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My home on the platform: Exploring the physical privacy concerns of home-sharing providers



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ABSTRACT

The success of home-sharing platforms like Airbnb has introduced the role of sharing providers, i.e. those users who list their properties on the website and share them in exchange for an income. Different from micro-entrepreneurs within other types of peer-to-peer platforms such as e-marketplaces, the experience of home-sharing often presumes face-to-face interactions and physical sharing of private spaces and goods. For providers, this can give rise to concerns about the integrity of the personal possessions they share ("physical privacy"; Lutz, Hoffmann, Bucher, & Fieseler, 2018). Employing Belk's theory of the Extended Self, which postulates that individuals' owned objects and spaces become part of their identity (1988), and based on a sample of European home-sharing providers, we investigate strategic self-presentation, reputational concerns, and attachment to shared properties as predictors of their physical privacy concerns.

1. Introduction

The emergence of the 'sharing economy' has brought new opportunities for travellers looking for accommodation for business or leisure purposes. In particular, 'home-sharing' platforms such as Airbnb and Vrbo have pioneered what is commonly now referred to as 'the sharing lifestyle' (Cheng, 2016). As consumers have grown to consider home sharing through platforms like Airbnb as a comparable alternative to hotels (Guttentag and Smith, 2017), scholars have begun to evaluate the practice of home sharing, highlighting concerns such as regulation and urban climate (Dredge and Gyimóthy, 2015; Edelman and Geradin, 2015; Zervas et al., 2017). A recent body of research has focused on how home-sharing platforms have altered the roles and relationships typical of more traditional hospitality businesses (Arvidsson, 2018; Germann Molz, 2014; Raval and Dourish, 2016). In fact, as users are given not only the opportunity to book someone else's shared space but also to offer their own room or apartment to others, a novel type of participation has emerged on the platform. Aside from participating in a 'guest' role, users can also act as 'providers' – of accommodation, of travel information, and, lately, also of guided tours and entertainment (Puschmann and Alt, 2016; Sthapit and Jiménez-Barreto, 2018).

Micro-entrepreneurship is not specific to sharing platforms, and also exists within peer-to-peer communities such as Ebay or Etsy (Close, 2016; Kuhn and Maleki, 2017; Meged and Christensen, 2017).

However, the latter platforms are based on (a) online(-only) contact between users, and (b) the exclusive and permanent transfer of owner to user in respect of products. Within home-sharing platforms, the relationship between providers and guests is often face to face as well as online (Hamari et al., 2016; Möhlmann, 2015), and transactions allow just the temporary and non-exclusive access of guests to the shared property (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). This new kind of interaction leads to potential risks – for guests and providers – that differ both from the more traditional experiences of hospitality and from commercial exchanges. Many of these risks pertain to participants' physical environment and can affect their personal space and their personal boundaries. Therefore, discussing them requires a specific approach; for example, one that includes the notion of *physical risks* within a broader conception of privacy that spans beyond information and data sharing (Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b).

Several prior studies have concentrated on the experiences of guests on home-sharing platforms – for example, by identifying the motivations behind their choice of Airbnb instead of a standard accommodation option (Min and Lu, 2017; So et al., 2018), by analysing their expectations regarding service (Guttentag and Smith, 2017), and by defining the relationship between trust and (re)purchase intention (Liang et al., 2018; Mao and Lyu, 2017). Much less academic attention has been paid to home-sharing providers, though, with research mostly focused on the motivations behind providers' participation (Jung et al.,

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2016; Lampinen and Cheshire, 2016) and on exploring their data privacy concerns (Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b; Ranzini et al., 2017). Recently, Lutz et al. (2018b) empirically explored the ‘emotional labour’ that comes with the experience of sharing one’s apartment on a platform, a factor that is amplified by the risks emerging from the parallel exposures to online and real-life interactions with guests (for more critical discussion of worker conditions in the sharing economy, see also Etter et al., 2019).

We extend this literature by further exploring the experiences of home-sharing providers, focusing on the notion of ‘physical privacy’ (i.e., the concerns providers have about guests invading their personal space and damaging their property). This subject is currently understudied, in comparison to the body of research investigating online privacy in respect of participation in home-sharing platforms (Ert et al., 2016; Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b). Physical privacy concerns are experienced by home-sharing providers when they fear a violation of the boundaries they set around their personal spaces and goods. Since homes, in all their physical representations, can be understood as an expression of the identities of their owners, the emotional bond connecting providers with the spaces they share can make physical privacy more prevalent among their concerns (Lynch, 2000). By empirically exploring the antecedents of physical privacy concerns, our study contributes to a better understanding of the complex socio-material dynamics of home-sharing services that span online and offline worlds, with a particular focus on providers.

