What reasons lead guests to choose Airbnb and Booking.com to book peer to peer rentals? A comparison between the two major booking platforms

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Bibliographic Note

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Abstract

The appearance of the digital revolution some years ago allowed the creation of the sharing economy which is the sharing of resources which is not being used in exchange for a fee or compensation. Thus, the phenomenon of peer to peer rentals appeared in the tourism world as individuals started renting their apartments or houses to guests in order to gain extra money at the same time that the hotel industry started to be affected for a new type of accommodation in the market.

Furthermore, platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com were created to make a match between suppliers of accommodations and travellers who need a place to stay by the time they are visiting a city. These platforms allowed owners of peer to peer rentals to easier distribute and sell their stays to guests.

Moreover, it was sought to know, through interviews, what reasons led guests and travellers to prefer to choose Airbnb or Booking.com to book peer to peer rentals as well as understand their opinions regarding the strategies of both platforms as they are two of the biggest companies in the market.

Thus, the first thing every guest does when they want to book a peer to peer rental is choosing the platform or website where he will make the reservation. Thus, many factors can influence these decisions as every guest has different needs and behaviours. Some want to get more flexibility on their trip while others prefer to choose a more trustworthy platform. Or some want to experience a personal and direct contact with locals while others prefer not to have any human contact. Moreover, the characteristics of the platforms themselves as the simplicity to use, the quickness, sharing of information, the easiness to understand how they work and prices appear as important factors.

Keywords: Airbnb, Booking.com, peer to peer rentals, platforms, sharing economy

Resumo

O aparecimento da revolução digital há alguns anos atrás permitiu a criação da economia de partilha que consiste na partilha de recursos que não estão a ser utilizados em troca de uma compensação. Assim, o fenómeno dos alojamentos locais apareceu no mundo do turismo onde indivíduos começaram a arrendar os seus apartamentos ou casas a hóspedes de forma a ganharem dinheiro extra ao mesmo tempo que a indústria hoteleira começou a ser afetada por este novo tipo de alojamento no mercado.

Para além disto, plataformas como o Airbnb e o Booking.com foram criadas de forma a fazerem a ligação entre fornecedores de alojamentos e viajantes que necessitam de um local para pernoitarem durante o tempo que visitam a cidade. Estas duas plataformas permitem aos proprietários de alojamentos locais que facilmente distribuam e vendam estadias a hóspedes.

Assim, procurou-se saber, através de entrevistas, que razões levam hóspedes e viajantes a preferir o Airbnb e o Booking.com para arrendarem alojamentos locais assim como perceber as opiniões relativas às estratégias adotadas por ambas as plataformas uma vez que são duas das maiores empresas no mercado.

Desta forma, o primeiro passo dado por um hóspede quando quer realizar uma reserva de alojamentos locais é escolhendo a plataforma ou website onde pretende reservar. Assim, vários fatores podem influenciar estas decisões uma vez que cada hóspede tem necessidades e comportamentos diferentes. Alguns pretendem ter maior flexibilidade nas suas viagens enquanto outros preferem escolher uma plataforma mais confiável. Ou alguns pretendem ter uma experiência mais pessoal onde existe um contacto direto com locais enquanto outros preferem não ter qualquer contacto humano. Para além disto, as características das plataformas como a simplicidade, a velocidade, a partilha de informação, a facilidade de perceber como funcionam e os preços aparecem como fatores determinantes.

Palavras-Chave: Airbnb, Booking.com, alojamentos locais, plataformas, economia de partilha

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1. Introduction

1.1 Theme Framing

Many persons or more preferred to stay on a vacation rental last night using the online platform Airbnb (Tsotsis, 2015) instead of a traditional accommodation such as hotels or bed and breakfast. The tourism phenomenon of tourists staying in rooms rented by locals has existed for many years, but the appearance of the sharing economy gave more relevance to this practice as it allowed people to share resources and services. The sharing economy allowed individuals to rent their spare spaces, rooms or entire houses (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2016) which, consequently, made possible the creation of platforms of peer to peer rentals such as Airbnb, Booking.com, HomeAway or Couchsurfing.

As the exponential growth of peer to peer rentals is directed linked with innovation in technologies (Zervas et al., 2015), the internet already had been recognized for having a huge impact in the accommodation industry such as the booking process, customer reviews and marketing at the same time that brought means which guarantee a better communication and trust between host and their possible future guests (Guttentag, 2015). However, the appearance and the rise of the sharing economy and of platforms of peer to peer rentals stamp a transformation with more quality in the innovation of the industry.

Moreover, what is more notable is that at first sight, these platforms could have everyone doubting about them as compared with traditional accommodations such as hotels these platforms show relevant weaknesses. Thus, guests have to trust in strangers to guarantee the quality of the accommodation, the security and protection of them and the cleanliness instead of simply trust companies which already can have a national or global brand. Despite this, peer to peer platforms continue to grow and have a huge importance in the supply of a variety of peer to peer rentals in many cities as well as bring a diversity of tourists to those same cities.

Thus, two platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com are being used by millions of people worldwide. These platforms are different, have different characteristics and usually people use both in different ways. At first sight, Airbnb has as main objectives the offer of a variety of peer to peer rentals and to create a community integrated almost in a social media while Booking.com has a lot more offers including traditional accommodations as well as do not have so many concerns about the user friendliness of his platform.

At the same time, the characteristics and features both websites have, influence the consumer satisfaction as websites should be seen as important factors in the service to the clients and not only has products catalogues (Shih, 2004). Thus, and according to Grove and Fisk (2001), the design of the website which is associated with the characteristics of easy navigation (Kim et al., 2009), the content of the information and quality in its performance allow the achievement of great performances in the internet. On the same hand, a website which presents a good layout and where it is easy to navigate and understand its features at the same time that transmits safeness to its users allow platforms to retain or not their customers. Furthermore, the trust users have in the platforms is very important as consumers could not be present in person to guarantee the quality of the product which they see on the internet (Mavlanova et al., 2012).

Thus, the success of these two platforms raises the obvious questions of what reasons lead tourists to choose to use Airbnb or Booking.com and what different characteristics the two platforms have to have so many persons using them.

1.2 Objectives and Relevance of the Study

Some academic researchers have already done studies to try to understand why persons take part in the sharing economy and what are their motivations (Hamari et al., 2015; Hawlitschek et al., 2016b; Möhlmann, 2015), why consumers use Airbnb (Liang et al., 2018; Shavit, 2015; Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016) and what are the typical behaviour of persons who use these platforms and stay in peer to peer rentals.

Although the first step to choose an accommodation is by choosing the platform where it is possible to book, the comparison between Airbnb and Booking.com is limited. Thus, several questions were raised in order to better understand the reasons which lead consumers to book in Airbnb and Booking.com:

- What reasons lead users to choose Airbnb and Booking.com to book peer to peer rentals?
- What are the main differences between Airbnb and Booking.com?
- What necessities is each platform better in satisfying?
- What are the most important features that make the user satisfied?

Thus, these study is relevant to several entities:

- The tourism sector;
- To consumers of peer to peer rentals;
- To platforms;
- To hosts and companies which do property management.

The tourism sector would understand how the offer of peer to peer rentals is being presented and what needs both platforms satisfy. At the same time, it helps to understand what strategies should be improved in order to offer better services to its customers.

On the same hand, all the customers of Airbnb and Booking.com could understand where every specific need could be better attended as well as allow them to discover the features and characteristics of platforms which were not well-known.

Furthermore, it would be important for both platforms as they could better understand the necessities and experience of each guest in theirs and in the competitor website as they could manage their strategies to try to capture new users. They could better understand what are the main characteristics and features that users praise the most and what things should be thought in order to present a better service to the client. The best way to improve and offer better solutions is by understanding the customer necessities.

Moreover, every individual host or companies which do property management may understand what are the different characteristics of guests who book in Airbnb or Booking.com and what they expect by making a reservation on each platform. It could allow them to better know how to manage prices, to offer complementary services, to create different ads according to the platform where they post their property as well as could allow them to have a different accompaniment as they are hosting guests from different companies. Indeed, understanding the consumer allows the creation of a better strategy to satisfy and keep them.

Finally, this master thesis has the objective to be used as a support of future research on the field, especially by being a basis for future quantitative researches in order to better understand and verify the hypothetical conclusions taken with the qualitative research done in this dissertation.

2. Literature Review

2.1   Collaborative Consumption

The importance of the sharing economy worldwide has grown fast over the last decade (Sundararajan, 2016). Thus, it allowed the increased usage of social platforms which made it easier for persons to share products and services between them (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016) which is understood as collaborative consumption. Thus, information and technologies have a huge impact in the Tourism and Hospitality sector by making a better match between offer and demand which enabled the creation of different services as well as have an important role in the behavioural choice of tourists (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). All the information and experiences which are shared in social media contribute to the sharing of peer to peer rentals and the converge to the practices of collaborative consumption (John, 2013). It is, also, considered a phenomenon where persons synchronize the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or compensation (Belk, 2014).

Thus, digital platforms as Airbnb and Booking.com incentivized persons to distribute and share access to spare rooms (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016) which bring more value to the market taking into account that these companies bring consumers together to make a better match between supply and demand in the hospitality and tourism sector (Zekanović-Korona and Grzunov, 2014).

Many authors believe that collaborative consumption is only interesting for people who want to have economic benefits (low cost) which was being considered as having more impact after the global economic crisis (Guttentag, 2015). On the one hand, others consider that this phenomenon is not only motivated for cost savings (Botsman and Rogers, 2011) as consumers want to experience new brands (Gansky, 2010), are more open to get what they need (Botsman and Rogers, 2011), are more environmental conscious and give more importance to the community (Botsman and Rogers, 2011; John, 2013). However, there are persons who do not know or do not like collaborative consumption as the lack of trust could be considered as an obstacle due to the fact that it is related with the relations between users (trust between sellers and buyers), between users and technologies (trust in payment system) and between users and companies (uncertainty and regulatory issues) (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016).

Thus, participating in the sharing economy is related to a specific consumer need and it can be suggested that behavioural intention is dependent upon satisfaction and benefits

received (Tussyadiah, 2016). Moreover, and according to Bellotti et al. (2015), participating in the sharing economy ranges from relying on extrinsic motivation (behaviour that is instrumental and aims to achieve outcomes outside the behaviour itself) to depending on intrinsic drives. Thus, guest satisfaction will be dependent on how good peer to peer rentals perform in achieving these benefits (Mohlmann, 2015). On the same hand, collaborative consumption satisfies social needs of consumers by having a desire for socialization and sense of belonging (Botsman and Rogers, 2011). In fact, and according to Guttentag (2015), tourists are expecting to have a social experience for staying with locals which lead to an authentic travel experience. Also, direct interactions with users in peer to peer rentals systems help in the development of social ties beyond economic exchange (Kim et al. 2015).

In the case of understanding the profile of the tourist of peer to peer rentals, studies show that younger persons find collaborative consumption attractive and it is them who usually share information on the Internet, which means that they have more probability to participate in collaborative consumer (Gansky, 2010). Also, online sharing behaviour of youngers who born in the digital era of social technologies is transmitted into offline sharing behaviour (John, 2013). On other hand and regarding motivational factors, enjoyment factors and economic benefits have impact in the behavioural intention for collaborative consumption while sustainability and enjoyment guide attitudes to collaborative consumption (Hamari et al., 2015).

In other studies, it was found the importance of instrumental factors such as utility and convenience in participating in collaborative consumption (Mohlmann, 2015). In fact, after a study about consumer reviews in peer to peer rentals, it was found that amenities and convenience of location are important factors for guest's evaluation (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2015). Thus, in collaborative consumption, the behavioural intention is dependent on satisfaction and benefits received (Tussyadiah, 2016).

However, few studies were made in this field and were very limited (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). The appearance of the sharing economy allowed the growth of peer to peer rentals which is explored in the next section.

2.2   Peer to peer rentals

In recent years, a different kind of accommodation has appeared, the peer to peer rentals, which according to the Tourism of Portugal, they are those which are characterized for providing services of temporary accommodation to tourists, through a remuneration, and

which meet the requirements therein, prohibiting, expressively, the exploration of establishments of peer to peer rentals which meet the requirements to be considered tourism enterprises. In simple words, peer to peer rentals allow ordinary persons to rent all parts of their living places for a short period of time (Guttentag, 2015; Zervas et al., 2015). Pairolero (2016) defends that, for example, Airbnb is a temporary rental of a house to others without changing its functions as a property for accommodation. This exponential growth of peer to peer rentals is directed linked with innovation in technologies as well as a flexible supply of assets which are not being used (Zervas et al., 2015). In the hospitality industry, there was the appearance of platforms of peer to peer rentals such as Airbnb, Booking.com, HomeAway, Couchsurfing, 9flats, FlipKey and Roomorama, which brought a new way of travelling and a new form of choosing accommodation. Airbnb, funded in 2008, quickly has become the market leader and it has served over 60 million guests since 2008 which appear as a big competitor of hotels. (Guttentag, 2015; Zervas et al., 2015). Airbnb appears as a novel business, which has different resources to offer to consumers, such as monetary savings and a wide range of amenities and local experiences for guests (Guttentag, 2015). This peer to peer platform appears after the recognition of the lack of accommodations when hotels were saturated in high profile events (Botsman and Rogers, 2011).

Thus, peer to peer rentals have their uniqueness comparing it with traditional accommodations, taking into account that the service is not provided for professionals, they have flexible inventory, low cost of market entry and do not have barriers to enter in the market (Guttentag, 2015; Tussyadiah and Zach, 2015; Zervas et al., 2015). Thus, one of the factors which drive consumers to choose peer to peer rentals rather than hotels is cost, because hosts have the ability to charge very competitive costs taking into account that fixed costs are already covered, there are few or no labour costs, they are not fully dependent on peer to peer rentals revenue and they usually do not charge taxes (Guttentag, 2015). Also, Mohlman (2015) considers the factors of cost savings, community belonging, familiarity, trust and utility as determinants which affect satisfaction and future intention of using peer to peer rentals. Thus, these platforms allow individuals to be micro-entrepreneurs and act as hosts offering their accommodation to tourists or business travellers for a cost (Sundararajan, 2014). Indeed, having into account location and apartment type, hosts could earn income by temporarily rent their spaces for few days, weeks or months (Jung et al. 2016). On the same hand, tourists can find more affordable accommodation, different types of properties, stay in different kind of neighbourhoods and live like a local, which is a unique

experience (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016; Tussyadiah and Zach, 2015). In fact, factors of sustainability, enjoyment and economic benefits affect the behaviour to participate in peer to peer rentals platforms (Hamari et al., 2015). As Airbnb is seen, for guests, as a low-cost option (Liang et al., 2015), hosts are also driven by financial motives (Hamari et al., 2015).

On the other hand, and according to a survey recently done by Airbnb, has shown that already many hosts have multiple listings, although most of the hosts only manage one listing (O'Neil and Ouyang, 2016). Thus, hosts with multiple listings may offer a service with not so high quality taking into account that the attention given to the guests diminished, because the host capacity by listing also reduced (Xie and Mao, 2017). It is important to refer that if hosts hire a company to manage their listings, the host attributes do not necessarily show the individual quality of the host (Xie and Mao, 2017). In fact, according to Oskam and Boswijk (2016), it is expected to see Airbnb as a sales channel where we could see branded apartments rentals. On a comparison made between hosts with single listings and hosts with multiple listing it was discovered that usually hosts with multiple listings receive more reviews, charge less, offer properties with more space and allow more guests to stay. Also, it appears that hosts with multiple listings usually have a more popular location (Xie and Mao, 2017).

However, and according to a report of Morgan (2015), 59% of travellers never heard of Airbnb while only 12% have used the platform which shows that this market could grow even more in the future. Thus, in the next section, a brief comparison will be made between Booking.com and Airbb

2.3   Booking.com vs Airbnb

Airbnb presents itself as a "global travel community that offers magical end-to-end trips" (Airbnb, n.d.b). It is an online platform which makes the match between normal persons who want to rent their spare spaces as accommodations in exchange for income and consumers who want to stay in accommodations and having a different experience. The places Airbnb sell can be very diversified as they can differ from an island to a living room (Wortham, 2011), but usually the offer is a house, an apartment or private room (Airbnb, n.d.). According to Guttentag (2015), the website of Airbnb is direct and it is very similar to traditional booking websites as individuals have to make a research based on destination, travel dates and group size. Then, the website shows a list of alternatives of spaces which are available for that period of time and which could be filtered by price, amenities and neighbourhood. Guttentag (2015) also adds the individual could make a

selection with more detail having in mind the photographs, the description and reviews of previous guests, being necessary to have an Airbnb account to make a reservation. If the individual is interested in the space, he has to send a request to the host to show interest and ask some questions. The host will answer it and if a request is made, the host can accept the reservation. After all this has been done, the payment is done through the website of Airbnb as well as a fee will be charged to tourists and hosts.

Airbnb provides only a limited range of information about demographics, but the company says that approximately 40% of users are Americans, being the Europeans the major of the remaining (Airbnb, n.d.), being the average age of 35 which is been growing since the company started (Yu, 2012). On the same hand, in a study made by Jumpshot in the US in 2015, 88% of Airbnb's reservations were made for groups of two to four people and 60% of the reservations were for the entire home / apartment. Furthermore, 7% of the reservations were for single guests and only 11% of the reservations were for one night stays while 31% were for two or three nights (Shavit, 2015).

