

Money or love - Why do people share properties on Airbnb?

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ABSTRACT

To keep apartment sharing platforms running, enough people have to act as hosts and offer accommodations. While a lot of research exists on the role of guests, the motivations of Airbnb hosts to offer rooms or apartments still need clarification. In an experimental, randomized, preregistered 2 (room vs. apartment) x 2 (financial vs. social motivation)-between-subjects design (N = 359) the present vignette study investigates the motivations of potential Airbnb hosts. Findings show that people are more willing to offer their property when they are made aware of the financial benefits than when social benefits are made salient, even in the case of experienced hosts. People are more willing to offer separate apartments than rooms within the apartment they live in. Willingness to host depends upon interpersonal characteristics such as risk taking but not on trust in others. The probability of making offers increases when guests can be selected more freely.

1. Introduction

Belk (2007) defines sharing as the ‘act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use as well as the act and process of receiving something from others for our use.’ Sharing itself has existed for centuries in the family context. However, the advent of internet technologies made possible an extension of this concept to persons outside the family. The global recession of 2007–2008, smart portable technologies, and new concepts of ownership of the millennial generation (access instead of ownership) have facilitated the rise of the sharing economy. Today, sharing covers diverse sectors of the economy ranging from car sharing (Uber, DriveNow), accommodation-sharing (Airbnb, Couchsurfing), crowdfunding (Kickstarter), and joint dining (EatViz) to sharing of clothes (Kleiderkreisel) or even pet sharing (Dogsharing).

In 2007, due to money problems, the founders of AirBnb decided to rent out rooms of their apartment to attendees of a San Francisco conference in order to supplement their budget (Chesky et al., 2021). What was born of necessity has since then become a viable business solution. Airbnb, a short-term rental platform permitting private sharing of unused rooms or entire properties, has proliferated since its foundation in 2008. Due to the threat it poses to the hotel industry as well as its tendency to increase local property prices, cities as diverse as Palma de Mallorca and Berlin penalize listings of entire properties on the platform (Krex, 2016; Urban, 2018). Whereas sharing a temporarily empty room with a stranger does not affect the housing situation, letting an entire flat short term reduces the possibility of long-term rentals for the local

population and has a severe negative effect on the housing market. After a short decline due to the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic travel and rentals on Airbnb are picking up again (Gallego, 2020; Chesky et al., 2021).

The proliferation of Airbnb has started a large stream of research in tourism related journals. A search on Web of Science in February 2021 returned 308 hits for the search string “Airbnb AND Tourism”. The rise of the sharing economy and here especially short-term renting has been attributed to different factors. Many articles focus on the importance of a trusting relationship between participants (e.g. Hawlitschek et al., 2016; Tusyadiah & Park, 2018; Wu et al., 2017). Other researchers pointed to the importance of additional sources of income for hosts and cost savings for guests (Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015; Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016), the possibility of increasing social contacts (Farmaki, 2019), or both (Tusyadiah & Pesonen, 2016), as well as being innovative (Cheng, 2016; Hamari et al., 2016; Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015). Environmental concerns, which were often thought to be important in the beginning of the analyses (Gansky, 2010), are of secondary order today (Möhlmann, 2015). However, Böcker and Meelen (2017) reported a gender effect, with sustainability issues being more important to women. This gender effect was further visible in statistics offered. Airbnb states that globally female hosts dominate the business (Moussa, 2019). Scientific studies either cannot detect gender differences in the provision of sharing-economy offers (Böcker & Meelen, 2017) or see a dominance of male hosts (Sarkar et al., 2019).

The phenomenon of renting out private property exists not only since

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Airbnb but is one of the original forms of travel and tourism. Research on second homes has already investigated possible reasons for real estate owners to share or rent out their property. McLeod & Busser, 2014 researched motivations for second home owners to let their property to friends or family. Bieger et al. (2007) found a generational effect for renting to tourists. The pre-war generation perceived the renting of own property less as an intrusion into their privacy. Also, older generations thought less than younger generations that renting actually paid off financially. This is contradicted by a later study from Skak and Bloze (2017). Böcker and Meelen (2017) transferred this to the Airbnb sharing economy context and found that financial motivations to share prevail over social ones.

Due to the recent popularity of Airbnb, we based our questionnaire study on the Airbnb platform. Research on motivations to book on Airbnb is plentiful. Many aspects are covered, e.g. the comparison between hotels and Airbnb (Birinci et al., 2018; Young & Corsun, 2017), or the age groups or different segments using Airbnb (Guttentag et al., 2017; Mittendorf, 2018), as well as the general motivations of Airbnb users (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016). Literature on hosts also exists but focuses rather on technical aspects of renting, e.g. the distribution of hosts in a city (Sarkar et al., 2019), advertising and pricing on platforms (Chattopadhyay & Mitra, 2019; Kakar et al., 2018; Kwok & Xie, 2019; Tussyadiah & Park, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017), legal protection of sharing-economy workers (Schoenbaum, 2016) and security concerns of female hosts (Farmaki, 2019) than on the motivations that drive people to share their property with a stranger.

Three literature reviews of the past few years' underline that researching Airbnb has become a discipline in the tourism context. They point to the fact that much has been learned about sharing on Airbnb, but under-researched areas still exist (Altinay & Taheri, 2019; Cheng, 2016; Dann et al., 2019). Much is known about the motivations of young people choosing Airbnb instead of a hotel; however, less work has been done on who is willing to offer accommodation and why. Furthermore, all of the above-mentioned studies on hosts' motivations focus on hosts who are already active on Airbnb. They do not distinguish between hosts who want to let a room vs. a separate apartment. Additionally, within the sharing-economy literature, many surveys have been undertaken, but experiments are scarce. The following article intends to close this gap. In an experimental study, we wanted to identify motivational drivers for letting a room or an apartment on the Airbnb platform. The aim of our study was to examine the motivations of people who do know of sharing platforms but have not yet acted as a host.

