

**Interview mit Susan, Airbnb-Host, persönlich, 13.04.2017,
Interviewer: TF, Transkription: GS, Korrektur der Transkription: LS**

Thomas: I just need your approval that I can record it, so. #00:00:04-0#

Susan: Okay. #00:00:04-0#

Thomas: I have it on. #00:00:04-3#

Susan: Your approval. You may record. You have my approval. #00:00:09-9#

Thomas: Okay, thanks. I think I said something about the approach, so I say anything more about that. And to begin I would like you to introduce yourself in a few words and also regarding your Airbnb role and type of listing. #00:00:29-7#

Susan: My name is (*Susan*) and I have to Airbnbs, 'been living in this neighborhood, when we brought the house in 2014 in the very beginning and then we renovated it and that took two years, we moved in two years ago, 2015, and always with the intention that we will rent these two apartments, but... as then it became clear that we would, that it was better to do Airbnb for us, we thought, maybe. So we thought we will try it and see how it goes because that way we have the flexibility, I don't know if this is what you wanted to know. Did you? #00:01:18-2#

Thomas: Yeah. (...) #00:01:22-4#

Susan: Okay. #00:01:23-6#

Thomas: The next thing will be, or the first question will be (...), why you registered or decided to rent out. #00:01:30-7#

Susan: Oh, so originally we knew that we were 'gonna rent, but then we put it on the market, the top floor, to rent it and I met some people. Then I quickly realized that I liked having the flexibility, if I Airbnb it, then I get to keep the whole house to, if I wanna have my relatives stay there or I needed it for any reason, I can just take it, whereas if I rented it our permanently then, then that would be someone who's there all the time and it would be their house, you know? So I liked the flexibility and we earned that more money doing Airbnb, but it's a lot more work, so. But right now, well, then until we furnished it and we did everything, so now it's kind of like we made the commitment to do Airbnb, you know? 'Cause now we have it all furnished and in (*Stadt in New York*) you usually you don't, apartments don't come furnished. So. Yeah, so now we're kinda in it. Now it's good it works really well, really can't complain. #00:02:37-0#

Thomas: Okay. And do you use also any other platforms or just Airbnb? #00:02:41-2#

Susan: No, just Airbnb. #00:02:42-4#

Thomas: Okay. And do you use it for traveling as well, like as a guest? #00:02:48-1#

Susan: Yeah, sure. I do. It's great. Yeah, we've, I mean, we used it last year, my husband and I and, yeah I've used it a few times. #00:03:02-8#

Thomas: Okay, and what do you like about being an Airbnb host? #00:03:07-0#

Susan: Well in (*Stadt in New York*), it's cool because you would never be in this area unless you were in Airbnb. There's no one, no one would ever stay out here, unless you knew someone. So I think it's really cool that it opens up other parts to the city for the people and, and what do I like personally about it? I like meeting people and offering my space, I like the flexibility, like I said. It's just very easy, I don't know, I think it's great. #00:03:42-2#

Thomas: Is there any situation or moment that you remember as being particularly nice or special? #00:03:49-3#

Susan: Well, actually, yeah one of the first guests that we had were Dutch and they brought, they were one of our first, we had first experiences as we ever had with it and they came and they were so sweet and they had two kids and they stayed downstairs and they were girls and they were a little bit older and they brought a book for my son and they played outside in the backyard a lot, it's a heat, sometimes in the summer or spring when guests come and stay downstairs they have a, they have a, they can use the backyard too. They have a door that leads to it, so. #00:04:24-4#

Thomas: ((I see it from above.)) #00:04:25-4#

Susan: Yeah, so my son can play outside with kids, so. It doesn't happen that often, but it does happen and it's cool. That's my favorite. #00:04:34-2#

Thomas: We actually chose it because you have children. Because when you travel, because we don't know if it works well. #00:04:44-6#

Susan: Yeah. #00:04:45-9#

Thomas: We supposed when people have children, they know what they// #00:04:49-2#

Susan: Yeah. (laughter) #00:04:51-2#

Thomas: Is there anything that you don't like about it or that you find annoying? #00:04:56-2#

