The Theatrical Rules in Collaborative Consumption

a case of Airbnb

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ABSTRACT

Title: The theatrical rules in collaborative consumption: a case of Airbnb

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Keywords: Collaborative consumption; sharing economy; access-based consumption; dramaturgy; habitus; strategies of action; structuration theory; symbolic interactionism; Airbnb; collaborative lifestyles; consumer culture theories; Pierre Bourdieu; Richard Jenkins; Ann Swidler; Erving Goffman; Herbert Blumer

Purpose: The study aims to advance the understanding of collaborative consumption through the research on the engagement rules, conventions, and norms that govern the practice. The study postulates that it is through the possession of the right competences and meaning that permit insiders to successfully apply the rules of collaborative consumption while deterring outsiders from making an initial or repeated attempt. The study's intention is to shed light on the specific competences and meaning that are required by collaborative users to carry out these rules.

Methodology: The study's research philosophies relate to relativism and social constructionism. The research style follows that of structuration theory where insights on the consumer agency are derived from studying its structure. Netnography is used to capture rich data that exist within online social interactions where participants indicate and interpret their consumption ideologies. A hermeneutic approach, as a form of abductive research style that is both deductive with the help of existing theories as well as inductive by drawing inferences from qualitative data collected, is adopted.

Theoretical Perspective: The study builds on two bodies of theoretical research: the first group documents the rise of collaborative consumption, and the second group consists of several classic cultural theories, namely Goffman's concept of dramaturgy, Blumer's symbolic interactionism, Swidler's strategies of action and cultural competence, and Bourdieu's habitus. They are used respectively to formulate the research purpose and guide the process of data analysis. The study extends the academic understanding of collaborative consumption by focusing on the rules, conventions, and norms that govern the practice as a research area that has been previously overlooked.

Empirical Data: The empirical case chosen is Airbnb. The material collected are online social interactions from a community forum visited by users of Airbnb. Netnography is used to document rich data by capturing the languages used and behaviors inscribed by online users. The resulting data material that were downloaded, marked and analysed in digital copies amount to 183 discussions threads consisting of 1665 individual postings or comments contributed by about 330 users with an average of 5 postings per user.

Conclusion: The study develops a tentative model for cultural analysis that can be applied to users of collaborative consumption to examine their willingness and ability to participate in the field. By researching the engagement rules, the study has elucidated four types of user motivation, three groups of cultural competences and two contexts of meaning interpretation. The interconnectedness of the three elements of motivation, competences, and meanings are holistically discussed to paint a clearer image of their functions and manifestations within collaborative consumption.

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1. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive coverage of the field of collaborative consumption, both in terms of consumer aspirations as well as existing research trajectories, while demonstrating its importance as a research topic in present times. Firstly, a background on the changing nature of consumer identity projects relating to objects is presented where the rise of collaborative consumption is motivated. Secondly, existing literature on the topic is summarized. Thirdly, a critique on past studies is presented which follows the introduction of a critical research angle that is underexplored by existing studies. Fourthly, the purpose and research question of this study is formulated and the desired theoretical contribution is outlined. Lastly, the chapter closes with an overview of key ideas in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

1.1 Background

> "Peer-to-peer is going to become the default way people exchange things, whether it is space, stuff, skills, or services" – Brian Chesky, co-founder and CEO of Airbnb (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.14)

In recent years, consumer research has noted a great increase in the popularity of non-traditional consumption models where the focus is on sharing and temporary access rather than on ownership (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014a; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2015). Spurred on by the development of Web 2.0 (Belk, 2014a; Grassmuck, 2012) solutions from companies like Airbnb, Zipcar and LendingClub are gaining interest among consumers at the expense of traditional providers across various fields such as travel, transportation and personal finance (Owyang, Samuel & Grenville, 2014). Known by many names and definitions, these consumption models are often referred to as collaborative consumption (Belk, 2014a). In one of its more important definitions, it is described as "transactions that may be market-mediated in which no transfer of ownership takes place" (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.881). Simply put, instead of buying and owning goods, some consumers are choosing to access them temporarily when needed and possibly from complete strangers. The development of said consumption behaviors is widely believed to be driven by economic and societal considerations (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Tussyadiah, 2015), such as lower costs, free market ideologies, community building and environmental rhetorics (Guttentag, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016).

The growing research interest in collaborative consumption is nothing short of essential. It is estimated that more than 110 million North Americans have now participated in collaborative consumption (Owyang & Samuel, 2015). As one of the prominent cases, there are over 100 million users worldwide who have engaged in short-term lodging through Airbnb (Solomon, 2016). Still and all, many researchers argue that it is likely just the beginning (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Belk, 2014; Owyang, Samuel & Grenville, 2014; Tussyadiah, 2015). The market size for collaborative consumption is predicted to grow from US$14 billion in 2014 to US$335 billion by 2025 (Yaraghi & Ravi, 2017). In turn, the increasing receptivity towards consumption that favors "temporary access and non-ownership [consumption] models" has given life to an influx of new Internet-based businesses (Belk, 2014a, p.1595); they have entered the scene to leverage opportunities in this growing consumer segment. As the market continues to grow, it is believed that the modern consumption culture will further "transform the way companies think about their value propositions and the way people fulfill their needs" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.30). However, despite having disrupted various business landscapes and causing serious threats to incumbents (Möhlmann, 2015), the understanding of the demands that confront the producers of collaborative consumption remains notwithstanding peripheral (Hartl, Hoffmann & Kirchler, 2016). Since the phenomenon is widely believed to be driven by fundamental changes in consumer behaviors (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), it may be critical to explore cultural elements as a possible research angle to begin an investigation into the consumption field.

1.1.1 From "we are what we have" to "we are what we access"

Traditionally, ownership has been the prevalent practice across various forms of consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Several possible explanations for its sovereignty have emerged from previous research. They include ownership being regarded as more economically beneficial, as indicative of higher status, and as a source of individual freedom and personal security (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Another important postulation pertains to the significance that ownership and possessions have for consumer identity projects (Bardhi, Eckhardt & Arnould, 2012). It has long been argued that objects can become an extension of our persona (Belk, 1988), so much so that it has been a cornerstone of consumer research for more than 25 years (Bardhi, Eckhardt & Arnould, 2012). These researches have been imperative in providing a greater understanding of various consumption practices and behaviors (Schau & Gilly, 2003). In a particularly influential article on the topic, Russell Belk, building on previous research, argues that "we are what we have" (Belk, 1988, p.160). Referring to famed French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, Belk (1988) explains that the motivation behind people's desire for possessions is the need to develop a sense of self. Hence, the means through which people discover who they are is by examining what they have (Belk, 1988). As such, he argues that it is through possessions that people search for, articulate, validate and determine a sense of being (Belk, 1988).

However, as illustrated in section 1.1, the turn of the century has given rise to other possible forms of consumption and acquisition that deviate from the concept of ownership (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Even as ownership remains the dominant mode of consumption, its dominance is being challenged by the growing popularity of "temporary access and non-ownership [consumption] models" (Belk, 2014a, p.1595). Previous research has described this occurrence as a "shift in the socio-cultural politics of consumption" (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.883), and has provided a number of reasons to explain this deviation. Firstly, access is increasingly perceived as a more economical consumption option within contemporary societies. It follows as consumers have become more cost-conscious in light of major global financial crises that have caused them to re-evaluate their spending decisions and values which include the relationships they share with their possessions (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Secondly, the demand for access is propelled by a growing re-urbanization movement where people are relocating back into cities (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). By its very nature, urban dwellers are likely subjected to conditions of compact living and space constraints, such as having less room for parking or storage, which inhibits the acquisition of non-essential items. Thirdly, the growth of access is paralleled to the rise of liquid modernity in societies (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Liquid modernity illustrates the situations faced by modern consumers where social structures and institutions are losing the edge over defining the "frames of reference for human actions and long-term life strategies" (Bauman, 2007, p.1). Instead, people operate their feelings, social connections and relationships with objects in a fluid manner. Access, therefore, presents itself as a consumption mode suited for shaping liquid consumer identity projects (Bardhi, Eckhardt & Arnould 2012).

Recognizing the growing trend of collaborative consumption and non-ownership, Belk (2014a) has revisited and slightly modified his earlier postulate. He now suggests that, in the near future, human beings might become "what we access" rather than what we own (p.1598).

Figure 1: Fundamental shift in consumer identity projects

1.2 Problematization of prior research

Since its inception in the 1970s (Felson & Spaeth, 1978), the meaning associated with the term "collaborative consumption" has been subjected to several changes. Research interest in collaborative consumption, or what it later came to symbolize, has just begun to gain traction within consumer research (Belk, 2014a). As such, existing research, while growing quite rapidly, is still scarce (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015). Even so, these researches have been primarily focused on two main literature streams: one that defines what is and what is not collaborative consumption (Felson & Spaeth, 1978; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014a; Botsman & Rogers, 2010), as well as another that studies the underlying motivational factors and cultural values that drive collaborative consumption practices (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2015; Möhlmann, 2015; Piscicelli, Cooper, & Fisher, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015). This subchapter serves to illustrate these two literature streams in greater detail.

1.2.1 Various definitions of collaborative consumption

The first literature stream consists of several important articles that attempt to shape the definition of collaborative consumption. The term, which was first conceptualized by Felson and Spaeth (1978), captured a broad definition as "events in which one or more persons consume economic goods or series in the progress of engaging in joint activities with one or more others" (p.614). These activities include instances of having a phone call or hanging out with buddies while drinking beer. The definitive scope is, therefore, rather diffused though it centers around individuals participating in collective actions that relate to some forms of consumption (Belk, 2014a). For many years after, the usage of the term was little heard of within academia. In fact, it only took off when it was repurposed by Botsman and Rogers (2008) in their seminal book *What's mine is yours*. While witnessing the growth in the popularity of "temporary access and non-ownership [consumption] models" (Belk, 2014a, p.1595), the authors had attempted to use "collaborative consumption" to capture the different forms of organizations that it has given rise to (Leismann, Schmitt, Rohn & Baedeker, 2013). As such, Botsman and Rogers (2010) define collaborative consumption as "systems of organized sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping, redefined through technology and peer communities" (p.15). In doing so, they emphasize the transactional nature of the practice while contrasting it with the coordinative nature that was described in Felson and Spaeth's definition.

According to Botsman and Rogers (2010), collaborative consumption can be further classified into three distinct categories: redistribution markets, product service systems and collaborative lifestyles. Firstly, redistribution markets are organizations characterized by either the trading of pre-owned goods, one in place for another, or a passing of ownership of goods at a price or for free (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). This form of organized system is motivated by the contemporary consumption attitude that 'new is not always better' and a general responsibility towards societal and environmental sustainability. Some examples of providers are SwapTree, eBay or craigslist. Secondly, product service systems are organizations characterized by the leasing or co-usage of particular tangible goods, either provided by an individual or a company, that are rendered as chargeable services instead of the actual selling of those goods (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Examples of tangible goods delivered in this way include automobiles, launderettes or solar panels. Lastly, as a variant to product service systems, collaborative lifestyles are organizations characterized by the provision of intangible goods - instead of tangible goods - as chargeable services (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Examples of such intangible goods shared include time, space or skills, which form the basis for companies like Airbnb and Taskrabbit. Relating to the shift from ownership to access illustrated in section 1.1.1, it is the organizations that fall under product service systems and collaborative lifestyles that are gaining increasing attention.

Shortly after, Botsman and Rogers' definition of collaborative consumption was adopted and simplified by Belk (2014a) and Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012). Belk (2014a) describes collaborative consumption as "people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation" (p.1597). The definition excludes organizations that involve a permanent transfer of ownership but emphasizes the necessity of rewards which could be in either monetary or non-monetary form. In doing so, he omits aspects of sharing or gift giving that was categorized as "redistribution markets" in the original definition by Botsman and Rogers. Similarly, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) have also chosen to exclude "redistribution markets" in their definition. However, they crafted an even narrower definition under a new name which they termed "access-based consumption" (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Access-based consumption is described as "transactions that can be market-mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place" (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.881). As such, they maintain in this definition that collaborative transactions are regulated by an agency involving a monetary exchange between two or more individuals. The contrast between said definition of "access-based consumption" and "collaborative consumption" as defined by Botsman and Rogers is graphically illustrated in Figure 2 below.

While the definitions discussed above have repeatedly been used to frame different types of research on collaborative consumption, we look to one other literature stream for inspiration on selecting a suitable form to base our research.
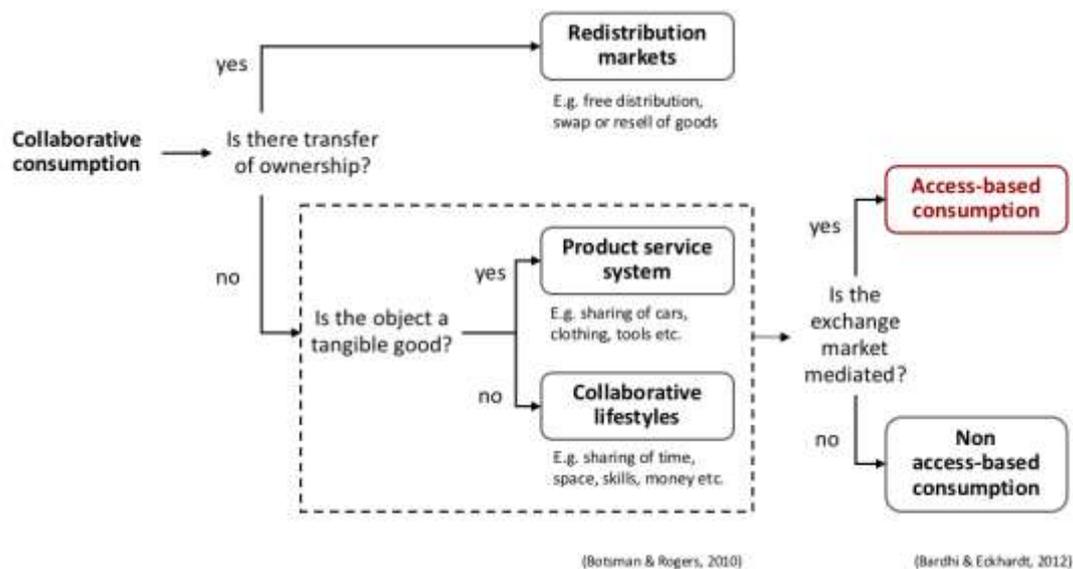
Figure 2: Contrasting the definitions of collaborative consumption

1.2.2 Drivers for using collaborative consumption

The second literature stream comprises a series of studies that focuses on the underlying motivational factors and cultural values that drive collaborative consumption practices. These studies, which were mostly quantitative in nature and conducted over the last few years, have examined several variables that are propelling consumers to pursue collaborative consumption. In one quantitative analysis on the users of Car2go and Airbnb, a carsharing and a short-term lodging service respectively, Möhlmann (2015) tested participants' responses to a set of variables. They include community belonging, cost savings, environmental impact, familiarity, internet capability, service quality, smartphone capability, trend affinity, trust and utility (p.195). In doing so, he found that self-serving benefits, namely utility, trust, cost-savings and familiarity, act as significant predictors for their consumption behaviors (Möhlmann, 2015). Another quantitative study was conducted by Hamari, Sjöklint, and Ukkonen (2015) on the users of Sharetribe, a peer-to-peer trading network, with a similar purpose. The set of

variables used in this case includes sustainability, enjoyment, reputation and economic benefit (Hamari et. al., 2015, p.2051). Their results are broadly consistent with those of Möhlmann (2015) where the factors of enjoyment and economic benefits related to self-gain were found to be strong predictors while the factor of sustainability associated with altruism was found to be a mild predictor of consumption intention (Hamari et al., 2015). In a third quantitative study on users of peer-to-peer lodging rental services, Tussyadiah (2015) found contradictory evidence that the altruistic factor towards sustainability was equally important as self-serving factors such as economic benefits and community building.

While the studies above have explored particular psychological factors, Piscicelli, Cooper, and Fisher (2015) provide an alternative perspective using cultural value as the unit of analysis. In this quantitative study, they contrast the values that are deemed more important by users of a UK online collaborative marketplace than those valued by the UK population in general. They found that values such as "self-transcendence and openness to change" are more highly regarded among users in motivating usage of collaborative consumption (Piscicelli et. al., 2015). In this case, self-transcendence refers to users' willingness to prioritize the interest of others before their own. Openness to change refers to users' readiness to try new ideas rather than adhering to conventional practices. On the other hand, users were found to have a lower perceived value towards "self-enhancement" (Piscicelli et. al., 2015). Self-enhancement, which refers to the desire for reputation and status, was not found to be influential unlike in other studies. Similar to the study by Tussyadiah (2015), altruism, captured by the value of "self-transcendence" in this case, was found to be significant which contradicts the results from earlier studies by Möhlmann (2015) and Hamari and his team (2015) where self-interest was found to be more important instead. This inconsistency could indicate that quantitative research, which involves the testing of hypotheses and variables on the basis of consumers as rational creatures (Sassatelli, 2007), may be inadequate in explaining users' participation in collaborative consumption. As such, we turn to contemporary qualitative research on the topic to provide more holistic insights.

In one of the few noteworthy qualitative studies available, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) conducted 40 semi-structured interviews while studying users of the car-sharing platform, Zipcar. They attempt to study three forms of engagement dynamics: those between consumer and the shared object, one consumer and another consumer as well as consumer and marketer. Users who engage in car sharing through Zipcar are found to maintain rather transactional relationships with the vehicle, other users and the intermediary company (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Instead, users focus on the utility value of the shared vehicles and how they could help them accomplish their goals. In this way, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) argue that these users are driven predominantly by self-serving rather than altruistic motives. They postulate that to be the case for consumers in other similar sharing scenarios as they refrain from getting attached to shared objects outside of their utility value (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Furthermore, the study observes that access-based consumption (see section 1.2.1) as a whole is gaining symbolic value (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Users expressed their joy from being perceived as smarter, freer and more flexible with collaborative consumption and not being tied down by traditional mode of ownership. Even so, Belk (2014b) argues that self-interest motives in collaborative consumption do not negate all senses of altruism. Instead, he argues for the coexistence of a mixture of both aspects which are at work in all forms of collaborative consumption (Belk, 2014b).

1.2.3 Sharing vs. Pseudo-sharing

While reviewing the works of authors from both literature streams illustrated in sections 1.2.1-2, it was evident to us that collaborative consumption has frequently been examined in contrast to the traditional form of sharing. Central to this discussion is Russell Belk's (2014b) view that not all forms of collaborative consumption can be considered sharing. Coining the term "pseudo-sharing", which he uses to discern collaborative consumption models that are not sharing, Belk (2014b) identifies three criteria that distinguish pseudo-sharing from sharing.

They are "the presence of profit motives, the absence of feelings of community, and expectations of reciprocity" (Belk, 2014b, p.7). Belk argues that the original purpose of sharing, involving helping others in need and forming social bonds, is lost with the notion of pseudo-sharing (Belk, 2014b). This view is supported by Möhlmann (2015) and Bardhi, and Eckhardt (2012). In Möhlmann's (2015) quantitative study, community building was found to be an insignificant predictor of collaborative consumption behaviors among the users of Car2go and Airbnb. Similarly, in Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2012) qualitative study on Zipcar users, collaboration was found to be driven by self-interest which hinders community building and heightens demand for greater personal rights protection.

Other researchers, who have either taken a broader definition of collaborative consumption or studied the forms that are more closely related to sharing, have provided differing opinions. Botsman and Rogers (2010) were the pioneers who describe the practice as community-building. They indicate that the rise of these new modes of consumption has brought society closer together and to care for each other with a revived interest in the community (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). In a similar vein, Tussyadiah, Hamari, and his team have found evidence that supports community-like behaviors. Tussyadiah (2015)'s study on users of peer-to-peer lodging rental services has found community-building as an important factor that propels participation. In studying users of Couchsurfing and certain goods sharing platforms, Hamari and team found that users value the opportunities they have to connect socially with like-minded others in purposeful ways (Hamari et. al, 2015). As such, previous case studies have supported Belk's (2014b) concept of sharing and pseudo-sharing. Nevertheless, it is not the point of the debate which form of collaborative consumption - sharing or pseudo-sharing - is better. It is, however, crucial to note the distinction between the two when doing research into collaborative consumption.

1.3 Research positioning

In the preceding section, an overview of the prior literature, including its focus areas and key findings, was presented. It follows in this subchapter that several areas of problematization from past studies will be highlighted in arriving at the research position. These areas include the limitations of prior research, the unique demographics of collaborative users and the need to choose a definition of collaborative consumption for this study.

1.3.1 Inconclusiveness of prior research

Despite attempts by prior research to delineate the "interests" of collaborative users, which they term as motivating factors towards collaborative consumption (see section 1.2.2), these findings have been broadly inconclusive when they are being contrasted with each other. This inconsistency is evident for the studies done by Möhlmann (2015), Tussyadiah (2015), Hamari, and his team (2015). Central to their discussions is the conflict between motivating factors that relate to either self-interest or altruism where these studies have found supportive evidence on both sides. As such, these discrepancies suggest that the "interests" of users, when used as a unit of study, did not help to improve the overall understanding on users' willingness for users to participate in collaborative consumption.

Besides "interests", cultural effects are often said to be at play in influencing one's action. "Values" are often conceptualized as the connector between culture and action (Swidler, 1986). In other words, a researcher can better understand user actions by studying the values that are embodied by their informants. One such research on collaborative consumption was conducted by Piscicelli, Cooper, and Fisher (2015) where values were used as the unit of study. However, previous scholars have criticized the limiting view of value paradigm approaches that are used to decipher actions (Blake & Davis, 1964; Cancian, 1975). Instead, several cultural theories have suggested that culture contributes to a set of styles, abilities, and practices rather than values that are indicative of deterministic preferences and choices (Bourdieu, 1984; Swidler, 1986). As such, the prospect that values guide action is equally deficient as the proposition that interests guide action. They argue that an over-focus on the "unit

act" impairs both perspectives. More specifically, it is not possible for an individual to choose actions painstakingly one step at a time, with each step evaluated based on their interests and values, to optimize for most favorable outcomes (Swidler, 1986). The negation in the use of "interests" and "values" leads to the postulation that collaborative consumption may not have been sufficiently interpreted using traditional rational consumer decision models based on the neoclassical perspective. The research positionings of these previous researches are presented in Figure 3.
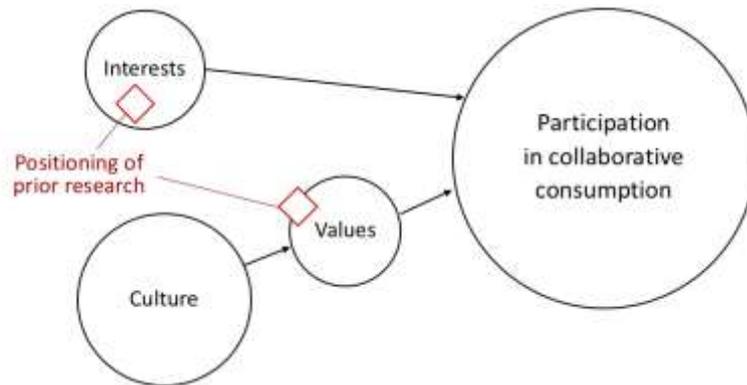
Figure 3: Positioning of prior research on interests and values influencing participation

1.3.2 The young, affluent and urban

While reading prior studies, one can notice an interesting observation. Collaborative users are more likely to be young, affluent and urban dwellers (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014; Owyang, 2014; Stokes, Clarence, Anderson, & Rinne, 2014; Hamari et. al, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015). The specificity in the attributes of these users is surprising since collaborative consumption is widely considered to be beneficial for all, both on a collective and an individual level (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Belk, 2014). These universal benefits, which relate to economic savings as well as positive impact on the community and the environment (Piscicelli et al., 2015), seem to appeal to individuals differently due to their demographics and socio-economical statuses. It is all the more peculiar that there are more affluent than non-affluent collaborative users even though the latter might benefit more from the economic advantages brought about by collaborative consumption. It also seems to defy logic for rural dwellers and people from older age groups to refrain from participation since those benefits are equally applicable to them as well.

Revisiting the idea of culture as having an effect on individual abilities (see section 1.3.1), this exclusivity among adopters may indicate that those who could benefit more from the practice are being shut out because they lack the prerequisites for participation. An assemblage of knowledge, abilities and styles, often argued by sociologists and anthropologists, may be required for people to operate with ease during group activities (Bourdieu, 1977; Swidler, 1986). As such, one tentative reason could be that non-users are excluded from collaborative consumption because they do not possess the necessary cultural competences needed to engage in the practice.