In order to consider how the risk of damage to a provider’s possessions could determine physical privacy concerns, we draw on Belk’s (1988) theory of ‘extended self’ – the idea that an individual’s possessions can contribute to their sense of self – and we explore the relationship between providers’ attachment to their shared possessions and physical privacy concerns. In an updated conceptualization of the extended self, Belk (2014) further theorized that digital possessions, such as a person’s online profiles, could also be perceived as an extension of the physical self. Building on this theory (Belk, 2014, 2016), we explore whether home-sharing providers’ investment in their online profiles, by means of a strategic self-presentation, might influence their perceived offline vulnerability. Within this analysis, we also take account of the fact that, while home-sharing providers invest strategically in their platform presence, their identities, as well as those of their shared properties, are increasingly co-constructed or contested by other users, through ratings and reviews (Bucher et al., 2017; Chhabra, 2010; Yannopoulou et al., 2013).

In sum, the present study considers how home-sharing providers’ strategic self-presentation and their reputational concerns relate to their physical privacy concerns. In addition, we explore the role of attachment to shared properties as a mediator between strategic self-presentation, reputational concerns, and offline privacy concerns. Our empirical investigation is based on a sample of European providers ($N = 241$) operating on different home-sharing platforms.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The extended self and the role of attachment for physical privacy concerns

Building on Belk’s theory of the extended self, it is fairly straightforward to argue that home-sharing providers who feel attached to the accommodation and goods they share might perceive stronger physical privacy concerns. According to Belk (1988), an individual’s identity and sense of self extend to persons, places, and things that they recognize as ‘their own’. Any loss or violation of possessions is therefore perceived as ‘a loss or lessening of the self’ and can give rise to feelings similar to grief and mourning (Belk, 1988, p. 142).

Belk’s conceptualization of the extended self is particularly fitting to the home-sharing context because it helps to explain some of the challenges that providers face when they share their homes and possessions with others (Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b; see also Belk, 1988). Furthermore, in Lynch’s

(2000) view, the importance of a home is particularly emotional, as it is the instrument through which owners express their identity and actively negotiate boundaries. Participating on a home-sharing platform can give providers the perception that, in order to generate an income and maintain a good reputation, hospitality should be ‘absolute’ (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000), and, therefore, that no restrictions should be imposed on the guests and no requests should go unanswered. This can lead providers to perceive a lessening of the self, as they give power over their belongings to a stranger who becomes the master of their home (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000). As such, platform-based sharing can generate significant concerns about physical privacy. Even when voluntarily sharing physical possessions with others, and even though platforms such as Airbnb provide insurance against goods damaged by guests, home-sharing providers might feel concerned about letting strangers into their private spaces (Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b; Ranzini et al., 2017).

Moreover, it is possible that the *degree to which* providers care for and identify with their shared properties might contribute to the experience of physical privacy. According to Belk (1988), attachment to physical goods are crucial for their inclusion within an individual’s extended self, which in turn determines the nature and level of any concern when such goods are shared. ‘Relationships with objects are never two-way (person–thing), but always three-way (person–thing–person)’ (Belk, 1988, p. 147), and, therefore, granting someone access to an owned and identity-relevant property could highlight the competitive nature of ownership, and trigger fears about the loss of such space.

Empirical studies have highlighted how attachment influences owners’ feelings around a possession. A study of Nigerian consumers highlighted how the election of an object as ‘favourite’ could determine concerns around its potential theft, as opposed to resignation towards its possible loss (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). Sivadas and Venkatesh (1995) found that, the more attached consumers were to particular objects, the more likely they were to consider them as part of their identity and to be possessive about them. The ownership of a house, in particular, appears to have a specific emotional value (Lynch, 2000): for example, one study of homeowners observed a correlation between their home attachment and their perception of the risks of burglary and vandalism (Brown et al., 2003). Accordingly, we posit that, for providers on home-sharing platforms, attachment to one’s possessions can have specific consequences; that is, as attachment to certain possessions leads individuals to more strongly incorporate them within their identity, the act of sharing them with others might generate feelings of vulnerability and exposure (Belk, 2014). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. Home-sharing providers who are attached to their shared properties are more likely to have physical privacy concerns.

2.2. Spanning online and offline worlds

The spanning of online and offline experiences is one of the defining features of providers’ participation on home-sharing platforms. On the platforms, providers share information and photos to attract potential guests (Fagerström et al., 2017; Tussyadiah, 2016). Offline, they grant guests temporary access to their possessions, providing, de facto, an alternative to hotels, hostels, and other types of accommodation that can be reserved online (Guttentag and Smith, 2017; Lutz and Newlands, 2018; So et al., 2018).

