

Understanding niche accommodation in tourism: The case of Couchsurfing hosts

P. Ndebele



Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr M Scholtz

Graduation: May 2019

Student number: 27655318

DECLARATION LETTER

I, **PENITENCE NDEBELE**, identity number **9308151273180** and student number **27655318**, hereby declare that this research submitted to the North-West University, for Masters Degree study in dissertation format titled '*Understanding niche accommodation in tourism: The case of Couchsurfing hosts*' is my own independent work. It complies with the Code of Academic Integrity as well as relevant policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the North-West University; and has not been submitted before to any institution by myself or any other person in fulfilment (or partial fulfilment) of the requirement for the attainment of any qualification.

Plakele	Sholl
PENITENCE NDEBELE	DR MARCO SCHOLTZ
	(Supervisor)
12/11/2018	10/11/2018
DATE	DATE

1

FUNDING STATEMENT

Financial assistance from the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa, is gratefully acknowledged. Statements and suggestions made in this study are those of the author and should not be regarded as those of the North-West University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people; this study would not have been possible without your support:

- I would like to thank the Almighty for giving me the wisdom and strength to complete this study, thus far he has taken me.
- To my supervisor Dr Marco Scholtz who went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure
 the completion of this study, thank you for all your support, motivation and guidance and
 always being there at the time of need. You believed I could do it even when I did not
 believe in myself. All your efforts are greatly appreciated.
- To my family: your love, support, encouragement and motivation does not go unnoticed. Thank you for all the prayers and your belief in me. To my mother Sibonile Ndebele words cannot express my gratitude to you, when I was stressed you were there to give support thank you and to my father Dr Clever Ndebele the most passionate academic I know, thank you for the advice, motivation and belief that someday I will get to where you are.
- To the staff at NWU TREES (Tourism Research in Economic Environs and Society), I did
 not know much about research at the beginning but because of the opportunities working
 with all of you provided, I am proud and grateful to say I am a better researcher today. I
 will be forever grateful to have learnt from the best.
- To my colleagues, the Research Assistants 2017-2018, thank you making me laugh, motivating me and helping me to have fun while writing up this dissertation.
- To my friends all over the African continent and beyond, I do not know where to begin. Your emotional support means a lot to me, for all the video calls, the texts and prayers thank you, may God do exceedingly and abundantly well for you.
- To all the respondents on Couchsurfing.com, thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
- Thank you to Rod Taylor for the language editing of this study.

I dedicate this study to my parents Sibonile Ndebele and Dr Clever Ndebele, for all the sacrifices you made for me to get to where I am. I am eternally grateful, thank you.

ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is regarded as one of the fastest growing sectors of the South African economy and is estimated to employ a third of the total population in South Africa directly or indirectly. The tourism industry consists of transport, food and beverage, accommodation and entertainment. The accommodation sector is a subsector of the hospitality sector which consists of accommodation and food and beverage sector. The accommodation sector plays a vital role in tourism as it provides short-term stays for travellers. The traditional accommodation sector is quite expensive and considered inauthentic by some travellers hence the emergence of an online hospitality exchange known as Couchsurfing. It is therefore important to examine Couchsurfing to ascertain its role in tourism activities and the economy. Couchsurfing connects like-minded individuals for the provision of free accommodation and other activities such as events. Although a relatively new platform, Couchsurfing has been studied extensively in a Western and Asian perspective. Therefore, this study focuses on the South African host perspective in comparison to international hosts. The interaction on this platform is between strangers therefore South Africa, being known as the crime capital of the world makes examining Couchsurfing important to ascertain why people take the risk despite the high crime rate. Questions therefore arise: Firstly, who are the people (Couchsurfing hosts) who temporarily allow visitors (couchsurfers) into their homes and why? Secondly, what do hosts expect in return? How do South African hosts compare to international hosts? Do South Africans share an interest in authentic experiences? Lastly, how do hosts approach safety issues? This study was based on these questions.

The goal of this dissertation was to analyse Couchsurfing as niche accommodation in tourism from the hosts' perspective. Four objectives were formulated to achieve the goal of the study. The first objective was to carry out a literature review of the accommodation sector in tourism so as to provide an overview of this sector to date. The information contained in the review provides a discussion of how the accommodation sector fits into tourism, as well as the history of the sector, different types of accommodation establishments and the changing trends of the sector. Lastly, the review reveals how Couchsurfing forms part of the accommodation sector.

