



Research Paper

## Co-Creation of Values Between SomeBnB-providers And their Guests

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** This paper aims to study how somebed and breakfast providers and theirguests experience the visits on the island of Gotland in Sweden, regarding and with a particular focus on processes of co-creation of values while interacting with each other's.

**Method** AQuestionnaire and an interview study was conducted. The questionnaire was digitally sent to some visitors and their hosts after the visits on the island. These visitors and hosts were selected from one single Bed and breakfast (BnB) accommodation.In addition to questions about their background and way of traveling to and around the island, guests were also asked about their experiences regarding values created during theirvisit to the island while associating and communicating with their hosts and other guests staying at the same accommodation. The hosts, BnB providers, in turn were asked about how they experienced the values created in contact with their guests.

**Findings** The study shows that there are several processes involved in co-creation of values between visitors and hosts. Co-creation processes begin already when visitors are planning their visits to the island. Their expectations are created while choosing their accommodation type, often done online on different websites.Pre-information about the chosen BnBaccommodation contributes to visitors' expectations and image of the object, which can be seen as a part of their identities. In the physical meeting with the accommodation and the hosts, the co-creation process is strengthened.There are processes of participation, communication, creation of meaning for the stay, processes of trust and responsibilitieswhich all together create a common culture which in turn contributes to co-creation of values for both parties.These processes also take place between guests. This process of co-creation creates knowledge about the destination and the values that enhance the positive experience of the visits. It also creates knowledge for the hosts about how they can develop their service to achieve increased customer satisfaction.

**Practical Implications** - The study shows how the process of value creation takes place in practice and how it enhances the visitors' experiences of the entire journey. It also shows the opportunities offered by processes for hosts learning the needs and expectations of customers to create better products and services. This allows the organizers of the accommodation to inform and influence as well as balance of the choices the visitors make during the stay.

**Originality/Value of paper** - The study makes a contribution to the knowledge of processes of co-creation of valuesby exploring how some tourists and their hosts experienced the visits to the island. The study can help bridging the gap in the views and actions on co-creation of valuesamong visitors and those who are visited.

**Keywords:**consumers as co-creators, processes, experiences, visitors, visit organizers, values, sensemaking

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is today one of World's and also Sweden's most promising industries (Tillväxtverket, 2016).Gotland, Sweden's largest island is situated approximately 100 km from the Swedish coast, and 180 km from the Estonian coast. The tourism industry has been an important economic factor on the island for more than 150 years. Gotland's population is relatively small and stable and has been so for the last decades. Around 58.000 people live on the island permanently. Approximately 22.000 live in Visby, the island capital and only city on the island. The island has very few industries (cf. Cementa, northern Europe's biggest supplier of limestone for cement) and is still strongly agricultural (Gotland iSiffror, 2017). Still, there are over one million visitors travelling to the island on yearly basis. Tourism is today one of Sweden's new industries.

According to the Swedish Trade's export, value of tourism in Sweden is higher than the total export value for iron, steel and Swedish cars (Tillväxtverket, 2016). As a growing industry, tourism has great importance for employment. According to international estimates, tourism and travel in a global perspective is going to increase by just over five per cent annually up to 2020 (ibid, 2016). Sweden and Gotland is well placed to take advantage of this increase. The Travel and tourism industry's vision is to double the Swedish tourism by 2020. The biggest challenge for tourism in the future is to achieve local sustainable development. The concept of the experience economy states that as services become increasingly commoditized, companies must look to differentiate their offerings by focusing on the design and delivery of experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Experiences indicate the next step in the progression of economic value, requiring businesses to shift from a delivery-focused service paradigm to one that recognizes that the service is simply the arena to engage individual customers in a personal way (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Walls et al., 2011).

In a hospitality and tourism setting, according to Oh et al., can everything tourists go through at a destination become an experience: be it behavioural or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, or expressed or implied experiences (Oh et al., 2007, p. 120). Visitors play an active, co-creative role in determining and constituting value-in-use through resource inputs in their experiences in destinations according to research (Prebensen, Vittersø, & Dahl, 2013). In the industry, experience-related research is well presented but remains still underrepresented in the area of hospitality and tourism research (Ritchie et al., 2011). In the shift towards sharing and collaborative consumption has caused notable implications for the accommodations industry. Probably the most famous organizer of private run bed and breakfast providers is Airbnb, grounded 2008. The organization has faced several and severe resistance from the established accommodation industry. Nevertheless, they have managed to become one of the largest organizers for private accommodation booking platforms online for tourists around the world. (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016; Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). The number of other Bed and Breakfast (BnB) accommodations are today increasing and also very popular among travellers visiting to island of Gotland in Sweden. They are usually small family owned BnBs with only few rooms for renting. The tourist season on island is concentrated mostly to the summer months, June, July and August.

## **II. HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND ACCOMMODATION SECTOR**

There are lot of positive experiences of the sharing economy and its impact on hospitality, travel and tourism services (Guttentag, 2015; Heo, 2016; Tussyadiah, 2016). The first steps of the sharing economy in tourism was taking as early as 1949, when accommodation services were offered to travellers by Servas International (Molz, 2011). In 2003, couchsurfing emerged (Yannopoulou et al., 2013) and later in August 2008, Airbnb was founded (Airbnb, 2016a) and become a platform for the global tourism industry and specifically the area of hospitality.