On the other hand, Booking.com considers itself "one of the biggest e-commerce companies in the world in the travel industry" (Booking.com, n.d.). The company also explains that the objective is to turn the travel trips easier following its mission of giving the possibility to explore the world to all. Booking.com gives to the consumers the possibility to select a wide range of accommodations which vary from apartments, vacation rentals, Bed and Breakfasts, resorts, house trees and even igloos which accounted for almost 29 million accommodation options worldwide in 228 countries with more than 1,5 million reservations made daily. Booking.com gives the user the possibility to use filters options effectively, provides functions which are very useful to manage and the platform interface is user friendly (Mellinas et al., 2016).

Comparing both companies, Airbnb defines itself as a "trusted community marketplace" (Airbnb, n.d.) which has the objective of connecting the owners of some types of accommodations and individuals who are looking for a place to stay (Gyódi, 2017). On the other hand, Booking.com appear as a counterpart of Airbnb by offering not only private apartments, but also traditional hotels (Gyódi, 2017). However, on recent years, Airbnb is making an entrance in the hotel sector as well as Booking.com is slowly expanding itself into the vacation rental sector (Gavira, 2018). What it is interesting is that many proprietors diversify the risk by listing their properties among the platforms in order to gather more leads to maximize occupation (Gavira, 2018).

On a recent study comparing the customer perception in the two platforms, the intensity and strength of the customer relationship were higher in Airbnb as there is a better presence of human connection (Belleghem, 2014). Indeed, and although Booking.com offer transaction mechanisms very similar to Airbnb, the social interaction between guest and host it is not required (Gyódi, 2017).

Moreover, on a study made in Warsaw, Airbnb is providing a cheaper alternative for the services of hospitality in all price segments (Gyódi, 2017). Thus, at first sight, the customers and users of Booking.com appeared to have a bigger wealth than the users of Airbnb.

As Booking.com is many times associated with the hotel world, the differences between peer to peer rentals and hotels will be explored in the next section.

2.4   Peer to peer rentals vs Hotels

As Booking.com has a more diverse offer of accommodation and as many users do not know this website also has peer to peer rentals to choose from, is usually confused with a hotel platform. Thus, it is important to clearly define the differences between a peer to peer rental and a hotel and what a guest of peer to peer rental want and is expecting to find when wants to book it.

Traditionally, in the tourism accommodation sector, tourists rent rooms from formal businesses, however, Airbnb has changed this model by providing an online marketplace that allows rental of spaces from one ordinary person to another (Guttentag, 2015). Thus, providers of accommodation are increasingly competing with the hotel industry regarding guest experience (Mody et al., 2017) and although being a recent phenomenon the exponential growth of networked hospitality businesses appear as a serious competitor for the industry of hospitality with big consequences for tourism and tourism destinations (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016).

Previous studies have shown that lower end hotels and hotels not catering to business travellers have more probability of being substituted by peer to peer rentals (Zervas et al. 2015). However, more recent studies showed that the sharing economy is a current and future competitor of the hotel industry (Mody et al., 2017). On the other hand, and according to Lawler (2012), Airbnb only complements hotels by focusing on attracting a different kind of tourists. Thus, instead of chasing all types of tourists, they focus on the ones who are looking for this kind of accommodation (Shankland, 2013).

Thus, the hotel industry is facing a growing competition from the sharing economy across different types of consumer markets and Airbnb appears undoubtedly as the most important competitor (Mody et al., 2017). Thus, is expected that Airbnb will turn hotel rates and revenues down taking into account that the growth of the supply will affect the distribution of the power in the market (Jordan, 2015) and it is already normal to say that Airbnb "is bad for hotels and good for tourism" (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). Indeed, it is said that between 43-67% of Airbnb listings are direct competitors of hotels as they are not shared spaces (Huston, 2015).

Concerning hotels, the five most important attributes for tourists are location, service quality, reputation, friendliness of staff and price (Dolnicar and Otter, 2003). Thus, there are some factors which remain in favour of hotels such as security, hygiene, fluctuating and uncertain quality. Also, familiar consumers have 34% more probability of choosing hotels instead of Airbnb with the sharing economy (Lieberman, 2015).

On the other hand, peer to peer rentals have different things to offer and the two most important factors which drive consumers to use this type of accommodation are social appeal and economic appeal (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2016). Social appeal as viewed as the same benefits of Couchsurfing, which means that there is an interaction with hosts and local people at the same time that tourists receive valuable tips (Chen, 2011). On the other hand, and taking into account the economic appeal, tourists could rent an entire house and enjoy the comfort of it (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2016). Thus, peer to peer accommodations may satisfy different kind of needs when compared to hotels such as the needs for lower prices, more significant experiences and more sustainable travel which indicates that the determinants which influence intention to use peer to peer accommodations could be different than the ones associated with a hotel stay (Tussyadiah, 2016). Moreover, peer to peer rentals consumers are looking for instrumental value such as amenities, cost savings and social experiences with locals, which is something difficult to replicate for hotels (Tussyadiah, 2016).

As the sharing economy is increasing its importance, the hotel industry should take actions to deal with the popularity and growth of it (Mody et al., 2017). Thus, it is important to look to the possibility of integrating the experimental factors of the sharing economy into the concepts of hotels of the future (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016).

In the next section, it will be discussed the characteristics of websites which may influence the decision of customers.

2.5   Characteristics of Platforms

The internet has allowed the development of new business models and it is characterized as the main factor of electronic commerce (K. C. Laudon and Laudon, 2001) which is defined as all the value chain of the businesses processes in an electronic environment by using the technologies of information and communication (Albertin, 2000).

Moreover, the electronic commerce can be described by using four different perspectives, communication perspective, business process perspective, services perspective and online perspective (Kalakota and Robinson, 2001). The communication perspective is related with the delivery of products or services, the delivery of feedback and payments using electronic means. Furthermore, the business process perspective is linked with the usage of technology in order to automatize the workflow. Also, the service perspective is directed with the possibility to have low cost in the service practiced as well as the velocity in the delivery of that same service. Finally, the online perspective is related to the possibility of selling and buying products, services and information online.

Thus, the websites should be seen as important factors in the service to the clients and not only as product catalogues (Shih, 2004).

Furthermore, the commerce on the Internet has been growing in the last years as it has unique characteristics compared with the traditional forms of commerce (Souza et al., 2007). Thus, the environment involving online commerce can be defined using two main characteristics: high relevant task environment and low relevance (Eroglu et al., 2001). Regarding the high relevant environment, it is associated with the descriptive elements like the products description, delivery, prices, images and tools of navigation, which allow users and consumers to accomplish their objectives. On the other hand, the low relevant environment is related with all the data and information which do not have great influence in the decision of the consumer like colours, font type, icons or music.

Thus, the environment involving the electronic commerce has an important impact in consumer as a well-established and thought environment gives a higher satisfaction to the user (Eroglu et al., 2003). Also, Novack et al. (2000) consider these online environments when appealed only bring positive consequences.

Moreover, another factor which is considered a leverage for the marketing online is quickness related to the buying process and the access and recovery of information (Kotler, 2000). Indeed, for Turban et al. (2000) the usage of the internet allow quick comparisons as users can compare, analyse and find the products and services they want in the short time

possible. Thus, this quickness and efficiency are associated with the easiness and the help of the diverse search motors which allow the information to be more organized (Smith, 2002). Thus, the internet and websites allow companies to react quickly to the necessities of users as they work as an important factor to the companies take decisions regarding what clients to keep (Swift, 2001).

On the other hand, the security associated to a website can bring negative effects as it is considered the main factor in the creation of a website as the lack of security is the main inhibitor in the usage of this new form of shopping (Souza et. Al, 2007). As the main concerns involving security are the ones related to the truth of data, authentication and privacy of both sides involved in the transaction (Soyoung and Steol, 2003). Thus, the credibility of the website appears as a solution as the growth of credible sources, the easiness to have access to information of services or products, the easiness and efficiency in the acquisition of products or services and, especially, the amount of information available change the consumers' behaviour (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). The credibility is, also, related to the degree of reliability of the company regarding the compliance with promises (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995).

Although security is a concern, the online commerce brings value to the markets as it is available 24 hours a day and allows its usage through multiple locations (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Indeed, it allows a big variety in the offer of products and services which allow more efficiency and quickness in all process (Narayandas et al., 2002).

Moreover, and according to Grove and Fisk (2001), the design of the website which is associated with the characteristics of easy navigation (Kim et al., 2009), the content of the information and quality in its performance allow the achievement of great performances in the internet. Kalyanam and McIntyre (2002) add that the security, privacy, customer service, community and convenience have important roles in the marketing developed in the digital era.

Thus, understanding the main features and characteristics in websites pages is very important as help to know how companies are positioned in the market and how they work (Palmer and Griffith, 1998), which will be very useful to discover the characteristics consumers appreciate more in Airbnb and in Booking.com. Thus, the consumer behaviour will be explored in the next section.

2.6 Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour process is related with the activities which involve obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services including the actions that are preceded and followed by decision processes (Engel et al., 2001). Moreover, another important definition is consumer needs and wants which is the process related with the selection, purchase, usage and dispose of products and services in order to guarantee that the needs and wants are satisfied. (Solomon, 1996). Indeed, and according to some studies, customers make the decision to purchase something to satisfy some kind of need (Tussyadiah, 2016).

Many studies have been made regarding the behaviour adopted when individuals are purchasing services and products online (Alba et.al, 1997) as well as factors to understand the reasons behind why some products are not purchased in the online market (Peterson et al., 1997).

Thus, the online consumers are characterized, in general, for having higher requirements and by showing a more powerful attitude than the traditional offline consumer (Morrisette et al., 1999), being this power reflected in lower fidelity in the online context. However, it is important to refer this fidelity in the online context is linked with the relevance of information and availability of services and products (Eighmey, 1997).

Moreover, when comparing the traditional consumer with the online consumer, the second ones have more fears regarding the risks of purchasing products or services in the online context (Bhatnagar et al., 2000) which has been proven to have impact in the attitudes regarding the online shopping (Heijden et al., 2001).

As many studies were made, the factors users give more importance to in the electronic commerce are the quality of the service (Zeithaml et al., 2002) and the convenience (Reicheld and Schefter, 2000). Indeed, and according to Reibstein (2002), the resolution of problems and the quickness and counselling in the delivery of products are the main important factors, being, also, the price a not so important factor compared with the features of the website.

2.6.1 Tourist Consumer Behaviour

The tourists are those consumers who are engaged in voluntary temporary mobility in relation to their home environment (Cooper and Hall, 2008). It is important to notice that the profile of the tourist which stay in a peer to peer rental is different and there is a lack of studies in the field to try to understand their consumer behaviour, which is the "study of

why people buy the product they do, and how they make their decision" (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2007). Moreover, trying to understand the factors which lead to the satisfaction and behaviour of tourists in their intention to choose peer to peer rentals is not only important for hosts, but also to gather information to hotels for them knowing the competitive advantages of their competitor (Tussyadiah, 2016).

One of the most important models to analyse travel personality is the psychographic model of Plog (1974, 2001), which try to explain tourist behaviour in categories from allocentrism to psychocentrism. According to Plog's model, allocentrism characterize individuals who are adventurous and self-assured and prefer to explore unique destinations while psychocentrism characterize individuals who are anxious and not secured, and prefer to explore destinations overly commercialized. Plog (1994) categorized travellers into six categories: traditionals, sightseers, journeyers, voyagers, pioneers and venturers, being traditionals the more psychocentrism and venturers the more allocentrism. This model is usually used to predict the choice of travel destination rather than trying to understand the choice of different types of accommodation (Chow and Murphy, 2011). However, the perceived risks of the level of trust required to permit strangers to share the same house are more suggestive to confident personalities (Guttentag, 2016; Liang, 2015). Moreover, venturers are persons with more interest in technologies and often are the first ones to use new products and services. Also, innovativeness is an important factor which influences online travel purchase (Amaro and Duarte, 2013) and it was found out that moderate the relationship between intention to buy and attitude (Lee et al., 2007).

Airbnb consumers appear to be young persons with the sense of adventure who have attention to their budget and are comfortable in using technologies (Guttentag, 2015). Moreover, Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2016) discover that peer to peer rental tourists are more educated than the ones who not use this type of accommodation. Also, the type of trip which the consumer expects and wants has an impact in the choice of accommodation (Hu et al., 2002; Li et al., 2008) as well as the length of the trip as peer to peer rentals and Airbnb are chosen when tourists are planning a longer trip (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). On the same hand, the geographic and cultural distance must be analysed taking into account that it is important to understand the relationship between traveller personality and destination choice (McKercher and Chan, 2005).

2.6.2 Satisfaction, Expectations, Motivations

Several studies were already made to find the factors of satisfaction and intention of using peer to peer rentals (Tussyadiah, 2016). Satisfaction is defined as the evaluation result of a past related experience (Fang et al., 2014). Indeed, individuals with a past experience of a destination are more likely to visit the same destination again rather than a tourist with zero experience of the destination (Milmam, 1989). Also, it is perceived as an attitude that is led by a comparison of the service and quality which the consumer expects to receive from a purchase (Kim, 2012). Customer satisfaction is an important issue as it leads to positive post-purchase behaviour which can influence a repeat visitation, word of mouth, retaining consumers and increasing the volume of sales (Su, 2004).

However, it is important to refer that the satisfaction in the electronic commerce could be different from the traditional commerce as the interaction in the online context is between human and machine while in the traditional commerce it is an interaction between human and human (Evanschitzky et al., 2004). Thus, the concept of e-satisfaction rises and could be understood as the happiness of the consumer regarding a prior experience of purchase in a shopping website (Lee et al., 2009). On the other hand, for Szymanski et al. (2000) it is the comparison the consumer makes regarding the experience he had in the online market compared with traditional markets.

The dissatisfaction of consumers in the online environment could have negative consequences as the consumer could get a negative idea about the company with irreversible damages, the consumer does not find the information he wanted in the website and quit, the consumer does not make the purchase he wanted to do and, in the end, the consumer searches and finds a competitor website (Pinho et al., 2008).

On the other hand, travel motivation has gained special attention over the last years in order to predict and understand the factors which are more willing to influence the decision to travel (Kim et al. 2007). Also, their motivations have an important role taking into account that motivation theory describes a dynamic process of internal psychological factors (needs, wishes and objectives) that generate an uncomfortable level of tension in the mind and body of a person (Fodness, 1994). Travel motivation which is considered a driving force, dominate the travel pattern to fulfil and protect the desire of individuals as well as increase the self-value of them (Lee and Chen, 2005).

Furthermore, push and pull factors are considered to be the two principal motivational drivers in the motivation of the tourist to travel (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). On the one hand,

push factors are the ones related with tourist choices about excitement or relaxation which are influenced by a psychological force, while pull factors are the external forces of the destination attributes (Wong et al., 2013). Thus, these factors encompass tangible resources, traveller perceptions and expectations (Mohammad and Som, 2010).

Moreover, the consumer behaviour of tourists is influenced by their expectations, since it can influence tourist choice processes and perceptions of experiences (Gnoth, 1997). Indeed, services offered through peer to peer accommodations could be looked as different from hotel services which will influence the expectations and evaluation of the services by the consumers (Tussyadiah, 2016). For example, tourists have the expectations of having a social experience by staying with locals which lead to authentic travel experiences (Guttentag, 2015).

Thus, the correlation between expectations and motivations was proven, which means that when tourist have higher expectations they are more willing to search for knowledge about the city, culture and tour information (Lee, et al. 2011). Thus, the motivation of individuals could be manipulated using the suggestions of an individual's expectations regarding the consequences of their actions and the incentive value of the consequences generated by the action (Hsu et al, 2010). On the other hand, motivational factors have a stronger impact in the attitudes taken rather than the expectations of the tourists (Wong et al., 2013).

2.6.3 Trust

In the sharing economy, trust is characterized by a set of unique characteristics beyond other forms of exchange such as retailing in Amazon (Hawlitschek et al., 2016). Also, trust is the disposition to engage in social exchanges which involve uncertainty and vulnerability, but which are also rewarding (Bicchieri et al., 2004). Thus, in the sharing economy trust is very important as buyers could not be physically present to know the quality of the products over the Internet (Mavlanova et al., 2012).

Trust is related with the benevolence, dependency and credibility (Garbarino Johnson, 1999) as well as the idea consumers have regarding the security they could have in their payments (Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Also, and according to Anderson and Weitz (1992) trust is an important mechanism in the long term to assure the development of a relationship with the objective of assuring the needs and improve the profitability of customers and companies.

On the same hand, it is important to refer trust is positively linked with loyalty to a brand as the more trust a consumer has with a company, the higher would be the probability of doing business in the future together (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). Indeed, the trust consumers have will influence their future actions with the company they already have a lasting relationship (Vieira and Slongo, 2008).

As Flavián et al. (2006) concluded in their study regarding the online trust, the trust consumers have is higher when the users feel the website and the system is user friendly which consequently has a positive impact in the loyalty to the website. Also, as the user friendliness is higher, the satisfaction will be higher as well.

