, the impression that the guest builds of the host is determinant for trusting or not to stay in a certain home lodging on the trip. The respondents highlighted that they did a search on the possible host, to a greater or lesser degree. Some explained that they sought information through the platform reviews, whereas others went beyond and researched the host's social media.

### Category 5: expectation of learning and knowledge

A category that emerged in the interviews and was not foreseen in the literature was the expectation of learning and knowledge. CouchSurfing respondents 1, 4, 8 and 9 demonstrated that they sought a way to aggregate knowledge. It was perceived that the search for learning a new language and learning about new cultures was a reason for using CouchSurfing as lodging. This category is absent from the literature related to sharing economy in the context of tourism, but is present in the literature on consumer's behavior in the tourist sector. This can be noted when Swarbrooke and Horner (2002) affirmed that increasing knowledge and learning new cultures is a motivator factor in tourism.

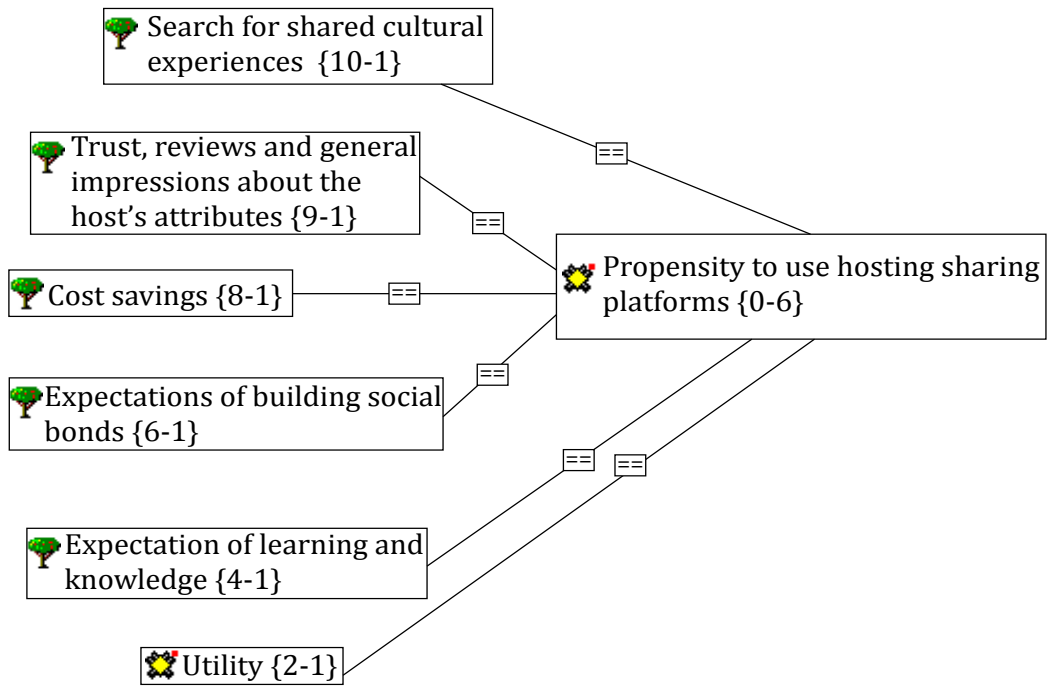
### Category 6: utility

Despite not appearing that much in the reports, utility was a category indicated by two participants as a motivation for consumption. This result corroborates Belk's (2014a) ideas about the sharing being able to have more functional motivations and utilitarian character, such as survival or even as a remedy to a necessity.

In the respondents' reports, three aspects were cited indicating restrictive factors of consumption, i.e. factors that would reduce the participants' interest in using the hosting sharing platform. Difficulty of having full privacy in the house of an unknown person and fear to be inconvenient in the host house were issues pointed out by some respondents. In the interviews, mainly made with women, a point always cited was the question of fear of suffering some kind of violence or harassment by the host. The respondents reported that, despite their fear, they had never suffered harassment or violence in such cases. The male respondents emphasized in the interviews that the fear of suffering some kind of violence or harassment is something stronger in women due to the female condition of suffering within a sexist society. However, it is important to mention that the harassment is not restricted to women. Respondent 3, a man, reported that he suffered sexual harassment by the hosts of CouchSurfing (also male) at two situations and that that was an unpleasant situation.