At its core, the sharing economy represents an online marketplace operated by an entity that encourages trade between buyers and sellers of resources of excess quantities, such as available bedrooms (Ert et al., 2016; Tussyadiah, 2016). This access to surplus products has also been described as "collaborative consumption" (Cheng, 2016). While the sharing economy and collaborative consumption share similarities in offering temporary access to online products, they are different as the latter emphasizes consumers rather than producers (Cheng, 2016; Dredge and Gyimothy, 2015).

Within the tourism and hospitality industry, Airbnb and other bed and breakfast accommodations have emerged as one of the most successful platforms for travellers around the world. Bed and breakfast accommodations are not merely a conventional medium for the exchange of hospitality products (Katz, 2015) but serves as a stage for socio-cultural exchange. In contrast to tourists staying in the traditional accommodation sector, BnB accommodations offers a window into local experiences, in which guests can extend their footprint by immersing themselves and discovering the local community (Fang et al., 2016). Accommodations can symbolize more than the traditional sharing of a space (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016) and fosters the sharing of a local social place (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). In the search of the market's originality (Ert et al., 2016), e.g. Airbnb permits access to accommodation listings outside traditional tourism regions. It is also characteristic for Airbnb accommodations to be able to facilitate the need for belonging among unfamiliar individuals (Edbring et al., 2016), from the first contact through the platform's website to the arrival at the location. While these activities can exist in the traditional accommodation sector, researchers argue that it might not be able to facilitate the same socio-cultural sharing as an Airbnb environment (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016; Oskam and Boswijk, 2016). While studies into experience and value co-creation have received much attention in recent tourism and hospitality studies (Chathoth et al., 2013; Chathoth et al., 2014; Chathoth et al., 2016; Morosan and DeFranco, 2016; Neuhofer et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2011), there is still a gap in understanding how experiences and value are created in collaborative marketplaces, such as Airbnb, and the wider sharing economy (Yannopoulou et al., 2013).

During the course of extraordinary consumption experiences (Arnould and Price, 1993) there have been

a discussion on the development of *communitas* as an evolving feeling of communion with friends, family and strangers. Wang (2004) highlights tourism's ability to give access to spontaneous interpersonal relationships with other human beings and possibility of making new friends. Lugosi (2008) refers to experiences described as short-lived emotional bonds that may be built or experienced through hospitality transactions, emphasizing their active, immersive nature. The most important process is the customer's perceptions of the extraordinary nature of their experiences. According to Arnould and Price (1993) the extraordinary can be understood as something positive providing meaning and new perspective to consumers' lives (Walls et al., 2011, p. 18). Wilson and Harris (2006) points out, that meaningful travel involves the search for an increased sense of self and reconsideration of perspectives on life, society and relationships with others. It is also emphasized by Boswijk et al. (2007) that the dynamic nature of meaningful experiences can lead to personal insight for customers. The experience causes the individual to change his or her perspective on herself in the surrounding world. The experience economy serves as the platform for organizations in striving to provide meaningful experiences, according to Hosany and Witham (2010). With reference to the aspects discussed above this paper aims to study how some bed and breakfast providers and their guests experience the visits on the island of Gotland, regarding and with a particular focus on processes of co-creation of values while socializing and communicating with each other's. This particular accommodation is family owned establishment using Airbnb's booking and service system.

### **III. THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1. Consumers as Co-Creators**

The relationship between consumption and production has been questioned in the research. The two are no longer viewed as two separate processes (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). Today the consumer is seen as a participant in the process and one that creates a sense of the product. The consumer is thus a co-producer of his consumption, as consumption is seen as an identification marker. The co-creating act gives a sense of the product. Through its co-creation role becomes customers' active participants in the experience of the product. Through co-creation role, the customer becomes an active participant. At the same time, consumers are co-creators of values. This new role for the consumer is significantly different from the passive mass-market consumer in post-war consumption (Bergman, & Klefsjö, 2008, 2012; Cohen, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2006).

This division of production and consumption, along with changing consumer roles and co-creation of value is shown most clearly in relation to the experience of consumption. Emotions arise inside consumers' heads through a complex interaction between the stimuli outside the individual and the person's personality, past experiences, etc. Experience Consumption is co-hijacked and consumers themselves clearly play an important role as contributors to the value of the product. Co-creation is a term that has been discussed in various contexts and has held somewhat different connotations. Customer Participation has been defined as the degree to which the customer is involved in producing and supplying a service (Dabholkar, 1990). Co-creation and customer engagement has also been noted as important for innovation and product (Thrift, 2006; Matthing, Sanden & Edvardsson, 2004). The emphasis in the early literature was the co-production as a source of productivity gains (Loveck & Young, 1979; Mills, Chase and Newton, 1983).

Today the focus is on the customer's participation in the construction of goods and services, and it is suggested that customers can participate in the production and delivery through self-service (e.g., self-service grocery stores and gas stations). However, according to Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a; 2004b, the creative process cannot only be seen as a tool to reduce production costs, but should be seen in relation to value creation. They use the term co-creation in the sense that customers go from being passive audience to become active co-creator of experiences. Co-creation is described in the experience economy as an environment, in which the supplier constructs context and the consumer is part of it (e.g. Disneyland). Bendapudi & Leone (2003) argues that the co-production may extend even further and is not only about customers' involvement and participation in a physical sense, but may also include psychological aspects.

