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Emotions in the Tourism Sharing Economy

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Title: Emotions in the Tourism Sharing Economy

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Abstract:

Emotional labour has for decades been addressed and investigated in tourism studies and tourism management. Originally coined by Arlie Hochschild in the late 1970s it has increasingly been elaborated upon in relation to tourism service work. This take on the originally sociological concept has predominately been managerial in tourism management studies, and contextualized as a clear-cut social interaction between employees and customers, with an employer in the background. Faithful to its mission to produce knowledge of value for the management of the tourist company (be it a hotel or some similar typical actor in the tourism industry) emotional labour has thus been imagined, grasped and understood in specific more or less instrumental and functionalistic ways. Emotional labour is something that has to be formalized in a certain way in order to be addressable and handable from a managerial rationality.

However, with the rise of the sharing economy in tourism, with beacons like uber and Airbnb in the center, the employee becomes his or her own employer, and at the same time is regulated by an assemblage of digital technologies. The established view on emotional labour as situated within a triangle of employee, customer and employer does not apply in the same way. As a consequence, emotional labour as a societal phenomenon needs to be rethought, outside the comfort zone of conventional managerialism. To some degree this has been done in tourism studies, but this research is still in its cradle. In particular, there is a lack of reasoning of more (sociological) contextual and systematic, as well as critical but also nuanced, takes on emotional labour in the tourism sharing economy. This paper offers such a contextual, systematic, critical but also nuanced (thus avoiding conventional neoliberalism-bashing) take on the phenomenon, with the highlighting the emotional labour of being an Airbnb host as a case.
