

Hotel managers' perspectives of Airbnb operations in Accra Metropolis, Ghana

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ABSTRACT: The study was conducted to ascertain hotel managers' standpoints on the influx of Airbnb facilities in Ghana's hospitality "arena" and the palpable effects. Employing a qualitative approach to data collection, the study made use of in-depth interview guides, engaging 33 hoteliers to elicit information. The disruptive innovative theory was adopted as a guide to the study. Data were analysed using Nvivo to "couch" themes to make meaning from the transcriptions. The results analysed revealed that a sizable proportion of hoteliers (27) were aware that Airbnb facilities operated in the study area, while a few others were hearing of them for the first time. It was revealed that services rendered by these facilities were "distinct", making Airbnb more accepted by the youth. Other respondents opined that Airbnb constituted a "misgovernance" due to the unregulated nature of their services in the country. To others, it was an easy way for some property owners to evade taxation by listing on the website. Many hoteliers did not find their operations a challenge to their businesses due to their markedly different clientele, while to others these facilities posed a potential threat. The study recommends that the activities of Airbnb be regulated to make it easier for their inclusion in the tax net for revenue mobilisation for the state.

KEYWORDS: distinctiveness, hotel managers, tax evasion, unregulated

Introduction

Accommodation is one of the most essential needs of the tourism industry and is also considered the most visible and tangible aspect of the sector deemed crucial to tourists (Akyeampong, 2007) and, moreover, it is further categorised into serviced and non-serviced (Middleton et al., 2009). This is no different from the types of accommodation services offered at Airbnb facilities. In recent times, many tourists have relied on online market platforms for making reservations and the selection of accommodation facilities when travelling (Llop, 2017) and Airbnb is an example of such an online market platform used by tourists seeking accommodation facilities anywhere around the world. It has been noted that Airbnb hosts often have little or no hospitality experience or tourism management education, skills or experience. Yet they seem to compete so easily and well with the decades of experience that hotel chains and franchises possess. Airbnb is now known to provide hospitality for strangers in 7 million homes in over 100 000 cities globally and in addition to that, these hosts offer close to 40 000 guided local experiences across more than 1 000 cities worldwide (Fischer et al., 2019).

Morozov (2013) describes Airbnb as part of the sharing economy (collaborative consumption, collaborative economy, or peer economy) online community marketplace. The Airbnb concept hinges on up-to-date internet technologies with an

emphasis on cost savings, sharing household amenities and the potential for more authentic local experiences, and this is achieved by targeting hosts and travellers alike (Guttentag, 2015). From the travellers' perspective, Airbnb's main aim is to single out adventure-seekers, city-break tourists and those who love to travel to exotic destinations. From a host perspective, those who wish to earn "some" extra money as a business through offering their homes to guests for short-term rental also engage with Airbnb platforms. In this way, guests have the opportunity to participate and interact with locals and gain different understandings of the norms, behaviours, habits and cultures of destinations that they visit (Schuckert et al., 2017). This concept also sheds more light on Stors and Kagermeier's (2015) finding that convenience and affordability play a pivotal role in a tourist's decision when selecting a place to stay, while Boakye (2010) identified security concerns as a factor influencing the type of accommodation a tourist chooses.

Airbnb therefore offers a wide range of selection options in different types of facilities like single rooms, suites, apartments, houseboats and many more on their website. Guests can search the Airbnb database not only by date and location, but also by price, type of property, amenities available and the language of the host. The guest can also add keywords and surf the internet to generate any other information that suits their preferences.

Brief history of Airbnb

The struggle to pay rent for an apartment by two 27-year-old men (university graduates) who had dreams of becoming entrepreneurs became the stepping stone to a significant transformation within the accommodation sector in the form of three air mattresses on the floor of a San Francisco apartment in 2007. The idea of renting out three airbeds on their living-room floor and cooking their guests breakfast at a fee of \$80 per night to take advantage of an upcoming Design Conference which saw the city's hotels being fully booked was the game changer for them (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Using a simple website, these two university graduates, Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia, took advantage of a major conference in town to successfully advertise their apartment as an "Air, Bed & Breakfast" for conference delegates wishing to avoid the expensive hotels in the city. Its success with their first three guests allowed them to see that it was a brilliant business idea. The roommates recruited another friend, Nathan Blecharczyk, a computer science graduate who quickly transformed the website into a service site allowing other people to similarly advertise their spaces as shared accommodation for tourists with an initial focus on upcoming major events. This initial business plan became a success at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. The website was officially relaunched in August 2008 with the new name "Airbnb.com" and its services were quickly expanded beyond shared accommodations to include the rental of full residences, food and beverage, rides and novel experiences. Since then, Airbnb has grown extraordinarily popular and now books millions of rooms across the globe, making it a multibillion dollar company booking millions of rooms per night for tourists around the globe (Salter, 2012).

