

The construction of trust in hospitality experiences mediated by the Internet: the cases of Couchsurfing and Airbnb

A construção da confiança em experiências de hospitalidade mediadas pela internet: os casos do Airbnb e do Couchsurfing

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Abstract: *Starting from the premise of the importance of trust in economic and consumer relations, this study reflects about the process of building trust in relations of consumption that are developed in the field of hospitality. Such reflection is based on the web platforms Airbnb and Couchsurfing that allow any person to host strangers or to be hosted by strangers in their own houses (with or without payment). This kind of practice interest us by indicating consumer relations which seem to overstep ordinary buy-and-sell experiences and show the formation of other social bonds whose constructions this paper intends to analyze.*

Keywords: *consumer; trust; Airbnb; Couchsurfing.*

Resumo: *A partir da premissa da importância da confiança nas relações econômicas e de consumo, este artigo se dedica a refletir sobre os processos de construção da confiança em relações de consumo que se dão no campo da hospitalidade. Tal reflexão é feita a partir das experiências do Airbnb e do Couchsurfing, plataformas que permitem receber estranhos em casa ou se hospedar na casa de desconhecidos pagando ou não por isso. Essas práticas vão nos interessar por*

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indicarem relações de consumo que parecem extrapolar as experiências ordinárias de compra e venda e evidenciar a formação de outros tipos de laços sociais, cuja construção o texto pretende analisar.

Palavras-chave: *consumo; confiança; Airbnb; Couchsurfing.*

About the issue of trust

Trust seems to be a fundamental issue on economic and consumption relations. Its importance can be evidenced by different studies (FUKUYAMA, 1996; FINURAS, 2013; GIDDENS, 1991; SIMMEL, 2004; ZAK, 2012, among others) and by the increasing interest for indexes that measure it statistically.⁴ These statistical constructions become important signals to evaluate the context, to search for trends and to try to foresee future events in the economy. As Porter said (1995), the statistics are linked to the constitution of public knowledge, producing a close relation between social numbers and public action, a relation that leads to the creation and disclosure of standardized measurements and indexes.

The indexes of trust are built by different institutions and are related to different applications and are distinguished according to the methodology developed and the statistic calculus that were made. Usually, it measures the consumer's and businessmen's trust regarding the future of economic activities, but also measures people's trust in institutions, brands, the citizen's trust regarding the government and political parties or even the degree of people's trust regarding social groups (such as friends, family and neighbors).⁵

The interesting fact in the construction of these indexes, that we seek to highlight in this paper, is the understanding of trust as a measurable variable. It is not rare that indicators that measure the degree of people's trust in certain situations (such as the job maintenance or payment of debts) and in certain institutions (such as companies, financial institutions or even the government) are presented in the media followed by analyses and predictions developed by "economy specialists"⁶ (NEI-

4 Restricted to the Brazilian landscape, some trust indicators: the Índice de Confiança da Indústria e o Índice de Confiança de Serviços (Index of trust for the Industry and Index of Trust for Services, measured by FGV); the Índice de Confiança do Empresário do Comércio, (Index of Trust of the Business Owner, measured by the National Institution of Commerce); and the Índice de Confiança do Consumidor (Index of Trust of the Consumer, measured by Exame magazine).

5 The Index of Social Trust, created by Ibope, measures trust in different layers of Society, quantifying trust in institutions of the public and private sphere, as well as the civil Society.

6 This expression refers to professionals specialized in economy and/or in charge of diagnosing and operating the economic and financial system: PhDs, journalists, investors, government officials.

BURG, 2010, p. 3). However, if we distance ourselves from the naturality in which we can perceive these numbers, it seemed appropriate to ask about how the construction of these measurements is developed, how they are monitored, as well as their effects. We notice that, from the indexes, trust gains visibility and that, when it is conceived through a methodologic approach, it gets adjusted to the mode privileged by our societies to conceive reality (CROSBY, 1999). Trust, when associated to a scale or transformed into number, gains uniformity and apparently distance itself from its personal and intimate aspect. From the number, trust seems to gain precision and, when measured, it gets standardized and manifested through an unit that dimensions it and allows comparisons.

