

The role of customer attributions in providing feedback to online platforms

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ABSTRACT

In the past few years, many new ways of conducting business have emerged. One of these new businesses is Airbnb, which is serving as a platform for hosts that are willing to rent their property and guests that need an accommodation. Compared to traditional business models, the platforms rely on feedback from customers to a much higher extent, enabling Airbnb to keep an overview of the quality of the stay and the host and serving as an HRM practice applied by the customers. The goal of this research was to find out more about what motivates customers to provide feedback and what prevents them to do so? The results were very interesting. While the attribution of the request for feedback due to quality improvement or creating trust were not significant, the hypothesis of the provision of feedback being negatively related to the perception of the request for feedback due to control and exploitation of workers if the service value of the worker is high was accepted. This outcome implies that customers value the personal contact with the hosts to a high extent and are not willing to provide feedback as much as they would otherwise, if they perceive the feedback request being in place in order to control and exploit employees. It was also detected that the age of the respondents had a significant impact on both, the feedback provision and the perception of the independent variables. Consequently, it can be said that Airbnb differs highly to the traditional ways of conducting business, but one of the biggest differences is the personal contact the customers have with the host.

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Keywords

HRM, platforms, customer feedback, attribution theory, feedback provision, social exchange theory, Airbnb

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research topic and background

In the preceding decade, countless innovative technologies and previously unfamiliar industries have emerged. Many of them differ to a high extent from the traditional ways of conducting business. One of these new and unusual industries are online platforms, such as Airbnb, which I will focus on in this research. The uniqueness of those platforms lies in the fact that they are merely serving as intermediaries between consumers searching for a specific service on one side and businesses or individuals offering the desired service on the other. Its “main role is matchmaking, so that a customer can access assets of a peer service provider” (Benoit, Baker, Bolton, Gruber, & Kandampully, 2017, p. 219). For example, Airbnb connects individuals searching for an accommodation in a certain location with owners of properties that are willing to rent it to them for a limited time period. In fact, Airbnb as a company itself does not own a single piece of property.

Despite the novelty of this platform approach, there is one traditional feature that most platforms still put a lot of emphasis on: customer feedback. Customer feedback is defined as the “information coming directly from customers about the satisfaction or dissatisfaction they feel with a product or service” (Business Dictionary, 2018). It is originally needed when wanting to improve on customer needs and wants to achieve a satisfying customer experience. In contrast to traditional companies, platforms rely on customer feedback to a significantly higher extent because customers are the main actors when it comes to performance appraisal for the service providers of any sort. With platforms, the customer essentially becomes the employer of the host, because he or she hires the host or rather the hosts property for a certain amount of time. The feedback can then be regarded as the HRM mechanism the customer implements to judge the quality of the service. In traditional firms, this is managed by the company the employees work for so the feedback on their work comes from the company itself. “Many platform workers are quasi-managed by algorithms that incorporate client feedback and other metrics and are developed and implemented by firms that officially are not their employers” (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017, p. 185).

Accordingly, it is much more important for platforms to not only engage with the customer but also to stimulate him to give feedback. That is because it is the only evaluation source for the providers to give an indication of their quality of work and thus the only way for them to continue to work for the company, which shows why they depend on it to such a high degree. But when is a consumer willing to share his opinion on his experience and what motivates or prevents him or her from doing so?

There are several ways of allowing and stimulating customer feedback, that highly differ among companies. Uber, for example, will ask customers to rate their drivers on a five- star rating system, with five stars being the highest and best rating a driver can receive. Airbnb, on the other hand, not only implements a five- star rating system consisting of various categories, such as location, check- in, communication, cleanliness, etc. but also gives the consumer the opportunity to submit a written, more personal, review with which they will, in many of the cases, receive a review of their performance as a guest in return.

Another point of interest is the perception customers have of feedback provision processes. Do they regard these as positive or negative? What is their understanding on why a platform firm requests their feedback to such a considerable extent and does this influence their willingness to provide feedback?

This is one of the aspects this research paper is attempting to find out more about in the subsequent sections.

Customer provision of feedback is concerned with whether the customer decides to provide feedback or not. There is a myriad of reasons for that decision, may it be that feedback positively or negatively affects workers, the companies, or the consumers and the community themselves.

To begin with, feedback provides future customers with an indication of the quality of the service, as evaluated by previous customers, which is relevant for several reasons. First, it is an indication of quality of the service the providers are offering, enabling the companies to distinguish between employees offering a high- quality service and employees offering a rather low- quality service. Second, it also generates trust for potential future customers, because they can rely on someone else’s previous experiences, which assists the customer in deciding and decreases doubts about the quality of that future experience. Nonetheless, feedback also helps the workers on the other side of those platforms to promote themselves, making sure they stay in business and generate profit, because they receive intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for their services and it enables them to verify the quality of their service

As Boons found out in his research of 2015, the extent of feedback received by an individual also “positively relates to perceived respect” and is used to “assess individual workers’ trustworthiness and value” (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017, p. 184). Therefore, it is of high significance for platform companies, consumers and providers to find out what drives customers’ willingness to give feedback as well as the perception of feedback, to not only satisfy potential future customers, but also reward the service provider for their work, indicate the quality of the service in a reliable matter and therefore help the companies acting as intermediaries to generate more profit. There are several other factors that are positively related to the intention to recommend, may it be “the perceived usefulness”, “feelings of enjoyment”, “social influence” or solely “trust” (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017).

Accordingly, there are various insights that have already been gained, but very few of them have been linked to platforms, which are so distinctive in their way of working compared to traditional firms.

In consequence, this research paper will find out more about why customers provide or do not provide feedback to platform service providers. This is not only helpful for platforms to improve on their feedback mechanisms but also for the service providers to guarantee that they are able to receive the maximum amount of feedback possible to stay in business for the overarching company.