For Möhlmann (2016) there are four factors of differentiation: transactions occur at least involving three relationships, social interactions involve online and offline components, transactions do not involve a transfer of ownership and transactions can be more associated with personal characteristics of the service exchange instead of pure goods exchange. Thus, the products and services are offered by private individuals which lead to three different targets of trust, which are trust in peer, platform and product (Hawlitschek et al., 2016). On the same hand, transactions on peer to peer platforms involve a matching (online) and an interaction (offline), which mean that this kind of service involves a real world interaction like staying in someone's else apartment (Möhlmann, 2016). Also, the sharing economy has been characterized by temporary rental activities among peers (Möhlmann, 2016), which needs a higher level of trust due to the fact that people are sharing assets which they desire to get back in great condition (Hawlitschek et al., 2016). Finally, the sharing economy is associated with service exchange (Lusch and Nambisan, 2015) which is more complex and usually involves much more factors such as location, cleanliness and friendliness (Möhlmann, 2016). With this in mind, trust in peer to peer platforms have to be differentiated from normal forms of economic exchange such as B2C or C2C (Möhlmann, 2016).

Regarding the trust which is demonstrated on the platform of Airbnb does not statistically influence the trust that tourists could have in the host (Liang et al., 2018). Thus, institution-based trust is the perception of individuals of the environment of the institution, including infrastructures and regulations which contribute for consumers to feel comfortable by making a purchase through Airbnb website (Liang et al., 2018). Indeed, trust is one of the important factors which affect the usage or not of this kind of platforms, so platforms operators have implemented some trust building engines, user interface artefacts and reputation systems (Teubner, 2017). Thus, consumers of Airbnb have the necessity of

showing themselves as trustworthy individuals in order to gather permission to book (Karlsson et al. 2017). In fact, the elements displayed are often the only points of reference to guest evaluate if they can trust on hosts and if the offer has quality (Hawlitschek et al., 2016). Moreover, the level of trust and satisfaction have been explored by researchers to determine their effects on repurchase intention in the context of online consumer behaviour (Chiu et al, 2013).

Thus, trust has an important role to explain why some websites are more popular than others (Gefen, 2003) as it is considered a critical factor in the success or not of a website (Torkzadeh and Dhillon, 2002).

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim of the study

Due to the recent and fast growth of peer to peer rentals in Portugal and in order to better understand what are the different characteristics of Airbnb and Booking.com, this study applies a qualitative approach to understand the reasons consumers choose those platforms and what are the differences between them. This study will focus in peer to peer rentals which were booked on the two major platforms, Airbnb and Booking.com, rather than other forms of peer to peer rentals that do not necessarily have a payment (Couchsurfing) as well as similar platforms such as HomeAway or TripAdvisor. Thus, this study appears as an opportunity to understand some features of the websites as well as the preferences and characteristics of customers of both platforms, which allow a better understanding of how both Airbnb and Booking.com operate and what type of travellers they target.

3.2 Qualitative Approach

A qualitative analysis was chosen as the method of research for this study. A qualitative research allows the collection of data related to a specific area of study and by using this data it is possible to construct different concepts and theories. As Rossman and Rallis (1998) had explained "there are few truths that constitute universal knowledge rather there are multiple perspectives about the world". Thus, a qualitative approach was found more relevant to conduct this study as:

- Allow individuals to be more specific and in depth about their experiences in Airbnb and Booking.com;
- Allow the collection of more diverse information as the individuals have more capacity and space to explain their points of views.
- The research questions could be focused on the experience of users on both platforms as the different and complete experiences of users will allow hosts to understand their clients as well as both platform could work to provide a better service and product.

On the other hand, a quantitative approach is more structured, it is based more in numbers and it is broader in scale which narrows down the capacity of the individuals to be more flexible which do not allow participants to give their all opinions and judgments. Thus, the objective of this study is to be considered a basis for future research as the hypothetical conclusions can be confirmed or not by a quantitative analysis.

3.3   Interviews

These interviews were made in person or by telephone when the consumers were in the city of Porto. Thus, the objective is to gather a perspective about the motivations of these consumers to prefer one platform over the other to book peer to peer rentals by understanding the experience of consumers on both websites. Also, it was important to understand the behaviours of users on each website at the moment of the reservation and what are the most important factors that each platform have which convince them to book. Thus, the features and characteristics of each platform were very important to create an interview script (see Appendix A) which is helpful at the moment of the interview in order to guide the interviewee into his/her process of reservation and to make him/her talk about his/her experience in the website, the feelings they felt, the difficulties and advantages they had in the websites and the reasons to choose that particular platform. Thus, the interview script has as main focus understand:

1) Motivations to use one platform over another;
2) Behaviour of customers on each platform at the moment of reservation;
3) Features and factors, they consider an advantage or disadvantage when they were using the website;
4) Features and factors, they consider important to book a peer to peer rental and if the platform provides it;
5) How bad experiences influence the future decisions to book on that particular platform;
6) Characteristics of consumers who use the platforms;

Thus, in a first phase of the interview, the objective was to understand how was the first experience of guests on the platform and how they discovered it for the first time. Also, it

was important to understand what the main advantages they saw were and felt using the platforms as well as disadvantages and difficulties which were important for understanding motivations and expectations. Also, it was asked if the competitor platform was already used and what the main differences were the participant saw between both websites. Thus, it was interesting to notice what the differences felt are, what features are different and what are the perceived advantages one platform has over the other.

In a second phase of the interview, the objective was to understand the behaviour and the steps taken until the moment of reservation. Thus, it was interesting to notice if each platform helps in this process and it if is easy to navigate, to filter and to find what is wanted. At the same time, it helps to understand if the process done in Airbnb is the same as Booking.com.

Finally, some data related to the process and characteristics of the interview was collected, especially, the demographic characteristics of the consumers who use the platforms and how each one made his particular reservation as well as how far in advance the reservation was made, how much time was taken to choose a particular peer to peer rental, with whom the reservation was made and if the reservation was made in group or individually. Thus, it will be important to notice if, in fact, there are differences in the process of reservation made by users. Indeed, users with a particular characteristic could be more auspicious to prioritize a certain feature or characteristic associated with the platform.

Thus, the data collected helped to understand the reasons behind why some consumers choose Airbnb or Booking.com by knowing what features consumers praise more in each website as well as the characteristics each platform have that are more willing to attract one type of customer over the other.

3.4 Universe and Interviewees Selection

Twenty-seven interviews were conducted with consumers who stayed in several peer to peer rentals, having seventeen of them booked on Airbnb and ten on Booking.com. The table below summarizes some characteristics of the participants:

Code	Age	Sex	Country of Residence	Level of Education	Professional Situation	Platform of Reservation	Is the first time the platform was used?	Do you already used the competitor platform?
A	53	Male	Brazil	High	Employed	Airbnb	Yes	Yes
B	31	Male	Belgium	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
C	35	Male	Brazil	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	Yes
D	45	Male	Ireland	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
E	24	Female	Germany	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
F	36	Female	Spain	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	No
G	35	Female	United Kingdom	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
H	59	Male	Netherlands	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
I	61	Female	Australia	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
J	39	Male	United States of America	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
K	35	Female	Portugal	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	Yes
L	41	Female	Portugal	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	Yes
M	36	Female	Croatia	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
N	24	Female	Germany	Medium	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
O	24	Male	Luxembourg	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
P	55	Female	Germany	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
Q	29	Male	Austria	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	Yes
R	28	Male	Brazil	High	Unemployed	Booking.com	No	Yes
S	24	Male	Switzerland	High	Employed	Airbnb	Yes	Yes
T	49	Female	United Kingdom	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	Yes
U	41	Female	Spain	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	Yes
V	19	Male	Portugal	High	Student	Booking.com	No	No
W	23	Female	Switzerland	High	Student	Airbnb	No	Yes
Y	26	Male	France	High	Employed	Airbnb	No	No
X	42	Female	Italy	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	Yes
Z	21	Male	Portugal	High	Employed	Booking.com	No	No
AA	24	Male	Brazil	High	Intern	Airbnb	No	Yes

Tabela 1: Characteristics of the interviewees

The idea behind the way a sample is collected varies and should reflect the relevance and the questions directing the study (Punch, 1998). Also, in many cases, there are advantages to

use methods of selecting a sample which allows the participation of individuals with multiple and vast experiences (Patton, 2002).

Thus, the target of this study was every foreigner traveller or not who was accommodated in a peer to peer rental using the platforms Airbnb and Booking.com. The Portuguese travellers/tourists will not be left out as they are fundamental and important clients of this type of services at the same time that it is interesting to notice if the reality of peer to peer rentals already arrived at the mentality of the Portuguese population and which platform fulfil the requirements needed. The objective was to gather a diverse sample to allow the collection of diverse information and different points of view. Indeed, a more diverse sample allowed the understanding of differences between users as some type of consumers could prefer one characteristic of the platform over another. Thus, it is important to have guests from different countries, from different ages, with different experiences and with different levels of education in both platforms. Thus, it will give more precise information to take better conclusions.

Participants were found through the company where the researcher works as the company does property management in the city of Porto which means it receives guests in their houses from all over the world. Also, participants were found through Facebook groups regarding peer to peer rentals as many members constantly use both platforms to make reservations worldwide. As highlighted, the participants were very diverse and presented different perspectives, experiences and feelings about the research topic.

3.5   Data Collection

The data collection took place in the months of May and June of 2018 as it is a very popular period for tourists coming to Portugal as well as many people are in holidays and are more open to do the interviews. Also, a Dictaphone was used to record all the interviews as well as every interview had to be transcribed in order to be easier to analyse. The participants were contacted by many methods:

- Using the extranet of Airbnb and Booking.com of the company, the researcher had access to the chat and to the guests and was able to arrange meetings;
- The persons who do the check-ins in the company also talked with the guests and ask them if they were willing to help the researcher;

- Through Facebook groups of peer to peer rentals, the researcher could reach several people who were interested to help.

Some of the interviews were made in the apartments were the guests were while others were done by telephone as many guests were visiting the city and had several activities to do. Thus, it was easy for them to be flexible and talk through the phone.

A Semi-structured interview was conducted by using an interview script with a series of questions with a particular order, however, this sequence of questions could vary as the researcher has freedom to explore additional topics and questions as the answers to what the researcher see as important replies of the interviewee (Bryman, 2004). Also, these variations in the interview schedule are important to allow the creation of empathy between the researcher and the interviewee. At the same time, as Seidman (1998) explained, using semi-structured interviews allow the individuals to give and talk about information which is important to them, but does not have to select the questions which are used in the interview as will allow the interviewer to understand details of the experience of individuals from their points of view.

The schedule of the interview was previously prepared to allow the researcher with the structure and flow of the interview. Each participant had to answer similar questions regarding their experiences and feelings inside each platform they had used, Airbnb and Booking.com. Most of the questions were open questions as these questions allow the interviewee to better express himself and to explain his feelings and experiences. As an example of an open question was "What advantages do you see on the platform when you are using it?". Thus, these types of questions allow the participants to better explain thoughts and feelings and could offer a more detailed information on the research subject (Sarantakos, 1988). Also, there were made few close questions relating to information such as age, how far in advance they book a property or if the reservation was made in group or individually. It is also important to refer that the researcher used a language which was understandable and relevant to each of the interviewees (Bryman, 2001). Thus, English was the main language used to make the interviews as many of the participants were foreigner and the researcher did not talk every language of these countries. On the same hand, the Portuguese language was used to talk with Portuguese and Brazilian interviewees as well as Spanish to talk with some users from Spain.

The interview schedule was divided into three sections:

- Experience and feelings of the user about the platforms;
- Detailed questions of features and characteristics of platforms;
- Participant's demographics.

As the interviews were conducted, the researcher had to adapt some questions regarding the wording of the interviews as sometimes the interviewees did not understand what the purpose of each question. As an example, the word "platform" was not associated to the website, but, instead, was associated to the company involved in the process of the reservation which made the participants talked about the vacation rental itself instead of focus on the features and characteristics of the website. At the same time, some questions were being answered before being asked, which made the researcher do not ask about the topic again.

3.6   Data analysis

The data started to be transcribed which helped the researcher to improve and understand what errors were committed and what could be done to improve. At the same time, while the interviews were transcribed, the interviewer started understanding better the subject and what topics were emphasized by the participants.

Once all the interviews were transcribed, all the data was coded. Thus, what the interviewees answered the questions made by the researcher was coded into keywords which were associated with a theme or subject. These keywords have the purpose to organize the text by categories which is an essential part of the qualitative research (Sarantakos, 1998).

The final stage of the process involved the analyses of the codes which were created. Thus, data were interpreted by identifying themes which were recurrent and highlighted in the interviews as well as it was important to analyse differences which occurred as participants could have different point of views regarding the same theme or subject. Once this was done, the researcher had to make a data validation, which means that all the transcriptions and codes were checked to confirm the theories and concepts concluded in the first analyse, which allow the researcher to confirm or validate hypothesis (Sarantakos, 1998).

4. Results

In this chapter, it will be presented the ideas which emerged from the individual interviews made with the guests of peer to peer rentals. Thus, the sentences and expressions used by the participants were codified which allowed the creation of themes and subthemes: (a) Flexibility, (b) Communication, (c) Type of offer, (d) Trust, (e) Impact of bad experiences, (f) Characteristics of the websites, (g) Prices and (h) Discovery of the platform.

The theme of flexibility appeared when the participants were confronted with the question "What is the role of the cancellation policy in your decision to book a peer to peer rental?", which led to the appearance of two subthemes: (i) Cancellation by guests and (ii) cancellation by hosts.

Moreover, the communication theme was divided into two subthemes: (i) Personal and (ii) Artificial as guests explained the experience of communicating with the host before, after and in their stay in the accommodation.

Furthermore, through the development of the interviews, participants when comparing Airbnb and Booking.com shared the idea of the difference in the type of offer in both websites as well as the loyalty some feel with a particular platform which led to two subthemes: (i) Diversity of offer in Booking.com and (ii) Airbnb's community (Loyalty).

Also, as participants had to answer the question "What reasons lead you to trust in the platform", three subthemes emerged: (i) Payments, (ii) Transparency and credibility and (iii) Control and awareness of content.

As some participants already had a bad experience with the website, some differentiate these bad experiences into two categories: (i) Bad experiences with the platform and (ii) Bad experiences with the host.

Another important factor which participants shared was some characteristics of the websites when they were using it as some saw advantages and disadvantages in both websites which lead to four subthemes: (i) Simplicity, (ii) Quickness, (iii) Comprehension and (iv) Information provider.

Furthermore, to the question "Where do you think the prices are lower?", guests express their opinions which were divided into two subthemes: (i) High or Low prices and (ii) Fees.

Finally, the way both platforms were discovered for the first time led to two subthemes: (i) Word of Mouth and (ii) Ads.

The table below summarizes all the themes and subthemes of the chapter:

Themes	Subthemes	Summary
Flexibility	Cancellation by guests	- Easiness to make cancellations in Booking.com vs Difficulty to make cancellations in Airbnb. - More important when reservation is made far in advance, when individuals are not confident about it and how the group is composed.
	Cancellation by hosts	- More cancellations in Airbnb than in Booking.com - Negative effects to the guest.
Communication	Personal	- Airbnb provide tools to create a more personal relationship between guest and host.
	Artificial	- Booking.com is associated with a "company" and with the hotel industry where advertisement and non-customization are privileged.
Type of Offer	Diversity in Booking.com	- Guests have the possibility to book peer to peer rentals, hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts.
	Airbnb's community	- Airbnb created a community which makes their customers know what is offered at the same time that they are loyal to the brand.
Trust	Payments	- Airbnb and Booking.com are considered well established companies which could guarantee the safety in payments. - Booking.com offer the possibility of make the payment on site while in Airbnb the payment is only made in the platform.
	Transparency and Credibility	- Sometimes photos, descriptions and reviews do not show the real value of the property.
	Control and Awareness of Content	- Airbnb has a chat and Booking.com has an intermediary which guarantee that everything said in the platform is controlled which make trust on both platforms increase.
Impact of Bad experiences	Bad experiences	- Bad experiences related to photos, cancellation

	with the platform	policies, refunds and customer service.
	Bad experiences with the host	- Peer to peer rentals which do not correspond to what was advertised.
Characteristics of the websites	Simplicity	- Linked with the idea of easy navigation, interface, content. - Booking.com is considered an outdated and sometimes confusing platform and Airbnb may appear as more user friendly.
	Quickness	- Associated with the speed of the website regarding the answers given. - Booking.com appear to give quick answers while Airbnb depends on the time hosts have to answer.
	Comprehension	- Linked with the idea of the website being autodidactic, which mean it is easy to understand and learn.
	Information Provider	- How the platforms share information regarding accommodations. - Booking.com appear to be more specific while Airbnb may miss some details in the information given.
Prices	High or Low Prices	- Users feel difficult to compare prices as the offer on both platforms is diverse. - Airbnb being associated with the concept of family and individual entrepreneurs may sometimes make users feel it is cheaper while Booking.com by being associated with hotels is linked to higher prices. - Booking.com gives benefits to their loyal users by giving them discounts.
	Fees	- Airbnb appears to not be always clear regarding the fees charged to the customer (cleaning fee, extra guest fee and service fee).
Discovery of the platform	Word of Mouth	- Referrals of other users, especially, family, friends and relatives.
	Ads	- Strategy used by both companies through television and internet.

