

Stockholmers embrace the sharing economy

Written by Staff reporter

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Services like Uber and Airbnb are two major examples of young companies using new platforms to shake up established markets. It is no surprise that traditionally tech-savvy Swedes are embracing them.

Indeed, when the taxi-hailing app Uber released its service in Stockholm two and a half years ago, the city became one of the company's fastest growing markets.

"Swedes are extremely interested in new technology and have been quick to use our technology," said Alex Czarnecki, Uber's head of expansion for the Nordics.

"That is why Stockholm was the fourth international city on Uber's platform. Tens of thousands of people in Stockholm already use the platform, and we've been overwhelmed by the positive response we have received."

Another example of an international company embracing Stockholm's reputation as a technology hub is Finnish event space search service Venuu, which was recently launched in the Swedish capital.

The company's marketing manager Axel Bergström has high hopes for Venuu's future in Sweden.

"The potential for our service is huge, the demand from both venue providers and location seekers have been great. So the need is definitely there," he said.

"The reason why Stockholmers adopt sharing services so quickly is because they have made adopting new ways of life a second nature", Bergström explained. "Without a fresh way of thinking by the users these sort of solutions would forever be just a marvelous idea instead of a great innovation," he said.

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Also German automobile manufacturer is dipping its toe into Stockholm's sharing economy by redefining the concept of car-sharing services with a new pilot program. The service, called Audi Unite, lets up to four people literally share a car, using an app to manage access.

"The interesting dynamic, if you look at most of the research, it says that this is going to drive down sales," Scott Keogh, president of Audi of America, told Auto News. "That's not what ends up happening. We don't see a negative impact on sales. What we do see is an opportunity to jump into some new segments of business."

In a similar manner, Stockholm based firm Workaround is set out to change the way the real-estate business works by office space sharing. "Workaround is set out to change the way the world work and how we are utilizing our urban resources in order to enable a more sustainable and inspiring work-life," the company said on its website. "We have collected the biggest supply of vacant, creative spaces in one site. You [...] only pay for the time you use".

The sharing economy – sometimes referred to as collaborative consumption or the peer economy – is an old idea vastly scaled up thanks to technology. What might once have been a local bed and breakfast or carpool can now become a global business.

However, the sharing economy, which often relies on non-professional suppliers of services, sometimes faces resistance from established professions and companies. The European Commission recently said that European countries should not shut itself off to "new business models" offered by the sharing economy and companies. The commission also plans to provide guidance on how to apply current rules to the sharing economy.

Joseph Michael, Business Development Manager for Stockholm Business Region Development, said that Stockholm – with world-leading broadband infrastructure, some of the top tech companies in the world and a population of environmentally conscious early adopters – is the perfect place for the sharing economy.

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“We are willing - and able - to try new services to share and use resources in smart innovative new ways,” he said. “Companies and investors who are interested in the sharing economy should definitely engage with the Stockholm community.”

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