1.2 Attribution theory

In order to explain customers’ feedback behaviors such as the provision of feedback, I will make use of the attribution theory. Addressing “how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events”, it “examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgement” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 23).

This theory is highly suitable for this research, because it shows how people explain events in their daily life, such as the request for feedback provision by companies. Because everybody perceives underlying causes for every action, customers also perceive an underlying reason for the request of feedback. There has already been extensive research about the relation of employees’ belief on why employers offer certain HRM practices, may it be that it “enhances service quality and employee well- being” or on the other hand in “management’s interest in cost reduction and exploiting employees” (Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). However, instead of linking it to

employees and employers' HRM practices, I will focus on the customers' beliefs about why platforms request their feedback on their websites.

Consequently, given that platforms are a novel phenomenon, not much research has been conducted for, there is little knowledge about the attributions of customers of giving feedback.

Nevertheless, I will fill the gap that exists in the analysis of platforms with the knowledge that has already been gained when analyzing the beliefs of employers and employees in traditional firms in order to see if it corresponds with the novelty of platforms and the customers' attribution of the providers' request for feedback.

1.3 Research question

The main research question this paper will address is:

“To what extent are customers' attributions of performance evaluation related to their actual engagement in performance evaluation of platform workers”?

The findings of the research will assist particularly those companies working in the online platform industry in several ways, as they can benefit from implementing the design or feedback methods that generate the highest amount of customer performance evaluation by ensuring that the customer perceives feedback as beneficial and useful.

The research also gives a contribution to the attribution theory, as it expands the knowledge on feedback provision at platform companies and adds to the existing research about perceptions on HRM practices.

2. THEORY

2.1 Platforms

Platforms have “enabled consumers to focus on shared access to products rather than owning them” (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017, p. 281). Whereas companies in the previous years owned the products or services they were offering, platforms solely “act as middlemen to fill immediate short-term service needs for consumers and businesses” (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017, p. 183).

There is a “triadic exchange involving customers, peer service providers and platform providers” (Benoit, Baker, Bolton, Gruber, & Kandampully, 2017, p. 219).

This implies that, as opposed to employees in regular companies, employees in platforms are not actually employed in the traditional sense, but are “effectively self-employed, and the platform's terms and conditions generally dictate all the details (such as pay, working conditions and intellectual property)” (Schmid-Drüner, 2016).

The popularity and usage of platform companies has increased rapidly within the preceding years.

According to Huws (2016), “by 2020 contingent workers will make up nearly half of all US workers, and 11% of these will be working for on-demand platforms”, showing how exponentially these platforms are developing.

On a similar note, PwC (2015) says that the “five key sharing sectors (car sharing, accommodation, finance, music video streaming, and staffing) will soar in global revenues from \$15 billion in 2013 to \$335 billion by 2025”.

In fact, the variety of terms this phenomenon is given, displays not only the increasing importance of it, but also the novelty, because of the different interpretations on what this approach is about. However, it is primarily referred to as “platform economy” (Kenney & Zysman, 2016, p. 61), “collaborative consumption” (Botsman, 2015), “crowd sourcing” (Felstiner, 2011) or “access-based consumption” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012).

Two well-known platforms are Uber and Airbnb.

Uber provides a “ride-sharing service”, where Uber drivers “utilize their own vehicles and work hours that are most convenient for them” (Benoit, Baker, Bolton, Gruber, & Kandampully, 2017, p. 219). They then offer their ride services to any individual searching for a ride on that specific date and time in the area of the service provider after mutual agreement on the service. Thus, Uber as a business, merely offers their app/ website to connect the driver with the individual looking for a ride.

Airbnb works in a very similar manner. Their website and service are connecting individuals, owning a property, whether it is simply a room, an apartment or an entire house, with an individual searching for a specific type of accommodation in a specific location in accordance with its preferences. Once more, the companies simply connect the two matching parties.

It is a very disruptive industry, shown for example in the fact that, “Airbnb had claimed 8–10% of revenues in the hotel sector in Austin, Texas, and exerted downward pressure on prices” (Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2015).

One reason for the increased use of platforms is that the “new model in which people share what they have will contribute to better resource efficiency, social benefit and reduced environmental pollution” (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017, pp. 281, 282). This suggests that the popularity is not only due to the novelty of the approach but also due to the fact that there are significant indications of it being more sustainable and effective in a time of environmental and economic uncertainties.

Despite all the advantages of platforms, several drawbacks exist, especially considering ethics and morals. Airbnb, for instance, “has led to long-term housing becoming less affordable by the restriction of supply as a result of short-term lettings, and the likelihood that some rentals are illegal and not properly regulated” (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017, p. 282). Not only Airbnb creates criticism, but also Uber is being accused that it “exploits workers with long hours and poor pay” (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017, p. 282).

Nonetheless, it continues to be a very popular industry that is growing continuously.

2.2 Customer Feedback

It is widely known that customer feedback relates to the satisfaction of customers with the product or service offered by a company. Nevertheless, there has been an inconclusive debate about what the driving factors are behind the customers' willingness to engage in performance evaluation.

Customer feedback can consist of many different facets. Some of it may be rather unstructured, such as suggestions or complaints by customers in person, as well as interacting with the customer and adjusting to his needs and wants, but it can also have a more structured perspective. This might include online surveys, phone calls with the customer or sending emails to observe their experience.

Furthermore, one can differentiate between administrative and developmental feedback. (Lepak & Gowan, 2016)

Administrative feedback is implemented to “understand your employees' current performance as well as their potential to perform”. (Lepak & Gowan, 2016, p. 329). This suggests, that it is used to make decisions about hiring or firing employees as well as analyzing their quality of service and potential.

Developmental feedback on the other hand, is used to “help employees to improve their performance in order to add more value to the company”. (Lepak & Gowan, 2016, p. 329). That way, companies check if the employees need a way to improve the quality of their service to make sure that they reach the fullest of their potentials.

