

Working with, instead of against Airbnb

 By [Theresa Prins](#)

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Airbnb is in the news again as government looks to apply regulations to the accommodation disruptor. And while traditional accommodation providers may see this as the first step in restricting the disruptor, the reality is that they are not going away.



Theresa Prins, founder of Revenue Resolutions

So how do traditional accommodation providers make it work?

Airbnb, for their part, seldom takes a combative stance and is looking for ways to work within the industry, while still disrupting the standard operating model. Traditional accommodation providers would do well to take note of this and consider why the Airbnb offering is so attractive to travellers.

Airbnb sells an experience and provides an opportunity to really connect.

A former colleague of mine took a year's sabbatical, and in an effort to truly experience the countries he was visiting, he only stayed in Airbnb properties. From the leisure perspective, I believe smaller properties are ideally placed to compete in the Airbnb space. They shouldn't fight it, they should embrace it.

After all, while the company might not be a traditional accommodation provider, it certainly doesn't shy away from listing hotels and other hospitality businesses on its platform.

This could open up a new stream of revenue for local hospitality establishments.

Airbnb Experiences also provide local tour guides with an additional opportunity to work outside of the traditional format. What are Airbnb Experiences? They are “activities designed and led by inspiring locals. They go beyond typical tours or classes by immersing guests in each host’s unique world. It’s an opportunity for anyone to share their hobbies, skills, or expertise without needing an extra room.”

Again, Airbnb is not taking away a stream of revenue with its Experiences, it is, in fact, providing another one. There is absolutely nothing stopping a certified guide operating on Airbnb and within the traditional space.

Of course, there is also the school of thought that perhaps traditional operators can look to beat Airbnb at their own game. According to an article in the Wall Street Journal, Marriott International will launch its new home-sharing vacation rental program in May.

Homes & Villas by Marriott International aims to attract customers who want a unique space, but with more assurances of the quality of experience. There are some key differences to Airbnb. For example, visitors will have to stay for a minimum of three nights, they will deal with a rental agency – not an individual host – and Marriott’s Bonvoy point program will inspire loyalty by offering experiences by virtue of earned points. It’s one of the first real steps made by a hotel group into Airbnb territory and it will be worth keeping an eye on.

There will always be changes in the industry, but instead of pushing back at them, I would suggest embracing the change and making it work for you. Airbnb was not the first player to change the game and they undoubtedly will not be the last. It’s up to local service providers to ensure they know when to jump on board.

ABOUT THERESA PRINS

Theresa Prins is the founder of Revenue Resolutions, a strategic revenue management agency for the hospitality, leisure and property management industries. Prins has over 25 years experience in the hospitality industry and is an expert in revenue optimisation.

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