Susan: No, not really. I mean cleaning and laundry, it's a lot. But that's just part of it. We do, like we doing the sheets, you know and like, you know. Or like things. No, it's going pretty well, you know, but, there are some things I've still need to get for upstairs, so it's like a constant process, so sometime people will say, will give me advise like things they think that would be nice to have in there, that aren't there and I use that advise, I think it's really helpful, so every few months or every, yah, every few months I might go to IKEA and then pick up a few new things, like I one thing I know is needed is a fulling from here and a bathroom caddy to like put stuff in the bathroom, certain thing on my list I've to get, so I'm always working on it, making it a little bit better, but like, that's not hard, it's just what it is, you know. It's not a big deal. #00:05:48-4#

Thomas: Okay and did you also have any bad experience so far? Or feeling uncomfortable? #00:05:54-2#

Susan: I haven't. I've only had great experiences. #00:05:58-2#

Thomas: Okay. #00:05:59-5#

Susan: Yah. #00:06:00-0#

Thomas: Hmm. #00:06:02-0#

Susan: I mean there was one guy that came once, who said that he felt like downstairs, who felt like it was like he had allergies here and asked if I had animals, which I don't and then he had bad allergies, so he left. So we gave him his money back and he left. Wasn't a big deal. But that's the only time anything ever happened. #00:06:23-9#

Thomas: Okay. What is special about your listing? #00:06:28-7#

Susan: Hmm. #00:06:30-3#

Thomas: Or what do you emphasize, maybe? #00:06:33-1#

Susan: I like it 'cause it's really clean and simple and there's not a lot of stuff in the apartment and it's just really basic and nice light, nice views. It's quiet. Yah, I mean I love, I just I love it. (laughter). It's hard. I don't like going, personally I don't like going personally I don't like going in an Airbnb when people have their stuff everywhere. I like that upstairs that it's like basic, you know? You don't have to have someone's stuff everywhere, you know? #00:07:13-1#

Thomas: Yeah, Okay and do you also take care of your profile? Do you update things? #00:07:18-1#

Susan: Yeah, yeah, sure. Do you update things? I have a guidebook on there, that I update. I mean I myself moved to the neighborhood two years ago, so I'm always learning new things in the neighborhood and the neighborhood is changing all the time too, so, you know, this, this building on the corner was a kind of, I mean, we would go there, but it was kind of a crappy case, now it's turning into an organic market, you know? It's like everything is getting fancy, you know? So the neighborhood is changing all the time, so I'm learning it as well, so when I discover something I update the guidebook and the neighborhood is changing all the time. Yeah. #00:07:56-7#

Thomas: Okay, so it's one part of the work that is related to// #00:08:00-8#

Susan: Yeah, sure. Keeping it updated. #00:08:05-0#

Thomas: And generally, if you need to go, you just ((would)) take care of her? #00:08:10-1#

Susan: Nah, it's Okay. #00:08:13-5#

Thomas: In general how do you integrate the or the work you do every day in life and also the presence of other people? #00:08:21-3#

Susan: They have an app, which I would use constantly on my phone, but now suddenly they updated it and it doesn't work on my phone anymore so I have a really hard time. I have to make my husband do most of the communication because my app only works when I'm on Wi-Fi and I don't know why. This is something that's recent, but that's how I do it typically just from my phone, you know? And i get messages, I get notifications that i usually try to answer them the second I get them, so that I don't forget, you know? #00:08:51-9#

Thomas: Okay. #00:08:52-7#

Susan: But it's become harder because my app isn't working, hasn't been working for like two weeks. It works at home, but it doesn't work when I am out. #00:09:01-4#

Thomas: Okay. #00:09:02-5#

Susan: So I haven't been as good in corresponding as I prefer to be. But yeah, it's just like texting someone or whatever, you know? My phone is the same. That's how I do it. #00:09:10-4#

Thomas: And do you prepare your apartment? #00:09:12-9#

Susan: Oh preparing the apartment, we have a guy that works for us who actually lives across, it works out really well. He lives across the street, so we pay him to, to prepare the apartment and how he's been doing it for about eight months, so he knows pretty well what it needs. It's not perfect, like sometimes he messes up, sometimes he forgets to put the (...) keys in the lock box, sometimes he forgets the toilet paper, you know? He does forget stuff. Ah, so ideally I go and I check it out and make sure that everything is fine after, but I can't always do that. But that's what I do. #00:09:49-6#