Table 2: Summary of Themes and Subthemes

4.1 Flexibility

Some of the participants emphasize the idea that going to a destination, sometimes, is not certain and things could change along the way. Thus, for many participants is important to be certain or secure that it is possible to change, modify or cancel a reservation that had already been booked. At the same time, it could allow the guests to make changes in their accommodations as a better solution could appear in the market as it could have a better price, quality and conditions.

On the same hand, guests want to be secure about their reservation and like to feel that it would not be cancelled by the host as it could change all of their plans for that particular stay. Some participants had experienced this type of situation as they had their reservations cancelled last minute and was not possible to arrange a solution.

Also, this type of flexibility is related to the kind of cancellation policy which has been used by hosts which tend to be an important factor to choose a platform over the other as well as choose a particular peer to peer rental.

Thus, the analysis of the theme of flexibility led to two subthemes: (a) the cancellation made by guests and (b) the cancellation made by hosts.

4.1.1 Cancellation by guests

Based on the theory of Stewart and Vogt (1999), travellers prepared their trips having in mind the uncertainty of the travel products and because of that, they try to be aware of contingencies and problems regarding the itinerary of their trip. Thus, as the reservation is confirmed, guests, sometimes, may have to cancel it for many motives and some of them shared their experience regarding the flexibility each website gives to them at the moment they have to make a cancellation.

As some participants explained, the cancellation policy and the possibility to cancel their reservations free of costs is an important factor in their decisions to choose an accommodation or the platform where they would make their reservations as they already had experiences where they had to make a cancellation. As Tussyadiah and Zach (2012) shared, information technology, where are included websites like Airbnb and Booking.com, helps travellers increasing their flexibility regarding when and to where they are going to travel. Having this in mind, guests might prefer to choose Booking.com over Airbnb:

"I used Booking.com fewer times than Airbnb, but the few times I used it was easy to make cancellations, because I had some experiences where I had to make a cancellation, and I had not any type of extra cost. Of course, it depends if the person who is offering the accommodation is providing that possibility, so I already had some situations where I had to make a cancellation and I had not any kind of loss."

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

"For many years I usually book using that website [Booking.com], especially because when I cancel a reservation there are fewer expenses."

<div align="right">(X, Booking.com, Italy)</div>

Thus, the easiness to make a cancellation could be an important factor for individuals who are not secured about their trips which allow them to have a more flexibility:

"Because there are situations where you do not have your holidays secured when you are going to travel and book it. There are some accommodations which have a free cancellation policy, 1 day before, other 1 or 2 weeks and if you are not so secure about your holidays, I think it is very important."

<div align="right">(F, Booking.com, Spain)</div>

"There are not too many taxes as Airbnb and at the moment of reservation you have the option in Booking.com of letting reserved which give you more freedom to make a cancellation if you have a problem. I had an experience one time in which I had an unforeseen and I could not travel which make me lost my reservations in Airbnb and I lost some amount of money, half of the value. In Booking.com, in most cases, I can let the reservation and only confirm it at the moment of the check-in."

<div align="right">(R, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

It is also important to refer that this flexibility is, for many participants, more decisive when the reservation is made far in advance as the probability of having to change plans are higher as well as it is important if the user is not confident about the holidays:

"Booking.com usually offer some categories to allow you to make a cancellation. One is more limited, other more flexible. It depends on the trip I will make. If it a trip that it is far away in time, I prefer to choose the

ones who a flexible cancellation policy, because could rise some changes until the moment of the trip and a hard cancellation policy will get me some kind of loss, so this is a factor, the time until the trip."

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

Moreover, the plans for the trip and the persons who compose the group could influence the importance of having more flexibility or not when the reservation is being made. For example, travellers which make a trip with friends have more probability to be flexible upon their trips than individuals who are travelling with children (Park and Fesenmaier, 2014):

"Yes, but depends on the plans. When I go with friends and I am not sure if everyone is coming it matters. But when it is clear, it does not matter. So, it really depends on the trip and with whom you are going."

<div align="right">(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)</div>

Furthermore, the taste of consumers may change across the time as well as they may not know every alternative on the market in a specific time (Guo, 2010). At the same time, as travellers increase their knowledge regarding some aspects linked to the trip, higher will be the alternatives considered (Park and Fesenmaier, 2014). Thus, as K and L explained, as the time of the reservation gets closer and the guest knows more about the city, the possibility to make a change in their accommodation to be in a more good location or in an accommodation which offers a service which is essential to their trip is important. Thus, Booking.com, may appear to them as the best offer to make a reservation:

"As in Booking.com, you have that added value of having many accommodations which do not ask you to pay immediately the reservation, sometimes I make a reservation … for example, right now I have some reservation in some destinations until October, but as the dates start being closer I am going to verify the reservation, which means, I will do other research and if it would be necessary, before I get to the destination, I would change my reservation. I did a trip to three different countries and before I departure I had all my reservations and all planned and during my trip I think I only did not change one hotel. All the others I change during the trip. Because I am going refining my researches. I am thinking "Maybe I need to stay in a place near the station" or "Maybe I need something else", so I am refining my research. I do an initial research, two months before maybe, and I make the reservation. I leave it booked just to rest and to know that I have a reservation and as the date start to be closer, I already studied more about the destination and I will get my research more refined. In the end, I changed my reservations, almost every time."

"It is a little bit by laziness. I made a lot of reservation per year and many times I do not have immediate availability to investigate to the maximum that accommodation and if it appears well superficially, many times I made the reservation and after it, with more calm, I will try to see if I discover any defect. If I found one I cancel it, if I do not find any it remains the same."

(L, Booking.com, Portugal)

As Q explained, Booking.com may appear to offer more flexibility to their users at the moment of cancellation as the company could have a bigger turnover and higher number of individuals interested which makes it easier for them to fill the gap left by a guest who makes a cancellation:

"I guess in Booking.com they have a bigger turnover. They have more people interested, so usually the policy is seven days before, three days before. They have enough people to fill the hole that I left. For example, in Lisbon, I booked in Booking.com, but then I prefer an apartment in Airbnb and I cancel my reservation in Booking.com and there was no problem. I guess the turnover of people is much higher."

(Q, Booking.com, Austria)

On the other hand, some participants had experiences with Airbnb where it was much more difficult to make a cancellation and explained the difficulty they felt to understand how it works as hosts could have different cancellation policies which make the offer heterogeneous:

"I found it a little bit confusing initially. The booking was ok, but I found the cancellation policy. The first time I had to cancel my booking and I was not sure how to get my money back, so the booking was easy, but the cancellation was difficult. As I said the booking was fine, but when I want to cancel it was when it gets a little bit difficult. Because each person has different cancellation policies, so you really have to take note about what the cancellations policies are."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

"Yes, a lot of reservations can be cancelled very easily without taking the money while it happens using other websites that I cancel a reservation and I lose a lot of money, especially in Airbnb. It happens just a few days ago."

(X, Booking.com, Italy)

"Also, the cancellation policies are not so many permissive."

(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)

At the same time, other perspectives were given as some participants consider that Airbnb would appear to give more flexibility as the possibility to contact the host is easier, which mean that by reaching the host, it would be easier to explain the reasons to make a cancellation:

"On paper, I would say Airbnb [to have more flexibility]. Because you have a direct contact with the host and it is easier to arrange anything."

(O, Booking.com, Luxembourg)

"In Booking.com I had to. We just book and we realize we have done a mistake and we could not cancel it. So, we have to call the hotel directly and we could cancel the reservation. But we have no chance to communicate with Booking.com, so I think it is easier with Airbnb, because you can speak directly with the host."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

Moreover, as G and H noted, they do not feel the necessity to have the possibility to make a cancellation in Airbnb as they usually feel secure and confident about their trips:

"I know a lot of people who use it [Booking.com] for booking things and, then, cancel it close to the time, but if I am booking something is because I am going somewhere, so I really do not need that feature."

(G, Airbnb, UK)

"Of course, if my plan changes I will have to change back, if I found it disappointed and if I have reasons to give it up, but usually I do not give up. I have not had done that yet. As soon as I get my itinerary done

and I pretend to go, I will not withdraw unless I get the idea it is creepy. If there is a creepy place the people behave creeilpy, I will forget it, but I did not get that idea at all."

<div align="right">(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)</div>

Although being a factor of differentiation when individuals want to book an accommodation, many of them emphasize the idea of not preferring one platform over the other when they start researching. As L noted by making a reservation there is the possibility to contact the host and being the cancellation policy free there are not any problems:

"Does not have influence [to book in Booking.com], because by making the reservation I can talk with the host. If I chose a place where the cancellation policy is free I can make the reservation, talk with the owner and if the answer he gives me is not satisfactory I cancel it."

<div align="right">(L, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

At the same time, some participants shared that the cancellation policy is not important and many times are not even analysed:

"As I said before we book very late, so there are not many chances we cancel. I do not even know it is the cancellation policy in Airbnb."

<div align="right">(O, Booking.com, Luxembourg)</div>

"To be honest I usually do not look to it, because we only will book something like a flight or whatever if we will go into there. So, I really do not look to it."

<div align="right">(G, Airbnb, UK)</div>

"Yes, but not so much [the importance of the cancellation policy], because mostly when I go to a city I go, so cancelling is not so important, because also I book a flight and I go."

<div align="right">(W, Switzerland, Airbnb)</div>

4.1.2   Cancelation by hosts

On the other side of the coin, cancelations could be made by hosts which will affect the trip of their guests, especially when this cancelation is made a few moments before their

arrivals. To less flexible individuals, these changes and obstacles are seen as threats rather than opportunities (Connor, 1992).

Thus, as C and I noted, they feel that the hosts in Airbnb make much more cancellations than the ones in Booking.com and, because of that, C feels more secured with Booking.com as beside having the possibility to cancel easier, he also thinks hosts in Booking.com cancel less times that the ones in Airbnb:

"In Booking.com, besides I am starting my research in Airbnb, I have had more security. Even for consulting, because I already made a big number of reservations in both platforms and I always consult qualifications. I start noticing that the reservations I saw and the comments of other people in Airbnb ... I saw that the number of cancellations were too many, much higher than in Booking.com starting from the host and to many one day before the check-in. This start frustrating me and I asked myself if it would happen to me, because I would be in other country and he would cancel my reservation in time and what could I do. And in Booking.com that never happen and I could not see a historic that this had happen with someone."

(C, Booking.com, Brazil)

"The only disadvantage is maybe when you make a booking, as I said, many times people cancel on you and you cannot see it on the website. You make the booking and, then, maybe a week later the host can cancel on you and obliviously it is not shown in the website. So, you are quite vulnerable to cancelations."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

Furthermore, as K explained, she feels much more vulnerable to get a cancelation in Airbnb and she consider it like a phobia. She also gave a practical example of the consequence these types of cancelations can bring to the guests as they could not arrange an alternative accommodation if the cancelation is made only a few days prior to their arrival. Indeed, several studies indicate that the number of alternatives affect the choice strategy (Shields, 1980):

"Yes, absolutely. Because in Airbnb I will get stuck. This a phobia that I have. For example, you make a research on Airbnb with two months in advance to guarantee your place and I can give you a practical example. Some of my friends went to Iceland and in Iceland as there are few accommodations, in the summer, things are sold out very quickly. They made a reservation in Airbnb to stay in a nice apartment, well located and the host cancelled their reservation just two weeks before they arrive there. The consequence of that was

that at the time they did not have any accommodation to stay. This is almost impossible. Airbnb usually try to re allocate you to another place when they are available. This is extremely serious. My problem with Airbnb is that. It is committing myself with an accommodation where they took the deposit from your card and as the dates getting closer, or your plans change a little bit or the plans of the host change a little bit too and things could go wrong. This, for me, it is like a phobia. The loss of the control of your trip. So, that flexibility in Booking.com is something which make me prefer Booking.com."

<div align="right">(K, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

Thus, as many participants noted, Booking.com may give them more freedom and security as they feel their accommodation is booked. On the other hand, they feel Airbnb does not completely secure their accommodation as they are quite vulnerable to cancelation by the hosts. At the same time guests lose the possibility to arrange a new accommodation in some places as they are almost booked.

4.2   Communication

Through the interviews, many participants explained their experience regarding the communication inside the websites and how they feel when they needed to communicate with the host through the website and in real life considering it is an important factor:

"Of course, you like to talk with the host and create a more homie relationship."

<div align="right">(K, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

Thus, many of them, characterized platforms as could give a more personal communication with the host and a more easiness to directly contact him. On the other hand, some explained the artificial and automatic answers the platforms could give in order to accelerate the process of communication. Both situations provide a different experience to guests as may explain different needs some guests have.

Thus, the analysis of the theme of communication led to two subthemes: (a) personal communication and (b) artificial communication.

4.2.1 Personal

As Guttentag (2015) explained, travellers expect to have a social experience by staying with locals, which mean, that the possibility to interact with a local in order to exchange ideas and experiences as well as the locals could share hidden gems and interesting places to visit to the guests could be important to define the experience. Thus, the platform should reflect that in order to bring host and guest together and to create a more personal relationship as the direct interactions with users in peer to peer rentals systems helps in the development of social ties beyond economic exchange (Kim et al. 2015).

As the interviews were conducted, the researcher found that most users consider Airbnb a more personal platform as Airbnb give the possibility both to the guest and host to have a better communication and to share tips and ideas at the same time that guests interact with someone who owns their own property:

"I think Airbnb is definitely more personal. They always have personal contact. It is like once rented, there is someone there who you can write by WhatsApp or by email when you have questions and there is always someone there for you. The persons always have some tips to give, they told us where to go, what is good, what not to do and I think is more personal than a hotel."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

"I think Airbnb is more personal, because you are dealing with somebody who owns a property or a house or whatever."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

Thus, Airbnb appears as an intermediary who can give tools to make the communication easier and personal as the platform provides a chat which is always available:

"Also, the contact, the effective contact you have with the host I think in Airbnb is simpler and quicker."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

"In Airbnb [is easier to talk with the host], because they have a chat which is always available." I like this type of all communication not by phone, but by chat where you have everything written and if something happens they have everything on the platform."*

"I do not remember if I tried to talk with somebody in Booking.com, but in Airbnb, not this time, but when I did it was very easy."

Furthermore, and when the participants were asked about the differences they felt between Booking.com and Airbnb, they emphasized the idea that Airbnb is more one on one platform while Booking.com is a booking site and you do not know who your host is going to be as you can know this information in Airbnb:

"If you are the host, we would contact you through Airbnb and, then, we would have a conversation online to see if it is available and it is booked. Then, we would define the date to come here and the person will say "Looking forward to seeing you", "What things will you need?", "At what time are you going to arrive". This is completely flexible and we could meet anytime we like, we could ask about parking. Whereas in Booking.com, you just book a hotel, and it is fine too, but is the biggest difference. In Airbnb is one on one relationship whereas Booking.com is only a booking site. It works, but is only a booking site."

"I think it is very direct like a hotel would be a brand, so a hotel might be a chain. The branding will be almost generic while here would be completely individual, so you get an idea of the type of person you are going to get, so you get to know your host from the photographs, from what they say, how they say it, what their customer would be interested in, so you get that sense from the techs of Airbnb and also from the photographs. You get the sense of the type of person they are while in a hotel, if it is a good hotel, you know the type of clients they work with, but is much more generic. It is not individualized."

Moreover, many participants who associated Booking.com with hotels explained that Airbnb is a more personal and humanized platform as the offer is made by families and amateurs and not by many professionals:

"I like the feel Airbnb is a bit more amateurs, more human, not so glimpse. In Booking.com or websites like that, I find it more smooth and slick and I do not feel attracted by that. So, I like the simplest and the more humanized appearance of Airbnb."

(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)

"I think Airbnb is more personal, because you text directly with your host and like I said I use Booking.com for hotels, so they are not so much personal as you when have a host and a flat. And on Airbnb, you have the picture of the host and it is much more personal."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

"Airbnb is more personal and it is related more with family and I get more information about the cities and the people in the land and the country."

(P, Airbnb, Germany)

On the same hand, users feel that they could meet easily the persons who provide them with the accommodations which allow the creation of a bond between host and guest. Indeed, a user of Airbnb told an experience she has as she rented an apartment which was normally inhabited:

"And sometimes the owners live in the apartment. One time I stayed in Paris and the apartment was not commercial and the girl who rent to us was on holidays and we stayed in her apartment, so you see apartments of people who live there most the time of the year. But right now, we see more commercial apartments there."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

Another user of Airbnb shared his experience where a host presents him the city where he stayed without charging nothing more:

"Usually it is connected with a personal profile and usually you know who are the hosts and usually they are the ones who receive you. Other times you have the telephone contact of him like Whatsapp which allow you to communicate with them. Also, there were some hosts who got me to know the city and they did charge nothing."

(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)

4.2.2   Artificial

On the other hand, many users and participants noted that their experience with Booking.com not allowed them to have an easy communication with the host through the platform. As F noted, she could not send a message to the host using the platform:

"I think they [Booking.com] do not let you do it personally inside the platform and would not be the personal contact of the accommodation or the person. In my case, I sent a message to know how the parking was and they had answered me through the platform. But it is something I do not like too much."