In Figure 1, you can see a recap of the four types of feedback. This research paper will focus on the structured and

administrative way of giving and receiving feedback. That is because the majority of platforms make use of structured feedback compared to unstructured. An example of that is Airbnb, that makes use of structured rating mechanisms. Moreover, since this research is on platforms in specific, administrative feedback is more prevalent and of higher significance, as it affects decisions regarding the employees and companies to a much higher extent. Nevertheless, developmental feedback is also important, because the host wants to improve his service for future customers.

	Structured	Unstructured
Administrative	e.g. in- app rating of employees Focus of this Research	e.g. complaints leading to firing of employees
Developmental	e.g. surveys to improve products or serve customer needs	e.g. complaints leading to changes in products or designs

Figure 1. Four types of feedback

Most of the platforms, will have very simple feedback mechanisms. Uber, for example, has a 5- star rating mechanism, asking the customer directly after the ride has ended on their opinion of the experience and their feedback in the app. Customers also have the choice to use the in- app tipping mechanism to give an extra reward to an above- average service.

Along similar lines, Airbnb’s rating system not only consists of the 5- star mechanism, rating various categories such as cleanliness, location or communication but also operates on a feedback loop basis, implying that not only the service provider receives a written feedback, but also the customer has a chance to use the feedback given to it by the service providers to verify its account and make use of it when booking accommodations in the future.

This study is particularly addressing the issue of customer feedback provision and behavior. Customer feedback provision means that the focus is on when and if customers share their experiences and not the extent to which the experience was satisfying or not.

Thus, there might be several perceptions that consumers have of feedback that either leads to them providing it or refraining from providing it.

2.3 Attribution Theory

To explain customer feedback provision, I draw on the attribution theory because it explains the underlying causes and intentions of something and its resulting behaviors. This theory serves as a suitable base for this research, because it is very broad and yet explains individuals’ behavior very specifically. Moreover, there has already been similar research conducted in this field which can be applied, transferred and compared to the provision of feedback in platforms.

The main concept of the attribution theory by Bernhard Weiner is why people do what they do, in terms of “how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events”, and it “examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgement” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 23). To recapitulate, it means that human behavior is driven by an attribution of why things happen the way they happen, implying that there is always a cause or reason to every behavior and action. Relating this to feedback and platforms, it is that customers think there is a reason why platforms are

requesting their feedback, due to there being an underlying cause for everything.

In general, you can distinguish between two types of attributions: (1) internal attributions relating to something within the observed person, such as its personality or its beliefs, or (2) external attributions, relating to something caused by the outside, such as the situational features

There are certain advantages and disadvantages of the attribution theory. Advantages are that it “provides predictability” and it is “effective at predicting behaviors when the cause was properly identified” (Leadership Central, 2018). Drawbacks are that “inaccurate inferences can lead to erroneous assessments”, other plausible causes are ignored, and it can lead to “expecting a particular behavior from yourself or others that might not become reality” (Leadership Central, 2018).

As beforementioned, there are numerous research papers connected to the concept of attribution theory. As an example, Nishii et al. (2008), conducted a research into employee attributions of the “why of HR practices”. This means that they focused on what employees perceive about why companies are implementing certain HRM practices. To display their findings briefly, it can be said that the external attributions of the employees, are limited to union compliance as a reason to implement a certain HRM practice. However, concerning internal attributions, Nishii distinguishes between (1) commitment- focused attributions which describe the notion that employees believe that their employer offers HRM practices to improve service quality or employee well- being and (2) control- focused attributions such as cost reduction and exploiting employees.

The reason why Nishii et al.’s research and the consequential findings are related to the purpose of this research paper, is because providing feedback is also a distinctive type of HRM practice. This is also the cause of why some of the internal attributions that Nishii et al. (2008) found can be adopted to this research paper, making them case- specific to platforms and feedback. Linking the commitment- focused attributions by Nishii et al. (2008) to this research, it can be noticed that companies might indeed request feedback, in order to improve the quality of the service, because feedback reflects the quality of the experience the customer encountered, so customers might expect an alteration or appraisal after giving feedback. However, employee well- being is not very applicable in this case, as providing feedback does not reflect on the employee well- being, nor changes it. Concerning the control- focused attributions, cost reduction is not applicable for our research, because again, providing feedback does not reduce costs. But the attribution of requesting feedback to control and exploit employees can be assumed, because this perception is omnipresent in all types of firms, that try to maximize their profit and not only limited to traditional firms. Compared to traditional firms, that maximize their profit by maximizing their revenue and keeping costs low, platforms maximize their revenue by making sure that the workers expand their availabilities to a maximum. In the case of Uber, for example, the company also minimizes the labor costs as much as possible, but since the drivers are all independently working for the company, they are very restricted in their protection rights compared to traditional workers. The positive feedback assists the workers to keep working for the company but if it is negative for any reason, Uber can simply deinstall their accounts and thereby fire them without any protection on the side of the driver.

In the case of Airbnb, the platform tries to ensure that the hosts generate a high amount of revenue by expanding their availabilities, but they also take a relatively high percentage of what the hosts earn to cover their fees and costs.

There also aspects, that are specific to platforms. One external attribution is building network trust in the community of the provider. Trust is defined as the “firm belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone” (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). It is particularly important in this case, because people are solely reliant on the experiences and feedback of previous guests and people active in the community to avoid frauds or danger and develop trust in the worker as well as the platform themselves. A summary of the three abovementioned attributions of the request of feedback at Airbnb can be found in figure 2.

