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# Staying in a Shared Territory: How Do P2P Accommodation Guests Feel

## Introduction

Facilitated by technology, regular people (i.e., hosts) are able to rent out spare space in their homes (unoccupied bedrooms or entire properties) to peers (i.e., guests) these days (Tussyadiah 2016). This new type of accommodation services, named P2P accommodations, has drawn increasing attention in the tourism and hospitality literature. Studies in the tourism and hospitality literature have mainly considered P2P accommodations a new type of hospitality business (Guttentag et al. 2016, Guttentag and Smith 2017) and emphasized P2P accommodation guests' overall attitudes and evaluations toward the experience (e.g., good, favorable) (Tussyadiah 2016, Cheng et al. 2019). However, it has been largely overlooked that important nuances underlie P2P accommodation guests' overall feelings and evaluations (Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto 2018).

In P2P accommodation rentals, guests and hosts can share space temporally, physically, and psychologically. P2P accommodation guests are indeed individuals who engage in an exchange of money for the right to temporarily use space in others' territory. On one hand, guests are aware of themselves staying in others' territory; on the other hand, the money guests have paid for their stay may provide solid ground for guests to claim their own territory in the rental. A P2P accommodation rental thus can be considered a shared territory consisting of the guest's territory, the host's territory, and/or a combination of the two. People feel and behave differently staying in own vs. others' territories (Taylor and Lanni 1981). How do P2P accommodation guests feel about staying in a shared space like a P2P accommodation rental? What factors influence P2P accommodation guests' feelings? These are genuinely interesting questions to be examined.

Considering a P2P accommodation rental a shared territory between the host and the guest, this study attempts to understand P2P accommodation guests' feelings of staying in a shared territory from the lens of human territoriality. Findings of this study will uncover important nuances underlying guests' overall feelings about their P2P accommodation experiences and depict a more detailed and realistic picture of P2P accommodation experiences, facilitating the improvement of guest experiences in the sharing context.

## Methodology

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used to uncover P2P accommodation guests' feelings. Purposive sampling was used to select cases that could fulfill the research objectives (Smith and Osborn 2008). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants and the interviews were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. In total, 13 participants were recruited in this study.

Analysis of qualitative interview data was implemented using the qualitative data analysis software Dedoose. Coding procedures followed the recommendations in Smith and Osborn (2015). Essentially, for each case, the author proceeded through the following steps: initial individual comments → determining themes → listing themes → clustering into superordinate themes. After all transcripts were coded, the authors began to look for patterns between cases to establish master themes for the entire group.

## **Results**

### ***Feelings of Staying in a Shared Rental***

Participants reported to simultaneously possess a sense of being in their own territory and that of being in others' territory during their stay in P2P accommodation rentals; the two senses each comprises part of the sense of being in a shared territory. The sense of being in others' space compelled participants to behave respectfully and carefully during their stay and to feel constrained, fearful of contamination, and uncertain about their behaviors. However, staying in others' territory was not a solely negative experience; participants reported becoming curious when staying in others' territory, which enhanced their overall P2P accommodation experiences. On the other hand, P2P accommodation guests felt as though they had their own space in a rental; they reported feeling free and relaxed when staying in their own space.

### ***Factors Affecting Territorial Senses***

The physical environment of P2P accommodation rentals, the host's hospitality, and many situational factors can reinforce guests' sense of being in others' territory and being in their own territory, including home amenities and facilities, personal items/décor, length of stay/use, presence of the host, the type of rental used, disturbance from others, and companionship from friends or families. These factors are not mutually exclusive, and multiple factors can simultaneously affect guests' sense of being in own vs. others' territory.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

Findings in this study demonstrated that P2P accommodation guests possessed a sense of being in others' territory, and experienced feelings such as respect and carefulness, being constrained, uncertain, curious, and fear of contamination. Conversely, guests also experienced a sense of being in one's own territory, which was related to feelings of freedom and being relaxed. Eight groups of factors were found to affect guests' feelings, including home amenities and facilities, personal items/décor, length of stay or space use, physical presence of the host in the rental, the type of rental used by guests, disturbance from others, hospitableness of the host, and companionship of friends and family. Depicting P2P accommodation guests' feelings from the lens of territoriality, this study uncovers the nuances involved in P2P accommodation guest experiences.

In addition, findings in this study provide propositions for subsequent studies on P2P accommodations. For instance, it will be interesting to quantitatively examine the relationships between the types of rentals used by P2P accommodation guests and their feelings of staying in a rental, assess the effect of host presence on P2P accommodation guest experiences, and compare guests' feelings over the whole process of their stay in P2P accommodation rentals.

Findings of this study also shed light on the design of hosts training programs developed by P2P accommodation platforms. For instance, Airbnb has included "free of hosts' personal items" on its website as a requirement for well-maintained Airbnb Plus homes, a selection of the highest-quality homes (Airbnb n.d.). However, the findings of this study demonstrate that such standardization may be a double-edge sword. Although hosts' personal items remind P2P accommodation guests of being in others' territories, guests may indeed appreciate the otherness created by such items, because these items create a pleasant feeling of curiosity among P2P accommodation guests.

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