1.3.3 Field definition in this study

As shown in section 1.2, various complexities have arisen in prior literature as a result of the myriad of definitions that have come to be associated with collaborative consumption. In order to derive insights without making sweeping assertions, there is a need for any research in this domain to more narrowly define collaborative consumption. To do so, we return to Botsman and Rogers' (2010) definition of collaborative consumption as a starting point (see section 1.2.1). The scope of the consumption practice covered in this study now needs to be

reframed with two main considerations. Firstly, the past researches (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014; Owyang, 2014; Stokes, Clarence, Anderson, & Rinne, 2014; Hamari et. al, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015) that have described the disparity in demographic and socio-economic statuses of collaborative users (see section 1.3.2), have pivoted their studies on specific types of organizations. In all of these researches, they are limited to organizations that are characterized by Botsman and Rogers (2010) as "product service systems" and "collaborative lifestyles". Especially in the research by Owyang (2014), participants with organizations characterized as "redistribution markets" are found to be undifferentiated by ages or income levels. Therefore, as the first step in the simplification process, it seems appropriate to exclude organizations that are prescribed as "redistribution markets" and focus on what is left of the definition by Botsman and Rogers (2010). Secondly, consumption behaviors may widely differ between sharing in the context of business-to-consumer (B2C) and in that of customer-to-customer (C2C) (Möhlmann, 2015). Hence, as the second step in the simplification process, the scope excludes practices that are not market-mediated as shown in Figure 4 below. This leaves us with the definition of access-based consumption by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012). Access-based consumption defines collaborative consumption as transactions that are market-facilitated involving tangible goods, such as cars or tools, and intangible goods, such as skills or time, but with no exchange of ownership. Therefore, henceforth in this paper, collaborative consumption will be used interchangeably to mean the same as access-based consumption.
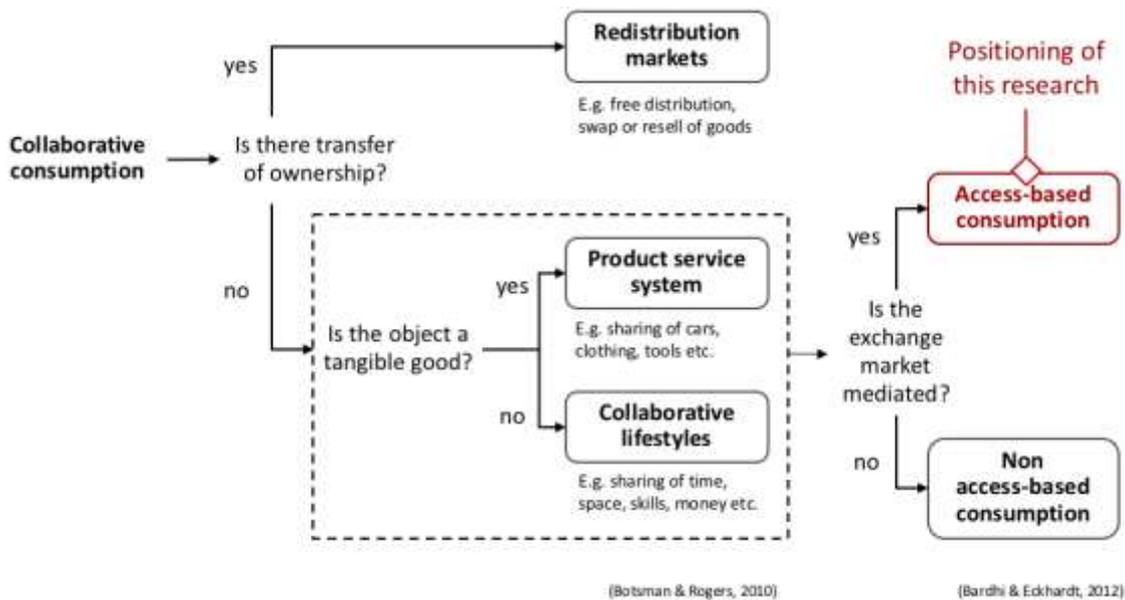
Figure 4: Positioning of this research on the definition of collaborative consumption

1.3.4 Arriving at the research questions

To generate the research questions for this study, we begin by evaluating three premises that have emerged in this subchapter. Firstly, in section 1.3.1, it is observed that while previous researches have quite extensively explored various interests and values towards collaborative consumption (Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015; Hamari et al., 2015; Piscicelli et al., 2015), they have not fully understood the topic using rational consumer decision models. Secondly, in section 1.3.2, the rather distinct group of users, with similar cultural influences and priorities, is postulated to possess a repertoire of cultural competences necessary to navigate the field; without which users eventually drop out, or are said to be shut out, from participation. Thirdly, in section 1.3.3, this study's definition of collaborative consumption is chosen as that of access-based consumption described by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012).

With the purpose to further the understanding of collaborative consumption, the first premise suggests that the study explores a cultural approach that differentiates from the ineffective units of analysis of "interest" and "values." As motivated by the second premise, the unit of analysis chosen for this study is the "rules" that govern the practice. These are the rules, conventions, and norms that are dropping or shutting out the reluctant and the unknowing. By understanding the requirements of these rules, this study aims to delineate the cultural competences necessary to ensure their adherence. To the dimensions of "rules" and "competences", we introduce an additional dimension of "meaning" from the practice-as-entity framework proposed by Huber (2017) that is used for studying collaborative consumption practices. Meaning forms the fundamental through which one interprets the world such as in differentiating the right from the wrong using one's subjective beliefs and judgments (Huber, 2017). The scope of this study is illustrated in Figure 5 which introduces the unit of analysis of "rules" that has been overlooked by prior literature. Following which, we discern the possible "competences" and "meanings" that are associated with the adherences to these engagement rules.
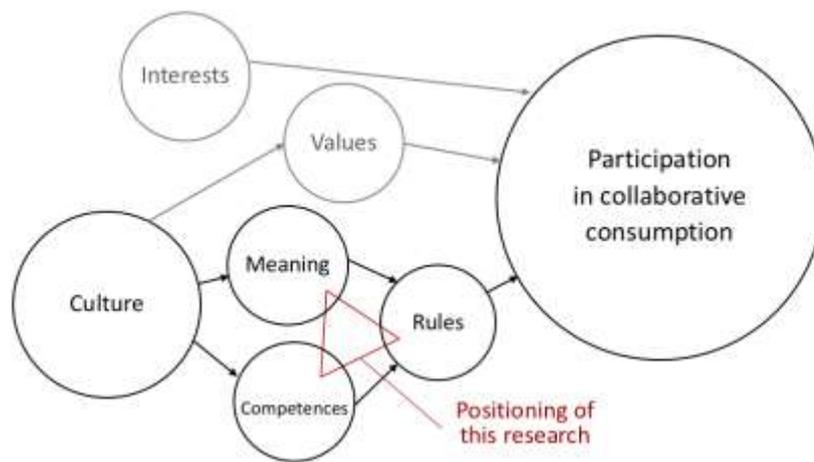
Figure 5: Positioning of this research on rules and conventions influencing participation

As a result, the research questions in this study are formulated as follows.

- *What are the rules of engagement, conventions and norms that govern collaborative consumption?*
- *What are the cultural competences and meaning that users require to adhere to these engagement rules?*

1.4 Research purpose

The purpose of our study is to advance the understanding of collaborative consumption through research on the rules of engagements, conventions, and norms that govern the practice. We postulate that it is through the knowledge of these rules and the possession of the right competences and meanings that people are able to successfully participate in collaborative consumption while those who lack them are deterred from making an initial or repeated attempt. In contrast with past literature on interests and values, where the over focus on the "unit act" has led to inconclusive results (see Figure 3), this research is positioned on the rules and conventions, thus creating the possibility for more meaningful results (see Figure 5).

On a broader theoretical level, this study contributes to the school of literature on consumer culture theories that examines the influence of the institutional and social structure on consumption (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), which has been absent from the field of collaborative consumption. Prior literature, within the finer definition of access-based consumption adopted for this study, have mostly examined collaborative consumption through the research lens of object-self identity (Chen, 2009; Rifkin, 2000) and the dimensionalization of its varied forms (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Therefore, as a more focused theoretical contribution, we hope to further the academic understanding of collaborative consumption by studying the structure (or rules in particular) that governs the practice to understand the cultural requirements of the consumer agency regarding competences and meanings. On practical contribution, the findings obtained through this research may provide an initial insight into how the growth of an otherwise mainstream phenomenon is being barricaded by its self-imposed structure where practitioners can draw references to devise strategies for continued growth.

1.5 Thesis outline

In this first chapter, we have taken the reader through several significant past researches that centered on the topic of collaborative consumption. We initiated the literature review on a broader level by describing the shifting focus of consumer identity projects before examining more specific research streams that had attempted to either define collaborative consumption or identify user motives. Additionally, we formulated the research questions and purpose based on the problems identified from these studies and postulated the potential theoretical and practical importance of this study.

Up next, the second chapter will discuss the research method including the proposed philosophy, research design, choice of case, data collection method and analysis procedures. We will also highlight the steps taken to consider issues on ethicality, trustworthiness, authenticity and research limitations. In the third chapter, we will review several prominent culture theories relevant to the study including the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Ann Swidler, Erving Goffman and Herbert Blumer. In doing so, we will also introduce a theoretical framework that is used to guide data collection and analysis. In the fourth chapter, we will present the findings and analysis. In the fifth chapter, we will discuss the study's results by elucidating the insights that have emerged in relation to the research questions. Finally, in the sixth chapter, we will conclude the thesis by outlining several theoretical and practical contributions as well as possible recommendations for further research.

2. Method

This chapter outlines the research method undertaken to study collaborative consumption in response to the research question established in the preceding chapter. Firstly, we present the research philosophy that motivates the study's ontological and epistemological positions. Secondly, we describe the research methodology in relation to the chosen philosophical positions. Thirdly, we explain how the empirical case is selected. Fourthly, we outline the preparational work carried out prior to data collection. Fifthly, we present the plan for data collection. Sixthly, we show the plan for data analysis. Seventhly, we discuss the ethical considerations for the research design where preclusive measures are proposed as mediation. Eighthly, we outline the steps taken to ensure research trustworthiness and authenticity. Lastly, the chapter closes with a discussion on limitations of the research method.

2.1 Research philosophy

On the measure of coherency, it is necessary to motivate the epistemological and ontological positions of this study to formulate the right research design and guide the researcher's reflexive stances (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The epistemology chosen for this study is "social constructionism" similar to that taken by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2015) in their study on Zipcar. The concept of social constructionism has been described by adept qualitative researchers, such as Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Shotter (1993), as a means of capturing "the ways that people make sense of the world - especially through sharing their experiences with others via the medium of language" (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015, p.142). The epistemology is aligned with the research purpose to gain a greater understanding of the influences underlying collaborative consumption by studying the specific rules of engagements and established conventions. Rich data and descriptions were collected from informants through which insights and conclusions were interpreted. Social constructionism contrasts the "positivist" epistemology more often adopted by prior literature (e.g. Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015; Hamari et al., 2015; Piscicelli et al., 2015) where hypotheses are formulated to test for causality between variables and the propensity for action.

In this paradigm, which follows the ontology of "relativism", we appropriate that the truths that we seek are a social creation of fragments of society and "constructed by people relative to their language or social group, social class, theory, paradigm, culture or worldview" (Hunt, 1994, p.226). Therefore, by its nature, what are considered as "truths" only exist within the context of particular groups of people and cannot be assessed justly or definitely across other groups (Hunt, 1994). Evidently, this contrasts the ontology of "realism" with the unremitting search for truth from particular rationalistic or extrinsic determinants associated with the "positivist" epistemology (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015). The relativist ontology is, therefore, more appropriate for us to fulfill the intention of filling in the gaps in understanding collaborative consumption, by entering the world of the social group through their narrations, while deferring any preconceived notions.

2.2 Research design

To motivate the research design, the research design matrix created by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) can be introduced for the purpose of illustration in Figure 6. While the horizontal axis indicates the span of research epistemology, the vertical axis indicates the level of involvement of the researcher ranging from close proximity in the case of "engaged" style to full independence from study objects in the case of "detached" style (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015). The research design for this study is "engaged constructionism" characterized by the interpretivist stance and close proximity to the objects of study. This design is shown in the lower right quadrant in Figure 6.
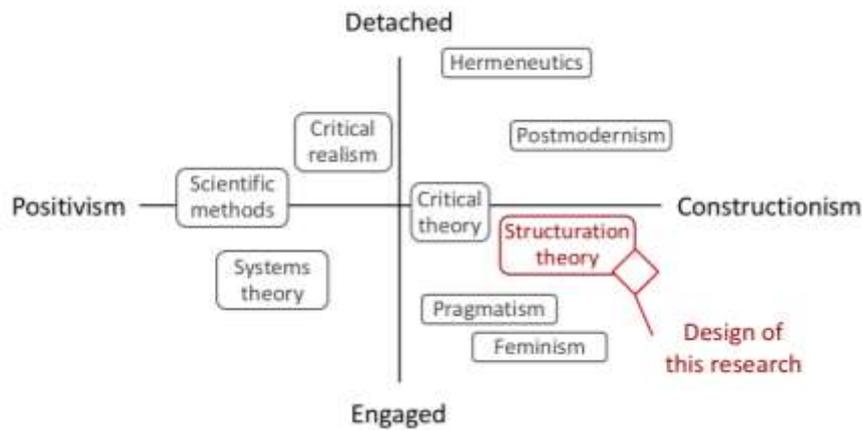
Figure 6: Epistemology and research style (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015)

Within the group of "engaged constructionism" research designs, the research approach can be further developed with structuration theory conceptualized by Giddens (1984). According to the theory, an agency that composes of individuals is guided by structures or rules and resources at the level of particular practices in their actions (Giddens, 1984). Central to this theory is the concept of "duality of structures" where a structure is "both a medium and an outcome" (Giddens, 1984, p.25), and is continuously produced and reproduced through continuous interaction between the agency and the structure (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015). This concept is supportive of the research positioning in section 1.3 that postulated that necessary rules or resources are governing user engagement in collaborative consumption. These structures were delineated using an abductive approach composing of both an inductive style based on interpretations and a deductive style based on theories (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The philosophical positions of "relativism" and "constructionism" are more useful, in this case, through a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. While qualitative methods collect rich data that captures the symbolic representations in social constructs (Levy, 1959), quantitative methods examine the causality of variables and are less useful in making sense of the meanings that people associate with their actions (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015). Thus, the former approach is more suited for the intention of this study.

Amidst the array of constructionist qualitative methodologies, such as "action research, cooperative inquiry, archival research, ethnography and narrative methods," the latter two are commonly used in consumer researches (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015, p.225). While both qualitative techniques provide rich descriptions, narrative methods collect only "micro-level accounts" by individual users, while ethnography also collects "micro-level interactions" between users (Bertilsson, 2009). As these micro-level interactions are the basis through which the consumer agency and structure are constructed and can be interpreted, ethnography is therefore preferred as the method of choice in this study. Ethnography is a research technique where the researcher is deeply immersed in the group culture and dynamics of the objects of study and retrieves rich data by documenting the languages and behaviors through observations or interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Internet and Web 2.0 has created an entirely digital medium for ethnographic research in what is known as netnography. As explained by Kozinets (2002), netnography involves studying "the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications" (p.62). This approach is achieved by applying traditional and market-oriented ethnographic research methods to different types of Internet communities such as online forums, bulletin boards and independent web pages (Kozinets, 2002). As such, it allows for an observation of the social behavior of consumers that is "naturally occurring" as it is done in a "context that is not fabricated by the marketing researcher" (Kozinets, 2002, p.62).

Netnography was used as the research method in this study. It is suited for studying collaborative consumption for several reasons. Firstly, netnography, which surveys online communities, is well poised for studying collaborative consumption where users, facilitated by web 2.0, are mostly active in cyberspace. Secondly, by adopting a passive approach with no direct researcher involvement, the explicit language of informants are documented without the risk of disturbance due to intervention techniques used in other methods (Kozinets, 2002). Thirdly, netnography provides an inexpensive, timely and scalable research option which is advantageous over the use of narration methods such as semi-structured interviews (Kozinets, 2002). Lastly and most importantly, netnography provides researchers with the emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives for more holistic insights (Easterby-Smith & et. al., 2015). In turn, this would allow us to learn and understand the rules and resources of collaborative consumption through the ways in which consumers articulate and behave.

2.3 Empirical case selection

In selecting the most appropriate empirical site for netnographic research, it was necessary to first decide on the specific empirical case of study. Brand awareness and the size of user base were used as the basis for the initial shortlist. Three services are ranked as the top options in terms of brand recognition (Owyang & Samuel, 2015). They are: Uber, a ridesharing service with at least 40 million riders in 500 cities worldwide (Kokalitcheva, 2016); Airbnb, a short-term lodging service with over 150 million users worldwide present in 191 countries (Airbnb, n.d.); and Kickstarter, a collaborative funding platform for creative projects with over 12 million users (Kickstart, n.d.).

The second round of filtering was conducted based on four characteristic dimensions, conceptualized by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012), that can be used to differentiate between various types of access-based consumption. They are temporality, anonymity, market mediation, and consumer involvement. These dimensions were used as the framework to evaluate the shortlisted options in an attempt to delineate the case that exhibits the strongest agency/structure formation. Firstly, on temporality, longer-term usage is more conducive to the development of user relationships than shorter-term usage (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). As sharing accommodation, in the case of Airbnb, necessitates a longer duration of engagement as opposed to sharing a car or funding a project, the level of vested interest of users for information exchange may likely be higher. Secondly, on anonymity, prosocial behaviors are more pronounced in public than private consumption (Belk, 2010; Chen, 2009; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011). As such, Kickstarter differentiate as the service that provides a more public consumptionscape conducive for communal like interactions. Thirdly, the level of market intervention can "shape exchange norms" and hence motivating structural dynamics that guides interactions (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.885). In this case, the complexity in negotiation is expected to be the strongest in Airbnb and Kickstarter. Lastly, on consumer involvement, it captures the extent through which opportunities can be provided for users to engage in object appropriation. Relating to usage duration with a more tangible good, users of Airbnb are expected to have the highest degree of involvement among the three services. All in all, it is shown that Airbnb is the most attractive option and chosen as the empirical research case.

2.4 Making cultural entrée

There are two preliminary steps outlined by Kozinets (2002) in making a "cultural entrée" or preparing for conducting netnographic research. The first step involves the formulation of specific marketing research questions and the selection of the suitable online channels for observation (Kozinets, 2002). While the research question has been introduced in section 1.4, a number of appropriate online platforms were identified in an initial web scan. Of the various types of online communities recognized by Kozinets (2002) as suitable for market-oriented netnographic studies, including electronic bulletin boards, web pages or web rings, lists, and chat rooms, electronic bulletin boards and chat rooms were found to be appropriate channels for revealing micro interactions

between users. Furthermore, due to the nature of the short-lived and fast-moving interactions that exist within chat rooms, electronic bulletin boards were adopted as the channel of choice. The Airbnb official forum (http://community.airbnb.com) was found to be the best available electronic bulletin board.

The second step outlined by Kozinets (2002) involves the researcher getting acquainted with the nature of the forum, how it works and how the members interact, to develop a proper and thorough "understanding of the symbolic world of the subjects of study" (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003, p.216). The Airbnb official forum was analyzed and found suitable on a few grounds. Firstly, the forum contains an array of relevant user-generated data on Airbnb matters by hosts and guests, serving as a platform to gather ideas, feedback and experiences between users (Hipkins, 2016). Secondly, with a total conversation count of over 35K and an average of 15 new posts per hour, the site traffic is high with participation from a host of users from around the world. Thirdly, as the forum is not entirely moderated by Airbnb, it enables the unfolding of peer-to-peer interactions with a typical post receiving on the average of five comments. Fourthly, with no character limit placed on the length of entries, the forum facilitates the providence of rich data by users to be retrieved. Lastly, and contrary to conventional ethnographic methods that require transcription, these netnographic data were conveniently downloaded in the exact words used by the authors.

2.5 Data collection

We hung out at the Airbnb community forum from April 18th to 22nd to listen in and collect data entries posted from January 2017 to March 2017. The data were retrieved in several sessions that differed time-wise. The forum is organized into eight different chat rooms namely: "welcome and announcements," "new hosts," "hosts," "community help," "where in the world," "travelers", "Airbnb open" and "host newsletter" (see Appendix 1) (Airbnb, n.d.). Three of these chat rooms are designed for hosts, "new hosts," "hosts" and "host newsletter," two are designed for guests, "where in the world" and "travelers", while the remaining three are created for members from both groups. In studying the perceptions of hosts as collaborative consumers, the chatroom "new hosts" was chosen for data mining where the established rules of engagement are clearly mentioned during the interesting exchanges between new and experienced hosts. These rules are often given as advice by more senior hosts in response to the questions from novice hosts. In the case of guests, the chatroom "travelers" was chosen where the conversations relate to Airbnb as opposed to the more generic comments found on the alternative option.

According to Eysenbach and Till (2001), netnographic research can take three differing forms: passive observation without interacting with the subjects of the study, active interaction with the subjects of the study but without disclosing one's role as a researcher, and disclosing one's role as a researcher and then actively interacting with the subjects of the study. With our intention to observe the rules, conventions, and norms that exist within the user groups, passive observation is selected as the appropriate mode of research. This is so as the more active interaction associated with the latter forms of the research mode was not necessary with the richness of data available through the online forum exchanges. The data studied were taken from forum threads which consist of opinions made as assertions and critiques by hosts and guests of Airbnb. These data were downloaded and saved digitally when they were found to include the mention of any particular engagement rule, norm or convention appropriated by the community. The selection criteria were necessary to filter through large amounts of data which were then stored in chronological order starting from the January 1, 2017. As is the case with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), the process of data collection was ceased when further data obtained did not contribute to additional insights on the topic (Kozinets, 2002). The resulting data material that was downloaded, marked and analyzed in digital copies amount to 183 discussions threads consisting of 1665 individual postings or comments contributed by about 330 users with an average of 5 postings per user. Even so, the posting counts were not as evenly distributed among the forum participants as what is shown by the average count. We estimated that there were around 50-80 contributors who were more active which indicates a community structure. The ratio of data from hosts and guests averaged at 1.7 is to 1 with more active forum participants who were hosts than guests.

2.6 Data analysis

The purpose of the data analysis is to identify patterns and themes in the collected data through reflexive and meticulous investigation that will help explain the studied phenomenon and generate theory. However, before the data analysis can begin, the collected data needs to be compiled and organized "in a way that facilitates the empirical process" (Easterby-Smith et al., p.185). As an alternative to the conventional approach of handling data manually, computer-assisted data analysis have predominantly been deployed by some netnographers through the usage of the basic functionality of digital storage as opposed to the more complex analytical capabilities (Hahn, 2008). The advantages of storing data digitally include the ease of retrieval and coding of data enabling the scalability of research at a larger scale (Kozinets, 2010). As such, this research utilized the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis method which entailed downloading relevant user comments from the web, through a web clipper plugin installed on the internet browser, and subsequently storing the data in a protected database in Microsoft OneNote (Kozinets, 2010). In so doing, the manual collection of qualitative data is mitigated where the said approach can easily become operationally burdensome owing to the myriad of physical material or printouts associated with huge amounts of data sets collected.

Subsequently, the collected data was analyzed using hermeneutic interpretation and an abductive approach to allow for sense-making, interpretation, and generation of insights. Imperative in the choice of an appropriate method of analysis is that it goes together with the philosophical and methodological considerations of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to Kozinets (2010), the analysis of netnographic data is normally guided by an inductive approach relating to the epistemology of social constructionism. This means that theory is generated from the data using a bottom-up approach where individual observations are used to make inferences about the object of study. Thus, the inductive approach subscribes that the generation of themes during the analytical process should not be influenced by the prior theoretical knowledge of the researchers (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Furthermore, it is important to note that the top-down approach using prior theorizing "can inhibit the forming of fresh ideas and the making of surprising connections" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p.94). Potentially, it could lead to the researcher forcing a preconceived result (Glaser, 1992). However, at the same time, avoiding existing theory completely can lead to the study "not making the connection between data and important research questions" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p.94). Therefore, in processing the empirical data, we adopted an abductive approach, which entails both inductive and deductive elements (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994; Kirkeby, 1994). Additionally, it has been argued that abduction is particularly appropriate in cases where "the researcher's objective is to discover new things" (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p.559). As our study looks into an area of research that has not been explored extensively, this makes the abductive approach an attractive option.

Hermeneutic interpretation is a way of interpreting qualitative data that has been highlighted as an appropriate data analysis method for netnographic research (Kozinets, 2010). The hermeneutic interpretation process, referred to as the hermeneutic circle, suggests that in order for someone to understand a text in full, one has to also understand the individual parts of that text and vice versa (Gummesson, 2003). It, therefore, involves iteration between interpretation and analysis of the various parts of a text and the text as a whole. The ambition of this process is to generate a holistic understanding of the text by "delving into the social and historical contexts of the data for explanations, providing a subtle, specific, nuanced cultural interpretation" (Kozinets, 2010, p.120). Since the aim of this study is to study micro level interactions within the social context of the Airbnb community, hermeneutic interpretation was considered to be an appropriate method of analysis. The hermeneutic process is also characterized by a constant comparison of prior understanding and the knowledge that has been acquired during the research process (Gummesson, 2003). This makes the hermeneutic interpretation process abductive in nature which adds to its appropriateness as the method of analysis in this study.