Values are usually divided into subjective and objective values. This dichotomy arises when we see values based on consumption (value-in-use) compared to the value of trade (value in exchange). Value in Exchange values often expressed as the price of a commodity. Values of products and services can also be divided into utilitarian (benefit) and hedonistic (perceived feeling) and the so-called novelties (novelty value, it is desirable for the moment.) (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). The subjective values help us to understand how the consumer or customer can evaluate the same product or service differently, or how even the same consumer or customer at any other time values the product or service in totally different ways. If one changes the perspective to include only the consumer value creation, values can be divided into utilitarian and hedonistic. Utilitarian values consist of instrumental products or services, purchased to satisfy any practical needs (such as fixing a car) (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Hedonistic values (such as to experience a concert), however, exist for themselves and are perceived as an enjoyment of something (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). When discussing consumer behaviour, their experiences become important parts of the value creation. There is plenty of research

on the hedonistic values of consumers through e.g. by performing extreme sports such as skydiving, rafting, etc. (Arnould & Price, 1993). Other studies have looked at cultural and educational experiences such as the experiences of visits to museums and art exhibitions. These studies have further developed the discussion of different types of values and the experimental consumption: identity construction, community and meaning (Poulsen, 2014).

Psychologists have explored psychological aspects of various pleasurable experiences. What attracts consumers to the hedonistic experiences is the pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction, which in turn can be combined with e.g. feelings, sensations and thoughts and then be united to a complete and immersive experience. This feeling can be equated with the concept of flow where e.g. the feeling of space and time become blurred. Some of the latest research findings on the value of products and services such as co-creation processes involve even the psychological aspects of value creation such as the motivation and the strength of the motivation as important aspects. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

Based on the S-D logic, service-dominant logic of marketing, customers and firms co-create value through an integration of a set of resources (Vargo et al., 2008). The findings of Agrawal and Rahman, (2016) reveal the presence of three primary resources that form the basis of collaborative value co-creation efforts in bed and breakfast settings, namely, BnBhome, places in the local community and the host as a distinct value creating actor. While the BnBhome and places in the local community can be conceptualized as physical operand resources, the host emerges as a distinct operant resource (skills and knowledge) and a key resource integrator who, outside tourist zones, creates the basis upon which social practices and value co-creation can occur (Saarijarvi et al., 2013). This local contextual sphere with these resources is meant to reflect the authentic, local characteristics of real or true Gotland. Like any other form of autonomous interaction between people, customers and hosts, it can even evoke negative reactions. There can arise dissatisfaction between the two parties. This important and dark side of co-creation is still poorly documented in the research (Gebauer, Füller and Pezzeri, 2012). Echeverri and Skålén (2011) criticise the amount of portrayed positive value practices, arguing that merely positive creation of value is relatively unrealistic in practice. In an attempt to recognise negative spheres of value creation, they developed the notion of value co-destruction to appreciate possible negative outcomes. It is not uncommon, though, that an incongruence between actors and their practices and resources, if misused, could diminish value. (Lefebvre and Plé, 2011; Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). Value co-destruction can also occur through the elimination of opportunities for one party, thus creating benefits solely for another party (Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2014).

### **3.2. Meaningmaking and Sensemaking**

#### **3.2.1 Meaningmaking**

Meaning-making as a concept is described in psychology, as a process of through which people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and the self. (Ingelzi, 2000) Through meaning-making, persons are retaining, reaffirming, revising, or replacing elements of their orienting system to develop more nuanced, complex and useful systems. (e.g. Gillies, Neimeyer & Milman, 2014) The term is widely used in constructivist approaches. (e.g. Dorpat & Miller, 1992). The term is also used in educational psychology (Ingelzi, 2000; Mortimer & Scott, 2003) Sensemaking, again, has been described as a process by which we give meaning to our collective experiences. It is often formally defined as the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalizes what people are doing (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). The concept was introduced to organizational studies by Karl E. Weick in the 1970s and has since had an impact on both theory and practice. The concept was intended to favour a shift away from the traditional focus of organization theorists on decision-making and aiming towards the processes that constitute the meaning of the decisions that are enacted in behaviour. Research on sensemaking has become an important issue in organizational studies, and has been growing as more researchers seek answers to how meanings are created in organizations (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010; Clark & Geppert, 2011; Cornelissen, 2012; Monin, Noorderhaven, Vaara, & Kroon, 2013).

Sensemaking research became more common in the 1990s. An important turning point was the appearance of "Sensemaking in Organization" in Weick's book in 1995. Sensemaking studies in organizational sciences then focused on critical events and their post-scrutiny. The significance of language in the sensemaking process began in the 1990s to attract attention from researchers, but also sensemaking links to organizational culture, social relationships and strategic changes. (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 61) In the 21st century, sensemaking research was increasingly focused on the social processes of organization, and the linguistic nature of the organization in building a shared reality became a mainstream. Main research interests were, among other things, language, narrative and discursive practices. In the field of research, a so-called linguistic turnaround was manifested as a constructivist emphasis in sensemaking research instead of cognition. (Sandberg & Tsoukas,

2015) However, cognition was not completely abandoned but remained as a minority orientation (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015).

Although Karl Weick is undeniably regarded as the founding father of sensemaking, his thoughts on organizational significance have been developed theoretically in different directions in the 21st century. The current post-Weick sensemaking research field is considered fragmented (Brown, Colville & Pye 2014). The position of sensemaking research in science is controversial today. Maitlis and Christianson (2014); also, Brown, Colville & Pye 2014) argue that there is no single sensemaking thinking, but several different views. Some researchers consider it as a theory of sensemaking theory (e.g. Stein 2004; Skålén & Strandvik 2005; Holt & Cornelissen 2014). Other scientists talk about sensemaking lenses (e.g. Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, Colville, Pye & Carter 2013). The sensemaking perspective approach is also used in sensemaking literature (e.g. Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015, Shahzad & Muller, 2016). Weick identified seven properties of sensemaking (Weick, 1995): Identity and identification is central. Who people think they are in their context shapes what they enact and how they interpret events (Pratt, 2000; Currie & Brown, 2003; Weick et al., 2005; Thurlow & Mills, 2009; Watson, 2009).<sup>1</sup> Retrospection offers the opportunity for sensemaking. The point of retrospection in time affects what people notice (Dunford & Jones, 2000), thus attention and interruptions to that attention are highly relevant to the process (Gephart, 1993). A recent study, however, shows that sensemaking can be time-oriented for both the past, present and future (e.g. Gephart et al., 2013; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