The concept of the "sharing economy"

This phenomenon of locals sharing lodging space with tourists for some benefits has existed for centuries (O'Gorman, 2010) but the innovation of the internet and mobile technologies has revolutionised this practice and allowed it to gain much popularity by facilitating a virtual market where communication and trust are established between hosts and guests. With the support of these various technology-based applications, those participating in the sharing economy have an opportunity to enhance consumer access and to mitigate the progressive commodification of assets (Olson & Kemp, 2015). Stors and Kagermeier (2015) identified two main drivers that foster the rapid growth of online sharing platforms as the internet (enabler) and technology (facilitator) of the matchmaking process between the demand and supply and people's changing values in post-materialistic positions. Morozov (2013) mentions Uber, a transport sharing app, and Airbnb, an accommodation platform, as the major market leaders of the sharing economy. The growing usage of peer-to-peer services like Airbnb and Uber in tourism and hospitality businesses starting about a decade ago has stimulated industry players to look at various ways of dealing with the effects of these new trends of collaborative consumption in the industry (Juho & Iis, 2017).

The recent advances in information communication technologies (ICT) and the widespread use of mobile devices has also influenced the consumption behaviour of most people, as such devices become the enablers of sharing economy concepts,

where the consumers can find ways to buy, rent, or use goods and services with much lower prices and greater convenience (Pouri & Hilty, 2021). The boosting of the sharing economy with the common slogan "What's mine is yours" mainly affects the accommodation sector as it does not only offer moderate and affordable overnight stays, but that the visitors not only visit cities, but also enjoy a traditional environment and have an authentic experience (Stors & Kagermeier, 2015). Sharing makes a great deal of sense for the consumer, the environment and for communities if managed and balanced fairly by companies and governments. Thus, from the ecological, societal and developmental point of view, the sharing economy has become popular in contemporary times (Fischer et al., 2019).

The Airbnb story so far in Ghana and Africa

Airbnb is making a shift from novelty accommodation to a mainstream tourist option across many parts of Africa. Since launching Airbnb on the continent, the travel start-up has accordingly achieved well over 130 000 listings which have seen the continent receive over 3.5 million guest arrivals, with half of these guests arrivals recorded in the past year alone. Airbnb's growth on the continent is highlighted by one statistic: Nigeria, Ghana and Mozambique are all among Airbnb's eight fastest growing markets globally. The start-up's growing popularity is also reflected across the continent with seven countries all recording over 100% increase in guest arrivals over the past year (Airbnb, 2018; Yomi, 2018).

In Ghana, Airbnb, which has been described as a trusted community marketplace for people to list, discover and book unique accommodation around the world, has over 300 host listings across the regions of the country, with prices ranging from \$10 to \$200 per night. Thus, Ghana has been listed among the top eight countries in the world experiencing fast growth and the second-fastest growing host community in Africa, with close to 352% growth in guest arrivals in 2019 (Airbnb, 2018). The Airbnb website where reservations are made offers free registration and account creation to hosts and guests (Molz, 2014). These spaces vary widely, ranging from a living-room futon to an entire island (Wortham, 2011; Salter, 2012), Airbnb is said to provide a 24/7 customer support service, including \$1 million worth of insurance for the host (Airbnb, 2018).

The competitive nature of the traditional hotel (accommodation) industry has compelled hotel managers to aim for higher performance. So it is crucial to identify and implement effective competitive strategies (Tavitiyaman et al., 2012). Using information technology, maintaining cost effectiveness, differentiating business offerings and encouraging service quality are among the tactics widely used by hotel managers to compete in the ever-changing hospitality and tourism industry (Jönsson & Devonish, 2009). The extant literature highlights several competitive strategies commonly adopted by hotels, including leveraging information technology, ensuring cost competitiveness, differentiating market offerings and promoting service quality (Jönsson & Devonish, 2009). However, the hospitality industry is dynamic and hotels are often challenged by the need to adapt to an ever-changing industry environment (Senior & Mophew, 1990).

The rise of Airbnb could therefore pose a considerable threat for the traditional accommodation sector as it allows ordinary persons to rent out their residence through the Airbnb website