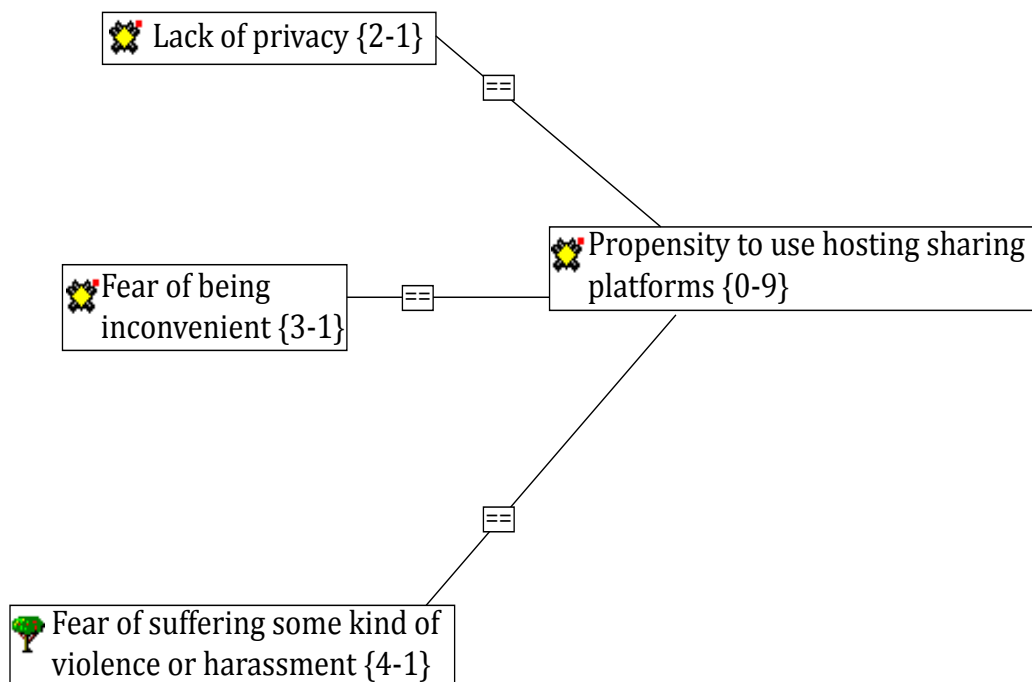
To synthesize the results of the interviews related to CouchSurfing, two proposals of theoretical models on motivational and restrictive factors to the propensity for using hosting sharing platforms were elaborated. The icon of the figure represented by = = corresponds to the term "is associated with" to indicate, for example, that the code "Cost savings" is associated with the code "Propensity to use hosting sharing platforms".

**Figure 1** – Positive motivational factors for consumption of hosting sharing platforms (Couchsurfing)



Source – elaborated by the authors (2018)

**Figure 2** – Restrictive factors for consumption of hosting sharing platforms (Couchsurfing)



Source – elaborated by the authors (2018)



## Motivations for the using collaborative consumption platforms (Airbnb) for tourism from the guests' perspective

The main motivators signaled by the respondents regarding the use of Airbnb were: (1) cost savings; (2) expectation for shared cultural experiences; (3) utility; (4) search for privacy; (5) trust; and (6) search for learning and knowledge.

### Category 1: cost savings

Similarly to CouchSurfing, cost savings appeared on Airbnb as a strong antecedent for consumption. All respondents stated that the cost-benefit issue was a motivator, in a greater or lesser degree. This result corroborates the exposition by Belk and Sobh (2007) and Lamberton and Rose (2012) regarding cost savings as one of the motivations for the using sharing economy platforms. According to the respondents, the lowest prices of the available rooms on Airbnb in relation to the daily fees at inns and hotels correspond to a factor that contributes greatly to the choice. In addition, the respondents stressed that the platform offers lodging options ranging between cheap and expensive, which provides lots of choices.

### Category 2: expectation for shared cultural experiences

The expectation for shared cultural experiences was also an aspect that appeared as a motivator in the report of some Brazilian respondents who used Airbnb. Based on the interviews, the search for shared cultural experiences in the view of most participants is connected to a search for more authentic tourist experiences, experiencing more alternative tourism. On the other hand, respondents 1, 7, 8 and 10 did not manifest the search for shared cultural experiences as an antecedent and made it clear that their interest was more due to cost savings and utility.