Gephart et al. (2013) states that perceptions of the future are always based on the present and the past, and thus future-oriented thinking does not reject retrospectiveness. Gephart and Partners (2013) have raised an ethnomethodological approach to sensemaking's timely question. According to the thought, the sensemaking takes place in size and does not have a temporal beginning or end. Thus, the temporal nature and location of the sensemaking cannot be shown. (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 97; see also Gephart et al., 2013, 275). People enact the environments they face in dialogues and narratives (Bruner, 1991; Watson, 1998; Currie, & Brown, 2003). While speaking, people build narrative accounts which are helping them to understand what they think and organize their experiences as well as control and predict events (Isabella, 1990; Weick, 1995, Abolafia, 2010) and reduce complexity in the context of change management (Kumar & Singhal, 2012). Sensemaking is a social activity in that plausible stories are preserved, retained or shared (Isabella, 1990; Maitlis, 2005). However, the audience for sensemaking includes the speakers themselves (Watson, 1995). The narratives are both individual and shared, an evolving product of conversations with ourselves and with others (Currie & Brown, 2003). Sensemaking is ongoing by individuals simultaneously shaping and reacting to the environments they face. People learn about their identities by projecting themselves onto this environment and observing the consequences and the accuracy of their accounts of the world (Thurlow & Mills, 2009). This is a feedback process so even as individuals deduce their identity from the behaviour of others towards themselves, they also try to influence this behaviour.

As Weick argued, "The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs" (Weick, 1993). People extract cues from the context to help them decide on what information is relevant and what explanations are acceptable (Salancick & Pfeffer, 1978); Brown, Stacey & Nandhakumar, 2007). Extracted cues sorts out points of reference for linking ideas to broader networks of meaning. They are simple, familiar structures that are fragments from which people create a larger understanding of what may be occurring. (Weick, 1995). People favour plausibility over accuracy in descriptions of events and contexts (Currie & Brown, 2005; Abolafia, 2010) An obsession with accuracy seems fruitless and impractical among people with multiple shifting identities in shaping their world, according to Weick, 1995. In the 1990s, several types of sensemaking research were performed which broadened and deepened the knowledge of the process. Sensemaking affects several central parts of organizational processes (e.g. Weick, 1988, 1990, 1993); Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Rerup & Feldman, 2011; Catino & Patriotta, 2013; and lies therefore close to the core of organization (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Some readers of traditional scientific expression find it difficult to understand Weick's different expression (e.g. Gioia (2006). The research on sensemaking in this study can be seen as procedural. Many post "weickian" theorists such as Cornelissen (2012), Hernes and Maitlis (2013), Gephart, Topal and Zhang (2013), and Maitlis and Christianson (2014) emphasize the processuality of sensemaking and diverse art of the process. The process is dynamic, active and continuous (e.g. Miles 2012, Gephart et al., 2013). Another factor contributing to this study is the social nature of the process hosts interacting with their guests. According to Weick, sensemaking takes place in interaction with the members of the organization, but also intersubjectively.

Collectively shared meanings, build on such an organization a reality that enables members of the community to function in a meaningful way (e.g. Gephart et al 2013, Hernes & Maitlis 2013, Maitlis &

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<sup>1</sup>Identity can be understood through multiple frames of reference. The core idea in the different definitions is: "Identity is what construes a person, that is, who I am, to which I belong. It contains the essence of being self, which separates me from others" (Gioia, 1998: 19).

Christianson 2014, Giuliani, 2016). Among others, Cornelissen (2012) and Maitlis and Christianson (2014) emphasize the significance of the environment in the sensemaking process.

According to Weick (1995) there are three stages of the sensemaking process: 1) awakening, 2) interpretation, building intersubjective meanings and creating a cognitive map, and 3) action. The first step of the sensemaking process consists of three stages: noticing, bracketing and creating an initial sense. (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015, S14). In this phase, existing information is screened and explanations are searched for an event that interferes with the activities of the members of the organization. Hinting, becoming conscious, and brainstorming can only take place on the individual existing informational frameworks, i.e. mental models, which in turn are based on previous experiences. (Weick et al., 2005)

Creating an initial sense is done through categorization. Weick and his partners use the term labelling. The labelling phase is looking for credible explanations for what happened. Phase two includes the interpretation of clues, the formation of intersubjective meanings, and the construction of a cognitive map. Action is an essential part of the sensemaking process. Weick (1995, also 2001) asks in his book, *Sensemaking in Organizations*, an important question: "How does the action become coordinated in the world of multiple realities? Weick's answer is "Through communicative interaction" (Weick, 2001:26). Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar (2008) suggest that organizational activities are coordinated with narrative structures as they create the organization and its social reality. Weick states that activity generates raw material for sensemaking. It also creates the hints and stimuli needed to start the process, which in turn reinforces the process. This is important because it tests the understanding and gives feedback on the understanding that is generated in the process, and at the same time it creates the basis for new meaningfulness. Thus, activity and cognition belong together (Weick, 1988). These theoretical aspects, presented above, are used in this study as foundation for analysing and understanding the processes involved in the interaction between guests and hosts at the BnB accommodation. Both meaning making and sensemaking is to be seen as processes involved within interaction between guests and hosts, in this study, at the BnB accommodation.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY AND DEMARICATIONS**