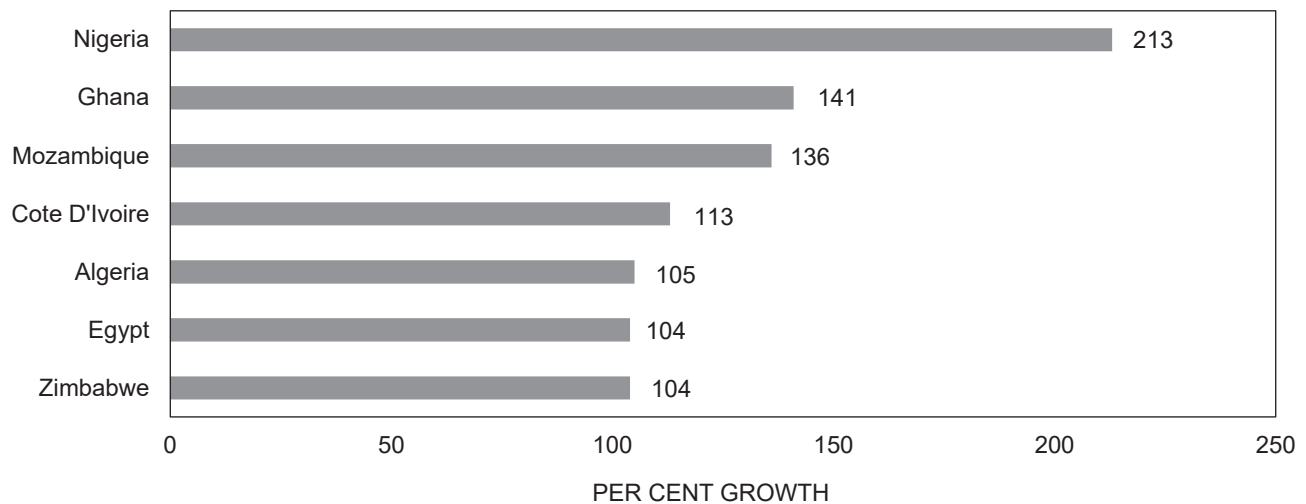


FIGURE 1: Year-to-year growth of Airbnb arrivals, July 2018 (adapted from Yomi, 2018, p. 1)

and, through this, millions of rooms are rented out in a year. To reiterate this concern, Stieler et al. (2017) drew a conclusion about hosts perceiving Airbnb as a "give-and-take" venture: once they have the space and another has the money, then exchange is readily done. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate hotel managers' perception of Airbnb services and to explore if they perceive any threats regarding the "impact" of Airbnb on hotel businesses, with particular reference to the provision of accommodation in the hospitality sector in Ghana.

Statement of the problem

According to Guttentag (2015), Airbnb is an example of the rise of a disruptive innovation in the accommodation sector of the tourism and hospitality industry which allows ordinary people to rent and share surplus space. The growth of this disruptive innovation of collaborative economy in tourism and hospitality is a response to several challenges that the traditional tourism and hospitality system has embedded within it, notably redundancy, high transaction costs and asymmetries of regulation impeding innovation and destination competitiveness, including innovation in the traditional tourism system that most managers have not addressed (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015). Airbnb has experienced rapid growth as a result of increasing consumer acceptance of peer-to-peer sharing through technology. This has led to guests building trust about the host and listings which provide information on location, pictures for selection purposes and opportunities for review of experiences including review of host profiles (Kathan et al., 2016). Airbnb operations are said to exist in 81 000 cities and in 191 countries worldwide [Ghana inclusive] (Airbnb, 2018; Zumost et al., 2018). The Greater Accra region is said to host over 300 facility listings in the nation's capital alone (Airbnb, 2018) and as such, the economic impact as a result of Airbnb activities is considerable. A survey conducted between 2012 and 2015 in London on Airbnb properties listed against traditional hotels indicated that Airbnb host properties in the city of London alone outnumbered the traditional hotels, even though the hotels outnumbered the rooms provided by the Airbnb properties, making the hotels suitable for group

tours (Quattrone et al., 2016). This has made Airbnb facilities a significant force in the accommodation industry, and thus a potential threat to the traditional hoteliers. While the Airbnb concept is considered an excellent economic venture for hosts, questions may not only be asked about Airbnb potentially disrupting the traditional accommodation sector which requires permits and/or licenses for operations, but also the question of their legality arises when it comes to taxation. With Ghana facing challenges of establishing measures of tax retrieval with a reported 1.5 million out of six million potential individual taxpayers formally registered with the Ghana Revenue Authority [GRA] (Government of Ghana, 2020), this viable potential source of taxpayers (Airbnb operators) will surely be missing from the national income, which is significant for the country's development purposes.

Airbnb as an alternative to traditional hotel accommodation

To book a place of your choice, like a home, at your own pace and convenience even before you travel is one reason the guest is said to prefer Airbnb. Proximity to the tourist destination of the place of stay is another reason since tourists will have less stress getting to tourist sites and have more time to spend at the destinations. The added advantage of direct interactions with the locals and in a few cases the issue of guest privacy are several reasons why tourists prefer Airbnb to the traditional hotel systems (Stors & Kagermeier, 2015). Frochot and Batat (2013) add that tourists increasingly seek emotional experiences when they are travelling to alternative destinations, choosing properties to stay and that engage them on a personal level to indulge in the experiential aspects of consumption. Interaction between hosts and guests as part of the visitor experience also counted, as tourists, especially those who are leisure-oriented, have indicated Airbnb facilities gave them some information about the city, the host's favourite sites to visit, and more. From the hosts' observation, another factor that motivates tourists to use a shared facility is that visitors greatly appreciated the individuality of the facilities and design of the accommodation compared to traditional hotels (Stors & Kagermeier, 2015).