The actual analytical process followed a number of distinct steps. First, after the collected data had been compiled and organized in a convenient manner, both researchers read it through in full. This was done to gain an initial familiarity with the nature of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). At this stage, we wrote short field notes to document any observations and reflections related to the data (see Appendix 2) (Kozinets, 2002). As noted earlier (see section 2.5), the collected data was made up of postings that were found to include the mention of any particular engagement rule, norm or convention appropriated by the community. As such, the field notes addressed the particular engagement rules, norms or conventions that were found in the retrieved forum postings. Because of its abundance, the data was then discussed and reflected upon jointly. This was done to facilitate the understanding of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). At this point, we started to evaluate the data in accordance with our theoretical framework, derived from our prior understanding of the topic at hand. In doing so, we identified a number of initial themes from the rules, norms, and conventions.

Once the initial evaluative themes were established, we went through the data again, starting a more thorough and in-depth interpretation process. However, before the interpretation process started, the data was split into two sets, one pertaining to hosts and one pertaining to guests. The datasets were then interpreted separately to make the interpretation process more manageable. At this point, we used the hermeneutic interpretation approach to analyze and interpret the interactions in the forum threads. As such, the individual posts were interpreted and contrasted to the forum thread as a whole and vice versa, creating a comprehensive understanding of the interactions (Gummesson, 2003). Moreover, in line with the hermeneutic interpretation process, we continuously compared the empirical material with our theoretical framework to add greater depth to the understanding of the data (Gummesson, 2003). Once a forum thread had been interpreted, the rule, norm, or convention that was discussed in the thread was put into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as a "line of action". There it was grouped together with other "lines of action" that were deemed to have similar functions for Airbnb users. These groups were then labeled strategies of action and summarized in a table along with their corresponding lines of action (see Table 1).

In the final steps of the analytical process, the focus was changed from interpreting data hermeneutically to linking the strategies of action to the previously identified evaluative themes. Applying our theoretical model to the empirical material, we tried to link the delineated strategies of action to the cultural competences and meaning attributions of the Airbnb users. In particular, each strategy of action was juxtaposed with the theoretical concepts of cultural competences and meaning attributions where interpretations of the latter two attributes were made (see Appendix 3). By repeating these steps, we generated a list of associated competences and meaning which were then thematized into three groups of competences and two groups of meanings. All in all, the findings that were derived from the empirical material on collaborative consumption were subsequently used to construct a tentative analytical model for cultural analysis.

2.7 Ethical considerations

In his conceptualization of netnography, Kozinets emphasizes the necessity of researchers to both reflect on and adhere to ethical guidelines when conducting netnographic research (2002). Central to this concern, as Kozinets puts it, is the fact that researchers conducting netnographic research can often be considered to be, "lurkers" (2002, p.65). This stems from the mismanagement in the expectations of forum participants where their data, which were retrieved by netnographic researchers, were never shared with the intention of being used for research (Kozinets, 2002). The potential of user resentment, which arises from the researcher position as "lurkers," demands that researchers consider more carefully these ethical issues when collecting user verbatims. Despite its importance, the nature of these ethical guidelines is still a subject of much debate and a consensus agreement on what constitutes ethical netnographic procedures is still lacking (Kozinets, 2002). The main points of the debate are twofold.

The first point relates to the ambiguity of whether particular online forums may be considered as public or private spaces for the publishing of personal opinions (Kozinets, 2002). Eysenbach and Till (2001) propose three measures that can be used to determine if an online forum can be perceived as a public or private area. Firstly, a forum is considered more private if a subscription or login is needed for entry to the discussion platform. This is not the case for the empirical site for this study. While users are required to register an account before posting on the Airbnb forum, no logins are required for visitors in accessing the comments posted on the site. Secondly, the degree of privacy is necessarily inversely proportionate to the number of participants within the community. With participation from at least 300 unique contributors, a regular user within the Airbnb community forum may resemble more closely to a voice in the crowd. Lastly, the concept of privacy can also be understood from the established posting rules and guidelines provided by the forum administrator. In the case of the Airbnb community forum, the posting guidelines particularly warn its members that "the Community Center can be viewed by anyone [...] for your safety and privacy and those of others, do not post personal details about yourself or any member" (Hipkins, 2017). As such, fulfilling all three criteria, the empirical site of choice can be understood as a less private space. Furthermore, the lack of authentication by the system administrator during the registration process creates no barrier to entry for anyone to participate in the forum. As such, the purpose of registration can be seen more as a mechanism to create user identifiers than to enforce community security.

The second point details the debate over how informed consent and confidentiality should be enforced in online settings (Kozinets, 2002). The need for informed consent can be decided by the degree through which the interaction between forum members can be considered to be public or private where the need is greater in the case of the latter (Eysenbach & Till, 2001). The four step process introduced by Kozinets (2002) on ethical considerations for netnographic research in private spaces can be outlined as follows. Firstly, the researcher should declare his or her research intention to participants on the online platform. Secondly, the researcher should not divulge the personal information of participants interacted during the study. Thirdly, the researcher should provide the option for participants to evaluate and influence their research approach. Lastly, the researcher should acquire the consent of participants before replicating their posts as quotes. These measures mentioned above are used for research in the case of private spaces. Archival data, collected and analyzed in a passive and non-intrusive fashion, and where the researcher anonymizes the data without disturbing user interactions, can be carried out ethically without informed consent (Eysenbach & Till, 2001). Consequently, with the intended forum as a public space, this paper shall uphold the ethics by enforcing the anonymization of all data presented.

2.8 Trustworthiness and authenticity

A central tenant of the netnographic method, as with other research methods, is to ensure a trustworthy interpretation of the data collected (Kozinets, 2002). This entails adhering to more traditional methods in order to infuse the research with methodological rigor (Kozinets, 2002). However, due to the "unique characteristics of online communities" (Kozinets, 2002, p.62), netnography also requires a certain degree of bespoke methodological procedures. According to Kozinets (2002), this usually requires a departure from the oft-used concepts of reliability and validity.

The appropriateness of the measures used for the evaluation of the rigor of a study is dependent on their compatibility with the study's fundamental methodological and philosophical origins (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Therefore, criteria normally used for quantitative or positivist research are likely to be less appropriate when applied to qualitative or social constructionist research. As illustrated in section 2.1, our study is of a qualitative nature and adheres to a social constructionist epistemology as well as a relativist ontology. As opposed to quantitative research methods, where reliability and validity are essential measures in formulating and validating the quality of research, the usefulness of these criteria to qualitative research has been a matter of discourse (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Reliability and validity have been argued to have

less influence on qualitative research as the focus is on local and particularistic accounts rather than on statistical measurements (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Moreover, as explained by Guba and Lincoln (1994), reliability and validity are often incongruent with the social constructionist epistemological position that tends to guide qualitative research. It is argued that reliability and validity are associated with the assumption of a singular reality (Bryman & Bell, 2015), something that is at odds with the constructionist position that "verifiable observations are potentially subject to very different interpretations" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015, p.84). As a way to address these issues, a number of scholars have argued the necessity to draw upon a number of different criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Schwandt et al., 2007).

For example, Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) propose that trustworthiness and authenticity are more appropriate criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research than reliability and validity. They suggest that trustworthiness encompasses four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These are argued to correspond to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, criteria commonly used for the evaluation of the quality of quantitative research. Authenticity is, primarily, concerned with fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Consequently, given the qualitative nature of our study and our choice of netnography as our research method, rather than using reliability and validity, we have used authenticity and trustworthiness to ensure and evaluate the quality of our study. A number of measures have been taken to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study in the following areas.

Firstly, credibility relates to how believable the account of the studied context that the research has generated is (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). As outlined above, qualitative research usually subscribes to the fact that there is not one true account of reality. Rather, multiple accounts of reality can exist. For such an account to be considered credible it must be considered to be believable (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, to enhance the credibility of the study we took measures to ensure that we obtained a holistic understanding of the research context so that we could depict it in a believable way. Amongst other things, this was done through persistent observation and on-site team interaction (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989).

Secondly, transferability relates to whether the results of a study can be transferred to other contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As mentioned above, the focus of qualitative research is usually on local and particularistic accounts. As such, they are often context dependent. Therefore, transferability is generally of less importance in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Instead, it has been argued that qualitative research should aim to provide people with "a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other milieux" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.398). Thus, in order to enhance the transferability of the study, we tried to produce a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p.6) of the research context, rich in detail, to generate an as comprehensive "database" of the study as possible.

Thirdly, dependability refers to whether a study can yield the same results if replicated (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). To a considerable degree, this is contingent on how detailed of an account of the study that the researchers have been able to create. Such an account should outline things such as various philosophical, methodological, and analytical considerations. As such, it has been suggested that researchers should leave a "trail" that is possible for people to investigate and examine (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p.77). Therefore, to enhance the dependability of the study, we have tried to outline every step of the research process in a transparent manner. In so doing we have, among other things, documented and kept records over the data collection (see Appendix 1) and the data analysis (see Appendix 3), including field notes (see Appendix 2).

Fourthly, confirmability relates to the degree of objectivity with which the study has been carried out (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It has been argued that it is virtually impossible to avoid some degree of subjectivity in qualitative

research, but it is nevertheless important for researchers to show that they have taken measures to overcome any potential personal biases (Bryman & Bell, 2015). While it is difficult to both ensure and document, we have tried to avoid letting our personal biases affect the study in any way. For example, in order not to force any preconceived notions during the research, all choices pertaining to data collection and data interpretation were discussed between both researchers to challenge hidden assumptions and biases before making any decision (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Fifthly, authenticity relates to the representativeness of the informants in a study and whether the researchers have consciously taken different viewpoints into account in the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As previously stated (see section 2.5), approximately 330 people have contributed to the empirical material of this study. Within this group, hosts are overrepresented but only marginally. Furthermore, the informants are of varying demographic background. As such, the diverse mix of informants contributed to the authenticity of the study.

2.9 Limitations

While the choice of netnography as our research method carries with it a number of advantages, it is not without its disadvantages. As detailed above (see section 2.2), netnography allows us to obtain information-rich and naturally occurring data in an unobtrusive manner (Kozinets, 2002). Furthermore, the data is collected in a more efficient and less time-consuming fashion than other qualitative data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups (Kozinets, 2002). By collecting textual interactions through copying or downloading them directly from their online setting, no time needs to be dedicated to transcription. Nevertheless, the netnographic method carries with it a number of disadvantages that need to be considered.

The most significant methodological limitation of the netnographic method relates to the textual nature of the captured data (Kozinets, 2010). The online contexts that netnographies aim to study are generally regarded to be "impoverished" of social cues (Kozinets, 2002, p.64). This means that the textual nature of the data that is obtained through online contexts, as compared to data that is obtained through face-to-face interactions, fails to capture nonverbal communication that might play an important role in understanding the meanings of what is being said (Kozinets, 2010). Such nonverbal communication might include body language, hand gestures, and shifts in tone. As a result, contextualizing the data can turn out to be more difficult than data captured through traditional ethnographies (Kozinets, 2002).

Moreover, as detailed above (see section 2.2) this netnography has a passive approach with no direct researcher involvement. As such, similar to the limitation posed by the textual nature of the data, the passive approach may hinder the interpretation of the collected data (Kozinets, 2010). While a passive approach allows the documentation of explicit language of informants without the risk of disturbance from the researcher, it has been suggested that such an approach can affect the researcher's ability to "experience embedded cultural understanding" (Kozinets, 2010, p.75). Without any practical experience from the studied online context or direct contact with informants, it might be difficult to understand the mechanics of the community. In this way, a purely observational role might keep the researcher from truly understanding the cultural context and reducing any analysis of cultural meanings to conjectures.

Furthermore, taking a passive approach means that it is not possible for the researcher to pose follow-up questions or seek clarification for the interpretations made about the social interactions within the online community. As a result, novice researchers might end up with a shallow analysis. Therefore, netnography in general and the passive approach in particular, put considerable demands on the researcher's "interpretive skills" (Kozinets, 2002). Another limitation of the netnographic method relates to the uncertainty of the truthfulness of the informants' online identities (Kozinets, 2002; 2010). As the online setting brings with it the possibility for people to be

anonymous, it has been argued that people may portray themselves in an untruthful way. People might be dishonest about their age, sex or ethnicity and might embellish their "education, occupation and income" (Kozinets, 2010, p.131). In fact, it is almost taken for granted that so is the case (Kozinets, 2010). As a consequence, it can be difficult for researchers to be certain that they truly understand the research context.

Nevertheless, netnography was deemed to be the most appropriate research method given the purpose of our study. While the netnographic method has a number of downsides, the benefits that it presents are deemed to more than outweigh them. As our intention is to study the micro level interactions of members of the Airbnb community rather than the individual members themselves, the fact that members might put on a "more cultivated and controlled self-image" (Kozinets, 2002, p.64) than in other settings is considered to be of little concern. Moreover, not only has it been found that untruthful self-presentation online is less common than what has typically been asserted, the fact that people create different self-images is true also of other social contexts (Kozinets, 2010). As such, the potentially falsified nature of informant identities may not adversely affect the trustworthiness of the data. Furthermore, to be able to capture such micro-interactions in a naturalistic environment is considered to be more valuable than the opportunity to interact with the members of the community which would have been possible if a less passive approach to netnography had been used. Rather, it was reasoned that taking a less passive approach could have otherwise disrupted conversations and, in turn, alter the behaviors of the community as a result (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003).

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3. Theory

This chapter presents the cultural theories that guide the formulation of the study's theoretical research framework. Firstly, we introduce the metaphor of dramaturgy that is often used to analyze micro-interactions between individuals. Secondly, we explore the concept of strategies of action and theory of practice that connect actions of individuals, or their adherence to rules, with their cultural competences. Thirdly, we outline the theory of symbolic interactionism to conceptualize the manifestation of meaning and its implications on users' participation in collaborative consumption. Lastly, we present the theoretical framework by putting together the important elements from all four theories. An overview of these theories is summarized in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Overlays of theories in this chapter

3.1 Dramaturgy

One prominent theoretical lens on social interaction is the use of the "dramaturgy" metaphor that describes individuals as actors of a play illustrated by Erving Goffman (1959). The following section will explore key ideas from his influential work, *The presentation of self in everyday life*.

3.1.1 Self presentation

In this "dramaturgy" analogy, each individual or self is said to "put on his show for the benefit of other people" when speaking or behaving in public (Goffman, 1959, p.10). In turn, the performance is read by an audience that subsequently ascertains particular claims about the performer (Goffman, 1959). The metaphor is brought to life with the concepts of two regions: the front and back stages. At the "front stage" where the performance is given, performers present themselves in acts that have been designed to portray distinct impressions while subduing any habitual acts that conflict with their desired images (Goffman, 1959). At the "back stage", away from the eyes of the audience, performers unwind and are said to be "off character". It also serves as an arena where the performances are constructed, rehearsed and coached (Goffman, 1959). Performance interplay between performers and audience is crucial in a process known as socialization where certain conventions and ideologies are continuously produced, by some, and learned, by others, and which contributes to the overall sustenance of cultures (Clausen, 1968; Macionis, 2013). There are two main concepts developed by Goffman (1959) in detailing performers' strategies for socialization.

In one concept, performers influence the perception of their audience with the use of a set of designative stage props. Conceptualized as "fronts", these tools are a "part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (Goffman, 1959, p.13). Four different aspects of a front can be delineated with expected regularity for a unique performance: setting, personal, appearance, and manner (Goffman, 1959). "Setting" is the most visual element of a front and can be illustrated by items that are placed on the stage where the performance is made. In the instance of online dating, this refers to user profile pages that are used by others as background information in their interactions with the profile owners (Messaris & Humphreys, 2006). "Personal" is the fundamental front element with parts that are most closely associated with the performer such as their age, size, and race. "Appearance" is a more fleeting aspect of the front that informs of the performer's cordial status or state of activity such as their preferred social contexts that are formal or informal. "Manner" is a related front element to "appearance" but include the signs that indicate the role that performers would like to play in an upcoming conversation such as their degrees of proactivity or reactivity. Appearance and manner are essential in the example of online dating where both aspects are captured within the content and tonality of online interactions that help portray a particular user impression (Messaris & Humphreys, 2006).

In another concept, performers are obsessed with the notion to provide their audience with an idealized performance of themselves, which is typically constructed based on values and norms that are widely acclaimed by society (Goffman, 1959). Performers are therefore inclined to take steps in convincing their audience that they are more ideal than they are in reality (Goffman, 1959). This is exemplified by performances that showcase the idealized self as the only or primary self, though every individual would have more than one self in one's real life (Goffman, 1959). In the instance of bloggers, this refers to their attempts not to recreate their entire offline selves online but rather carefully orchestrate facets of their personality that they wish to showcase to their readers (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). Additionally, performers idealize by exaggerating the exclusivity of their performances to make the audience feel that they are special (Goffman, 1959). These obsessions are taken to the extreme with the attempts to hide or downplay certain events, details, and intents which are inconsistent with these idealized images or what is known as "backstage behavior" (Goffman, 1959). There are various inauthentic consequences with such corrective actions. Firstly, the performer may develop secret pleasure over the hidden perks, unknown to their audiences, which are inconsistent with what is expected of their glorified status. Secondly, the audience may evaluate the performer based on an image of false perfection since any glitches or inaccuracies have been rectified before the appearance. Thirdly, the judgments of the audience may be impeded by the overemphasis on the outcome of the performances rather than the process necessary for the performers to achieve it. Lastly, in some circumstances, the performer may be willing to overstep personal standards privately in an attempt to achieve a desired public image.

3.1.2 Managing impressions

Central to the idea of people as masters of their performances is their unremitting responsibilities to express themselves appropriately and consistently in public at all times (Goffman, 1959). The notion relates to Goffman's (1955) earlier concept of "face" which he defines as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line (stance) others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p.222). As such, if one, while operating in the front stage, fails to abide by the social rules and conventions that govern their performance, one is said to lose "face" relating to the lowering of one's social value and status (Messaris & Humphreys, 2006). However, performance management is a complex task in itself, where impressions impinged on the audience can be caused by expressions that are "given" as verbal cues and those that are "given off" as non-verbal cues (Goffman, 1959). While the former is a conscious construct, the latter can be both conscious and unconscious making it difficult to control (Goffman, 1959).

Inasmuch as performance has been hitherto illustrated as an act of one person, it is crucial to discern its broader function for maintaining collective interests as opposed to individualistic interests (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, in the framework outlined by Goffman (1959), the actor is necessary a member of a team where cooperation is essential in staging a joint performance. This camaraderie is advantageous in ensuring the coherency of the performance where "each teammate is forced to rely on the good conduct and behavior of his fellows, and they, in turn, are forced to rely on him" (Goffman, 1959, p.50). Even so, performance disruptions associated with inappropriate expressions can occur that negatively impact the order in social interaction, the indictment in one's self-conception and the stature of the whole social establishment (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, impression management is of paramount importance and is implemented by the team using three defensive measures (Goffman, 1959). Firstly, teammates are expected to be "dramaturgically loyal" and be obliged to preserve the integrity of the performance. This maintains that they guard the team secrets, refrain from manipulating others for personal gains and are receptive to taking on even minor roles in good manners. Secondly, members should be "dramaturgically disciplined" and should not needlessly break character. This entails that they possess dexterity, caution, discretion and poise to navigate the field with skill and ease. Lastly, teammates ought to practice "dramaturgical circumspection" by anticipating and planning ahead to ensure that shows are undisrupted. This necessitates that they exercise precaution such as selecting only good members while delineating those that do not meet the cut.

3.1.3 Dramaturgy in collaborative consumption

Although Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective is initially prescribed for interactions that exist face-to-face, the robustness of the principles has been argued by many sociologists, such as Jenkins (2010), Laughey (2007), Jacobsen (2010), and Miller and Arnold (2009), as adequate for extension into computer-mediated media. Furthermore, Meyrowitz (1985) motivates, as a possible extension to Goffman's work, that "it is not the physical setting itself that determines the nature of the interaction, but the patterns of information flow" (p.36). Laughey (2007) contends that the progress of computer-mediated media has enabled participants communicating online to generate content-rich data suited for analysis using the framework. As such, they suggest that Goffman's dramaturgical model is, notwithstanding, valid, thus making it appropriate for use to examine users' online conversations on collaborative consumption.

As shown in the preceding section, performance is not a unit act but a show, collaboratively put forth by a team. However, as highlighted by Goffman (1959), the "team" analogy illustrates a group that merely lives within the series of interactions that maintains the integrity of conversations, and outside of which, it does not sufficiently constitute a social formation or hierarchy. Hence, the model can be applied to study collaborative consumption in more modest ways. The different groups of users in collaborative consumption can be seen as the performers and the audience where the former tries to instill in the latter an impression of themselves by following a set of rules and norms. Albeit Meyrowitz's (1985) proposal of the online space as increasingly evolving into a "middle stage", with aspects of both the front and back stages due to normative use of the internet, the empirical site (community forums) in this research is assumed as the "back stage". It is used for delineating the rules, norms, and conventions that are negotiated by collaborative consumers for use at the "front stage" (Airbnb website). In particular, the rules deployed at the "front stage" are analyzed through their conversations at the "back stage", such as those pertaining to their user profiles (fronts), their assertions (idealization) and their condemnations (defensive measures). The nature of their paradoxical selves is also observed through off-character reactions that are typically hidden or downplayed at the "front stage".

3.2 Culture in action

A number of prominent cultural theories address human behavior and the resources that enable that behavior. The following section will look more closely at two such theories, Ann Swidler's (1986) theory of strategies of action and Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of habitus and capital.

3.2.1 Strategies of action and cultural toolkit

The world of sociology has generated numerous hypotheses aiming to explain what drives action and human behavior. Particular importance has been given to models suggesting that action is driven by either individually perceived interests or by culturally prescribed values (Swidler, 1986). One influential and enduring model of action is that put forth by prominent German sociologist Max Weber. Weber argued that human behavior was the result of a drive toward "ideal and material interests" (Weber, 1946, p.280). He meant that the interests valued by individuals, whether they are ideal, on matters related to spirituality, social stature etcetera, or materialistic on issues related to financial gains among other things, function as the impetus that set actions in motion (Swidler, 1986; Swedberg, 2000). The actions generated from the ideal and material interests are then directed to various end goals by ideas through "world images" that "define the destinations human beings seek to reach and the means for getting there" (Swidler, 1986, p.274).

Later scholars, while drawing upon the work of Weber, have de-emphasized the significance of ideas to give more prominence to the role of values (Swidler, 1986). Rather than being the result of more rational and individualistic interests, the values driven paradigm suggests that action is motivated by a pursuit of certain end goals that are influenced by "cultural tradition" (Swidler, 1986, p.274). Society is argued to share common values, in which some end goals are favored while others are considered to be undesirable. In this way, the cultural tradition motivates people toward pursuing certain goals while negating others, effectively "defining what people want" (Swidler, 1986, p.274).

While these two paradigms have been the popular explanatory models of action, they have not been without their detractors, and their explanatory merits have been called into question (Swidler, 1986). Both paradigms argue that action is driven by a pursuit of wants, be they derived from interests or values. However, critics have questioned the relevance of looking at wants, arguing that they do little to explain what people do and, thus, are insufficient in describing actions. The primary point of contention is that both paradigms assume that actions are selected so as to conform to their interests or values. However, it is not possible for every single action to be critically considered in reality. Instead, to circumvent the painstakingly time-consuming process that this would entail, people rely on "culturally-shaped skills, habits, and styles" (Swidler, 1986, p.275) to arrange actions in larger collections, referred to as strategies of action, for the attainment of certain personal objectives. These skills, habits, and styles form, what Swidler (1986) refers to as, a "toolkit" of cultural competences which determines what lines of action that one can pursue. Consequently, to successfully navigate in a particular cultural environment, you need to be familiar with the necessary cultural competences and skills. Without a working knowledge of these, moving between different cultural environments will likely result in friction and, what is commonly known as, culture shock. As a result, the set of actions is chosen to optimize the use of available cultural competences (Swidler, 1986).

3.2.2 Habitus and capital

Parallels can be drawn between Swidler's concept of strategies of action and Bourdieu's theory of practice. While Bourdieu considers practice to be pursued by one without intentional consideration, it is nevertheless guided by an image of an end outcome that one aspires to reach (Jenkins, 2007). In his view, people tap on their embodied form of cultural resources, which he coined as habitus, to draw references that enable them to achieve these outcomes. The habitus, which constitutes the resources through which individuals form strategies, is comparable to Swidler's notion of a tool kit of cultural competences. In a similar way, the embodied knowledge or skills that one possesses in the form of habitus confines one's action to a limited range of contexts where they can be of use (Ferreira, 2015). The habitus is further defined by various types of capital (Sassatelli, 2007). As outlined by Bourdieu, there

are four primary forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Jenkins, 2007). Economic capital refers to an individual's financial assets, social capital to his or her social networks, cultural capital to his or her embodied dispositions, cultural skills, and educational merits, and symbolic capital to his or her status and reputation (Holt, 1997; Jenkins, 2007).

