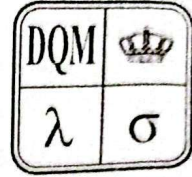


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## CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES OF THE ACCOMMODATION SHARING ECONOMY

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*Summary: The sharing economy is a concept with high growth potential and ever-expanding application possibilities in various fields. The accommodation sector, as one of the pioneers in the implementation of the concept, is still in the focus of both market participants and the academic public. The subject of the paper is the analysis of current research questions and data from the area of the sharing economy in the accommodation sector. The aim of the paper is to evaluate the current state and identify future challenges of this segment of the sharing economy by applying methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The research results indicate key and emerging themes in this area, as well as a positive growth trend of the accommodation sharing economy.*

*Key words: Sharing economy, accommodation sector, growth, challenges.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The sharing economy is experiencing rapid growth in contemporary conditions. A shift in focus from ownership to accessibility is at the core of the sharing economy concept. Given that, it is not surprising that the accommodation sector is a particularly suitable area for his implementation. There are numerous advantages of applying the concept. The sharing economy has made it possible to reduce costs, make better use of underutilized resources, and implement sustainable practices. The benefits are, therefore, visible at all levels, from the point of view of direct participants, hosts and consumers, and community. In addition to the financial ones, the concept of the sharing economy in the field of accommodation has also brought consumers a number of intangible benefits. Among other things, the concept of the accommodation sharing economy, unlike the traditional one,



provides guests with an authentic experience and view of the destination from a local perspective, which is especially valued in modern tourist movements. The aim of this paper is two-fold: first, to identify key topics in the field of accommodation sharing economy that are in the maturity stage, but also emerging themes that are beginning to attract the attention of the scientific public; and second, to evaluate the most important trends in the development of the accommodation sharing economy by analysing quantitative data.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the growth of the sharing economy was accompanied by the growing interest of theoreticians in this concept, it cannot be spoken about the existence of a single and generally accepted definition. One way of defining the sharing economy is as "consumers granting each other temporary access to underutilized physical assets ('idle capacity'), possibly for money" (Frenken & Schor, 2017, p. 4-5). In understanding the concept, it is necessary to start from several basic premises on which it is based. First of all, the sharing economy was made possible by information and communication technology, because its functioning is based on online platforms that enable direct contact between service providers and consumers. Then, the sharing economy implies temporary access to resources and goods instead of ownership. Keeping this in mind, Acquier et al. (2017) state that one of the fundamental cores of the sharing economy is the access economy, which advocates the sharing of unused or underutilized resources. Finally, this approach enables the optimization of the use of resources and their better utilization. The sharing economy is often seen as a sustainable practice, bringing environmental, economic and social benefits.

The sharing economy finds application in various fields. However, tourism and travel have proven to be very suitable, and the accommodation and transport sectors as pioneers in this area. The sharing economy in the accommodation sector has experienced exponential growth in recent years and can be marked as one of the most prominent transformations of this area [Farmaki et al., 2021]. Accommodation sharing is often seen as a sustainable alternative to traditional facilities, which is less resource intensive and involves participants, either on the supply side or on the demand side, who are more environmentally conscious (Midgett et al., 2018). It is based on online platforms that connect tourists, i.e. guests with accommodation owners, i.e. hosts. The network that recorded the greatest success in this field and represents both the pioneer and the most globally known example of the accommodation sharing economy is Airbnb (Priporas et al., 2017; Akbar and Tracogna, 2018). Hence, it is not surprising that Airbnb is the main context of the research of the academic public, within which efforts are made to theoretically establish a number of important issues in the accommodation sharing economy.

With the rapid growth of the aforementioned platform, one of the key research questions was its impact on hotel business success. Guttentag and Smith



(2017) mark the platform as a disruptive innovation and in their empirical research, which included examining the attitudes of tourists, they come to the conclusion that two thirds of them would gladly choose Airbnb as a hotel substitute. Airbnb and the traditional hotel industry are not subject of comparison in terms of comparing and quantifying success. Mody et al. (2017), for example, use them as a subject of comparison in the context of tourists' experiences. They conclude that Airbnb outperforms the traditional hotel industry in all dimensions of the experience they observed and emphasize that this platform provides a greater degree of inclusion in the local community and a greater degree of personalization, which further leads to authentic and memorable experiences. Unlike the proponents of the sharing economy concept, who emphasize potential benefits, such as higher earnings or better allocation of resources, critics emphasize certain negative externalities, such as the fact that the concept is driven solely by personal economic interests. In the context of criticism, Quattrone et al. (2016) explore the regulation to which Airbnb is subject and emphasize that traditional regulations cannot respond to dynamic changes in the functioning of the platform. This does not exhaust the research of the functioning of the accommodation sharing economy. It includes numerous other aspects and domains. While certain research questions are entering the maturity stage, others are emerging themes.

### **3. KEY AND EMERGING THEMES**

The accommodation sharing economy, along with its great success on the market, attracted the attention of researchers. Numerous scientific papers have been published on this topic in the last decades. In order to conclude what the current key and emerging themes are, an analysis of the twenty-two most influential papers in the Google Scholar database in the last five-year period was performed. Key themes and research questions, as well as the number of papers per theme are shown in Table 1.

While positive and negative effects, experience and consumers, sustainability, as well as the impact on hotel business remain key topics in the area of accommodation sharing economy, there are also certain emerging ones. As such, the researchers' focus on the supply side, home exchange as a new type of sharing economy and value co-creation enabled by the interaction between the basic elements of the accommodation sharing economy system can be marked.