The second objective was to review Couchsurfing as a niche for accommodation in tourism. This provides a background to the platform and an understanding of the different aspects involved in the operations of Couchsurfing. This review also provides some of the motivations of hosts' participation in Couchsurfing.

The third objective was to determine Couchsurfing hosts' motives for hosting strangers at no fee as well as to conduct a comparison between South African hosts and international hosts. Safety measures, reasons for account verification and determining if Couchsurfing has improved hosts understanding of other cultures was also examined as part of this objective. This was done so as to develop strategies to popularise Couchsurfing using the motives identified as well as determine safety measures used by hosts, if any.

To attain this information, an online questionnaire was designed in Google Forms and distributed to hosts on the Couchsurfing website as well as international Couchsurfing groups on Facebook. A total of 624 usable responses were obtained, divided between South African hosts (n=197) and international hosts (n=427). The data captured in Google Forms was transferred into Microsoft Excel and analysed through IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.25.0). The results of the analysis were presented in four parts. Firstly, the combined descriptive socio-demographic and behavioural profiles were shown. Secondly, comparisons were made between the socio-demographic and behavioural profiles of South African and international Couchsurfing hosts. Thirdly, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to reduce the number of statements in the Likert scale that measured why couchsurfers are hosted by Couchsurfer hosts. Fourthly, independent sample tests (*t*-test) and cross tabulation analyses were presented to reveal differences in hosting behaviour between South African and international hosts.

The EFA revealed three factors as motives for hosting strangers at no fee. These were socialising, reciprocity and kindness. The most important motivation was socialising, revealing that, for the host, partricipation in Couchsurfing is about meeting and interacting with new people, which in turn facilitates cultural exchange. A comparison of the hosts with regard to socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics was conducted through t-tests and cross tabulation analyses. The analysis revealed small differences between the hosts with regard to years of hosting couchsurfers, and number of times Couchsurfer hosts had been hosted. International hosts have been hosting couchsurfers longer than South African hosts and have hosted couchsurfers more times than South African hosts. Cross tabulation analyses revealed a very weak relationship between country of residence and socio-demographic variables such as level of education.

The final objective was to draw conclusions and make recommendations with regard to the study. Contributions of the study are also discussed in this chapter. This study makes a significant contribution to literature by providing a South African perspective of Couchsurfing as well as the safety measures hosts use when engaging in this virtual community. This study

also reveals that accommodation provision is not the only way to participate in Couchsurfing but activities such as 'tour guiding' and attending events to interact with other hosts and couchsurfers as well. It is strongly recommended that the site managers better market the importance of the verification safety feature because most hosts do not regard it as important or necessary. This study can, in future, be used to develop a framework for the improved management and marketing of this hospitality network.

Keywords: accommodation, authentic experience, Couchsurfing, hospitally, host, niche accommodation, tourism.

OPSOMMING

Die toerismebedryf word beskou as een van die sektore van die Suid-Afrikaanse ekonomie wat baie vinnig groei en daar word gereken dat dit 'n derde van die totale bevolking in Suid-Afrika óf direk óf indirek in diens het. Die toerismebedryf bestaan uit vervoer, kos en drank, verblyf en vermaak. Die verblyfsektor is 'n subsektor van die gasvreiheidsektor wat bestaan uit die voedsel en drank sektor. Die verblyfsektor speel 'n noodsaaklike rol in toerisme aangesien dit korttermynverblyf aan reisigers verskaf. Die tradisionele verblyfsektor is redelik duur en sommige reisigers beskou dit as nie outentiek nie; dus het 'n aanlyn gasvryheidsuitruiling, wat as "Couchsurfing" bekend staan, na vore gekom. Dit is dus belangrik om "Couchsurfing" te ondersoek om sy rol in toerismebedrywighede en die ekonomie te ondersoek. "Couchsurfing" verbind eensgesinde individue vir die voorsiening van gratis verblyf en ander aktiwiteite, soos gebeurtenisse. Alhoewel dit redelik nuut is, is "Couchsurfing" breedvoerig in 'n Westelike en Asiër perspektief bestudeer. Hierdie studie fokus dus op die gasheerperspektief in vergelyking met internasionale gashere. Die Suid-Afrikaanse interaksieplatform is tussen vreemdelinge, en Suid-Afrika staan bekend as die misdaadshoofstad van die wêreld, en daarom is die ook belangrik om ondersoek te doen om ook vas te stel waarom mense die risiko neem ten spyte van die hoë misdaadsyfer. Vrae ontstaan dus: ten eerste, wie is die mense ("Couchsurfing"-gashere) wat besoekers (couchsurfers) tydelik in hul huise toelaat en hoekom? Ten tweede, wat verwag gashere in ruil daarvoor? Hoe vergelyk Suid-Afrikaanse gashere met internasionale gashere? Deel Suid-Afrikaners 'n belangstelling in outentieke ondervindinge? Ten laaste, hoe benader gasheercouchsurfers veiligheidskwessies? Hierdie studie is op hierdie vrae gebaseer.