The constitution of the different forms of capital that one possesses is important for one's ability to navigate in the various milieus of the social world. Bourdieu refers to such milieus as social fields, and defines them as "social arenas within which struggles or maneuvers take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them." (Jenkins, 2007, p.84) The items at stake in any given field will vary but they serve to define the field in question. For example, in the field of education, intellectual significance might be at stake, and in the field of politics, power might be at stake (Jenkins, 2007). Within the field, individuals will then fight for these stakes by employing their various forms of capital. The fundamental mechanics of a field will define the rules of that field, the required skills, and "the type of capital needed to play" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.112). Because it relates to cultural skills and dexterity, what Holt refers to a "field-specific cultural capital" (1997, p.97) is often considered to be important for individuals to move with ease within a field. Furthermore, the competition for stakes within the field means that it is also "structured internally in terms of power relations." (Jenkins, 2007, p.85) This structure will be determined by the amount of appropriate capital the individuals in the field have (Jenkins, 2007). As explained by Holt, it is "typical that those with lesser cultural capital resources are dismissive of, or antagonistic towards, the objects and practices of those with greater cultural capital resources." (1997, p.95) Consequently, lacking the necessary cultural capital will mean that an individual will not be able to move within a particular field and will attain an inferior position within the fields hierarchy.

3.2.3 Resources for collaborative consumption

Inasmuch as the resemblance between both cultural theories, one should be aware that Swidler's (1986) work on strategies of action and cultural competences was inspired from that of Bourdieu's (1984) outline of practice and habitus. The main commonality introduced in section 3.2.2 relates to both theoretical accounts of the "move from rules to strategies" (Jenkins, 2007, p.43). That is, the notion that people possess and attain specific end outcomes or goals by leveraging their unique sets of cultural competences, and executing collectively in groups of actions rather than single acts with each under thoughtful consideration (Jenkin, 2007; Swidler, 1986). However, as a means of conceptualization that aims to increase the accessibility of these theories to sociologists, Swidler's work simplifies the culture of action in two distinctive ways (Swartz, 2012). Firstly, Bourdieu's portrayal of action as a consequence of culture is less voluntaristic as in the case described by Swidler. In his theory of practice (1984), the origins of the actions of people are said not to be wholly conscious but more closely resemble "a mastery acquired by experience of the game" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.10). These actions are said to include those that are beyond conscious commands, such as in the case of involuntary body gestures, that contrasts the more deliberate orchestration of actions as described by Swidler. Secondly, Bourdieu suggests that the actions of an individual are more strongly influenced by group dynamics which is absent in Swidler's analysis of human action.

Culture embodiment that motivates action can be applied to the context of collaborative consumption. In the earlier section of 1.3.2, this study postulates that a particular set of competences may be necessary to navigate the social field. In fact, several prior studies have observed that those who possess similar traits - the young affluent and urban - are more likely users, while those without seem to be shut out from using collaborative consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014; Owyang, 2014). This exclusion suggests that the latter might not be able to master what Swidler terms as strategies of action and probably lacks what Swidler and Bourdieu deem as cultural competences necessary for participation. For the relevance of this study, the concept of cultural competences more holistically entails both the unconscious aspect, as emphasized by Bourdieu's habitus, as well as the conscious aspect, that was later enriched by Swidler's cultural toolkit. Henceforth in this paper, we will address both the abovementioned resources collectively as cultural competences. Furthermore, despite having the right cultural competences, these resources may be underutilized as people might not be willing to give up on their habitual practices to embrace new opportunities (Swidler, 1986).

3.3 Symbolic Interactionism

The term "symbolic interactionism" distinguishes a distinct school of theories that has been used by many scholars in their studies on people and how they experience and communicate meanings through symbolic forms. The following section will explore the fundamentals of Herbert Blumer's (1986) symbolic interactionism.

3.3.1 Defining symbolic interactionism

Among the many variants of symbolic interactionism, a critical framework, conceptualized by Blumer (1986), depicts society as consisting of people whose lives revolves around a continuous process of meaning interpretation through their daily encounters and interactions. The creation of symbolic meanings in contemporary societies, which can be both conscious and unconscious, often manifest through consumption practices (Slater, 1997; Wattanasuwan, 2005). The solidity of the concept has led to a profusion of research studies that have examined the symbolic meanings behind varying forms of consumption as the basis of self-identity projects (e.g. Dittmar, 1992; Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; Elliott, 1994; McCracken, 1988). To further define the concept of symbolic interactionism, Blumer (1986) leverages three main premises. In the first premise, the actions that people take towards objects, such as possessions, situations, ideals or other human beings, are based on the meanings which they have created of these objects (Blumer, 1986). In turn, the symbolisms of these objects are appropriated in the construction of one's concept of "self" where one is said to be "the object of his own action" (Blumer, 1986, p.79). By focusing on the individual as the creator of the meanings that drive one's actions, Blumer (1986) dismisses more traditional views of human behaviors as the outcome of certain psychological factors, such as attitudes and motivations, or sociological factors, such as social structure and cultural values. In both opposing views, the meanings created by individuals are argued to be either circumvented or disguised by these factors that are inadequate in explaining human behaviors (Blumer, 1986). It is perhaps only through delineating the self that correct understanding of people's consumption choices can emerge; that is as a means to extend the concepts they have of themselves (Wattanasuwan, 2005).

In the second premise, the meanings that people attribute to objects are said to be transpired through their interactions with others (Blumer, 1986). This view contrasts two classical perspectives on the stimulus to meaning creation: from the inherent sense of the object itself in the form of use value, and from the psyche of oneself in the form of original thoughts, emotions, and motives (Blumer, 1986). While the former neglects the meaning that emanates from the symbolism of objects, such as a rose as a symbol of romance other than a flower, the latter limits the arousal of meanings to the psychological state of an individual such as particular motives or emotions (Blumer, 1986). Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the importance of social interactions not simply as a medium to express human behaviors and their associated meanings but as a process that constructs them (Blumer, 1986). This process involves "defining to others what to do and interpreting their definitions" of those meanings through which people come to shape their own practices from the influences of others (Blumer, 1969, p.10). The same can be said about the human conduct that motivates various forms of consumption practices. The meanings associated with consumption have often been postulated as being "socially constructed" with "no essential external reference point" (Elliott, 1997, p.286). Clearly, it is through studying social interactions among consumers that these meanings can be delineated.

In the third premise, the meanings that people construe from objects are said to continually evolve in an interpretive process (Blumer, 1986). The process can be described in two steps. It begins with an individual engaging in an internal dialogue with oneself through which one recognizes the meaning that was previously attributed to an object. The individual then filters, validates, eliminates, reorganizes and modifies the meaning assigned to objects based on the new information obtained in light of their recent encounters (Blumer, 1986). In other words, an individual's ability for interpretation is the latent tool that shapes the meanings that in turn informs

one's actions. In contemporary society, the symbolism in consumption is equally volatile where signs and symbols are subjected to the constant course of assimilation and appropriation by distinct individuals (Baudrillard, 1998; Elliott, 1997). The interpretative process, illustrated through symbolic interactionism, therefore allows consumers to continually re-evaluate and readapt the meanings derived from consumption in constructing their preferential lifestyles (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

3.3.2 Action from social interaction

Self-interaction, the internal dialogue where an individual "indicates to oneself" the meaning of objects, could be described as the propeller to all of one's actions (Blumer, 1986, p.13). However, it is through social interactions with others that the seeds of action are first planted. Blumer (1986) defines two types of social interactions: non-symbolic interaction and symbolic interaction. In non-symbolic interaction, one reacts involuntarily when prompt by another in a conversation without interpretation (Blumer, 1986). In symbolic interaction, the reverse is true where one responds consciously and mindfully to the trigger from another in a conversation by interpreting the contexts of the exchange (Blumer, 1986). For instance, when informed that a particular fashion company allegedly hires child labor, one may consider on the basis of human rights to boycott the brand altogether. Symbolic interactions, in what is termed as "gestures", have direct implications in three areas (Blumer, 1986). Firstly, it signifies to the target audience in the symbolic exchange what constitutes the desired response. Secondly, it signifies what serves as the intentions of the creator in the symbolic exchange. Thirdly, it signifies the collaborative act that is a result of the exchange between both parties involved (Blumer, 1986). In other words, the onset of symbolic exchange impacts both the parties where the receiver attempts to both interpret the meaning that is intended by the initiator and provide a response that is expected by the initiator.

Another aspect that is associated with Blumer's (1986) analysis of symbolic interaction is that the parties involved in the exchange have to place themselves in the roles of one another in order to understand each other. The notion of role-playing in symbolic interactionism is enriched by Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogy and has been discussed in much detail in section 3.1. Through taking the roles of others, individuals interpret the purposes and inclinations of those actions to decide on how to comport themselves (Blumer, 1986). They may then choose to dismiss the intent of the initiator, modify it, validate it, magnify it or even replace it. However, whenever an individual responds in an act that resembles what is expected by others, a group action is formed (Blumer, 1986). Simply put, "joint action consists of individuals fitting their lines of action to one another" (Blumer, 1986, p.16)

3.3.3 Symbolism in collaborative consumption

Consumers and people alike rarely operate alone. Group behavior, through symbolic interactionism, can be seen as a concerted effort by individuals who share similar views of the meanings attributed to particular modes of consumption that spur them to engage in the activity together (Blumer, 1986). As such, when taking a broader perspective, "human society is to be seen as consisting of acting people, and the life of the society is to be seen as consisting of their action" (Blumer, 1986, p.85). Societies, as motivated by Blumer (1986), consist of two main groups: the stable and the unstable societies. Stable societies are characterized by rudimentary tribes and peasant civilizations while unstable societies relate to modern consumer settings where market elements are always subjected to change. Unlike in the case of the former, the role of social structures in modern societies does not serve to adhere or restrict the actions of its people. Instead, social structures help to frame the situations where people act and provide the necessary symbols through which people can make sense of these situations (Blumer, 1986). For instance, by using recycled envelopes one can demonstrate one's commitment to environmental conservation and by appearing at classical concerts one can portray one's cultural cultivation through the conventional lens of modern societies (Wattanasuwan, 2005).

However, in unstable societies with their varied consumptionscapes, it is not uncommon for the emergence of situations where the actions of the partakers have not been previously moderated or institutionalized (Blumer, 1986). In such cases, the circumstances that shape people's actions are evolving, and the symbols used by individuals are subjected to much fluctuation (Blumer, 1986). As a disruptive consumption phenomenon that has manifested over the recent decade, it seems appropriate for collaborative consumption to be considered as one of such new circumstances (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). As demonstrated by the study from Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012), user participation in collaborative consumption is necessarily motivated by the symbolic meanings or sign values they derive from the experience. In particular, these meanings, situations, and symbols are said to revolve around two important elements involved: the shared object and the act of sharing (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). It is thus postulated that where access-based consumption is gaining significance, ownership may likely decrease in importance. Thus the different meanings that people create around ownership and access-based consumption warrant further analysis.

3.4 Theoretical framework conceptualization

Integrating the theories outlined in the preceding sections of this chapter, we construct a preliminary theoretical framework to guide the analysis of online social interactions in Airbnb collaborative consumption as shown in Figure 8 below.
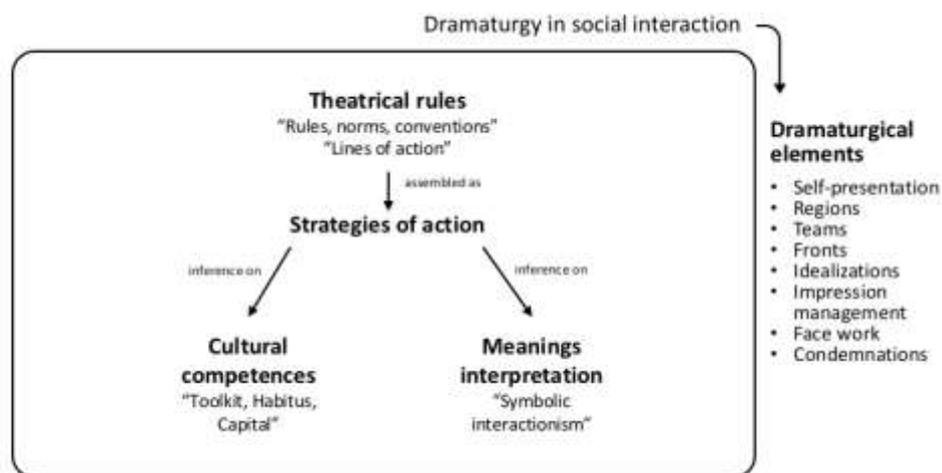

Figure 8: Theoretical framework of this study

It has been postulated that a set of **"rules, norms, and conventions"** governs collaborative consumption; ensuring those who fulfill the criteria to participate while shutting out others. The theoretical framework is designed to make sense of these **"theatrical rules"** that are embedded within social interactions in the following ways.

Firstly, the framework enables the filtering of the rules, norms, and conventions that have the most impact on the success of Airbnb users from the other more mundane ones. This filtering is achieved by framing social interactions using Goffman's (1959) concept of "dramaturgy" where users engage in purposeful acts of self-presentation within the community. In this view, the aspects of the consumption practice delineated are by nature dramatic, where the rules of success are necessarily theatrical rules that are created by users with the intention of making distinct impressions. By adopting this theoretical model, **"dramaturgical elements"** are juxtaposed as signifiers to various features of the social field of collaborative consumption allowing access to richer and more holistic descriptions. Secondly, the framework allows the organization of said rules, norms and conventions into larger assemblages that can be collectively analyzed and made sense of with greater reflexivity. The grouping of

actions is done through the concept of Swidler's (1986) "**strategies of action**". In this view, the engagement rules, conceptualized as various **"lines of action"**, are said to be grouped into larger sequences or "strategies of action" that direct the user towards achieving clear objectives. These objectives are pieces of a multifaceted plan which the user conjures to win over others in the social field.

By connecting engagement rules to the concept of "strategies of action", the theoretical framework extends into two other related domains providing insights on the users: their **"cultural dispositions"** and **"meaning interpretations"**. Hence, thirdly, the framework allows the definition of a set of prerequisites necessary to navigate the terrain. These requirements are illustrated by Swidler (1986) as the cultural **"toolkit"** that consciously informs the user on how to act and Bourdieu (1990) as **"habitus",** or its finer form **"capital",** that unconsciously facilitates the user to move with ease. As assimilated in this framework, the combination of both cultural resources, conscious and unconscious, are drawn by users in ensuring their success within the social field. Lastly, any implementation of particular "strategies of action" requires both the aforementioned cultural resource as well as the impetus from the meanings that users derive from the practice (Swidler, 1986). To this end, Blumer's (1986) theory of **"symbolic interactionism"** is used to analyze the meanings that users derive from these "strategies of action" as well as those they are willing to give up as a result. All in all, the theories illustrated above are chosen as they have been widely cited within academia, and their conceptualizations are founded on the basis of and can be connected through the medium of social interactions.

4. Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings obtained from web-based research and data mining efforts using the netnographic approach on the online Airbnb community forum. We illustrate these findings alongside their analyses. Firstly, we present an overview of the socioeconomic and demographic profiles of Airbnb users to provide a more profound understanding of their user personas. Secondly, we feature an adapted version of Goffman's dramaturgical model in the context of Airbnb's collaborative consumption to frame the different theatrical elements with the findings found from netnography. Thirdly, we feature several rules, norms, and conventions that are related to the cultural competences for Airbnb users along with their analysis. Finally, we present other rules, norms, and conventions that are related to the symbolic meanings of Airbnb users along with their analysis.

4.1 Profiling hosts and guests

Collaborative consumers participating in Airbnb engagements consist of two groups: suppliers and buyers. Following the terminologies used by Airbnb, suppliers are termed as "hosts" who lease their lodgings on a short-term basis, while buyers are termed as "guests" who serve as temporary occupants.

The predominant demographics of hosts and guests are consistent with the characteristics of young, affluent and urban found in earlier studies. In a particular survey with correspondents across 83 countries, 62% of hosts are between the ages of 25-44, 77% of them possess a bachelor's degree or higher, and 70% of them have an annual household income of US$50k or greater (Breese & He, 2016). Similarly, statistics on guests reveal that the vast majority of them are between the ages of 18-34, where the percentages may vary across countries ranging from 40% in Germany to 73% in China (Statista, 2015). A recent survey carried out in the United States reveals that while 24% of the population with an annual household income of US$75K or higher have once been a guest on Airbnb or a similar service, only 4% of those with US$30K or lower have had similar experiences (PewResearchCenter, 2016). Additionally, Airbnb guests were found to be over two times more likely to be living in urban than rural areas in the United States (PewResearchCenter, 2016).

Notwithstanding participation by a close group of individuals with similar attributes, Airbnb's host and guest bases have grown quite substantially over the last few years. The growth is driven partly by Airbnb's global expansion strategies. In 2016, there are estimated 650,000 hosts who are residing globally across 191 countries (Breese & He, 2016). The total number of guests that have found short-term leasing via Airbnb reaches 100 million in the same year (Solomon, 2016). Despite the status of Airbnb as the poster child of collaborative consumption, the percentage of people in each country who have engaged in Airbnb as guests is still small with the number at 11% in the United States where the practice first started in 2008 (Kokalitcheva, 2016). The contrasting roles of hosts and guests, with each group carrying its unique set of engagement rules, norms, and conventions, therefore provides the foundation for this research through which we delineate the possible barriers to adoption.

4.2 Applying elements of dramaturgy

In presenting the findings and analysis of the users of Airbnb, we contrasted the results with several main elements of Goffman's (1959) framework of dramaturgy. We have summarized these main parallels in Figure 9. They relate to the concepts of roles as performers and audience and regions as front and back stages. All of which are further illustrated in the rest of subchapter 4.2.
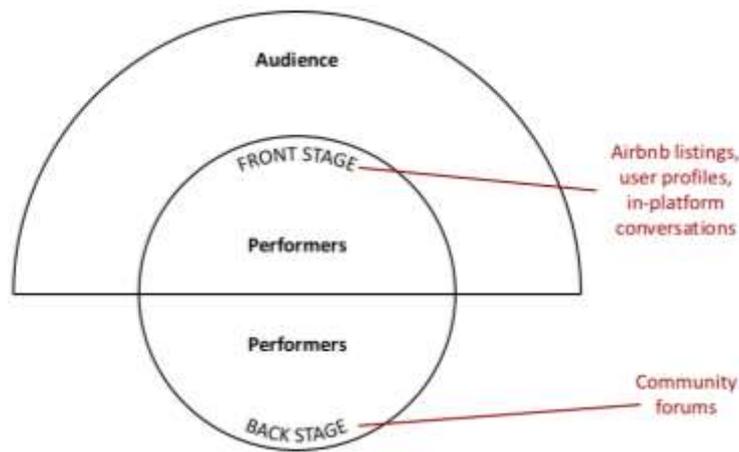
Figure 9: Airbnb users illustrated through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework

4.2.1 The interchanging roles of hosts and guests

Any collaborative arrangement in the case of Airbnb necessarily involves the interchanging of roles between the host and the guest as the "performer" and the "audience" through the different stages of the engagement process (Goffman, 1959). This process is illustrated in Figure 10 below. In the initial stage of the process, the guest selects off a list of available housing options on the Airbnb platform one that best fulfills the criteria of his specification. The first show or performance is one that is put up by the host to capture attention from the guest. The host can thus be analogized as "performer" on the stage while the guest as "audience" in the stands. In the second stage, the host reviews the request made by the guest and decide if the guest satisfies their requirements for hosting. Thus, the theatrics is delivered by the guest to the host in gaining their trust for access to the leased property. The role reversals analogize the guest as "performer" and the host as "audience" (Goffman, 1959). In stage three, a deal is struck between both parties, and they establish their formal partnership in collaborative consumption by exchanging contact information.
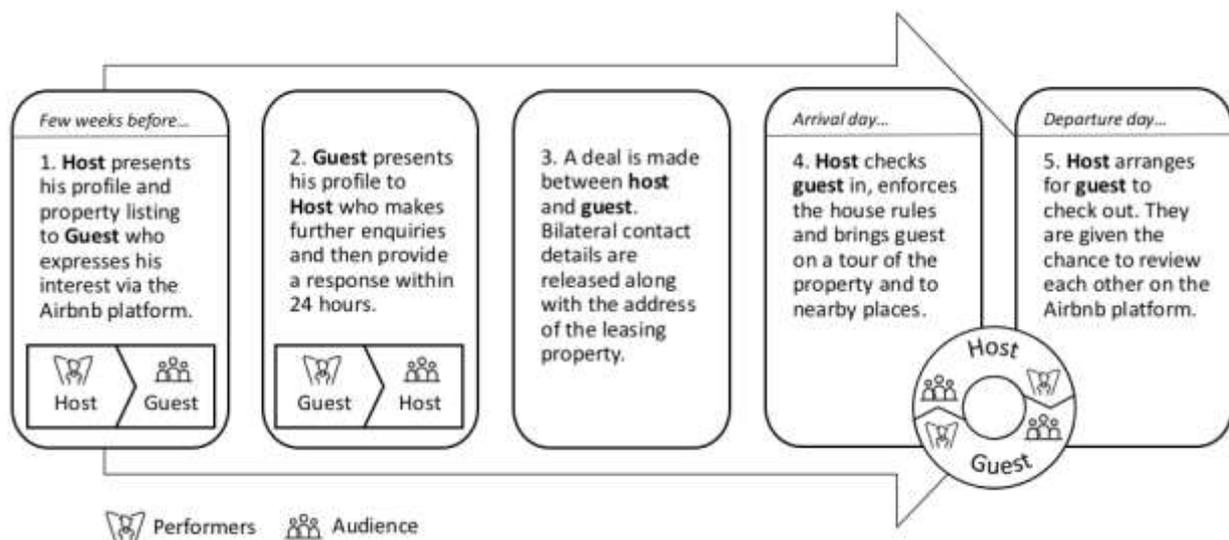
Figure 10: Engagement process between Airbnb host and guest

In stage four, the host and guest finally meet in person after weeks of communicating online. Their frequency of encounters depends on the duration of stay and the type of leasing arrangement. These leasing arrangements are broadly categorized into two main formats. In the first format, the guest rents a room as part of the residence of the host and both parties share common living spaces during the engagement. In the second format, the guest rents an

entire house or apartment distinct from the host's residence. Both parties meet only on a few occasions, usually at check-in and check-out. Throughout this period, the host and guest consistently take turns to evaluate the performances of one another by switching between the roles of "performer" and "audience". In stage five, the collaborative relationship comes to an end at the last day of leasing when the guest checks out. All performances have now been delivered, and it is time for the results. Airbnb facilitates bilateral feedback exchanges by notifying both parties to write a review for each other on the platform that helps improve their credentials for future bookings.

4.2.2 Hosts and guests as two separate teams

The concept of "teams" (Goffman, 1959) is equally relevant in contemplating the purpose of performances which are carried out between hosts and guests with every Airbnb leasing engagement. It follows that these performances do not serve primarily to impress the other party by proving individual worthiness in their respective roles. Instead, as a broader perspective on the notion of impression management, the creation of impressions is a collective effort of a team and not merely the work of an individual (Goffman, 1959). Applying this view to the dramaturgy of the users of Airbnb, two distinct teams, one consisting of hosts and the other of guests, can be delineated. Each team is observed in their online exchanges to preserve a unified image of the group by imposing common standards among its members. As shown in section 4.2.1, hosts and guests are said to act the roles of both the "performer" and the "audience." However, as teams, it can be postulated through the logics of Goffman (1959) that the hosts' team can be considered the predominant "performing team" while the guests' team can be deemed as the principal "audience". This premise is so as hosts command greater power than guests in navigating the relationship. They often demonstrate their dominance over the conditions of the leasing engagement and play a more proactive role in coordinating the act. Despite only being of weak presence, power relations (Jenkins, 2007) can still be observed within the various teams. Forum participants are awarded distinct ranks, ranging from one to ten, based on the frequency of their participation in forum discussions. Additionally, hosts who have performed consistently well are awarded the "Superhost" status badge which is displayed on their profile pages as a symbol of one's reputation.

4.2.3 Empirical site as the back stage

The "front stage" (Goffman, 1959) of the performance between collaborative users of Airbnb takes place on the primary hosting platform (http://airbnb.com). Self-presentation by guests at the front stage centers around the use of "fronts" (Goffman, 1959). Three of which are profile pages, review histories, and in-platform conversations. Firstly, a personalized profile page is managed by every Airbnb user, regardless of their role as host or guest, and is created on their first visit to the site. Mandatory information required for the creation of user profiles include name, profile photo, email address and contact number. Optionally, users can improve the legitimacy of their profiles by verifying their identity, either through the providence of their passport ID to Airbnb or by linking their Airbnb to other social media accounts. Users can also increase the completeness and amiability of their profiles by adding short descriptions of themselves. Review histories, on the other hand, cannot be fabricated at first login. It is collected by users at the end of every Airbnb leasing engagement of which they are given the option to review the other party and for the other party to review them (see Figure 10). Depending on the positivity or negativity of these reviews, a user's participation history can influence his credibility in different ways. Thirdly, in-platform conversations are probably the most powerful tool involving one-on-one text message exchanges between guests and hosts. These conversations are restricted to the visibility of only the guest and host participating in collaborative consumption. These can be made at any time before, during or after the leasing engagement. Similar to guests, hosts also utilize these three "fronts" in their self-presentation. Outside of which, they are given the additional web page to provide information on their leasing properties which they furnish with beautiful interior photos and elaborated descriptors. Despite the richness of data at the "front stage", social interactions that capture the rules, norms, and conventions of hosts and guests are private and are inaccessible for data mining.