(F, Booking.com, Spain)

Although, K found Booking.com quite useful as it could accelerate the process and give an immediate answer as the process is automatized and the platform gives an answer straight away:

"It depends from accommodation to accommodation. In Booking.com as the booking assistant is automatized, you write and the assistant answer you straight independently the answer of the platform they answer you straight. You always know how much time you have to wait for an answer."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

Thus, Booking.com was many times associated with the concept of "company" where everything is automatized and where every process is repeated and not personalized. As N explained, Booking.com sends the same email to everyone every time a booking is confirmed:

"No, not really. I think Booking.com is more like an office. If you book there, you get an email, but it is like a norm. Everybody gets this email. If you want to book an Airbnb, you have to ask the person if it is ok to get there and if you can come or not come and I think it is more personal. If you receive an email when you book a hotel [in Booking.com], there is like an address and you can go there and get the check-in at 10, but if you have some questions or do you want any info it is not possible. It is like a norm, everyone gets this email. You can contact them, but it is as if you get in touch with an office. First have to say "Hello, this number, Booking.com number" and then they search for you and when you call them it is not a person also."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

Indeed, H noted Booking.com send a lot of advertisement and it gives more importance with the process of selling accommodations rather than selling experiences and the possibility to contact the host:

"I already get a bit sick of Booking.com and those places, because of the advertisements. They sent you a lot of advertisements, last minutes offers and things like that and I don't like that. I don't like that kind of information and my mailbox fills with all that kind of stuff about the places where I had been and last-minute deals. I do not like that. I think Airbnb does not do that."

<div align="right">(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)</div>

H also adds that Booking.com looks for perfectionism and consequently transmits a more professional website which is not always associated with the idea of personality:

"That everything does not need to be always perfect, have beautiful colours and the best site. I like it when it is … I do not want to say it is more hobbyist, but not professional. I do not like it too professional. Booking.com and websites like that, Hotels.com there are just too professional."

<div align="right">(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)</div>

At the same time, Booking.com is associated with hotels and not peer to peer rentals and, as O and Q explained, Booking.com is less personal as individuals do not have a direct and personal contact with the host:

"No [I do not feel Booking.com is personal], because Booking.com is more hotels, so you do not meet the host or it is an employee."

<div align="right">(O, Airbnb, Luxembourg)</div>

"It is easy to communicate things like check-in and check-out, but this communication about the city, Booking.com is less personal especially because it is hotel oriented and they do not communicate too much with the individual clients, but I do not care actually. It is fine for me."

<div align="right">(Q, Booking.com, Austria)</div>

At the same time and what it is interesting is that Q does not consider an important factor to have a personal communication with the host which could indicate that users of

Booking.com are not so eager to have a personal experience where tips, ideas and experiences are exchanged with locals. Indeed, Y has this idea when he is using Booking.com:

"The main reason is the facility, it is quite easy in fact. You do not have any contact with a human for me, it is quite simple and you can see all the possibilities very simply."

<div align="right">(Y, Airbnb, France)</div>

Thus, many users find other solution in Booking.com as they try to contact directly the accommodation besides doing it by the platform:

"Directly not. What I already did was to get out of Booking.com platform and directly contact the hotel, but a question through the platform I am not remembering to do."

<div align="right">(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)</div>

4.3   Type of offer

The participants emphasized the difference between the offer of Airbnb and Booking.com as it is an important factor to choose one over another. Besides that, Airbnb appears to have already created a community around the brand which possibly could make Airbnb users loyal to it. Thus, it is interesting to notice that many Airbnb users do not seem to know and understand that Booking.com also have the possibility to book peer to peer rentals.

Thus, the analysis of the theme of the type of offer led to two subthemes: (a) diversity in Booking.com and (b) Airbnb community.

4.3.1   Diversity of offer in Booking.com

Many participants noted Booking.com has a more diverse offer than Airbnb as its users have the possibility to not only book peer to peer rentals, but also hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts:

"The type of housing. Booking.com is mostly hotels and Airbnb is apartments. It depends on what you are looking for in your holidays."

<div align="right">(O, Airbnb, Luxembourg)</div>

"Categories of accommodation, because, mostly, Booking.com is Hotels and Hostels and Airbnb is private apartments."

<div align="right">(B, Airbnb, Belgium)</div>

"Yes. Independently of being properties, hotel or hostels, I already booked in Booking.com."

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

On the same hand, many Airbnb users when asked about Booking.com, do not know that it has the possibility to book peer to peer rentals as they were surprised when confronted with this idea:

"No, we won't aware of that [that it is possible to book peer to peer rentals in Booking.com]. Actually, I would assume that Booking.com was just for hotels. Or Trivago. I never assumed that this apartment would be in Booking.com."

<div align="right">(D, Airbnb, Ireland)</div>

"Booking.com I only use for hotels, I did not know that I can also book rooms and apartments."

<div align="right">(W, Switzerland, Airbnb)</div>

"I imagine Booking.com only has Hotels. I do not know if they have this same offer of apartments as Airbnb has."

<div align="right">(A, Airbnb, Brazil)</div>

Thus, and as F explained, Airbnb has a more clear and defined target while in Booking.com it is possible to almost book every type of accommodation which could influence the decision to book in one or other platform:

"We searched for an accommodation which could be more economic and what came out was this apartment. I think Airbnb is more focused in private accommodations and Booking.com not so much."

Indeed, as some participants explained, this diverse offer sometimes could be confusing to the user as it is more difficult to find the type of accommodation the user wants:

"There is a lot of stuff in Booking.com and find it difficult to find the exact kind of thing I am looking for and did not charge you upfront and I do not like."

(G, Airbnb, UK)

"If we are looking into Airbnb is because we specifically wanted an apartment. If we search in Booking.com, it throws a lot of things like hotels or hostels, so it gets not confusing, but it is just too much to get through to find what you exactly want."

(G, Airbnb, UK)

"Booking.com, as I said before, is a little bit confusing. Maybe it is because of the gamma and the variety of options it offers to you besides apartments, houses, flats and chalet. It gives more options and I think Airbnb is friendlier."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

Although being confused as it offers diverse kinds of accommodations, H does not have the same expectations as he has when he uses Airbnb as he thinks Booking.com only offers something simple and not complex:

"Yes, I think I already use it. I travel quite a bit. But, I usually do not spend my vacations choosing where I travel. Of course, I get in time, but I just expect a hotel room, that's it. I do not expect too much atmosphere, just a clean place. A place to sleep and shower and I have different expectations of Airbnb."

(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)

Other participants shared the idea that Booking.com many times appear as an alternative to Airbnb as the offer is higher and individuals could run away from apartments using it:

And to run away from apartments as Booking.com also offers rooms in hotels which is an advantage."

(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)

"I have used it for hotels, not a lot, just to book a couple of nights. On this trip that I am going to Italy, there were not so many options, so I had to use Booking.com."

<div align="right">(J, Airbnb, USA)</div>

4.3.2 Airbnb's community (Loyalty)

The participants who use Airbnb to make reservations of peer to peer rentals had similar and interesting ways to describe the apartment where they were staying as they constantly called it "Airbnb" instead of apartment or house:

*"My first experience was **staying in an Airbnb** I did not book, but a friend who was going with me booked and this was my first experience."*

<div align="right">(M, Airbnb, Croatia)</div>

*"Booking.com has more advertisement and it is harder to find the right hotel. It is not **an Airbnb**."*

<div align="right">(P, Airbnb, Sweden)</div>

*"Because they are far away from the town and the location of **the Airbnb's** are better."*

<div align="right">(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)</div>

Thus, Airbnb appears to have created a big and strong brand which is used to describe the type of product and service they are buying. At the same time, this may transmit a great loyalty to the brand like an emotional attachment as they feel Airbnb has a great quality in the service offered. Indeed, the trust consumers have will influence their future actions with the company they already have a lasting relationship (Vieira and Slongo, 2008). Thus, many positive characteristics of a peer to peer rental are referred when participants shared their experience with Airbnb:

"Well, it is about location. Also, what is really good is you get up whenever you want, so you don't have to be dressed and be down for breakfast and in hotels in at half past nine and we might be out some nights and get in at four in the morning and then we have to be smiley and happy for breakfast. We, also, can go to the supermarket whenever we want and prepare our breakfast. We also have lunch here, we can buy wine, local wine. We can have our own lunch here if we want. We do not have to out all day. We like to cook as

well, so it is really great here. It is a reason to **choose this Airbnb** *and the cooking facilities are excellent. What we really like is and what we learn is that if you go to Italy or Portugal, we like to visit food markets, but if we are staying in a hotel we only could really look. But if we are in an Airbnb we could actually buy vegetables, wine and fruit and we can come home and prepare some dishes. But we can't do it in hotels. For us, it is a major consideration."*

(D, Airbnb, Ireland)

"Also, the feeling of togetherness, being in a sort of a home together, so this were the most important factors for me to choose our **Airbnb's** *in Porto."*

(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)

Thus, most of the participants were aware of the fact that Airbnb offers multiple peer to peer rentals and know the target they had:

"[Airbnb] It is a private apartment and not a hotel."

(A, Airbnb, Brazil)

"To book apartments definitely Airbnb, I use it a lot more."

(G, Airbnb, UK)

"Because we like to stay in a flat [when asked why use Airbnb]."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

To describe the power and influence of Airbnb, T gave an interesting opinion as for her Airbnb is a monster who is gathering followers from all over the world:

"I think Airbnb is a bit of a monster, taking over the world. And they need to stop it."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

4.4 Trust

As both platform work as an intermediary between guests and hosts as well as guests book accommodations they do not see and they do not know, it is important that platforms

can guarantee security and make users trust them. Thus, in the sharing economy trust is very important as buyers could not be physically present to know the quality of the products over the Internet (Mavlanova et al., 2012).

On the same hand, both platforms develop procedures and criteria to secure these trust among users, especially the ones related with payments, transparency and means to control what is said and shared inside the websites. Thus, many users trust both platforms as they consider them very well established and known companies which already have a strong brand. Indeed, trust is one of the important factors which affect the usage or not of this kind of platforms, so platforms operators have implemented some trust building engines, user interface artefacts and reputation systems (Teubner, 2017):

"Yes. In general, I have a high degree of trust in those well-established websites, so I am not afraid. I feel I do not have any problem with Airbnb and Booking.com."

(Q, Booking.com, Austria)

"Both give me confidence, because both are well known companies worldwide, so I have plenty of trust in both of them."

(A, Airbnb, Brazil)

"As they are such big platforms they must have internal policies, security and everything. Also, I check if the website is https which means it is secure."

(O, Airbnb, Luxembourg)

Thus, the analysis of the theme of the type of offer led to three subthemes: (a) payments, (b) transparency and credibility and (c) control and awareness of content.

4.4.1   Payments

Trust is also related to the idea consumers have regarding the security they could have in their payments (Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Thus, the payments users have to do to secure their accommodation is an important step in the process of booking a property and both platforms try to assure this security. However, many users have lack of trust in the collaborative consumption regarding the relationship between users and technologies (trust

in payment system) (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). Thus, some participants feel this is a very important factor and it is something they usually think when they use this kind of platforms:

"I find a bit scary in a way that Airbnb has my credit card information, because you are afraid of hacking and that thing worries me the most. I have given a lot of private information like my numbers and my credit card information and if it gets hacked, it can also be used. I am a little bit scared."

(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)

However, many participants do not seem to be bothered about this topic as they consider Airbnb and Booking.com big and well-established companies which have means to secure safety in the payments:

"Yes [I trust Airbnb to make a payment]. Because it seems to be a very established company and I did not have any kind of fear of losing the payment."

(D, Airbnb, Ireland)

"Regarding payments yes. I think they have certificates of security and the platforms which use cards are well secured. I do not have any type of problems regarding online payments."

(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)

On the other hand, many guests of Booking.com when confronted with this topic explained a feature and tool that Booking.com as to assure a safer way to guarantee the payment:

"Yes. Actually, I am a little unconcerned regarding that. I never ask about that and I never thought about the safety in those things. I think Booking.com is a little bit more secure in some aspects, because in some experiences I have you make the payment in cash or by credit card at the moment of the entrance and, maybe, this helps a little bit. Even when I made the payment with my credit card I think it is safe."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

"Because when you make a payment you usually prefer to make it on site [and Booking.com gives that option]."

As R explained, Booking.com, in some accommodations, have the possibility to make the payment on site which could help users to trust on the website as they are not obliged to make the payment immediately. Thus, Booking.com allow users to know the accommodations which offer these type of solution:

"Yes, I can know it [pay through the website or not]. Many times, I can choose that option. If I want to pay at the moment or if I prefer to pay at the moment of my arrival."

(L, Booking.com, Portugal)

Thus, these solutions allow guests to confirm if the accommodations really exist as well as allow users to verify "in loco" how the accommodations are and what are the characteristics of it which could be an important factor for persons who are unsecured:

"It gives you some safeness, because you never know if the property is not what you expected. I do not know if this happens here, but maybe it could not even exist and it gives you security. You look and you are a witness of what you are paying off, you have the opportunity to look in loco. I think it is important especially for the persons who more unsecured in using it. I am travelling with my aunt and mom and they are a little bit afraid of that, so maybe for that kind of public is important."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

On the other hand, Airbnb opts not to offer this kind of option as it takes the money immediately which, in I's opinion, could be a problem as if the individual wants to recover its money, they have to wait. In fact, as Flavián et al. (2006) concluded in their study regarding the online trust, the trust consumers have is higher when the users feel the website and the system is user friendly which consequently have a positive impact in the loyalty to the website.

"Yes, depending on how strict ... I do understand why they got to be strict, but Airbnb takes your money immediately and if you cancel it you have to wait a long time to try to get it back."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

At the same time, as both companies appear as an intermediary in the transaction between hosts and guests, users may feel more confident to make a payment taking into account that if a cancellation has to be made is the company which has to refund it:

"Every time I had a problem, Booking.com was the intermediary and gave me a pertinent answer and the money back. It was a reservation that actually we could not do, because my father was in the hospital. We deliver the documents proving my father was in the hospital and with Booking.com there was no problem. You can choose to solve this directly with the accommodation or with Booking.com and I prefer to use Booking.com."

<div align="right">(U, Booking.com, Spain)</div>

"Yes [I trust in Airbnb to make a payment], because I know when you book a room you pay to Airbnb and they pay it to the host. So, it is not directly to the host and he would be not so easy to trust. Thus, if I have to cancel a reservation I know it is not the host that has to give the money back, it is Airbnb."

<div align="right">(W, Switzerland, Airbnb)</div>

4.4.2 Transparency and Credibility

The credibility is related with the degree of reliability of the company regarding the compliance with promises (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995). Thus, many users shared their experience in both websites and many talked about the transparency and credibility both platforms have, especially regarding the offer, features and reviews that are presented to the guests. Moreover, some participants feel some accommodations are not what it is presented in the platforms as they feel hosts in both platforms cheat when they present and create their ads about the accommodation as well as photos do not show the real and true value of the property. Indeed, the transactions on peer to peer platforms involve a matching (online) and an interaction (offline), which mean that this kind of service involves a real world interaction like staying in someone's else apartment (Möhlmann, 2016):

"This will sound weird, but I in Airbnb people tend to rely on the sense if the quality of the rooms. I did not like my room in Lisbon which was booked through Airbnb even though it looks really nice when I was booking it and the price was high as I expected more for that price, so I can say the quality of the

accommodation is lower in Airbnb then in Booking.com. Somehow, I feel they cheat on the photos and they cheat in the listings, they cheat on the prices and in Booking.com I do not have that feeling."

<div align="right">(Q, Booking.com, Austria)</div>

"The disadvantages [in Airbnb] are maybe that you never know what you are booking, because the pictures can be of a good angle and you do not know how it looks in the other side. You can see the picture, but you never know as it is, so it is difficult to make your own picture in the mind."

<div align="right">(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)</div>

"It also has other microsites in the way it works, they rely on trust, because recently I had to book somewhere in Lisbon and when I came in I thought: "This is really weird, this is not the living room we saw on the picture". The apartment was really different from the pictures. They took the photo of the living room and then put a wall to create a bedroom and they changed the furniture."

<div align="right">(T, Airbnb, UK)</div>

"What I mean by that is that when you look to a place [in Booking.com] and has high reviews and the photographs show it is not that when you get there, it is not always what is shown in the website."

<div align="right">(I, Airbnb, Australia)</div>

On the same hand, many other participants have the same feeling regarding the process of users leaving reviews as sometimes it can be seen some accommodations with zero comments or reviews which, in the opinion of the users, are fake:

"I mean that Booking.com is not very transparent about how customers leave their reviews, especially, in Croatia you sometimes will find accommodations with no reviews. Whereas in Airbnb, it has always a customer review when you want to book an apartment. If it has not it means it is the first time they are renting it."

<div align="right">(M, Airbnb, Croatia)</div>

"In Booking.com we had in Prague a problem. A hotel was not what we expected, was not so clean. I think there were some recommendations there that were not true. Maybe they have to better test the reviews and recommendations down there. They have to check if they are really true and I think it is a problem that they have."

"No, I do not think every review is credible, because we never know the relationship between the person who did the review and the offer, but in general I think they are true."