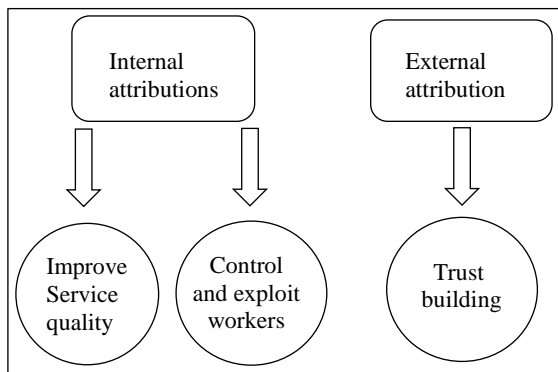


Figure 2. Attributions in this research

2.4 Hypotheses

Adding on to the attributions, I will develop several hypotheses, not only adjusting the research of Nishii et al. (2008) but also drawing from various other insights gained from previously mentioned literature as well as considering the applicable attributions.

The first hypothesis is focused on the attribution of the request for feedback due to the improvement of service quality. This is positively related to customer feedback provision, because by providing feedback, you give back to the whole community. This implies, that the provision of feedback does not directly benefit the person providing it itself, but benefits every potential Airbnb user, because they will enjoy a higher quality of service in the future. In return, the person providing feedback also relies on other users to act the same way, so that it is a constant improvement of quality, benefiting everybody and motivating many users to provide feedback.

Therefore, *hypothesis 1*, is:

Attributions that the provision of feedback reflects the improvement of service quality will be positively related to customer feedback provision

The second hypothesis is linked to the attribution of requesting feedback in order to develop network trust. This attribution is positively related with the provision of feedback, because it also benefits the entire community. As mentioned before, trust is highly important in platforms, so that no one is being taken advantage of and manages to avoid fraud or other dubious offers. Consequently, by providing feedback, you enable potential future guests to trust the host to a higher extent just as you can rely on other users to provide feedback to have a more reliable opinion about potential future hosts. Ergo, customers will be more motivated to provide feedback because it creates reciprocal trust in the network and about future stays.

Therefore, *hypothesis 2*, is:

Attributions that the provision of feedback reflects the development of network trust will be positively related to customer feedback provision.

The third hypothesis is concerned with the attribution of the request for feedback to control and exploit workers. When looking at traditional firms, the request for feedback is not associated with the control or exploitation of workers as much

as it is with the improvement of quality, because those companies have various other systems to assess the quality of the workers. Therefore, you might not consider this attribution being linked to feedback provision to a significantly high extent. But because platforms are very limited in their possibilities of assessing the quality of workers, feedback is one of the only ways to do so.

The feedback provided by customers assists the platform in evaluating the service of the workers and therefore also control the workers, as those are highly dependent on positive feedback, because otherwise their accounts might get deactivated and they cannot keep working for the company. The feedback provided might also assist the platforms in controlling the workers, because due to the high dependence on good feedback, they are in some way forced to drive as many customers as possible or hosts as many guests as possible to receive as much feedback as possible in order to keep their position at the company,

The second part of the hypothesis is concerned with the service value of the worker. The service value of the worker is if the service provided fulfills their expectations and if it is appreciated. When the service value of the worker is high, customers are likely to be wanting to refrain from them being controlled and exploited by the underlying platform because they believe that they offer good service and should continue to do so. Therefore, despite the fact that providing feedback would not have any serious impact on the customer itself, customers will most likely appreciate the worker enough to be wanting to avoid them getting exploited and therefore not provide feedback.

Nevertheless, there are various factors that could influence the correlation between the two variables, which is why I will introduce another theory that moderates the relationship between the variables. This theory is the social exchange theory. It states that “people are motivated to attain some valued reward for which they must forfeit something of value (cost)”, and it also says that “we are disturbed when there is not equity in an exchange” (Redmond, 2015).

Applying this to platforms and providing feedback, it is apparent that customers want to receive something in return, when providing feedback, but also want to give something back to the providers. They also identify on a more personal level with the service provider than with traditional companies, which may lead to them being more attentive of the provision of feedback and rewarding good and punishing bad service.

Therefore, *hypothesis 3*, is:

Attributions that the provision of feedback reflects the control and exploitation of workers will be negatively related to customer feedback provision if the service value of the worker is high.

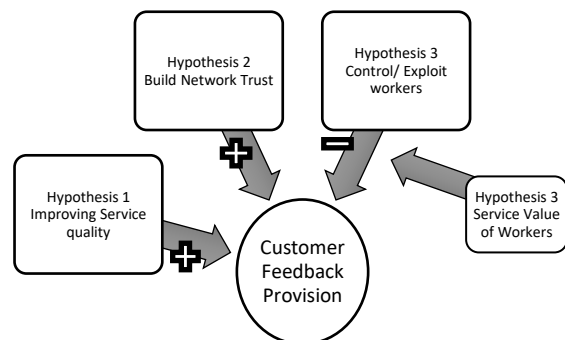


Figure 3. Research hypotheses

The following parts of the research will address and test those hypotheses and delve into the analysis of platforms and the provision of customer feedback.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling Procedure

The interest of this study is to find out the link between customers' attribution of providers' request for feedback and the provision of feedback.

To test the hypotheses, there are various considerations that must be considered.

First, I decided to focus on one specific platform instead of using multiple, that platform of my research being Airbnb. The choice of using only one platform has been made, because it enables the findings to be more consistent and avoids differences in customer feedback provision behavior, that are due to differences in the type of platform used, such as the design of the app or what the customer receives in return after providing feedback. Airbnb in specific was chosen because every customer can verify whether they have provided feedback for each time they had used the accommodation of a provider or not. Furthermore, there is a significant amount of people making use of Airbnb, which facilitates the data collection to a substantial extent.

The next decision that was made was concerning the procedure of the data collection. I worked with quantitative research, specifically online surveys, making use of the software "Qualtrics". Airbnb operates on an online basis, meaning that accommodations are booked online as well as feedback is provided online. Therefore, making use of an online survey is the most useful approach. The choice of applying a survey was also made, because the application had to be appropriate to answer the research question and test the hypotheses. Due to the fact that the research question asks for the extent of the customer provision, quantitative data is needed, resulting in a survey being the ideal choice.