When we ask ourselves about these trust indexes, the idea is not to confront the legitimacy of these indicators and the efficacy of their measurements, but to emphasize the importance of trust as a technical and social element capable of influencing actions. Produced and studied by specialists from different areas, what these indexes tend to reveal is that certain behaviors vary according to the degree (high or low) of trust. Thus, when monitoring these measurements, we seek to identify types of behavior, to foresee actions from different agents, correlating trust and future decisions. To call attention to this fact is to put into evidence trust as a significant element in social relations.

Trust between people is a primordial element for the integration of society (SIMMEL, 2004, p. 191). Anthony Giddens (1992) invites us to look at trust in relation to risk. For example, when we enter a plane or deposit cash on a bank, we trust dynamics that organize these actions and minimize the risks; even if these risks do not cease to exist and the knowledge about the functioning of these systems are in power of “experts”. Faced with this, trust, according to Giddens (1991), works as a conscious act of believing in something knowing about the situations of risks and also about some guaranties.

Trust is, thus, present in daily activities, whether it is the purchase of milk of a certain brand, believing in the quality of that product, or when we drive our car and believe that other people will not drive their automobile towards us on purpose. We always establish social relationships that demand trust and we forge a conviction on the other person. Usually, we suspend our skepticism and convince ourselves that is safe to establish a relationship. This conviction, often times, is supported by personal reasons, but those reasons do not fully explain this feeling.

However, beyond the brands we usually purchase and the services we usually use, it is curious to notice the emergency of consumption experiences that seem to demand more trust than we are used to giving. We talk about it thinking of a market formed by internet platforms that allow travelers to find hosts able to receive them, paying or not for that activity, and offering the whole house or just one room –activities happening between total strangers.

One example of that is HomeExchange, a service of house exchange. When launched, in 1992, it allowed, through letters, that the travelers swapped lodgings. Thought as an alternative to booking rooms in hotels, it proposed to reduce costs of accommodation (mainly for family trips) and to enable the discovery of places from a local perspective. With the creation of the Internet, the service migrated to a model closer to the social networks. From an online platform, members would disclose their houses and become, at the same time, hosts and guests. It works like this: A person is hosted at someone's house while their host stays at their house. This idea, however, is not so unique: Other platforms offer similar services, such as GuestToGuest.com, Roomorama.com, Love-HomeSwap.co and Knok.com.⁷

This type of company and business model, although it is recent, have been growing and shows significant numbers. Perhaps the most expressive one is Airbnb.com, created in 2008 and allows you to rent, per season, apartments and houses (or just rooms), besides having more

⁷ The website HomeExchange.com started to work on several countries, counting with a global team of approximately 50 people. They launched their portuguese version, TrocaCasa.com, in 2006. Available at: <https://www.trocacasa.com/pt/>. Accessed in: April 12th, 2016.

singular options, such as castles, caves, igloos, treehouses and boats. Everything with prices as diverse as the possibilities of accommodation, ranging from costing less than a hostel to more than a luxury hotel.

Airbnb has offices in many cities in the world to manage millions of accommodations in more than 34 thousand cities used by more than 60 million people (ABOUT US, 2016). Only in Brazil, there are over 70 thousand accommodations registered in the platform – a growth of 67% in relation to 2015 (INFOMONEY, 2016). The company revenue comes from the taxes over each transaction. A percentage of the payment received by the host is deducted and it is added another percentage to the guests' payments. Currently, the company has market value of approximately US\$ 25 billion (BORNELI, 2015).

Couchsurfing.com, on the other hand, created in 2004, four years before Airbnb.com, is one of the firsts and most expressive hosting platforms, whose peculiarity lies in not performing any type of monetary charge from its users and, mainly, being focused on cultural exchange that can exist from an interaction among strangers. Currently, according to information disclosed by the company, their website gathers approximately 12 million people in over 200 thousand cities (ABOUT US, 2016).

It is interesting the fact that so many people are trusting strangers to the point they host them in their house, being present or not. Regardless of the reasons presented by these people to act that way - the desire to make new friends, cultural exchange or the extra money coming from the rental -, trust appears as a fundamental element in these experiences.

Trust, in these cases, is not only an index adopted by the market to measure the relation between people, but the condition of possibility of these business models. Trust, in platforms as Airbnb and Couchsurfing, seem to suggest the existence of more than a simple disposition for investing or consuming, but also a predisposition of interacting and trusting one another to the point of letting them stay at your house, use your personal objects, live with you and your family and sleep in the

next room as if they were acquainted to you. What is this relationship and how it is developed?