We examine the following four under-researched questions:

- (a) What motivates people to rent a room/flat they formerly might have left unoccupied?
- (b) Do motivations for renting a flat or a room differ?
- (c) Are there gender differences in motivations to act as a host?
- (d) Does interpersonal trust moderate the willingness to act as a host?

2. Literature review and hypothesis generation

Airbnb is popular and well known in Germany among all age groups. In 2018, 19% of Germans had offered a room or flat on Airbnb. Among the 16–29 age group, almost one third had hosting experiences on Airbnb (Suhr, 2019). Many people in this group, especially students and workers commuting long distance who partly work from home or take business trips, do not use their rooms or flats continuously. This opens up the possibility of renting, which Airbnb and similar platforms have made a lot simpler.

2.1. Social vs. financial motivation and housing situation

Among Airbnb users, a great deal of research has been conducted to explore why people stay in shared rooms rather than visit hotels or campsites (e. g. Birinci et al., 2018; Young & Corsun, 2017). Dann et al.

(2019) identify 45 studies that investigate user motivations. With regard to guests, Tussyadiah (2015) categorizes three principal reasons for using peer-to-peer accommodation rental systems: environmental (sustainability), social (community) and economic factors. On the other hand, the study classifies lack of trust, lack of economic benefits and lack of efficacy with regards to technology as deterrents.

Of the 45 studies identified by Dann et al. (2019), only 16 take into account the hosts' perspective. However, to our knowledge, except for a survey by Teubner and Flath (2019) that explored the impact of privacy concerns on the intention of hosting on a sharing platform, no research distinguishing the different motivations for renting a room or a flat exists. Tussyadiah and Park (2018) stated that in general, hosts present themselves as well-travelled persons who like to meet other people and mention their professions in their profiles. This could imply that hosts decide to let their rooms because they want to socialize. On the other hand, Sarkar et al. (2019) analysed the spatial distribution of hosts in New York City, and found that hosts in general reside in more central, middle-income areas but have less income or a mortgage, so that the economic benefits of renting a room are attractive. This is in line with findings from Gutiérrez et al. (2017) for Barcelona. Böcker and Meelen (2017) analysed different types of sharing-economy offers, looking at providers' and users' motivations for their participation, and found that economic motivations prevail over social ones. Environmental motivations were not an issue in the case of apartment-sharing. Karlsson and Dolnicar (2016) also identified three principal reasons for offering a room on Airbnb: income, social interaction and the availability of unused space. Income clearly emerged as the main objective, social contact ranked second. This has also been shown by Mittendorf and Ostermann (2017), who found that economic benefits prevail over social motivations when selecting either a business or a private customer on Airbnb. However, contrary to ours, their study, based on a very small sample of 53 participants, did not differentiate between shared room or individual apartment.

Therefore, we postulate the following hypothesis:

Main hypothesis.

H1. The probability of making an offer on a sharing platform is higher for people for whom the monetary aspect has been made salient.

Given that offering a room means sharing facilities with others (bathroom, hallways, kitchen, etc.) we believe that motivations to offer a room or an apartment differ as a result of more frequent personal contacts in the case of room offerings. Farmaki and Stergiou (2019) interviewed Airbnb hosts and found that when cohabiting with a guest, the possibilities of making social contact is of equal importance to hosts as the possibility of earning money. Lampinen and Cheshire (2016) conducted a qualitative study and stated that the financial motivations of hosts do not crowd out the social motivations. On the other hand, Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto (2018) declared that the social part of hosting is the main idea of Airbnb, and hosts who do not want to make contact with their guests should abstain from hosting, as socialising provide especially memorable experiences. We argue that guests who deliberately select a room over a flat might be more interested in socialising, and that the same applies to hosts. Therefore, we hypothesize that people offering a room within their own apartment are more eager to get to know their guests.

H2. People who can offer a room within the apartment they live in are more willing to do so when the possibility of socialising has been made salient.

In our opinion, the importance of social contacts should also be higher if people are already experienced hosts because they are familiar with the benefits of hosting. Dolnicar and Talebi (2020) surveyed benefits to hosts and found that hosting on Airbnb offers tourism-like benefits. Social contacts with visitors enable people who otherwise do not have the possibility of travel to experience other cultures, meet new people and develop personally. This is similar to results stated by

Farmaki and Stergiou (2019), who interviewed experienced hosts as well as guests and discovered that combatting loneliness is one motive for offering a room on Airbnb. Even though hosting is mainly driven by economic motivations, social interaction remains an important issue. Ikkala and Lampinen (2015) conducted a qualitative study based on interviews. The possibility of charging money gave Finnish hosts control over social interaction. This feeling of control made hosts more comfortable with continuing to host. Thus, we propose as a further hypothesis:

H3. For people who already use sharing platforms, the effect of socialising is higher.

The independent website [insideairbnb.com](https://www.insideairbnb.com) presents an overview of the type of accommodations offered in major cities of the world. Two German cities are represented: Berlin and Munich. In both cases, approximately half of all offerings are for entire apartments (Munich 55%, Berlin 47%). Compared to other European cities, this is a balanced panorama. In most European cities, most listings are for entire flats. A study conducted by the Wallis Tourism Organization (Walliser Tourismus Observatorium, 2017) revealed that in typical Swiss tourism destinations (i.e. cantons with many skiing facilities or attractive lakes) in general, entire flats are offered. On the other hand, cantons with a predominantly business-oriented infrastructure and many commuters (Basel, Geneva) do have a lot of rooms on offer. A similar picture appears when checking [insideairbnb.com](https://www.insideairbnb.com). Regions which are highly attractive for short city trips due to their cultural or historic highlights (Vienna, Prague) or close to touristic areas (Bordeaux, Greek islands) show a high rate of entire accommodations listed, whereas destinations that are not as touristic (Manchester, Bologna) provide a more balanced offering. However, it is rarely the case that more rooms than flats are on offer. Combining these findings with the arguments from above (monetary motivations prevail over social ones), people might find it easier to offer an accommodation on Airbnb when they do not have to socialize. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H4. People who can offer an apartment (separate from their own) are more willing to offer it on a sharing platform than people who can only offer a room within the apartment they live in.

