

The Role of Emotions as Impression Management Device in the Sharing Economy

Camille Lacan

IAE - University of Perpignan Via Domitia

Olga Goncalves

IAE - University of Perpignan Via Domitia

Cite as:

Lacan Camille, Goncalves Olga (2022), The Role of Emotions as Impression Management Device in the Sharing Economy. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 51st, (107082)

Paper from the 51st Annual EMAC Conference, Budapest, May 24-27, 2022



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Abstract

Host self-presentation strategy is key on digital platforms of the sharing economy and many hosts use their personal photo to shape their online impressions. Despite their importance, less is known for their influence on consumer decisions. This research fills the gap by examining how three emotional strategies (happiness, sadness and neutral) used by hosts in their profile picture influences the peer booking decision. Drawing on the impression management theory and a state-of-the-art deep learning model, this research reveals that hosts tend to display rather positive (happy face) and neutral emotions in their profile picture. However, the link between emotions and bookings is more complex than valence alone. Results indicate that there is a sadness penalty for female hosts and a happiness premium for male hosts, suggesting that gender is an important moderator of the emotional strategy. These findings offer guidance to manage its online self-presentation.

Keywords: *Emotions; impression management theory; sharing economy*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media