

*Fani Efthymiadou and Anna Farmaki***Peer-to-peer accommodation hosting as a means of empowerment:  
Perspectives of women Airbnb hosts****Intro**

In the last decade peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation platforms experienced a rapid growth, with Airbnb representing the poster child of the sector. The phenomenal expansion of the sector was such that P2P accommodation has been characterised as a disruptive innovation in the tourism and hospitality industries (Guttentag, 2015; Zach, Nicolau & Sharma, 2020) that may yield significant economic and social benefits to its users. For instance, Airbnb may offer a convenient, value for money accommodation option for travellers whilst allowing them to interact with hosts (Lee, 2022; Tussyadiah, 2016). Likewise, hosting on Airbnb may provide entrepreneurial opportunities, financial gains and opportunities for socialization for hosts (Farmaki & Kaniadakis, 2020; Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016).

Despite the burgeoning number of studies on Airbnb user perspectives, little is known of the views of women users of the platform and especially hosts (Farmaki, 2019). This is surprising as women represent 56% of Airbnb hosts (Airbnb, 2019). The platform proudly proclaims that it contributes to women empowerment as through hosting they can gain several economic and social benefits. Nonetheless, insofar there is no study examining women empowerment of Airbnb female hosts. To respond to this gap in the research, this study examines the perceptions of women Airbnb hosts in terms of the attainment of empowerment through the hosting practice. In so doing, we draw from Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework which acknowledges empowerment as a dynamic process requiring resources (e.g. financial, social support) and agency (capacity to make decisions) in order to achieve desired outcomes.

**Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative approach to examine the perspectives of Airbnb women hosts in terms of women empowerment through hosting. Specifically, we examined women host perceptions of the resources required for hosting, their motives for hosting on the platform, the role of the platform in women empowerment and the benefits expected to be gained through the activity of hosting in relation to the five dimensions of women empowerment (economic, social, political, educational and psychological). Overall, 30 interviews were conducted with women Airbnb hosts located in Greece that were purposively selected in accordance to their experience and active role on the platform. Greece provides an interesting context as it is a developed country that, nonetheless, has been plagued with economic instability and uncertainty (Papatheodorou & Pappas, 2017). To analyse the data, thematic analysis method was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006) whereby meanings (themes) within the data were identified and analysed using Nvivo 12.

**Findings**

Qualitative analysis revealed two main categories of women hosts, professional hosts who did not necessarily own property but managed multiple listings and non-professionals who owned properties and decided to exploit the available space through hosting. Therefore, the ownership of property as a key resource needed for hosting is not a prerequisite for women empowerment through hosting. Moving on, both professional and non-professional women

hosts identified both economic and social benefits as motives for hosting, highlighting the flexibility that the activity offers them as important. In accordance to women empowerment through hosting, women views varied as not all of the five dimensions of women empowerment seem to be equally achieved by professional and non-professional hosts. For instance, women claimed that hosting made them feel independent as they gained extra money to cover their needs, support their family and invest in future entrepreneurial opportunities. However, some non-professional hosts stated that they are already empowerment by their primary occupation for which they may require a form of higher education. Furthermore, while social empowerment was recognised as an outcome for most women, some claimed that the negative image that Airbnb has in their community has adverse effects on their social position. In addition, professional women hosts seem to have a more proactive role in achieving political and educational empowerment than non-professional hosts by getting involved in local tourism decision-making and participating in educational seminars and workshops. Last, most women hosts claimed that they received psychological empowerment from hosting (e.g., confidence, joy) even though a few hosts stated that hosting causes them anxiety as they want guest to feel satisfied.

In terms of the role of the platform, women said that they didn't feel special treatment or assistance was given to women hosts. Although no problems were reported regarding hosting, women suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for them that some women hosts attempted to overcome. For example, they didn't wait for booking requests to come from the platform but sought to find hosts from alternative routes such as their network. As such, study findings offer significant theoretical and practical implications that contribute to existing knowledge of the resilience tactics of women in hospitality in empowering themselves, especially at times of uncertainty.

Keywords: Women Empowerment; Peer To Peer Accommodation; Qualitive Analylisis

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