2.2. Gender effect

According to a press release from Airbnb for 2018, globally 56% of all hosts are female (Moussa, 2019). Airbnb does not disclose how many rooms and how many entire flats are offered. The statistic is counter-intuitive to scientific research that found a prevalence of male hosts (Sarkar et al., 2019), or a study by Böcker and Meelen (2017), who could not detect gender differences in the provision of sharing-economy offers. Chen and Chang (2018) similarly did not see any gender differences in Airbnb acceptances by guests. This is contrary to a later study by Pino et al. (2020) who detected that gender cues pointing to female characteristics increased booking intentions among customers. Schoenbaum (2016) recognized the earning possibilities for women especially through Airbnb, since hosting takes place at home and can easily be combined with child-care or household work, which are traditionally the occupations of women. On the other hand, Schoenbaum (2016) pointed to risks of sexual violence for female hosts due to all of these transactions taking place in the intimacy of the home without adequate legal protection. This could be a reason why female guests prefer female hosts, a bias that could not be detected among men (Su & Mattila, 2020).

Farmaki (2019) underlined the benefits of female micro-entrepreneurship. Her qualitative study with extensive narratives showed the risks women take and the tactics they employ in order to avoid unwanted guests. She pointed out that these difficulties apply especially to co-habiting hosts, another evidence to support the findings of Su and Mattila (2020). Therefore, we propose as **H5**:

H5. Interaction effect: Women are less willing to offer a room. When able to offer an apartment separate from their own, there is no gender difference.

2.3. Interpersonal trust

Trust is a central element in the sharing economy. For providers, Hawlitschek et al. (2016) distinguished between trust in the platform and its technical abilities to handle the process and trust in the users of the service. Dann et al. (2019) identified 31 papers dealing with trust on Airbnb. Of these, 13 analysed the hosts' situation. Cheng (2016) also characterized trust as one of the main issues concerning Airbnb users, guests and hosts alike. Airbnb resolves some issues for hosts (collecting rent, establishing reviews of users among others), but still hosts have to be sure that the guest leaves the rented property in an orderly manner and also behaves according to local rules in order not to cause problems with the local neighbourhood or authorities. Stories abound on [Airbnbhelp.com](https://www.airbnbhelp.com) about negative experiences with guests. Therefore, hosts as well as guests must be able to trust the other party. To our knowledge, there is no research on guest characteristics that drive hosts to trust them. However, research on the reverse topic is plentiful. Yang et al. (2019) explained that the cognitive trust-identity attachment building mechanism extended by users is the most effective one. Wu et al. (2017) showed that many host attributes (gender, speed in accepting reservations, number of listings per hosts) influence trustworthiness. Additionally, as Tussyadiah and Park (2018) showed, well-travelled hosts are perceived as more trustworthy than others. The same applies to hosts who provide trustworthy profile pictures of themselves (Ert et al., 2016).

In general, interpersonal trust is different for each individual. Rousseau et al. (1998) defined trust as 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or the behavior of another' (Rousseau et al., p. 395). Psychology literature shows that interpersonal trust does not follow neoclassical economic theory. Instead people consider personal experiences and expectations to make a decision on when to trust somebody and when not. Fetchenhauer and Dunning (2009) applied an experiment developed by Berg et al. (1995) to find whether people trust an unknown stranger in the lending context. In general, people trust in their counterparts too much. In a later article, Dunning et al. (2019) explained that this is based on the idea of what is morally right. However, this moral sense differs from person to person. Park and Tussyadiah (2019) showed that more trusting guests are more inclined to participate in a sharing-economy encounter. We believe that the same applies to hosts and propose as **H6**:

H6. The probability of making an offer on a sharing platform is moderated by trust in others.

Airbnb offers hosts the possibility of rejecting tenants as well as starting a conversation before accepting a guest. This has led to animated debates of possible discrimination on Airbnb. Kakar et al. (2018) found that race guides pricing of Airbnb offers in the San Francisco area (i.e., whites can charge higher prices). Farmaki and Kladou (2020) analysed why Airbnb hosts discriminate and stated among other things that some hosts see this as a valuable practice in order to safeguard themselves or their property (e.g., single females not accepting male guests). In an earlier study by Farmaki (2019), narratives from female hosts pointed to the importance of being able to select the tenant.

Looking at the theory of trust building on the internet, Stewart (2003) posited that it is easier to trust familiar or recommended objects, especially when interaction takes place. The theory of entitativity developed by Campbell (1958), postulates that people trust individuals who belong to the same entity. Entities are characterized by similarity, proximity and common fate. When Airbnb proposes a guest to a host, hosts see the guest's rating and the guest's self-description but not their picture. Thus, they can get to know the guest through a conversation and other points of interest. On the one hand, this may lead to

discrimination. On the other, this extension of trust to formerly unknown strangers might encourage people to offer their room/flat on the platform in line with the findings from Farmaki and Kladou (2020). We thus formulate H7.

H7. The probability of making an offer on a sharing platform is higher when the guest can be freely chosen.

Summing all hypotheses up, we propose a research model in which the willingness to offer accommodation depends a) upon the social vs. financial motivations and on b) the housing situation. It is moderated by c) gender and d) interpersonal trust (Fig. 1).