However, different opinions were shared as some reviews are so elaborate or unpleasant that is not considered false:

"Yes [the reviews are all credible]. For example, I already found reviews where guests were very unpleasant with the apartments that I wanted to choose in the beginning. With those reviews, I quit immediately. If in twenty reviews, you see nine are talking bad about the apartment you start thinking."

"I do not read all the reviews. I give more value to the rating which is dependent on reviews, but I do not read in detail the reviews. Usually, I see the punctuation between 0 and 10, read some factors like cleanness or location and doing that I am considering most of the reviews are true. In fact, I never thought about it, but I would say the few that I read, sincerely, I believed they were reliable and they did not look false. Many of them had a so elaborated context that I thought that was real."

At the same time, the number of reviews of a property is important as higher the number of reviews, higher the credibility of the property may be:

"Not necessarily the classifications, but I usually look to the comments and, of course, the comments could be manipulated, but in general when you have a base of comments very high and diverse it tends to be more trustworthy."

"Of course not [the reviews are not all credible], but if you have enough reviews we just imagine the average of all the reviews are credible."

On the other hand, Airbnb may have a more controlled system of reviews which only allow guests who actually stayed in the accommodation to write their opinions about their experience which guarantee to the users that reviews are true:

"Also, we could see the recommendations of other guests that are also true, because you can only recommend your apartment if you really stayed there [in Airbnb]. When I stayed in Albufeira I have to recommend the stay and was good what to do it and, also, the host could make a recommendation about me and would be online with Airbnb."

<div align="right">(N, Airbnb, Germany)</div>

"And with the reviews of Airbnb you get the feeling they are genuine, it is people who stayed in the house and they usually write things that you can believe. Whereas Booking.com you just do not know who exactly the people are. So, I think Airbnb has a stricter review process which is previous to be shared."

<div align="right">(I, Airbnb, Australia)</div>

However, this characteristic was also viewed as something negative having in mind that guests met the host and could not be honest at the time of the review as they could create a personal connection at the same time that host also could leave a review to their guests:

"[I do not trust the review system], Because this is for guests who stayed in a property and they know they have to write a review and, also, host have to write a review about guests, so I think if people know they are going to write a review about them, so I do not think people give a 100% honest review about the property and, sometimes when you are in someone else property you feel that it is their home and you have a direct contact with them, before and in your arrival, so you kind of have a personal connection and then it is quite difficult to write a truly honest review. Not everyone, but most people don't give an 100% honest review. And the reviews just coming up. I used to trust 100% on reviews, but since the experience I have in Lisbon this holiday I do not 100% trust on it. I do not trust 100% on Airbnb, because there are standards that you have to keep."

<div align="right">(T, Airbnb, UK)</div>

Moreover, and another factor participants found important to point Airbnb as a more credible platform is that the accommodations are rented by families and Airbnb is more private, reserved and personal platform. Thus, individuals turn to be micro-entrepreneurs

and act as hosts offering their accommodation to tourists or business travellers for a cost (Sundararajan, 2014) which get the sense of credibility at the same time the reservation is done by a personal profile:

"I think they are the same, I do not see much more difference. Maybe Airbnb is a smaller platform and more restricted regarding the type of accommodation, the apartments and houses of families, I feel more credibility for being a thing much more reserved and because there are entire families who already rented there. Also, it is something much more personal, so maybe in Airbnb, they are more credible."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

"It is a guess, but the reviews of Airbnb by being connected to a personal profile and I do not remember if Booking.com allow this or not. In case of being written with a personal profile gives it more credibility."

(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)

Furthermore, many participants consider both platforms may prioritize good reviews over bad ones as they appear in the first position and sometimes some ads only have good reviews:

"I have been noticed that Airbnb has a certain filter and put the bad reviews more down, for example. And in Booking.com you can see by a chronological order which is very important for me. When I make a reservation I always look for the opinion of the travellers who were there before me."

"Because Airbnb does a filter in the comments, which means, the negative reviews go to the end and the persons end being persuaded by the positive reviews."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

"Also, the reviews [of Booking.com] are always good as if they have edited them."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

On the other hand, K knows and explained that some of her friends who have an accommodation pay a fee to Booking.com to appear higher in the search results which can create the feeling that Booking.com is more eager to sell using marketing strategies to give more relevance to the accommodations which pay to them:

"Booking.com has prizes, which mean, you arrive at the accommodation and they have framed pictures saying they have a rating of 9, it is a mean of promotion. Booking.com use that kind of tool of promotion and I know they ask for some accommodation to pay to them to, for example, appear in the top of the researches. I know what happens in Booking.com and I do not know if it happens with Airbnb for example. I do not know if Airbnb is only user experience or if they have a marketing campaign behind. Probably they have it too. In that way, I think they could trick a little bit the consumer as the first option that appears to you was paid by someone to appear in the first position in the researches. I have some friends which have a hostel and I know they pay to appear in the first position. They had constructed a hostel from scratch, they had 10 in rating and they had to change the location. So, they had to sell the old hostel and create a new one in the centre of the city. They paid to appear in the first position to had, again, the same number of guests as fast as possible. I know they did that, but they are my friends. But the other properties which do it, if I stayed in one of them, I do not know."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

Another point of view was done and presents different opinions regarding the fact of the platforms being responsible for the offer which is considered false as some consider platforms do not have the possibility to verify every property of the platform as other consider they are the agents and are responsible for their offer:

"No, because Booking.com cannot go through every apartment to verify them. I also have to tell you that I have some vacation rentals. My parents live with that as they have a villa. We tried to explain everything as it is and we understand that there are some hosts that in order to get more guests hide the truth and Booking.com cannot go apartment to apartment to check them all. It is not possible, it is not viable. So, it is why I check the reviews of other guests."

(U, Booking.com, Spain)

"Yes, I think they are. Ultimately, they are, they have to be responsible, because they are agents. They have to be responsible, because you are booking through them and they are acting as agents listing those properties. I think it is dangerous. Normally it works really well, but sometimes you get someone who does not have the same content other people have and those things are not right. Airbnb should do things and I think they are not doing it, they are not perfect."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

4.4.3   Control and awareness of content

The control platforms have over what it is written, shared and talked between users is considered as an important factor to trust on the platform as it is a way of sometimes solving a problem or difficulty. In the case of Booking.com, users consider the existence of an intermediary between hosts and guests when they are communicating is very important as they feel comfortable to have something controlling the flow of communication which assure that the accommodation gives an answer with a purpose:

"In Booking.com, yes [I trust]. They have a communication platform that works very well to send messages. They are, now, filtered by Booking.com itself. Which mean, you write the message and the message goes to a centre of Booking.com and Booking.com is the one that sends the message to the owners. But, on one hand, I do not dislike this tool, because you know Booking.com is aware of what you are saying and, in a certain way, is almost comforting, because the accommodations do not answer you without purpose. There is a formal communication."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

On the same hand, R shared his experience with Booking.com and he also explained the fact of existing an intermediary between the communication:

"But in Booking.com, if I am not mistaken, there is an intermediary. You send a message and Booking.com sends the message to the host. This intermediary channel could delay a little bit the answer you get."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

On the other hand, Airbnb, besides not having the intermediary in the middle of the communication between host and guest, has a chat which helps users feel safe as everything is written in the website and allow them to have evidence about what had been said:

"In Airbnb [is easier to talk with the host], because they have a chat which is always available. I like this type of all communication not by phone, but by chat where you have everything written and if something happens they have everything on the platform. In Booking.com no."

(M, Croatia, Airbnb)

Although these might happen, K has a different opinion as she considers that many times these communications in Airbnb moves on to other forms of communication as by telephone or Whatsapp which make users lost control of the communications as Airbnb only accepts evidence which are present in the platform:

"And sometimes, in Airbnb, persons start the conversation and want to pass to Whatsapp and you feel you lose some kind of control, because if there is any problem after it, Airbnb only solves things that had been written in the platform. Every communication which is written in another way of communication, a direct email or a Whatsapp, Airbnb does not take responsibility and, in that sense, I like the system of Booking.com, because of that."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

Moreover, N has a completely different approach as she believes Airbnb is behind the accommodations which are offered and, because of that, are always responsible for the user:

"I think it is better in Airbnb [the trust]. You know Airbnb is behind the apartments and if you have any problems and you contact Airbnb, they will be responsible for you. So, you always feel secure."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

She also adds that if the accommodation is being announced in the website is because it has a contribute of Airbnb and it is trustworthy while in Booking.com is there only a contract between the owner and the platform:

"Sometimes the person is not really the real owner of the property, maybe is the son or the cousin or nephew, so you can't always check the property, but you know if they give it way is because they have a contribute of Airbnb. Whereas in Booking.com there is a contract between Booking.com and the owner of the apartment."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

4.5   Impact of bad experiences

As participants were confronted with the question "Have you ever had any bad experience with the platform?", many of them shared their experiences and what was not so good in the usage of the websites as well as how these problems were solved.

Furthermore, some participants felt bad experiences influence their future decisions to book any type of accommodations, to book in a particular platform and even make them change the way they search in the platform as helped them to be more attentive to some details. Indeed, the more trust a consumer has with a company, higher would be the probability of doing business in the future together (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999).

Thus, the analysis of the theme of the impact of bad experiences led to two subthemes: (a) bad experiences with the platform and (b) bad experiences with the host as many participants understand the difference between these two types of experiences:

"I open more my options and I looked for that traditional methods, but nothing so objective and permanent. I simply abstract myself and I imagine that this depends on the host, but I believe the hosts and the platforms are two distinct things."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

4.5.1   Bad experiences with the platform

Some participants associate the bad experience they have with the platform as these bad experiences were related to some features inside the website like photos, cancellations policies and refunds as well as campaigns:

"Last year, in the Easter, there was an ongoing campaign where there were vouchers of 15€ by each friend that were invited. At the time, I share many vouchers, but it was not clear in the rules that as one person already used the voucher of someone could not use it again. And what happened was many situations that were invalidated and when I contact the client support I had to talk with several persons who were not inside the subject and who gave me contradictory information's and I ended up being dissatisfied with the story. After it I had some months I did not use Booking.com. I tried to book directly to the accommodation"

(L, Booking.com, Portugal)

"Yes [bad experiences influence my future decisions], nowadays, I already search in both platforms, in Airbnb and in Booking.com. For example, there were some situations where I made a search in Airbnb and the differences, the qualifications of the persons who had a property in the region where I would like to stay were bad or neutral. So, I tried in Booking.com for positive qualifications and I finish choosing one on these platforms."

(C, Booking.com, Brazil)

Moreover, the way the problem is solved by the platform, especially, when guests have to use the customer service was important to define if the experience was bad or not:

"I make much more reservation in Booking.com than in Airbnb and in Booking.com I already had to appeal to the customer service because of different reasons and I always had an immediate answer and they always solved my problems and this makes me continue trusting in the platform."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

"I think the customer service of Airbnb is not great, because when you try to solve a problem with them, you can't hold them very easily. They are virtual, you do not know who they are, they get a while to get back to you. The person I tried to get a hold on was the host, so Airbnb was just the platform and they did not help me when I have a problem."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

Thus, these bad experiences users consider they had with the platform were considered as an important factor to choose or change the platform where they book properties:

"Once I could not get my money back, the next time I will watch first in Airbnb and, then, Booking.com."

(W, Switzerland, Airbnb)

"By chance, the next trip I did I used Airbnb."

(L, Booking.com, Portugal)

"Yes [bad experiences influence my future decisions], nowadays, I already search in both platforms, in Airbnb and in Booking.com. For example, there were some situations where I made a search in Airbnb and the differences, the qualifications of the persons who had a property in the region where I would like to stay

were bad or neutral. So, I tried in Booking.com for positive qualifications and I finish choosing one on these platforms.”

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

4.5.2 Bad experiences with the host

On the other hand, many guests do not feel the responsibility for the bad experience was the platforms as they blame hosts or accommodations for that:

“Sometimes there is some misunderstanding, but the responsible is not Booking.com. The responsible are the hosts who hide some truths.”

<div align="right">(U, Booking.com, Spain)</div>

“Probably yes, but it could not have been a problem of Booking.com, but with the companies who sell stays.”

<div align="right">(V, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

These bad experiences are many times associated with an offer which does not correspond to the reality or there are some eventualities during the stay:

“In Airbnb, I had a problem one time with an accommodation and the accommodation did not correspond to the ad and I had to exchange many emails until I had a direct contact with a person by telephone and this fragile the confidence I have with them.”

<div align="right">(K, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

“There some eventualities. For example, the last one where I was, the water was missed in the night, so we already had the contact of the host, he came there to see what was the problem and was a work in the street that ended up taking water throughout the region, so we waited the time he said to us and the problem was solved. Eventually, we stayed in an apartment through Airbnb and was a couple who rent a bedroom in their residence and when we arrived there, it was not explained in their ad, but they had a child at home who was noisy and who was always screaming, jumping, making noise and waking us up in the morning, so we ended up negativizing that family. In general, it was a very nice welcome, but the child disturbed our sleep, but it is

some things that happen. The app helped us qualify by allowing us to show our satisfaction or dissatisfaction and we try to look for the ones who have a better qualification for us to have a better experience."

(C, Booking.com, Brazil)

"Yes, but not such a bad experience. In that time, the photos were different than the place really was and the description was a bit better than the place really was and that was the kind of bad experience that I really had, but I think it is ok."

(E, Airbnb, Germany)

Although some consider the fault is not of the platforms where the accommodations were offered, the way the websites act as an intermediary in the resolution of the problem is valued by guests:

"We had a flight delay for two days, so at the end, the hotel wanted to charge us for the nights. We call the customer service [of Booking.com] and they arrange everything and fixed it. This was not a really bad experience, so it did have any influence. But if I had one, I think it would influence my decision."

(O, Airbnb, Luxembourg)

Also, some consider it part of the learning process of knowing how some things work on the website and what they should change in their process when they make a reservation:

"Yes [the bad experience influences our future decisions], because now we just look the reviews and, of course, the comments of persons who just book before, because it was our first mistake when we book apartments as the apartment was new and no reviews were made to make our decision with sense."

(Y, Airbnb, France)

Thus, when participants were asked if those bad experiences influenced their future decisions to book on the website, the answers were varied and different opinions were shared. Some consider the fault is not of the platform and they would not change the place where they usually book because of that while some make associations between a bad experience and the platform even when the bad experience is related with the host or accommodation:

"Not really [did not influence future decisions to book in Booking.com], because I think it was not a fault of Booking.com. Maybe they have to better test the reviews and recommendations down there. They have to check if they are really true and I think it is a problem that they have. It depends on the hotel and not on Booking.com. They can make a hard alliance for them, but not really."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

"It already influenced [my future decisions to make a reservation in Airbnb]. After the Lisbon flat, I decided in the future I will go always to Booking.com and I will stay fewer nights, but I will stay in a place where I feel nice."

(Q, Booking.com, Austria)

4.6 Characteristics of the websites

According to Shih (2004), the websites had an important impact in the service provided to clients, which mean, the features and characteristics displayed in the websites where the services or products are being offered have an important role. In the case of Airbnb and Booking.com, the way the peer to peer rentals are presented to the user could influence their decisions to choose a particular website.

Thus, when guests were confronted with the question "What are the advantages you see in the website of Airbnb/Booking.com?", they shared the experience inside the websites and what were the main characteristics presented.

Thus, the analysis of the theme of the impact of the characteristics of the websites led to four subthemes: (a) Simplicity, (b) Quickness, (c) Comprehensions and (d) Information provider.

4.6.1 Simplicity

The subtheme of "Simplicity" is linked with the easiness users have to understand the platform and to use and find what they are looking for on the website. In fact, and according to Grove and Fisk (2001), the design of the website which is associated with the characteristics of easy navigation (Kim et al., 2009), the content of the information and quality in its performance which allows the achievement of great performances on the internet:

"Airbnb is easy to use. You can use the filters which are easy to use and quick."

(AA, Airbnb, Brazil)

"And it is really easy to use. You can choose different filters, different features that are important for you and it is nice as it gives you the right option."

(X, Booking.com, Italy)

"Because everything is very intuitive and it is easy to find what we are looking for. I think in this way, it helps the user."

(V, Booking.com, Portugal)

Regarding the interface of the website many users considered Booking.com appear to be a more outdated platform as it appears to be old and not modern:

"Airbnb feels a way more modern, scaled down and less plugged. Booking.com feels like it is kind of outdated."

(J, Airbnb, USA)

"Airbnb is more modern. It has a younger appearance for younger people and Booking.com looks more like not old, but really solid and my friend is saying that it is not optimized by smartphones."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

"The website is not so good, it looks a little bit outdated, it is not a good website, it looks nasty, it does not look nice."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

On the same hand, the theory of Eroglu et al. (2001) explained that the low relevance environment which is one of the two main characteristics to describe online commerce and it is linked with colours, font type and icons does do not have a great impact in the decision of the consumers. However, some users were satisfied with the design and appearance of Airbnb regarding the colours used, the layout and the fact of being a more humanized website:

"[Airbnb is more user friendly] It looks professional. I like the whites and the layout of the website. It is easier and I could understand it. Booking.com has a lot of colours, it has a lot of reds. I like Airbnb more."

(W, Switzerland, Airbnb)

"I like the feel Airbnb is a bit more amateurs, more human, not so glimpse. In Booking.com or websites like that, I find it more smooth and slick and I do not feel attracted by that. So, I like the simplest and the more humanized appearance of Airbnb."