I further chose this type of procedure, as it incorporates many different opinions on the provision of feedback. It also enables me to have a larger sample size, as well as diversity in the sample size in a facilitated way. It is specifically suiting for the concept of attributions, because every human links causes to specific behaviors, so every human will link reasons to the provision of feedback, which made it easy to generate a sufficient amount of people filling in the survey.

Furthermore, online surveys facilitate not only reaching a significantly higher amount of people, but also generating results in a much shorter time span than for instance interviews would.

Moreover, operationalizing the variables used in our research works well in a quantitative way to achieve correlations that prove or deny the hypotheses.

There were several decisions regarding the participants of the research to be made.

I chose to focus on diversification in the participants. This displays diversification in age groups and gender as well as nationality, to make sure that the customer feedback provision behavior is not dependent or different among a specific gender or country, but to be able to generalize it to all genders and all countries after the research has been conducted. Nevertheless, the research was conducted in English, as the majority of our target group and people that make use of Airbnb are fluent in English and had the opportunity to contact us in case there are any misunderstandings or confusion regarding the questions due to language barriers.

Furthermore, the sample size had to be as large as possible to receive a result that is valid and unbiased. Therefore, I decided to receive at least around 150 responses to the online survey so

that the results can be applied to various circumstances and sample groups.

The sample group consisted out of a variety of individuals that have booked with Airbnb before and have therefore had a choice and opinion on feedback provision. This group varied, between family and friends, to students at the University, to accessing various travel platforms and online groups, that contain many people using Airbnb on a regular basis. Thus, it should be mentioned that the target population are Airbnb users, because the aim of the research is to generalize to all Airbnb users, so the sample should be representative of the group. Therefore, the criteria for respondents of the survey were the usage of Airbnb and the willingness to upload a proof showing if they have provided feedback or not.

We first conducted a short pilot test, with three potential respondents, making sure that all questions are clear and understandable. Then we reached the respondents by providing them with an URL via text message, email or an online post in various travel forums and the choice to fill in or not. We also provided them with an incentive to fill in the survey, being a 50€ voucher for Airbnb, to motivate individuals to fill it in and submit it to us and to ensure that they make use of the survey in a responsible matter. Apart from the 50€ voucher, another possible motivation to fill in the survey was to contribute to future research. Furthermore, we made sure that all questions and directions were clearly stated and that our contact details were present in the survey in case of any misunderstandings or questions regarding the research.

The survey consisted out of several subcategories and questions. Recent customers verified their statement with a choice of submitting a screenshot of the website proving how often they have provided feedback in the past.

Once the data collection had been finished, the survey responses were verified. Some had to be deleted due to not completing the survey fully, skipping some questions or accidentally entering the wrong data. In total, the number of responses that were valid and fully completed, was 144 samples. This sample size is representative of the Airbnb community because it is a large number of respondents all active in the Airbnb community. Nevertheless, there are some aspects that must be taken into account when generalizing. First, it should be mentioned that the majority of the respondents were relatively young and therefore we should generalize towards and focus more on the younger groups of Airbnb users. Out of the 144 responses, the majority is between 18 and 24 years old (58,3%). The 25-34 years old group accounts for another 25% of the sample, which leaves 16.7% from the age groups above 34.

Regarding the country of origin, it can be said that the majority of the respondents came from Europe (60,4%) or North America (21,5%).

The last control variable, the experience of the respondent with Airbnb, resulted in 50,7% of the respondents using Airbnb for one to two years, 29,9% of the respondents have been using Airbnb for three to four years, 11,1% have been using it for five years or more and 8,3% have been using Airbnb for less than one year.

3.2 Operationalization

The next aspect to be considered is the operationalization of the variables.

The different attributes will be listed on a five-point Likert scale. This means that each of the items will be measured on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree"). Linking the scale to my research, the scale measured how the how customers receive the request of feedback.

The scales for the variables can be found in full length in appendix 1 and the full operationalization table can be found in appendix 2.

I started the analysis with an exploratory factor analysis. This was conducted to check if the survey questions asked for one variable are loading on the same factor and therefore measure the construct they are supposed to measure. The factor analysis was conducted for each of the variables separately.

The higher they load on the same factor, the better, because it shows that they measure the same construct.

I also checked for internal consistency, by looking at the Cronbach's alpha. As a guideline, I took the values above 0.7 to be internal consistent

3.2.1 Measuring the improvement of service quality

The first independent variable is the attribution of service quality. We define the attribution of service quality as an attribution "of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations." (Business Dictionary, 2018). This implies that the improvement of service quality is due to the service not fully conforming to the client's expectations and can therefore be adjusted in the future.

We developed the scale to measure this variable ourselves, as there was no appropriate scale already existent.

In line with this, the first item we used to measure the attribution of service quality improvement, is (1) helping the hosts deliver quality services to their guests. Thus, feedback assists the hosts in conforming fully to the customers' expectations. The second item we used is (2) improving the quality of the listings. This is to apply feedback to get rid of any inconveniences and dissatisfying experiences and make sure that the service conforms to a higher extent to their expectations in the future.

When conducting a factor analysis, it was to apparent that both items load highly on the same factor and have a high Cronbach's alpha, showing internal consistent as well as reliability of the scale, meaning that it measures what was intended to measure.

	Factor 1	Cronbach's Alpha
Item 1	.801	.781
Item 2	.801	

Figure 4. Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha of H1

3.2.2 Measuring network trust

The second independent variable is the attribution of network trust. We define this as the attribution of the "firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something" (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). This implies that the guest should trust the host to be reliable, truthful and able to rent out his accommodation in a mindful matter.