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Sample size calculation and preregistration

The sample size was calculated by GPower. A small effect was expected to be detected ($f = 0.10$; $\alpha = 0.05$; Power $1 - \beta = 0.80$, one-tailed test). The resulting sample size was 351. We planned a sample size of 360, i.e. approximately 90 subjects per group. The decision for further sampling was only made upon completeness of the data and on the time subjects took to answer the questionnaire.

In order to make our work transparent, we preregistered our design, hypotheses, main analysis and planned sample size of 360 participants for a power of 80% as well as exclusion criteria and the data stopping rule using the platform AsPredicted (<https://aspredicted.org/>). Our preregistration was submitted prior to data collection.

3.2. Data collection

Four hundred one participants recruited via the online platforms Surveycircle.de and PollPool.com as well as LinkedIn took part in the survey. Forty-two persons were excluded from the study. Of these, 18 persons declared that they had already participated in the study at another time, four admitted that they did not seriously participate, and two persons were interrupted for more than 3 min. Four people had closed their browser during the survey. We also excluded one participant who said that he didn't know of Airbnb but indicated that he had already acted as a host on Airbnb. The time another 13 participants took to answer the questionnaire lay below half the median or more than two standard deviations above the mean of answering times, which had been defined as exclusion criteria in the preregistration. As a result, 359 persons were included in the study. Two hundred fifty-seven participants (71.6%) were female, 100 (27.9%) were male, and two persons (0.6%) indicated another sex (transsexual, intersexual, etc.). The mean age was 28.7 years ($SD = 10.1$). Single participants made up 34.6%, 64.8% lived in a partnership or were married, and 0.6% were divorced or widowed. Three hundred and five participants (85.0%) knew sharing platforms but had not hosted yet. Of the 44 (12.2%) participants who did already host guests, 26 had shared a part of the apartment they lived in and 18 had shared a separate apartment. Twelve participants (3.3%) answered that they had shared their property to earn extra money, 36 participants (10.0%) wanted to get to know new people. Also, for 36 participants (10.0%) one of the reasons to share their property was that

the income is better than with a long-term rental.

Due to the experimental design in which participants were presented a fictitious story in which they either had a room or an apartment to rent, we did not generally ask whether the participants had property that they could eventually rent out. Rather, the study focused on the general attitudes of individuals toward renting regardless of whether a property was available at the time of the study or not. Differences in the distribution of individuals who already owned a property at the time of the study and those who did not should not affect the outcome due to the random assignment to the experimental groups.

3.3. Design

A 2 (housing situation: *room vs. separate apartment*) x 2 (motivation: *financial vs. social*) between-subjects design was chosen. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four resulting conditions. Using the online questionnaire software Unipark, we opted to attempt a uniform distribution of groups in order to reach a balanced design.

3.4. Measures

All scales were measured on five-point Likert scales. The literature shows that five-point scales are less confusing to participants than scales with a higher number of categories and thus increase response rates (Babakus & Mangold, 1992) while having a high reliability (Jenkins & Taber, 1977). The answers ranged from 1 ('I do not agree at all') to 5 ('I absolutely agree'). In the category *readiness to assume risk*, the answers ranged from 1 ('I am not at all willing to take risks') to 5 ('I am absolutely willing to take risks').

3.4.1. Dependent variables

The probability of hosting on Airbnb as well as the probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely were chosen as dependent variables.

3.4.2. Control variables

We controlled for a series of variables. *Interpersonal trust* was measured by the Interpersonal Trust Short Scale KUSIV-3 (Beierlein et al., 2014) ($\alpha = .74$). *Readiness to assume risk* was measured by the one-item scale ('How do you personally rate yourself: How willing are you to take risks in general?') of Beierlein et al. (2015). We used a self-created scale to measure *personal financial management* ($\alpha = .70$) with the three items 'I can budget my money so I have enough for the whole month', 'I save a part of my available money every month' and 'I often have to go into debt' (reversed).

3.5. Procedure

Participants completed the experiment during the time period from February to April 2020 using the software Unipark Questback. Participants gave their informed consent to participate after being informed about anonymity, voluntariness and the ability to stop answering at any time. Ethics approval was granted by the Ethics Officer of the authors' University on 4 February 2020. The control questions about interpersonal trust, readiness to assume risk and personal financial management were sampled after a greeting at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants were asked whether they knew of Airbnb. Regardless of the answer, there was a short explanation about sharing platforms in order to provide all participants with the same information. Participants then read a short vignette. The subjects of the *room/financial motivation* group (for *apartment* and/or *social motivation*, see the alternative sentences in parentheses) read the following vignette:

Please put yourself in the following situation:

Imagine that you have *one more room in your apartment than you currently have*. The room would have 20 square meters and could be reached separately via a corridor (a 30-square-meter one-bedroom apartment in

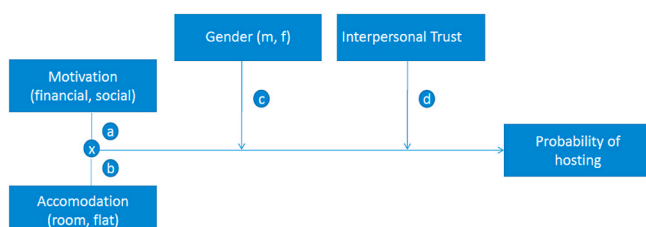


Fig. 1. Research model and research questions.

another city. You can't use this apartment for yourself right now). An acquaintance of yours has told you that she/he is also offering a room (an apartment) on Airbnb. This would be a nice way to earn some extra money. The income is better than if you rent a room all year round. For him/her it would be clearly worthwhile (a nice way to meet interesting new people. He/she had already had some guests who were very similar to him/her and meeting them was very inspiring to him/her.)

Now consider whether you should also try this.