Thomas: Would you have somebody// #00:09:51-9#

Susan: But, yeah I have a, yes, I have someone. #00:09:55-5#

Thomas: Because it would be too much work for you? #00:09:57-1#

Susan: It's impossible, yeah. It's impossible. And it's, and the schedule is always different, you know, it's like. #00:10:05-1#

Thomas: And so he prepares everything when new guests arrive? #00:10:10-2#

Susan: Yeah, he cleans the place and does the laundry and he keeps, so he takes the old sheets and puts the new sheets on, so he's always, it's always in a, like turnover, you know? #00:10:19-9#

Thomas: Mhm, and also when they leave, do you ... meet the people usually or? #00:10:29-3#

Susan: Usually but not always. It depends in what time from here. But I've been home a lot more because of the babies, so. I usually meet people. #00:10:37-8#

Thomas: But you do seek contact, but if there something comes up// #00:10:41-2#

Susan: Only if they want to, I try, we keep it just independent, you know? If they, if they wanna meet and sometimes you do wanna meet and say hi, then I'm here, but if they don't, then, you know? Sometimes people just wanna have their own privacy. #00:10:55-3#

Thomas: Okay, it depends? #00:10:57-3#

Susan: Yeah, it just depends, yeah. #00:10:59-9#

Thomas: Mhm. And ... how would you describe like a good Airbnb host? What should? #00:11:08-6#

Susan: Depends on the area. I mean in a city like (*Stadt in New York*) I think it's good to just be hands-off and be there and be in communication when they need you, but then, you know? Like be, have the person be independent. If I was going to some small town and maybe I would want more interaction with the host, I don't know. Just be in touch. That's it. Just being in touch I think makes a good host and having a good communication, I'd say. #00:11:39-5#

Thomas: So when there are questions that the people// #00:11:41-1#

Susan: Yeah, that they're there. Exactly. That's the most important thing. #00:11:44-7#

Thomas: Okay and do you know anybody else who is a host? #00:11:50-3#

Susan: I have a friend who has an apartment in Paris. #00:11:53-3#

Thomas: Mhm. #00:11:55-3#

Susan: Who's a host. #00:11:56-0#

Thomas: Okay, but you don't meet other hosts like there are some// #00:11:58-7#

Susan: Oh no, I don't do that. I've never done that. #00:12:01-5#

Thomas: Mhm. And you're not planning to do this? #00:12:03-2#

Susan: No. Not at this moment. I don't have time. #00:12:07-5#

Thomas: Yeah. And what do you consider when you got that ((going))? I don't know. Do you have instant booking? I don't remember. #00:12:17-1#

Susan: I have it. Sometimes I have to turn it off, but I do have it. #00:12:20-9#

Thomas: Mhm. #00:12:22-1#

Susan: How much longer is it? #00:12:23-9#

Thomas: I don't know. #00:12:25-0#

Susan: Can I pause it for a second? 'Cause she has to leave at five. (talking to somebody else) #00:12:40-2#

Thomas: So you have to, if you get a request, you read what the people are writing and what do you consider before you accept the guests? #00:12:54-5#

Susan: I mean we accept the most people. I mean it's, everybody is, we accept everyone actually. The only thing I don't accept if someone wants to have a party or if they wanna film. But even filming I would talk to them about. But sometimes people wanna use it to do a film. #00:13:14-7#

Thomas: In the apartment or? #00:13:17-1#

Susan: Yeah, that has happened a couple of times. But ... it's usually everybody is accepted. Okay, so you, I mean, I put that to Airbnb because they, they sort of verify the people and. #00:13:34-1#

Thomas: So you don't look on their profile of the people, or? #00:13:38-4#

Susan: Yeah, I look at them, but mostly I look at the inquiry and, yeah, some people, many people don't have reviews. Many people just start with Airbnb, only just became members, so I can't really turn people away because they don't have enough reviews and stuff because a lot of people don't even – or they have one review, you know? #00:13:55-2#

Thomas: Okay. #00:13:56-3#

Susan: But if I were, if I were, I'm telling that for travelers, but if I were going to stay at someone's place and they only had one review, that would be different. #00:14:05-0#