The peer-to-peer accommodation providers have thus emerged as significant competitors with the hotel industry. In particular, the fast growth and popularity of Airbnb has fuelled some discussion in both industry and academia about the impacts of Airbnb offerings on the traditional hotel market. Airbnb has economically affected the city and households since its inception (Llop, 2017). In cities such as San Francisco (USA) and Barcelona (Spain), where Airbnb was already common in 2014, close to 2.7 million tourist dwellings were provided by Airbnb, which is almost twice the number of lodgings offered by the traditional hotels (Airbnb, 2018). In addition to the positive economic impact on the city and households, this phenomenon has also brought some negative effects in Spain as a whole where 66.5% of the population live in flats (the highest among EU member states) and which are normally organised as condominiums.

The disruptive innovation theory

The theory underpinning this study is the disruptive innovation theory. This theory was proposed by Clayton Christensen in 1997 and helps shed light on how incumbent businesses are disrupted by smaller entrants in the business market environment (Christensen & Raynor, 2013). The theory suggests that the advantage that new entrants have is that they do not necessarily have to produce a new product or offer a new service to compete with existing competitors in the market. According to the theory, before the new entrant can forge ahead in the market, it takes advantage of either one or all of the four main elements neglected by the existing businesses, often using very few resources (Christensen, 1997). The entry into the hospitality industry by Airbnb has been a reason for some major firms in the tourism and hospitality industry to react and draw up tactics and strategies to gain competitive advantages rather than focusing on developing the existing traditional hotel businesses. This usually happens when all the incumbent business efforts are geared towards developing products or services that suit the existing most profitable customer, neglecting the needs of those at the lower edge of the market, and therefore giving new entrants an opportunity to concentrate on a neglected segment of the market by meeting their needs at a cheaper cost compared to the current business offer. The existing firms usually are reluctant to respond to the new entrant and continue to pay attention to their major profitable market segments, thereby giving the new entrant enough time to eventually move up-market, extending solutions that appeal to the existing business's main customers. At this juncture, disruption occurs. The tourism industry across the world is currently battling with the disruption by the shared economy's two major leaders (Uber and Airbnb) in the industry (Juho & Iis, 2017).

The disruptive innovation theory therefore suits this study because it clarifies how new entrants are able to make inroads into the market of an established business. The entrant gets going by first focusing on the new market of non-consumers. After gaining ground, it gradually becomes appealing to the existing business's "mainstream" customers, some of whom will switch and then begin to accept it and enjoy its low price offerings. It is vital to emphasise that not every new entrant is a disruption and not every fast-growing disruption will have an impact on the incumbent's business over time since some disruptions can be a sustainable innovation, like Uber (Christensen & Raynor, 2013).

Methodology

Study area

The study area is the Accra Metropolis, the capital city of Ghana. Accra has most of the 3- to 5-star-rated hotels in the country (Akyeampong, 2007). These hotels host most of the conferences and conventions as they are well equipped to handle business transactions, workshops and seminars (Akyeampong, 2007). Accra also has the highest listings of Airbnb, with 482 host listings. According to the review ratings on the Airbnb website, it has been rated 4.6 stars, with host ratings as high as "super hosts". Ghana, according to the Airbnb website, during its first week-long Africa Travel Summit in September 2018 is ranked the second-highest in West Africa after Nigeria (Airbnb, 2018). The largest international airport in Ghana (Kotoka International Airport) is located in Accra and serves as gateway for both local and international tourists travelling in and out of the country. As the capital city, Accra hosts the seat of government and the Jubilee House (presidential office and residence), parliament house, diplomatic missions, most of the government ministries and agencies and head offices of most businesses and organisations, including the largest malls in the country. The Metropolis is made up of many towns and cities.

Study population

The Greater Accra region has 623 licensed hotel facilities (Ghana Tourism Authority [GTA], 2017), with 145 of them located in the seven selected study areas. The study covered all 74 licensed hotels located in the catchment area of the Accra Metropolitan assembly. The respondents in this study were managers of hotels located in the selected areas. In the catchment area of the study, there were over 50 listings of Airbnb facilities. The reason for selecting these areas was because hotels located in these areas were more likely to be affected by Airbnb operations and the hoteliers would have gained some experiences with the operations of Airbnb facilities and so were thought to have relevant knowledge on the operations of Airbnb services. They equally would have some perceptions on Airbnb operations, thus making hotel managers suitable participants for this study. Table 1 shows the various hotel ratings totalling 74 in the study area, some of whose managers were contacted.

