Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
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# Peer-to-peer as a travel accommodation option and the customer value

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## Abstract

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The purpose of the study was to investigate the concept of peer-to-peer accommodation as a travel lodging option from the customers' point of view and the reasons for choosing that. Airbnb and Couchsurfing were used as examples of peer-to-peer accommodation.

The theoretical section of the thesis covers the history of the homestay concept as the original form of peer-to-peer accommodation, its features as a part of hospitality exchange network, and the influence of modern technologies. The Gen Y representatives' lifestyle and purchasing behavior is studied. The information for the theoretical part was gathered from different web articles and literature. The empirical section presents the study of the reasons for choosing peer-to-peer accommodation and the customers' satisfaction overview. The data of the empirical part was gathered through an online questionnaire survey.

The results of the study show that most peer-to-peer accommodation customers are the Gen Y representatives and are basically satisfied with the lodging option. The two main reasons for choosing that are social and financial. Social factors are connected with the opportunity to meet new people and communicate with them in person. Financial factors mean the lower price of this type of accommodation, and customers' willingness to be more cost-efficient. The research finding can be applied for further investigation and in customer relationship management.

Keywords: peer-to-peer accommodation, sharing economy, digitalization, Gen Y

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# 1 Introduction

Due to the fast development and constant implementation of new internet programs and applications, the Internet and social media has become a huge online marketplace which also enables sharing economy development. It connects people, facilitates users' communication and creates special type of communities, where everyone is able to find, purchase and rent whatever they want, and, what is important as well, to share their user experience.  Moreover, any user can try on bilateral roles: one may be a provider and consumer at the same time.

The Internet combines and integrates the following functional properties: information representation; collaboration; communication; interactivity; and transactions (Mathies & Weiermair 2004, p. 290). In fact, the author believes that all these features can be applied to the concept of peer-to-peer (p2p) accommodation as well.

The idea of peer-to-peer accommodation coincides with the concept of homestay. Homestay is an oldest lodging option during travelling. However, facilitated with online social network platforms, peer-to-peer has become a very popular form of accommodation nowadays.

According to Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015), technological advancement is one of the reasons for this development. Another reason is economic pressure. People have become more mindful about their spending and try to save more money. As a result, peer-to-peer renting, in travel industry, is an alternative to hotel type of accommodation that offers value with less cost. Another reason for peer-to-peer accommodation development is social. People need a stronger community and they want to create and maintain social connections. Due to the use of p2p accommodation, travelers are able to get a unique social experience by interacting

with the hosts, who are locals at their travel destination, and taking part in particular local events.

## 1.1 Research questions and method

The topic of the thesis is "Peer-to-peer as a travel accommodation option and the customer value". The aim is to find the answer for the main question: what are the reasons for people to choose peer-to-peer accommodation? In addition the study investigates in practice how customers' demands are satisfied, and what kind of actions hospitality exchange networks (HEN), as a part of peer-to-peer concept, take to build trust within the networks.

In other words, the thesis is focused on detailed analyzing and summarizing the reasons for choosing hospitality exchange networks from the guest-customers' point of view through the quantitative research, to be more exact, with the help of online questionnaire.

The author's intention is to provide to the readers a comprehensive overview of the peer-to-peer accommodation type and an in depth analysis of the reasons to choose this type of lodging. The intention is also to investigate the Gen Y representatives and their lifestyle, as they obtain a strong purchasing power within p2p concept.
The empirical section is based on a survey research. The research method is self-administrated survey which is done in the way of structured questionnaire. This survey can be called a quantitative research as the basic idea of that was to measure the variables, such as the reasons for choosing p2p accommodation.

The report consists of theoretical and empirical sections. The theory reviews the development of the concept of the homestay from its beginning till nowadays, when it is transformed into peer-to-peer accommodation facilitated with modern technologies. The basic features and the lifestyle of the Gen Y representatives as the main clients of HEN are studied. The analysis of the survey responses proceeds

the theoretical part. The intention is to find out and outline common tendencies within the research answers.

## 1.2 Aims and delimitations

The aim of the thesis was to find out the reasons for choosing p2p accommodation. Thus, the main idea of the thesis was to conduct research that will be focused on the users of hospitality exchange networks. The main aim of the thesis is to study the decisive factors for choosing p2p accommodation and the values that are offered by HEN.

First of all, the history of the hospitality concept is studied. The intention is to prove that the concept of homestay is the initial one. It was the first type of accommodation offered for travelers.  Then, the concept of peer-to-peer, as a developed idea of homestay, is examined. Thirdly, the features of p2p concept as a part of sharing economy are listed.

After that, p2p accommodation is analyzed from the network hospitality point of view. In the next part of the theoretical research, the intention is to study how modern digitalization facilitates hospitality exchange networks. And finally, the main customer of p2p accommodation, the Generation Y representatives, are studied.

The empirical part of the thesis is focused on the users of HEN and their perception of the p2p concept. The main delimitation for the research is the sample size as it is influenced by time and the necessary accuracy of the results.

## 2 History of the hospitality concept

The origins as well as the history of the hospitality phenomenon has been studied a lot. Still many researchers argue about the development of the contemporary commercial hospitality. Some people claim that hospitality and the provision of that are as old as recorded human history. For example, as O'Gorman (2010) states that one of the oldest writings devoted to hospitality is more than 4000 years old. The brief example of hospitality features of that period can be found in the teachings of Khety that date back to 2100 BC. It gives clear instructions on how to meet and treat strangers. According to the teachings, the way a person treats his guests is the way he pleases gods.

As Morrison (2001) states, the way people perceived hospitality that time could be explained by several factors, such as religious beliefs, trade development, transactional expectations, social status and the lack of trust to strangers. Consequently the hospitality principles of that period could explain a lot about believes and values.

Many other scientists, such as Dillon (1997), argue that the nowadays hospitality concept can be traced back to medieval Christian pilgrimage to Rome and Holy land, as the early rest houses and roadside inns are often taken as the origin concept for the nowadays hospitality industry.

Contrary to this idea, Pratt (1996) states that Hinduism and Buddhism pilgrimage is the origin motive for mass tourism, and as the result, for hospitality. Anyway, the original motive for travelling during those times, pilgrimage, was connected with religion.

Each historical period is featured with its own special lodging option, where all these lodging types do not exclude each other, but coexist. However, the concept of homestay, peer-to-peer accommodation, is evident in each of the periods, and appears to be the oldest type of hospitality. Humans have welcomed travelling

strangers into their homes for a very long time. People opened up their homes for those taking on pilgrimage, attending festivals, travelling with the purpose of trade or to be taxed. There is some religious evidence for this phenomenon. For example, in the Bible there are several references for that. Also, Prophet Mohammed told his Muslim followers that they should treat strangers with respect and help, as he assumed that hospitality is a holy feature. (O'Gorman 2010.)

Commercial hospitality existed already in 3500BC. Hostels and inns providing accommodation and drinks in Mesopotamia date back to 2000BC. What is important that the stela, containing the well-known Code of Hammurabi, includes laws governing commercial hospitality. The early charitable rest houses in India still provide shelter for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims. In Israel the ruins of old roadside inns can be found. (O'Gorman 2010.)

Timothy and Teye (2009) give a clear overview of the commercial hospitality development. According to them, during the Middle Ages a plenty of roadside inns and watering holes were built to satisfy the needs of travelers. But homestays were the major form of lodging in many parts of the world.
During the period of the Industrial Revolution due to the high development of transport, such as steam trains and ships, a rapid spread of travel in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia occurred. This lead to the development of popular resorts and seaside luxury hotels. However, staying at people's homes was a popular alternative as well.