The scale we used to measure this has been adjusted from the research of Liang et al. (2018) focusing on trust in Airbnb and trust in hotels. We used this scale, because it was already applied successfully to Airbnb and represented the desired measurement of trust in a valuable way. We then picked the items that matched our research goal to the highest extent and translated them to the following items. The first item we used to measure this concept has been to (1) provide future guests with the guarantee that the host is trustworthy. Thus, the guest should be able to trust the host that his or her information is correct and that it does not deviate from what has been promised to the guest.

The second item that has been used to measure network trust was to (2) provide future guests with the guarantee that the host

is dependable. What this implies is, that the guest should be able to expect the room to be ready by arrival and that the host does not switch up reservations, cancels rooms shortly before arrival or misuses their confidential information.

The factor analysis showed that both items load on the same factor to a high extent and that the Cronbach's alpha is also very high, showing the scale is appropriate and reliable.

	Factor 1	Cronbach's Alpha
Item 1	.907	.903
Item 2	.907	

Figure 5. Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha of H2

3.2.3 Measuring the control and exploitation of workers

The next independent variable is the attribution of the control and exploitation of workers. We define this as the attribution of "treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work" (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). This implies that Airbnb takes advantage of their workers to fulfill their own interests and disregards the interests of the owners themselves.

We developed the scale for this variable ourselves, due to a lacking existence of scales measuring the desired construct. In line with this, the first item we measured is (1) to pressure the hosts to expand the availability of their listings, even if it harms their won interest, meaning that Airbnb's interest is to always have the accommodations fully booked to gain as much revenue as possible, without considering the impacts on the providers. The second item we used is (2) to maximize the profit for Airbnb, at the expense of the host's interest. This would include situations where Airbnb increases the percentage they receive from the providers' revenues.

The factor analysis showed that the items load on the same factor to a smaller extent than the other variables, and that the Cronbach' alpha is somewhat lower, which may be due to the fact that those questions were more controversial than the others and therefore the respondents might have had different opinions on the control and exploitation of employees.

	Factor 1	Cronbach's Alpha
Item 1	.629	.566
Item 2	.629	

Figure 6. Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha of H3

3.2.4 Measuring the service value of the worker

Besides the independent and dependent variables, there is also one moderator variable: *the service value of workers*. We define this as "if you value something or someone, you think that they are important and you appreciate them" (Collins Dictionary , 2018) .

The scale we used for the moderator variable has been adjusted from the research of Meijerink (2013) measuring service value. We translated the items to Airbnb and the hosts and resulted in the following items.

The first item we used for this is (1) overall, the value of my most recent Airbnb stay for me is very high, to assess the respondent's opinion on the service value of their worker.

The second item we apply is (2) in comparison to the spent effort and time, the extent to which my most recent Airbnb stays satisfies my needs is very high, which also emphasizes, how high the service value of the worker indeed is.

The factor analysis showed that both items load on the same factor to a high extent and that the Cronbach's alpha is also very high, showing the scale is appropriate and reliable.

	Factor 1	Cronbach's Alpha
Item 1	.775	.744
Item 2	.775	

Figure 7. Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha of H3

3.2.5 Measuring customer feedback provision

The dependent variable we used is customer feedback provision. We measured this variable in percentages by dividing the amount of times they have provided feedback through the amount of times they have booked a stay with Airbnb.

3.2.6 Measuring the control variables

We controlled the sample for various variables. The first item we controlled for is the age of the respondents. This is of significance because the technological understanding as well as the perception of feedback might differ among generations. We asked the respondents to enter their year of birth and then transformed that variable into their age and then formed several age groups to facilitate the analysis.

The second item we controlled for is the country of origin. It was used to check if the perceptions on the request for feedback differ among countries or cultures, as some cultures might perceive providing feedback more of a positive aspect to give back to the host while others might perceive it as a waste of time. We measured this item by asking the respondents to enter their country of origin and then grouped them in continents to have an easier understanding of the different origins and cultures.

We also controlled for the experience the respondents have with Airbnb, with the year the respondents have started using Airbnb, to assess whether that makes a difference in their behavior. This could happen, because the customers that have used it for a longer time, might feel more tied to Airbnb and its host and the request for feedback. We measured this by asking for the year the respondents have started using Airbnb and then assorted that data into four groups all showing a different duration of experience with Airbnb.

3.3 Analysis

To analyze the data gained by conducting the survey and then test the hypothesis, we used SPSS and the multiple regression method.

We used this method, because in this research we have one dependent variable and several independent ones. In addition, the independent as well as the dependent variables are continuous, which further adds to the choice of multiple linear regression.

Before starting with the analysis, I checked if the assumptions to carry out a multiple linear regression analysis are met. The first assumption, which is a sufficient sample size, is met by having 144 people filling in the survey.

The second assumption is that there is no multicollinearity. Looking at the correlation table in Figure 8, you can see that this assumption is also met, since the highest correlation is .493, which is not high enough to imply multicollinearity.

The third assumption is linearity. This can be verified by taking a look at the normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual. The values are more or less on the line of the best fit, which also measures linearity, proving that this assumption is met as well.

The fourth assumption is that there are no outliers. This can be checked by looking at the Cook's distance and at the standard residual. The standard residual has to be in range of -3 to 3, which is given with values of a min. -1,995 and a max. of 1,113. Cook's distance should not be bigger than 1, which is also given with a value of 0,056 maximum. Therefore, the fourth assumption is also met.

The last assumption is that the dependent variable is normally distributed. That assumption can be checked with the test of normality, the Shapiro- Wilk test. However, it has to be above 0,005 to be significant and normally distributed, which is not given with a value of 0,001. This means, that the dependent variable of this sample is not normally distributed, which violates an assumption. Nevertheless, the multiple regression analysis will be continued, but there is some caution to be taken when generalizing the outcomes.

Furthermore, The Spearman Correlation test in SPSS was taken into account as it does not assume a normal distribution, but this test could not be applied due to the fact that not all of its assumptions were met.