### Category 3: utility

The utility was also one of the motivations of using Airbnb in the participants' view. A point highlighted by Airbnb users was the possibility of using house spaces such as the kitchen, which lodging in a hotel does not provide. Unlike CouchSurfing, the expectation of building social bonds was not an antecedent of consumption for most respondents who used Airbnb. Only two interviewees demonstrated that they had wished to build new friendships from the lodging. The other respondents showed interest in making relationships merely due to the hosting transactions. The respondent 1, for example, highlighted that she did not have much desire to interact with the hosts.

From the respondents' reports, it is perceived that the lack of expectation of building social bonds by Airbnb consumers may be related to what Belk (2014b) said about how charging a utilization fee on Airbnb contributes for the hosts to look more as hotel owners. For the author, this brings as

a consequence: decrease in the sense of community, which is something stronger in CouchSurfing. Such point can be verified in the research result when all AirBnb respondents stated that they were never hosts, whereas most respondents of CouchSurfing stated that they have received guests via the site.

#### Category 4: Search for privacy

Unlike CouchSurfing, the privacy was not a restrictive aspect of consumption. For respondent 1, AirBnb enables more privacy to the guest since it can offer a single room for the person, unlike hostels that charge cheaper only for the shared room. This aspect was mentioned by respondent 2 when she stated that “she felt like she was in her own home in the experience with AirBnb”.

#### Category 5: trust

Trust was also a motivator factor signaled by all AirBnb respondents as fundamental. Unanimously, all research subjects stated that they searched the host profile and read the assessments of other users on the site. According to them, the research in reviews and the impression they had of the host ensured that they felt more secure to stay in the home of an unknown person.

It was the profile that gave me security. If they had 11 comments, 10 super well and a comment with the person answering, you see that this is possible. It really happened. The host seemed like a caring person. I noticed the ranking and the positive comments. I think this was the key. I trusted the reports of others. (Respondent 3 AirBnb, 2017)

I searched the person inside and out AirBnb. I tried to search something at the Facebook. I focused mainly in what people who had stayed there reported. But I think about a very interesting thing... It's a critical analysis that I don't know if everyone does. Who's the one that evaluates the evaluator, you know? What's level of demand that those people had when they were making that reservation or that analysis? I've always evaluated, searched for information about who was evaluating to see if it was a profile close to mine and whether the expectations I had mirrored it or not. (Respondent 4 AirBnb, 2017)

This aspect confirms the statements of Bonsón Ponte, Carvajal-Trujillo and Escobar-Rodríguez (2015) and Kim, Chung and Lee (2011) about trust being a fundamental element for online peer-to-peer transactions, since two strangers are not susceptible to engage in a monetary transaction without trusting each other. In this way, online assessments are configured as one of the main ways to facilitate trust in the peer-to-peer context. This can be understood empirically through the respondents' statements. Based on the statement of respondent 4, it was possible to realize how much the assessments of other users are taken into consideration and are weighted to make a decision.

## Category 6: expectation of learning and knowledge

Another motivational factor for the use of AirBnb signaled by two respondents was the search for learning and knowledge, as mentioned by some respondents of CouchSurfing.

I knew I was going to learning something, and you can practice your English. . . . So, your mind has to be open and my mind has always been open, I've always liked these learning opportunities. I think that this issue of willingness to share, willingness to learn has a lot to contribute because you give and you get when you live these experiences. There's always an exchange. They are always very strong cultural exchanges. So it was a time I was destined for. I was up to know other cultures. (Respondent 4 AirBnb, 2017)

This category had not been pointed out in the literature on collaborative consumption and was an emerging aspect signaled in the interviews. This indicates that one of the possible motivations for using this platform is related to the willingness to learn more about cultures and languages and the search for self-knowledge.

## Restrictive aspects of the utilization

Some restrictive aspects of consumption also appeared in the interviews with AirBnb consumers, such as the fear of the host being an inconvenient person, the fear of invading the space of the other, the fear of lack of hygiene and the concern with personal objects.

