Strategic self-presentation in the sharing economy: Implications for host branding[1]

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Abstract

Peer-to-peer accommodation platform is a unique venue of commercial social exchanges where mixed-mode interactions (i.e., online first, then offline) occur between hosts and guests. With the continuous growth of sharing economy comes the importance to better understand the strategies that hosts use to communicate with and attract their prospective consumers. Using the framework of personal branding and self-presentation, this study explored the different ways hosts of peer-to-peer accommodation articulate their profile online. Using host descriptions from 12,785 Airbnb listings in New York, United States, five clusters of host self-presentation were identified: The Global Citizen, The Local Expert, The Personable, The Established, and The Creative. Honest and positive self-presentation, as well as competence strategies were identified from these clusters. The host profiles were further explored to identify differences in their behaviour, listing characteristics, and guest review ratings.

Keywords: sharing economy, personal branding, host branding, self-presentation, Airbnb

1 Introduction

Since its introduction in the late 2000s, the socioeconomic system labelled as sharing economy, peer-to-peer economy, on-demand economy, or collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Belk, 2014; Guttentag, 2013) has been experiencing a tremendous growth with a large number of users embracing it for different product and service categories. Taking advantage of online social network technology, companies such as Uber and Airbnb facilitate new ways of resource redistribution among consumers to fulfil unmet demand with idling supplies. In the travel and tourism industry, peer-to-peer accommodation is considered a significant new entrant in the competitive landscape of accommodation sector. Therefore, it is important to better understand the dynamics that lead to the future growth of peer-to-peer accommodation and cement its position as a competitive player in the travel and tourism marketplace.

Salient to understanding the sharing economy is exploring both sides of users who are participating in these sharing platforms: user-providers (i.e., hosts) and user-receivers (i.e., guests). Due to the recent emergence of sharing economy as a research topic in travel and tourism, studies on the characteristics and behaviour of its users are

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extremely scarce. A few studies on consumer characteristics and motivations to participate in the sharing economy (and benefits sought from doing so) did not differentiate between the user categories (e.g., Hamari, Sjöklint, and Ukkonen, 2013; Kim, Yoon, & Zo, 2015; Möhlmann, 2015). Hence, there is lack of specification in terms of strategic behaviour that consumers adopt in their participation. Other studies focused on the market characteristics and benefits sought by guests (e.g., Tussyadiah, 2015; Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2015), but excluded host behaviour. Belotti et al. (2015) explored different motivations among user-receivers, user-providers and service providers, but did not specify the consumption contexts (i.e., using sharing economy as one broad consumption category). While these studies are beneficial in explaining the different factors that drive the adoption of commercial sharing platforms by consumers, they are limited in the conceptualization of user-provider behaviour and, therefore, the managerial implications for user-providers in terms of strategies for future growth beyond the initial stage of adoption.

In light of the limitation in current literature, this study aims at addressing two broad research questions: (1) "How do the hosts of peer-to-peer accommodation articulate their identity online?" and (2) "Are specific online self-presentation techniques associated with better guest evaluation?" As user-providers in commercial sharing systems, hosts have a unique position to represent their own identity and at the same time be associated with a service provider in the eyes of their potential guests (i.e., prospective customers). In other words, while they are considered as "peers" of user-receivers in the social network, they also carry a "brand" associated with the services they provide. Therefore, the ways hosts express themselves by crafting and posting their profile online need to be explored from two strategic perspectives: personal branding (i.e., self-marketing) and its relationship with service providers' brand. In order to answer the research questions, this study consults the theoretical foundation behind personal branding as well as self-presentation strategies in the contexts of online marketing and social networks (e.g., Chen, 2013; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Shepherd, 2005). In particular, this study conducts a series of text analyses on descriptions of Airbnb hosts to identify the underlying self-presentation techniques. Further, based on the characteristics that differentiate these techniques, this study provides recommendation for future research direction in host branding.