In this context, we go back to the initial question about the construction of trust that needs to be delimited. Thus, the issue which we are going to deal here is about the trust constructed or demanded in consumption experiences that are made in the field of hospitality through the cited platforms. That way, the proposal of this article is to analyze the way trust is built on Airbnb and on Couchsurfing. As it will be presented, these platforms are supported in different processes and mechanisms of construction of trust to create other relationships between consumers. Such initiatives had been chosen by being the most expressive of this business model.

Consumption, hospitality and privacy

Simmel (2005), when analyzing the metropolis at the beginning of the 20th century, talked about the difficulty of individuals to adapt the intensification of nerve stimuli and interactions which they are exposed to. For the author, life in a small city would be marked by more habitual interactions, in which people could establish deeper bonds and construct relationships based on the feeling. In opposition to this model, life in a big city would be marked by the gathering of people with different interests, by a nervous agitation, an ambience of contrasting stimuli and by frequent changes, demanding, that way, that the individual change their lifestyle: instead of keeping solid relationships, it would be necessary to forge more superficial relationships. After all, as Simmel (2005, p. 582) clarifies, in an amplified circle, it would not be possible to establish deeper relationships with all the individuals; it would not be possible to respond to the massive number of stimuli from the big city with the same behavior that leads the small city life. The subject living in the metropolis would interact in a more impersonal way, he would not react with the soul anymore, but with the mind. The subject would have a posture of reservation to achieve a distance from things and people.

Paying attention to the phenomenon of adaptation of subjects to life at the metropolis, economic relations that were developed were the focus of Simmel's attention. The author argues that the monetary economy facilitated the most superficial relationships among people. The producer-consumer relationship would be an example in which would evidence the distance between people - these agents would no longer recognize one another.

The big city lived and described by Simmel presents people establishing relationships that are no longer restricted geographically or limited to family groups or circle of acquaintances. However, if relations, at that moment, became wider, the contact with the other, on the other hand, was marked by indifference and strangeness. In order to face the conditions imposed by the big city, it was necessary to find ways of transforming these relations into more precise, safer relationships, and to search an "objectivity in the treatment of people and things" (SIMMEL, 2005, p. 579). This analysis from Simmel was reinforced by Anthony Giddens (1991), that, following the path of the German philosopher, said that trust is fundamentally involved with the institutions of modernity. In the midst of the great diversity of the big city emerged the need for contracts and institutions that can produce guarantees, i. e., constructing trust between strangers.

Francis Fukuyama (1996), North-American political economist, reinforces this idea when he said that "[...] People who do not trust one another will end up cooperating only in a system of rules and regulations, that have to be negotiated, agreed, organized and put into practice many times by coercive means" (FUKUYAMA, 1996, p. 43). We know and are used to contractual mechanisms that regulate trust among strangers in our society. Institutions such as notary's offices and objects such as stamps create sense on papers and allow us to have guarantee in the transactions we perform. However, what imply to trust in the context of experiences of companies such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing, in which the relations of consumption that involve trust and intimacy seem to build and measure trust in other ways?

For many people, to rent a house per season or to receive a distant relative or a friend of a friend to spend a few days at their house is not something new. However, what Airbnb and Couchsurfing do, as well as other similar initiatives, is to systematize and widen these customs, enabling that more people connect through hosting practices, to the point of transforming certain experiences in profitable business models. Through the mechanisms created by Airbnb and Couchsurfing, it is possible to rent (or to offer for free) a property, contemplating the entire house, but also one room or only a mattress in the living room, remaining, in these cases, in the residence along with the guest/customer, sharing spaces and even the routine of the house. In these initiatives, the transactions (paid or not) are organized by a platform that also functions as a “showcase” of the available spaces, responsible also for creating strategies aiming at constructing and measuring trust so that complete strangers feel safe enough to receive or be a guest with the other. This last dimension is our focus in this paper: to understand how trust is produced in the person who hosts or the one who asks for accommodation.

Let's start by Couchsurfing (CS), that presents as a global community of travelers willing to "share their lives in a profound and meaningful way" and who say to have as a mission “to make the world a better place from trips that enrich human connections” (ABOUT US, 2016). On their website, CS presents five values (OUR VALUES, 2016) that guide the experiences developed through this platform: “Share your life”, that is, share your time, your house, your objects; “create connections”, because they understand that accepting the good from strangers strengthen the faith on the other and helps creating better people; “Offer kindness”, which include respect, tolerance and appreciation for the different; “stay curious”, that is, keep the desire of learning from the other person and their world; “leave it better than you found it”, a posture that people must have with the world, with relationships and with your host's house.