In addition to that, I applied the linear regression in a hierarchical way, meaning that I first entered the control variables as X, then I entered the independent variables as X, and then I entered the interaction variable (service value * the mean of factor 3).

4. RESULTS

Next, the outcomes of the linear regression analysis will be displayed.

The first thing to focus on are the descriptive statistics, seen in Figure 8.

As you can see, the mean for the first independent variable is 4,07, which implies that the respondents agree with a perception of the request for feedback by Airbnb to be due to quality improvement.

The mean of the second independent variable is 4,47, which likewise explains that the respondents agree to perceive also the request for feedback to be in place to build network trust.

The mean of the third independent variable is 2,59, showing that the respondents disagree with the statement of the perception of the request for feedback in place to control and exploit workers.

In addition, there are several significant correlations to be detected. The highest significant correlations is the perception of the request for feedback due to the creation of trust with the perception of the request for feedback due to quality improvement. However, the control variable of the age group is also significantly correlated with the perception of the request for feedback due to creating trust as well as with the dependent variable of the feedback provision.

The second part of the results are the outcomes of the regression analysis, to be seen in Figure 9.

I used three models, the first one being only the control variables, the second one the control variables and the independent variables and the third one the interaction variable.

As you can see, the R^2 significantly increases, when the control variables are added, as it moves from .069 to .090. The addition of the interaction variable also increases the R^2 significantly, from .090 to .132. This means that in model 3, 13.2% of the variance in the dependent variable is predicted by the independent variables.

Another important aspect to notice is that age has a significant, positively, and somewhat strong impact on all three models, showing that the feedback provision differs amongst age groups, as you can see in figure 9, model 2 ($B = .239, p < 0.01$).

	Mean	SD	Experience with Airbnb	Age Group	Origin	Quality Improvement	Trust	Control	Value	Feedback Provision
Experience with Airbnb	2,44	.80	1							
Age Group	1,77	1.20	.025	1						
Origin	1,87	1.42	.132*	-.010	1					
Quality Improvement	4,07	.97	0.21	-.113*	-.093	1				
Trust	4,47	.87	.135*	-.247***	-.057	.493***	1			
Control	2,59	.95	.081	-.018	.095	-.033	-.122*	1		
Value	4,18	.78	0.29	.148	-.016	.079	.216	.048	1	
Feedback Provision	69,74%	39.287%	.123*	.232***	-.028	.014	.027	-.133*	.250	1

Figure 8. Descriptive Statistics (***) Significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), ** significant at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed), * significant at $p < 0.1$ (2-tailed))

Because the relationship is positive and significant, it can be said that the older the customer is, the more likely he or she is to provide feedback.

The next thing to be considered are the standardized coefficients.

Hypothesis 1 is “*Attributions that the provision of feedback reflects the improvement of service quality will be positively related to customer feedback provision*”.

In figure 9, model 2, it can be seen that the relationship is positive, but weak and insignificant ($B = .007$, $p > 0.1$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 must be rejected.

Hypothesis 2 is that “*Attributions that the provision of feedback reflects the development of network trust will be positively related to customer feedback provision*”.

As seen in figure 9, model 2, the relationship is positive, but also weak and insignificant ($B = .048$, $p > 0.1$), leading to the rejection of hypothesis 2.

However, hypothesis 3, “*Attributions that the provision of feedback reflects the control and exploitation of workers will be negatively related to customer feedback provision if the service value of the worker is high*”, leads to a different result than the two previous hypotheses.

In model 3 in figure 9, it can be noticed that the relationship of control and feedback provision changes to a significant outcome showing a strong and negative relationship ($B = -.574$, $p < 0.01$) with a significant moderating effect of the service value of the worker, showing a strong and positive impact on the relationship ($B = .484$, $p < 0.01$).

This means that the higher the service value of the worker becomes, the more is the relationship of the attribution of the request of feedback due to control and exploitation negatively related to the customer feedback provision.

Therefore the results show that when the service value of the worker becomes higher, the customer wants to avoid the control and exploitation of him or her and provides less feedback if he or she perceives the feedback to be contributing to the control and exploitation.

In summary, you can say that the negative relationship between the attribution of the request for feedback due to control and exploitation of workers on the one hand, and the provision of feedback by a customer on the other turns stronger when service value of the worker is high.

This lends support for Hypothesis 3.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Experience with Airbnb	.123	.125	.134
Age	.228***	.239***	.193**
Origin	-.042	-.027	-.016
Quality Improvement		.007	.021
Trust		.048	-.011
Control		-.130	-.574***
Moderator			.484**
N	144	144	144
F	3.472**	2.263**	2.948***
R²	.069	.090	.132
Adj. R²	.049	.050	.087

Figure 9. Regression Outcome (***) Significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), ** significant at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed), * significant at $p < 0.1$ (2-tailed))

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Limitations

All in all, the results showed that the customers indeed have attributions about the request of feedback. Despite the fact, that hypothesis 1 and 2 had to be rejected due to insufficient significance, hypothesis 3 showed some interesting findings. However, since the dependent variable is not normally distributed, we cannot generalize the findings to all Airbnb users.

Furthermore, the violation of the assumption of a normal distribution might have had an impact on the findings and its significance.

Apart from that, it is to be mentioned that the fact that the dependent variable has been measured in percentages, with a high amount of percentages being close to 100% or 0%, which could also cause the non-significant findings, as data points between 20% and 80% are better for the analysis.

Therefore, other measures could be taken to change the outcome of the findings, such as treating the proportion as a binary variable with a logistic regression, which exceeded the time frame and abilities of this research.

5.2 Practical Implications

However, as beforementioned the findings of hypothesis 3 are very interesting. It implies that compared to traditional firms, the hosts at Airbnb are very valuable to the guests and therefore the guests want to avoid the hosts being controlled or exploited by Airbnb and reduce the amount of feedback provided.