When cars became more popular, during the 1920s, when having a personal car was common and widespread, people became more able to explore and travel by their own. That enabled the development of motels and bed and breakfast inns, as well as the demand for dining services was increased.

During the Second World War which affected the whole world, people rented out their spare rooms for extra income. The period after the Second World War is the

era of the fastest exploration. The more efficient and larger aircrafts let people travel more abroad and overseas. That enhanced the demand for accommodation even further.

Today in late modern era rapid technological development allows people be more independent in their choice and planning. Therefore, hospitality industry expands more and more to meet the customers' needs. Nowadays due to the Internet and technology development encounters between people become generalized by social media and networking technologies. Web platforms, such as Couchsurfing, Airbnb and so on, transfer online communication into offline social interaction that is gathered around hosting, guesting and hospitality.

However, there are other theories about the development of the contemporary hospitality as well. For example, Rutes and Penner (1985) claim that there are four basic roots for the contemporary commercial hospitality. Facilities that were provided to expedite trade and mail delivery, and that were offered to government and religious travelers are the "predecessors" of contemporary commercial hotels. Greek and Roman spas lead to resorts and entertainment-based facilities. Super luxury hotels can be traced back to royal courts. And finally, renting out houses and rooms lead to the development of time-shares and bed and breakfast lodging, and peer-to-peer type of accommodation.

There are discussions about the main modern features of the contemporary commercial hospitality as the result of the previous development. Wood (1994) believes that the contemporary hospitality has nothing in common with "the personal giving out" and is only about the financial exchange. He explains that nowadays hospitality is lacking "spiritual qualities" and is not about personal involvement as it used to be before. For example, as Morrison (2001) claims, nowadays hospitality supply emerges from urbanization, decrease of kinship importance and overall process of urbanization. Luckily, this is far from being the truth. The reliable example for that is peer-to-peer lodging type, facilitated by social media network. One of the most mentioned reasons, why people choose such companies as Couchsurfing,

Airbnb, HouseTrip and so on, is the social factor. The interaction with humans in person, whether they are a host or a guest, is extremely valuable for people, and is taken as added value. Personal connections lead to the involvement into the life of the travel destination city, and experience, values and skills exchange as well. Moreover, Couchsurfing does not assume any payment to the host for staying at his property. So, it is not about the financial exchange between host and guest, but is about meeting new interesting people from all over the world.

## 3 Peer-to-peer accommodation

Peer-to-peer accommodation refers to the process when an owner makes his house or empty room available for another person for a short period of time (Wikipedia, n.d., Peer-to-peer property rental). As a result the idea of peer-to-peer accommodation coincides with the concept of homestay. Users of peer-to-peer renting can lend whatever they have spare: cars, equipment, premises, even skills. The term "peer-to-peer" is most of the time used to describe rental transactions enabled with online technologies. For quite a long time people have been renting out their belongings, more often in the sphere of lodging. As a result, this kind of business model is quite similar to the vocation rental, when people rent out their houses or furnished apartments for a short period of time to tourists as an alternative to hotel accommodation (Wikipedia, n.d., Vacation rental). The examples of peer-to-peer accommodation rentals facilitated with network platforms are Airbnb, HomeAway, 9flats.

### 3.1 Peer-to-peer accommodation as a part of collaborative consumption

Peer-to-peer accommodation is an aspect of sharing economy. According to Wikipedia (Wikipedia, n.d., Sharing economy), sharing economy is also known as shareconomy, collaborative consumption and peer economy. Collaborative consumption (CC) is a set of resource circulation systems which let consumers both "obtain" and "provide", temporarily or permanently, valuable products or services, by the direct interaction with the other consumers or with the help of the intermediary, for free or with a fee.

Inside this system an individual can have bilateral roles as an obtainer or a provider. Obtainer is the one who is looking to gain access to some goods, owned and provided by some other people, for a short period of time. Provider is the one who owns the product or service and rents it out for a short period of time directly or with the help of mediator. Mediator is the third party in the collaborative consumption model. He facilitates the transaction between obtainer and provider, and, most of the

time, sets the terms of the exchange. As a reward, they earn the predefined part of the value that was exchanged. Example of these mediators in hospitality industry can be such online hospitality exchange networks as Airbnb, 9flats. (Wikipedia, n.d., Collaborative Consumption.)

As Botsman and Rogers (2010) claim, the concept of collaborative consumption includes traditional sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping made with the help of latest technologies and peer-to-peer marketplaces. It means that with the term collaborative consumption they assume the transaction between individuals made free of charge that exclude any monetary exchange.

However, Belk (2014) claims that this definition is too broad. It can lead to misunderstanding and can be mixed with the idea of gift giving and sharing. According to Belk, collaborative consumption is *people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation*. Belk also explains that by mentioning "other compensation" he also implicates bartering, trading and swapping in his definition.  The researcher also mentions that the term collaborative consumption is something in between "sharing" and "marketplace exchange", with the features of both of these cases. In addition, he also mentions that in case with some companies, such as Zipcar.com, that offer collaborative consumption opportunities, he calls the transactions as "pseudo-sharing", as there is only the vocabulary of the word "sharing" which is taken, but in fact short-term rental activities happen.

Furthermore, for example, when talking about the term and its actual features, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) combine the idea of sharing and collaborative consumption in the concept of "access-based consumption". As they explain, people prefer more to pay for the opportunity to temporary access goods, instead of owning and buying them.

According to Belk (2014), the Couchsurfing model cannot be considered as collaborative consumption, as it does not assume any fee, and a non-compensated peer-to-peer hosting model. However, it is important also to mention that Couchsurfing, as well as some other network hospitality services, such as BeWelcome, Hospitality Club, Global Freeloaders and some others refer to "hospitality services", or so called the concept of hospitality exchange. The idea of this concept is that people gather in organized social networks, where they can offer or look for accommodation, owned by other members, for free (a so called concept of networked homestay). However, in this study Couchsurfing will be considered as collaborative consumption peer-to-peer accommodation organization, offering the concept of homestay.

In anyway peer-to-peer hosting uses the power of online tools to enable the sharing of the resources between strangers. In some cases that assumes money exchange. At some other cases it causes interchange. However, everywhere it relies a lot on generosity and the power of Internet that establishes and controls trust.

In total, there are three types or systems of collaborative consumption. The first one is redistribution markets. Through these markets used or pre-owned items are moved from the places where they are not needed anymore to the sites and some people where they are necessary. The examples of these redistribution markets are big online marketplaces like eBay (eBay, n.d., front page), online free exchange sites like Freecycle (Freecycle, n.d., front page), online clothing swap web-pages like Swapstyle (Swapstyle, n.d., front page) and so on.  Another type of collaborative consumption is collaborative lifestyles. They assume sharing of resources like time, space, skills and money. People with the same interests or needs gather to exchange most of the time non-tangible assets. The example of the collaborative lifestyle might be the platform called TaskRabbit (TaskRabbit, n.d., front page) that matches users who have some task to be done with those who can make the task for a fee.

The last type of collaborative consumption is product-service system. It refers to that kind of consumption system when users pay for the temporary access and usage of goods owned by other peer-to-peer platform users. Items that are owned privately are shared with the help of peer-to-peer marketplace. The example of online platform that is product-service system is Open Shed (Open Shed, n.d., front page). At this platform people can rent out their tools, camping equipment and so on. (Botsman and Rogers 2010.)

The idea of collaborative consumption is not new. Flea markets, second hand shops, homestays are all the examples of the idea. However, quite recently, due to the information technology it has entered new development.