In this study, a process-oriented perspective is used. Sensemaking and process are closely related to one another (Hernes & Maitlis 2013, 27). However, the process is an ambivalent term. It can be understood either in organizations as visible artefacts, such as language, meaning, social interaction or power-related relationships, or it can be understood ontologically as an expression of reality. (Chia 2013, 112, 135). From the point of view of the artefacts, the process can also be seen as a series of activities in which members of the organization are seeking understanding of unclear and confusing events in the operating environment. Mills and Partners (2010, 189) see sensemaking as a non-linear process. It does not happen in certain periods, but the process functions overlap and their intensity varies. The process is different for each member of the organization (see also Thurlow & Helms Mills 2009, 462).

This study is of qualitative and explorative art (Yin, 1994) and was performed as a case study in one single bed and breakfast accommodation. An interview and questionnaire study was conducted. Qualitative interviews give access to meaning that interviewees themselves have constructed, and they allow the researcher to enter the hermeneutic circle (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) of the interviewee and to gain an understanding which does not depend on delineated categories but rather on thematic strands extracted from the material by dint of researchers' interpretive and conceptual efforts. (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The interview questions were open-ended and constructed on the base of the aim of the study. Thirty couples, eleven Swedish and nineteen international couples, were interviewed at the accommodation. Interviews were held at the accommodation and lasted around one hour each. Respondents were first telling about their trip, including its duration, destination(s), travel party composition, amount paid per night for the accommodations and question about why respondents chose to stay with the specific accommodation.

The second section comprised questions about respondents' experiences of the trip regarding processes of planning the trip, meeting the hosts at the BnB establishment and how they did experience environment, hiking destinations, sights, attractions, shopping and other dimensions of the experience economy for tourists during their stay on the island. The third section of the interview included questions of the extent to which respondents perceived their trip to be meaningful by participating in discussions with their hosts and other guests, to their well-being and creating memorable visits, as well as their intentions to reuse the services of the particular type of accommodation. The fourth section included questions about how, staying in the BnB accommodation, met their expectations and created value for the whole trip. Finally, respondents were offered the opportunity to volunteer any additional information about their experiences that was not captured in the interview. The questionnaire was digitally sent to some 50 visitors or couples and their 2 hosts after the visits on the island.

The respondents consisted of 30 couples who got interviewed at the accommodation earlier but could now answer the questions anonymously.

The questionnaire can then be seen as an evaluation of the experiences of the stay. The questionnaire followed the same type of design as interviews.

The hosts, BnB providers, in turn, were interviewed about how they experienced the values created in contact with their guests during the whole process of hosting the guests. In analysing the data, both interview and questionnaire data were assessed. The data, guests' and host's answers, were compared with each other's in order to reveal amount of processes involved in communication and changing experiences between the two. Demarcations of the study are that it consists only one bed and breakfast accommodation and their guests and hosts. In this study sensemaking is seen as both cognitive and constructive approach. Many sensemaking researchers believe that the sensemaking process is more than a cognitive process (e.g. Myers 2007, Grant, Dutton & Rosso 2008), as it simultaneously initiates an affectionate process. This process works both on conscious and an affective level, trying to interpret reality (Naidoo 2005).

The analysis of the processes in the study follows the theoretical framework of sensemaking and co-creation of values. The involved processes, supporting processes (encounters) as well as main process, are to be seen as interconnected. The sensemaking process has certain features. The seven qualities of the process, according to Weick, 1995, are used as analyse criteria as well as the logic of three phases or stages of the sensemaking process: 1) awakening, 2) interpretation, building intersubjective meanings and creating a cognitive map, and 3) action. The thematic analysis of processes resulted in the emergence of distinct themes of social practices, practice elements and value formations, which are presented in the findings section next.

## **V. RESULTS - REVEALING A PROCESS-BASED FRAMEWORK**

The selected data shows several processes involved in the meeting of hosts and guests while planning, meeting, discussing and participating in the social construction of accommodating on one single bed and breakfast establishment. The study revealed both support processes and main processes. In the following sections these processes are presented with some respondent statements and figures over the results.

### **5.1. Background of the visitors**

The results show that there is little or no difference between Swedish and foreign guests backgrounds. Of these 30 couples, 11 were Swedish nationals of Swedish origin, rest of them, and 19 of different foreign nationalities (three couples from USA, one from Hungary, one from Tanzania, one from Canada, two from UK, four from Australia, three from Germany, three from Switzerland and one couple from Norway). The Swedish couples had in average been to island a couple of times before, while the foreign couples visited the island for the first time. Couples' educational background was quite similar, only two single persons of the couples had undergraduate level. The foreign couples average age differed though a bit, theirs' being younger than the Swedish ones. The average age for the Swedish couples were 46,8 years while average age for foreign couples turned to be 40,6 years.

### **5.2. Encounters**

In the following, encounter processes of value-co-creation are presented with a help of the Figure 1. Encounters. Some statements from the respondents on each encounter are given. Both parties in the co-creation process, hosts and guests, and their perspectives are explored and discussed in this study. Encounters can be seen as the processes that seem to be leading to co-creation of values for both hosts, in taking care of and offering accommodation for the guests, as well as to the guests, who are staying in bed and breakfast accommodation. Encounter processes are the processes and practices of interaction and exchange that take place between hosts and guests within social interaction.