Home-sharing providers, more than their guests, are incentivized by the platforms to both create an attractive online identity and achieve consistency between their online and offline selves (Tussyadiah, 2016). This effort is particularly important, since guest reviews are explicitly asked to both certify the similarity of the physical space with the pictures presented online and to evaluate their interaction with the provider. Home-sharing providers can therefore feel pressured to present themselves both online and offline in a way that is commercially attractive, while running the risk of creating an inauthentic representation and potentially being punished through negative reviews (Ert

et al., 2016). Previous research has established that there is a connection between providers' choices in terms of self-presentation and their ability to generate trustworthiness and revenues (Ma et al., 2017a, 2017b). Unsurprisingly, many providers resort to 'personal branding' or 'self-marketing' (Gandini, 2016; Tussyadiah, 2016) in order to generate positive guest responses.

Such commercial incentives can be the source of significant vulnerabilities. For example, providers tend to share a substantial amount of private information on sharing platforms, thereby exposing themselves to risks in terms of privacy violation, both by peers and through the platform itself (Lampinen, 2014). Although, in terms of privacy, the experience of providers on home-sharing platforms would appear similar to that of sellers on online marketplaces such as eBay or Etsy (Duh et al., 2002; Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b), the physical sharing of spaces and possessions adds a layer of physical privacy concerns to the experience of providers. In the next section, we will explore why online behaviours can have consequences for this specific type of offline concerns.

2.3. The digital extended self and the strategic importance of self-presentation and reputational concerns

With the digitalization of many physical goods as a consequence of the emergence of digital technology, the extended self has also broadened to the digital realm. According to Belk (2014), digital tools such as online agendas, apps, and wikis are able to extend users' identities because they provide an 'extension' to the memories, answers, and references that users can reach on their own. Additionally, the physical devices connecting users to digital services have become smaller and more ubiquitous (Belk, 2016), which further diminishes the distance between physical possessions and the digital world (Jeong et al., 2017).

As social network sites – as well as, later, sharing platforms – have put individuals and their social relationships at the very centre, scholars have suggested that online identities (i.e., the sum of a user's profiles and online interactions) could also represent an expression of the extended self (Sheth and Solomon, 2014). Notably, online identities are characterized by fluidity: on the one hand, they are the result of users' self-presentation (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013; Hogan, 2010); on the other, they are co-constructed by the likes and comments of others (Belk, 2014). This fluidity is particularly relevant for a platform aimed at facilitating travel: the 'selves' of hosts are socially constructed through their relationships with guests (Cohen, 2010), but also relate to the properties they share (Ma et al., 2017a, 2017b). Specifically, on home-sharing platforms, the information providers share about themselves contributes to the attractiveness of a listing (Ert et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2017a, 2017b). At the same time, their self-presentation and reputation are co-constructed with their guests (Teubner et al., 2017) and therefore are vulnerable to disruption via negative ratings and reviews (Malhotra and van Alstyne, 2014).

In this sense, the self-presentation of providers is more strategic than that of consumers within the same platforms. The information providers share about themselves becomes part of their offer – as Roelofsens and Minca (2018, p. 170) noted, 'bodies and places ... represent core elements in the production of meaning', whereby providers' smiling profiles are 'normally accompanied by inviting images of places'. Hence, self-presentation for providers on home-sharing platforms can be thought of as an *extended self*-presentation—that is, a blend between providers' self-presentation and the promotion of the property they share.

At the same time, however, self-presentation is the only narrative guests can access if platforms allow providers complete control over the information they communicate (Pera et al., 2016). In previous studies on not-for-profit hospitality platforms, such as Couchsurfing, hosts were found to exert this control as a pre-emptive tool of customer selection and risk minimization (Cherney et al., 2017). So, even though providers of home-sharing services might have formal options through which to select their guests and protect their property (such as platform-offered insurance plans), they seem to engage strategically in personal branding as a way to select their audience (Gandini, 2016), thereby exerting control over whom

they want – or do not want – to share private goods and spaces with.

As more investment is dedicated to building an online self-presentation that is 'an intimate connection between individuals and places' (Roelofsens and Minca, 2018, p. 271), and as this also serves as a pre-emptive tool for guest selection, concerns about harms to one's shared property can also emerge. Thus, we posit:

Hypothesis 2. Home-sharing providers who place more strategic importance on self-presentation on the platform are also more likely to have physical privacy concerns.

