

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF AIRBNB HOSTS IN BRAZIL THROUGH COMMUNITIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Cibelle Batista Gondim
Universidade Federal de Paraíba
João Pessoa, Brasil
Anderson Leonardo de Castro Seabra
Luiz Mendes-Filho
Universidade Federal de Rio
Grande do Norte - Natal, Brasil

Web 2.0 and social media have redefined the tourism industry in many ways. Therefore, it is of great relevance to investigate its consequences, such as the influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) on individuals' behavior and the formation of online groups around specific interests, such as the shared economy. This study uses the Psychological Empowerment Theory, which remains scarcely researched in the context of tourism, to analyze the effects of participation in virtual communities on Facebook in the performance and capacity of the hosts of Airbnb in Brazil. A qualitative approach have been adopted with support of multiple techniques (observation, content analysis and netnography), and 581 publications were analyzed in a virtual community of Airbnb hosts, in addition to interviews with 14 participants, in order to obtain a better understanding of the behavior of the group and its implications on the individuals. The study pointed out that virtual communities can help hosts feel empowered to take control of their own actions in managing their offer within the platform. The main contribution of the study was to demonstrate the potential relationship between psychological empowerment through participation in groups in social media, and also through the exchange and sharing of UGC. Furthermore, it was observed that the analyzed community allows a type of social experience based predominantly on the sharing of information, without necessarily forming more deep social relations.

KEY WORDS: *Psychological Empowerment Theory, virtual community, user-generated content, shared economy, Airbnb.*