

travelweekly

## business

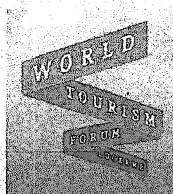
Essential news, comment and analysis

## TOP STORY

AIRBNB ACCEPTS  
PROFESSIONAL  
LANDLORDS

Christopher Cederskog  
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**SITE IS HAPPY TO HOST  
LANDLORDS WITH  
MULTIPLE PROPERTIES.  
IAN TAYLOR REPORTS  
FROM THE WORLD  
TOURISM FORUM**



Airbnb is “not afraid” of professional holiday-let landlords using its site and has admitted “some of its best hosts” offer multiple properties.

Christopher Cederskog, Airbnb regional manager for Europe, told the World Tourism Forum in Lucerne last week: “We don’t distinguish on a day-to-day basis between those who are professionals and those who are not.”

He insisted: “The vast majority of our hosts are not professional

landlords – 90% of our hosts rent out [rooms] for less than 100 days a year. If they were professionals, they would not make money doing that.”

But Cederskog conceded: “Some of our best hosts have five to six properties.

“We are not afraid of professionals using the platform. We look at the level of service. The more important thing is whether the service is good [and] we think it is possible to offer good service

only with about three properties [on Airbnb].”

Cederskog rejected the suggestion that the accommodation-sharing site become “more transactional” one Airbnb user described being handed the keys to an apartment on arrival in a city and being told: “Here are the keys, here the rules, pay an extra fee for cleaning.”

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▶ CONTINUED FROM BACK COVER

"We noticed we were growing possibly a little too quickly in 2012-13," he said. "We took steps in 2013-14 to let hosts know what we expect of them. We ask people why they get into it [renting out rooms] and use natural-language filtering on their reasons. 'We want to make money' responses have gone down over the past two years."

Cederskog also rejected a suggestion about a lack of safety or security. He said: "Airbnb is one of the most transparent and safest sites. You can't interact with Airbnb as a user or host without being registered. You can't operate if not safe and secure."

He said Airbnb would not have grown so explosively without the financial meltdown and housing crisis, but insisted it was wrong to believe the site competed only on price.

Cederskog told the forum: "All companies have a huge element of luck. For Airbnb, it was the financial crisis and the housing crisis that had a huge impact. A lot of people found themselves with mortgages they could not afford. They put up rooms on Airbnb to make some rent."

The key to the platform's explosive growth was "a fundamental shift in the way the consumer works", he said. "The consumer is changing. People want to experience what a city is truly like. This is the biggest, fundamental change. Consumers want to experience a city feeling they can be part of it, that they can belong anywhere."

He added: "Technology has been essential, but what is most important is solving consumer needs. Smartphones have been a driver for us. Tied to the smartphone is the prevalence of social networks. Plus, we have been able to plug into global payments and content delivery. The timing has been fortunate. Ten years ago, it would have been difficult to build Airbnb."

"[Now] we see very strong growth [and] Europe is 50% of our business. Marriott wanted to add 20,000 rooms last year. We added 20,000 rooms in one-and-a-half weeks." But he added: "We still aren't a big player."

▶ THE WORLD TOURISM FORUM WILL MOVE FROM A BIENNIAL TO AN ANNUAL EVENT NEXT YEAR WITH THE 2016 FORUM TO BE HELD IN BEIJING. THE DATE HAS YET TO BE CONFIRMED.

## travelweeklybusiness

### WORLD TOURISM FORUM 2015: Academics and industry de

## GROWTH: DECLINING GLOBAL PRODUCTIVITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT TO CAUSE SLOWDOWN

Travel and tourism growth figures are poised to stall as a result of declining global productivity, according to US social theorist and advisor to governments Jeremy Rifkin.

But he suggested this period of stagnation could herald a "third industrial revolution", which would transform the world economy and travel. Rifkin told the World Tourism Forum: "GDP is slowing all over the world. Productivity is waning all over the world. Unemployment is stubbornly high in every country – and no industry is more affected than travel and tourism."

He warned: "You rely on the health of every other industry. Your growth figures will slow over the next 20 years."

The UN World Tourism Organisation has forecast travel numbers will grow to 1.8 billion by 2030, up from 1.1 billion in 2014. Yet Rifkin insisted: "We're at the beginning of a very long sunset, [although] we can glimpse the sunrise."