Thomas: Okay. Mhm. #00:14:06-7#

Susan: But for travelers. #00:14:08-1#

Thomas: So it's more important if you are a guest// #00:14:11-7#

Susan: Yeah, I think it's more important for the guest to make sure that the host has a lot of reviews and is well reviewed because you are the one who is going to stay at their house. But if, as a guest, if it's, you know, they just tell me, the that, what's the worst that can happen, yeah, it's like, i don't think that they're gonna', it's fine. #00:14:31-9#

Thomas: Okay. #00:14:32-2#

Susan: (laughter) #00:14:33-2#

Thomas: And what in general do you think about the review system, that Airbnb has? #00:14:40-8#

Susan: It's fine to me. #00:14:41-2#

Thomas: Yeah? #00:14:42-2#

Susan: (laughter) #00:14:43-6#

Thomas: And you said you got feedback from your guests? #00:14:50-0#

Susan: Sometimes. #00:14:50-3#

Thomas: Sometimes and so, have there been reviews that affected you and your listings? Like you said, you have a list of things that you buy or that you// #00:15:01-7#

Susan: I just, it hasn't affected my reviews 'cause most people are nice enough to just tell me privately, if they, if something wasn't working or they didn't or whatever. They just tell me. Very few write that in their review. But that's only happened someone will say "here's a list of things i think you need" and then I'll, you know, either go get it or not, but, you know, their advice. #00:15:25-5#

Thomas: Okay. And you take it serious? #00:15:28-3#

Susan: Oh yeah, definitely, because I'm not the one staying up there, so I don't know what the experience is like, so I find it helpful, actually. #00:15:35-3#

Thomas: Okay. And do many of your guests write a review or? #00:15:41-7#

Susan: Most of them. Yeah. #00:15:43-8#

Thomas: And do you read all of them? #00:15:46-7#

Susan: Yeah, pretty much. Yeah. #00:15:51-8#

Thomas: And would you be disappointed if somebody doesn't leave a review? Or is it? #00:15:55-8#

Susan: No, I, I have a lot of reviews now. At the beginning I wanted, I really needed reviews, but now I have so many, I've been doing it for two years, so now I have 150 reviews or something. They're all pretty good. So, I don't know. If someone doesn't leave me a review, I don't think it makes a difference. #00:16:15-4#

Thomas: Mhm but in the beginning it was quite important to, because// #00:16:21-4#

Susan: You have to build your reputation. #00:16:24-2#

Thomas: Mhm. Has there been any negative review or some critique expressed in public reviews? #00:16:35-1#

Susan: No. #00:16:37-7#

Thomas: So if there was something, how would you react to that? #00:16:41-3#

Susan: I'd be disappointed and upset. #00:16:44-6#

Thomas: Would you write like you can answer the reviews or you can (...) the people or you can write to Airbnb. What would you consider doing? Or would you just leave it like that? #00:16:54-6#

Susan: No, I would write my response to whatever their thing was publicly, I guess. I don't know. I haven't been in that position before. #00:17:02-8#

Thomas: Okay. And do you also write reviews of your guests or? #00:17:09-2#

Susan: Usually. #00:17:10-1#

Thomas: Usually? #00:17:11-9#

Susan: Mhm. #00:17:14-1#

Thomas: And what do you consider when writing these? #00:17:16-4#

Susan: Do I what? #00:17:17-2#

Thomas: Do you make a short review? #00:17:18-0#

Susan: I just write a short thing. #00:17:20-1#

Thomas: Basically this// #00:17:22-3#

Susan: Yeah, "good guest, good communication", you know. Just something very simple. #00:17:27-2#

Thomas: Very simple, similar as well. Mhm. #00:17:28-2#

Susan: Yeah, don't spend that much time being with the guests. #00:17:32-1#

Thomas: Okay. And if there was something problematic with the guest, would you also leave a review, like a (...)? #00:17:45-2#

Susan: No, if there was something problematic, I just wouldn't review them. #00:17:47-3#

Thomas: Mhm. #00:17:48-4#

Susan: I've never given someone a bad review or something. #00:17:56-0#

Thomas: Okay. #00:17:57-6#

Susan: Yah. #00:18:00-7#

Thomas: ... Airbnb reviews tend to be really positive when you look at them, I don't know if you have the same impression, but most reviews are positive. #00:18:14-2#