The study employed the purposive sampling technique, which is a strategy employed to deliberately select persons or events to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other sources (Taherdoost, 2016). A total of 35 hotel managers were sampled out of the 74 licensed hotels. Hotels that were located within a radius of 10 kilometres to and from the Kotoka International Airport and spanning all hotel ratings were chosen for the study. Other parameters included selecting managers

TABLE 1: Hotel ratings and their listings with the Ghana Tourism Authority

Hotel rating	Number of hotels
4-star	1
3-star	6
2-star	23
1-star	17
Guest house	18
Budget	9
Total number of hotels	74

Source: GTA (2017)

based on their length of stay in managerial positions, knowledge of Airbnb and sufficient work experience in the field of hotel management regarding the research subject (Freedman et al., 2007). With purposive sampling, sample sizes may or may not be fixed prior to data collection and, for the purpose of this study, the sample size was determined on the basis of theoretical saturation, which is the point in data collection when new data no longer brings additional insights to the research questions posed (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

For the purpose of the study, standardised open-ended interview guides were prepared for conducting the in-depth interviews. In this situation, the researchers posed questions, allowing all interviewees to contribute as much detailed information as they desired, followed by probing questions as a follow-up (Turner, 2010). In some cases, telephone interviews were conducted since the managers were not available on the scheduled date of the interview. The interview covered five sections, from manager's demographics, hotel's visibility online, hotel managers' awareness levels of the new competitor and hotel managers' perceptions of Airbnb being a competitor in the wake of the arrival of Airbnb in the hospitality space.

The data collection steps included visiting the facility in person to meet with the managers themselves to interview them, and in a few cases calling the hotel managers to make our intentions known and arrange dates and times for a telephone interview so that they could make time for the engagement. Once the date and time were set for the telephone call, the conversation was recorded with permission from the interviewee directly using the phone and noting down key points alongside the telephone recording. After each successful telephone interview, the recording was labelled and copied onto a computer for safe keeping and duplication. The data was collected specifically where the hotels are located, notably East Legon, airport area, Osu, La, Tesano and Achimota.

The transcription of the data done manually. NVivo, which is a software tool that supports qualitative data analysis, was employed. It is rigorous and systematic analysis software that is employed using structured and unstructured data. It also handles many data types like Excel spreadsheets, audio, video, PDFs and more. NVivo also gives an advance analysis of the data and gives you a visual outcome in the form of basic diagrams and maps for word frequency, and text search to help the researchers best read and do interpretation of the results. NVivo enables the creation of nodes and coding of the data and for this reason and for the purpose of this study, NVivo was used to analyse the transcribed data.

Results and discussion

Fifty-seven hotel managers were contacted. Of these, 33 indicated awareness of the operations of Airbnb facilities in the study area. The level of awareness was one of the key constructs for which this study was conducted. Male hotel managers constituted 64 per cent (n = 21) while female managers constituted 36 per cent (n = 12) of the sample, suggesting that management of the hospitality sector is gender biased. The majority (n = 15, 45.4%) of the managers were in the age range of 41 to 50 years old. The rest of the demographic information is summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Sociodemographic data of respondents

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Per cent (%)
Sex		
Male	21	64.0
Female	12	36.0
Age (in years)		
25-28	2	6.1
30-40	7	21.2
41-50	15	45.4
51-60	9	27.3
Work experience		
5 years & below	2	6.1
6-10	11	33.3
11-20	13	39.4
21 & above	7	21.2
Education		
Undergraduate	2	6.0
Masters	31	94.0
Hotel online visibility		
Yes	27	82.0
No	6	18.0
Ownership of website		
Yes	18	55.0
No	15	45.0
Hotel type		
High grade (3 & 4 star)	7	21.0
Medium grade (1 & 2 star)	18	55.0
Lower grade (guesthouses & budget hotels)	8	24.0

Level of awareness by hotel managers of Airbnb operations in the metropolis

One group (n = 24, 42.11%) were not further interviewed after admitting to not being aware of Airbnb operations and had just heard of it for the first time from the research team. Despite the global existence of Airbnb operations for 13 years and six years in Ghana as at the time of the study, one of the managers made this remark:

I have never heard of something like Airbnb, an online platform allowing people to share their surplus home space and guests also risking to stay with or without hosts. I am hearing it for the first time from you and will have to gather more information on them (Budget hotel manager, 54 years old and six years in management position).

Another manager also commented as follows:

Ah, you mean the people allow strangers into their homes in the name of selling surplus space to make extra cash? Is the Ghana Tourism Authority aware? Are they registered? For me, I cannot accept a stranger for any amount of dollars (Guesthouse manager, 39 years old and three years in management position).

One other manager relayed this information below:

So you wake up one morning to realise your stranger is dead, how will you handle it? How will you contact the family or that the person has an underlying condition and gets an attack while in your house. This thing cannot just be safe (1-star hotel manager, 45 years old and eight years in management position).