The peak in oil prices in 2008 had marked the end of an era, he said, arguing: "Your industry started to shut down in the summer of 2008."

Rifkin added: "You can have all the innovations of Silicon Valley, but if they are plugged into the old economy [based on oil and car use], it is not going to increase productivity."

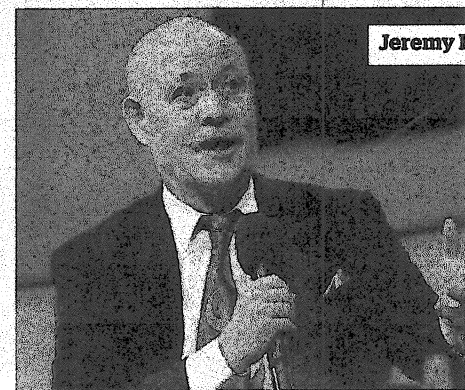
## SMARTPHONES: 'NO LINK BETWEEN AGE AND BOOKINGS'

Age-based assumptions about travellers' use of smartphones is "unhelpful", according to research.

Dr Andreas Liebrich, e-tourism specialist at the University of Lucerne, told the World Tourism Forum: "There is no correlation between age and smartphone bookings."

Liebrich reported on a study of smartphone use among travellers in the UK, Germany and France, with more than 1,000 consumers surveyed in each.

He said: "Our results show that when it comes to mobile behaviour and adoption of new technology, inter-generational behaviour is narrowing more than we think. Age segmentation is not helpful. We could see some differences by market, but they were not significant. During the booking journey, there was no clear correlation to age. The



Jeremy Rifkin

However, he suggested we are in the throes of a "third industrial revolution" based on the convergence of new technology, sources of energy and forms of transport (driverless cars and t

Rifkin said: "Within 25 years, millions of people will produce their own energy and share it on a grid." He argued: "Certain industries – music, TV – have ruptured already. The sharing economy is going to eliminate a lot of goods and services from the capitalist economy." But Rifkin said the new economy could "dramatically increase productivity and reduce costs", adding: "You need to create a roadmap for travel and tourism."

biggest difference was between light users of smartphones and heavy users.

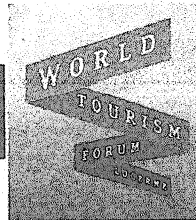
"In the travel planning phase, it does not make sense to target smartphone users by age."

Researchers also looked at responses to promotions and flash sales. Liebrich said:

"We could not identify a difference between generations, but when we looked at behaviour there was a clear pattern. Heavy users of smartphones were way more comfortable with 'push offers' than lighter users."

Dr Andreas Liebrich





ne together in Lucerne. IAN TAYLOR reports

## SUSTAINABILITY: GOVERNMENTS URGED TO STANDARDISE REPORTING ACROSS SECTOR

VisitBritain chairman Christopher Rodrigues called for governments to standardise reporting on sustainability across the travel sector.

Addressing the World Tourism Forum, Rodrigues said: "This is a wonderful industry, but it contains the seeds of its own destruction. The challenge we keep coming back to is sustainable tourism.

"There is no joined-up government in most countries. It is a fragmented industry. We tend to be short term and you are more likely to be fired for not managing load factors or filling rooms than promoted for a long-term strategy that deals with growth.

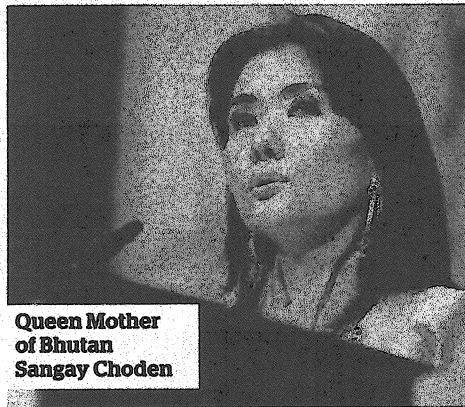
"Governments need to lead. If they got behind standardised reporting and insisted on its adoption, we would start to see more sustainability."

Greenearth.travel director Geoffrey Lipman said: "We have not put the time, attention or resources into sustainable travel. We need to change the way we do business every day, not the way we talk at meetings."