After participants read the vignette, we recorded the dependent variables, i.e., asked for the probability of acting as a host on Airbnb as well as for the probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely. We then recorded participants' own experiences with sharing platforms as well as sociodemographic data. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they had seriously answered the questions, whether they had already participated in the survey and whether they had been disturbed during the time they took the survey.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary analyses

4.1.1. Descriptive group analysis

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants on the groups formed by the housing situation (room vs. apartment) and motivation condition (financial vs. social) as well as the means and standard deviations of the dependent variable probability of hosting. Participants were almost equally distributed between the four resulting groups, with a slight imbalance in the proportion of male respondents between the two social motivation condition groups.

There were no significant differences within the experimental groups regarding the distribution of the control variables gender, $\chi^2(6) = 10.29, p = .113$, and the question whether participants had already acted as a host on Airbnb, $\chi^2(3) = 5.98, p = .112$.

4.1.2. Prerequisites

The distribution of dependent variables probability of hosting and probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely deviated significantly from normal distribution in all groups. However, for the probability of hosting, the skewness did not differ significantly in any group from the zero values required for the normal distribution. For the kurtosis the value $kurtosis/SE(kurtosis) = -2.07$ significantly differed from zero only in the apartment/financial motivation group. The other groups did not show significantly deviant values for the kurtosis. For the variable probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely, the skewness deviated significantly from zero in three of four groups; however, the kurtosis did not differ significantly from zero in any of the groups. Due to the almost identical composition of the groups (see Table 1) and the sample size, variance analyses could be performed despite deviations from the normal distribution. The Levene test for variance homogeneity in the experimental groups did not have to be rejected for the probability of hosting, $F(3,355) = 1.45, p = .22$, or for the probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely, $F(3,355) = 0.51, p = .68$.

Table 1

Participants, means and standard deviations for the probability of hosting in the experimental groups (room/apartment; financial/social motivation).

	room		apartment		Total
	financial	social	financial	social	
% (N)	26.2% (94)	23.4% (84)	24.0% (86)	26.5% (95)	100% (359)
% male (N)	26.6% (25)	21.4% (18)	27.9% (24)	34.7% (33)	27.9% (100)
M (SD)	2.99 (1.14)	2.79 (1.19)	3.19 (1.32)	3.17 (1.17)	3.04 (1.21)

4.2. Main analyses

4.2.1. Overall test

As specified in our pre-registered analysis plan, we first tested the effect of the independent variables housing situation (room vs. apartment) and motivation (financial vs. social) on the probability of hosting on Airbnb for the total data set.

The two-factor ANOVA resulted in a significant effect of the housing situation, $F(1,355) = 5.15, p = .024, \eta^2 = .014$. If participants were able to offer an apartment apart from their own, the probability of hosting was judged higher ($M_{\text{apartment}} = 3.18, SD = 1.24$) than in the case that they were only able to offer a room within their apartment ($M_{\text{room}} = 2.89, SD = 1.17$). However, neither the motivation, $F(1,355) = 0.75, p = .39, \eta^2 = .002$, nor the interaction term between the housing situation and the motivation $F(1,355) = 0.53, p = .47, \eta^2 = .001$, were significant. Hypothesis 2 was thus confirmed; however, Hypothesis 1 could not be confirmed for the total data set.

A paired t-test resulted in a significantly higher perceived probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely, $t(1,355) = 12.86, p < .001, (M_{\text{normal cond}} = 3.04, SD = 1.21, M_{\text{more choice}} = 3.55, SD = 1.16)$. Hypothesis 7 was thus confirmed.

4.2.2. Experiences with Airbnb

Of the participants, 97.2% ($n = 349$) knew of Airbnb before the survey, and 11.7% ($n = 42$) had already acted as a host on Airbnb. Of these, 18 (40.9%) had rented a separate apartment or a house, and 26 (59.1%) had rented a room within their own apartment.

Participants who had already acted on Airbnb as a host showed a significantly higher probability of hosting in the presented scenario, $t(1,355) = 3.09, p = .002 (M_{\text{exp.on Airbnb}} = 3.57, SD = 1.09; M_{\text{no exp.on Airbnb}} = 2.96, SD = 1.22)$. This was also true for the probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely, $t(1,56.2) = 2.40, p = .020 (M_{\text{exp.on Airbnb}} = 3.90, SD = 1.03; M_{\text{no exp.on Airbnb}} = 3.49, SD = 1.17)$. For participants who did not know of Airbnb before the survey, the reverse was true. They indicated a much lower probability of hosting, $t(1,357) = 2.77, p = .006 (M_{\text{Airbnb unknown}} = 2.00, SD = 1.25; M_{\text{Airbnb known}} = 3.07, SD = 1.20)$ as well as a lower probability of acting as a host when the tenant could be chosen freely, $t(1,357) = 3.50, p = .001 (M_{\text{Airbnb unknown}} = 2.30, SD = 0.95; M_{\text{Airbnb known}} = 3.58, SD = 1.50)$.

A three-factorial ANCOVA with the factors housing situation (room vs. apartment), motivation (financial vs. social) and Airbnb experience (not known vs. known, but not yet acted as a host vs. known, and already acted as host), and with the covariates interpersonal trust, readiness to assume risk, personal financial management and age resulted in a significant main effect of the experience on Airbnb, $F(2,341) = 3.93, p = .021, \eta^2 = .023$ and the housing situation, $F(1,341) = 4.78, p = .029, \eta^2 = .014$. Fig. 2 shows that the willingness to rent was lower for persons