A majority (n = 20, 83.33%) of the managers who were not familiar with Airbnb operations in the metropolis were from the

lower grade hotels, specifically the budget hotels, guesthouses and 1-star rated hotel category. This seems to explain why the lower grade hotels were the most affected by the operations of Airbnb due to their manager's lack of awareness and readiness to compete with Airbnb in the ever-changing hospitality market (Guttentag, 2015). This scenario is further reiterated by Brown and Kaewkitipong (2009) who asserted that small hotels often did not have the expertise required to take complete advantage of the internet and follow technological trends, allowing Airbnb hosts and their operations to overshadow the hotel businesses. Again, many of the lower category of hotels were "self-owned", with managers who were mostly 50 years old and above and this suggests why they might be less enthusiastic or not abreast with technology and current trends in internet-based hospitality avenues like Airbnb in the metropolis.

Regarding hotel managers who were aware of Airbnb operations in the metropolis, their responses were coded into themes. Themes generated based on managers' awareness of the Airbnb operations were classified into distinctiveness, "misgovernance" and tax evasion facilities.

Distinctiveness

The empirical literature on Airbnb over the years has identified some specific attributes of Airbnb that distinguish them from the typical characteristics of the hotel sector (Dolnicar, 2018). These attributes (Table 3) are said to influence the purchasing decisions of consumers. Some of the managers trying to define Airbnb on their own mentioned location, shared space, lower price ranges, authentic experience and online reviews as attributes that define or showcase Airbnb as facilities that offer unique services to attract guests, hence increasing consumer acceptance. A guesthouse manager who laid an emphasis on shared space and availability of technology explained what Airbnb entailed as follows:

Airbnb is a website where people book rooms to stay with a host they do not know from anywhere because it is cheaper than staying in a hotel. Thanks to technology. There is no cost accruing to selling your rooms on Airbnb as compared to the cost of operating as hotels (Guesthouse manager, 40 years old, with four years' experience in management position).

Another manager describes Airbnb as:

It is an app that allows anyone including some hoteliers to buy or sell out surplus space for short-term stays across the world (1-star hotel manager, 52 years old, with seven years' experience in management position).

Another manager also opined as follows:

Airbnb facilities are usually located within the community and around tourist destinations. So the tourist prefers to stay there, depending on the price and space available. Sometimes too, the "foreigners" want to mingle with the local people and live like them, hence their preference for Airbnb to the hotels (3-star hotel manager, 52 years old, with 11 years' experience in management position).

The statements of these managers have portrayed the attributes of Airbnb and their operations well. These responses seem to be in tandem with the findings of Dolnicar and Otter (2003) who identified several essential attributes that influenced tourist purchasing decisions, including cleanliness, location, reputation, price, value and quality of service like room comfort and security. Their responses also capture the technology and how people make money by having strangers stay, which are both in line with the modus operandi of Airbnb operations. Airbnb describes what it does as uniquely leveraging technology to economically empower millions of people around the world to become hospitality entrepreneurs through unlocking and monetising their spaces, passions and talents (Airbnb, 2018). The statement regarding Airbnb entrepreneurs being technologically inclined corresponds with the findings of Hunter et al. (2015) who affirmed Airbnb to be an online accommodation platform aided by the use of technology and the internet.

Most managers were of the view that Airbnb appealed more to the leisure tourist, enabling them to freely select where they wanted to stay either in or away from the central business district and get to eat and stay with the locals. This seems to exemplify the theory underpinning this study which espouses that disruptive innovations will usually start by targeting the lower end of the market and with time move upmarket, appealing to mainstream customers (Christensen et al., 2007).

It is worth noting that some respondents had booked and stayed in Airbnb facilities before outside Ghana, while some managers had made reservations for friends and family in Airbnb facilities due to their homelike settings and nearness to tourist sites.

I am not sure the Airbnb operators are into a corporate business like we do as hoteliers. Their facilities look more like homestays and their operations are more of self-service, hence, most suitable for individuals travelling on their personal budget (2-star hotel, 49 years old, with seven years' experience in management position).

The manager of a 4-star facility expressed his view as follows:

They provide something like a home setting for an individual and that of a small family on vacation. I booked a full house on their platform when my brother was coming to visit me here in Accra for about a week with his wife and kids and wished to stay alone. We never met the landlord, but the caretaker of the facility came to clean daily and left (4-star hotel manager, 49 years old, with five years' experience in management position).

"Misgovernance"

The statements of these managers that led to the coining of the theme *misgovernance* further explains their level of awareness of Airbnb operations with regard to regulation issues. One of the managers pointed out that

I am not sure those people are regulated by any government regulatory bodies especially on what to provide, prohibit, safety and security issues, among others. When you check the Airbnb platform you realise the house rules are set by the landlord or host without any crosschecks and once a guest is comfortable with the rules, that's it, business is established (2-star hotel manager, 39 years old, with six years' experience in management position).