Beyond Green Travel chief executive Costas Christ agreed, saying: "Sustainability is a global priority. But I meet with 300 hotels a year that say: 'It's too expensive, we don't have the budget.'"

However, TripAdvisor director of industry relations Helena Egan said: "We make it sound like everything has to change now, but this industry is ahead in a lot of things."

In a separate address to the forum, Queen Mother of Bhutan Sangay Choden Wangchuck argued economic development



Queen Mother of Bhutan Sangay Choden

**"If mismanaged, tourism can bring destruction of the environment and economy"**

need not exclude preservation, but she insisted: "There is a delicate balance between financial gain and preservation.

"With good planning and management, tourism can be a positive force. But if mismanaged, it can bring destruction of the environment, culture and, eventually, the economy."

"Bhutan received its first tourists only in 1974. We were concerned that unplanned and unregulated tourism would affect our environment and culture. So we embarked on a 'high-value, low-volume' policy. Forty-one years on, 70% of Bhutan is still under forest cover. Economic development and preservation are not mutually exclusive."

Rodrigues, Egan, Lipman and Christ sit on the World Tourism Forum Think Tank, which met in Lucerne last week.

## INNOVATION: TOURS PROVIDER TRIP.ME WINS NEW AWARD

Start-up sharing site Triip.me, based in Vietnam, won the first World Tourism Forum Innovation Award.

Triip.me offers local tours and experiences in destinations in southeast Asia, bringing the Airbnb idea to tours and tour guides. It aims to expand globally.

Founder Hai Ho said: "There is no standard database for tours, no standard system and no easy way to book a local experience. We help travellers book local experiences easily and allow locals to share and preserve their culture. We have about 6,600 local experiences and about 6,000 users [to date]."

The site is based in Ho Chi Minh City. It takes 10% commission on each transaction and has a staff of six.

Hai Ho collected the \$10,000 first

## ELECTION COUNTDOWN

By STEPHEN D'ALFONSO, head of public affairs, Abta

## ONE WEEK TO GO: IT'S NOW OR NEVER

With just a week until the country goes to the polls, you have a final opportunity to influence your local parliamentary candidates on the importance and value of our industry.

The polls haven't moved for weeks – we're on track for a hung parliament and every vote will matter. Leaders of the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, SNP, Greens and UKIP will be acutely aware of this, and using every opportunity to secure your vote.

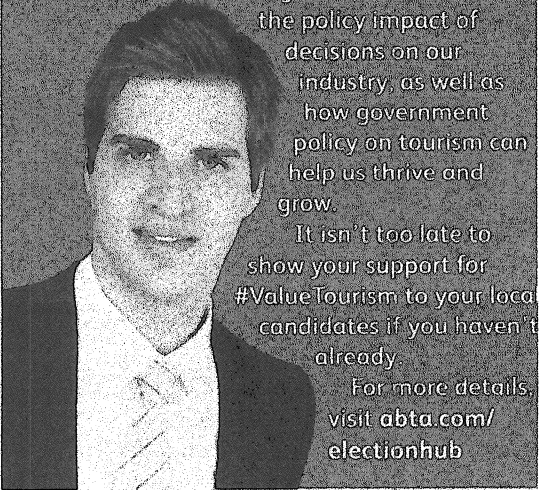
It has been fantastic to see the industry get behind #ValueTourism throughout this election campaign, with individuals relating their own experience on why our sector deserves more support in parliament.

Abta members have raised our concerns with candidates and helped the campaign garner the support of more than 150 would-be MPs. Add the 500 candidates in marginal seats whom Abta has contacted direct, and it's clear we're making our voice heard.

We must use this momentum to ensure the next government considers the policy impact of decisions on our industry, as well as how government policy on tourism can help us thrive and grow.

It isn't too late to show your support for #ValueTourism to your local candidates if you haven't already.

For more details, visit [abta.com/electionhub](http://abta.com/electionhub)



prize at the forum on what was his first trip to Europe. Fellow finalists Kelly Garofalo, co-founder of US-based World Connect, and Annie Beaulieu, founder of Canadian-based Freedom, each won \$5,000.

The award was judged by a panel including British Hospitality Association chief executive Ufi Ibrahim and Pacific Asia Travel Association chief executive Mario Hardy.

*"We allow locals to share and preserve their culture"*