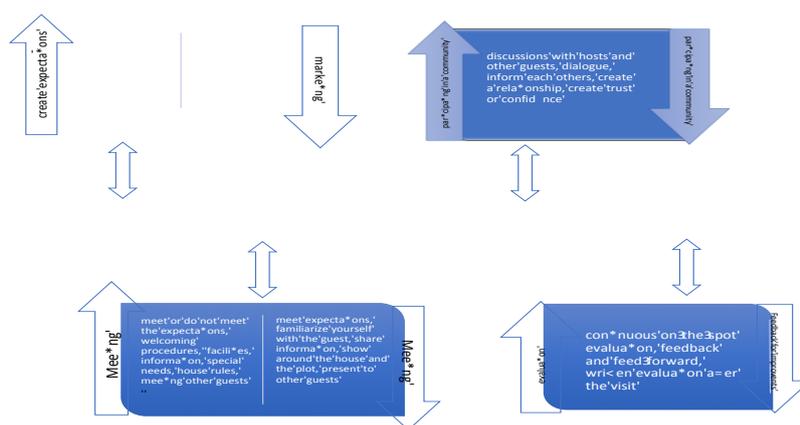


Figure 1. Encounters

### 5.2.1. Planning - to create expectations

Booking the trip, accommodation, rental car etc. was experienced as easy and uncomplicated by the majority of the visitors. Only two visitors were pointing out that travelling with the dogs was challenging in order to find accommodations that accepted dogs. There were different reasons to visit the island among visitors. Some of them, mostly foreign visitors, had heard or had read about the island in some guidebooks, such as Lonely Planet. Others had got hints from their friends who already had visited the island. Many of couples mentioned that it was to seek some tranquillity and nature as a contrast to city tourism when making their choice of visiting the island and this specific accommodation. The information offered about the island in advance was accurate and corresponded quite well the experiences visitors had of the island. Furthermore, the couple's expectations were well corresponding with their experiences of the visit: Service, at the restaurants, tours, museums etc. organized and offered for the visitors, was in general experienced as very satisfactory:

Generally good, but Visby is too touristic and stressful, some of the younger waiters and service people were less service minded. Some of the restaurants didn't keep the standards of good service. The attractions on the island received also good reviews from the visitors. There were couples that wished some more bicycle lanes, though. One couple was pleased with the number of different attractions on such a limited area. The first thing visitors do in order to start their processes of visiting the resort is to plan their trip. Usually to book the tickets for the trip and then book the accommodations needed. As it seems to be the case today, it's often alternative forms of accommodations which are preferred while people are travelling. Bed and breakfast accommodations have increased in an amount and this is also happening on island of Gotland today. Research shows that visitors of today want to experience the resort through accommodating in other places than hotels and cottages on the campsites. (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016; Oskam and Boswijk, 2016).

In order to plan the trip, visitors use online services consisting of homepages and booking sites. While planning their stay visitors look the different and wide spectra of offering accommodation possibilities. Already here, at the start, they do begin the process of creating values for the whole trip. By sorting the object, they really select something due the different parameters after their needs, expectations and economical resources. Below some statements presented from the guests.

We are so happy; our room was exactly like in the pictures. Island was more amazing than we expected.

It was even better (charming and beautiful) than we had hoped.

We almost cut this destination from our trip to save money, but it was one of our favourites out of the six places we visited in Sweden.

But not all of the couples were as satisfied:

The nature is such wonderful but the town Visby did not meet our expectations.

Hosts, in turn, offers symbols for visitors' selections by designing their homepages and booking sites with the pictures and images, creating expectations or disexpectations. Information, text and pictures are short advertisements over eventually upcoming accommodation. These can both attract or deter the customer. This process can be seen as a part of marketing.

### **5.2.2 Meeting**

By planning the trip visitors seem to create their expectations on accommodation. In the physical meeting, they then confirm or must reject their expectations. This is a multi-level meeting: The guests can experience the house as it turns out in reality by meeting their hosts, by familiarizing with the room and the rest of the house and its' surroundings. They also get acquainted with other guests. Information exchange about house rules do take place; preliminary information about the surroundings, local history, nearest grocery store, restaurants and public transportation are issues discussed within this first contact.

The BnB providers meet the guests with their different questions and gives some standardized information on the house and surroundings. This physical meeting enables both parties to confirm their expectations. The host can also have the first opportunity to evaluate the guest's satisfaction with the room and the facility. Hosts can also discover guests' special requests, plans for the nearest days and excursions. Here some statements from the guests. The first experience of the house was very bad. We didn't get the room we had hoped for. After I have showed the room to the guests, I already had got an impression of what kind of people they are. It is always nice when guests are satisfied with choosing our accommodation.

### **5.2.3. Participation – creating relationship**

While the guests have installed themselves in the house, a process of participation in the daily life of the house begins, participation in the Community, its' people and routines. Not every guest wishes to participate the community. Some of them, though, are limiting their social participation to the curtesy against hosts and other guests and prefer withdrawing from the community. But it's more common among the BnB guests who are active and willing to participate in the company of others, according the hosts.

To participate means in this study that hosts and guests find occasions to discuss different matters with each other's in order to create a relationship by dialogue. Such occasions are offered around breakfast time, within other meals and within other kinds of unscheduled meetings in the house or in the garden. In these discussions, different issues are reasoned and dealt with. The guests are telling about their experiences from their daytrips consisting many different activities. The host are giving their local picture of matters and gives hints and advices over the visiting objects. All together are learning from each other's and can create value to their visit on this way. While changing their experiences they are creating relationship built on trust and confidence into each other's.