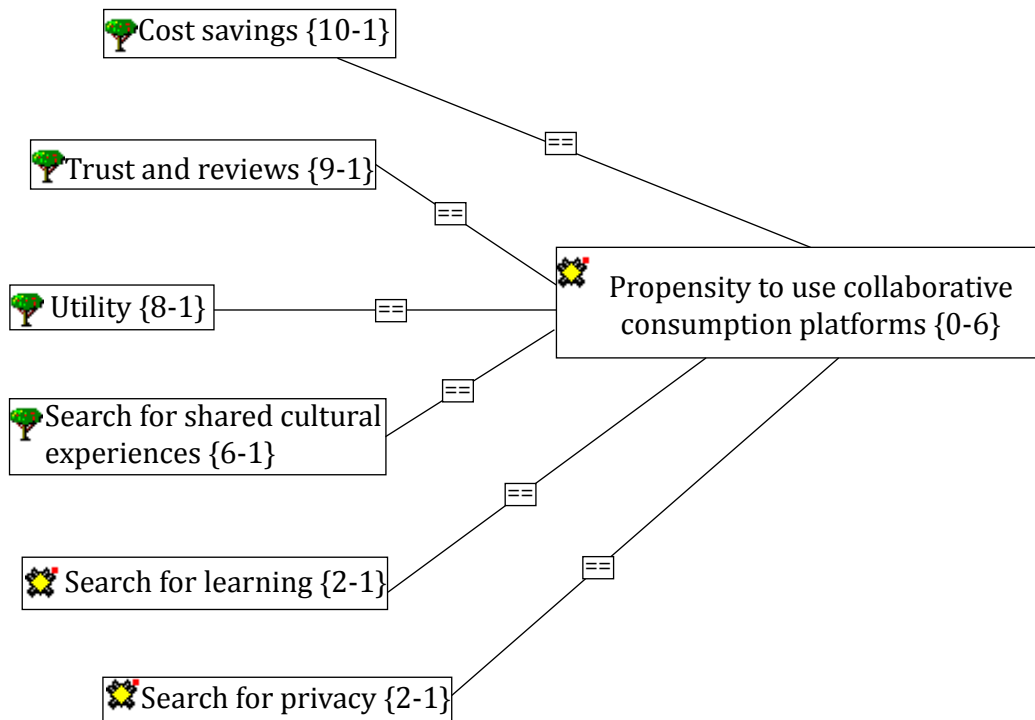
We always smell a rat in relation to the goods we carry, if we can leave the things like that and they will be there the way you left it. So, I think this is always a rat you smell. But as in all the experiences I've had until today, I had no problem with that. So, I guess I don't care that much at this point anymore. (Respondent 7 AirBnb, 2017)

My concern with the AirBnb is to get into some trap. Especially in regard to the hygiene, if it's a kind of improvised place. . . I think it's my biggest concern. (Respondent 10 AirBnb, 2017)

It is important to highlight that, in the literature about collaborative consumption, no studies were found addressing the restrictive factors of consumption. However, they appeared in the study related to both AirBnb and CouchSurfing.

To synthesize the results found in the analysis of interviews with AirBnb consumers, the following model was elaborated with the motivational factors for the propensity to use collaborative consumption platforms of hosting, representing the case of AirBnb.

**Figure 3** – Motivational factors for consumption of collaborative hosting consumer platforms (AirBnb)



**Source** – elaborated by the authors (2018)

Finally, the conclusion in the results analysis is that there were motivators common and different factors between the CouchSurfing platform and the AirBnb platform. The similar motivators for both platforms were: cost savings, expectation for shared cultural experiences, utility, trust, and search/expectation for learning and knowledge.