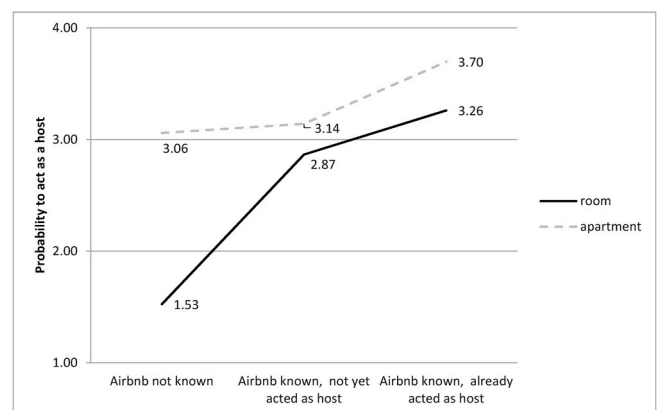


Fig. 2. Interaction of the housing situation (room, apartment) and the experience on Airbnb (marginal means).

who did not know of Airbnb before the survey, especially in the case of renting a room within their apartment ($M_{\text{Airbnb unknown, room}} = 1.53, SE = 0.71; M_{\text{Airbnb unknown, apartment}} = 3.06, SE = 0.63; M_{\text{Airbnb known, not acted as letter, room}} = 2.87, SE = 0.09; M_{\text{Airbnb known, not acted as letter, apartment}} = 3.14, SE = 0.10; M_{\text{Airbnb known, acted as letter, room}} = 3.26, SE = 0.31; M_{\text{Airbnb known, acted as letter, apartment}} = 3.70, SE = 0.24$).

The motivation did not significantly affect the *probability of hosting*, $F(1,341) = 0.20, p = .65, \eta^2 = .001$. However, except for the group of persons who did not know of Airbnb previously, the *probability of hosting* was higher in the financial condition ($M_{\text{Airbnb unknown, financial}} = 1.71, SE = 0.63; M_{\text{Airbnb unknown, social}} = 2.87, SE = 0.71; M_{\text{Airbnb known, not acted as host, financial}} = 3.12, SE = 0.09; M_{\text{Airbnb known, not acted as host, social}} = 2.88, SE = 0.10; M_{\text{Airbnb known, acted as host, financial}} = 3.70, SE = 0.31; M_{\text{Airbnb known, acted as host, social}} = 3.25, SE = 0.23$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 could not be confirmed.

As our main target group consisted of persons who did know of sharing platforms but had not hosted yet, we conducted a separate analysis for these $n = 305$ participants. As specified in our pre-registration, we additionally analysed the gender effect. We excluded the single remaining participant within the main target group who indicated a diverse gender due to the small sample size. We conducted a three-factorial ANCOVA with the factors housing situation (*room vs. apartment*), motivation (*financial vs. social*) and gender and the covariates interpersonal trust, readiness to assume risk, personal financial management and age.

As can be seen in Table 2, both the housing situation and the motivation showed significant effects. There was neither a main effect of gender nor an interaction between gender and the housing situation (*room vs. apartment*). However, there was a significant interaction effect between motivation and gender. Fig. 3 shows that for women, the marginal means for the probability of hosting were only slightly higher in the financial than in the social condition ($M_{\text{fem.-room-financial}} = 2.88, SE = 0.15; M_{\text{fem.-room-social}} = 2.86, SE = 0.17, M_{\text{fem.-apartm.-financial}} = 3.16, SE = 0.17; M_{\text{fem.-apartm.-social}} = 3.07, SE = 0.16$). However, for men, the marginal means were higher in the financial than in the social motivation condition ($M_{\text{male-room-financial}} = 3.26, SE = 0.24; M_{\text{male-room-social}} = 2.32, SE = 0.24, M_{\text{male-apartm.-financial}} = 3.43, SE = 0.28; M_{\text{male-apartm.-social}} = 2.93, SE = 0.24$). For both men and women, the probability of hosting was thus higher when an apartment separate from their own could be rented. However, men were more likely to act as an apartment host for financial motives than for social reasons. Readiness to assume risk, $F(1,292) = 7.57, p = .006, \eta^2 = .025$, and age, $F(1,292) = 9.51, p = .002, \eta^2 = .032$, significantly predicted the *probability of hosting*. However, trust in others did not significantly affect the *probability of hosting*, $F(1,292) = 0.14, p = .713, \eta^2 < .001$. Hypothesis 6 could therefore not be confirmed.

5. Discussion

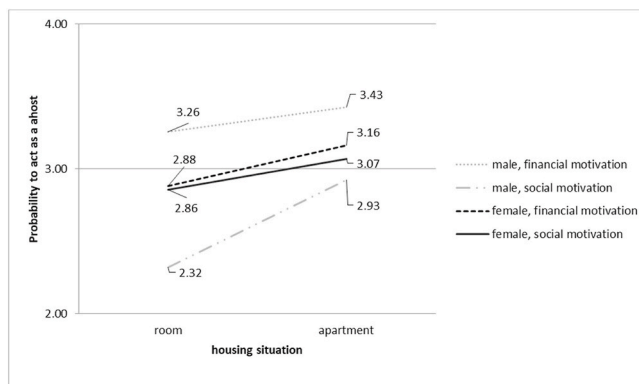
After a slowing of the rental market during the COVID-19 pandemic

Table 2

Degrees of freedom (df), sum of squares (SS), F values, p values and partial η^2 values of a three-factorial ANCOVA explaining the probability of hosting.

	df	SS	F	p	η^2
Complete model	12	45.81	2.83	.001	.10
Housing situation (Hou)	1	5.94	4.40	.037	.02
Motivation (Mot)	1	9.01	6.68	.010	.02
Gender (Gen)	1	1.81	0.67	.512	.01
Risk Readiness	1	10.22	7.57	.006	.03
Trust	1	0.18	0.14	.713	.00
Financial man.	1	0.15	0.11	.737	.00
Hou* ^a Mot ^b	1	0.49	0.36	.547	.00
Hou* ^a Gen ^c	1	0.28	0.21	.649	.00
Mot* ^b Gen	1	6.28	4.66	.032	.02
Hou* ^a Mot* ^b Gen	1	0.92	0.68	.410	.00

Notes: ^aHou – Housing situation; ^bMot – Motivation; ^cGen – Gender.