## 3.2 Peer-to-peer accommodation as a part of network hospitality

According to Molz (2014), nowadays the cases of accommodation exchange and hosting and guesting interplay with each other, facilitated with the help of technology. This lets friends and total strangers cooperate and encounter with each other off- and on-line in our modern mobile and networked society.

Wittel (2001) claims that internet social networks influence social life significantly, turning communities into network society, where humans' relations are more informational, based on data exchange, of short duration but quite intense. Molz (2014) lists several main features in network hospitality phenomenon. For example, technological development and networking enable brief, individualized and informational interactions between friends and strangers that empower new higher qualities of our social life on- and off-line.

Our modern society is not only becoming more networked, but mobile as well. And networking and mobility are involved into hospitality, as being on the move all the time leads to performing hosts' and guests' roles daily. Thus, daily humans are involved into hospitality encounters, by managing shared public space and by holding doors open. People perform hospitality at work as well, by coordinating,

communicating and caring. In private life, hospitality shapes communication with family and friends. That is the reason why it is so important to realize how hospitality crosses over with technology, creating new modes of communal life between friends and strangers.

Another feature is sharing with strangers which coincides with peer-to-peer exchange. After sharing thoughts, emotions and pictures at social web pages people started sharing their homes. Thus, network hospitality is all about sharing. (Molz 2014.)

The question of sharing resources leads immediately to the safety issue that has been discussed a lot. And it is crucial when it comes to home sharing. There are few ways how hospitality networks try to establish the sense of trust and accountability among strangers online and later off-line. First of all, there are complex online reputation systems. A sense of trustworthiness is created by immediate information exchange. Members write references, reviews and ratings that are publicly available, after they have met each other in person. These public references become the basis for members' reputation within the network.

For better transparency and credibility members should go through a verification process, or sign up through social web page such as Facebook, which creates an aura of reliability. As a result, this Consumer Generated Media (CGM) gives some sort of comfort and ensures trustworthy experience. This online reputation is valuable for participating in hospitality exchange networks and becomes a sort of property. Members are individually responsible for managing their own reputation, as it becomes a currency within the network. (Molz 2014.)

Another feature of network hospitality is feeling like a guest. It means that people become temporary but intensively close to each other. Hosts and guests feel free and more open than usual to tell about their lives and experiences. (Molz 2014.)

One more characteristic of hospitality networks is engineering randomness. It means that with the help of hospitality network platforms people are able to design their off-line encounters with their hosts or guests, in other words they are able to choose the strangers with whom they want to interact with. This is also a social value of network hospitality, personal interaction with interesting people. (Molz 2014.) This randomness is an opposite of like-mindedness that in case with hospitality exchange networks can be a basis for trust. This phenomenon of homophily is quite common in other social networks as well. People tend to connect and interact with other members of the same interests, experiences and opinions.

Pop-up assemblage is a trend nowadays and one more feature of network hospitality. The components of hospitality such as beds and food, are not spatially fixed anymore. Since then, encounters of hospitality between mobile strangers can pop up in unusual neighborhoods and in private people's homes. It changes the tourist patterns as well, a travel destinations are moved from city centers or popular sightseeing places to unexpected sites and locals' homes. (Molz 2014.)

Network hospitality reconsiders hierarchical structure as well. The technological aspect that assembles people together at peer-to-peer on-line networks and maintains their encounter off-line restructures the hierarchical pattern between host and guest. This cooperation between host and guest is changed into collaborative hospitality. For example, within the Couchsurfing network all members are potentially hosts and guests. (Molz 2014.)

The history of network hospitality concept is quite long. For example, according to Judith Adler (1985), in the beginning of the 19th century in England some trade societies gathered into networks of homes and inns to give lodging to travelling craftsmen. In 1949 hospitality exchange networks such as Servas International and the American Field Services exchange program were created with the idea to promote intercultural understanding.

However, one of the first hospitality networks, facilitated with the help of the Internet is a web site called Let-Me-Stay-For-A-Day.com. It can be considered as the earliest example of peer-to-peer accommodation, facilitated with the internet as well. In 2001 a Dutch student Ramon Stoppelenburg was overwhelmed with the dream to travel the world. But, having no extra money for that, he created the web-page, where he asked for free places to stay, for free meals and transportation during his trip. As a result, he received more than 4000 invitations from hosts from 77 countries. (Molz 2014.)

Hospitality exchange networks are only small example of network hospitality. There are also online hitchhiking and ridesharing sites (backseatsurfing.com/, www.blablacar.ru/ ), travel sharing web sites, that help travelers meet with tourists (www.rentalocalfriend.com/en), food-related and meal-sharing web-pages (www.thuisafgehaald.nl/#), social eating sites (eatwithalocal.socialgo.com/) and so on. Significant about all these web sites is the way they turn online networking into offline social encounters within the model of hosting, guesting and hospitality. They allow peer-to-peer exchanges of some tangible hospitality resources (beds, food) and exchanges of sociable resources of hosting and guesting (friendliness, welcome).

## 3.3 Peer-to-peer accommodation and digitalization

New technologies are an integral part of our daily life. We use computers, smartphones, and social media networks to be connected and to share. That is why peer-to-peer accommodation, as a part of collaborative consumption, is a high-tech phenomenon nowadays. The reason is that technologies, such as the Internet, smartphones, online platforms and social networks, enable and empower the development of peer-to-peer concept.

People gather in communities with the help of online tools. These technologies match people together, depending on their needs and interests, and transfer their online encounters into offline real life communication.

For example, through the Airbnb online platform "hosts" create their accounts and offer to rent out their properties. Properties can be of any type: shared room, apartment, entire house, yachts and so on. Those listed properties create a database. At the same time, "travelers", or "guests" search through the database for the available accommodation, by entering details of their trip. For making a reservation "travelers" have to make a profile as well. As a results, the business model of Airbnb is a creation of online rental marketplace that enables "hosts" and "guests" to connect, and allows transactions between them, without having any accommodation by its own. All the bookings and transactions are made through Airbnb platform. The revenue model of the company is that it earns the profit from two sources. 10% commission is charged from property owners for every booking that is made. And 3% of booking amount is billed as transaction charges from "guests".

It is obvious that Airbnb internet platform is a sort of intermediary between providers and obtainers that are all users of this platform.

As a result, anybody who has the access to the Internet can connect to all the web content. The internet gives a huge choice of offers, so everybody will find what they are looking for. This is the power of the internet when it comes to peer-to-peer concept. In fact the web is a huge marketplace that enables these kind of exchanges. Peer-to-peer accommodation platforms such as Airbnb, Couchsurfing are user-friendly web-pages that make is easy to search, review, analyze and compare offered accommodations. Consumers have more information, more choice and more tools to satisfy their needs.

### 3.3.1 Technology as enabler

According to John (2013), technology is enabling and driving collaborative consumption, and peer-to-peer accommodation provision in particular. Plus, online sharing and communication encourage our offline sharing and encounters.

First of all, consumers tend to leverage the internet, as if it is a tool, in order to create communities. Within these communities, or with the help of platforms, they exchange data about availability, price, and location. Internet is removing the middleman, so that anyone from a T-shirt designer to a knitter can make a living by selling peer-to-peer (Botsman 2010). The same idea applies when it comes to accommodation sharing. Hospitality exchange networks remove the traditional hotels, hotel online booking systems and tour operators. And this shift can be explained by economical and environmental interests. People are more thoughtful nowadays about their expenditures and they try to be more resourceful. Hospitality exchange platforms let them find faster and cheaper solutions. (John 2013.)