(H, Airbnb, Netherlands)

On the same hand, Booking.com was many times described as confusing taking into account that advertisement is constantly appearing to users, the offer is varied and not very organized and also the currency used is constantly changing:

"Both are friendly, but I believe Airbnb is a little bit more. Booking.com, as I said before, is a little bit confusing. Maybe it is because of the range and the variety of options it offers to you besides apartments, houses, flats and chalet. It gives more options and I think Airbnb is friendlier."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

"Booking.com has more advertisement and it is harder to find the right hotel."

(P, Airbnb, Germany)

"I was also a little confused when I was in Mexico, because Booking.com change all the time the currency and I did not see that, because it only shows the number, so we thought the currency was in Mexican pesos, but it was in US dollar. So, it was really expensive."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

On the other hand, the way is easy to use filters in order to better research for a particular accommodation in both websites was something appreciated as users understand easily how to use this feature:

"Because it is easier to navigate, it is easier to choose filters which you want to apply, it is easier to order and make a sort of various things being by location, for price or for punctuation. I think it is easier to use literally."

<div align="right">(L, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

"It is just easy to find what you are looking for, because can say if you want the all place or just a room, exactly where you are going, what amenities you need and you don't always can get that with all of the other platforms. And there is a tone of pictures of every property which is something I really like as well."

<div align="right">(G, Airbnb, UK)</div>

"And it is really easy to use. You can choose different filters, different features that are important for you and it is nice as it gives you the right option."

<div align="right">(X, Booking.com, Italy)</div>

However, some users had the opinion that in Booking.com it is easier to be specific regarding characteristics of the properties which allow them to quickly find what they want:

"Booking.com [is more user friendly], because you can add more filters. Every criteria you want. If you are looking for something more specific you can add several requirements and it is not possible in Airbnb."

<div align="right">(O, Airbnb, Luxembourg)</div>

"I mean you can choose how far a place is far from the centre and you can choose how the place is far from the centre and there are some features like if there is swimming pool. You can choose to see the places started with the lowest price, so choosing different filters is easier to find something good for you."

<div align="right">(X, Booking.com, Italy)</div>

"Connected to the filters, I have many options and even to open the ads I have so many options and so many information that sometimes it is not easy to understand where is supposed to book, where it is supposed to go then. On one hand, the filters help to see in detail, but sometimes for me that I make some reservations, but I am not a specialist, I fell I have some difficulties regarding that. By having so many options and so many information."

<div align="right">(Z, Booking.com, Portugal)</div>

4.6.2   Quickness

One of the factors which is considered to have a strong impact on the strategy of digital marketing is the speed associated with the buying process and the access and recovery of information (Kotler, 2000). Thus, the speed with which a website gives an answer to its user is an important factor to retain them in the website more time and to be easier to sell its products and services. On the same hand, the fewer steps a user had to make in the website is an important factor not to lose that specific lead as the internet and websites allow companies to quickly react to the needs of its users (Swift, 2001). In the case of comparing Airbnb and Booking.com, users feel Booking.com gives a more immediate answer which is something appreciated by them:

"It is easy for me to understand the availability and final price [in Booking.com]. In Airbnb, we always have the cleaning fee, a fee for that and fee for other thing and when I contact an accommodation I prefer something more immediate."

(L, Booking.com, Portugal)

"I mean I, for example, I try to choose flats with balconies or gardens, because I like having a place in the open air. If I am not wrong it was not possible to choose the distance from the centre, so we … I am remembering I did not have the possibility to choose many filters on my flat, so the choice they gave is wider, you have to see more places and it is not so good for you. With Booking.com you have more filters, you can choose from the beginning, so when they gave you the options, they are more precise and you do not have to waist so many time searching for apartments which do not fit."

(X, Booking.com, Italy)

On the other hand, many participants were not so pleased with Airbnb with the time they have to spend to make a reservation as many times hosts have to accept the reservation as well as the registration in the website is not so immediate:

"I think sometimes the reservation period is a bit long [in Airbnb]. For example, sometimes I have to wait one day until my reservation being approved, especially, when you are looking for a place in a popular date and sometimes is too long to wait for your reservation. I do not know when you are going to have accommodation or not. Booking.com does not have that in my experience. I never have seen it, I only see it in

Airbnb. They have a policy that if you want to reserve they ask for my ID and I have to wait for a day for my reservation to be approved."

<div align="right">(M, Airbnb, Croatia)</div>

"In my experience, was only one time and I had difficulties with the registration. I think it is much easier in Booking.com. I have to give them a telephone number, they call me back and they give me this registration number in Airbnb. In the end, it passed a long time and were too much personal. It was too personal, I had to wait a long time, whereas in Booking.com I only had to wait 1 minute to know if it was ok or not."

<div align="right">(P, Airbnb, Germany)</div>

"Nothing really. I suppose that the only thing is the ones that you can't book straightway and you have to wait for the people getting back to you and, then, if it is not available and you really want to stay there is annoying [in Airbnb]."

<div align="right">(G, Airbnb, UK)</div>

On the other hand, some participants had a completely different opinion as they consider that having a chat in Airbnb allow things to be quicker while in Booking.com the presence of an intermediary in the communication could delay the process:

"I think it depends on the host. It depends on the quickness and availability of the host. But in Booking.com, if I am not mistaken, there is an intermediary. You send a message and Booking.com sends the message to the host. This intermediary channel could delay a little bit the answer you get. In Airbnb, in every experience, I had, as in Booking.com you have an online chat, but at the moment you make the reservation you instantly receive a phone number. After that moment, I use the traditional methods like the phone or Whatsapp."

<div align="right">(R, Booking.com, Airbnb)</div>

"The only problem that I found on Booking.com comparing it with Airbnb is that Booking.com do not have a fast chat near the host, but for email and telephone I could quickly access the person and it was simple and fast."

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

Also, the quickness and efficiency are associated with the easiness and the help of the diverse search motors which allow the information to be more organized (Smith, 2002). Thus, another characteristic T found really useful and accelerate the process in Airbnb is the fact of being possible to see all the photos of the properties very quickly as the layout helps the user not to lose so much time:

"It quite quick, it is not long windowed, there is no much information. It is quite clear and then, if you like, the look of it and you click on it you have a proper look at the map. It works quite well and if you are in a hurry and you don't want to waste time to see all of the properties, it is quite boring, it is long windowed and it is a thing that quite works well on the website, the layout of the photographs."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

4.6.3   Comprehension

The way a website could be understood by the user without many difficulties it is an important factor to retain him in the platform as the quicker a user understands the website, the quicker he could buy a product or a service.

In the case of Airbnb and Booking.com, users have different opinions regarding which platform is more intuitive, autodidactic and more structured. In the case of Airbnb, users were usually satisfied and thought it was easy to understand how the website works:

"I think [Airbnb] it is structural and easy to go on there and everybody knows what to do. It is like a nice design for the homepage and also an easy design, so even people who are not used to computers can research after some minutes of explanation."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

"I think it is a little bit confusing in relation with Airbnb, Airbnb is clearer. I am talking about the interface. The interface of Airbnb is more autodidactic."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

"Yes, super easy [to learn how to use Airbnb]. You do not need instructions."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

On the other hand, some participants consider Booking.com easy to understand as they think the website was created to make the life of its users simpler:

"It is more intuitive. When I open the Airbnb page, I have to look it for 45 seconds to learn and to get the idea where everything is and somehow, I have the feeling when they create Airbnb they did not think about the user experience. They do not think "Ok, every person has to find a room", they somehow made it more complicated. For me, Booking.com is much easier."

(Q, Booking.com, Austria)

"Booking.com is clearer than Airbnb. I had some doubts in the beginning and I still have some in the usage of the platform."

(A, Airbnb, Brazil)

"In a quick way you can know what you have to select and the options we have."

(V, Booking.com, Portugal)

Also, some participants shared the idea that in Airbnb some specific characteristics are not so easy to understand, especially some policies regarding cancellations as well as the communication with the host. "A" shared an interesting opinion as he considers his age could be the decisive factor to not be so familiar with the usage of Airbnb:

"I found it a little bit confusing initially. The booking was ok, but I found the cancellation policy. The first time I had to cancel my booking and I was not sure how to get my money back, so the booking was easy, but the cancellation was difficult."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

"In the usage itself, especially, I do not if it is because of my age, because for you, youngers, it is easier the usage of those platforms and of the computer. But, for example, in contact with the host, I did not have yet an easier contact. I still confuse myself, because I have some difficulty at the moment to contact the host."

(A, Airbnb, Brazil)

4.6.4 Information provider

As Airbnb and Booking.com are platforms where it is possible to make accommodation reservations, the way the information is shared after the reservation is important so that guests can understand what was booked and what rights they have, which mean that platforms have an important role in the communication as they act as an intermediary between the guests and the accommodations. Thus, many participants consider both platforms give all the information needed before and after the reservation:

"It [Booking.com] gives us information, it warned us that it is the period of check-in, which is the schedule and it always remembers you and I think it is an important factor for me to be lost."

(C, Booking.com, Brazil)

"And I think there are most of the information you need to book an apartment"

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

However, some users are not always satisfied with how the information is shared taking into account that some specifications and details could be missed, which is something they consider could be improved, especially because some things are different from culture to culture:

"I mean, it could nicer if it could have more information, because sometimes it is not easy to know exactly. For example, they sometimes say "a washer in a building". Sometimes there are a few things that are not quite in detail, but it is not too bad."

(J, Airbnb, USA)

"No, but what maybe could be a disadvantage that I am thinking now is, and maybe in Portugal, you do not have this problem, the bathroom. When we arrived here the shower is totally different. It would not be something impeditive, we would not stop coming here because of that, but I think the platform of Airbnb could show more details like, for example, video. I do not know if I could access, because it was the first time I used it and I do not know if it has this resource of video. If it hasn't, it should have this resource for video to show more details about the place."

(A, Airbnb, Brazil)

At the same time, Z noted that he usually does not contact the host to take doubts as he considers he has enough information to make the best decision as the description allows him to understand well what has been offered:

"I do not have to click in many buttons, I have all the information and with a dozen filters I could find and filter for the options. Usually, I filter for price or for location and I could filter for what I want. This helps me a lot. Until now, I never had that need. As I have so many information and the descriptions has almost everything which is offered in the accommodation, so the all the information's is almost included there. My experience is not long, so maybe it is a reason of not having the need to ask for information, but I would say the information I have there is more than sufficient to allow me to take a decision."

(Z, Booking.com, Portugal)

Moreover, a specific characteristic of the websites was many times shared as many participants consider that the map provided for both websites allow them to better understand where the accommodation is located, which is an important information given for both websites for users to take a better decision:

"I think it is good. You have a good … with the map you can see every apartment and every room you can use, so it is very not so difficult to use, it is easy."

(W, Switzerland, Airbnb)

"In Booking.com, I remember, it gives me the map on the right side with every place in the range of price I put and which exist in that region. And if I pull the map with the arrow to the right or to the left it shows me what exists up or down and it is a difference to Airbnb if I am remembering well. It helps a lot, because I could find interesting things with that way."

(C, Booking.com Brazil)

"So, the map is developed in Airbnb and sometimes you get the actual address. Not always, but when you have the actual address you can check it on Google street view to see how it is really like or you can only go to the general area to see. We were in a city in East and Central Side of Italy and we knew that the place would not be really nice, but we knew that if you went downside we would be in the centre. So, we used the map in Airbnb to find it."

However, some users were not so pleased regarding this feature in Airbnb as many shared the idea that many times it is only provided with a radius where the accommodation might be which in some cases could fool the user:

"Airbnb, initially, only gives you a big ball to show where the place is more a less. And one time, an accommodation was not in the place where was supposed and that thing bothers me. I rent a property in Ponta Delgada and I was travelling alone and we had to be with a production team, but I arrange my accommodation alone. I rent with a person of Airbnb, the location said Ponta Delgada and, in reality, the accommodation was seven kilometres away, on the other side of the island. That accommodation was in the other side of the island and I explain to the person is that the accommodation is in this zone and it is 2 minutes from here, but this one was on the other side of the island. She said I would do it by car very quickly and I have to explain to her that I was working and not in vacancies. There is a various type of persons renting accommodations and as I am in Airbnb, does not have to mean that I am a foreigner in vacancies, stupid, who do not know where is the other side of the island. This kind of things bothers me. The specific location, it only gives a ball of the zone and the zone was completely wrong, so, yes, this bother me."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

"In Booking.com. In Airbnb, they only give you a radius of the location. As I said before, in Booking.com, the contact with the host it is not so easy, they only allow me to send a message and sometimes they do not give a phone number, however regarding the address the specific location I think Booking.com is more precise."

(R, Booking.com, Brazil)

4.7   Prices

Price is an important factor in the decision to buy a product or a service, especially when the service or products are very similar. Thus, the price appears as a factor of differentiation in the choice of accommodations and, consequently, in the choice of platforms where guests book.

Thus, all the participants were confronted by the question "Where do you think the prices are lower?", which allow the sharing of different opinions and ideas which led to the appearance of two different subthemes: (a) High vs Low Prices, (b) Fees.

4.7.1 High or Low prices

Many authors believe that collaborative consumption is only interesting for people who want to have economic benefits (low cost) which was being considered as having more impact after the global economic crisis (Guttentag, 2015). Thus, many opinions were shared regarding the website or platform where participants consider the prices might be lower. Thus, many participants started by sharing the idea that prices in Booking.com might be higher as the appearance and the offer of hotels are associated with higher prices while peer to peer rentals may be associated with lower prices. In fact, peer to peer accommodations may satisfy a different kind of needs when compared to hotels such as the needs for lower prices (Tussyadiah, 2016):

"Because a time that I was looking for a place to stay in Spain, Airbnb had much more accommodations which were cheaper than Booking.com and Booking.com had a lot of hotels that I did not want to consider. I think it is because Booking.com tends to have a lot of hotels, hostels or some sort of accommodation that it is not a regular person like in Airbnb and sometimes even agencies."

(M, Airbnb, Croatia)

"It is much cheaper [Airbnb]. It is incredibly cheaper. It has no comparison. It is much cheaper than a hotel."

(D, Airbnb, Ireland)

"It is difficult. I would say Airbnb, but I am not sure. Because I know Booking.com is always the cheaper on for hotels, so that it is why I am not sure."

(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)

At the same time, Airbnb usually allows individuals to share the apartment which makes the offer cheaper, as well as the idea of Airbnb being associated with apartments, helped participants to have this opinion.

"It is very clear and you could see pictures and in Airbnb, they also have good prices for me. Also, it is cheaper than a hotel and you stay in those real apartments sites."

(N, Airbnb, Germany)

"Because I think it is cheaper [Airbnb] and I can stay in the city and I can pay it."

(P, Airbnb, Germany)

"Probably here in Airbnb, because we have to share it with more people and I think it is cheaper here in Airbnb."

(B, Airbnb, Belgium)

However, some users found that Booking.com might practice lower prices as many accommodations shared with them that their prices are lower in Booking.com as well as they shared the idea that Booking.com has an advertisement where it is said that they refund prices which could be higher. On the same hand, many of them compared prices in apps like Trivago and the answer given is that Booking.com has lower prices:

"They say they will refund prices that are higher. I never have done it, so I do not know if it is true. Anyway, they have good offers and I never tried using Trivago or something like that, so I do not know if at the end there are cheaper websites, but trying to compare the prices on TripAdvisor I think Booking.com prices are quite good. I never tried to look for other prices on other websites. The prices were good, so I book it."

(X, Booking.com, Italy)

"I do not know how they can do it. On Sunday, I returned from China and I will return to China in a few months and in the accommodation where I was I asked to the accommodation if they make discounts and they said, deliberately, that the low cost is Booking.com. They showed me the price at their table and was different, so I do not know how they can have low costs, but they have it. They have lower than the specific accommodation. How they do it? I do not know."

(K, Booking.com, Portugal)

"I only used Booking.com for hotels and Airbnb for home staying is very difficult to say, but I think if you go to Trivago and I usually use Trivago which gives the option of Booking.com and Expedia or one of those. I usually find the base prices are lower in Booking.com."

(I, Airbnb, Australia)

Indeed, this can be explained by the fact of Booking.com offer some discounts to its users mainly the ones who have the label "Genius" which is acquired by some users who are loyal to the brand which makes them make reservations with some discounts and some perks:

"Because I am Genius in Booking.com and usually I have some discounts. Usually [the Genius programme] gives me a lower price and some punctual things that are not so important, but always make a difference. For example, having the possibility to do the check-in earlier or the check-out later. Also, have a drink of courtesy or another upgrade."

(L, Booking.com, Portugal)

"I also have a premium account in Booking.com and we have several discounts, but most of the times Airbnb is cheaper. It is what they call Genius, because I book a lot in Booking.com, so I have a 10% discount and sometimes could go to 40-45%."

(O, Booking.com, Luxembourg)

Furthermore, some participants do not have a clear opinion as to many of them the fact of both websites offer a diverse option of accommodations do not allow them to make a comparison. On the same hand, some consider it will depend on the time of the year:

"Sincerely I do not have so many feedback regarding that. When I make a reservation I only use Booking.com, so I usually do not compare between platforms. Because there are so many options for accommodations in every city … if I choose a city, I have twenty or more, actually more, accommodation to choose from in different locations, different ratings, so it is difficult to compare between websites and say "Ok, this website is more expensive or this website has lower prices". So, I do not have a great opinion regarding that."

