

# **Quality Standards, Service Orientation, and Power in Airbnb and Couchsurfing**

Haiyi Zhu  
Assistant Professor  
Nov 1st, 2017

## Transportation



## Finance



## Consumer goods



## Space



## Personal services



## Professional services



# Two types of sharing systems

## Social-based

**Sharing is incentivized through social relationships, such as generalized reciprocity, trust, and altruism**

## Market-based

Sharing is incentivized through extrinsic rewards, like cash

Social-based

Example

*couchsurfing*

Hosts provide beds to others for free.

Market-based

Example

**airbnb**

Hosts provide beds to others for fee.

Social-based

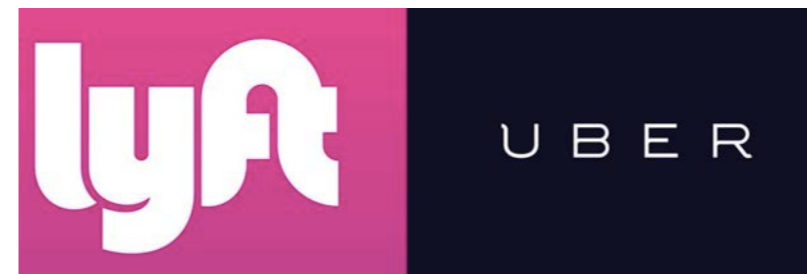
Example



Provide rides for free (carpooling).

Market-based

Example



Provide riders for fee.

Social-based



Market-based



Social-based

Market-based



**RQ. Although offering similar services, how different are social-based and market-based sharing system?**

Prior research shows that the involvement of money can have profound and unintended consequences.



**Story: Introducing a financial incentive – like a fine – to discourage parents from showing up late to pick up their kids.**



# Today's talk

couchsurfing

**VS**

airbnb

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*couchsurfing* **VS** **airbnb**

What are the differences between Couchsurfing and Airbnb with regard to their **services** and **user relationships**?

# Method

## **Mixed method approach**

### **Stage 1:**

- Grounded theory analysis of the interviews of 17 dual users.
- Generate propositions.

### **Stage 2:**

- Quantitative analysis of public hosts data on Airbnb and Couchsurfing
- Test the propositions.

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# Result overview

**Proposition 1:** Airbnb creates perceived minimum standards on offerings, Couchsurfing creates more variable standards. **(Quality Standards)**

**Proposition 2:** On a spectrum of emphasis between people and places, Couchsurfing tends to emphasize people, Airbnb tends to mix emphasis on people and places. **(Service Orientation)**

**Proposition 3:** Airbnb gives more power to guests, Couchsurfing gives more power to hosts. **(Power Relationships)**

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# P1. Quality Standards

“I always wanted to host on Airbnb but I didn’t actually have a bedroom that I felt would be **sufficient for guests who are paying for it**. It’s one thing when you’re like, “you can come Couchsurfing with me - I’ve got a couch.” It’s a completely other thing when you feel like you’re providing a paid service and you are accountable to this person for creating privacy and an experience where, if they want to, they can totally not interact. “



# P1.Quality Standards

“I project my expectation. **If I were to be paying for it, I’d expect a nice stay.** This is why I never Airbnb-hosted before, because I couldn’t enable that [kind of hosting] “

# P1.Quality Standards

“Perception in public is that Couchsurfing is full of hippies, broke students and you’re actually sleeping on someone’s couch all the time. **Quite often you stay in a proper bedroom just like an Airbnb.**”

# P1.Quality Standards

“It was a really beautiful area in Chicago, on the 23rd story. It was looking over Lake Michigan. He said normally he rented in Airbnb when he’s gone; and when he’s there he hosts on Couchsurfing.”