Peer-to-peer accommodation is the kind of lodging option when using is prioritized over owning. Resource-saving culture puts less value on ownership but more on renting, bartering and exchange. (John 2013.) As a result, social media networks and mobile technologies are necessary infrastructure for the successful development and usage of peer-to-peer accommodation nowadays.

However, technologies are not the necessary condition for peer-to-peer processes, but rather empower them. Sharing is an old social practice, which enabled with modern technologies, enters new ways. Social networks and real-time technologies are taking us back. They help us return to more natural old days' style of living, when everyone knew each other, talking at central market place. With the help of online networks people create virtual communities, where they can meet, discuss and give their opinion. Bartering and sharing are being reinvented into more dynamic and appealing forms (Botsman 2010). Collaboration and sharing are in humans' blood. It is our natural evolutionary advantage. Only people borrowed that ability, which became very useful. (John 2013.)

Botsman and Rodgers (2010) compared humans with bottlenose dolphins, when talking about our group cooperation. For a long time, people resembled dolphins in their behavior. When it comes to food, land and other resources access, dolphins

come together, cooperate and help each other. In prehistoric times people gathered in groups and tribes for cooperative hunting in order to improve chances to get food. As a result, this reciprocity and mutualism are the basis for human cooperation and the core for our existence. In this regard high technologies take us back to our tribal behavior and let us live the way we are meant to live with other people. (John 2013.)

The second way how technologies enable peer-to-peer is that it enhances trust between total strangers, who are the members of the same online community. Social networks create the virtual trust that develops online reputation systems. And nowadays the reputation capital is one of the core assets in collaborative consumption. (Molz 2014.) For example, as it was mentioned already before, with the help of reviews and ratings (in total, Consumer Generated Media) a level of credibility is created. This virtual credibility level defines the way users will trust each other face to face. Virtual reputation will get a real world value.

The term Consumer Generated Media (CGM) has the same term as User Generated Content (Wikipedia, n.d., Consumer Generated Media). This can be any kind of content, presented in the form of blogs, discussion forums, chats, ratings, reviews and other forms of media created by the users of online platform. In this case the consumer is producer. The content that is delivered by other users is highly valued nowadays, as this kind of feedback seems to be more trustworthy for the users. The level of credibility that is created with the help of CGM is a significant factor and it is decisive when it is about creating the trust with consumer.

### 3.3.2 Technology as a driver

Technology is driving peer-to-peer accommodation provision as it serves as a bridge between online and offline encounters. Due to online platforms people perform their prosocial behaviors that before online they practiced in real life situations.

First of all, this happens because people are inclined to share and cooperate. According to Botsman (2010), there is something in common between farmers'

markets and Facebook, as both, in virtual and real world, the sense of community is highly important. Peer-to-peer concept is seen as a natural continuum of social networking, where loose networks of people are created. And online sharing grows sharing offline, as well.

As it was mentioned, social networks have reminded us how the community is important. People have learnt already to share and to express their individualism online. And nowadays they want to transfer this sharing experience into offline world. In other words, people are looking for social interaction, to express themselves in a more social way. (Molz 2014.)

Also, because we are so used to and have experienced the feeling of the community online, we are also ready to let this community "enter" our real life. Plus, due to the use of internet platforms, we have experienced enough sharing online, so there might be no difficulty in turning this experience into offline world. (Molz 2014.)

As a result of that all, peer-to-peer concept and modern information and communication technologies are connected with each other with the idea of sharing. After sharing online, when it is a sort of communication, people are ready for sharing offline, when this is the act of distribution. In both cases sharing represents the type of interpersonal relationship, based on such social values as trust, mutuality, equality and cooperation. The concept of sharing is core practice and central value for online and offline interpersonal communication. (Botsman 2010.)

Consequently, there are few major features of digitalized peer-to-peer accommodation concept. First of all, customers tend to leverage the Internet. It is tool that is daily used. With the help of social networks, mobile platforms such as Couchsurfing, location-based GPS services users have a better option to find best appropriate for the accommodation option. (John 2013.) Then, users have a strong sense of community and are socially conscious (Tussyadiah & Pesonen 2015). One more feature is that peer-to-peer concept is environmentally friendly. There is more priority on bartering, swapping and resource-saving than on owning. (Tussyadiah &

Pesonen 2015.) Trust is created with the help of Consumer Generated Media (Molz 2014). What is more, users are eager to share their individualism (Botsman 2010). Finally, sharing and cooperation are the core social practices.

## 4 Generation Y

Although there is no any exact and sharp time frame that limits this group when in starts and ends, most of the time when talking about the Generation Y or Millennials people assume those born in between 1980s and 2000s. (Wikipedia, n.d., Millennials). Thus, nowadays the representatives of this generation are between 17 and 36 years old.

Ordun (2015) studied many the Gen Y representatives and characterized them as the second biggest population in the history of the world. According to him, the Millennial Generation has also some other names such as Echo Boomers, Net Generation, Gen Wired, We Generation and IPod Generation. The members of this group are the children of the Boomers Generation. Different generations perform various economic and social opportunities, different technology activity, and different social norms and community values. As well as Baby Boomers were different from their parents in ideology and lifestyle, there is also a generation gap between Millennials and their parents over the combination of life experiences and buying behavior.

From some point of view the Gen Y is evaluated as lazy and impatient, selfish and apathetic irresponsible and somehow lost. However, as a positive overview, the Gen Y representatives seem to be social, open-minded, ambitious and motivated, smart and confident. And the common idea for them is that they like to buy and spend their money.

This group outnumbers the Generation X, and it creates the largest market after baby boomers. So the people aged between 17 and 36 years old have become the

major force in marketplace, plus they often influence the purchase decisions of Baby Boomers, their parents.

Somehow this generation is different from all the previous generations. The reason is that it is the first generation cohort where there are less than two parents in a family is common, women work more than ever before, childbearing age is older nowadays and there are more households with double income. If to compare the Gen Y with the previous generations, it is less focused on making family and gets married later. More than the half of the Millennials are still single and many of them still live with their parents.

## 4.1 Generation Y and social media technologies

The representatives of the Gen Y are the first global generation, connected with the help of the Internet and social networks. That is why their use of modern technology is something that differs them from all the other generations. According to Bolton and Parasuraman (2013), the members of the Generation Y are the digital natives, because information technology deeply affects their daily social life. This generation fully shares, searches for and consumes the content on social media platforms.  The key characteristic for digital natives is that they early and frequently rely on technology for entertainment, purchasing and interaction. The representatives believe that technology helps people use their time more efficiently and that is why they practiced prompt growth in social networking, communication technologies and globalization.

The Millennials are the first generation that almost all their lives had computers at home. And they use that for many aspects of their life, especially for communication. The need to interact with others is the major reason for them to use social media. They are more likely than older age groups to prefer social networks for communication with their relatives and friends. Additionally, the representatives of the Gen Y tend to value other people's opinion in social media, and they think it is important to provide feedbacks about brands and products in the Internet.

Basically, there are two classification of the social media consumer activities: contribution (posting and giving feedbacks) and content consumption (observing). Millennials represent both consumer activities: they contribute to the content by mixing information from different sources, they tend to stay connected and multitask with the help of technologies, and they spend lots of time just consuming the media content. (Bolton and Parasuraman, 2013.) In addition, the Millennials are growing up sharing, as well. It is their second nature. They share files, games, emotions, opinions, knowledge and goods with the help of online technologies. (Botsman, 2010.)