The "back stage" (Goffman, 1959) of the performance for both hosts and guests exist on Airbnb's self-moderated community forums (http://community.withairbnb.com). The multiple forum channels, each designed with either the Airbnb hosts or guests in mind, provide the space through which one party can "relax" and "drop their fronts" in the absence of the other party (Goffman, 1959). At the "back stage", it is observed that novice users, hosts and guests alike, are actively engaged in seeking the advice from their more experienced counterparts. This move could also happen in the middle of a performance (Goffman, 1959). For instance, a new host when greeted by a non-response from his guest on the Airbnb platform (at the "front stage") may tap on the experiences of other hosts on the forum (at the "back stage") for potential solutions before returning to the "front stage". In the absence of externals, individuals are more likely to communicate in a more thoughtful and constructive manner with the intention to establish credibility and trust for oneself among one's fellow teammates and to build the morale of the team in general (Goffman, 1959). Furthermore, as the "back stage" is the nesting ground through which performances are first constructed, rehearsed and schooled, it is not without the "idealizations" of performances and the "condemnations" of unaccepted behaviors (Goffman, 1959). All these dynamics are fundamental to the established rules, norms and conventions that are of interest in this research. The empirical sites chosen are the "new host" and "travelers" community forums which are used to study the unique behaviors of hosts and guests respectively.

4.2.4 The theatrical rules in collaborative consumption

Netnographic data, in the form of social interactions among forum participants at the "back stage", are analyzed through an abductive approach to delineate the performance rules, convention, and norms pertinent to both users of Airbnb: the hosts and the guests. These rules advocated by forum participants are termed by Swidler (1986) as "lines of action". They were interpreted and grouped into various "strategies of action" based on the similar functions they play for Airbnb users in the social field. This exhaustive list of strategies of action were then filtered where only those that constitute strategies of self-presentation, interpreted through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, were retained. Table 1 summarizes the finalized list of strategies of actions associated with self-presentation which we fondly termed as the "theatrical rules" of performances. In turn, these theatrical rules have been thematized and are found to depict four main theatrical intentions: legitimacy, fairness, self-composure and respectfulness.

Firstly, in the theatrical intention of legitimacy, both guests and hosts are found to act in ways that portray an image of validity to instill confidence in others who engage them in collaborative arrangements. These moves are concerned predominantly with foot-in-the-door strategies that are significant in earlier stages of the engagement process, shown in Figure 10. Hosts are found to focus on embellishing their "storefronts" by making their hosting and listing profiles more enticing and believable to visitors. Guests, on the other hand, are observed to focus on cajoling hosts and providing them with all information requested to ease their level of anxiety. Secondly, in the theatrical intention of fairness, hosts and guests resort to various tactics in portraying moral and righteous images of themselves to be ethically appraised within the community. To do so, Airbnb users have to learn the official rules set by Airbnb, express their knowledge of the game and demonstrate the integrity of their character with strict adherence to these rules. The depiction of fairness is a critical status act within the Airbnb community, particularly since user reviews, through which hosts and guests are rated on the accuracy of their performances with every collaborative engagement, readily become visible to the public as permanent features on their profiles.

Thirdly, in the theatrical intention of self-composure, hosts and guests alike are engaged in activities that portray a public image of stability, calmness, and collectedness even in the face of misfortune. The portrayals require that Airbnb users become accustomed to the fact that problems are unavoidable, spot the early warning signals and respond to conflict in a polite and self-assured manner. The display of self-composure is most effectively portrayed during instances of conflict resolution arising from the misalignment of expectations between both

parties. They can manifest across all stages throughout the engagement process where the result of which are displayed in the form of user reviews. Lastly, in the theatrical intention of respectfulness, both hosts and guests deploy an array of tactics in portraying an image of kindness and civility that prove their consideration for the interests of others. These efforts are made to humanize the transactional nature of access-based consumption by instilling a measure of honor between the owner and the temporary user of the shared object. Guests are found to communicate through their actions a sense of respect to hosts for being provided access to a traditionally private possession. Hosts, on the other hand, respond in ways that show their respect towards the privacy of their guests to welcome them to their homes.

The four theatrical intentions mentioned above along with their respective strategies of action and specific rules of engagements are outlined in Table 1 below. In the following subchapters, these strategies of action will be elaborated and presented through two themes: cultural dispositions of Airbnb users and their meaning interpretations.

User	Strategy of action	Theatrical rule, convention, norm (or line of action)
Theatrical intention 1: legitimacy		
Guest	Explain why you are worth hosting	- Communicate in advance - Open to answer questions on further inquiry - Provide more information on your profile - Maintain a positive tone during online communication
Host	Display clearly your legitimacy	- Have your user profiles verified - Have sufficient photos and descriptions of yourselves
Host	Market your listing well	- Describe what is available around the neighbourhood - Have a more attractive listing title - Improve interior design hence the attractiveness of listing photos - Provide more descriptions about your home
Host	Price your listing appropriately	- Set rates below market average for first-timers to gain reviews - Set rates over market average to attract higher quality guests - Set prices higher on the weekends - Do not allow price haggling
Theatrical intention 2: fairness		
Guest	Play by the rules of the game	- Understand the rules and abide by them - Accept having to pay a security deposit in advance if you lack prior reviews - Accept that your inquiries might be declined, even without any clear reasons for it and don't take it as an attack on your person - Know how to deal with problematic situations and know how to consult with the Airbnb framework and rules - Validate your concerns by learning about your rights - Rate fairly by sticking to your morals instead of the benefit of self-presentation - Contact Airbnb to provide mediation service
Host	Play the game fairly and wisely	- Do not cancel on guests for non-ethical reasons - Let the guests cancel if they don't show up - Offer the right refund based on Airbnb rules if guests don't show up - Leverage the short term Airbnb marketing boost for new hosts - Provide response to guest request within 24 hours - Do not discriminate guest based on demographic categories - Do not communicate with guests outside of the Airbnb platform - Do not disclose contact information to guests prior to booking confirmation - Involve Airbnb to mediate should conflict arise - Do not accept payments made outside of the platform - Promote yourself and your listing but do not overpromise

Theatrical intention 3: self-composure		
Guest	Establish a diplomatic relationship with the host	● Admit fault and initiate reconciliation when you have broken the rules of engagement ● Don't point out flaws with the apartment ● Don't attempt to negotiate pricing ● Don't micro-manage the little things or the conditions of the apartment, such as cleanliness
Guest	Detect legitimacy	● Screen information about the listings more closely ● Find hosts who have the "superhost" status ● Know what to look for "red flags" in a host
Host	Engage in people reading	● Assess and reject shifty guests ● Assess legitimacy of guests through conversations ● Build your instincts or gut-feeling that comes with experience ● Do short-term rentals for starters as longer terms arrangements are typically more problematic ● Learn the read the "red flags" in a guest
Host	Understand the perils of hosting	● Accept property wear and tear as part of the deal ● Set aside small fund to absorb minor cost of damage ● Accept soiled linens as part of the deal ● Prepare to do minor damage touch-ups such as painting ● Use easier to clean items such as dark-coloured carpets
Host	Take the high road	● Accept a review with composure even if it's unfair as your guest would want a more emotionally collected host ● Accept that guests do not read your house rules even if you have made them clear in your listing ● Accept that people do not read descriptions and can have unrealistic expectations of the arrangement ● Cater for polite small talks even if you would find it a nuisance
Host	Standardize interactions	● Navigate with gestural small talk ● Dictate the nature of interactions
Host	Normalize transactions	● Do not allow price negotiations ● Do not allow alternative types of payments
Theatrical intention 4: respectfulness		
Guest	Know your place	● Don't question the rules of the hosts or their reasons for declining you when no rules have been breached ● What is provided to you is mandated by the host and you have less say in the matter
Host	Give space to others	● Do not provide images of family photos as they may give guests the pressure that social activities are expected with the host family ● Do not expect for guests to inform you on their plans of arrival as they would behave in the case of a hotel booking ● Go out of your way to manage arrival times without disrupting guest such as. investing in a codebox or to obtain their flight number ● Security cameras are discouraged

Table 1: List of all rules, conventions and norms of Airbnb users

4.3 Performer's cultural dispositions

Albeit the theatrical intentions outlined in the preceding section, one cannot mobilize the necessary strategies of action without the appropriate cultural resources required to wield them (Swidler, 1986). As described by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1990) and Ann Swidler (1986) in section 3.2, a distinctive cultural repertoire of competences, both conscious and unconscious, are tapped on by performers in ensuring their persuasiveness at the front stage. In this section, we attempt to outline three types of cultural dispositions that are embodied by Airbnb users. They are the social performer, the disciplined performer, and the deliberate performer.

The sociable performer	The disciplined performer	The deliberate performer
One who is … ● friendly, warm, outgoing ● expressive, eloquent ● diplomatic ● charismatic, charming	One who is … ● ethical, moralistic, principled ● pragmatic, logical, practical ● keen on getting things done ● conscientious	One who is … ● perceptive, empathetic, sensitive ● rational, level-headed ● results-oriented ● meticulous ● modest, peace-loving, down to earth, non-calculative

Table 2: Attributes from the cultural dispositions of performers

4.3.1 The sociable performer

The first cultural disposition of Airbnb users is characterized by individuals who are experts of the theatrical portrayal of "legitimacy". They readily put on a mask that turns them into friendly, expressive, charismatic and diplomatic beings that appeal to the affection of others often by making a deep and desirable first impression. In the context of performance, one can be thought of as an improv performer that actively engages the audience in the co-creation of the performance. As natural networkers, social performers are effective in striking a rapport with others. They do so often within relatively short time frames while achieving a decent level of mutual trust and amiability. The sociable performers use mainly four strategies of action "market your listing well", "display clearly your legitimacy", "explain why you are worth hosting", and "establish a diplomatic relationship with the host" (see Table 1).

Market your listing well

Firstly, hosts who are endowed with the dispositions of the sociable performer, deploy the strategy of action termed "market your listing well" (see Table 1). As previously mentioned (see section 4.2.1), the engagement process on Airbnb starts with the guest selecting an appropriate listing from a long list of available accommodations via the Airbnb platform. For hosts to promote their property listings and capture the attention of guests, they must display an attractive front. The empirical material makes it clear that hosts need to portray a front that exudes appeal and charisma. Hosts, who understand the importance of this, learn to manage, or even manipulate, their front to represent these characteristics. The primary way to achieve this is through careful and meticulous construction of one's property listing by deploying expressive "stage props" (Goffman, 1959). The property listing is the first and most critical touch point between guests and hosts, and there are several props available to craft them. The manner in which the different props are used is of great importance to the subsequent success of the host's ability to attract guests. In the empirical material, this is, primarily, illustrated by new hosts who are uncertain of how to use these props efficiently. Therefore, they turn to the Airbnb community forum's "new host" section for advice on how to better promote their listings. The new hosts are encouraged to portray their property listings in an open and welcoming manner, going beyond small photos and generic descriptions.

> *"The photos of your place look stunning - but your descriptions are sparse. Tell me more about your home so I can imagine myself living there. You need to tell people more about the area, nearest airport, do they need a car or can they walk to shops and pubs? Talk about the walks they can take along the cliffs. Tell them about famous attractions that are nearby, is there a stables, a pub with great music, a local train station, what festivals are in your area?" - Host A*

In the above example, Host A provides concrete advice to a new host as to how his property listing can be improved, showing a proficiency with the ability to construct a front that will appeal to the guests. More specifically, Host A instructs the new host to provide more graphic descriptions of the property and its immediate vicinity to allow prospective guests to picture themselves living there. In this way, the universal ideals of the property as modern, cozy and homely can be conveyed using idealization (Goffman, 1959). Thus, to increase the attractiveness of their listings and market them well, the sociable performers leverage their cultural competences to communicate clearly and sufficiently in a charismatic and charming manner. The skill inscribed from the cultural repertoire (Swidler, 1986) is that of selling or promotion where one highlights the key product attributes along with one's perceptiveness to communicate in a way that is best received by one's audience.

Display clearly your legitimacy

The second strategy of action deployed by hosts who are endowed with the dispositions of the sociable performer is termed "display clearly your legitimacy" (see Table 1). Specifically, the empirical material makes it clear that hosts need to portray a front that exudes legitimacy and trustworthiness. Similar to the deployment of the property listing, the hosts' user profiles are crucial in establishing an attractive front (Goffman, 1959). This portrayal is, primarily, achieved through providing more information about oneself in a meaningful manner, allowing for a more genuine and reliable connection with prospective guests. This is illustrated in the examples below, where a new host is asking for advice on how to better promote his listing.

> *"Your profile pictures highlight a very attractive young woman but your head is missing. Your pictures should be clearly of you. You have no personal profile beside that picture. As a potential guest I would have no idea who you are, what your personality is like, your interests, what makes you an interesting person, or what you would be like to have as a host." - Host B*
>
> *"you do not have a personal description. Many experienced travellers look for that and it helps travellers to relate to you personally rather than see you as a hotel manager." - Host C"*

Here, hosts B and C, suggest that the new host can convey his personality in a more genuine way by adopting an official profile picture and a more personal description of himself. In suggesting to the new host to reconsider the presentation of himself on the user profile, the hosts display adeptness in providing more comprehensive and detailed information as part of impression management (Goffman, 1959). To demonstrate legitimacy, the sociable performer taps on his cultural competences to showcase his expressive and eloquent character. This display requires the deployment of one's skillful command of words as a tool from one's cultural toolkit (Swidler, 1986).

Explain why you are worth hosting

Thirdly, similar to the hosts, guests who possess the cultural dispositions of the sociable performer are apt in navigating the social field of Airbnb by deploying the strategy of action labeled "explain why you are worth hosting" (see Table 1). As described earlier (see section 4.2.1), the second step of the Airbnb engagement process involves a theatrical performance where the roles have been interchanged (Goffman, 1959). The hosts, as the audience, evaluate the profiles of the guests, as the performers, who have made inquiries on their listings. For a booking to be made, the guests must live up to the requirements that the host put on possible tenants. As such, the hosts act as gatekeepers for the guests' usage of Airbnb's services. The empirical material shows that guests have to display legitimacy and trustworthiness in an explicit way to successfully gain initial access. This move is

observed through the manipulation of their user profiles and their conduct in the interactions with hosts. To do so, like is the case for hosts, they make use of different "stage props" (Goffman, 1959) related to their user profiles as well as in-platform communication. In the empirical material, this becomes particularly evident in regards to first-time guests. A commonly recurring situation, on the Airbnb guest forum, is first-time guests who repeatedly fail to make reservations owing to their lack of prior histories of their Airbnb usage. As inscribed by Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogy, guests are observed to seek useful information and guidelines to circumvent this situation at the "front stage" (the Airbnb platform) by turning to the "back stage" (Airbnb community forum's traveler's section). Here hosts and more experienced guests alike, repeatedly, offer the same advice to the prospective guests: develop your user profiles and be accommodating and cooperative in the interaction with would-be hosts throughout the booking process. The prospective guests are routinely advised to edit their user profiles, to display a more comprehensive image of themselves to come off as more trustworthy, and to appease any potential concerns and apprehensions on behalf of the would-be hosts. They are recommended to provide extensive biographies, photos of themselves, and verified accounts. It is through social interaction that the conduct of guests is subjected to the influence of the hosts and other guests though it depends on one's preference to align one's activities to those prescribed by others (Blumer, 1986). Nonetheless, examples of suggestions from hosts D and E are shown below in correspondence to a question from a new guest about tips on improving his prospects of successfully booking a stay.

> *Do update your profile and mention your interests, profession and why you want to use Airbnb. This help hosts see you as more trustworthy. About 60% of my guests are new but I only accept those with verified ID, full photo, a description and who tell me about their plans and why they choose my place. Try this approach and hopefully you will get a booking. - Host D*

> *It might help you to be "chatty" in your profile and your request to stay. It builds trust with the host [...] imagine that your mother or grandmother was doing Airbnb in her home or a studio on her property. How would a guest present themselves so that you would feel comfortable with that person visiting your mother? Be that guest. Airbnb is a wonderful thing but it is very personalized and not like a hotel where you just pay to stay. – Host E*

In the above exchange, Host D and Host E express concerns about the minimalistic nature of the user profile of a new guest and the effects that it might have on his chance of booking future stays. As in this particular case, it is, time and time again, stressed that the prospective guests cannot just provide the bare minimum of information about themselves on their profiles. Instead, they need to divulge a broad range of complementary information, stretching from the inconsequential to that of a more personal nature. For example, the prospective guests are advised to mention, among other things, their profession, interests, their place of origin, their alma maters, reasons for using Airbnb, why they are traveling to particular destinations, and what they plan to do while they are there. In this way, they are also encouraged to go beyond just talking about their credentials, or the "personal" part of their "fronts", by exhibiting their cordial status or "manner" by being "chatty" (Goffman, 1959). In line with Blumer's (1986) notion of symbolic interactionism, the guest is encouraged to view himself from a third party's perspective, the position of the host, in this case, to have a more objective view of his line of actions. This role-playing is shown in the reply given above, where the guest is advised to present himself as the type of guest he would be comfortable with if the host would be his mother or grandmother. Furthermore, the prospective guests are also advised to upload photos of themselves and to verify their accounts as additional ways of completing their profiles. Therefore, guests who are sociable performers can be expressive in their user profiles and are willing to disclose more personal information. Inability to construct and display a user profile that conveys trustworthiness, by failing to address the criteria above, is considered to be a "red flag" for the hosts on the forum and may result in guests being declined by hosts. This warning is illustrated in the response by Host F to a new guest who is experiencing difficulties in booking stays, displayed below.

> *I recently got a request from a young woman with no information on her profile, no verifications beyond phone and email, a sultry pose (she later changed that to her face in dark glasses) and the request said 'interested in rental'. All red flags for this host. – Host F*

In the above example, the answer of Host F clearly illustrates the demands that hosts put on prospective guests, and the necessity of guests to possess the abilities of the sociable performer to gain the trust and the subsequent acceptance of the hosts one wishes to stay with. The "chatty" manner of presenting oneself that is encouraged for user profiles also extends to the interaction with the would-be hosts in the inquiries to book accommodation at the third stage of the Airbnb engagement process, as explained earlier (see section 4.2.1). This interaction serves to complement the user profile in establishing a trustworthy front. While this communication is necessary for most bookings, the empirical material shows that they are of particular importance concerning the inquiries made by guests with no, or limited, previous Airbnb usage. Some hosts, replying to first-time guests' queries about how to act when making an inquiry for a listing, informs them that booking an accommodation without any prior Airbnb history will likely mean that the hosts will want to ask them questions to evaluate their aptness and suitability as guests. In these interactions, it is imperative for the prospective guests to be accommodating, cooperative and make a personable impression, to ensure the would-be hosts of their appropriateness as guests. In this way, guests need to adjust their "manner" to display an appropriate "front" to hosts (Goffman, 1959). This adjustment is illustrated in the below example where Host G answers the questions of a new guest who wonders about the appropriate rules of engagement with would-be hosts when making inquiries about bookings.

> "...we're an Instant book ready location. If you choose to book with us directly, with no reviews, be prepared to answer a number of questions after the fact. We have to make an assessment pretty quick that you are shifty so we can cancel. If you send an inquiry, we're likely to ask the same-ish questions [...]. You may or may not book, so it's still a casual conversation." - Host G

In the above post, Host G displays how hosts evaluate guests on the impression they make during their initial contact. Hosts need to make a quick judgement call on the guests based on their initial interaction. Therefore, guests need to make a strong first impression that quickly communicates their outgoing personality so as to establish their amiability. To increase one's appeal, guests who are sociable performers draw upon their cultural competences (Swidler, 1986) of friendliness and outgoingness. They engage in friendly exchanges with hosts both directly through conversations as well as indirectly through their rich profile descriptions. This act not only requires one to be a good and active storyteller but also one's willingness to disclose personal information.

Establish a diplomatic relationship with the host

Fourthly, guests that possess the cultural disposition of the sociable performer also deploy the strategy of action "establish a diplomatic relationship with the host". As clarified earlier (see section 4.2.1), the fourth stage of the Airbnb engagement process comprises the actual stay, in which the guest arrives and gets acquainted with the accommodation. At this stage, a typical situation faced by guests is how to address perceived issues with their rented accommodations without annoying or provoking the host unnecessarily. The empirical material shows that guests need to portray their amiability toward hosts, not make a fuss, and refrain from nitpicking. This display relates to Goffman's (1959) concept of "personal front", more specifically "manner", where a performer manipulates the audience's perceptions of him- or herself. In the below example, a seasoned host is responding to a new guest's questions on the appropriate etiquette when interacting with hosts during a stay.

> "This is not an antique store, so don't "point out flaws" in the host's space. That is a quick ticket to the curb. ("Sounds like my space is not for you.") All hosts want happy guests, and if you sound unhappy before you book, well the relationship is not going to get any better…" - Host H

In the above post, Host H argues that guests that in any way come across as negative, by way of being critical or having a less than happy attitude, are considered to be problematic. Instead, he coaches the guest on the importance of not being overly critical about the rented accommodation and to have a "happy" demeanor throughout the stay. A pleasant demeanor will help guests to maintain their relationship with the host without

running the risk of generating any animosity that might lead to critical reviews. Therefore, adopting a diplomatic "manner" (Goffman, 1959) in any engagement with hosts will help guests to mitigate such situations. The fifth, and final, stage of the Airbnb engagement process constitutes the departure from the rented accommodation, as previously pointed out (see section 4.2.1). During this stage, the guests and the hosts have the possibility to evaluate each other on the Airbnb platform. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, the reviews are an important aspect of the user profiles, contributing to presenting a trustworthy front for the guests and hosts alike. As such, negative reviews can be detrimental to the successful usage of Airbnb. The empirical material shows that guests who have received poor reviews as a result of circumstances pertaining to their past stays may effectively jeopardize their attractiveness as guests by calling their trustworthiness into question. As such, there are diplomatic measures that they can take to, if not restore then at least ameliorate the damage that might have been done. Such diplomatic measures include responding to poor reviews in a thoughtful and amiable manner. In the below post, Host I replies to the questions of a new guest who, inadvertently, have caused damages to the property of a host, and wonders how to deal with the negative review that it resulted in.

> *"I would also take a moment to respond to his review since other hosts will see it. Something brief and polite like, "Dear Mr. Host – we are so sorry for the damage our dog caused. As a show of good faith we have sent you the replacement cost via the Resolution Center. We can assure you we are responsible pet owners and it was never our intention to be deceptive." A mature, polite response like that should help future hosts feel comfortable renting to you." – Host I*

In the above exchange, Host I explains how admitting fault and initiating reconciliation publicly, in response to a negative review, is an appropriate way to manage the subsequent fallout when you have broken the rules of engagement. This is the case also for inadvertent wrongdoing. Showcasing an ability and willingness to take responsibility for issues that have arisen during your stay, and to offer your cooperation in trying to rectify the wrong that has been done, is considered to be a possible way to come out of such a situation with your trustworthiness, somewhat, intact. As referred to in Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogy, this is a way to maintain decorum. By responding to the negative review, the guest can behave in a way that presents her as a responsible guest to future hosts. In this sense, it is just a show, a form of damage control that serves to "help future host feel comfortable renting to you". As such, to establish one's reputation, guests who are sociable performers use their cultural competences (Swidler, 1986) of amiability and diplomacy. Their engagements with hosts are tactful and sensitive and they refrain from nitpicking and micromanaging.

As shown above, the cultural disposition of the sociable performer reflects one who can portray legitimacy and trustworthiness by virtue of their sociability skills and communicative dispositions. They command a range of cultural competences that manifests in various attributes, skills, and styles:

- Market your listing well: skills of selling and promotion, and communicate in an effective way
- Display clearly your legitimacy: skillful command of words for expressiveness and eloquence
- Explain why you are worth hosting: a style of storytelling and willingness to disclose personal information
- Establish a diplomatic relationship with the host: skills of diplomacy and style of amiability in relationship management

The competences that are utilized by a sociable performer originate both from one's conscious as well as unconscious cultural configuration. While certain skills such as selling, artful command of language and storytelling can be voluntarily activated as part of one's toolkit (Swidler, 1986), the more involuntary mannerisms of diplomacy and amiability may be mobilized in more subtle ways as part of one's habitus (Bourdieu, 1990).

4.3.2 The disciplined performer

The second cultural disposition of Airbnb users is characterized by individuals who are experts of the theatrical act of portraying "fairness." As such, they are apparent in branding themselves as ethical, diligent and law-abiding in the collaborative engagement. In the context of performance, one could imagine a disciplined performer as an acrobat circus performer whose every move has been carefully trained, timed, coordinated and replicated across performances. The focus of the disciplined performer is to ensure that "things are done right". Therefore, their actions are guided by a strong commitment to a particular moral code and their actions are diligently carried out by that code. Their ability to discern the right from the wrong is in part due to their effort made in mastering the rules of the game. Disciplined performers use two strategies of action "play fairly and wisely," and "play by the rules of the game" (see Table 1).