(Z, Booking.com Portugal)

"It depends, some are lower, some are expensive. I have no idea, it depends on what you are booking and where and the time of the year. I think it depends on a lot of aspects."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

"It is equilibrated in my opinion. I already found low prices in Airbnb and I already find affordable prices in Booking.com. To this particular trip I am making, it was seven nights, four from Booking.com and

three from Airbnb. In this case, as it is a long trip and I am going with friends, I do not prioritize to stay in hotels and I am staying in residences. So, the question regarding value was essential and I was looking for the lower price and the proximity to places I have interest in visiting. In this case, Booking.com had more options, but was equilibrated with Airbnb. I do not see much more difference regarding price."

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

4.7.2 Fees

Another important factor which is associated with price is the extra fees guests have to pay to the platform or to the hosts which may appear to influence the decision of where to book the accommodation:

"Airbnb sometimes wants a cleaning fee, and it is something I understand, but put the price higher."

<div align="right">(R, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

"I think it is related to the fees of the platform and of the accommodation."

<div align="right">(F, Booking.com, Spain)</div>

Many users shared the experience that Airbnb is not clear regarding the price which initially shows to its users as it always needs to update it with fees:

"For me, the fees are always important. In the beginning, there is the price and at the end is always higher, but I am not sure if it is the case. It is like when you book a flight and at the end is more just because you have to pay with the master card. I hate, but I do think it is the case in Booking.com or in Airbnb."

<div align="right">(S, Airbnb, Switzerland)</div>

"Another thing that is not nice using Airbnb is that they show you a price that is cheaper and, then, when you go on with the reservation they add some expenses like taxes and so on, so the prices are higher than the one they show you while in Booking.com is the price they show you."

<div align="right">(X, Booking.com, Italy)</div>

On the other hand, the fees are considered reasonable and might appear not to affect the decision of guests in the decision to book in a particular website as they consider a fair price for the services purchased:

"They are not high, so I think they are ok, they are not expensive."

(X, Booking.com, Italy)

"It is not for now, because on the beginning the fees were quite low, so we do not look at it. Nowadays they increase it, we know it. The fees are quite reasonable for the service purchased."

(Y, Airbnb, France)

"No. If they are high values I consider it, but usually it has no importance in my decision."

(V, Booking.com, Portugal)

Furthermore, these fees, sometimes, are not even noticed by users which is something interesting taking into account that it is an extra cost they have to pay. Thus, both platforms might appear to not explain clearly how these fees works, which, in the case of "Z", make him consider himself an "easy victim":

"I would say I do not compare if I have been charged high or not regarding fees, so in that case, I would say I am an easy victim to the fees of Booking.com. Usually, I do not compare I could not say if the price includes or not the fees or if those fees are added after it, so maybe I am being robbed by Booking.com."

(Z, Booking.com, Portugal)

However, these fees are not so pleasant to others who consider it is a great amount of money paid which is not reflected in the customer service of the platforms:

"It is disgusting. It is a massive amount of Money. It is ridiculous and they have terrible customer services. They take a massive booking fee and sometimes there are 18%, they take a percentage from the host and a percentage of the guest. It is too much."

(T, Airbnb, UK)

4.8   Discovery of the platform

The first thing a guest does before booking an apartment is choosing the platform where he is going to book. Thus, the way users discover the platform could be important to know how their decision was influenced and what both companies are doing to target their customers.

As the interviews were conducted, the participants had to answer the question "How did you find the platform for the first time?", which led to the appearance of two subthemes: (a) Word of Mouth and (b) Ads, which are two interesting marketing strategies which have different outputs.

4.8.1   Word of Mouth

Referrals between users are one of the most powerful ways to get consumers as if someone trustworthy references a product or a service the probability of the new customer buy it is higher. Thus, word of mouth is one of the most used ways to discover both platforms as previous familiar persons had used it:

"I do not know, it is been a long time ago, but I think it was seven years ago and I think it was a friend of mine who said it was a good thing. I already knew Airbnb and I went through it."

(P, Airbnb, Germany)

"I think a friend recommend it the first time and they used it before. So, was a few years ago, five years ago. And was really easy to use, so we thought to try it [Airbnb]."

(G, Airbnb, UK)

"I do not remember exactly how, but I think I had a friend who used it, so I give it a shot. I just tried it out."

(J, Airbnb, USA)

One the same hand, what is interesting to verify is that many hosts recommend it to friends to use to their trips although they have a different perspective of both platforms as they act not as guests, but as hosts:

"Booking.com was an indication from a friend who already had used it for renting properties for Tourism. She had good experiences and she recommended it to me."

<div align="right">(C, Booking.com, Brazil)</div>

"I was told by a friend who actually is a host on Airbnb, so I went on and register."

<div align="right">(I, Airbnb, Australia)</div>

Moreover, many of the first experiences of guests are by going with a relative or familiar to a property booked on both platforms as the first contact is not directly done by them:

"My first experience was staying in an Airbnb I did not book, but a friend who was going with me booked and this was my first experience. And, then, she kind of explain how the platform worked and I start using it after that."

<div align="right">(M, Airbnb, Croatia)</div>

4.8.2   Ads

As both companies are considered by the majority as big platforms, the marketing strategies of both of them are strong, which make many users discover the websites by advertisement:

"I have done it before for an interrail trip in France and there were some ads on the internet of Airbnb and was in 2016. Airbnb was quite popular and was always on the screen to search for apartments."

<div align="right">(N, Airbnb, Germany)</div>

"There was a quite long time ago. I think it was right on the beginning and I saw it through advertisements."

<div align="right">(O, Airbnb, Luxembourg)</div>

Thus, both Airbnb and Booking.com try to advertise themselves in different means of communication as television and internet:

"Firstly, from television and the ads on television. I discover it on the television in Brazil and after it was through the Internet, especially through Facebook. I tried to understand how it works and, also, through people we knew who already have used Airbnb."

(A, Airbnb, Brazil)

"Through the means of communication: television and internet [how I found Booking.com]."

(E, Airbnb, Germany)

5. Conclusions, contributes, limitations and future research

This final chapter has the purpose to reunite the general ideas and topics which appeared in the empirical study and in the interviews done with the guests who stayed in peer to peer rentals in the city of Porto. Thus, this study had the purpose to understand the motives and reasons to guests of peer to peer rentals to choose Airbnb or Booking.com at the same time that tries to understand the main differences perceived by guests between these two platforms.

5.1   Conclusions and contributes to the investigation

The several interviews led to the appearance of many topics which answer the question "What reasons lead tourists to choose Airbnb and Booking.com to book peer to peer rentals?". These topics are summarized in the figure below and allow several entities (hosts, guests, platforms and the tourism sector) to better understand the needs and characteristics of the consumers of both platforms:
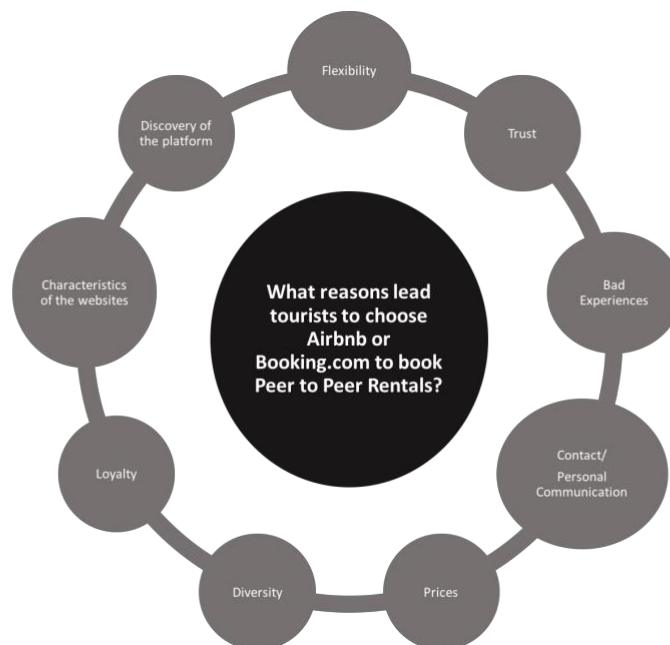

Figure 1: Summary of Topics

Thus, the flexibility guests want to get on their trip may be a decisive factor as the easiness to make a cancelation allows them to make changes through their trips that could be

influenced by an unforeseen or by the discovery of better solutions related with the accommodations. Thus, the theory of Stewart and Vogt (1999) is confirmed as travellers prepare for contingencies that it is related to the uncertainty of the products and services offered. Also, as Hwang and Fesenmaier (2011) explained, trips are linked with numerous decisions where it is included in the choice of accommodations. Also, information and technology changed the travel behaviour as increase the flexibility in the choice of location and timing (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012). On the other hand, cancellations which are done by hosts appear as a negative factor for guests as they could have some difficulty to find an alternative. Thus, a high inflexible person will see this as an obstacle while a flexible individual will be more open to other alternatives and will have more probability to learn from unforeseen situations than from intentional learning process (Park and Fesenmaier, 2014).

Furthermore, the communication and direct contact guests have with hosts may influence their decisions as the possibility to have a more personal connection with the host and locals is something important in the peer to peer rentals world. Indeed, by taking part in the collaborative consumption, tourists are expecting to have a social experience for staying with locals which lead to an authentic travel experience (Guttentag, 2015). However, some users have other needs as some may prefer not to have any social connection and prefer not to socialize.

Moreover, bad experiences appear to affect the future decisions of guests regarding the platform where they might want to make a reservation. However, these bad experiences should be differentiated between experiences with hosts and with the platform. In fact, a bad experience with the host may not influence future decisions while bad experiences with the platform may have a negative impact in the guest preferences. Indeed, by assuming the responsibility of the company in the experience, users may feel inclined to choose other options.

The theory of Mavlanova et al. (2012) defended that trust users have in the platforms is very important as consumers could not be present in person to guarantee the quality of the product which they see on the internet. Indeed, this is reflected in the reality of Airbnb and Booking.com as both platforms are considered big and well established which make their users feel safe and secured regarding payments. Thus, the obstacle regarding the relationship between users and technologies (trust in the payment system) (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016) appear to not be a problem regarding the two platforms. However, users feel that some of the offer is not so credible as many accommodations, in reality, are not equal to what is

shown on the photos at the same time that many reviews are considered as not trustworthy which could be something to be improved as credibility is related with the degree of reliability of the company regarding the compliance with promises (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995).

Moreover, the prices which are offered on both platforms may not appear to have a strong impact as the accommodations are very diverse and the price range is big which opens the range of options to its guests. On the other hand, the extra fees that are paid such as service fee or cleaning fee are something not very appreciated by guests as it is an extra cost that they do not understand.

Furthermore, the type of offer on both websites may appear to be an important factor as the fact of Booking.com have other types of accommodations rather than peer to peer rentals could attract more guests who are not sure of what type of accommodation they want to use. On the other hand, Airbnb users are very loyal to the brand and almost feel they belong to a community as they adopt the name "Airbnb" to refer to an apartment or house which indicates a deep connection with the brand.

Another important factor to retain customers is the characteristics of the websites. Thus, the simplicity and easiness to understand the features of the platform is important not to lose the lead as the environment involving the electronic commerce has an important impact in consumer, because a well-established and thought environment gives a higher satisfaction to the user (Eroglu et al., 2003). Moreover, the quickness both platforms give an answer to its users appear to be important and the fact of Booking.com being considered a more automated platform could help as the answer are given faster while in the Airbnb the fact of being a more humanized website could delay answers. This quickness has an important role in the strategy of online marketing as quickness is related to the buying process and the access and recovery of information (Kotler, 2000).

Also, the way users discover the platform is very important as the first experience could affect the future decisions. Thus, both of them invest in the word of mouth where relatives and familiars recommend the platform which appears to be a more credible and efficient way to advertise its services. At the same time, both were in many cases discovered through ads on the internet in the television. However, this excessive advertisement could not be seen as good by some users.

Also, there are some needs which are better satisfied by each platform as users feel some differences when are using Airbnb and Booking.com. Thus, flexibility appears as a factor for them to choose Booking.com over Airbnb as the mechanisms provided by Booking.com can

provide to its users an easy way to cancel their reservations which allow them to make changes through their trips that could be influenced by an unforeseen or by the discovery of better solutions related with the accommodations.

On the other hand, users who are not looking for social connections with the community may prefer to choose Booking.com as some consider it only a booking platform and many associated it with hotels. In fact, this proves the theory of Tussyadiah (2016) as social experiences with locals, provided by the collaborative consumption, is something difficult to replicate for hotels. Also, the description of Booking, "one of the biggest e-commerce companies in the world in the travel industry" (Booking.com, n.d.), fits perfectly as describes a platform worried about business and not with the experience of its customers. Thus, this study which compared both platforms confirms the theory that Airbnb has a more intense customer relationship as there is a presence of human connection (Belleghem, 2015), which is solved by the offer of a chat in its website. Thus, Airbnb's description, "global travel community that offers magical end-to-end trips" describes the demand for offering different and unique experiences to its consumers.

Regarding the prices and although many users consider difficult to compare it, Booking.com may appear to offer low prices by offering discounts to the more loyal users through the Genius programme while Airbnb does reward its customers.

Furthermore, Booking.com may appear to be a simpler platform which could be related to the fact of being many times considered an outdated website. Airbnb appears to be a more modern website which could attract younger persons who usually find collaborative consumption attractive and are them who usually share information on the Internet, which mean that they have more probability to participate in collaborative consumer (Gaskins, 2010).

Summing up, each platform may appear to target different types of customers who have different needs and behaviours. Thus, hosts may be prepared to receive different type of guests and should have a different behaviour towards them as could be a decisive factor in providing a better service. On the same hand, hosts may prepare their strategies to overcome some disadvantages each platform could bring in order to have a stronger contribution to the tourism sector. On the other hand, guests could know which platform could better satisfy their needs and provide a better experience according to their preferences. Indeed, guests who prefer to have more flexibility may choose Booking.com while guests who want to have a social connection with locals may prefer to choose Airbnb.

5.2   Limitations of the study and future research

This master thesis comprises some limitations which could be seen as bases to continue the research about the reasons guests have to choose two of the major e-commerce websites in the travel industry at the same time that tries to understand the differences perceived by users between them.

The fact of this dissertation being based on interviews done to guests who came to Portugal could be seen as a limitation as the results could be generalized for every destination. Thus, the application of the study in other geographic areas with users with different necessities could contribute to a better understanding of the topic as this two brands have a strong global impact.

On the same hand, and although being used a well-known research method, many interviews were not done in the native language of the participants which can constrain them as many are not so used to talk in English. Thus, participants might not feel free and comfortable in the answers given. With this in mind, it is important to make an effort to do interviews with individuals who feel more comfortable talking in a particular language. Also, some interviews were done by telephone which made the data collection not linear at the same time that appear as an inhibitor to create a more personal relationship with the interviewer.

Moreover, the fact of the study having as main objective understanding characteristics, features and experiences in platforms is something which is not static in time. Thus, both platforms get some updates through time which could change the hypothetic conclusions this study takes. Thus, future studies is important to study and be aware of that changes and understand the impact it could have in conclusions.

Furthermore, the collection of data was made in a certain period of time as it is suitable to have a longitudinal approach as help study experiences and characteristics through time as allow a dynamic analysis of the experience of consumers in the platforms.

At the same times, the number of interviews made could be seen as a limitation as a bigger sample would allow taking better conclusions and ideas. However, the sample collected was diverse in terms of age, gender, solo traveller, group traveller which allow the achievement of interesting results.

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7. Appendix

7.1 Appendix A. Interview Script

What are the reasons to guests choose Airbnb or Booking.com to book a peer to peer rental?

Part One

1. On which platform did you make the reservation for this stay?

2. Is it the first time you make a reservation on this platform?

3. Have you ever made any reservations on the competing platform?

4. How did you find this platform?

5. How much time do you take to make a reservation?

6. How far in advance did you make the reservation?

7. Was the decision to make a reservation made in group or individually?

8. With whom did you decide to make the reservation?

9. What led you to choose the Airbnb/Booking platform?

10. On your opinion, what are the advantages of this platform? And disadvantages?

11. Did you already have any bad experience with the platform you used? And with the competing platform?

12. Have you ever reserved any property more than one time? If so, why?

13. What do you want to book on the platform?

Part Two

1. What was the process done by you on the platform until the time of the reservation?

2. What factors do you consider most important in choosing a particular accommodation?

3. What is the role of reviews in your decision?

4. Does a personalized description of the apartment influence your decision?

5. What is the role of the owner's photo on your decision?

6. What is the role of photos on your decision? And cancellation policy? Amenities?

7. If you have doubts about an apartment, what do you do to clear it up?

8. How did you check the location of the apartment?

9. On which platform did you consider the prices lower?

10. Which platform is the most user friendly?

11. Which platform gives you the most confidence when you make a reservation?

12. What is the role of fees paid to platforms at the time of booking?

Part Three

1. How old are you?

2. What is your country of residence? If you are from Portugal, which city?

3. What is your level of education?

4. What is your professional situation?