A provider's reputation on a home-sharing platform is also dependent on their strategic self-presentation. However, this dependence exists only in part, as guest ratings and reviews contribute to the co-construction of their profiles (Belk, 2014). In fact, the comments, reviews, and ratings provided by guests can be thought of as creating a sense of authenticity (Chhabra, 2010) in respect of both the home-sharing providers and the shared possessions (Bucher et al., 2017; Yannopoulou et al., 2013). Consequently, a provider's online representation 'emerges through testimonies' (Roelofsens and Minca, 2018, p. 172), as guest reviews can contribute to, or disrupt, what prior researchers have defined as providers' 'reputation capital' (Gandini, 2016). While studies of Airbnb have found reviews to be, for the most part, honest (Fradkin et al., 2015) or positively biased (Bridges and Vásquez, 2018), malevolent practices have also been seen to emerge (Edelman et al., 2017). Since a provider's reputation has been established to be an antecedent for the profitability of a listing (Teubner et al., 2017), negative or malicious reviews can be a true source of concern for those sharing their homes on these platforms.

Such concerns are consistent with considerations regarding the extended self, as providers' reputations contribute to their digital selves (Belk, 2014); as such, vulnerabilities can emerge from the loss of control that comes with their co-creation. As providers perceive their online extended self to be under malign threat, they might also report concerns about the violation of the personal physical space and property. Therefore:

Hypothesis 3. Home-sharing providers who are concerned about their reputation on home-sharing platforms are also more likely to have physical privacy concerns.

Finally, we consider Belk's conceptualization of attachment as central to the extended self. From Belk's (2010) perspective, an individual's attachment to a physical possession, and therefore its inclusion within the extended self, works both as a boundary between the self and others as well as a boundary between the offline and online self (Belk, 2014). In the context of home-sharing, a high level of attachment to a shared good can limit a provider's willingness to share it (Hellwig et al., 2015), or raise concerns about physical privacy (Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b). Most importantly, attachment to a shared property signals its high identity value (Belk, 2014): on home-sharing platforms, where the reputation of providers and the evaluation of their shared properties are intertwined (Ma et al., 2017a, 2017b; Zervas et al., 2017, attachment provides a link between online identity and physical property.

Different from fully commercial B&Bs, in fact, where the personal reputation of hosts is largely disconnected from the evaluation of the shared properties, home-sharing providers link their reputation on the platform to the space they own and care about – which might explain the link between their investments in strategic self-presentation and their perception of physical privacy (Belk, 2013; Gandini, 2016). At the same time, because of the increased identity value providers attribute to shared properties they are attached to (Belk, 2013), the relationship between their personal reputational concerns and their physical concerns about the property will also be mediated. As such, we propose the role of attachment as a mediator for both relationships:

Hypothesis 4a. The relationship between the strategic importance of self-presentation and physical privacy concerns is positively mediated by attachment to the shared possession.

Hypothesis 4b. The relationship between reputational concerns on the platform and physical privacy concerns is positively mediated by attachment to the shared possession.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data and sample

The present study is based on an online survey created as part of a larger study about the sharing economy in 12 European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom). Data were collected through a Qualtrics questionnaire that lasted an average of 20 min. Survey respondents were recruited through panel sampling, and were selected on the basis of their experience of the sharing economy, either (primarily) as consumers or as providers to a sharing platform. Over the course of two months (May and June 2017), we collected a sample of 556 users of sharing economy platforms who identified as providers of goods and/or services. Of these respondents, 241 reported to be, or to have been, providers of home-sharing services.

With a sample size of 241, bivariate correlations as low as $r = .20$ could be reliably estimated; that is, we can say with .80 confidence that the 'true' correlation would be less than .10 removed from the estimate (Schönbrodt and Perugini, 2013). We regard this as a quite acceptable sensitivity. The majority of the sample (68 %) had also experienced home-sharing services as a guest. The average age of the sample was 35 years old ($SD = 12.21$). Gender distribution saw a slight over-representation of male (58.5 %) versus female (41.5 %) home-sharing providers. Additional details about the demographic composition of the study's sample are presented in Table A1.

3.2. Measures

The measures for this study were mostly chosen from previously validated scales, adapted to the context of home-sharing platforms. The dependent variable, *physical privacy concerns*, was measured through the scale that Lutz et al. (2018a) adapted from Stutzmann and colleagues (Stutzman et al., 2011). As the original scale exclusively targeted Airbnb users, we adapted the language so as to make the context also available to providers on other home-sharing platforms. In three items, participants could express their level of concern about issues such as 'Consumers damaging my personal belongings'. The scale proved to have sufficient reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .854$).

Attachment was measured through four items adapted from the attachment scale of Dwayne Ball and Tasaki (1992). It included items such as 'What I offer on the sharing platform almost feels like a part of me' and 'What I offer on the sharing platform says a lot about who I am'. This scale also reported sufficient reliability ($\alpha = .828$).