### **4. DATA ON THE ACCOMMODATION SHARING**

In order to assess the current state and draw conclusions about future trends in the area of the accommodation sharing economy, Figure 1 and Table 2 show data on guest nights at the level of the European Union (EU) as a whole, as well as by individual countries, booked via the sharing economy platform.

If the data on the number of guest nights at the level of the EU as a whole are observed, a positive trend can be seen, that is briefly interrupted in 2020, as a result of



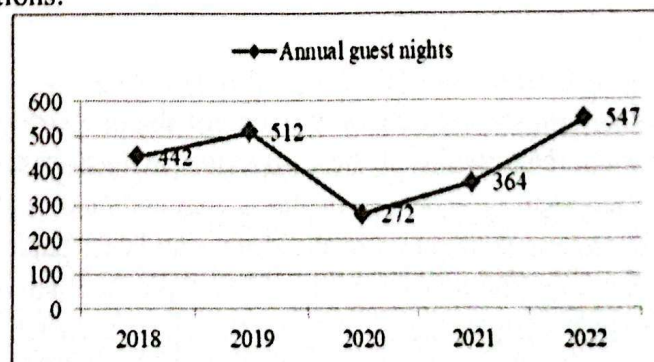
the global health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the following year, the number of guest nights booked via the online platform recorded a positive growth rate, so that in 2022 it would be at a level that is even higher than that recorded in 2019, the year before the crisis.

*Table 1. Themes in the research area of the accommodation sharing economy*

Theme	Research questions	No
Negative effects	Non-professional service providers, risk of short-term employment, conflictual relationships between stakeholders	3
Positive effects	Increases choice, intercultural understanding, activation of unused capacity	2
Experience	Amenities quality, house decoration, accommodation space, host response, guest-host interactions	3
Supply side	Economic motivation, knowledge level, service flexibility	1
Customer	User's preferences, satisfaction, lifestyle changes as motivation for choosing, factors of purchase intentions, How affect consumer experiences, value sharing, tourists' motivations and constraints, booking experiences	5
Impact on hotel business	Airbnb versus hotels, the biggest threats to hotels, hoteliers' perspectives	3
Home exchange	Exchange of homes via online platforms	1
Sustainability	Environmental sustainability, positive competition, impact on tourist attractions	3
Value co-creation	Interaction between human actors and technology	1

Source: Author

Table 2 shows data on the number of guest nights in accommodation capacities booked via the sharing economy platform for each EU country individually, as well as by origin of the guests. Such overview enables several conclusions. First of all, accommodation sharing capacities are more popular when it comes to international than domestic guests. Second, the EU countries that absolutely dominate this market are Spain and France, which are also the leading not only European, but also world tourist destinations.



*Figure 1. Overnight stays of guests in the EU in accommodation capacity booked via the sharing economy platform, 2018 - 2022*

Source: Eurostat (2022). Collaborative economy platforms.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/tourism/database>



*Table 2. Overnight stays of guests in EU countries in accommodation capacities booked via the sharing economy platform, 2022*

Countries	Number of guest nights		
	Total	Domestic	International
Austria	16,246,029	1,749,051	14,496,978
Belgium	9,483,632	3,177,840	6,305,792
Bulgaria	3,230,486	1,105,802	2,124,684
Croatia	30,831,251	1,537,603	29,293,648
Cyprus	4,135,742	418,667	3,717,075
Czechia	6,705,580	2,101,614	4,603,966
Denmark	4,776,532	1,189,070	3,587,462
Estonia	1,286,201	502,758	783,443
Finland	3,356,748	1,856,803	1,499,945
France	137,166,518	88,405,580	48,760,938
Germany	42,481,655	30,301,518	12,180,137
Greece	31,621,497	4,402,039	27,219,458
Hungary	7,578,355	1,285,370	6,292,985
Ireland	5,554,213	1,846,667	3,707,546
Italy	84,105,950	24,472,108	59,633,842
Latvia	1,179,187	329,659	849,528
Lithuania	1,685,167	864,866	820,301
Luxembourg	322,201	28,871	293,330
Malta	2,822,783	151,262	2,671,521
Netherlands	8,786,873	2,504,896	6,281,977
Poland	26,348,453	15,575,149	10,773,304
Portugal	33,195,011	4,629,030	28,565,981
Romania	5,732,807	3,115,457	2,617,350
Slovakia	2,229,785	820,631	1,409,154
Slovenia	2,740,963	232,840	2,508,123
Spain	117,954,021	44,902,360	73,051,661
Sweden	4,989,256	1,786,919	3,202,337
EU	596,546,896	239,294,430	357,252,466

Source: Eurostat (2022). Collaborative economy platforms.  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/tourism/database>

## 5. CONCLUSION

The accommodation sharing economy is one of the pioneers and leaders in the practice of sharing. The results of the qualitative analysis carried out in the paper showed that the sharing economy in the accommodation sector remains a field that attracts considerable attention of theorists. The latest papers in this field are devoted to further scientific understanding of key topics that have already been significantly researched, such as the effects, consumers and sustainability of the concept. However, certain emerging themes can be observed, which may represent future research challenges, such as supply sides, home exchange and value co-creation. When it comes to qualitative data, their analysis showed a positive growth trend of the accommodation sharing economy and its exceptional ability to recover in crisis periods. Then, it is more popular with international than domestic guests.



Namely, there are few countries among those analysed where the number of overnight stays by domestic guests in these types of accommodation is higher than the number of overnight stays by foreign guests. Considering the very intensive growth of international tourism, this can be assessed as a positive trend from the perspective of the future development of the accommodation sharing economy. Finally, the fact that this type of accommodation is particularly sought after in the most popular tourist destinations indicates the existence of a positive correlation between the accommodation sharing economy and the level of attractiveness and development of the tourist destination.

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