2 Online Personal Branding

The changing landscape of social practices and personal (consumer-to-consumer) relationship formation via technology-mediated communication forms unique online behaviour among Internet users. The proliferation of social media has encouraged Internet users to create and manage an online identity that signifies their personal brand. Previous research has explored the topic of self-marketing by examining the strategies people use to present themselves in personal web pages and various social media platforms (e.g., social networking sites, online forums, blogs, etc.) for various goals (e.g., Chen, 2013; Dominick, 1999; Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Shepherd, 2005). The premise of these studies is that consumers are applying the same marketing and branding principles originally developed for products and services to generate a favourable image of themselves (Chen, 2013; Schwabel, 2009). Specifically, Schwabel (2009) defines personal branding as the process by which

individuals differentiate themselves from the crowd by articulating their unique value proposition and leveraging it with a consistent image across different platforms to achieve their goals. While a number of research on personal branding and self-marketing focuses on leaders or celebrities (e.g., in political campaigns, in advertising within the entertainment industry), an increasing number of studies also deal with self-presentation among "amateur individuals" or "everyday people" (Chen, 2013; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Shepherd, 2005). The goals of personal branding have been tied to seeking employment, establishing friendship, dating, or simply self-expression (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). In this study, while still retaining their amateur quality, peer-to-peer accommodation hosts are expected to employ specific personal branding tactics in order to induce booking from prospective guests.

Personal branding is associated with the process of "packaging and editing the self," which involves making choices of what information regarding self to include and what to leave out (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). An increase in consumer empowerment and control of social media landscape leads to the phenomenon of consumer "egocentrism" (Chen, 2013). That is, with an absence of face-to-face confirmation, a person is only what is expressed in his/her online content, making him/her in control of his/her own brand (Sanderson, 2008; Trammel & Keshelashvili, 2005). Literature on self-presentation and impression management in technology-mediated communication, drawing largely from Goffman's (1990) theory of self, has focused on social relationships that are exclusively online (e.g., personal websites, blogs, YouTube, etc.). Within this literature, the emphasis is on the absence of nonverbal communication cues and the potentially asynchronous communication, which lead to the so-called selective self-presentation strategies (Walther, 1992; 2007; Walther & Burgoon, 1992), where online personal identity is malleable and subject to self-censorship. However, in areas of mixed-mode social relationships (i.e., when people first meet online and then move offline), self-presentation and personal branding strategies are entangled with anticipated future interactions (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006).

In a typical peer-to-peer accommodation system, prospective hosts and guests communicate online and, after confirming the booking, interact offline during service delivery (consumption). This modality switch (i.e., from online to offline) has been suggested to shape the degree of self-disclosure in online self-presentation strategies (e.g., Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006). That is, while highlighting attributes of personal strength and uniqueness is an important aspect of personal branding, communicating an online identity that is consistent with expected offline impression from target audience will result in perception of authenticity (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). Indeed, in the contexts of social media communication, Kim and Lee (2011) suggest two strategies with regards to self-presentational behaviour: honest and positive (i.e., selective [Walther, 1992; 2007]) self-presentation. Honest self-presentation tactics emphasize the importance of accuracy (authenticity), while positive strategies place more emphasis on desirability. The tension between the need for authenticity (accuracy) and desirability has been observed in situations where significant and long-term social relationships are the goal of personal branding, such as in online dating (e.g., Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). However, it is largely unknown in situations of social-commercial exchanges (user-

receiver – user-provider relationships) such as the sharing economy, especially when consumption occasions are expected to be less frequent (e.g., traveling for vacation).

Further, in addition to the competing desires for accuracy and desirability (honest vs. positive self-presentation), previous research utilizes Jones' (1990) five strategies of self-presentation in interpersonal situations: ingratiation (i.e., expressing statements of modesty, saying mildly negative things about self and positive things about others, with the goal of being liked), competence (i.e., expressing skills, abilities, accomplishments, etc. with the goal of being perceived as qualified), intimidation (i.e., expressing threats or statements of anger with the goal to gain power), exemplification (i.e., expressing ideological commitment, self sacrifice, and self discipline with the goal of being perceived as morally superior), and supplication (i.e., expressing entreaties for help or self-deprecation with the goal to appear helpless so others will extend their aid). In the contexts of online personal branding (e.g., through blogs or personal websites), previous research identified the dominance of ingratiation as a foremost used strategy among different user profiles (e.g., Bortree, 2005; Dominick, 1990), followed by competence. The unique position of peer-to-peer accommodation hosts, as a host (personal) and as a part of a company (an Airbnb host), signifies the importance of exploring these different self-presentation strategies in relation to the company brand.