The variable *reputational concerns* was formulated based on results from the qualitative study by Lutz et al. (2018b). The scale included three items, such as '(I am concerned about) someone giving a bad evaluation of what I share'. This scale was found to have a good reliability ($\alpha = .857$).

Finally, *strategic importance of self-presentation* was measured using the only entirely self-formulated scale, which assessed the strategic importance hosts attribute to performing self-presentation on home-sharing platforms. The scale contains three items, including 'It is important how I appear to others on the platform'. The reliability of this scale was deemed sufficient ($\alpha = .751$).

In addition, four demographic variables were added to the analysis: *participants' age, gender, education, and income level*. The wording of the main scales is available in Table A2.

3.3. Data analysis

The collected data were analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM), which allows for the inclusion of latent constructs, the easy testing of indirect effects, and the specification of measurement errors. In order to ensure the feasibility of the study, we employed a two-step analysis. First, exploratory factor analysis was employed to establish the unidimensionality and internal consistency of the constructs (see Table A3 and A4). Subsequently, a structural model was constructed for all respondents with the complete data set, using Mplus (Version 6.1) (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Combining the two steps, the formulated hypotheses could be tested for applicability and direction.

At the construct level, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted all scored above the acceptable thresholds for criterion values (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Nunnally, 1978). Because of these fitness measures (see Table A5), we considered SEM to be an appropriate tool with which to answer our research question.

4. Results

4.1. Antecedents of physical privacy concerns

Our first three hypotheses concerned the direct relationships of the strategic importance of self-presentation, reputational concerns, and attachment to the physical privacy concerns of providers on home-sharing platforms. The results of the SEM, depicting each of the hypothesized relationships, are shown in Table A6.

As can be seen, the results of the SEM confirm the hypothesized positive relationship between attachment to one's shared belongings and physical privacy concerns ($\beta = 0.35, p \leq .05$), suggesting that the level of attachment providers feel in relation to the goods they share on a platform might contribute to their feeling of discomfort over potential harms to their belongings. This finding supports Hypothesis 1.

Similarly, the SEM results highlight a positive and significant relationship between reputational concerns and physical privacy concerns ($\beta = 0.66, p \leq .001$). This result confirms the idea that hosts who are worried about negative reviews affecting their online reputation might also be more concerned about possible violations of the goods they share on the platform. Based on this result, Hypothesis 2 can be accepted.

Finally, the direct relationship between the strategic importance of self-presentation and physical privacy concerns proved to not be significant ($\beta = -0.12, p = .46$), suggesting that hosts who care more about the strategic management of their online impressions are not necessarily more likely to be concerned about potential damage to their shared possessions. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

None of the demographic variables was found to predict physical privacy concerns ($\beta_{\text{age}} = -0.05, p = .30$; $\beta_{\text{income}} = 0.05, p = .26$; $\beta_{\text{gender}} = -0.01, p = .69$; $\beta_{\text{education}} = -0.07, p = .17$).

4.2. Mediation by attachment

In order to test Hypotheses 4 and 5, two mediation paths were included in the SEM. The results from the mediated model are presented in Table A7.

Testing Hypothesis 4, it appears evident that, when it comes to the relationship between reputational concerns and physical privacy concerns, the indirect effect through attachment is small and only marginally significant: $\beta = 0.08, p = 0.067, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.04, 0.21]$. We can therefore assume that attachment to one's shared property might play a limited explanatory role, or no role, in the perception of physical privacy concerns for hosts who are highly concerned about their reputation. Because of the marginal significance level, and because of the significant relationship between reputation and physical privacy, suggesting only partial mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986), we can only partially accept Hypothesis 4a.

The relationship between the strategic importance of self-presentation and physical privacy concerns appears instead to be

significantly mediated by attachment: $\beta = 0.24$, $p \leq .05$, 95 % CI [-0.1, 0.62]. Given the lack of significance of the direct relationship between strategic self-presentation and physical privacy concerns ($\beta = -0.12$, $p = .46$), we can assume full mediation by attachment. Attachment to the shared property can therefore be inferred to explain why hosts who find their strategic self-presentation important also perceive concerns about the physical privacy of their shared property.

5. Discussion

Employing Belk's (1988) theory of the extended self, we explored the effects of several variables on the physical privacy concerns of home-sharing providers. Our aim was to investigate whether the attachment of providers to their homes and possessions, as well as the importance they attribute to the construction of an online identity (via strategic self-presentation) and the potential risks relating to such endeavour (in terms of reputational concerns), could predict perceived vulnerabilities around their shared spaces. Building on Belk's idea that the sharing of treasured possessions can lead to concerns about infringements of personal boundaries (Belk, 1988; Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b), we also analysed attachment as a potential mediator of the direct relationships.