## 4.2 Generation Y and purchasing preferences

According to Ordun (2015), the Digital Natives representatives are aware about their purchasing power. They are more demanding, comparing with their parents, Baby Boomers. They prefer those products that help them to express themselves, and, dislike their parents, they are confident and trust in the brand name that they choose.

The digital natives appreciate independence, and they do not rely at someone else when choosing their lifestyle. However, the social influence on their purchase decisions is very high.  Normally, well-known people, their friends and social media influence their decisions. As a result, trying to be independent, still they rely a lot on the online information and Consumer Generated Media. Buying decisions are affected a lot by opinions in social media and friends in virtual world.

# 5 Research implementation

The research of the current thesis, presented in the empirical part, is based on a survey research. The research was done in the way of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-administrated so that each respondent is asked to answer the same set of questions that are arranged in predefined order. This quantitative research design is descriptive. The reason is that it is aimed at describing the current status of such phenomenon as p2p accommodation. (CIRT, n.d., Quantitative Approaches.)

During the data collection process, first of all, the research problem was defined. It was planned to find out the customers' reasons for choosing p2p accommodation. And it was important to find out the background information of the respondents as well. As a result, quantitative and qualitative variables had to be measured. Variables are characteristics and attributes of the research interest. They can take on different values. There were numerical and categorical types of variables. Numerical variables can vary in amount or degree and they are normally expressed in numerical format. For example, numerical variable in the current survey is the respondents' age. Categorical variables explain qualitative characteristic and do not express numerical ordering. The example of this type of variable is customers' level of satisfaction. (CIRT, n.d., Variables and Operational Definitions.)

After that the population was defined. The population of the research are all the users of peer-to-peer accommodation type, such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing, both hosts and guests. The sample is the exact part of the population that was selected for the analysis. As a result, the sample size of the current research is 67 people that represent statistical units.

The method that was used is probability sampling, to be more exact, simple random sampling. The population is quite large-scale, more than 100 million Airbnb users and 3 million Couchsurfing users. (tochka.net, n.d., Что такое CouchSurfing и как им пользоваться?) Because of that it is not possible to obtain the full list of all the

people. Still simple random sampling was used. The reason is that the representatives of the sample were asked to follow the link and answer the survey question. The link was published at the thesis writer's social media web-pages, such as VK and Facebook. In addition, the random members of Airbnb and Couchsurfing communities in Facebook received messages with the link to the survey and a short cover letter. The idea of the cover letter was to motivate the respondents and to give the exact information about the purpose of the survey and the responding. For example, the respondents got the details of the person who conducted the survey and the reason why it was made. Additionally, they were given the address where the total results and thesis would be published. The respondents were also told that the research is anonymous and confidential. The approximate time for filling in the questionnaire was also given.

The quantitative and qualitative types of questions were asked in the survey to gather the necessary background information about the respondents and to find out their level of satisfaction about the hospitality exchange networks that represent peer-to-peer type of accommodation.

After the information was gathered, it was entered into the data matrix. The data matrix contains the values of the variables. The data matrix for the current research was done in Excel. The data for each research unit (one respondent) was placed on one line in the data matrix. Each column of the Excel table contains the values of one variable. (Mirola 2014.)

The data is described in the format of tables and charts, where information is summarised in more easily explainable way. This survey can be called as a quantitative research as the basic idea was to find out users' overall level of satisfaction about peer-to-peer type of accommodation.

According to Mirola (2014), in quantitative research the sample should represent the population statistically. The process of data collection, processing, coding and

analyzing were done in separate phases. However, it was noticed that data analyzing was made unconsciously at every step of data management. The collected data is coded and presented in data matrix format.

In qualitative research the sample should represent the typical features of the population. The sample is not valuable statistically, however it should give theoretical significance. The processes of data collection, processing, coding and analyzing are interconnected. The collected data is presented verbally.

The survey research was conducted in the beginning of September 2016. Later on the data collected through the questionnaires was processed, analyses and summarized in the end of September till beginning of November 2016. The survey research was created online with the help of Google account and Google Forms.

## 5.1 The survey structure

The survey consists of 15 questions. In total they were divided into four groups that cover the following topics. The overall background information about the respondent, such as age, gender, occupation and marital status and awareness, use of hospitality exchange networks that represent peer-to-peer accommodation type were studied. The next topic was connected with the issue of trust (if people feel safe staying at peer-to-peer accommodations?) Finally, the reason why people choose peer-to-peer accommodations and p2p customer value were examined.
There are some dichotomous, close-ended, multiple-choice and mixed questions and most of them require fill-text answer. This kind of open ended question allows more in-depth information from the respondents. The full cover letter and the survey questionnaire are presented in appendices 1 and 2.

## 5.2 Quantitative analysis

The results of the quantitative research are presented in large-scale numerical format that can be processed, categorized and analyzed with the help of special statistical software such as Excel. The gathered data subjects research findings to

quantification and quantitative coding. In quantitative method the data collection, processing and analyzing are done separately, however they are connected with the goal of the whole research. The data gathering and analyzing processes are not flexible and linked to the rules. Each respondent's answer is analyzed separately.

During the data analyzing process different measurement scales were chosen. For example, ordinal measurement scale was used to imply ranking (CIRT, n.d. Quantitative Scales of Measurement.) This kind of coding was used by assigning numbers to the frequency of HEN usage, for example. Number 1 was assigned to the answer "Never (I am only the member, who is surfing through the offered types of accommodation)". The answer "Very seldom (once in two years)" was coded with number 2. And so on.

A nominal measurement scale was used to put attributes and perceptions into special categories based on common characteristics. One of the offered reasons why people choose p2p accommodation was its lower price. Consequently, the answer "It's cheaper" was coded with number 1. The answer "I can meet more people" was coded with number 2. And so on. Then the coded information was tabulated in the data matrix, frequency and percentage distributions were constructed.

After data tabulation, the information was disaggregated within different variables. It was made with the help of Excel Filtering. Disaggregating helped to explore and analyse data even deeper. (EvaluationToolKit, n.d., Analyze Quantitative Data.)

# 6 Research results

The findings are represented in the same order as the main categories of the survey. First the background information of all the respondents is be analyzed. Then the awareness and the use of peer-to-peer accommodation type is be discussed. After that the users' level of trust will be investigated. And finally, the customer value is be analyzed.

## 6.1 Background information

The first category of the survey reveals the data about respondents' age, gender, occupation and marital status. The asked questions are as follows:
1. What is your age?
2. Are you man/woman?
3. Are you working/ student/ working student/ unemployed?
4. What is your marital status?
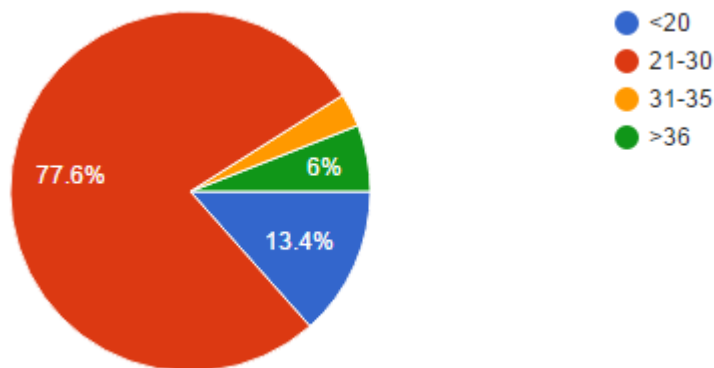


Figure 1. Total amount of respondents.