Play fairly and wisely

Firstly, hosts with the dispositions of the disciplined performer commonly deploy the strategy of action labeled "play fairly and wisely" (see Table 1). As was made clear earlier (see section 3.2.3), hosts command more power in the collaborative engagements on Airbnb than guests do. Using that dominance in one's favor, resorting to questionable moral and opportunistic behavior, is strongly discouraged and frowned upon both by Airbnb and the Airbnb community. Taking advantage of your dominant position in the Airbnb engagement can have far-reaching ramifications for hosts, as it can lead to formal penalties from Airbnb and negative reviews from guests who feel victimized and treated unfairly. The ability of hosts to portray fairness in the Airbnb engagement is dependent on their understanding of the explicit and implicit rules, the "dos" and "don'ts" of Airbnb, that both guests and hosts need to adhere to. This act is necessary for what Goffman (1959) refers to as being "dramaturgically disciplined," meaning that performers need to be disciplined to portray an image that is consistent with the rest of team. Failure in doing so would reflect poorly on the individual in particular as well as the team in general. Therefore, the first step toward cultivating this ability is to ascertain the rules, to learn them, and to truly understand them. This activity requires a certain amount of diligence, conscientious attention to detail and proactivity from the hosts. An example of the knowledge that you need to acquire before being able to successfully use Airbnb as a host can be illustrated in the example below.

> *"Good for you to ask the question. On the other hand, you have launched a business without understanding the platform and the business [...] Please look at the discussion threads on this site about guests not being respectful of the space and you will have your answer. So many rules evolve after a negative experience with a guest. [...] You will save yourself grief and money if you do that. This site has many real life experiences that I have found most enlightening." - Host A"*

In the above example, Host A, an experienced host, argues that new hosts need to be more attentive to rules and to learn how to play the game before throwing themselves into the hosting business. This is a classic example of how new performers are being coached by their more experienced counterparts on how to perform at the "front stage" (Goffman, 1959). If not aware of the rules, there are plenty of pitfalls one can easily fall into. Therefore, new hosts are advised to get more acquainted with the rules by consulting the many discussion threads on the Airbnb community forum as well as the information provided directly from Airbnb on their Help Center website. As a result, hosts who possess the dispositions of the disciplined performer understands the necessity of not abusing the advantage they have been given, but to play by the explicit and implicit rules of the game, acting fairly and sensibly. Not only does this protect their future business on Airbnb, but it also maintains the integrity of their performance team (Goffman, 1959). In the empirical material, one instance of this is new hosts seeking advice on the appropriate measures for the cancellation of guests' bookings. In the below example, Host B, a new host, seeks advice on how to deal with having been blocked from making new bookings by Airbnb after canceling a reservation that she considered to be priced too cheaply.

"I increased prices for my place (there is a big festival going on in town) and a guest was able to book at the standard price (which was super low for that season). I sent him a special offer that reflected the new prices, in which he declined. I made the mistake of cancelling his original reservation. Now I can't go back in the calendar to make the dates available. Help!" - Host B

"Blocking of the dates is one of the penalties for cancelling. You can call Airbnb, plead ignorance and see if they will unblock the dates, but I think you are wasting your time because the whole point of the penalties is to dissuade host cancellations. From the guest's point of view, be accepted, paying, and then being asked for more money is perceived as being unfair." - Host C

In the above exchange, Host B is made aware by the more experienced hosts that the blockage is a result of her wrongdoing. Host B's attempt to drop prior commitments as a way to further her interests, without any greater regard to the guest whose reservation is being canceled, is firmly and universally condemned by the responding hosts. As a result, the subsequent blockage is considered to be warranted. The more experienced hosts display the characteristics of the disciplined performer, understanding that one has to abide by the explicit and implicit rules of Airbnb, even in situations where they might not always be in your favor. As a result of the cultural dispositions of the disciplined performer, they are inclined to act fairly and in accordance with their moral code. As part of their theatrical act, the disciplined performer highlights the moral aspect of decorum to enforce the image of "non-interference and non-molestation of others" (Goffman, 1959, p.67). This act is clearly illustrated in the above example. The necessity for hosts to "play fairly and wisely" can be further illustrated by new hosts who have received underwhelming reviews due to their accommodations not being considered to live up to the standards or expectations of their guests. As previously mentioned (see section 4.3.1), for guests and hosts to successfully navigate the social field of Airbnb, there is a need for them to portray their attractiveness and appropriateness, as guests and hosts respectively, in various ways. For hosts, an essential aspect of this pertains to enhancing their property listings in a way that makes them seem appealing and inviting. However, while they need to be constructed in a way that presents them in the best possible light, it is necessary for the property listings not to be deceitful. Whether a listing is purposefully exaggerated or inadvertently misrepresented as something that it is not, guests will react negatively and reviews will be reflective of this. This rule is demonstrated in the example below where a new host is coached on how to avoid such issues in future Airbnb engagements.

"I would say Airbnb is not a hotel set-up but a unique experience in a private home and add some words that convey that the furniture is not new etc. and any other quirks in the opening description, that way people's expectation will not be for a newly renovated place." - Host D

In the above example, Host D explains the importance for property listings to truly reflect their actual condition, as a way to live up to the expectations of the guests. They treat the manner in which the property is described in the listing as a form of expectation management, where it is important not to overstate its qualities. They do this to avoid what Goffman (1959) refers to as "misrepresentation" where performers risk crippling their reputation when they are found to exaggerate their performance. Thus, to be perceived as credible and trustworthy, the disciplined performers leverage their cultural competences to master and maintain a strict moral code of conduct. This moralistic disposition is likely related to some form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) attributed by one's cultivation as a result of one's social upbringing.

Play by the rules of the game

Secondly, guests with the dispositions of the disciplined performer regularly deploy the strategy of action labeled "play by the rules of the game" (see Table 1). This strategy of action is comparable to the strategy mentioned above, namely "play fairly and wisely" (see Table 1) that pertains to hosts. Just as is the case for hosts, guests also need to understand the explicit and implicit rules of the game to successfully navigate the social field of Airbnb. While hosts dominate in the negotiations of terms, they are not the only ones susceptible to questionable and

opportunistic behaviors. Just like hosts, the empirical material shows that guests also engage in opportunistic behaviors. This conduct is discouraged by Airbnb and transgressions will be reprimanded. However, beyond formal penalties administered by Airbnb, the opportunistic behavior will also result in poor reviews from hosts that feel exploited, diminishing the user's attractiveness as a guest. Guests who possess the characteristics of the disciplined performer will understand the need to act fairly in the Airbnb engagement and not to try to procure any unwarranted benefits. Once again, for the sake of reviews, this demonstrates effort towards building the moralistic aspect of one's "decorum" (Goffman, 1959) that has been previously described concerning hosts, but now from the perspective of guests. In the empirical material, this can be illustrated by hosts expressing frustration with guests not honoring their bookings and showing up with more people than agreed upon. In the following example, Host E expresses considerable resentment toward guests who tries to do this.

> *"I've had two of these IB's lately, [...] the actual booking is for 4 but the message mentions 6 guests, 2 of whom are child 'non-persons'. One of these guests swiftly amended his booking and paid the extra when asked. The second, despite two messages from me asking her to amend it hasn't amended it and won't respond to emails. Frankly, I'm done with chasing her and when she turns up with 6 guests, only 4 or none are getting through the front door." - Host E*

In the above example, it is made clear beyond any doubt that such behavior will not be accepted and will only come back to hurt the guests that engage in opportunistic behavior. While "playing by the rules", on the one hand, encompasses the established rules that guests are advised to follow to be rated favorably by hosts, it also includes rating hosts in a just and fair way by the standards of the community. It follows that one should abandon one's unnecessary obsession to maintain an image of "niceness", and hence the prestige of one's own business, by embracing the potential of gaining respect from being honest and fair. An instance of such is illustrated below.

> *"If this was a commercial hotel, it would get a bad rating on TA, but I don't want to be "labelled" as a guy who throws out bad ratings, since I guess it would decrease my chances of making reservations in the future, if the hosts can see that I give bad ratings?" – Guest A*

> *"Please don't worry about that - some hosts definitely deserve the bad reviews they get! We need to be honest in our reviews & not worry about being labelled. We need to look at the whole picture. [...] It would be obvious to us that the host was the problem. The only way we can keep both hosts and guests on Airbnb honest is by giving honest reviews." - Host F*

In the above example, the host advises the first-time guest to be fair in his reviews, even though he worries that it might reflect poorly on himself. The guest experiences that he is in a dilemma where he believes that an honest review might cause the host to lose "face" (Goffman, 1959) by having his ability to abide by the social rules and conventions of Airbnb called into question. He worries that writing negative reviews might cause future hosts to decline his inquiries as they fear that he might be consistently critical in his reviews and could potentially make them lose "face" as well. However, the more experienced host assures him that writing an occasional negative review will not reflect poorly on him. Instead, his act of honesty will be appreciated – reflecting well on both his reputation and his contribution to the overall integrity of the Airbnb user community. To be viewed as reliable, the disciplined performers rely on their cultural competences to demonstrate their commitment to Airbnb's code of conduct. This righteous mentality is possibly more related to the performers' unconscious than conscious cultural competences, originating from what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as the habitus.

As shown above, the cultural disposition of the disciplined performer reflects one who can portray fairness and trustworthiness by virtue of their moralistic dispositions. They command a range of cultural competences that manifests in various attributes, skills, and styles.

- Play fairly and wisely & play by the rules of the game: disposition towards learning and respect for the ethical rights of others

The competences that are utilized by a disciplined performer probably originate from their unconscious cultural configuration. These dispositions that pertain to one's propensity to be ethical, honest and law-abiding are possible involuntary aspects of one's cultivation. In this way, the associated cultural capital that forms one's habitus might play a more crucial role than its conscious doppelganger in shaping the said performer (Bourdieu, 1990).

4.3.3 The deliberate performer

The last cultural disposition of Airbnb users is characterized by individuals who are experts of the theatrical acts of "self-composure" and "respectfulness." They are conspicuous with their intentions to extend a measure of goodwill to others for the benefit of their experiences in the collaborative engagement. In the context of performance, one can be thought of as a theatrical actor who goes the extra mile to provide the audience with free snacks at the door in the hope that they would enjoy a good show. Even though their actions are often on display, reciprocations that are returned in kind from others are appreciated, and may or may not be expected, as their focus is often to avoid possible conflicts or the disappointments of others. The interactions with their audience are strongly defined by the element of politeness or, as inscribed by Goffman (1959), "gestural interchanges" which are the conversational formalities that help portray respect and courtesy at the "front stage". Deliberate performers use mainly two strategies of action "know your place", and "give space to others" (see Table 1).

Know your place

Firstly, guests who possess the dispositions of the deliberate performer typically deploy the strategy of action which we term as "know your place" (see Table 1). As mentioned in section 3.2.3, the power difference in any collaborative engagement through Airbnb is clear; the hosts always command more authority in the relationship than the guests. The dominance is a result of the more invested and proactive role that the team of hosts has to play over the team of guests (Goffman, 1959). Guests who understand their place in the collaboration learn to navigate a field where negotiations are not made by both sides on equal terms. In fact, they learn to accept the fact that they are often susceptible to the aloofness or dismissal of hosts. In so doing, they re-evaluate their status in the collaborative engagement. This is illustrated in the example below where Guest B responds to Guests A on his desired disposition.

> *"Are we rejected because of our lack of renting history, incomplete profiles, or insufficient inquiry messages? I wonder why the hosts tell us that the dates are unavailable, instead of telling us what made them reject us? Is it acceptable to keep showing an all-vacant calendar?"* - Guest A
>
> *"You'll drive yourself crazy trying to figure out some hosts and listings. Hosts can decline and don't have to give a valid or real reason. I wouldn't take it personally - it could be anything from them not having their calendar uptodate, holding out for a longer booking, etc."* - Guest B

In the exchange above, Guest A, who is new to Airbnb, expresses his perceived injustice having received a rejection from a host who did not provide him with any justification. The posting is met with a nonchalant response from Guest B who offers him the advice of acceptance rather than pursuing the case further with the host. Guest B is a regular deliberate performer where, in this case, 'no action' is the deliberate action by the performer in backing down and swallowing one's pride in knowing that there is no better resolution. Though it was unclear if Guest A will indeed heed the advice from Guest B, Guest B's attempt, as an example of a symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1986), was evident in triggering Guest A to interpret and re-evaluate the contexts or meanings of power relations. This is a standard "back stage" behavior where members of the same team, in the absence of the audience, communicate out of character with the intention to streamline their performances before returning to the "front stage" (Goffman, 1959). Similar to the above instance, this level-headedness and non-calculative behavior are illustrated in the following example where Guests D advises Guest C on their embodied dispositions.

"This apartment is "surface level" clean. The moment you scratch the surface, you see it isn't clean. How do you recommend we proceed? Try partial refund? Get Airbnb involved?" - Guest C

"I think if I am a host with guests that would make such a detailed inspection when they arrive and then complain to Airbnb and expect some kind of refund I would be very discouraged and give them a thumbs down...with the remark that they should have booked a hotel." - Guest D

In the forum thread illustrated above, Guest C who is a stickler for cleanliness was unsatisfied with the condition of the apartment where she had been hosted. Guest D, a model of a deliberate performer, in this case, can detach himself from his position as a guest when responding to her outcry as an unrealistic expectation. He differentiates Airbnb leasings from hotel bookings regarding cleanliness standards where he deems such grounds as unworthy of contention. In this case, the accepted gesture is to not nitpick on conditions but to put oneself in the role of the host, to indicate to oneself what is acceptable and to reframe one's judgment based on underlying meaning negotiations (Blumer, 1986). Following from the concept of team dominance by Goffman (1959), it is evident that guests need to respect the dominance of hosts over the collaborative engagement. This act is so as hosts dictate the terms of the leasing agreement as well as play a more proactive role in the interaction process which warrants them more power in the relationship. Therefore, they have to portray a "personal front" (Goffman, 1959) characterized by an accommodating and malleable manner. Thus, to navigate a tricky landscape of power differences, guests, who are deliberate performers, leverage their cultural competences to rationalize and prioritize the essentials while acting in a modest and down-to-earth manner. The skill inscribed from the cultural repertoire (Swidler, 1986) is that of strategic analysis where one identifies the various options available, feels the environment and weighs the odds before taking any action.

Give space to others

While guests with such cultural dispositions are perceptive to the battles they cannot win, hosts are astute to the opportunities through which they can deliver sensible value. Despite having the upper hand in the collaborative engagement, these hosts are not keen on exerting their dominance over the guests. Instead, they turn the tables around and attempt to impress the guests by providing them with added value that is atypical of Airbnb requirements. Therefore, hosts who are deliberate performers utilize the second strategy of action which we term as "give space to others" (see Table 1). This concept, where hosts are obsessed with providing guest a glorified presentation of themselves, is termed by Goffman (1959) as "performance idealization." They do this by taking additional steps to convince their audience that they are better than what they are expected to be. It also requires that hosts, who are looking to impress their guests, willingly give up on having full control over the engagement by cutting their guests some slack. This move is shown in the example below where Host B provides a new host, Host A, with his opinion that dabs into this very disposition.

"I'm brand-new at this and got my first booking [...] Airbnb says to contact the guest to confirm arrival times, give directions, etc - fine - but I have now sent both texts and emails and nothing, not a word. The problem is that I am working until 5.30 tomorrow [...] The last text I sent I did say if I didn't hear back [...] but I'm fretting. Is this total silence normal?" - Host A

"You could have self check in with a programmable lock, key safe or 24 hour restaurant on the corner where they can leave the key. [...] There are all kinds of hosting styles" - Host B

The exchange above is one of the most frequently asked questions on the forum and concerns the management of check-in timings of which hosts have full say on the terms. Host A, who is new to Airbnb, expresses her concern over the loss of control over the communication with her guests in arranging for their check-in. Instead of imposing on the guests to respond, Host B proposes, as a regular deliberate performance, for Host A to consider other check-in options that would provide value to guests without straining the host-guest relationship. By thinking outside of the box, deliberate performers often orchestrate activities that put their graciousness out on full display. To some extent, deliberate performances are said to be motivated by the desire to advance one's status

through idealization (Goffman, 1959). In the case of hosts, the drive towards pursuing the ideals is associated with the intention to advance one's reputation as "superhosts". An excellent example is observed in Host C's comment below from a different thread but on the same matter.

> *"I would ask for their flight number so that you can check when the flight lands and work out approximately what time they will arrive. You could email the guests beforehand saying something like "your flight, number xxxx is due to land at xxxx, and it will take you approx xxx hours to get through customs. The airport is approx 15 mins from my place so I will expect to see you at xxxx and xxx (another time maybe 1 hour)""* - Host C

In the response above, Host C demonstrates her attention to details and willingness to go the extra mile for her guests by checking their flight arrival information and sending a customized reminder email at their convenience. However, as the act is influenced in part by theatrics, deliberate performances carry a strong hint of dramatic realization where their exclusivity is often exaggerated to create the impression that the particular audience has been given individual attention (Goffman, 1959). In the case of Host C, these emails she proposed are nothing more than templates that are reused on multiple occasions regardless of whom her guests are. While her deliberate performance might be considered flashy in this case, hosts of this disposition are also found to exhibit their perceptiveness in subtle forms mainly to enhance their hosting experiences. This act is illustrated in the understated performance of Host D below.

> *"While I like the family photos, you may find that some people find that off putting as it feels like you are going to be forced into a social/fun gathering the moment you arrive! Some people like lots of interaction with hosts and others just want someplace quiet to sleep - so I would think about both types of guest."* - Host D

In the example above, the suggestion given by Host D, as an improvement to the property listing of another host, is to reconsider the choice of images which can come across as rather "socially demanding". Host D is well-versed in the different personalities of guests who are users of the service. The recommendation that he has given not only demonstrate his sensitivity as a deliberate performer but his knowledge of the needs of others in the social field. Albeit a subtle form, his actions function equally as an act of "performance idealization" (Goffman, 1959). To give space to others, the deliberate performer taps on his cultural competences to showcase his perceptiveness and meticulous character to enhance the experience of others in the collaborative engagement. This act also requires patience and cautiousness as dispositions from one's habitus (Bourdieu, 1984).

As shown above, the cultural dispositions of the deliberate performer reflect one who can portray self-composure and respectfulness by virtue of their rationalistic skills and modest dispositions. They readily put themselves in the shoes of others to activate their rational rather than emotional selves in the pursuit of win-win situations. The frequent and conspicuous extension of their goodwill is perceived by others as measures that are over the top, where they exceed the baseline of expectations that prevails within the social field. They command a range of cultural competences that manifests in various attributes, skills, styles and dispositions.

- Know your place: skills of strategic analysis, identifying options, feeling the environment and weighing the odds; ability to control one's emotions
- Give space to others: skill of perceptiveness and dispositions of patience and meticulousness

The competences that are utilized by a deliberate performer originate both from one's conscious as well as unconscious cultural configuration. While certain skills, such as strategic analysis and rationalization, can be voluntarily triggered as part of one's toolkit (Swidler, 1986), the more involuntary mannerisms of emotional control, patience and meticulousness may be influenced in subtle ways as part of one's habitus (Bourdieu, 1990).

4.4 Implications of theatrical portrayal

Following the cultural dispositions introduced in the preceding section, it is important to note that even in possession of such cultural resources, people may not be at the predisposal to leverage the strategies of action made available to them. This resistance could be due to their reluctance to let go of other more habitual strategies of action which come into conflict with the ones necessary for theatrical portrayal (Swidler, 1986). In this section, we examine the meanings, which users attribute to their habitual lines of action, which they are willing to give up in place of new meanings that justify their involvement in collaborative consumption through Airbnb. They are illustrated through two themes: uncertainty and disenchantment.

4.4.1 Uncertainty

The first set of meanings that Airbnb users have to give up on when participating in collaborative consumption relates to the sense of certainty that they have over associated situations, possessions, and people. The shroud of uncertainty that surrounds collaborative consumption is mainly motivated by transactions that occur between strangers and acquaintanceships that are formed through online communication. Aside from the virtual space being an inconvenient medium to establish trust between strangers, Airbnb limits users from making any disclosure of contact information on its website before the leasing agreement. In fact, any form of contact information such as address and mobile number are automatically censored by the system if shared. While Airbnb does provide a myriad of tools, as mentioned earlier in section 4.3.1, that enable users to portray legitimacy, these tools are optional, and a large part of the user base continues to maintain rather minimalistic user profiles. This will be illustrated by performers' use of the three strategies of action "engage in people reading", "take the high road", and "understand the perils of hosting" (see Table 1).

Engage in people reading

With the odds stacked against them, Airbnb hosts and guests alike, have to learn to navigate an environment of ambivalence. Firstly, one of the strategies of action that users deploy in assisting in this transition is termed as "engage in people reading" (see Table 1). Unlike more traditional modes of partnership, where collaborators are necessarily provided with sufficient information before both parties are convinced to the deal, Airbnb users are forced to abandon this meaning of "definiteness" in partnership building and embrace a meaning of "speculation". The risk associated with such speculation is illustrated by the misfortune of Host A below.

> *"He was a verified member and seemed to have a good review from a previous place. [...] we came back from our trip on Sunday and our place was trashed they stole all our electronics (both large screen LED tv's. A sound bar. 2 playstations and 2 apple tv's." - Host A*
>
> *""It seems like these people target a place for the one night they need to rob it or to throw a party and then clear out in the night or early morning. Unfortunately these thugs usually target an inexperienced new host [...] doesn't have an adequately trained gut-feeling yet when the typical red flags appear (one guest for a whole home for one night, coming for a celebration...)" - Host B*

In the above example, Host A, who is new at Airbnb hosting, has his apartment trashed and burgled by his guests even though they possess trustworthy credentials in the form of user reviews. It follows that performance idealization, when accepted as a normality, could potentially blind an audience in making more perceptive judgments (Goffman, 1959). The response from Host B is useful in explaining "people reading" as a strategy of action adopted by more experienced hosts. Beyond reviewing the peripheral credentials of the guest, it involves the triangulation of multiple factors, such as the duration of stay, the number of guests and the purpose of visit, to identify, more holistically, potential "red flags" that could indicate if a guest would be deemed as dangerous. This knowledge to navigate the social arena has been described by Swidler (1986) as cultural competences and Holt

(1997) as field-specific cultural capital. Clearly, the meaning associated with the often cited words of "instincts" or "gut-feeling", used by experienced users in creating conjectures about strangers, deviates from those that arise from more traditional forms of partnership. Hence, to navigate uncertainty associated with strangers, Airbnb users are forced to abandon the meaning of "definiteness" and embrace a meaning of "speculation".

Take the high road

Even if both parties were found to be legitimate, there is no certainty that they will abide by the terms of the collaborative engagement in good faith. In fact, hosts and guests have learned to accept that their perception of what is right or wrong could be called into question and being walked all over by their other halves. Collectively, the second strategy of action is termed as "take the high road" (see Table 1) where Airbnb users soon discern that they have to drop the meaning of "correctness" that pursues personal justice and to adopt the meaning of "indifference" that allows for compromises. One example of such adjustments can be seen in the excerpt below.

> *"My guest violated a rule I have in my house rules about eating in the room twice. Does anyone know if AirBNB has a policy about guest reading the rules prior to booking?" - Host C*

> *"...guests don't read your house rules. You need to figure out what the really important ones are to you and when people check in mention those 3 or 4 in particular. [...] Personally it's not a reason for getting AirBnB involved, it's not a reason for a bad review etc" - Host D*

In the exchange shown above, Host C questions his rights in dealing with guests who violate house rules. It is evident from the response from Host D that these house rules are not equally regarded by guests and are prone to be broken. Host D recommends the strategy of action of "taking the high road", that is by not pursuing personal justice with Airbnb but to remind the guest not to break the rules again. The connotations that transpired from the interactions with Host D likely indicates to Host C that he should let go of situations that he is not in full control of (Blumer, 1986). Nonetheless, Airbnb users, who readily forgo the meaning of and need to pursue personal justice, are inevitably motivated by the portrayal of their theatrical image in the limelight. This is shown in the following example.

> *"I have a house manual the spells (almost) everything out [...] He clearly didn't read the description of the listing, let alone the house manual, and he left a bad review" - Host E*

> *"You address publicly some things the guest wrote in private feedback. So what a prospective guest sees is your long defensive response to a short review. [...] It's hard when a guest is difficult, but you have to be the one who looks professional or people will worry about staying" - Host F*

In the example above, Host E asserts that he has been wronged by his guest who has given him a bad review despite claiming that he has done everything right. The reply from Host F elucidates the theatrical nature of the strategy of action, "take the high road." She proposes to Host E not to kick a fuss out of the situation where his reviews written in bad faith could be judged by other potential guests as a lack of professionalism. Herein lies what Goffman (1959) describe as the maintenance of "decorum" which is part of the "personal front" through which the performer maintains an image knowing that the audience can observe him from outside of the direct range of action. Hence, to mitigate uncertainty associated with situations, Airbnb users are forced to abandon the meaning of "correctness" and embrace a meaning of "indifference."