The primary result to emerge from our analysis was a strong and positive relationship between hosts' reputational concerns and their physical privacy concerns—specifically, the fear that their shared possessions would be in one way or another violated. While providers' self-presentation on home-sharing platforms is co-constructed, as guests' reviews can confirm or disrupt their reputation, negative reviews can still be perceived as a loss of control over what Gandini (2016) defined as one's 'self-brand'. As guests' reviews not only inform others about future choices but also determine their perception of a host (Mauri et al., 2018; Zloteanu et al., 2018), hosts' fears about digital damage, such as the possibility that guests might paint a negative and indelible picture of a shared property, can feel very similar to concerns about violations in the real world.

This finding is interesting as it provides novel insights into the entanglement between online and offline worlds in the context of home sharing, where these two worlds evidently converge. Theoretically, then, we provide a new way of seeing this entanglement, as our arguments bring previously unexpected relationships to the fore. To verify these relationships, we mobilized Belk's (2013) conceptualization of the digital extended self, whereby a host's reputation on the platform can be interpreted as an immaterial object they co-construct and own. Since both hosts' reputations and their shared possessions can be perceived as representations of their identity (Belk, 2013; Lynch, 2000), the perceived menace coming from a disruption of their self-presentation online can lead to a stronger perception of vulnerability, including with regard to very practical risks such as those pertaining to the physical safety of one's shared home.

Our results also provide novel insight by suggesting an explanatory role for providers' attachment to their shared goods: we find that a direct relationship exists between providers' attachment to their possessions and the related physical privacy concerns. Reflecting on this result alongside Belk's (1988) idea of the extended self, it becomes evident that attachment determines the importance of possessions in terms of a person's identity – hence, hosts will feel substantially more concerned about the safety of a possession to which they feel attached to, compared to one they do not feel any connection with (Brown et al., 2003; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). The more providers are invested in the home they share on the platform, the more they will be concerned of the risks emerging from a shared ownership.

Within our findings, attachment appears to also perform a role as a mediator of the relationship between providers' perceived importance of strategic self-presentation and physical privacy. This result might be best interpreted in light of what is peculiar to home-sharing platforms: the 'peerness' of the relationship between providers and guests. That is, because attachment to the shared home is an expression of providers'

identity (Lynch, 2000), a personal involvement exists in the sharing, and a greater investment in self-presentation corresponds to a higher concern about the safety of the objects corresponding to that online identity (Belk, 1988).

The increasing commercialization of home-sharing platforms such as Airbnb is also a factor to keep in mind when interpreting our findings. Providers who take a purely micro-entrepreneurial approach to the sharing platform, and therefore share their properties solely as a commercial opportunity, may experience fewer, if any, physical privacy concerns, because the spaces they share will not be spaces they inhabit, and are therefore less likely to generate attachment. For such providers, physical privacy concerns can have less of a personal value, and rather emerge as fears about damages to the future profitability of their possessions. Our results suggest that, for these providers too, higher concerns about their online reputation might generate higher physical privacy concerns, and vice versa. Future research could confirm and extend this finding.

For home-sharing providers, the difficult balance between the benefits emerging from participating on the platform, the reputational risks, and the ambivalence towards letting guests access homes they care about is consistent with what Lutz and colleagues (Lutz et al., 2018b) identified as the 'emotional labour' that seems specific to sharing economy providers. Providers can be thought of as performing emotional labour – that is, 'regulating both feelings and expressions for organizational goals' (Grandey, 2000, p. 97; see also Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b) – as they share parts of their identity through their profiles on the platforms, as well as through the properties they feel attached to. For hosts, sharing spaces to which they are attached (such as rooms in the homes they inhabit), investing in reputational capital, such as through strategic self-presentation, becomes an essential tool to attract the right customers – including those less likely to harm or damage the possessions. In this sense, self-presentation can be seen as a form of pre-emptive emotional labour (Lutz et al., 2018b), and, as the investment in attracting the correct customer grows, so can the risks being perceived as connected to sharing a property that is emotionally relevant.

6. Conclusions

This paper represents an attempt to extend the existing body of research on privacy within home-sharing and, more broadly, sharing economy platforms. Employing Belk's (1988, 2014) theory of the extended self, we explored the physical privacy concerns of home-sharing providers, testing whether strategic self-presentation, reputational concerns, and attachment to one's shared goods could influence providers' feeling of vulnerability around their possessions and themselves. The study's findings provide novel insights regarding the relationship between online and offline worlds, which are by definition connected for home-sharing platforms, and whereby, in both the physical and the virtual space, home sharers are exposed to vulnerabilities: offline, potential damage and invasion of one's goods; online, potential damage and invasion of one's reputation. Our study has shown that these vulnerabilities and concerns are connected, and we have identified the moderating variables therein.