3 Methodology

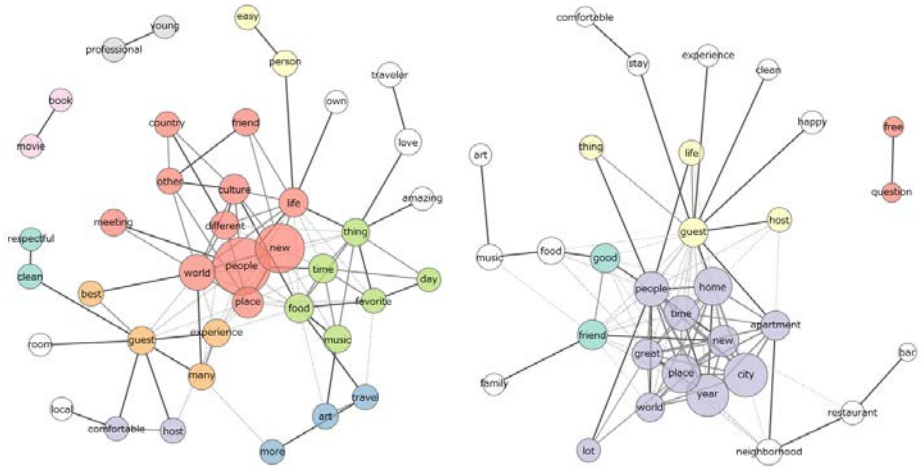
To explore how peer-to-peer accommodation hosts articulate their identity online, textual data containing descriptions of Airbnb hosts in New York were obtained from a third party website, *InsideAirbnb.com* (2015), sourced from publicly available information on Airbnb website in June 2015. In order to analyse the underlying self-presentation tactics among hosts in relation to their behaviour, listings, and guest evaluation, this study excluded host descriptions with missing guest ratings and listing information (i.e., host acceptance rate, host response rate, host response time, listing price, property types, location, and guest ratings). As a result, host descriptions from 12,785 Airbnb listings are included in the analysis.

The first step of the text analysis was to pre-process the text corpus, which include processes of tokenization, elimination of stop words, part-of-speech (POS) tagging, and lemmatization. The pre-processing was conducted using *Stanford POS Tagger* (Toutanova, Klein, Manning, & Singer, 2003). The final corpus consists of 897,175 tokens and 22,107 word types as target analysis. The mean term frequency (TF) is 25.24 (i.e., on average, words appear 25.24 times in the corpus) with a standard deviation of 399.40. The second step was to identify the differences in how Airbnb hosts articulate themselves online using a hierarchical cluster analysis with Ward's criterion and Jaccard Coefficient as distance measure (Romesburg, 1984). In order to better understand the clusters of host descriptions, high frequency keywords associated with each cluster as well as their distribution were analysed. Word co-occurrence networks were developed using Jaccard Coefficient to determine the edges of network and Fruchterman-Reingold's (1991) algorithm to determine the layout of network. Finally, the differences between host description clusters were explored using cross-tabulation (with chi-square tests) and independent-samples *t*-tests to explain different host self-presentation tactics. These analyses were conducted using *R* and *SPSS* statistical packages.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Clusters of Host Self-Presentation

Based on a hierarchical cluster analysis with nouns and adjectives with a minimum TF of 500, five meaningful clusters of host descriptions were identified, which reflect different attributes of hosts articulated online. The first cluster (*The Global Citizen*) contains host descriptions of 2,017 Airbnb listings. The high frequency keywords in this cluster include *New*, *People*, *World*, *Culture*, and *Different*, which represent the openness of the hosts to welcome guests from different parts of the world, highlighting their eagerness to meet new people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition to *New* and *Different*, host descriptions use positive adjectives: *Amazing*, *Best*, *Comfortable*, and *Clean*, mostly to describe others (e.g., listings). The network of high frequency keywords in this cluster is presented in Fig. 1a. Size of the nodes in the network indicates the word frequency; thickness of paths indicates strength of word pair connection; colour indicates word communities detected using random walk method (Pons & Latapy, 2005). Density of the network represents the percentage of actual paths relative to all possible connections. The word community at the centre of the network reflects desire to meet new people from different culture. Connected to this community are personal interests (e.g., travel, favourite things, etc.) and characteristics (e.g., easy person).