TABLE 3: Themes generated based on awareness levels

Theme	Frequency
Distinctiveness	19
"Misgovernance"	24
Tax evasion facilities	17

Another added:

I think those people need to be regulated so as not to let the host take things into their hands and do as they wish since the country's reputation is at stake. Imagine something goes wrong with a guest who is not a Ghanaian. What happens? (Guesthouse manager, 58 years old, with 17 years of experience in management position).

Some respondents were also of the view that it was more in the interest of government of Ghana to enact laws that will regulate and govern the activities of Airbnb, among other short-term rentals. A passionate complaint launched by one manager displayed her sentiments as follows:

With the number of registrants on the Airbnb page, it is clear it has come to stay in the hospitality industry for a very long time and so it will be more in the interest of the government to register and regulate the operators of Airbnb in Ghana if not for anything, but for them to pay taxes to the state (3-star manager, 46 years old, with 12 years' experience in management position).

Another manager also shared his viewpoint:

Other countries I know are regulating the activities of Airbnb operations and other short-term accommodation rentals and just as we the hotels through the Ghana Tourism Authority and the Ghana Hoteliers Association are registered and licensed, Airbnb must also be registered, licensed and regulated in a way (1-star hotel manager, 35 years old, with three years' experience in management position).

Another manager also reiterated that

The regulation of Airbnb is not just for the hotels, but for Ghana as a whole. Some countries have benefited enormously from the regulation of Airbnb. Ghana can also benefit if they are properly registered and regulated (4-star hotel manager, 52 years old, with 11 years of experience in management position).

These revelations from the hoteliers further underline the findings of Guttentag (2018), who reported that many countries have made efforts aimed at enacting laws to regulate short-term rentals. Cases in point include Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Palma, Singapore and San Francisco who have enacted laws to regulate the activities of short-term rentals including Airbnb. The situation in the Ghanaian business space where the operators of Airbnb facilities are not regulated is of concern considering the huge number of listing of facilities on the platform and it is only proper that their activities should be regulated.

Tax evasion

The comments elicited from respondents led to the formulation of the theme "tax evasion facilities" which portrays that this group of managers was fully aware of how Airbnb facilities operated. Respondents lamented how Airbnb hosts were not paying any taxes as these "smart entrepreneurs" who had enough rooms and facilities and could have registered as hotels with the GTA, but "clandestinely" registered as Airbnb hosts to evade the payment of taxes to government. The respondents pointed out that the government of Ghana would make enough revenue from taxes collected from the "hundreds" listed on the Airbnb website to let them also contribute their quota towards national development. A few respondents shared similar sentiments on tax evasion as follows:

It's a good thing to see people listing on the Airbnb platform every minute because it's free with no stress, no renewal of licenses, you can drop out without any cost attached, no employee salaries to cater for, domestic utility bills for commercial purpose and most seriously, the non-payment of taxes like we grapple with value added tax (VAT) and the National Health Insurance Scheme levy (NHIS) as hoteliers (Guesthouse manager, 27 years old, with two years' experience in management position).

A 2-star hotel manager also stated as follows:

Some of the facilities listed on Airbnb are big enough to even register as hotels. They are even bigger than some budget hotels and others look the same size as ours. These owners are hiding behind Airbnb to have less cost of everything from utility bills to zero tax payments (2-star hotel manager, 44 years old, six years' experience in management position).

A 3-star accommodation facility manager also stated as follows:

I think there must be a way to let those people pay taxes for they have enjoyed lots of freebies including "tax holiday" for far too long (3-star hotel manager, 58 years old, with 14 years in management position).

These assertions have been found to be in line with the findings of Nieuwland and van Melik (2020) whose study reports on how municipalities are struggling to regulate Airbnb in Europe and America and reiterates the fact that in many countries, city officials are looking at possible ways of regulating Airbnb operations for occupancy taxes.

Perspectives on Airbnb being in competition with the traditional hotel operators in Ghana

In the explanations of managers which came from 27 hotel managers, it was indicated that they saw no form of competition between Airbnb and the hotels, compelling them to reduce prices or experience a fall in growth in guest arrivals with the resultant adverse effects of low room occupancy, and most obnoxiously, a fall in hotel revenue mainly due to Airbnb operations. Six respondents, however, alluded to some form of competition emanating from Airbnb facilities with the traditional hotels in the metropolis.

I do not see Airbnb as a competitor in the hotel business because what they do doesn't affect my business, especially my sales. My revenue has been OK and has not fallen to Airbnb. They have their way of reaching their market and we have ours (4-star hotel manager, 44 years old, with seven years of work experience).