In total, the sample size is 67. According to the research results, 52 participants, more than 77% of the respondents, are in between 21 and 30 years old. 13% of the respondents are younger than 20 years old, four people are older than 36 years old, and 2 respondents, that constitute 3% of all the sample size, are in between 31 and 35 years old.
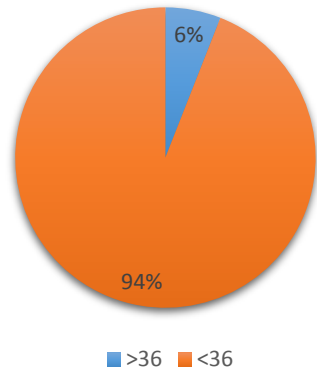
Figure 2. The respondents' age.

The results show that almost all the respondents (94%) belong to Gen Y generation cohort that consists of people aged between 17 and 36 years old.
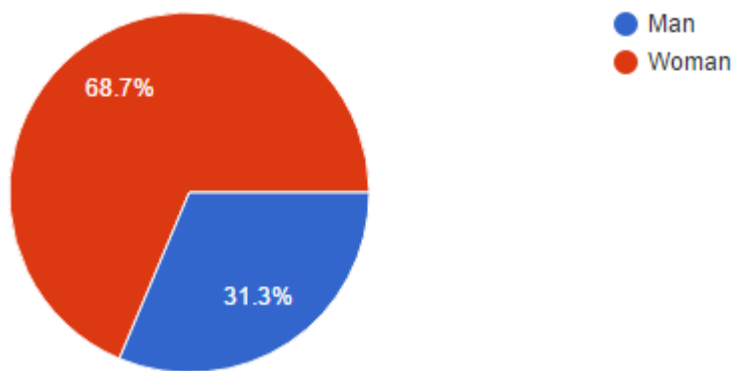


Figure 3. The respondents' gender.

As for the gender issue, almost 69% of all the respondents are women. That can be also explained by that fact that women are most of the time more willing to answer different internet questionnaire surveys.

As for the occupational issue, almost equal amount of people are employed (23 people) and studying (21 people). Little bit less of the respondents are working students (19 people). And only four respondents are not students neither employed.
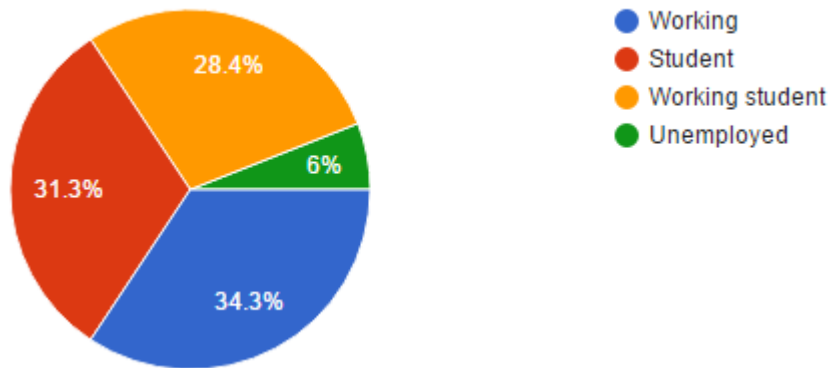
Figure 4. The respondents' occupation.

As the research shows, 28 respondents are single. They make up 42% of total sample size. This situation can be explained by the fact that most of the representatives of the Gen Y are students nowadays, who still prefer living with parents and start their own families considerably later than the previous generations. It also explains why 46% of people have a partner, but not spouse. The Millennials prefer postponing getting married, or they do not get married at all. The same amount of people, 4, are married or married/have partner with children.
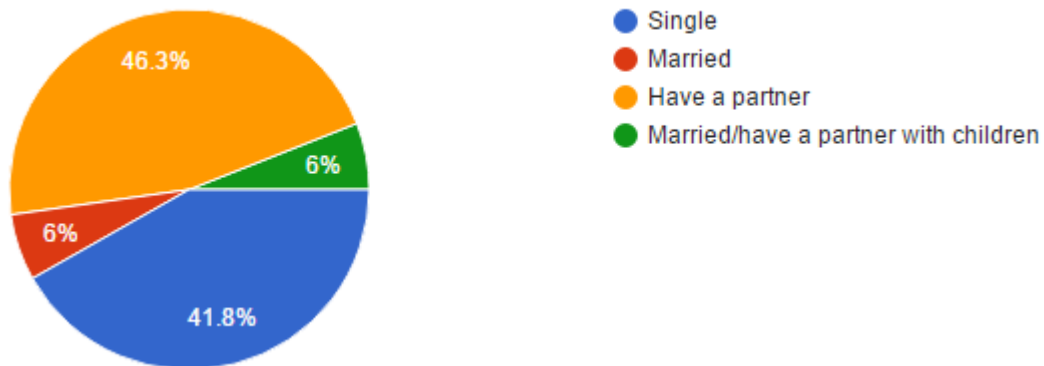


Figure 5. The respondents' marital status.

The total background analysis of the sample reveals that almost all the respondents belong to the Gen Y generation cohort. The exception is 4 participants, as 3 of them are employed men and one is a single working woman. Remarkable point is that all

these people have never tried any HEN. It proves the idea that p2p accommodation option is mostly popular among the Millennials.

After categorization and data analyzing it is obvious that the population sample belongs to generation of the Millennials. It also identifies major characteristics of this cohort: less focused on having a family, but more on ambitious personal career. Almost two-thirds of the respondents are students. Getting married later, living with parents and being unemployed (25 people in total) are another features of the Gen Y.

## 6.2 Awareness and the use of peer-to-peer accommodation type

The next part of the survey gathers information regarding people's awareness about hospitality exchange networks as a part of peer-to-peer accommodation type. In addition, the frequency of use is questioned.

The questions asked are as follows:

5. Have you ever heard about hospitality exchange networks such as Airbnb or Couchsurfing?

6. Have you ever used hospitality exchange network? Are you a member of any of them? If yes, please state which one.

7. How often do you use those networks (as a host or a guest)?

8. In case you have never used hospitality exchange network as an accommodation option, would you like to try? Why?

**Have you ever heard about HEN?**
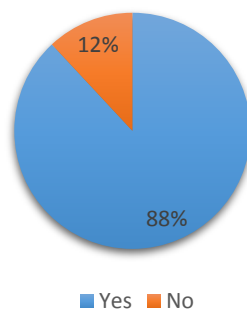
12%

88%

■ Yes ■ No

Figure 6. The respondent's awareness about HEN.

As it is shown on data chart 88% of all the respondents that make up 59 people in total know about the existence of hospitality exchange networks. This amount is quite high and lets think that peer-to-peer type of accommodation is quite popular among the young generation.
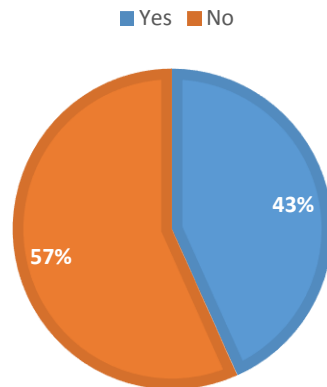
**HAVE YOU EVER USED HEN?**



Figure 7. The use of HEN.

However, surprisingly, only 43% (29 people) of all the sample have used the type of accommodation, or a member of any of them. Most of the time Airbnb was mentioned as lodging opportunity. The reason can be that even though the audience is aware about the existence of such accommodation option as homestay, this still might look doubtful. People can feel uncertain because of trust and safety issues. The other reasons mentioned by the respondents were the lack of comfort and privacy when staying at someone else's place. However, opposite to these ideas, a respondent wrote that home staying as an accommodation option during travelling is more convenient for them. The other person mentioned that making his own food is greatly important for him. As a result, p2p is a good option for them.