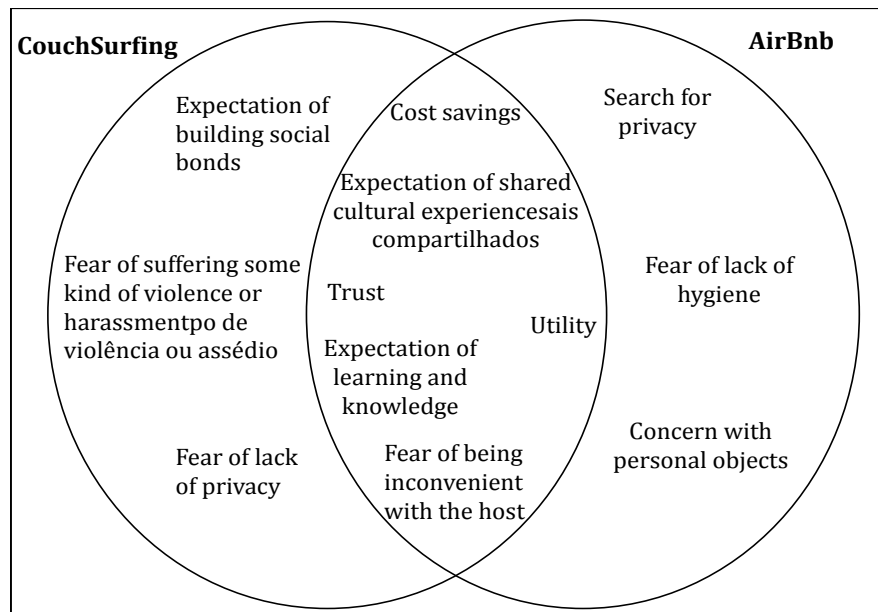
Regarding the differences, the expectation of building social bonds was a positive motivator factor that appeared in the interviews related to CouchSurfing, but it did not appear in the reports of the AirBnb respondents. This difference may have occurred due to the fact that CouchSurfing corresponds to a free platform/app, whose proposal is more focused on stimulating friendships between members (considering that the hosting cannot be charged), whereas AirBnb has a more commercial character.

The search for privacy has been indicated as a motivator for using AirBnb and not CouchSurfing, which can be considered a difference between platforms. This result may have occurred due to the more commercial character of AirBnb and the fact that renting a single room (or a full apartment) provides more privacy to the tourist than a shared room in a hostel, as the respondents mentioned.

Other differences observed between the platforms were the restrictive factors of use. Whereas on the CouchSurfing platform, the fear of suffering some kind of violence or harassment and the fear of lack of privacy were pointed out as factors that demotivate consumption, such aspects did not appear in the reports

of the AirBnb respondents. On the contrary, respondents signaled that they sought privacy by adopting AirBnb. AirBnb respondents mentioned fear of lack of hygiene and concern with personal objects as restrictive factors, which did not appear in CouchSurfing interviews. The similarity between the respondents' reports of CouchSurfing and AirBnb regarding restrictive factors was the fear of being inconvenient with the host. Figure 4 synthesizes the common factors and the different factors between the platforms:

**Figure 4** – Common and different factors between the Couchsurfing platform and the Airbnb platform



Source – elaborated by the authors (2018)

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this study was to understand the motivations of people to adopt sharing practices and collaborative consumption in the field of tourism in AirBnb and CouchSurfing. For this, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 CouchSurfing consumers and 10 AirBnb consumers, who had already used such platforms in guest roles.

In general, the study results indicated that cost savings, expectation of building social bonds, expectation of shared cultural experiences, trust based on reviews, utility, and search for learning and knowledge were the main positive motivators for the use of shared hosting economy platforms. Moreover, fear of suffering some kind of violence or harassment, fear of being inconvenient with the host, and fear of lack of privacy emerged from the interviews as restrictive factors for consumption, and such aspects had not yet been explored by the literature.

As this study focused on understanding the perspective of the guest/consumer of sharing economy in tourism, future studies should be carried out to understand the host's perspective. Given that the sharing economy theme



in tourism is relatively recent and this work followed a qualitative approach to further explore the subject, another suggestion to the future is that more studies of quantitative approach on this subject are developed. In addition, studies about the impact of the sharing economy in other sectors should be developed such as transport, cities and real estate, as well as in relation to other relevant issues such as regulation and labor relations. Thus, because this theme is recent, there are many areas for studies to address various aspects of the sharing economy.

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Received on: 01/31/2018

Approved on: 05/10/2018

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

**Luciana Alves Rodas Vera:** Formulated the research problem and objectives, developed the theoretical proposition, conducted the bibliographical review, chose the methods, data collection, and data analysis, elaborated tables, graphs and figures, critically reviewed the manuscript, the manuscript writing, and the standardization according to the RTA.

**Marlusa de Sevilha Gosling:** Defined the research problem and objectives, developed the theoretical proposition, chose the methodological procedures and critically reviewed the manuscript.