Airbnb defines itself as a “trustworthy community market for people to post, find and book accommodations” (ABOUT US, 2016), works

with the slogan “make yourself at home”, which categorizes the mission which it presents: to build a “feeling of belonging” and to make the members feel “welcome” and “safe” in any place of the world since they are using the service (THE WORLD IS YOUR HOUSE, 2016).

On both platforms, in order to be a guest or a host, it is necessary to register and create a profile with general information, such as: name, email, photo, city, languages they speak, where they studied and/or worked and a personal presentation; but each one of the platforms have their specifics according to their focus. On Airbnb, for those who want to be hosts⁸, it is necessary to describe in detail the place offered: how many people can stay there, if there is a garage, how is the neighborhood and the public transportation in the region, among other information of this sort; in addition to posting pictures of the rooms. It is also necessary to describe extra services that can be offered to the guests, such as Internet, breakfast, TV, kitchen etc.

Whoever look for a place to stay at Airbnb must write down the destination, the dates of arrival and departure and the number of guests to find the available options. It is interesting to notice that, on Airbnb, when you look for a place to stay, the result of the search highlights the property, not the host. There is a big picture of a room of the residence and in the bottom right corner, a small picture of the host, along with the price of rate of that place. In contrast, on CS, the result of the search for city brings the hosts of that locality and there are no pictures of the property, only pictures of the person. The focus is not in the space evaluation or the comfort of the place, but in the experience of cultural exchange with the other, so much so that the idea of the website is to offer a “couch”, even if most hosts offer a bed or something more comfortable.

Beyond the information previously quoted, on the CS profile there must be if "the couch is available to receive people" (it is possible to say "yes", "no" and "maybe") and if the host "accept children or pets". The profile also shows how the room in which the guest is going to sleep is

8 It is possible to register to be only a host, a guest or both.

(mattress, bed, couch, individual or shared room, living room) and if there is a preference for hosting women or men, among other information of this sort. CS's profile also require answers for questions that try to show the person's lifestyle so that the guest, when looking for a place to stay, can choose somebody they can connect to and feel comfortable meeting, as well as the host, who must read the traveler's profile and choose whether they want to host this person or not. The questions are: "mission in life", "how do you participate on CS", "experiences on CS", "interests", "philosophy", "music, movies, books", "types of people I like", "teach learn, share", "an incredible thing I've seen or done", "opinion about CS".

From what was exposed above and from interviews with Airbnb and Couchsurfing users and the participant observation made by one of the authors, it seems possible to suggest that trust in the relationship between host and guest can be understood from one of their synonyms: the credit. One believes in the other's reputation, suspending, at least partially, the uncertainties and believing in the success of the relationship. One trusts the other with the expectation that the experience is successful. The descriptions made by the hosts and guests, generate profiles disclosed by the websites, enable choosing who to interact with, provoke feelings such as recognition, sympathy, or even curiosity between the users and, in that sense, produce connection and help in the process of constructing trust.

Construction of trust on Airbnb and on Couchsurfing

With the popularity of the internet in the 90's, we were gradually learning about this environment and creating new ways of trusting strangers from the connections offered by the digital network. We believed that the people whom we interact were real; we shopped in online stores and gave our credit card information trusting it would not be disclosed; we bought not only on stores we know, but also from strangers at Mercado Livre or eBay; today, the forms of connection between strangers

increased: We are hitchhiking⁹, sharing meals¹⁰ and sending mail¹¹, besides, of course, staying at their house. As we previously indicated, both on Airbnb and on Couchsurfing, the strategies used to build trust, guaranteeing, thus, their business model, are many: profile with personal information (both); message exchange between host and guest (both); references (both); verification of the identity (both); vouchers (CS); hosts protected by insurance (Airbnb) and 24 hours service (Airbnb). Let's see each one of them.