a. Cluster 1: The Global Citizen (Nodes = 40, Edges = 100, Density = .13)

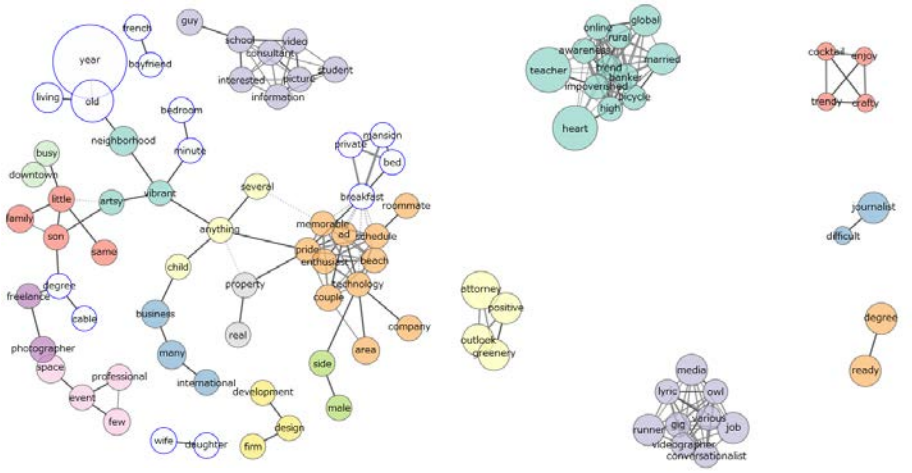
b. Cluster 2: The Local Expert (Nodes = 31, Edges = 100, Density = .21)

Fig. 1. Word Co-occurrence Networks in Clusters 1 and 2

The second cluster (*The Local Expert*) contains host descriptions of 4,206 Airbnb listings. The high frequency keywords in this cluster include *City*, *Place*, *Home*, *People*, and *Guest*, which highlight their competency in welcoming guests to their comfortable home and introducing all that the city has to offer (e.g., good food, music, art, etc.). This reflects the competence strategy in the categories suggested by Jones (1990). The

adjectives used in this cluster are all positive (e.g., *New*, *Great*, *Good*, *Happy*, *Comfortable*, etc.) and mostly attached to aspects other than the hosts. The word co-occurrence network in this cluster is presented in Fig. 1b. Central to this network is the word community that explains their home and their city, with a word community on features of the neighbourhoods (e.g., bars and restaurants) connected to it.

The third cluster (*The Personable*) contains host descriptions of 474 Airbnb listings. Hosts in this cluster describe themselves in terms of basic demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, family, and general personal interests. Among the high frequency keywords are *Year*, *Old*, *Business*, *Male*, *Woman*, and *Couple*. Adjectives used in this clusters are not entirely positive (e.g., *Busy*, *Little*, *Vibrant*, *Artsy*) and mostly attached to aspects other than the hosts. By presenting themselves in these terms, guests are communicating non-specific, but more personable brand to prospective guests as regular people trying to monetize their spare space. The network of high frequency keywords in this cluster is presented in Fig. 2a. The network consists of many word communities, some of them detached from the others, indicating the absence of a single major theme, but random facts about the hosts.



a. Cluster 3: The Personable
(Nodes = 62, Edges = 105, Density = .06)

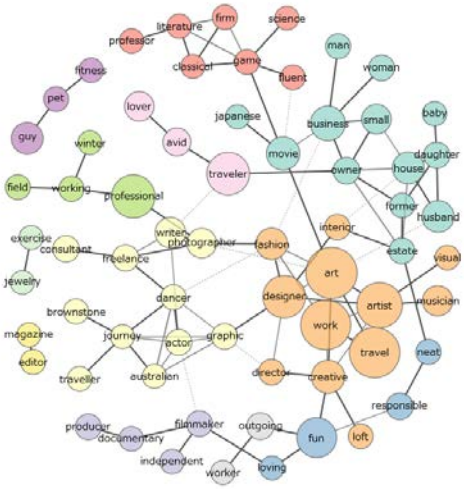
b. Cluster 4: The Established
(Nodes = 33, Edges = 111, Density = .21)