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE HEN?

■ never   ■ very seldom   ■ often   ■ very often

**64%** — never
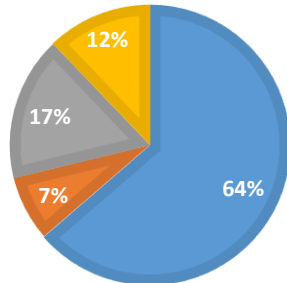**7%** — very seldom
**17%** — often
**12%** — very often

Figure 8. The frequency of use.

When talking about the frequency of use, more than half of the respondents (69%) never stay at someone else's home when travelling. 12% (8 people) mentioned that p2p accommodation such as Airbnb or Couchsurfing is the only lodging option during their travelling. 17% of the respondents (11 people) said that they use HEN as their travelling accommodation option quite often. And only 5 people mentioned that they use p2p accommodation option very seldom.

Out of the 42 people who said that they have never stayed at someone else's home when travelling, only 6 people mentioned that they would not like to try HEN as a lodging option. 36 respondents claimed that they definitely would like to try p2p accommodation. A respondent mentioned that although they have never used Airbnb or Couchsurfing or any other HEN, they would like to try that as many of their friends take advantage of that and she thinks it is very practical. Two respondents, who have already used HEN, strongly recommended to use this kind of travel accommodation, as that was the way they met their partners.

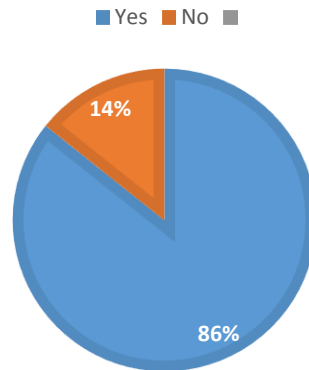**WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY HEN?**

Yes ■ No ■ ■



14%

86%

Figure 9. The willingness to try.

Consequently, most of the respondents had heard about hospitality exchange networks as Airbnb or Couchsurfing. Still, many of them (67%) have never used them. A positive finding at this part of the research is that people are quite open for new experiences. Out of 42 people who have never used HEN, 36 would like to try that, whether because they believe it is practical or cheap, or because they value their friends' opinion. It proves one more time, that the representatives of the Gen Y are thoughtful about resource saving. They prefer having new experiences and rely a lot on other people's opinion.

**6.3 The level of trust**

The next part of the survey is devoted to the question of trust. The basic aim of this part was to find out whether people feel safe and whether they trust their hosts when staying at peer-to-peer accommodation.

The questioned asked were:

12. If you are the user of hospitality exchange network, do you think you can trust people with whom you stay (hosts)?

13. How do you think, what kind of actions does hospitality exchange network take to build trust between members of the network?

According to the results, most of the users answered that when using p2p accommodation option during their travelling they trust people with whom they stay (the owners of the place), however, still they feel little bit worried and unsure. Only 14 people said that they do not trust people at all. But what was interesting, is that they are those respondents who have never used any p2p accommodation. They have never experienced staying at stranger's home and that is possibly why they feel unsure about that. Only 12 answers were about full trust. So only 12 persons feel safe and fully comfortable as hospitality exchange networks build trust.
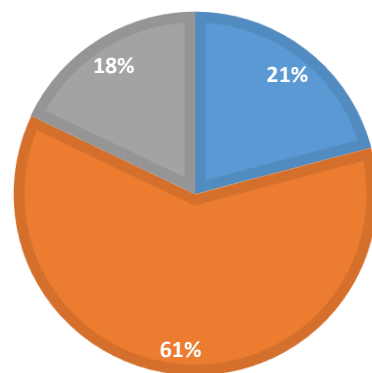
**CAN YOU TRUST PEOPLE?**



Figure 10. The level of trust.

When users were asked what they think p2p accommodation organizations do to build trust within networks, they had to choose between:

1. signing up through Facebook;

2. thorough verification process;

3. creating community like atmosphere;

4. members are encouraged to leave reviews and ratings that helps to get more information about host/guest.
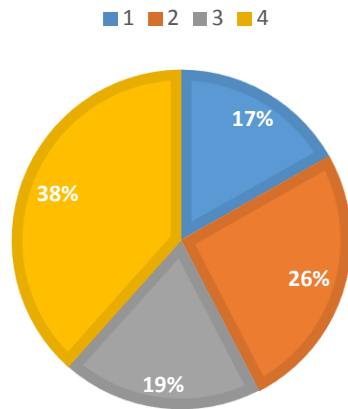
■1 ■2 ■3 ■4



Figure 11. Actions of HEN to build trust.

Most of the users believe that ratings and reviews made by other members of the network are the most trustworthy source of information. This Consumer Generated Media creates a sort of credibility and safety that makes people choose p2p as an accommodation option. However, less people believe that the thorough verification process is reliable enough. Only 24 people believe is strong community like atmosphere. Signing up through Facebook does not seem to be reliable either.

In total, online platform creators of hospitality exchange networks invest a lot into helping users rely on the networks and other users. For example, to become a member any person has to go through an in-depth verification process, including signing up through Facebook and giving personal information. However, still humans rely more on other people's experience. That proves another major feature of the Millennials: the willingness to stay independent, but relying a lot on social and Consumer Generated media.

## 6.4 Reasons to choose and customer value

The last part of the research investigates the real reasons why people choose p2p accommodation as a lodging option. And the customer value is found out as well.

The social factors, the opportunity to meet new people and to learn more about the destination and locals, were mentioned by 31 people (46% of total sample). Firstly, the travelers have a chance to get acquainted with people living at their travel destination. They can familiarize with the lifestyle and get the taste of the locals' real life. Due to HEN tourists can have a look at the back stage of their travel destination and have full insight into their hosts' culture. Additionally, the use of homestay concept gives another social value. When living at someone else's home during travelling, people may interact with humans (hosts) in person. After making the contact online, they have personal connection offline. And that is what users look for as well. After sharing online they want to have real life communication.

Only 8 people said that staying at Airbnb or Couchsurfing or any other HEN is a trend nowadays. 12 respondents mentioned that they choose staying at someone else's home because it is convenient. Four of them mentioned that they value the possibility to cook their own food during travelling. Especially it is valuable when travelling with a lot of friends or relatives.

When the users were asked whether they would still choose HEN in case the price for hotel was the same low, 15 people hesitated with the answer. Most of them said that it would depend on the situation. In case the reason to travel was to learn more about the destination, then they would choose HEN. 35 people answered that they would definitely choose a hotel, as for them it is more convenient lodging option that gives more privacy. For example a respondent mentioned that they like "when someone else cleans there and make the visit there comfortable". Plus, the safety issue is one more reason to choose a hotel.

16 people claimed that even when the price for hotel was lower, they would still choose someone else's home. As they explained, they like staying at a simple, not fancy place, where they have a chance to make a real opinion about the country.The financial factor makes most sense for all the users and those who have never tried

the concept of homestay before. Every respondent mentioned the less price for staying as the reason to choose HEN as a lodging variant.

The question about the overall level of satisfaction was not compulsory. Nevertheless, all the 23 answers received were positive. As a respondent mentioned, that hospitality exchange networks provide a place to sleep and that is the most important issue when you travel. Some people noted that most of the time when staying at Airbnb or Couchsurfing, they get more than they could expect, dipping into the real world of their travel destination.

## 6.5 Summary of the results

As the research shows, 94% of all the respondents belong to the Gen Y. It means that almost all the respondents (except for 4 person) who ever heard or used hospitality exchange networks belong to this generation cohort as well. The survey demonstrated most of the Millennials basic characteristics such as being focused more on personal career opportunities than on making family and getting married late.