Understand the perils of hosting

Aside from the uncertainties of people and situations illustrated thus far, the handling of possessions in the form of shared objects is also a matter of ambivalence. The third strategy of action is introduced as "understanding the perils of hosting" (see Table 1) where hosts device an outlook of inevitableness towards the loss and damage of

the shared objects by accepting that such incidents can and will occur. Airbnb hosts learn to let go of the meanings they attribute to their leasing property as "theirs" and the need to "protect" their property from harm by embracing more loosely defined meanings that perceive the objects as mere "instruments" or "tools of the trade." Besides, it is observed among Airbnb hosts that their reactions towards damage to their objects quickly evolve into annoyance rather than grief in having to get their properties fixed or replaced. This shift suggests a distancing from the meanings of possession ownership otherwise attributed to the concept of self (Blumer, 1986). This disposition is illustrated in the forum thread outlined below.

> *"I am advance worried about damages as the apartment is brand new and every cm of the wall is painted in light grey. If the guest makes stains on the wall, could I claim deposit?" - Host G*

> *"This is wear and tear and part of sharing your house with paying guests." - Host H*

> *"Wear and tear is not something you can claim for - scuff marks on your wall from cases etc are wear and tear. Best to have a small pot of paint handy and touch up things like that." - Host I*

Based on the excerpts above, Host G, who is new to Airbnb, is concerned with the likelihood of damage to the newly painted walls on her property. This concern is met with the collective responses of Host H and Host I who describe these damages as mundane "wear and tear" that hosts are to consult as part of the deal. Like peas from the same pod, they have aligned their lines of actions with each other thereby constituting a group behavior (Blumer, 1986). Host I even further suggests that the host should be prepared for such damages and to make minor repairs on her own. Therefore, while managing uncertainties associated with objects, Airbnb users are forced to abandon the meaning of "perfectness" and embrace a meaning of "impermanence."

As shown above, the users of Airbnb pursue various strategies of actions to navigate within a climate of uncertainty that is created as a consequence of the unique nature of collaborative consumption. This shift can be attributed to the ambivalence that surrounds matters relating to people, possessions, and situations that manifest within the social field.

- Engage in people reading: abandon the meaning of "definiteness" and embrace a meaning of "speculation" in partnership
- Take the high road: abandon the meaning of "correctness" and embrace a meaning of "indifference" in personal justice
- Understand the perils of hosting: abandon the meaning of "perfectness" and embrace a meaning of "impermanence" in possessions

By pursuing these particular theatrical rules of engagements, users abandon their habitual strategies of action (Swidler, 1986) that constitute the meanings of definiteness, correctness, and perfectness in favor of alternative ones relating to new meanings of speculation, indifference, and impermanence.

4.4.2 Disenchantment

The second set of meanings that Airbnb users have to give up on relates to the widespread idealistic and romantic views on collaborative consumption. In previous literature, collaborative consumption has been conceptualized as prosocial where it resembles the attributes associated with hegemonic forms of sharing (Belk, 2014; Botsman & Rogers, 2008). Sharing, in the general sense of the word, is considered to be collaborative in nature and capable of generating strong feelings of unity. Thus, collaborative consumption has been regarded as a way for people to create meaningful connections. This sentiment has been advocated by Airbnb itself, which positions the company with the mission to create a "community built on sharing" (Airbnb, n.d.). However, at the same time, the positioning of the service as a means through which people "monetize their extra space" (Airbnb, n.d.) is a central aspect of the Airbnb business model and shifts the role of Airbnb from a social connector to a transactional

mediator. Hosts seem to take this to heart as 15.4% of them are full-time hosts, and around 59.2% of them use hosting to supplement their income (Breese & He, 2016). The mechanics of the Airbnb platform, therefore, tilt the scale of interactivity to the side of pragmatism as opposed to romanticism. This will be illustrated by the performers' use of the two strategies of action "standardize interactions," and "normalize transactions" (see Table 1).

Standardize interactions

The dominance of pragmatism over romanticism in the Airbnb engagement can be seen in the strong anti-social behavior displayed by some hosts. There are plenty of examples of hosts who convey considerable annoyance with guests that they perceive as being "high maintenance." It differs, quite naturally, from host to host what a high maintenance guest entails – anything from a guest that makes requests for amenities that have explicitly been stated to not be provided by the host to guests being perceived as too talkative. While they aspire to portray a front of accommodation and hospitality through the act of idealization (Goffman, 1959), they try to keep all interactions with guests to a minimum and cut-off communication as soon as possible. One way for them to do this is through the deployment of the strategy of action labeled "standardize interactions" (see Table 1). As opposed to conventional forms of sharing, where the focus is on caring about and making connections with people, interactions for Airbnb users focus mostly on matters of transactions. This forces users to abandon the meanings of conversation as "deep" or "meaningful" for that of "utilitarian" or "trivial." In the below example, Host A, a relatively new host, seeks advice on how to deal with guests that engage in small talk, which she considers to be a nuisance.

> *"both long-term guests always questioned where I am going when I leave the home or where I was when I return. I do not mind interacting with guests but I think the long-term it begins to feel we are more ""roommates"" than them being a renter [...] How would you respond to these types of inquiries?" – Host A*

> *"this just sounds like your guests are making conversation [...] If, however, you feel like you are being interrogated by your guests, or there is some kind of assumption that you shouldn't be going out but rather staying in to be at their beck and call [...] just say in a bright and breezy fashion, ""Oh nothing exciting. I've just got some errands I need to run."" If you keep responding along these lines, hopefully they will get bored of asking! " – Host B*

In the above exchange, Host A explicitly states that she does not wish to engage in any substantial informal interaction as that, in her mind, would change the dynamics of the engagement. She holds that she wants the relationship with her guests to stay professional, indicating that more intimate interactions are treated as secondary. This attitude illustrates precisely how she, primarily, has adopted a pragmatic approach to the Airbnb engagement. In the capacity of being a more experienced host, Host B suggests for Host A to keep interactions with her guests short and to a minimum to wear out the guest's interest in conversing. The interaction effectively illustrates "standardize interactions" as a strategy of action. The advice is to engage in "symbolic interactions," through the use of "gestures," with guests to communicate the manner in which conversations between hosts and guests should be carried out (Blumer, 1986). This gesture is meant to express the desired response from the guests, the intention of the host, and the collaborative act that should be the result (Blumer, 1986). As suggested by Host B above, short yet polite answers can symbolize to a guest that the host does not wish to engage in small talk and interactions should be kept strictly functional. Repeat usage of such symbolic interactions is also suggested until the meaning has been received by the guest. The same reluctance to engage in pleasantries with guests, but expressed in a more disapproving and condemnatory way, can be seen in the below example. Here, Host C, a quite experienced host, is demonstrating a less than collaborative mindset, while venting various points of dissatisfaction with guests.

"For me I don't want longer lets. I don't want to share the kitchen and the laundry [...] shorter lets are more profitable for me, I get more money and I don't have to get into a longer term share where I have a roommate. I can get along with nearly anyone for a week or two [...] I don't want longer stays [...] one example (from a different website) was a guest saying he wanted to learn English with the family (I live alone) and if he liked the stay would stay longer. Straight no. I don't want to spend my evenings or weekends with someone following me to practice their English it's not part of the deal." – Host C

In the above example, Host C argues that she does not wish to share common spaces with guests and that doing so for longer periods of time will be exceedingly difficult. Moreover, she expresses that "chatting" and interaction, in general, is undesirable in collaborative engagements. Host C displays a more extreme attitude than Host A, from the previous example, though the underlying attitude seems to be the same. Her writings even seem to indicate that she would prefer not to interact with guests at all, describing guests as necessary "evils" for her business dealings. Herein lies what Goffman (1959) refers to as one of the two extremes of one's belief in performance: an individual can either believe in the act or be skeptical about it. Host C appears to adopt a rather skeptical disposition towards social affection in the Airbnb engagement where the sole purpose seems to be to make money. Hence, to engage in sharing through collaborative consumption, Airbnb users have to abandon the idea of conversations as "deep and meaningful" and to embrace them as "utilitarian and trivial."

Normalize transactions

The pragmatic meanings that are given to interactions can also be detected from the transactional aspects of the Airbnb engagement. The transactional nature can be illustrated by the strategy of action termed "normalize transactions" (see Table 1) where Airbnb users emphasize the meanings of "pragmatism" by adopting certain standards regarding payments and give up on the meanings of "romanticism" found in sharing. In the empirical material, this can be illustrated by hosts expressing resentment toward guests trying to negotiate prices or engage in bartering. In the example below, Host D, an experienced host, airs her opinion on the negotiating of prices.

"My day job is running an estate jewelry store and people feel free to dicker all the time. They ask the best price and I double the price...best price for whom? They back down for the most part. My best customers never ask for a discount and marking things up so yahoos can feel they got a deal is not the commerce I want to participate in. I find it tacky to bargain for a set, reasonable price on anything." – Host D

Here, Host D clearly displays a realistic attitude toward Airbnb, referring to hosting through the platform as a form of commerce and guests that try to haggle as "yahoos." Her less than flattering way of referring to haggling guests indicates little concern for the social side of hosting. In the below example, Host E, an experienced host, shares his sentiments on the issue.

"where it relates to bargain hunters [...] my idea is to not to sound so harsh when you're refusing a client. Wouldn't it be better to get what you want, while allowing the client to feel like they're getting what they want? Since we are in the hospitality industry [...] you can't please everyone but you have to show an accommodating image." – Host E

In the above example, Host E expresses concerns about the critical approach that is voiced by several other hosts while discussing their opinion on guests trying to negotiate prices. He displays concerns about, what is perceived as, a misalignment between the attitude that is promoted among the critical hosts and the attitude that is necessary when engaged in hospitality businesses such as Airbnb. Instead of being so dismissive of guests attempting to negotiate a better price, he argues that hosts need to be more accommodating and, even if not approving of such behavior, deal with it in a polite, friendly and professional manner (Goffman, 1959). He refers to this as a more accommodating "mindset" where an image of hospitality is displayed. But even in this case, the right "mindset" and the accommodating portrayal is just a show to further their success as hosts and is not particularly collaborative. This act reveals the skeptical side of the theatrical portrayal where the host is not necessarily

convinced by his act (Goffman, 1959). The pragmatic approach to the transactional aspect of the Airbnb engagement can be further illustrated by guests expressing interest in bartering in place of traditional payments. In the following example, Guest A proposes to pay for Airbnb stays through musical performances.

> *"I am doing a tour as a singer songwriter on a motorcycle. I have a lot of places to stay already, but I am looking to fill in some gaps with cheap or free places to sleep along my route. I'll play a concert at your house, BBQ, favorite bar, or place of work in exchange for lodging!" – Guest A*
>
> *"If you are looking for cheap or free accommodation, you are probably better looking at something like Couch surfing dot com. Good luck with your trip. It sounds fun." – Host F"*

In the example above, Guest A is swiftly, albeit politely, dismissed and directed to other more suitable platforms. This clearly highlights the pragmatic meanings that Host F ascribes to the Airbnb engagement, and which are shared by most other users on the forum. While a more romantic meaning attribution to the Airbnb engagement, were greater focus is put on the social interaction, might be more flexible in terms of price and mode of payment, the empirical material shows that there is no leeway when it comes to payments and the commerce of Airbnb. Furthermore, the Airbnb platform leaves no room for bartering as a monetary payment has to be made in connection with the confirmation of a booking. Hence, to consume collaboratively, Airbnb users are forced to abandon the meaning of "romanticism" and embrace a meaning of "pragmatism".

As shown above, the users of Airbnb pursue various strategies of actions to demystify the enchantment around sharing in collaborative consumption. This shift can be attributed to the misalignments in expectations relating to interactions and transactions that manifest within the social field.

- Standardize interactions: abandon the meaning of "deep and meaningful" and embrace the meaning of "utilitarian and trivial" in conversations
- Normalize transactions: abandon the meaning of "romanticism" and embrace the meaning of "pragmatism" in negotiations

By deploying the strategies of action discussed above, users abandon their habitual strategies of action, meanings of interactions and transactions on Airbnb as "deep and meaningful" and "romantic" and instead regard them as "utilitarian and trivial" and "pragmatic" respectively (Swidler, 1986).

5. Discussion

This chapter aims to critically examine the key topics that have emerged in light of the findings and analysis from the preceding chapter. Firstly, we begin by reviewing the findings of the study in relations to the research questions. Secondly, we propose a tentative model for cultural analysis that is conceptualized as an outcome of the analytical work. Thirdly, we apply the tentative model to our findings and in turn outline two distinct theatrical acts portrayed by Airbnb users. Fourthly, we discuss results on the topic of trust which has emerged as a central issue that impacts users' active participation. Lastly, we review findings on the issues of market mediation, community building, and interest motives which have all arisen as influential forces within the social field.

5.1 Insights from findings

The findings in the preceding section have fulfilled the two research objectives outlined at the start of this study. Firstly, the study has found that trust is the central factor that influences the success of user participation in collaborative consumption. By leveraging a set of rules, norms, and engagements in their participation in the social field (see Table 1), users are observed to display four theatrical intentions: legitimacy, fairness, self-composure and respectfulness. Secondly, it provides an initial glimpse into the cultural competencies and meaning negotiations required to participate in collaborative consumption. These cultural competences are captured in the dispositions of three types of performer: the sociable, the disciplined and the deliberate. The meaning negotiations, on the other hand, are grouped and presented in two predominant themes associated with uncertainty and disenchantment. All in all, the findings suggest that collaborative consumption, when examined through the lens of cultural theories, had proven to be more meaningful in retrieving explanatory insights as opposed to previous studies that study interests and values through neoclassical approaches.

5.2 A tentative model for cultural analysis

Culture has long been considered as a latent and pervasive force that shapes the action of people (Swidler, 1986). Undoubtedly, there exist numerous cultural theories that have been conceptualized to explain action through various facets of culture. In this study, borrowing the ideas from several classical culture theories, we have assimilated a model that connects culture to action as illustrated in Figure 11 below. In this model, action refers to a set of specific rules, or what is known as "strategies of actions," that is needed for participants to engage in a particular new form of consumption.

Figure 11: A tentative model for cultural analysis

Culture relates to action through two distinct spheres of influence: one that relates to people's willingness and another that relates to people's ability to carry out action. In the first sphere, culture influences the meanings that participants attribute to objects - people, possessions, ideals, and situations - by shaping the contexts and circumstances through which they interpret and renegotiate these meanings (Blumer, 1986). For people to pursue the specific set of actions required for particular forms of consumption, they have to adopt the new meanings associated with them and be willing to give up on contradictory meanings that are related to their habitual actions (Swidler, 1986). In the second sphere, culture motivates the competences that participants acquire or cultivate as particular dispositions that enable them to move with greater ease in the consumption field (Swidler, 1986). These cultural competences, inscribed as a toolkit (Swidler, 1986) or habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), provide people with the ability to execute the needed strategies of action proficiently and ensure their success within the particular consumption fields. As such, going beyond the concept of rules that keep practitioners within the social terrain and shuts non-practitioners out, this model considers the abilities and willingness of consumers as a possible hindrance to their participation in consumption.

The proposed model for cultural analysis can be elaborated through three premises. Firstly, an individual's cultural competences are, in themselves, inconsequential in influencing one's meaning interpretation where the reverse is also true. The two spheres of influence, that drive people's willingness and ability to participate in consumption, coexist on two separate planes of reference. In the case of collaborative engagements through Airbnb, some users who are "sociable performers," characterized by being warm, friendly and people-loving, may be sentimental towards the meanings of romanticism and be put off by the disenchantment that surrounds the practice. However, other users who are also "sociable performers," may only be putting on a front. They may choose to forgo these meanings of idealization and readily accept the pragmatic ideologies associated with collaborative consumption. Secondly, how important certain competences or meanings are to an individual depends on the significance of the strategies of action they enable. In this study, the strategies of action delineated are those relating to self-presentation which allow one to enter into a successful partnership with others within the community. There exist other strategies of action that deal with aspects of personal management that have been omitted. While these rules, such as basic tricks to getting started or ideas to optimize individual productivity, could also require certain cultural competences and meaning implications, these resources are, nevertheless, more fundamental and less uniquely positioned for the field. Lastly, the set of cultural competences and meaning implications required can change. This can be due to decisions made by the consumer agency or the mediating firm that alter the set of strategies of action required to participate in the consumption field. As such, competences and meanings that were previously important to the consumption practice may depreciate or be replaced. For instance, the pertinent strategies of action observed in this study, that primarily centered around the theatrical portrayals of trust, may conceivably diminish in importance should Airbnb impose stricter laws in enforcing security as part of the usage policy.

From the proposed model, it is evident that strategies of action play a central role in research as they form the basis through which one's "cultural competences" and "meaning implications" can be interpreted and analyzed by researchers. In this study, we were only able to retrieve these strategies of action because of the favorable conditions of the Airbnb community. As such, a few criteria concerning the consumption field needs to be fulfilled before applying the proposed analytical model. Firstly, participants should constitute a collective where members are actively engaged in a sustained level of interaction. A continuum of social interaction is necessary to maintain and renew the rules, or strategies of action, that govern the social field. In turn, the strategies of actions influence the meaning (Blumer, 1986) and motivate the competences (Swidler, 1986) that are required to play by the rules. Secondly, active participants who act as leaders are necessary to advocate the good and condemn the bad team behaviors (Goffman, 1959). By moderating the conversations between members, these group leaders reproduce the structure of the field (Giddens, 1984) and maintain the necessary performance rules (Goffman, 1959) required to participate. Lastly, participants of the community, despite the presence of inevitable differences in opinion, should come to a common consensus on a particular set of strategies of action (Swidler, 1986) or performance rules (Goffman, 1959) that serves as the dominant standard that regulates the field.

5.3 Theatrical acts in collaborative consumption

It was on a whiteboard in the living room of Chesky, Blecharczyk, and Gebbia, founders of Airbnb, where the sketch of a spectrum first materialized. To one end, there was the word "hotels". On the other end, there were the words "rental listings" by which they meant Craigslist, hostels, and free homestay networks such as Couchsurfing. In between the two ends lay a greenfield of unexploited potential: travelers seeking affordable lodgings with an opportunity to immerse within local cultures. It was there that the idea of Airbnb, to mobilize local homeowners to lease their properties to travelers in exchange for a reasonable fee, was conceived (Botsman & Rogers, 2008, p.6). Although they went ahead with the idea in any case, it was recognized then that the greenfield was vast and untouched for a reason - the distrust that exists between strangers. Issues of trust, or the lack thereof, passes on to the users and appear as a central theme in the findings on hosts and guests who participate in collaborative consumption through Airbnb. To put the findings into perspective, we apply the tentative analytical model and present them in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Tentative model used with results of this study

In the first sphere, culture influences the meanings (Blumer, 1986) that Airbnb users attribute to objects - people, possessions, ideals and situations - with the onset of uncertainty and disenchantment surrounding the practice. To navigate uncertainty, Airbnb users are found to abandon their habitual strategies of action (Swidler, 1986) that constitute the meanings of definiteness, correctness, and perfectness in favor of alternative ones relating to new meanings of speculation, indifference, and impermanence. In a similar vein, Airbnb users grappling with disenchantment are forced to forsake the meanings attached to exchanges in sharing as deep, meaningful and romantic, and to regard them as utilitarian, trivial and pragmatic instead. In the second sphere, culture motivates the competences (Jenkins, 2007; Swidler, 1986) that participants cultivate to move with ease in the social field. Airbnb users are found with the dispositions to be sociable, disciplined and deliberate. A sociable disposition pertains to conscious skills, such as that of selling, storytelling or an artful command of language, and unconscious mannerisms such as that of amiability and diplomacy. A disciplined disposition, on the other hand, exhibit deeper trenched principles of ethicality, honesty and being law-abiding. A deliberate disposition embodies more voluntary skills, such as that of strategic analysis and rationalization, and less voluntary characteristics such as that of emotional control, patience and meticulousness. Collectively, meaning and competences guide consumers' willingness and ability to execute the strategies of action in Airbnb's collaborative consumption. These strategies of action are found to fall into four main groups categorized by their intentions: to portray legitimacy, fairness, self-composure and respectfulness. We have separated these portrayals into two participatory acts (Goffman, 1959), themed as "we are trustworthy" and "we mean business." These acts are detailed further in this subchapter.

5.3.1 Act 1: We are trustworthy

Trust has been widely cited in previous literature as a factor that impacts active participation in collaborative consumption (e.g. Owyang et al., 2014; Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015; Hartl, Hofmann & Kirchler, 2016). Simply put, "a high degree of trust is often required within collaborative lifestyles because human-to-human interaction, not physical product, is often the focus of the exchange" (Botsman & Rogers, 2008, p.47). The critical strategies of action deployed by Airbnb users, hosts and guests alike, are found to assist them in putting on an 'act' to portray their trustworthiness to others within the community. These actions are believed to be related to one of two prominent theatrical intentions in depicting "legitimacy" and "fairness." Acts that showcase legitimacy revolve around foot-in-door strategies where hosts embellish their listing profiles to entice guests and guests furnish hosts with information to prove their worthiness. On the other hand, acts that proclaim their fair-mindedness are concerned with reputation-building strategies based on ratings and reviews they earned from the community which indicates their adherence to the formal rules and informal norms. To understand the need to put on such a display, it is necessary to review a few root causes behind the climate of "uncertainty" leading to the distrust.

Firstly, intermediary organizations like Airbnb do not assume full responsibility for all breaches in collaborative engagements. Unlike traditional middlemen that govern the integrity of exchanges between producers and consumers, companies like Airbnb serve mostly as caretakers or ambassadors, and they leave the policing work in the hands of the community (Botsman & Rogers, 2008). A sense of nostalgia for big brother governance was documented on numerous occasions as Airbnb users are readily dismissed when they accuse the company of possible oversights. For example, Airbnb responds to guests, who report bookings which turn out to be illegal, that it is their own responsibilities to observe local laws and codes. This sense of nostalgia can similarly be observed in the case of car sharing. Users have repeatedly requested for the intermediary company to impose additional surveillance mechanisms in regulating fairness in the usage of the service (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2014). However, in the view of these intermediary firms, the primary barrier to taking greater governance measures is often their lack of resources to orchestrate such feats. Hence, there is a shortage of formal legal regulations that are put in place to protect collaborative consumers (Hartl et. al., 2016). For example, hosts of Airbnb often cite the non-responses from Airbnb when making damage claims towards an insurance that Airbnb coined as "host guarantee." As such, transactions in collaborative consumption are based on loosely-established contracts which make it difficult for users to trust the integrity of others in making these exchanges (Belk, 2014a).

Secondly, online platform tools created by meditating organizations like Airbnb are questionable means to evaluate user trustworthiness. There exists a myriad of tools available to Airbnb users such as user profile pages, listing sites, rating systems and testimonials used to position themselves. Ert, Fleischer and Magen (2016) found in their study that "visual-based impressions" from the profile photos of hosts are influential in attracting the attention of guests while the testimonials they had received are inconsequential (p.64). Others have maintained that photos, videos, and testimonials have made consumption safer and less risky (Tovey & Masum, 2011; Sacks, 2011; Solove, 2007). Even so, the empirical material in this study revealed that users perceive a moderate level of ambivalence towards the online personas that have been created by others. There are instances documented where hosts and guests alike had suffered from thefts or assaults even though their co-users were previously screened to possess valid Airbnb user profiles. The results postulate that these online tools are inadequate in reviewing user trustworthiness. They support Festila and Müller's (2017) view that the real measure of trust in collaborative consumption can only be achieved when one's online presentation is affirmed by one's demeanor in real-life. Inasmuch as the causes of distrust hitherto discussed, the dramaturgical act that portrays trustworthiness plays a critical role in granting user acceptance within the Airbnb community. Users dramatize their performances (Goffman, 1959) by adding to them fine touches which they derive from their dispositions as sociable, disciplined and deliberate. They learn to evaluate trustworthiness through the coherency of others' performances, based on multiple attributes and from different platform tools, which they triangulate to construct unified impressions of others. Hence, the proficiency of one's act as a performer becomes an important unit of measurement for one's trustworthiness in collaborative consumption.

5.3.2 Act 2: We mean business

The pragmatic nature of collaborative consumption is a topic that has gained much interest in past literature (e.g. Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014b; Hamari et. al., 2015; Möhlmann, 2015; Hwang & Griffiths, 2017). The degree of market intermediation, accentuated by a profit motive of financial transaction, is said to influence the sharing dynamics as well as the rules of engagement that govern them (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Airbnb has positioned itself in the "middle ground" of commerce within the hospitality industry where the company both encourages community spirit formed around sharing and commercial activities by homeowners to monetize their excess space (Airbnb, n.d.). Unlike the act of trustworthiness, this act of pragmatism is staged not with the intention to improve one's worth in the community but to phase out more romantic newcomers who have joined the field with the wrong expectations, such as those who wish to engage in bartering or build lasting friendships. Thus, to negotiate derailments and bring these outlaws back on the right track, users deploy actions that relate to the theatrical intentions of "self-composure" and "respectfulness." Acts that demonstrate self-composure are negotiation strategies that range from passive-aggressions, by expressing negativity in a subtle manner, to nonchalance, by accepting negativity as lessons in finding the right collaborators. Acts that depict respectfulness, on the other hand, can be analogized to customer-service strategies where users extend their goodwill and consideration for the interest of others as a form of good service. To discern the motivations behind the act, it is pertinent to examine the factors that contribute to the "disenchantment" that surrounds the practice.