Fig. 2. Word Co-occurrence Networks in Clusters 3 and 4

The fourth cluster (*The Established*) contains host descriptions of a small number Airbnb listing (a total of 186). Hosts within this cluster highlight their professional occupation, education, and geographic areas of origin/heritage, with keywords such as *Teacher*, *Attorney*, *Banker*, and *Degree*, as well as *Global*, *Australian*, *Italian*, and *Rural*. Hosts in this cluster communicate the image of individuals with a certain level of achievement, as reflected in what they do professionally and as foreigners (or someone originating from rural areas) living their dreams in New York City. Additionally, nationality/heritage information presented in host description may appeal to international guests originating from the same geographic areas. The adjectives used

in this clusters are not entirely positive (e.g., *Difficult*, *Ready*, *Positive*, *High*), indicating flair of authenticity. While the strategy in this cluster can be identified as competence, it also indicates honest self-presentation. The word co-occurrence network in this cluster is presented in Fig. 2b. It is noteworthy that the network represents isolated word communities with weak connections among them.

Finally, the last cluster (*The Creative*) includes the largest number of host descriptions from 4,356 Airbnb listings. The hosts in this cluster describe themselves in terms of professional occupation or interests in different areas within the creative industry. Some of the high frequency keywords include *Artist*, *Writer*, *Musician*, *Fashion*, *Designer*, *Creative*, and *Filmmaker*. Adjectives used in the cluster are mostly positive and attached to the hosts (e.g., *Fun*, *Loving*, *Outgoing*, *Fluent*, *Neat*, *Responsible*), indicating positive self-presentation tactics. Included in the high frequency keywords are interests in gaming, language, literature, etc. Central to the network (see Fig. 3) is the theme of art, entertainment, and literature, as well as an image of a fun and fit person, and a word community around family profiles (e.g., *Husband*, *Daughter*, and *Baby*).



(Nodes = 67, Edges = 100, Density = .04)

Fig. 3. Word Co-occurrence Network in Cluster 5: The Creative

4.2 Host Clusters, Host Behaviour, and Listing

Table 1 presents the summary of host clusters in terms of host behaviour (i.e., acceptance rate, response rate, and response time) and listing characteristics (i.e., average price and property types). The acceptance rate (i.e., the percentage of booking requests accepted by hosts) is relatively similar across different host clusters. However, the response rate (i.e., the percentage of messages being responded by hosts) among hosts in Cluster 4 (at 85.56%) is slightly lower than the other clusters. Indeed, based on a series of independent-samples *t*-tests, the low response rate of hosts in Cluster 4 is statistically significant when compared to other clusters (with Cluster 1 [$t = 3.76$; $p <$

.001], Cluster 2 [t = 3.13; p < .01], and Cluster 5 [t = 2.64; p < .01]). Based on a chi-square test, response times (i.e., how long it takes for hosts to respond to messages from prospective guests) significantly differ across clusters (Pearson Chi-square = 62.48, p < .001). Hosts in Cluster 4 seemingly respond to messages a little slower than those in other clusters (i.e., with higher percentages responding within a day or a few days/more).

Table 1. Host Behaviour and Listing across Host Clusters

	Cluster 1 (N=2,017)	**Cluster 2** (N=4,206)	**Cluster 3** (N=474)	**Cluster 4** (N=186)	**Cluster 5** (N=4,536)
Host Behaviour					
Acceptance rate	89.42%	88.52%	86.72%	88.55%	88.45%
Response rate	89.91%	89.28%	88.70%	85.56%	88.76%
Response time:					
– Within an hour	32.62%	30.82%	25.32%	23.50%	29.76%
– Within a few hours	41.00%	39.09%	42.83%	38.80%	37.19%
– Within a day	24.19%	27.15%	28.27%	33.33%	26.26%
– A few days or more	2.13%	2.90%	3.58%	6.01%	2.82%
Listing					
Price (US$)	$161.55	$159.07	$167.24	$98.07	$119.32
Property type:					
– Entire home/apt	61.77%	58.86%	64.98%	64.48%	55.95%
– Private room	35.69%	39.32%	33.75%	34.97%	37.06%
– Shared room	2.53%	1.81%	1.26%	2.18%	2.34%
Location:					
– Manhattan	57.56%	55.21%	56.12%	50.54%	53.00%
– Others	42.44%	44.79%	43.88%	49.46%	47.00%