We are so pleased with our hosts who are giving us lot of information of what to see and experience. My husband is so good at giving our guests hints and advices on different visiting issues. (Host)

During the breakfast, we talked to the hosts and other guests about our plans on the trip, our lives back home, our children etc.

While talking to our hosts we got a feeling that we were talking to old friends.

### **5.2.4. Evaluation**

Evaluating is an ongoing process between the guests and the hosts. This process does already start while planning the trip and planning to welcome the guests. It continues at arrival by guests contrasting their expectations with the physical environment and the accommodation itself, the hosts and the other guests. This evaluation takes place throughout the trip and the stay on the accommodation as well as after the visit in the form of an evaluation carried out digitally in this BnB accommodation. The same process is being reviewed by the hosts. In these surveys, the guests are pointing out values being added to their stay by taking up issues like comfort, space, cleanliness, resources and amenities they could share at BnB home. Such as Wi-Fi, kitchen facilities, coffee machine etc. Also, ability to cook their meals, ability to buy the meals, ability to share and spent time in the garden with the hosts and other guests were mentioned as a value-creating issues. Socializing with other guests were mentioned as something positive and valuable. Staying with their own pet on the accommodation, were also reported as a value-adding dimension.

The garden was superb!

Breakfast was so delicious and generous.

The best coffee ever!

At breakfast, you could choose both gluten-free bread and lactose-free milk products. Fantastic!

To sum up the presentation of encounters above, they can also be understood and explained through the three phases of sensemaking process expressed by Weick (1995). Namely awakening, interpretation, building intersubjective meanings and creating a cognitive map, and action. In the following the sensemaking process with the seven known and thought-based qualities of the process by Weick, the features are analysed.

## **V. ANALYSING PROPERTIES OF SENSEMAKING**

Sensemaking is grounded in identity construction. Weick identified seven properties of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Identity and identification is central – who people think they are in their context shapes what they enact and how they interpret events (Currie & Brown, 2003; Weick et al., 2005; Thurlow & Mills, 2009; Watson, 2009). An individual understands the matter or the phenomenon only when he has spoken up her thoughts. An individual does not form her identity in a vacuum, but it is shaped by social relations, Weick, 1995. An individual learns to understand who she really is by looking upon herself through others. Based on the empirical evidence of the study, the choice of holiday is made, to a certain extent, to strengthen the self-image of the visitors. Destinations, accommodation, excursion goals, etc. are chosen to reflect the self-image, consciously or unconsciously. The house lay well next to the church surrounded by cornfields, I thought it was so beautiful!

The house was full of antiques and travel memories from around the world. It created a harmony for our stay. It is important that guests are able to feel like at home while staying in our BnB. To summarize, it can be said that this shows that there is a connection between the chosen type of visitors and their self-image or part of identity. Yet, there is a connection between the hosts' way of designing their home, the BnB accommodation, and their identity.

### **6.1. Sensemaking Based on A Review of The Past**

Retroactivity means how a person explains what happened to themselves afterwards. The process of relevance can therefore only be considered when things already have happened. (Weick 1995, 26) Things cannot be meaningful unless they have been first produced in words, texts, or acts. The phrase "How can I know what I think" used by Weick (1979, 133, 155; 1995, 18; 2009; 143) depicts the temporal logic of signification: It is backwards. However, Weick (1995, 24) recalls that trying to create meaningful events, one looks to the past, and thus, an individual can mislead things and this in turn may lead to false interpretations.

By looking retrospectively backwards, people learn through their experiences and can move their learning into future activities. (Weick 1995, 61; Weick et al., 2005, 413). can still be time-oriented for both the past, present and future according to some researchers (e.g. Gephart et al., 2013). Because our perceptions of the future are always based on the present and the past. According to these ideas, the sensemaking takes place and does not have a temporal beginning or end. Guests tell about their experiences regarding visitor destinations, service etc. and compare their past experiences to today's experiences. But they also make suggestions for improvement on various issues they have experienced.

The marketing of the hotels, restaurants etc. could be much better.

Info at the Museum in Visby was not available in English.

Routes for walking and biking have to be improved.

It's clearly an island that people, both locals and tourists, care for.

At the same time, it's also clearly getting swamped every summer with thousands of people.

I wonder how sustainable that is, also for the local economy. If the local economy is only based on the intake in the summer, the dependency on tourism is too strong - and sustainability then is the first thing to go out of the window.

### **6.2. Enactment**

Sensemaking shows the mutual sensitivity of cognition and activity to the environment. Sensemaking is the synthesis of cognition and activity (Thomas, Clark & Gioia 1993; Weick, 1995). Weick (1988, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) refers to the word enactment, which means the involvement of people in the creation of their environment. The guests are discussing with each other's and with the hosts during the different occasion of their visits. These discussions varies all from places to visit, environmental sustainability issues on the island, politics and private family matters. We had nice and long discussions with the hosts and other guests as well as the locals.

I learnt a lot from my hosts.

Our hosts discuss with us all kind of matters and gave us valuable advices on life, divorces etc.

### **6.3 Sensemaking is social**

The process of sensemaking is basically social. It's going on in interaction with the various guests of the accommodation. The social nature of sensemaking becomes visible when guests of the accommodation interpret their environment in interaction with other guests and construct explanations that help them to understand the reality and to act collectively. (Weick et al., 2005) Creation of meaningfulness requires shared meanings (Weick 1995).

Due the visitors' statements, they share same kind of experiences with other guests by visiting often same attractions. This, in turn, gives possibilities to talk over more profound about what they have been experiencing during the visits.