One possible explanation of why hypothesis 3 could be accepted whereas hypotheses 1 and 2 had to be rejected, could be the higher perception of negative factors than positive factors. It implies that there might be a need to distinguish to a further extent between positive factors and negative factors. Positive factors could be experiences where the quality has been improved or the trust has been increased after having provided feedback and negative experiences could be that the feedback provision has harmed the hosts, leading to a decreased feedback provision.

This separation of positive and negative factors has also been researched by Herzberg (1959). He found out that you can distinguish between satisfiers (motivators) and dissatisfiers (hygiene factors). The satisfiers are thus the motivation to do a certain action, whereas the dissatisfiers are not motivating while present, but demotivating when they are not present. For our case, this implies that the attribution of quality improvement and the attribution of trust are inherent to feedback provision and motivate to provide feedback. The attribution of control and exploitation however, has a stronger impact as it might result in dissatisfaction and therefore a stronger impact on reduced feedback provision, when absent.

In future research, one could investigate the connection between Herzberg's theory and the feedback provision to a higher extent and link its theory to the model.

Therefore, when feedback is perceived as negative, it might have a more significant or stronger impact, because the customers perceive their feedback provision to be more impactful on the hosts than when its perceived positively, because of the control and exploitation of employees. For future studies, this implies that the link between the high value of the worker and the attributions on Airbnb and its request for feedback could be investigated further.

Besides that, other reasons for the given outcomes could be that customers might not know that their feedback has such a significant impact when provided at platforms and they might perceive it to the same level as in traditional firms.

Another reason could be that there are different attributions of the request of feedback that were not taken into account in our research, such as indirect attributions that do not directly affect the relationship.

Consequently, there are several practical implications. First, Airbnb should focus on guaranteeing that the customer feels that their feedback is not used to control or exploit employees but for a positive use, such as improving quality or building trust.

Airbnb can implement this, by 1) when asking the customer to provide feedback, it could mention the reasons why they request feedback or 2) work together with the hosts on improving Airbnb's image of control and exploitation of workers and making sure that the hosts inform the customers as well that feedback is used for good causes, since the host seems to play an important role for the customer.

Nonetheless, we do not know the actual reasons why Airbnb is requesting feedback, only the perceptions of it, so there is a possibility that they indeed use the feedback to control and exploit employees, which should then be eliminated or significantly reduced to avoid reduced feedback for that reason. This could increase the amount of feedback given and therefore increase the amount of stays booked with Airbnb.

The findings also impact the hosts, however, because they might feel more appreciated and valued working for the platform, because they know that the customers value the personal contact and their service and want to avoid them being

exploited or controlled.

All in all, you can say that there are many possible ways to interpret those findings and that there are many ways to add on to them in future researches.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the research has provided many answers.

Regarding the research question "*To what extent are customers' attributions of performance evaluation related to their actual engagement in performance evaluation of platform workers*"? we found out that the attributions of performance evaluation indeed have an impact on the actual engagement in performance evaluation.

The strongest impact that was found was the relationship between the attribution of the request for feedback due to control and exploitation of workers and the feedback provision, moderated by the interaction variable of service value.

This implies that the unique nature of Airbnb, with its high amount of personal contact with the host, has a high impact on the perception of how the host is treated by Airbnb leading to the guests wanting to prevent them being controlled or exploited.

We also found out, that age has a significant impact on the models, underlining that it affects not only the amount of feedback given, but also the perception of the independent variables, being why Airbnb is requesting feedback. It showed that the older the customer, the more likely he or she is to provide feedback.

All in all, it can be noticed that the findings could not be generalized, because the dependent variable was not normally distributed, but nevertheless, the findings were very insightful and can be added onto in many ways.

First, it assists Airbnb, as they could guarantee to the customer to a higher extent that hosts are not being exploited to generate more feedback from the customers. Second, the findings also affect the hosts, because they show that the service of the host is appreciated.

Besides that, it can also be said that there might be a chance that customers perceive positive factors differently than negative ones.

Therefore, this research paper gives room to further research in the future, adding on to the findings and investigating the topic of platforms and feedback provision even more.

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9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Survey Questions

Directions: In this section, we would like to know your opinion about why you think Airbnb is requesting customer feedback. Please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below.

In my opinion, Airbnb is requesting feedback from customers, in order to

1. Help hosts to deliver quality services to their guest
2. Improve the quality of the listings
3. Pressure hosts to expand the availability of their listings, even if it harms their own interests.
4. Maximize the profit for Airbnb, at the expense of the host's interest
5. Provide future guests with the guarantee the host is trustworthy
6. Provide future guests with the guarantee the host is dependable

Value:

1. Overall, the value of my most recent Airbnb stay for me is very high
2. In comparison to the spent effort and time, the extent to which my most recent Airbnb stay satisfies my needs is very high

Appendix 2 – Operationalization Table

Variable	Definition	Survey Items
Service Quality	“An assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client’s expectations.”	Airbnb is requesting feedback from customers, in order to 1. Help hosts to deliver quality services to their guest 2. Improve the quality of the listings
Network trust	“Firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something”	Airbnb is requesting feedback from customers, in order to 1. Provide future guests with the guarantee the host is trustworthy 2. Provide future guests with the guarantee the host is dependable
Control and exploitation of workers	“Treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work”	Airbnb is requesting feedback from customers, in order to 1. Pressure hosts to expand the availability of their listings, even if it harms their own interest 2. Maximize the profit for Airbnb, at the expense of the host's interest
Service Value of workers	“If you value something or someone, you think that they are important, and you appreciate them”	1. Overall, the value of my most recent Airbnb stay for me is very high 2. In comparison to the spent effort and time, the extent to which my most recent Airbnb stay satisfies my needs is very high