It is not necessary to fill in all the asked information in none of the platforms, but a bigger amount of data can mean greater trustworthiness. CS is not responsible for any situation that occur between host and guest, but it offers many tips that try to contribute with the safety of couchsurfers. For example: It is advised to interact, preferably, with people who have a complete profile, with their real name, clear pictures and detailed descriptions of themselves. Obviously, such information can be invented, however, yet, they seem to have an important role in the construction of the trust. Another element that also seems to be important in this process is empathy, psychological capacity to feel what the other would feel and place oneself in the place of the other. There are people who defend that empathy would be capable of producing, even physically, a predisposition of trust. According to the research by Paul J. Zak (2012), developed in the field of neurobiology in its interface with economy, empathy would produce the hormone oxytocin, which has the function of promoting trust amongst individuals.

Far from thinking of Zak's studies and the forms of constitution of trust on Airbnb and on CS in a biologic determinism point of view, we can assume, for example, that would be possible for somebody to "see themselves in the other person", to feel empathy and trust someone by reading their profile on CS or Airbnb and perceiving that the person

9 Platforms such as blablacar.com and caronetas.com.br allows you to offer and get rides, sharing costs or not, after previous registration.

10 Websites such as eatwith.com and mealsharing.com allows you to receive strangers for a meal or exchange a restaurant for someone's house.

11 Platforms such as nimer.com and meemeep.com connect people that need to send something from one place to another with somebody that will travel to that place anyway.

likes the same movies, read similar books and described themselves using arguments and elements similar to your own. In general, the Couch Surfing profile gathers more personal information than Airbnb's, however, it is common that in the message exchange between hosts and guests they exchange links from their social media profiles, which allows them to know more about each other, trusting more or less according to the empathy built.

As previously mentioned, before being a guest or a host, in both platforms, it is possible to exchange messages to, for example, request more information, solve doubts, organize details and know more about the other person. This exchange of information is usually pointed out by companies as another strategy of building trust, that also seem to work from the construction of empathy through information capable of showing some characteristic of the host or guest in which the other would recognize themselves in.

After each stay, both the host and the guest must write a reference note about the other, that is, to evaluate the experience through a small text that will be exposed on the profile of the evaluated and cannot be altered or erased. People usually talk about either the physical space (in case of Airbnb) or about how the experience was with the other person (on both platforms). It is interesting to notice the friendly tone of references, even with people that only met to exchange keys, as it can happen on Airbnb. More references mean that more people had stayed in that place or that that person were already received in many places. The more positive references, the better constructed reputation and, therefore, the greater the trustworthiness. That is, with each indication with positive mentions, it is easier to get a couch on Couchsurfing or to rent a place on Airbnb.

It is important to notice that the exchanged references are visible to all the users of these platforms. This ample visibility of the references allows that the evaluation process do not get restricted to the guests and hosts, but is available to all, open to different interpretations. Once the references cannot be anonymous, we can notice that not only the

received evaluations but also the given ones have a role on building trust. For example, if you are a guest in a house of a person that has already 30 positive references and, after the experience, describe your evaluation in a negative way, criticizing something that everyone else seemed to like, that might suggest that the problem is you and not the other person, showing that perhaps you are not a good guest. The set of available information in the profile of these platforms allow the users to find different ways of interpreting them, putting them in relation and confronting them. In the case of CS, both the references you gave and the references you receive remain visible on your profile; within this logic, we understand that the way you speak about the other also expresses a little bit about yourself.

It is interesting to notice that, in these experiences, people trust not only the guest or the host, but they also believe in what people equally strange had to say about them. It is as if when you buy a product on an online store and you read the comments of people who already got the product, but you are not sure if, in fact, they are telling the truth.

When we reflect about the importance of these comments or testimonies, we verify the role which reciprocity has within these platforms. The principle of reciprocity, written in great detail by Polanyi (2000), has a fundamental importance for the organization and maintenance of the functioning of platforms we study. In the case we are analyzing, we verify that it is necessary to be recognized as a good guest or host to keep sharing freely the services. The importance of playing your role well not only guarantees a good experience with the other person, but also, most of the time, generates a good evaluation. Such evaluation is like a “credit” received due to a good behavior, that will be used in future interactions. The user reputation inside the platform is totally connected to the fulfillment of expectations and related to the condition of the host or guest. The social relation established will be fundamental for the attainment of a good evaluation and, consequently, the widening of trust (or credit) for new uses.