Note: One participant with gender diverse was excluded from the analysis due to the small sample size

Fig. 3. Participants who knew of Airbnb but had not yet hosted - Interaction of the housing situation (room, apartment), motivation (financial, social) and participants' gender on the probability to act as a letter (marginal means).

Note: One participant with gender diverse was excluded from the analysis due to the small sample size.

lockdown, apartment sharing is picking up again (Gallego, 2020). Still, little is known about people's motivations to start acting as a host on an apartment-sharing platform. In this experimental study, we made different motivations salient to prospective hosts and studied subjects' willingness to host on Airbnb. To that end, we manipulated subjects' belief that they had a room or an apartment to rent and that they could earn extra money (financial motivation) or meet new people (social motivation) by renting it.

5.1. Social vs. financial motivation and housing situation

In the relevant subgroup of people who knew of Airbnb but had never hosted before, as hypothesized, the probabilities of hosting were higher when the financial aspect of hosting had been made salient than in the social contact condition. People rent their spare rooms or apartments predominantly to earn extra money. This is in line with earlier studies conducted by Karlsson and Dolnicar (2016) as well as Mittendorf and Ostermann (2017). The readiness to act as a host for financial motives was especially higher for men. Men were much more willing to rent their room or apartment when the financial aspect had been stressed. This finding is also in line with Sarkar et al. (2019), and underscores the increased risks perceived by women prospective hosts, as pointed out by Farmaki (2019) and Schoenbaum (2016). However, more research is needed to discover motivations, because Airbnb statistics tell a different story (Moussa, 2019).

Stressing social aspects of hosting a stranger in one's room or apartment resulted in lower probabilities of hosting. Unexpectedly, this was especially the case when it was a room that could be rented. Subjects were less willing to let their room when the social aspects of hosting had been stressed. When able to let an apartment, they were slightly more willing to do so for social reasons. The results contradict our expectations. The literature shows that financial motivations prevail over social ones (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016; Mittendorf & Ostermann, 2017); however, social motivations are still important because sharing offers the possibility of escaping loneliness (Farmaki & Stergiou, 2019). Our sample consisted mostly of younger people, living in a partnership, who had not acted as a host on Airbnb. Thus, the loneliness factor as described by Farmaki and Stergiou (2019) was most likely not important.

Experience in the sharing economy increased the probability of offering an extra room or an apartment. This was true for both motivations and therefore also for the social motivation, for which higher effects were expected in hypothesis 3. The result is not surprising since experienced hosts have already taken the steps to offer accommodations on

Airbnb and will most likely only refrain if they have negative experiences.

Confirming hypothesis 4, we found a strong effect of the housing situation on the probability of hosting. People who have an extra apartment separate from their own are more willing to offer it on a sharing platform than people who can only offer a room within the apartment they live in. Offering a room means sharing facilities with others (bathroom, hallways, kitchen, etc.), which might be a higher hurdle than renting a separate property. This is in line with the situation encountered on [Insideairbnb.com](https://www.insideairbnb.com), where within Europe, entire apartments are the most common accommodation type offered on Airbnb.

5.2. Gender effect

Contrary to our expectations, we did not find any gender effect. Except for the interaction effect of gender and motivation, men and women did not differ in their willingness to host. This was also true for men and women offering rooms within their own apartments. Although both sexes were less willing to offer rooms than apartments, we did not see an extra effect for women. Women were as willing to offer spare rooms than were men. Whereas this finding is in line with a study by [Böcker and Meelen \(2017\)](#), it is still surprising. An earlier study by [Schoenbaum \(2016\)](#) points to the risks of sexual harassment for women sharing their properties. The website airbnhell.com publishes uncensored stories of Airbnb hosts and guests which include accounts of sexual harassment, property damage or theft. Thus, one would expect a lower willingness to share among women for self-protective reasons. It is also contrary to the results of qualitative investigations by [Farmaki \(2019\)](#) who explains that female hosts discriminate against males for self-protective reasons. [Su and Mattila \(2020\)](#) describe a similar phenomenon for guests. Female guests prefer female hosts.

5.3. Interpersonal trust

Contrary to our expectations, interpersonal trust did not moderate the probability of hosting on Airbnb. This is in contradiction to [Park and Tussyadiah \(2019\)](#), who showed that for guests, more trusting individuals participated more actively in the sharing economy. Hosts who provide their property and furniture take significantly higher risks than guests. Yet, trust was not a significant moderator. However, the readiness to assume risk had a highly significant effect, with people who were more ready to take risks being more inclined to act as hosts. Although not formulated as a hypothesis, this is a unique finding. To our knowledge, there is no study relating interpersonal readiness to assume risk to the willingness to host on Airbnb. [Malazizi et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated risk perception of Airbnb hosts and their intention to continue sharing their property. In their research, psychological risk had a negative relationship to the host's intention to continue using Airbnb. The authors included psychological risk anxiety about accommodating undesired customers and experiencing cultural conflicts as well as the pressure of potential payment losses. Our item *readiness to assume risk* was formulated as the interpersonal likeliness to behave riskily. Thus, the psychological risk from [Malazizi et al. \(2018\)](#) might be comparable to our findings. It is reasonable to assume that people who like to take risks are more likely to enjoy hosting a stranger and have cultural encounters with others.

In line with the results on the readiness to take risks, subjects were also more willing to act as a host when the guest could be selected freely. Choosing the guest gives people a feeling of control. As [Farmaki and Kladou \(2020\)](#) explain, it is sometimes necessary to exercise control and thereby discriminate against others in order to protect oneself. This especially holds true for women ([Farmaki, 2019](#)). The finding is also in line with the theory of entitlement developed by [Campbell \(1958\)](#). Choosing a guest enables hosts to select somebody who resembles their interests and belongs to their in-group, which increases a feeling of togetherness.