### **Hints as triggers**

The hints (extract cues) from the environment seem to fit well with the previously experienced experiences of the guests. They can interpret them even though the things' ambiguous nature. Guests filter also all the time the flow of information around them and chooses pieces fitting into their own structure of significance. In discussions at the BnB some hints (e.g. where to go, what to see) 'are highlighted, and on the other hand, some others never come into focus.

We got lot of excellent hints from our hosts.

Some other guests at the BnB told us about the nice pottery, which we then visited.

### **6.4. Sensemaking as an ongoing Process**

When guests at the accommodation react to the environment and shape it with the help of cognition and social actions, one can talk about the continuing nature of sensemaking. Sensemaking has then neither the beginning nor the end, because meaningfulness takes place at all time in the continuous flow of events. (Weick 1995, 45-46.) Guests always tries to understand what is happening around them. This shows how guests and hosts take part in this process already in initial phases: planning the trip as a guest or marketing the establishment as a host.

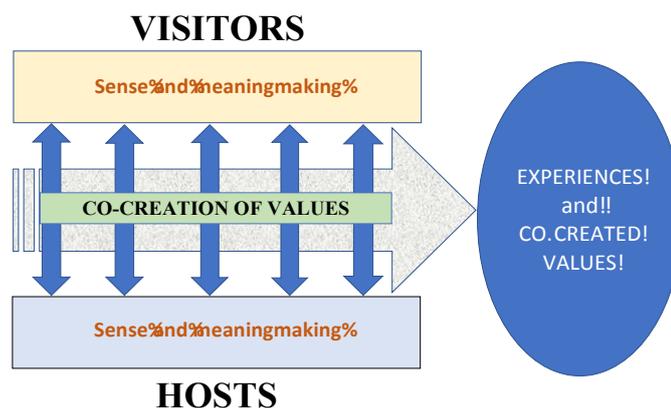
### **6.5. Sensemaking Based More on Plausibility than on Accuracy**

Continuous change in information flow makes accuracy meaningless for the guests. In order to be able to transform information into their own understanding there is a need of plausible explanations. These can be other guests and hosts subjective experiences as well as guide book texts and other informants. This information has to be then inserted with their own and earlier experiences, in order to make sense. Sensemaking is both individual and collective activity (Weick & Roberts 1993; Weick, 1995). It is an individual and collective process simultaneously. Above it has been described how Karl Weick constructs the nature of the sensemaking process based on seven characteristics. According to Weick (1995, 17), they define the sensemaking process and make it possible to understand why any situation, activity or phenomenon is shaped as it is formed and why people give different meanings to the same thing. Research literature utilizes the features of the sensemaking process created by Weick, although the evidence of the appearance of properties and the relationships between them is rather limited. Probst (2012) and Lunkka et al. (2015) have shown that the seven determinants of the Weick's sensemaking process are still useful and also relevant.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

This research aimed to create new knowledge about the processes involved in the co-creation of values between providers and their guests at one single BnB accommodation on the island of Gotland in Sweden. The interplay between these two actors can be seen as platform or arena for value-creation. The stay and the interaction with the hosts do not only create value for the accommodating itself during the stay but also for whole trip for the visitors. The hosts can be seen as co-producers of values. This value-creation process includes several other processes, so called encounters.

In this study, the encounters are to be seen as supporting processes to the main process of co-creation of values. With the help of these supporting processes both parties create meaning for the visits. Sensemaking is a collective process which seem to take place simultaneously with individual process of meaning making. In this study, the focus has been on sensemaking as a process which gives meaning to our collective experiences. In order to understand the process of co-creating values, this study has used Weick's seven determinants for sensemaking. With the help of the figure below, Figure 2, the process of co-creation of values is described.



**Figure. 2** Process of co-creation of values

Co-creation of values can be comprehended as both individual and social construction of values. Encounters can be regarded as supporting processes within the main process of value creation. Value-creation is an ongoing process from planning the trip to evaluation of it. This process is procedural, but it is not necessarily linear. Encounters or supporting processes can be described as phases or arenas to create interaction between the actors. On these arenas, the guests create values through sensemaking processes for the whole journey. Then BnB accommodation can be seen as generators for this process. This type of accommodating hospitality gives guests easier possibilities to share their experiences with the hosts and other guests. The hosts, in turn, gets immediate confirmation or feedback on their recommendations. This helps the host to develop their business and sharpen their advice on local attractions. Social interaction between guests and hosts creates comfort and homeliness. Discussion with other guests and hosts are more informal for their character. This can be compared against the more formal knowledge in guidebooks and brochures.

The process of co-creation seems to be an important part of our identity and it strengthens it in many ways. Guests are looking for accommodations that fit into their identity, which they consider themselves to represent. Choosing a small, family-run BnB rather than a large hotel allows one to be both seen and acknowledged as a person. This enables for some kind of revision of the self-image. This, in turn, creates value for the trip. Choosing to stay on a BnB has become more and more common among visitors worldwide. It is therefore important to create knowledge about how this type of accommodation creates value for visitors. Staying at the BnB seems to be a more complex social environment than staying at the hotel. This creates greater demands on both hosts and guests. Requirements for social interaction, increased knowledge of the local community, its culture, sights, history, activities and, not least, issues of sustainable tourism. This is even more important knowledge for visit organizers, accommodation suppliers and hosts. These privately-owned facilities and their owners usually do not have formal education about the visiting industry. Therefore, it is maybe important to provide training for the hosts; to enable them to be active players in the creation of sustainable local tourism through social construction.

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