

How entrepreneurial are Airbnb hosts in rural regions? An exploratory profiling study of three Nordic regions

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Abstract: Based upon a research gap in the tourism and entrepreneurship literature, this paper will explore professionalisation and performance aspects of Airbnb hosts through a two-step mapping study in three rural Nordic regions. While most empirical studies that investigate Airbnb hosts depart from a fixed assumption that they represent micro-entrepreneurs, we provide a more nuanced and complex picture of the host landscape in the context of rural regions. Our empirical study of Airbnb hosts explores three case regions in Denmark, Iceland and Norway and firstly maps the landscape of hosts for the case regions and thereby identifies different host profiles, including individuals with single and multiple listings, small micro-entrepreneurs and corporate tourism actors. The empirical study will secondly estimate the quality performance of Airbnb hosts in relation to their professionalisation, property and regional characteristics. We find that the host landscape in the case regions is very diverse, and that the professionalisation influences the performance, as measured through the customer quality evaluation, in a u-shaped form. Notably the Danish case region is dominated by large corporate tourism actors whereas the other two rural regions have a prevalence of individual single-listing hosts and small firms, e.g., tourism, farming and event companies. Our conclusion is that, outside of highly competitive tourist "hot spots", Airbnb offers opportunities for a variety of individuals and professionals to engage entrepreneurially. By this token, we provide important points of departures for follow-up research on Airbnb, tourism and entrepreneurship in rural and peripheral regions.

Keywords: Airbnb, micro-entrepreneurship, Airbnb hosts profiles, professionalisation, performance.