Accordingly, the results help us to understand the concerns around the boundaries set in homes (Lynch, 2000) and identity threats related to goods and places (Roelofsen and Minca, 2018). Furthermore, our findings shed light on the idea of 'absolute' hospitality (Derrida and Dufourmantele, 2000) – giving power over a home to a stranger – which seems more problematic for home providers who are more attached to their home. Similarly, home sharers give strangers – through ratings and reviews – power over their online identities, which might be equally problematic (Roelofsen and Minca, 2018, p. 172).

Thus, our results contribute to existing research on the role of reputation in respect of hospitality and sharing economy platforms (Bucher et al., 2017; Gandini, 2016; Teubner et al., 2017), suggesting that hosts' concerns surrounding their reputation online relate to their

fears about the objects they share. As a first study specifically approaching physical privacy concerns, our results contribute to the existing body of literature on privacy within the sharing economy (Hawlitsek et al., 2016; Lutz et al., 2018a, 2018b; Ranzini et al., 2017), and represent a possible addition to the early-stage explorations of emotional labour in platform work (Lutz et al., 2018b).

Given its exploratory nature, this study features several limitations as well as opening interesting avenues of future research and suggesting some practical implications. A first limitation concerns the fact that this study was based on a sample of panel respondents. While this type of recruitment offered the advantage of providing us with data from the different European countries, it has also been shown to subtly distort the responses of participants (Bach and Eckman, 2017). Additionally, within this study, we did not differentiate between providers on different home-sharing platforms. We are aware that Airbnb is nowadays the most successful home-sharing platform, but we also included providers from smaller networks. It could be that these networks have slightly different regulations or social norms, and that their users have somewhat different perceptions about risks involving, for example, violations of their private property. We also did not ask providers to specify *what* they share, which limits the nuance in our exploration of attachment, as attachment may vary depending on the nature of the shared space: for example, a room in an apartment the host inhabits might feel very different from a separate apartment. This potential variation is both a limitation of our study and something we wish to explore further in the future.

Many aspects of the present study could generate interesting avenues of future research. For example, the concept of physical privacy could be approached with more nuance – for example, qualitatively – in

order to better understand what physical concerns hosts associate with home sharing. Within this study, we assumed that physical privacy risks would be connected to hosts' interactions with guests, but listing an apartment online also exposes hosts to other risks, such as someone who is not a customer using the platform to locate and break into a property.

Additionally, it would be interesting to study the physical security of hosts, as well as concerns about the integrity of their shared possessions, in more detail. As physical security is one important driver of non-participation in the sharing economy (Kamal and Chen, 2016), it would be interesting to explore how hosts navigate this complexity, and whether they use their online self-presentation as a way to mitigate potential risks.

Lastly, the results of our study suggest that hosts' physical privacy might be something platforms should attempt to mitigate, especially if they wish to minimize the related emotional labour for hosts. While bigger platforms like Airbnb and Uber are experimenting with insurance policies (Traum, 2015; Weber, 2014), the protection of hosts will be more challenging for smaller and more independent platforms. Alternative systems, such as an efficient rating or signalling of consumers known to damage property, might also help minimize perceived risks.

Overall, the current paper contributes to our understanding of physical privacy concerns as a potential negative effect from participating in home sharing. We hope that the study and its findings represent a step towards a better understanding of the important psychological consequences of a phenomenon that has, in so many ways, altered the way tourism is conceived and practiced.

Appendix A

Table A1
Demographic composition of the sample.

	Absolute Numbers	Percent
Gender		
Female	100	41.5
Male	141	58.5
Total	241	100
Age		
18-24	47	19.5
25-34	92	38.2
35-44	51	21.2
45-54	25	10.4
55-65	26	10.8
Total	241	100
Education		
No Formal Education	1	0.4
Primary School	11	4.6
Lower Secondary	14	5.8
Higher Secondary	86	35.7
Bachelor's Degree	70	29.0
Master's Degree	50	20.7
Doctorate or Higher	9	3.7
Total	241	100
Income^a		
Low	43	17.8
Medium-Low	83	34.4
Medium-High	64	26.6
High	51	21.2
Total	241	100

^a To account for different currencies within our sample (Euros, Danish and Norwegian kroner, Swiss francs) the average income was taken as a reference per each individual country, and variables were recoded so that: Low (Lower than Mean – 1 SD), Medium Low (Higher than Mean – 1 SD, but lower than, or at the Mean), Medium High (higher than the Mean, but lower or equal to Mean + 1 SD) and High (Higher than Mean + 1 SD). In order to obtain a single income scale, the individual recoded measures were averaged.