Susan: Yeah people really// #00:18:17-0#

Thomas: Tend to make really positive reviews. #00:18:19-9#

Susan: Yeah, it's, it can really hurt someone if you write a bad review, so I, instead of, most people are, almost everyone is really polite and if, if they'll give me a good review, I give them a good review, but if, if there's something weird I just tell it privately, like I said before. Same goes both ways, you know, writing a public review is really a big deal. The people don't do that likely. If there was a huge problem, even if there, I mean I can't even imagine, to be honest. #00:18:55-1#

Thomas: Do you think that is it also positive? Does, do they matter? #00:19:00-2#

Susan: Do they matter? #00:19:01-6#

Thomas: Because// #00:19:02-9#

Susan: They do, for me they matter, for the guest because a lot of the guest will say, that to say, how far it was for them to get to Manhattan, or, or, they write in detail what their experience was like and that matters because when someone's looking, that's how they know what it's like to stay in my place. #00:19:23-8#

Thomas: Mhm. #00:19:25-2#

Susan: Of course it matters. They don't just say everything's great. Sometimes they say that. But some people really take the time to write a in depth review and that's very helpful. But I don't need, you know, everybody doesn't do that, but some people do. #00:19:40-2#

Thomas: And do you think in general, it's the last question, I think, that reviews are influencing the way you and your guests are acting during the stay here in your apartment? #00:19:54-0#

Susan: I mean// #00:19:57-5#

Thomas: Or (...) they do in which way? #00:19:59-8#

Susan: Acting? What do you mean acting? #00:20:00-5#

Thomas: Like they, I don't know, they're more cautious, they take more care of things?
#00:20:07-3#

Susan: Yeah, that's the whole system, of course. That's the whole system. That's how it works. It's like you, you know, that's how people feel comfortable to open up their home to strangers because they know, if something is weird, they have this power of writing a bad review. So, yeah, make sure, everything runs smoothly, I guess. #00:20:32-9#

Thomas: Okay. But it doesn't give you any pressure ... to be really like, to be service oriented or to, I don't know? #00:20:44-5#

Susan: I mean I could definitely do that more with Airbnb, like if I, you know, some, there's this thing called "superhost". And it is something that, you know, you could work really hard, like I could be putting every time, you know, one of the things that I don't do anymore but I used to do, but it became unsustainable, putting food upstairs and like getting it all ready, but now I found I do it so much and now I have two kids and I work and I just don't have time to be a superhost. Even though I have to say the top floor does have, I think it has five stars, or close to five stars.// #00:21:30-4#

Thomas: It has good reviews. #00:21:30-9#

Susan: Four point eight or something. I mean it does really well, but I go with, if I had time I would like really get into it, you know? But I just don't. Just don't. Especially now, with two kids. #00:21:46-2#

Thomas: I understand. #00:21:48-2#

Susan: (laughter) #00:21:49-2#

Thomas: Okay, yeah. So, thanks for having time for these questions. #00:21:55-1#

Susan: Of course. #00:21:56-4#

Thomas: I don't know if you want to add something, which is like important for you?
#00:22:02-1#

Susan: With what? With Airbnb? #00:22:03-5#

Thomas: Airbnb, yah, or with// #00:22:05-7#

Susan: I mean, yah it's, I mean, it's great, I don't know what else to say. What's important to me? It's... It helps us to support the house, you know? It's like hugely important for us financially and the websites makes it really easy and ... and ... I mean before Airbnb I used to rent my apartment when I lived in Manhattan on Craigslist and I had a great experience with that, too. I've always had the nicest people, but this is easier, you know? This is better. This is just so easy. But Craigslist didn't take a commission. #00:22:53-5#

Thomas: Okay, yeah. Airbnb takes a lot of commission. #00:22:56-2#

Susan: Yeah, they take a lot of commission. But they do so much, they manage everything, you know, manage all the money, manage the reviews, manage the profile, so, manage the people, so I feel like it's worth it. #00:23:11-8#

Thomas: Mhm. Okay. #00:23:14-3#

Susan: (laughter) #00:23:14-4#

Thomas: Thanks. #00:23:17-1#

Susan: My pleasure. #00:23:19-8#