The survey also states that most of the representatives of the Generation Y know about such lodging variant as peer-to-peer accommodation. Modern technologies give access to a huge amount of online data. Social media also plays an important role, when users can share any information they want, and travel experiences in particular. Still, many respondents have never used any type on HEN. However, they are willing to have new travel experience as most of the young generation members. The Millennials rely a lot on social media as an information resource. As a result, most of the respondents consider only Consumer Generated Media as a trustworthy information.

The major reasons for choosing p2p accommodation type instead of traditional hotels can be divided into two groups: social and financial factors. Both types of factors are significant, however it is not possible to define which one is more

influencing and meaningful. When the users were asked if they would choose hotel in case the price was the same low as it is for HEN, 15 people were not able to answer confidently, and 16 people said that still they would choose staying at someone's home.

At the same time the possibility to meet and to interact with people directly, opportunity to meet locals and experience the way they live and seeing the travel destination from the back stage were mentioned as the basic influencing reasons. The share of satisfied people, who have ever used HEN, was 100%.

# 7 Conclusions

The aim of the current research was to investigate the peer-to-peer as an accommodation option nowadays and to consider the influence of modern technologies, such as online platforms and social media. In addition, it was necessary to study the main customers' lifestyle and purchase behavior, to be more exact, the Millennials' main features. And it was intended to combine these aspects in practical part of the thesis, by conducting the quantitative research.

The theoretical section defined the development of the homestay concept beginning from its origin. The examples of the homestay were given for each historical period of humankind. Then the concept of homestay was reviewed as a part of peer-to-peer accommodation. And peer-to-peer idea was studied after the modern technologies influence. The Gen Y representatives as the main peer-to-peer customer were studied. Their lifestyle and purchase behavior were examined as well.

The empirical part of the thesis concerned the main customers' decisive factors for choosing p2p as an accommodation option. The research shows that even though hospitality exchange networks such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing are quite popular nowadays as an accommodation option during travelling, still many people have never tried them. The reasons are quite obvious, as during the vacation people value their privacy and personal space that can be guaranteed most of the time only by hotels or other commercial hospitality organizations.

The customer values of p2p as a lodging variant might be divided into two groups: social and financial. Financial values such as cost saving and value for less money were predominating, as every respondent, no matter whether they had ever used HEN or not, mentioned the lower price as the most important value of p2p accommodations. However, even if the price for hotels and p2p accommodations was the same, people still mentioned that they would choose p2p as a place to stay during the trip. The reason is that social value is a significant factor as well. The opportunity to meet new people and get acquainted with the locals, the chance to

see the travel destination from the back stage, and communication with people in real life are the valuable features, offered by hospitality exchange networks.

Although there are some negative stories about HEN customer experience, all the respondents that ever used Airbnb or Couchsurfing were satisfied with this type of lodging. The research revealed one of specific features of the Millennials: relying a lot on social and Consumer Generated Media. CGM is a strong tool used by HEN to build trust and level of credibility within the networks. 94% of all the respondents belong to the Gen Y. It means that the results of the survey can be considered as reliable, as the respondents were basically the main HEN customers. It also proves the fact that the Millennials have the strongest purchasing power in p2p sector.

## 8 Evaluation of the research

The general objective of the research was gained. The total overview of peer-to-peer accommodation was provided, customers' decisive factors were found out, analyzed and summarized. The main customer group, the Gen Y representatives, was investigated. However, the size of the sample was less than expected. To gain higher response level Google AdWords campaign was conducted during two weeks. For this time period more than 340 people clicked on the link to the survey. However, the sample size is only 67 sample units. It can be explained by the fact, that, as it was mentioned already before, many users simply surf through the Internet, but are not willing to add any content.

The research is considered as reliable and valid. Firstly, the objectives were met and results were summarized. While analyzing the data, at some point the answers of the same category began to resemble each other, and did not give any new information. That means the level of saturation was achieved. According to Siegle (Siegle, 2003), it is that point when *the researcher is no longer hearing or seeing new information*.

The presented results are applicable for any other research, regarding peer-to-peer accommodation and main customers' decisive factors. The thesis results are professionally useful for all the e-commerce oriented companies focused on tourism or hospitality fields. The reason is that this thesis will reveal the customer value of the peer-to-peer accommodation type. The decisive factors from the "guests'" point of view were examined. Thus, tourism and hospitality oriented companies can find out some new practically proven ideas for attracting potential and retaining existing customers. As for hotels, after getting acquainted with this thesis, management departments might detect some weaknesses or development opportunities within customer relationship processes.  Anyone, interested in reading the thesis, will get a profound information and analysis of hospitality exchange networks. Thus, the thesis might be interesting and useful for multiple parties, and it can give inspiration for further investigation.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

List of questions from the online questionnaire

1.What is your age?

2. Are you man/woman?

3. Are you working/student/working student/unemployed?

4.What is your marital status: single/married/have a partner/ married/ have a partner with children?

5.Have you ever heard about hospitality exchange networks such as Airbnb or Couchsurfing?
- Yes.
- No, I have never heard.

6. Have you ever used hospitality exchange network? Are you a member of any of them? If yes, please state which one.

7. How often do you use those networks?
- Never (I am only the member, who is surfing through the offered types of accommodation).
- Very seldom (once in two years).
- Often (every year).
- Very often (for every trip that I have I use only them if I need some accommodation).

8. In case you have never used hospitality exchange network as an accommodation option, would you like to try? Why?

9. What makes you choose a hospitality exchange network as an accommodation option during your trip instead of traditional hotel accommodation? (Several answers are possible.)
- It's cheaper.
- I can meet more people.
- I can learn more about my travel destination and people living there.
- Staying at someone's home is more convenient that at hotel.
- It is a trend nowadays.
- Other.

10. In case the price for staying at hotel was the same as using hospitality exchange network, which accommodation option would you choose? Please explain why.

11. In total, why do you like hospitality exchange networks? What kind of values they offer you?

12. If you are the user of hospitality exchange network, do you think you can trust people with whom you stay (hosts)/who stays at your home (your guests)?
- No, I don't trust anyone, so I don't use these networks.
- I trust my hosts/guests, but still I am always little bit worried.
- I trust these people fully, as the network (Airbnb or Couchsurfing) is building trust with the help of internet platform.

13. How do you think, what kind of actions does hospitality exchange network take to build trust between members of the network? (Several answers are possible.)
- signing up through Facebook;
- thorough verification process;
- creating community-like atmosphere;
- members are encouraged to leave reviews and ratings, that helps to get more information about host/guest.

14. In overall, after you have experienced hospitality exchange network, are you satisfied with that as an accommodation option? Please explain why.

15. What is the most remarkable moment when you were a host/guest at hospitality exchange network?

**Appendix 2**

Questionnaire cover letter

P2P as an accommodation option.
Good day
I am Rakovets Elizaveta, the student of Hotel, Tourism and Restaurant Management at Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Finland. At this moment I am conducting my survey as a part of my thesis process.

The purpose of the survey is to find out the users' opinion about peer-to-peer accommodation online networks (for example, such as Airbnb, Couchsurfing).

By responding to the attached questionnaire, you will help me a lot on my way to graduation.

The results of my thesis work will be published in Theseus (https://www.theseus.fi/), an open storage of the Universities of Applied Sciences of Finland.

All the responses will be processed anonymously and confidentially. Individuals cannot be recognized from the published results.

The answering questions will not take more than 7 minutes.

Thank you for participating!