In terms of property types, the majority of listings are for an entire home/apartment: the highest at about 65% among hosts in Clusters 3 and 4 and the lowest at 56% among hosts in Cluster 5. No statistically significant difference was found with regards to property types between clusters. In terms of price, Cluster 4 has the lowest average listing price at $98.07 and Cluster 3 has the highest at $167.24. A little more than half of the listings from all clusters are centrally located in Manhattan; the percentage of listings located in Manhattan is slightly lower in Cluster 4 (50.54%). In summary, hosts in Cluster 4 (i.e., The Established), which are rather small in proportion, are notably different from other hosts in terms of their behaviour (i.e., lower response rate and slower response time) and pricing of their listings (i.e., lower prices).

4.3 Host Clusters and Guest Review Ratings

In order to explore if different host clusters (i.e., self-presentation tactics) are associated with lower or higher review ratings from their guests, a summary of the mean scores of review ratings (on a scale of 1 to 5) for different aspects of guest experiences at peer-to-peer accommodation (i.e., overall, accuracy, cleanliness, check-in, communication, location, and value) is presented in Table 2. It is noteworthy that only ratings on accuracy and communication have direct association with hosts, while other aspects (e.g., location, value, cleanliness) are related to the property. It is also noteworthy that the average ratings for all Airbnb listings in this study are extremely high for all aspects of the experience: overall (M = 4.60; $s.d.$ = .36), accuracy (M = 4.69, $s.d.$ = .39),

cleanliness (M = 4.51, $s.d.$ = .51), check-in (M = 4.80, $s.d.$ = .33), communication (M = 4.83, $s.d.$ = .31), location (M = 4.63, $s.d.$ = .44), and value (M = 4.56, $s.d.$ = .39). This is consistent with Zervas, Proserpio, and Byers' (2015) study, which found consumer ratings on Airbnb to be higher than those on other online review sites, even for the same properties (i.e., based on properties cross-listed on Airbnb and TripAdvisor).

As can be seen in Table 2, guest ratings among Clusters 1, 2, 3, and 5 are nearly the same as the average scores for the entire listings. However, listings in Cluster 4 receive higher scores in overall, accuracy, cleanliness, and value. Notably, the score for accuracy in Cluster 4 is significantly higher than that of other clusters (based on independent-samples t-tests: with Cluster 1 [t = 2.68; p < .01], Cluster 2 [t = 2.58; p < .01], and Cluster 5 [t = 2.67; p < .01]). Since accuracy refers to the match between how hosts describe their listing online (i.e., guest online evaluation) and the real conditions/features of the listings (i.e., guest offline evaluation), it confirms that guests also perceive that the hosts in Cluster 4 are honest (or authentic) in presenting their personal brand. Finally, consistent with the lower listing price, the score for listings in Cluster 4 is higher in terms of value.

Table 2. Host Clusters and Guest Ratings

Guest Ratings	**Cluster 1** (N=2,017)	**Cluster 2** (N=4,206)	**Cluster 3** (N=474)	**Cluster 4** (N=186)	**Cluster 5** (N=4,536)
Overall	4.59 (.37)	4.60 (.36)	4.60 (.35)	4.65 (.32)	4.60 (.36)
Accuracy	4.69 (.40)	4.69 (.38)	4.70 (.38)	4.77 (.32)	4.69 (.40)
Cleanliness	4.51 (.49)	4.51 (.51)	4.51 (.52)	4.55 (.54)	4.51 (.51)
Check-in	4.79 (.32)	4.80 (.34)	4.79 (.34)	4.81 (.33)	4.80 (.33)
Communication	4.83 (.31)	4.83 (.33)	4.84 (.29)	4.84 (.30)	4.83 (.31)
Location	4.64 (.43)	4.62 (.44)	4.64 (.41)	4.65 (.42)	4.62 (.43)
Value	4.55 (.38)	4.56 (.39)	4.56 (.39)	4.61 (.40)	4.55 (.39)

In summary, regardless of host self-presentation strategies, all hosts seem to receive high scores in guest evaluation, with the exception of a small number of hosts in Cluster 4 who received even higher scores. Interestingly, while they are slightly less responsive to prospective guests, they received similar ratings in terms of communication. This is most likely due to the fact that prospective guests whom the hosts did not respond to were never converted into real guests and, hence, did not evaluate the hosts. As reflected in the higher score for accuracy, it is confirmed that in the socioeconomic (commercial) relationship contexts where modality switch occurs (i.e., online first then offline), accuracy is key to personal branding. That is, as guests develop service expectation based on the communication cues presented online by hosts, whether or not these cues are later confirmed during service delivery (i.e., direct host – guest interactions) shape guest experience and evaluation, which, in turn, also contribute to lasting impression management and personal brand.