ARTIGO

One of the factors that favor the reciprocity on Airbnb and on CS is the symmetry of the relationships. As Polanyi (2000, p. 68) already had pointed out when he described some socioeconomic principles, "reciprocity is greatly facilitated by the institutional pattern of symmetry". Both on CS and on Airbnb, there is a symmetry in the relationship between guest and host that makes them depend on each other for a good review and, consequently, to keep being successful in sharing the services offered by the platforms. Regardless of the reasons that lead people to use Airbnb and CS, to choose this type of experience, they are subject to the principle of reciprocity – and such mode of functioning of the platform makes the participants actions not be isolated. Giving and receiving are behaviors that acquire the same importance. Knowing how to give and receive – and doing it well – are virtues, are highly valued behaviors on the dynamics we observed. To be a good host or a good guest requires that both share the established rules of good living – whether they are implicit or explicit -, beyond demanding the effort of both parts to fulfill what is expected of them. In the case of the guests, we can, for example, think about the care with the house, the respect for the neighbors, kindness. In the case of the host, the reception, the safety and the observance of dates and hours scheduled.

When we run over the description of the mechanisms of construction of trust, it is important to emphasize that, in both platforms, it is possible to verify the identity of the user. On CS, for that verification, it is charged an optional tax: Through payment, the company is reassured that the name and house address are real. Indeed, this strategy can contribute in the construction of trust, but it does not appear to be one of the most important strategies, since, from the millions of users that are registered, less than one million has a verified account - there are very active users, with over 100 references, that do not have a verified account.

On Airbnb, the account verification is different: guests and hosts connect their accounts in platforms such as Facebook or Gmail and digitalize some identification document, such as the driver's license or passport, and they are not charged because of it. All the information are

kept in secrecy. In this platform, it is possible to speak in verification levels, once that what is mandatory to open an account is to register an email (that would be the first level); in so far as the user offers their profile in a social network or documents for verification, he gradually upgrades his levels and increase his trustworthiness.

Couchsurfing has yet another strategy of construction of trust that reminds the verification, but it is the user's total responsibility: vouchers, a species of symbol of trustworthiness added to the profile that means "it is safe to surf in this couch". But only the user who received three vouchers can contemplate other users. Perhaps due to its scarcity, this symbol of trustworthiness seem to be the most desired of the platform. However, even without having this "stamp", it is possible to travel and get "couches".

When accepting a stranger in house, one of the concerns is about the damages that can be caused by him/her, especially when the host is absent. Thinking about this, Airbnb offers a "host warranty", that promises the reimbursement of up to R\$ 3 million in case of property damage. Any reservation made by the website has this guarantee. However, Airbnb points out that it is only valid in cases where the guests cause damages that are not solved directly by themselves. In general, a broken glass is immediately replaced by the guest. Thus, Airbnb's idea is that the host first contacts the guest to solve the problem; in case that does not happen, they can use the warranty.

However, this warranty does not cover losses of money, pets, civil responsibility and common or shared areas. The company suggests that objects such as jewelry and works of art are kept in safes; regarding simple losses or damages (as a broken window), hosts can create a safety deposit to each reservation. That way, this "host warranty" only covers serious situations, such as possible fire.

Still in the attempt of offering a safe environment for transactions, Airbnb has other strategies to follow and guide their users, such as orientation meetings with new hosts and 24-hour services to the users.

In both the experiences, we can see that trust is developed through a collective, mutual construction. The companies, in their websites, offer mechanisms that allow to know the other: a detailed profile, pictures, the possibility of message exchange, system of references or even the service of verification of identity. However, it is essential that guests and hosts participate.

Final considerations

Unlike evaluations of trust that we saw in the beginning of the study, Airbnb and Couchsurfing do not have quantitative evaluation systems. Unlike trust indexes calculated and measured objectively that want to classify levels of trust and translate personal experiences in numeric and alphanumeric forms, both initiatives privilege description and qualification of experiences. When people describe, recommend and witness things, they create communicative dynamics and constitute bonds that do not go through a fixed classification or a standardized measurement, but through the constitution and permanent management of trust. Every person can define their criteria and parameters, being possible to not worry with any of the elements offered by the website or try to create other elements, such as the indication of closest friends and the elaboration of other questions that are not foreseen by the platforms.

Beyond the previously quoted strategies of construction of trust, it is important to remember that these companies also invest in the use of social networks in order to become known and to have their brands considered trustworthy. Moreover, they make frequent advertisement through personal e-mails for the people registered in the platforms. From the point of view of consumption relationships, it is important to observe that the communicational campaigns of companies usually focus on the construction of a “feeling of belonging” amongst users, using a personal tone, marked by the idea that these platforms are communities that allow unique experiences.