Firstly, the involvement of monetary exchange has transformed the very nature of sharing. Using the term pseudo-sharing, Belk (2014b) claims that collaborative consumption is a "wolf-in-sheep's-clothing phenomenon" that more closely resembles an opportunistic exchange where sharing is necessary to complete the transaction (p.7). Similarly, Rifkin (2010) describes that the romantic nature of sharing is lost to transactions where "traditional reciprocal obligations and expectations are replaced by contractual relationships" (p.9). Indeed, the influence of monetary exchange was found to have pragmatic effects on the users of Airbnb. Many hosts have come to perceive their involvement as a form of business while numerous guests have found ways to make the most of their experiences with full consideration for the money they have spent. The utilitarian benefits of collaborative consumption have been widely discussed in various researches as a source of motivation to user participation (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Hamari et. al., 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015; Hwang & Griffiths, 2017). Even so, some authors argue that a portion of Airbnb users exhibit sentimental behaviors by going beyond monetary exchange to provide guests or hosts with gifts (Yannopoulou, Moufahim & Bian, 2013; Festila & Müller, 2017). This is in line with our findings on deliberate performers who have gone out of their way to enhance the exchange experience, such as hosts giving space for guests to feel at home or guests giving in to hosts as property owners. Despite a limited few who do so without hidden agendas, it can be argued that these acts are mostly theatrical, in the hope that others return the favor through testimonials, based on pragmatic rather than sentimental reasons.

Secondly, the group behavior in collaborative consumption deviates from the ideals of communities. In the study on car sharing, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) found users to exhibit non-community like dynamics where they avoid meeting with other members, hold on and refuse to return items others have forgotten in the vehicles, and resist the efforts of the intermediary organization to create a more collective experience. Such experiences would more likely occur when goods are divided and shared in distinctive segments such as the use of a car or apartment that is limited by rental time (Belk, 2014b). Even so, in a recent study, Festila and Müller (2017) argue that Airbnb users present a general inclination towards brand community building that is motivated by their desire for more holistic experiences outside of the functional value of their homestays. Our findings reveal that the Airbnb community, which composes of a set of dialectical roles of host and guest, constitutes more complex relational dynamics. However, it can be postulated that the sense of "shared consciousness" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) is more evident among users that are suppliers (hosts) that those who are consumers (guests) in the collaborative relationship. This is so as hosts are found to play a more active role in engaging one another in "back-stage" interactions that

regulate the image of the team and Airbnb service, in general, to instill trust among the guests. Still, it is in line with the results of Festila and Müller (2017) that the users tend to "signal a sort of loose-tie community belongingness and as a mechanism of selecting the type of people that will engage with Airbnb" (p.59).

Thirdly, collaborative consumption appears to be more strongly motivated by self-interest rather than by altruism. This is supported by studies that have proposed collaborative consumption as an oxymoron aimed at gaining personal benefits by creating commercial transactions disguised in the form of sharing (Walsh, 2011; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2014; Belk, 2014b; Möhlmann, 2015). Gorenflo (2012) argues instead that self-interest and altruism are present together where the purpose of collaborative consumption is not to denounce self-interest but to find a way so that both ambitions can coexist. Indeed, this study has found that the good deeds carried out by Airbnb users can both be perceived as genuine, with the intent of contributing to the greater good of society, or staged in exchange for benefits to advance users' reputation. Goffman (1959) conceptualizes two end points to one's performance: "an individual may be taken in by his own act or be cynical about it" (p.11). As such, the degree of authenticity in sharing may be a matter of individual tendencies, which falls along the spectrum between believer and cynic, rather than a generalization that can be made to the practice as a whole. As shown by the factors contributing to disenchantment, the pragmatic effect on the social field creates a practice that deviates from the romantic view associated with hegemonic forms of sharing. To avoid disappointments from newcomers, it is, therefore, necessary for users to tap on their competences, of being sociable, disciplined and deliberate performers, to carry out the theatrical acts that elucidate the boundaries of pragmatism governing collaborative consumption.

6. Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the main outcomes of the study. Firstly, we begin by presenting a recap on all the key ideas presented in this study. Secondly, we present three significant theoretical contributions to academia through this research. Thirdly, we highlight three main practical contributions for consumers and practitioners. Finally we conclude the thesis by proposing possible research angles that have emerged from the study.

6.1 A recap on the study

Collaborative consumption has received considerable attention as an important consumer trend that has prevailed over the last decade. Since its inception in the late 1970s, the meanings infused in the term "collaborative consumption", describing activities through which people consume goods collectively, has become obsolete. Instead, the term is now more commonly used to describe consumption activities characterized by temporary access, carried out in a collaborative spirit, that is enabled by advances made within the world of digital technology (Festila & Müller, 2017). Despite the myriad of definitions associated with the practice, we focus on one dominant mode of collaborative consumption, namely access-based consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), that has witnessed escalated interest attributed to the rise of phenomena such as car sharing and short-term apartment leasing. Due to prior research's lack of focus on the cultural dispositions of collaborative consumers, the purpose of the study is to advance understanding of the subject guided by the following two research questions:

- *What are the rules of engagement, conventions, and norms that govern collaborative consumption?*
- *What are the cultural competences and meaning that users require to adhere to these engagement rules?*

The research has been framed using Giddens's (1984) structuration theory where collaborative consumption as a social field is postulated to consist of a consumer agency that is being regulated by its structure. The agency-structure dynamics is examined through the governing rules, norms, and conventions that are used by consumers to maneuver the social game. To capture these rules as the unit of analysis, the study has used a qualitative research approach. The data has been collected using netnography, involving the observation and recording of textual interactions in an online setting. The empirical case and site chosen for the study were Airbnb and said company's official community forum. A theoretical framework, constructed using classical cultural theories, namely the concept of dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986), strategies of action and cultural competences (Swidler, 1986) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), was used to filter, thematize and analyze the empirical data. The data was then further analyzed using a form of hermeneutic interpretation, where themes were developed both from the basis of prior knowledge and through the interpretation of the empirical material.

The study's key findings are threefold. Firstly, the rules of engagement among users of Airbnb have been conceptualized as consisting of four distinct intentions of legitimacy, fairness, self-composure and respectfulness. Secondly, the findings indicate that users require the right constitution of cultural competences to adhere to the rules above. These competences are embodied by the sociable, disciplined, and deliberate performers. Thirdly, the results suggest, in addition to the right cultural competences, that users need the appropriate meaning attributions to willingly participate within the contexts of uncertainty and disenchantment. The interconnectedness of the three elements of intentions, competences, and meanings are holistically discussed in the construction of a tentative model for cultural analysis. By applying the study's findings to this model, the two theatrical themes of trustworthiness and pragmatism emerged. Therefore, this study concludes that individuals participating in collaborative consumption are necessarily performers where their success in the field is determined by their proficiency in performing these two main theatrical acts.

6.2 Theoretical contribution

The findings obtained through this study present a number of theoretical contributions. Firstly, it extends the current academic understanding of collaborative consumption by focusing on the rules of engagement, conventions, and norms that govern the practice – a research area that has been previously overlooked. As covered in section 1.2, "problematization of prior research", existing research has been primarily focused on defining what is and what is not collaborative consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014b) as well as on the underlying motivational factors that drive collaborative consumption usage (Hamari et al., 2015; Möhlmann, 2015; Piscielli et al., 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015). Furthermore, the studies that have looked into the motivational factors of collaborative consumption usage have explored intrinsic and extrinsic interests and values with largely inconclusive results. In this study, we have instead argued that collaborative consumption is governed by a set of rules, norms, and conventions where only those who are equipped with the applicable cultural competencies and meaning interpretations can assimilate and participate in the social field. As a result, those who lack these competences and interpretations are effectively shut out. This view is captured through the assimilation of the tentative cultural analytical model which contributes to the field of consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). In this model, culture relates to action through two distinct spheres of influence: one that relates to people's willingness and another that relates to people's ability to carry out action.

Secondly, the study further enriches current understanding on collaborative consumption by conceptualizing it as a series of theatrical acts using Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy. In this view, users of Airbnb are argued to engage in purposeful acts of self-presentation in their social interactions, both during as well as outside of their Airbnb engagements, with other members of the Airbnb community. Users are argued to put on a performance with the intention of making an impression of trustworthiness and their success in doing so is measured by their ability to construct convincing portrayals. The rules, norms, and conventions that are argued to govern collaborative consumption are, therefore, conceptualized as "dramaturgical rules" that are embedded within the social interactions between collaborative consumers. Furthermore, guests and hosts on Airbnb are postulated to constitute two distinct performance teams where the theatrical roles of these teams are not set in stone. Instead of one team being only performers and the other being only the audience, the performance roles of guests and hosts are conceptualized to switch back and forth during each Airbnb engagement. As such, the study has illustrated and developed Goffman's (1959) principle of roles. By detailing the dynamics of interchanging roles between performers and the audience in collaborative consumption relationships, it contrasts traditional consumption models where the roles are fixed with providers acting as performers and consumers as the audience.

Thirdly, while Airbnb and other similar services have been the subject of prior research, these studies have centered on the customer side of the collaborative engagement (Tussyadiah, 2015; Möhlmann, 2015). In essence, users of collaborative consumption can consist of both supplier ("host" in our case) and customer ("guest" in our case). As such, the role and motivation drivers of suppliers have been the subject of under-theorization. By looking at both supplier and consumer, this study helps to ameliorate this under-theorization to a certain degree. By not limiting the study to focus only on guests, we have been able to see that guests and hosts share similar motives, competences, and meanings though the situations through which they manifest may differ slightly. For example, in the climate of uncertainty, guests may risk paying for an accommodation that differs from the specifications stated on the online listings while hosts may be more concerned with potential damages inflicted by strangers on their properties. In this way, the results from this study were able to represent the dispositions of collaborative consumers more holistically.

6.3 Practical contribution

In addition to the aforementioned theoretical contributions, the findings obtained through this study also present a number of practical contributions. Firstly, the findings offer insights into how the growth of Airbnb is potentially obstructed by its own structure. The study proved that the successful usage of Airbnb is dependent on the users' ability to portray a trustworthy exterior as well as their ability to deal with the uncertainty inherent to the Airbnb engagement. It has been further argued that this can potentially shut out those who lack the cultural competences to portray trustworthiness as well as those who are unwilling to deal with the risks associated with inherently uncertain ventures. As such, intermediary organizations like Airbnb can draw reference from these findings to develop growth strategies that can help them to achieve greater traction within contemporary consumer cultures. For example, Airbnb could implement measures that help improve the ability of users to portray legitimacy and assess the trustworthiness of others in the community. This could be done by making user verification compulsory for all users, as opposed to it being optional as it is today, or to mandate users to provide more information on their user profiles to reduce the anonymity perceived by others to instill trust (Botsman, 2008).

Secondly, and related to the previous point, the findings can also be of value to more traditional accommodation providers, such as hotels or primitive landlords, that are incumbents to the industries which mediating companies such Airbnb have come to infiltrate. As observed from the last decade, collaborative consumption has proven to be an important and prevailing consumer trend that is predicted to achieve sustainable growth in the coming years (Botsman & Rogers, 2008). As such, it is important for companies in direct competition with providers of collaborative consumption services to understand the cultural requirements that drive this consumer trend and to position themselves strategically in ways to take advantage of the challenges faced by Airbnb. For example, the importance of and the relative difficulty in establishing trust in the Airbnb engagement can be leveraged by traditional alternatives as key value differentiators for their services. One way to do so is by marketing to targeted segments that transactions are done securely with money-back guarantees for misrepresentations, potentially swaying those who are still sitting on the fence or those who are dissatisfied with collaborative consumption to pursue more traditional alternatives.

Lastly, the research has found insights that are indicative of a few key consumer trends. Contemporary consumers, postulated from those who participate in collaborative consumption, are found to possess a greater aptitude for risk when engaging in consumption practices. This audaciousness was demonstrated in our study by the willingness of participants to navigate in a consumptionscape of uncertainty caused by transactions between strangers and with inadequate means to evaluate their trustworthiness. This notion is driven by a parallel trend where consumers are increasingly prioritizing the value derived from experiences outside of possessions and their utilitarian worth. As such, these consumers are willing to negotiate and compromise the terms of their consumption engagement in exchange for maximum value, in both experiential and utilitarian forms. In a similar vein, it can be observed that contemporary consumers are progressively taking a more active role in consumption. By acting both as the "performer" as well as the "audience" in collaborative consumption, they readily invest more time and effort to plan, engage and evaluate the circumstances and symbolisms of their consumption practices.

6.4 Possible future research

While the findings obtained in the study has provided a number of theoretical and practical contributions, the study is not without its limitations. Firstly, previous literature has highlighted the great diversity that exists among collaborative consumption businesses (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Möhlmann, 2015). The field of collaborative consumption includes activities as diverse as online borrowing programs for fashion (RentTheRunway), parking spaces (ParkatMyHouse), and gardens (Landshare) (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2008). Although this study has limited the scope of collaborative consumption to access-based consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), the findings were based solely on short-term apartment renting with Airbnb as the empirical case. As such, while providing valuable insights into the field of access-based consumption, there is a chance that our findings might be inclined towards the context of Airbnb. Therefore, it could be valuable for future research to replicate the same research by using other empirical cases within the field of access-based consumption.

Secondly, the data collection method used in the study may also impose limitations on the findings obtained. The study has used a netnographic research method where the data was collected through observation-based qualitative research that was carried out in an online setting. With the purpose to capture interactions between Airbnb users without intrusion, the netnographic research method proved valuable in fulfilling the intention as such. However, the same research questions could be researched using other data collection methods, such as qualitative interviews and focus groups, to provide greater insight into the specific strategies of actions that are used to portray certain impressions of the users. This could be a means to achieve "triangulation", where the results from research conducted through different methods are contrasted for more holistic insights (Kozinets, 2002, p.65). These methods could also derive deeper insights into the meanings that people have on consumption by using more interrogative approaches with questions that relate to the issues of trustworthiness and pragmatism that have proven to be important in our study.

Thirdly, it has been suggested by researchers that individuals may portray idealized versions of themselves when they are framed within online settings (such as Kozinets, 2002; Festila & Müller, 2017). As such, it is postulated that impressions that are formed through online platforms may consist of fictitious theatrical displays that deviate from behaviors in real life. Therefore, further research could either contrast the online personas of hosts and guests with their offline dispositions and behaviors or examine the degree of honesty and integrity of the peer-to-peer review systems. A final note pertains to the empirical sites for this research. The sites that were utilized for data mining are dominated by hosts even for guest specific chat rooms where they attempt to disguise themselves as guests. As such, the data obtained may be slightly skewed towards the perspective of hosts where future research could consider other more holistic data sources for empirical material collection.

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Appendix 1: The Airbnb official community forum

Airbnb forum main landing page
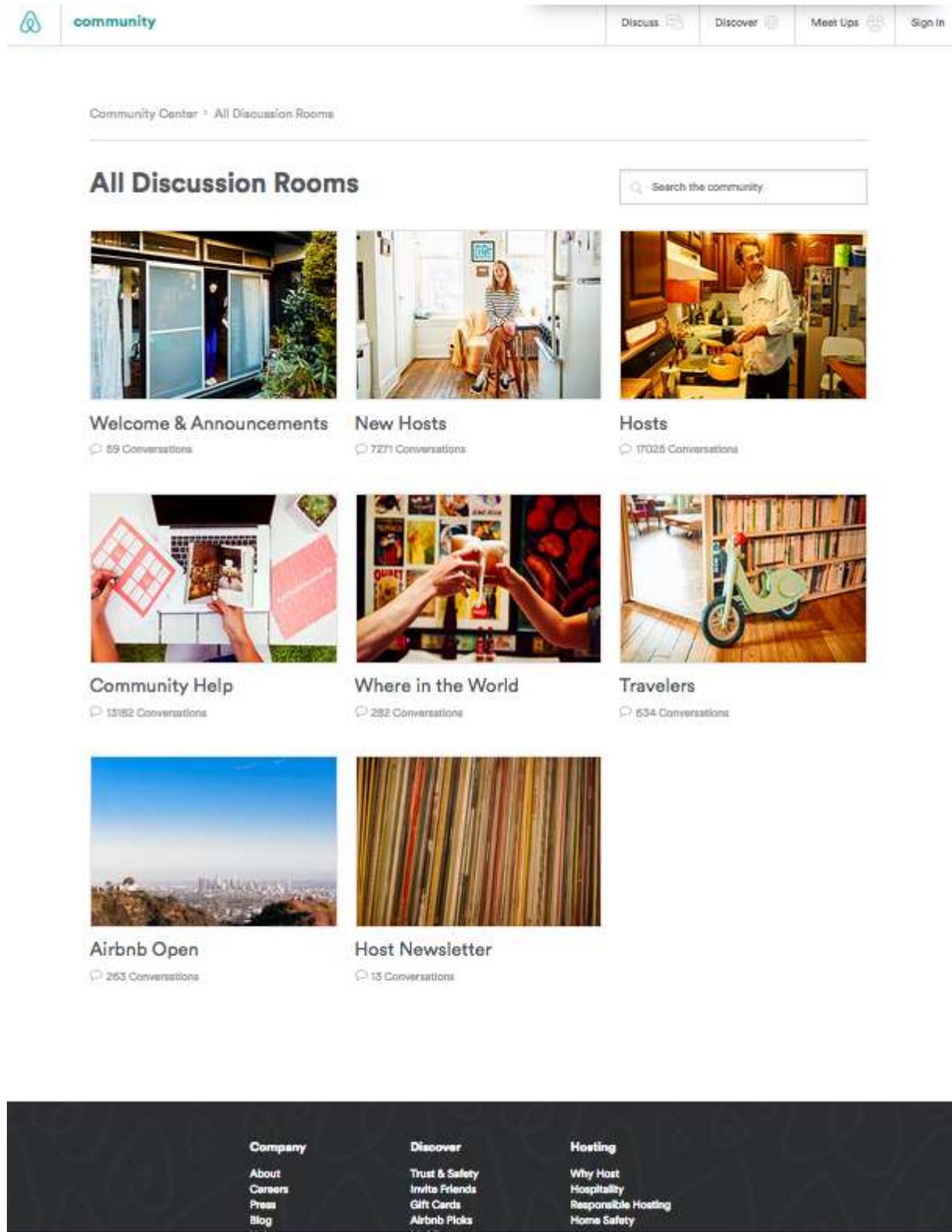
"New hosts" chat room landing page

URL: https://community.withairbnb.com/t5/New-Hosts/bd-p/new-host

"Travelers" chat room landing page

URL; https://community.withairbnb.com/t5/Travelers/bd-p/Traveling

Appendix 2: Sample of field notes

Field notes on a thread from the "New hosts" chat room

Check in & Rules

Options ▾

Hi Airbnb Community,

We are new hosts. We have couple of quesitons.

1. Can we charge extra if check in was after 12:00 am?

2. When is the best time to clean the apartment when you have guests?

3. What are some of the house rules that we should consider?

Thank you for your help.

Rafael & Lucy

North Bergen, NJ

👍 0

Join the conversation

4 Comments   74 Views

4 Replies

Options ▾

@Rafael Good for you to ask the question. On the other hand, you have launched a business without understanding the platform and the business... I looked at your listings. I think you do not understand pricing. Both listings have very low weekend pricing. Perhaps you thought this was an additional cost during the weekend but it is the price during the weekend. Do not feel comfortable with a couple of positive reviews. That is the luck of the draw. We all get lucky but we all get unlucky, even the best and most educated hosts can have a bad guest experience.

(handwritten note:) • describe as "business"
• gave "un called-for" advice.

As to your questions: 1) Like all hospitality, each day starts at 12:01 AM. If you allow a guest to check in after midnight, the day of the check in is the next day. Most hosts only allow guests to check in before midniight. 2) Cleaning is always before the guest arrives, but if you have long term guests, you should establish a periodic cleaning schedule that is mutually acceptable. Cleaning also allows you access to the site so you can confirm the guest is not abusing your space. 3) House rules should protect your space. Please look at the discussion threads on this site about guests not being respective of the space and you will have your answer. So many rules evolve after a negative experience with a guest.

(handwritten note:) • tips/ rules to protect the space or "business"

Please take time to review the many, many hosting article available through the Help Center. You will save yourself grief and money if you do that. Also, this site has many real life experiences that I have found most enlightening. This is a business. Treat it with respect and you will reap the rewards. I wish you the most success in this endeavor!

👍 3   **Reply**

URL: https://community.withairbnb.com/t5/New-Hosts/Check-in-amp-Rules/m-p/294103#M25417

Appendix 3: Sample of data analysis, thematization and theory linkage

S/No.	Practice, strategies of action	Rule, convention, norm	Habitus, capital, toolkit	Meanings and interpretation	Reference
Definition	*Way of organising action to achieve goals*	*Dos or don'ts*	*Disposition for appreciation*	*Implications on the extension of self*	
1	Explain why you are worth hosting (your intentions and trustworthiness)	Communicate in advance Open to answer questions on further inquiry Provide more information on your profile (Provide more information in order to appear trustworthy: e.g. state your interests, profession and your reasons for using the service to build up the trust of the host, present yourself in a way that makes the host comfortable with you as a guest (3.1)) Maintain a positive tone during (initial) online communication (2.2)	Social etiquette (politeness) Accomodating, cooperative (being able to present a nice front)	I am a friendly person, open to exchanges with others that I am unfamiliar with. I am able to present myself in a positive/fiendly/trustworthy way (I know how to carry myself)	1.1, 1.1, 1.3; 3.1, 2.2
2	Strike a balance between looking after your own needs/expectations and not offending your host	Don't be afraid to express your needs, but choose the right battles Communicate clearly what is and is not part of the rules of engagement (7.2)	Social etiquette (politeness) EQ (being perceptive and considerate about the views and feelings of others) Thoroughness (attention to details, meticulousness) (7.2)	I am socially equiped to deal with unfamiliar situations	1.2, 7.2
3	Make sure that yours and the hosts needs are aligned	Screen information about the listings more closely Compare the information of the listing with your needs	Thoroughness (attention to details, meticulousness) Self-awareness	I am a person who is in control of shaping my own identity	1.4, 1.4
4	Play by the rules of the game	Understand the rules and abide by them (Accept having to pay a security deposit in advance if you lack prior reviews 3.2) (Accept that your inquiries might be declined, even without any clear reasons for it and don't take it as an attack on your person 3.3)	Docile, obedient	I am principled I know how to carry my self	2.1, 3.2, 3.3
5	Find/identify/recognize legitimate listings/apartments (Also able to recognize bad ones)	Screen information about the listings more closely (find super hosts/know what to look for in a host (are they verified, do they have many reviews, do they have many photos of the listing, do they have a history of cancellations, does the listing look like it is too good to be true) and ask many questions)	Thoroughness (attention to details, meticulousness) Good judgement of the value of things (true or too good to be true (4.7))	I am a savvy user/I am able to navigate the service in a proficeint way	4.3, 4.4, 4.7
6	Understand the rules of the game and if you don't learn them	Know how to deal with problematic situations (know to consult with the Airbnb framework/rules) Validate your concerns by learning about your rights (4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2)	Tenacity (If you are uncertain, you learn how to deal with it)	I am relentless (and I stand for the rights that I deserve, I don't give up before they have been honored)	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.8, 5.1, 5.2
7	Establish a diplomatic relationship with the host	Don't point out flaws with the apartment (2.2) Don't attempt to negotiate pricing (2.2) Don't micro-manage the little things (the conditions of the apartment, e.g. the cleanliness) (4.9)	EQ (being perceptive and considerate about the veiws and feelings of others) Docile, obedient	I am able to control my emotions and structure my thoughts on what is most critical / rational	2.2, 4.9
8	Understand the intention of the platform	Read up on what the platform is about (2.3) Know that the platform serves more to connect people to rent properties rather than to socialize (professional rather than sociable relationships is the point) (8.2)	Docile and obedient (don't try to do something that you know will not likely be accepted)	I am well-informed	2.3, 8.2
9	Know your place in the engagement (Accept that you don't have the upper hand)	Don't question the rules of the hosts (or their reasons for declining you) when no rules have been breached. When the rules have been breached you can contact Airbnb to mediate for you. What is provided to you is mandated by the host. You have little say in the matter (6.2)	Humble (don't be arrogant)	I am self-aware (flexible)	3.3, 6.2
10	Resolve conflicts in host-guest relationships	Contact Airbnb to provide mediation service Be willing to admit fault and initiate	Problem-solving attitude	I am solution oriented	4.1a, 7.1