Table A2
Wording of scales used, Mean, St.Dev.

Question wording	Item number	Average and (/) standard deviation (1–5)
<i>Physical Privacy (3 items): Please indicate your level of concern with the following scenarios that could take place while interacting on a sharing economy platform:</i>		
Consumers damaging my personal belongings	pp_1	3.09 / 1.18
Consumers snooping through my personal items.	pp_2	3.03 / 1.13
Consumers using what I provide inappropriately.	pp_3	2.97 / 1.11
<i>Importance of Strategic Self-Presentation (3 items): State your level of agreement with the following items:</i>		
It is important how I appear to others on the platform	sp_1	3.36 / 1.16
I invest significant time and effort into how I present myself	sp_2	3.36 / 1.05
It is important to have full control over how I present myself on the platform	sp_3	3.58 / 1.07
<i>Attachment (4 items): Please indicate your level of agreement with the following scenarios:</i>		
I have a strong personal attachment to the possessions I share on the sharing platform	at_1	3.4 / 1.14
What I offer on the sharing platform almost feels like a part of me.	at_2	3.3 / 1.11
What I offer on the sharing platform says a lot about who I am.	at_3	3.24 / 1.11
If someone would criticise my offering publicly, it would feel like a personal insult.	at_4	3.20 / 1.18
<i>Reputational Concerns (3 items): Please indicate your level of concern with the following scenarios that could take place while interacting on a sharing economy platform:</i>		
Someone giving a bad evaluation of what I share	rc_1	3.13 / 1.11
A bad evaluation of what I share reflecting negatively on me	rc_2	3.11 / 1.17
Someone making an unflattering video/photo of what I share visible to others	rc_3	3.04 / 1.21

Table A3
Measurement Model.

Construct	Item	Std. loading	t-values	R ²	α	C.R.	AVE
Physical Privacy	pp_1	.84	31.57***	.70	.85	.85	.66
	pp_2	.80	27.59***	.64			
	pp_3	.80	27.47***	.64			
Importance of Strategic Self-Presentation	sp_1	.78	20.66***	.60	.75	.77	.52
	sp_2	.71	18.07***	.50			
	sp_3	.67	13.76***	.45			
Reputation Management	rm_1	.85	35.08***	.71	.86	.91	.71
	rm_2	.84	32.63***	.70			
	rm_3	.77	17.34***	.59			
Attachment	at_1	.72	19.76***	.52	.83	.80	.51
	at_2	.78	23.67***	.60			
	at_3	.76	22.46***	.58			
	at_4	.56	13.06***	.54			
Criterion		≥ 0.5	min*	≥ 0.4	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.6	≥ 0.5

* p ≤ 0.05.

*** p ≤ 0.001; α = Cronbach's α; C.R. = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Table A4
Discriminant Validity Test – Fornell Larcker Criterion.

	1	2	3	4
<i>Importance of Strategic Self Presentation (1)</i>	0.52			
<i>Reputational Concerns (2)</i>	0.31	0.71		
<i>Attachment(3)</i>	0.42	0.42	0.51	
<i>Physical Privacy Concerns (4)</i>	0.28	0.50	0.40	0.66

Squared correlations between the constructs shown; AVE on diagonal in bold.

Table A5
Fit Indices.

Index	Measurement model	Criterion
CFI	.982	≥ .90
TLI	.979	≥ .90
SRMR	.057	< .08
RMSEA	.032	≤ .05

Table A6
Parameter Estimate and Hypothesis Testing.

Hypothesis	Std. Estimate (t-value)	Result
1. Attachment → Physical Privacy Concerns	.35 (2.109)*	Accepted
2. Importance of Strategic Self-Presentation → Physical Privacy Concerns	n.s.	Rejected
3. Reputational Concerns → Physical Privacy Concerns	.66 (7.904)***	Accepted

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table A7
Mediation Test and Hypothesis Testing.

	a	b	c	c'	Indirect	se	95 % CI	Result
4a. Reputational Concerns → Attachment → Physical Privacy Concerns	0.24	0.35	0.77	0.66	0.09	0.09	[-0.04, 0.21]	Partially Accepted
4b. Importance of Strategic Self Presentation → Attachment → Physical Privacy Concerns	0.69	0.35	0.12	-0.12	0.24	-0.07	[-0.1, 0.62]	Accepted

Note. Paths in the mediation models are a = IV to mediator, b = mediator to DV, c = total effect of IV on DV, and c' = direct effect of IV on DV.

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