It is interesting to reflect about the use, both on Airbnb and on CS, of the term “community” in their promotional strategies, that seem to

work as an element of attraction and trust for new users. Many authors had already reflected about the communitarian characteristics allowed by tools or platforms on the internet (SMITH, 1999; CASTELLS, 2003; RECUERO, 2009). The semantic field suggested by the word community involves, in different levels, belonging, proximity, knowledge, affinity – qualities that directly contribute for the construction of trust. In the case of the Airbnb and the CS, we observe that such concept reinforces two qualities of these platforms. In one sense, the investment on the idea of community reinforces the idea of integration through common interests. Through the social network developed, platforms offer the possibility to be established as a relation with the other who shares similar interests; following this logic, the proposal of accommodation can be understood as a proposal of connection among people that seek different experiences from those offered by the hotels. Community, on the other hand, also refers to the integration of space, in the sense that it deals with an invitation to the house, to the space of the other - an invitation to a common experience. Through the sharing of spaces, this connection with the other can be experienced in different intensities.

The use of social networks for sharing positive among users is also a strategy of recurrent promotion of the platforms. In the case of Airbnb, it is not rare to see short videos that, in a short and fun way, emphasize data as the number of users registered or the cities where the services are available. Sharing information such as these contribute to put in evidence the size and magnitude of the service. The many numbers used express not only the dimension reached by the initiative: they also endorse the solidity of the business model, that, although recent, has an expressive amount of users and a relevant market value, as was cited. The safety of the platform is emphasized by the transparency of the exchange of information, by the service of financial guarantee and the 24-hour availability of the attendance team - these elements gathered bring legitimacy and authority for the rendering of services.

As discussed previously based on Simmel (2004), trust between people is a primordial dimension for society's integration. In an extended

circle of interactions, the relations had requested greater precision. For the author, the accountable preciseness brought by the monetary economy predominated in the spirit of the modern individual (SIMMEL, 2005, p. 580). To a great extent, the trust in the other, an environment of loss of the personal bonds, was reestablished through more precise and contractual relations, from the creation of institutions and functions to play roles that before were performed by individual subjects, without formalizations. This landscape that Simmel describes when observing the beginning of the 20th century seems to remain until today. What we observe with Couchsurfing and the Airbnb reveal, however, a type of “opening” in this objective mode of functioning. Somehow, These initiatives seem to put the emphasis back in the personal relations in a way to take trust between people as the base of its functioning, though the interactions happen mediated by companies and its guarantees. The platforms mediate the contact between users and lead strategies that reinforce the construction of trust, but the business model that they construct demand other bonds, different from those of the basically commercial interactions.

Moreover, both the platforms seek to build an integration privileging the “principle of the reciprocity” (POLANYI, 2000). When providing greater proximity in the relation between guest and host, they value for the construction of consumption relations that are not forged, solely, from the formalities customer-company, consumer-supplier. It is not the currency that intermediates the consumption relation and what it is in question in this relation is not simply the consumption of a service. The established logic is based, mainly, in a relation of reciprocity between the one who gives and/or receives, in a dynamic of mutual obligations in which both need to fulfill their role - that is, what is expected from them. The production of the trust passes precisely by the observance of other people's expectations and by the construction of a reputation.

Following different initiatives of consumption characterized by practices of sharing, we observe that they spread for the most diverse areas: from transportation to food, from tourism to education. In common,

such experiences bring trust as a condition of fundamental possibility. They are located, in this manner, in some place between personal relationship - characterized by their imprecisions - and the market economy - that privileges the objectivity -, but, without a doubt, they reorganize the role of trust in the consumption relations.

The practices of consumptions which we reflected about in this paper apparently belong to recent business models in expansion, as the companies' data the researches previously showed (COLLABORATIVE LAB, 2014). However, in the same way that we were accustomed to buy clothes and objects in departments stores instead of going to a tailor or craftsman, or we consider normal to do a hand gesture in the middle of the street to call a cab without knowing who that person is and where they are going to take us, it seems that such consumption practices can also become habitual or common. Occurring this or not, we should observe and investigate such ways of doing that are also ways of being, because they seem to let visible the connection between market and personal life, evidencing, once again, that, in consumption relations, economic and personal practices are not separate.

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