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## P2. Service Orientation

“People who go on Airbnb, they are looking for a **specific goal, a specific service, expecting the place is going to be clean [...] the water isn't leaking from the sink in.** I know people who do Couchsurfing even though they could definitely afford to use Airbnb every time they travel, because they want that **human experience.** “

## P2. Service Orientation

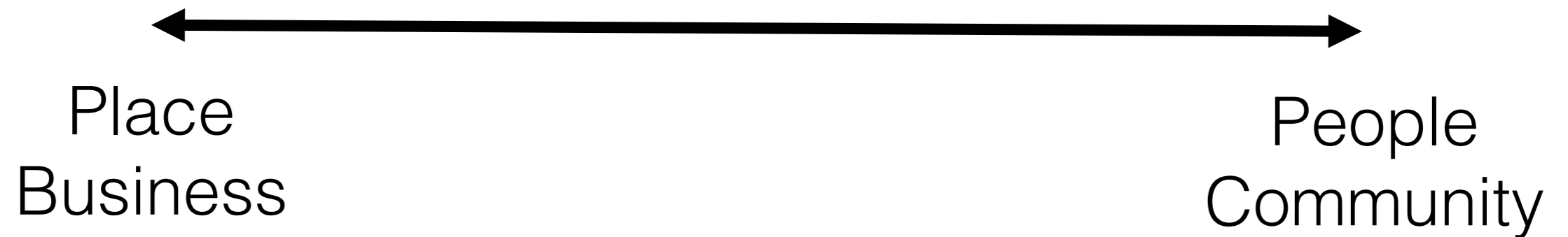
“I was supposed to stay there [Airbnb] for a month but I ended up staying there for four to five months just to help out [my host] after her mother had died. “

## P2. Service Orientation

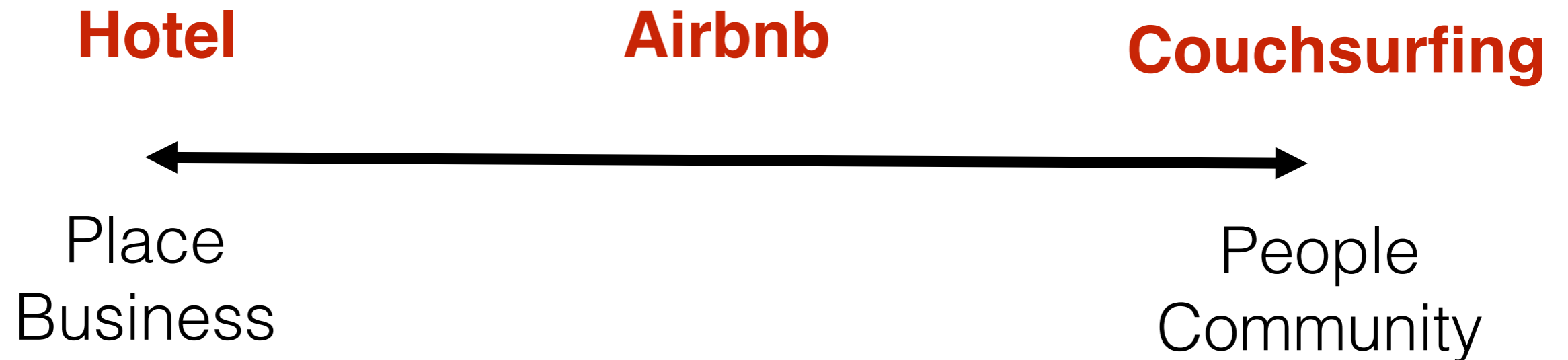
“Airbnb offers a different experience, and I don’t mean compared to Couchsurfing in this sense, I mean in relation to a more traditional tourism experience. Money means service, money means transaction, but I don’t want to say this sounding like a sociopath. There’s several gray and nuanced areas in people how they do business because its a **mixture of business and hospitality.** “



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# P3. Power Relationships

“On Couchsurfing the hosts usually have more constraining house rules compared to Airbnb, because **on Airbnb the host is trying to attract the guest**, whereas **on Couchsurfing, it works the other way round. It’s the guest that has to make an effort for the host to accept them.** “

# P3. Power Relationships

Participant 1 explained that she had contacted hosts on Couchsurfing and was so put off by their responses – “I only take girls”

“They were all like, “No, you have three boys with you – I **only take girls.**” I was like, “red flag,” so then I signed up for Airbnb.”

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# Collaborators & Students

**UMN**



**Max Klein**



**Jiajun Ni**



**Jie Kang**



**Isaac Johnson**

**UW**



**Mako Hill**



# Questions?

Haiyi Zhu

[haiyi@cs.umn.edu](mailto:haiyi@cs.umn.edu)

<http://haiyizhu.com/>