Our findings are summarized in [Table 3](#).

6. Conclusion

We conducted an experimental vignette study to investigate whether motivations to host on Airbnb depend on a) social vs. financial motivations, b) the housing situation, c) gender and d) interpersonal trust. To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the issue of hosts' motivations experimentally. We detected a higher willingness to offer apartments than rooms and to act as a host when the guest can be freely chosen. For the target group of people who knew of Airbnb but had not yet acted as a host, the financial motive appeared to be the main driver for sharing properties. Contrary to our expectations, social contacts neither moderated the probability of offering rooms nor were of higher importance for existing hosts. No gender effect could be found. The willingness to host was higher when the guest could be freely chosen. Trust in others did not moderate the results. However, interpersonal readiness to take risks moderated the willingness to act as a host on Airbnb. This fact has – to our knowledge – not been investigated before and demands further research. Our research extends the theories on trust in the apartment-sharing context that started with the findings from [Campbell \(1958\)](#). His research points to a sense of belonging with people that are similar to oneself. We show that the possibility of selecting a guest freely does increase the likeliness of hosting. Thus, instead of discriminating against others, as investigated by [Farmaki and Kladou \(2020\)](#) or earlier by [Kakar et al. \(2018\)](#), our experiment showed that people who are not familiar with hosting could be convinced accept guests in their home when allowed this freedom. This confirms findings for guests by [Su and Mattila \(2020\)](#).

Furthermore, our research confirmed experimentally what had been noticed on Airbnb, but had not been explained: Willingness to offer apartments was higher than willingness to share rooms. Our findings on motivations to share rooms/apartments underlined the importance of financial gains over social contacts.

Our study has implications for diverse stakeholders. On the one hand, municipalities are interested in people renting apartments to local residents rather than to Airbnb guests. They will, however, continue to face the issue of Airbnb rentals. Knowing that financial motivations are – even in the case of people renting out rooms – most important for hosts, steps can be undertaken to make renting financially less attractive through fines, taxes or both, as well as by offering incentives for guests deciding to stay at more traditional accommodation, such as hotels or campsites.

On the other hand, the Airbnb managerial perspective lies, of course, in acquiring more hosts who are willing to rent their property to guests. In their marketing concept, Airbnb managers could stress the issue of

Table 3
Summary of findings.

Hypothesis	Confirmation
H1 The probability of making an offer on a sharing platform is higher for people for whom the monetary aspect has been made salient.	Partly
H2 People who can offer a room within the apartment they live in are more willing to do so when the possibility of socialising has been made salient.	No
H3 For people who already use sharing platforms, the effect of socialising is higher.	No
H4 People who can offer an apartment separate from their own are more willing to offer it on a sharing platform than people who can only offer a room within the apartment they live in.	Yes
H5 Women are less willing to offer a room. When able to offer an apartment separate from their own, there is no gender difference.	Partly
H6 The probability of making an offer on a sharing platform is moderated by trust in others.	No
H7 The probability of making an offer on a sharing platform is higher when the guest can be freely chosen.	Yes

being able to select guests on Airbnb. This is a unique Airbnb feature since other platforms, such as [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) or [Homeaway.com](https://www.homeaway.com), do not permit prior contact between guests and hosts. By stressing this fact, new properties could be opened up for rentals. Additionally, managers could point to the financial advantages in order to acquire more hosts. This is the case for room-as well as apartment-sharing. Research on second-homes points to fears that prevent home-owners from renting out. Fear of destruction by guests, loss of flexibility and freedom are important considerations that have to be resolved before the financial aspects can be considered (Palmer & Mathel, 2010).

Furthermore, our study has theoretical implications. To our knowledge, until the present study, no existing research has investigated the different motivations for renting rooms or flats. This aspect has been neglected, and our study fills the gap. We find a significant effect of the motivation on the willingness to rent a property. Additionally, our study is unique because it investigated interpersonal motivators such as trust or risk taking.

Limitations of the study lay in the sample, in which the proportion of women was above average compared to the total population, and the average age was very low. This meant that the sample was not representative of the overall population. Additionally, the focus on the German market might not allow comparison to other destinations. A repetition with people of other cultural contexts could bring different insights. Of particular interest is the question whether the willingness to host differs in countries where values on the dimensions of the GLOBE study (Chhokar, 2009; House, 2011), deviate from those in Germany. Especially countries with differences in values in the collectivism dimension and the uncertainty avoidance dimension could be of interest.

For a majority of respondents, the situation described in the vignette, i.e. imagining one had a property to rent out, was a hypothetical situation. The majority of participants did not have property to rent out. We believe that due to the familiarity of Airbnb, the participants could well imagine the situation and reflect on their behavior, given they would have property. Nevertheless, it would be of additional value to replicate the study with participants who own property themselves.

Also, given the young age of our respondents with an increased probability of not having spare property to rent out, financial gains might be more interesting to these young people than to others who own spare properties. A repetition with people of a higher mean age who might also have spare property and therefore more money, could reduce the importance of the financial aspect and might increase the socialising aspect.

The study researched the Airbnb context. Many flats offered on Airbnb are second-homes rented out by their owners who advertise the same place on different platforms ([booking.com](https://www.booking.com), [home-away.com](https://www.home-away.com), [tuivillas.de](https://www.tuivillas.de), etc.). A focus on Airbnb instead of second-homes might have reduced the scope of the study. A similar concern has also been voiced by Casado-Díaz et al. (2020).

Our research took place during the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, we had to rely on Internet sampling, which might have excluded older participants due to Internet illiteracy, or families due to an increased workload resulting from the combination of work from home and home schooling. Therefore, it could be interesting to repeat the research after the COVID-19 pandemic, employing a different sampling technique, in order to obtain a more diverse and representative sample.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.05.009>.

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