Another shared his opinion as follows:

I think their primary product is accommodation just as it is our signature product and so if there is any competition, then we should feel it in our room occupancy rate falling. But for me, I have not had any drop in room occupancy rates not to talk of it being related to Airbnb operations. So for me, there is no competition at all. I believe both businesses encourage each other to work harder (2-star hotel manager, 49 years old, with six years' work experience).

Another manager also opined:

Well, the people who come to my hotel still continue to come and I even get some new customers as well.

I am not sure Airbnb is taking my customers even though I know they are growing faster in Ghana. I do not count the operators of Airbnb as my competitors at all (Budget hotel manager, 59 years old, 13 years' work experience).

From the responses of these managers, they saw no direct impact of Airbnb operations on hotel operations, and this seems to agree with the finding of Guttentag (2015) about the limited impact of Airbnb operations on hotels due to their unique attributes of appealing to younger, technologically savvy, adventurous and budget-conscious tourists who perhaps would not use the traditional hotels. Euromonitor International (2013) predicted that business travellers will always remain loyal to hotels because of corporate travel policies and standardised services, while Airbnb only creates limited impact with a focus on leisure travellers. The responses from the respondents affirm the findings of Hernández-Méndez et al. (2015) in their study of the impact of Airbnb on Singapore's budget hotels in which they found that managers being interviewed did not view Airbnb as a direct or primary competitor.

However, six managers (one guesthouse, two 1-star hotels, two 2-star hotels and one 3-star hotel) shared completely different views from the majority ($n = 27$), admitting there was some form of competition even though at a very low pace and that to some extent has called on hotels to worry about the operations of Airbnb. They added that with the continuous growth in guest arrivals and current facilities available through Airbnb, it poses a threat to hotel businesses now and in the future.

One respondent stated as follows:

Usually, when it comes to these sharing economies as they call it, their success or failure depends on the level of acceptance by the targeted group or the market. The last time I checked on the page you could see the number of listings had increased regionally across the country and that tells you the level of acceptance is higher and so could have implications now and even in the future if the growth continues on that trajectory (2-star hotel manager, 42 years old, six years in management position).

Another added:

Well, for now, I do not see or feel any competition between us as hoteliers and the Airbnb operators... but then, in the future they will be a serious force to reckon with, and we should worry about our businesses (budget hotel manager, 42 years old, with six years' work experience).

Another manager also contributed as follows:

I see Airbnb as an ambush on the hotel business now and that with time, it will cause some problems in the hotel business if nothing is done early as it is cheaper and easy to own and run, making it easy for them to compete with us as is happening now (3-star hotel manager, 57 years old, with 13 years' work experience).

In a study highlighting the limitations of Airbnb in a blog post, it came to the fore that Airbnb only poses a small or minimal threat to the hotel industry. This was no different from the reports of the few hotel managers who disagreed with the "no complete impact" mantra of Airbnb on the traditional hotel industry (Mody & Gomez, 2018). This statement again expresses the same opinion as Koh and King (2017), who in similar research earlier with hotels and hostels in Singapore found that Airbnb

was a direct competitor now and a potential competitor to reckon with in the future. This again supports the tenets found in the disruptive innovation theory where the competitor will usually start in a low-key fashion by targeting the lower market clientele of bigger businesses and with time move upmarket, appealing to mainstream customers of traditional businesses (Christensen et al., 2007).

Conclusion and recommendations

A section of hotel managers in the Accra Metropolis are aware of Airbnb operations in their vicinity, though it also came to the fore that a few hoteliers had never heard of them. Hoteliers again alluded to the fact that these facilities, which are listed worldwide and in Ghana, are on the increase. Respondents raised concerns about the unregulated nature of these facilities and revealed that many entrepreneurs deliberately enlisted their facilities freely on the website because it came at no expense, while due to their unregulated nature, their businesses did not fall under the tax net of the country. Respondents, however, were of the conviction that their activities and operations did not pose threats to their business though respondents from other hotels of the lower grades (guesthouses, budget hotels and 1-star rated hotels) saw it otherwise (as competitors). They believed that the general hotel business industry needed to worry about their operations because in the not-too-distant future, their impact on traditional hotels' revenue bases would be felt from the loss of clientele to these technologically savvy entrepreneurs (Airbnb operators) and their businesses.

The study therefore recommends that the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC) should mandate the GTA to begin putting in measures aimed at licensing their operations and also open them up for inspection and some form of rating of their facilities. The Ghana Revenue Authority also needed to come in and cast their tax net wider to cover these operations and rake in more revenue for the state. Airbnb operators in the country needed to act regularly and diligently on reviews and recommendations made by their clientele. This will enable them to deliver the expected quality needed which will foster their businesses. It is also recommended that the GTA should make it mandatory for hoteliers in the country to recruit staff with the needed expertise from hospitality training institutions as this will also boost the sector to be able to render quality services to guests hosted by their facilities to give guests good impressions about Ghana.

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