5 Conclusion and Implication

In an attempt to better understand different strategies that peer-to-peer accommodation hosts use to attract prospective guests, this study explored how hosts articulate their

profile online to obtain underlying self-presentation tactics. Using a hierarchical cluster analysis on textual data containing host descriptions of Airbnb listings, five clusters of host descriptions were identified: *The Global Citizen*, *The Local Expert*, *The Personable*, *The Established*, and *The Creative*. Using the framework of personal branding and self-presentation, high frequency nouns and adjectives from these clusters were examined to determine the strategic use of these words for host branding. It is apparent that, from the high frequency adjectives, hosts in Cluster 5 utilize positive self-presentation, while hosts in Clusters 3 and 4 are rather honest (as indicated by the presence of negative description of aspects of self and listing). From Jones' (1990) categories of self-presentation tactics, only competence strategy was observed from the clusters (in Cluster 2 and Cluster 4) where hosts describe themselves in regard of their expertise and competence as a host. While all of the clusters suggest efforts dedicated to personal branding (i.e., focusing on self as a person) more than to brand advocacy for the company (i.e., focusing on self as a part of Airbnb network). References to self as "providers" were apparent only in Cluster 2, where hosts communicate their "host-ness" as personal brand identity.

The majority of the hosts could be classified into Clusters 1, 2, and 5, with a small number in Clusters 3 and 4. However, Cluster 4 (the smallest in number) is the most unique in terms of their behaviour, listing, and guest review ratings. Hosts in Cluster 4 (The Established) have a lower average response rate and slower response time when compared to hosts in other clusters, indicating that they are less responsive to prospective guests. Despite this, they received a high score for communication from their guests, which is comparable to other clusters. Listings in Cluster 4 are notably lower in price and, hence, received higher review score for value. Importantly for personal branding, listings in Cluster 4 received a significantly higher score in terms of accuracy, which represents consistency between what hosts describe online (i.e., online evaluation) and what guests see in reality (i.e., offline evaluation). This signifies the importance of honest self-presentation in such commercial/social exchange platform. Since host – guest interactions are considered important in the sharing economy (and one of the benefits sought by guests [e.g., Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Tussyadiah, 2015]), it is important for hosts to present themselves in a more authentic way to ensure a consistent image after the modality switch from online to offline.

This study demonstrates the significance of assessing strategic efforts in a peer-to-peer, commercial sharing platform, a venue where company branding and personal branding overlap. Because of the infancy of this research area, this study presents opportunities for further examination into this topic. Utilizing text analysis software (i.e., automation of text processing) allows this study to analyse a large number of observation, compared to other studies on personal branding and self-presentation. However, there are limitations inherent to relying on algorithm to process textual data written in natural languages, such as unobserved nuances and sarcasm. Further, the textual data used in this study are snapshots of host profiles at a point in time and, therefore, do not reflect the dynamics of self-presentation in cases where hosts update their profile and possibly alter their self-presentation tactics. Additionally, host description plays an important role in shaping a brand during the initiation of interactions. This brand is typically reinforced during follow-up interactions with prospective guests (i.e., by exchanging private messages), where additional communication cues are given (or given off).

These follow-up interactions that occur privately are not available to aid in the confirmation of host branding strategies. Finally, because of the nature of on-demand economy, where the decision when to make properties available is fully at the discretion of the hosts, determining a reliable measure of success for different host branding strategies remains a challenge. This is due to the complexity and inconsistencies attached to such measures as number of reviews, monthly availability (occupancy), and review ratings. To address some of these issues, future research should assess the consistency between personal brand promise and brand image as observed in consumer reviews, by comparing how hosts describe themselves and how they are described in guest reviews.

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