Die doel van hierdie verhandeling was om "Couchsurfing" as nisverblyf in toerisme vanuit die gashere se perspektief te analiseer. Vier doelwitte is geformuleer om die doel van die studie te bereik. Die eerste doelwit was om die literatuur oor die verblyfsektor in toerisme na te gaan om sodoende 'n oorsig van hierdie sektor tot op hede te verskaf. Die inligting wat ingewin is, word gebruik om te bespreek hoe die verblyfsektor by toerisme inpas, asook die geskiedenis van die sektor, verskillende tipes verblyfinstellings en die veranderende giere van die sektor. Ten laaste word daar bekend gemaak hoe "Couchsurfing" deel van die verblyfsektor uitmaak. Die tweede doelwit was om Couchsurfing as nis vir verblyf in toerisme na te gaan. Dit dien as agtergrond vir die platform en 'n begrip vir die verskillende aspekte wat by die bedrywighede van Couchsurfing betrokke is. Hierdie oorsig voorsien ook sommige motiverings van gashere se deelname aan Couchsurfing.

Die derde doelwit was om vas te stel wat Couchsurfing-gashere se motiewe was om vreemdelinge teen geen fooi te huisves asook om Suid-Afrikaanse en internasionale gashere te vergelyk. Die rede hiervoor was om strategieë te ontwikkel om Couchsurfing meer gewild te maak met behulp van die motiewe wat geïdentifiseer is, asook om vas te stel watter veiligheidsmaatreëls gashere gebruik, as daar is. Veiligheidsmaatreëls, redes vir rekiningverifikasie en die bepaling van die feit dat Couchsurfing die gasheer se begrip van ander kulture verbeter het, is ook as deel van hierdie doelwit ondersoek.

Ten einde hierdie inligting in te win, is 'n vraelys in Google Forms ontwerp en aan gashere op die Couchsurfing-webwerf, asook internasionale Couchsurfing-groepe op Facebook versprei. 'n Totaal van 624 bruikbare antwoorde is verkry, wat tussen Suid-Afrikaanse gashere (n=197) en internasionale gashere (n=427) gedeel is. Die data wat op Google Forms vasgelê is, is na Microsoft Excel oorgeplaas en deur IBM "Statistical Package for Social Sciences" (SPSS v.25.0) geanaliseer. Die uitslae van die analise is in vier dele voorgelê, ten eerste, die gesamentlike beskrywende sosio-demografiese en gedragsprofiele; ten tweede, die sosio-demografiese en gedragsprofiele van Suid-Afrikaanse en internasionale Couchsurfinggashere is vergelyk. Ten derde, 'n Verkennende Faktoranalise ("EFA") is gedoen om die aantal stellings in die Likert-skaal wat gemeet het hoekom Couchsurfer-gashere couchsurfers huisves, te verminder, en ten vierde, onafhanklike steekproef-toetse (t-toets) en kruistabulasie analises is uitgevoer om verskille in gasheer-gedrag tussen Suid-Afrikaanse en internasionale gashere bloot te lê.

Die EFA het drie faktore bekend gemaak as motiewe om vreemdelinge teen geen fooi te huisves, naamlik sosialisering, resiprositeit en welwillendheid. Die belangrikste was sosialisering, wat aan die lig gebring het dat, vir die gasheer, deelname aan Couchsurfing beteken om nuwe mense te ontmoet en met hulle te kommunikeer, wat, om die beurt, kulturele uitruiling fasiliteer. 'n Vergelyking van die gashere met betrekking tot sosio-demografiese en gedragskenmerke is deur t-toetse en kruis-tabulasie analises uitgevoer. Die analise het klein verskille tussen die gashere aan die lig gebring, aangaande jare wat couchsurfers gehuisves is, en hoeveel keer Couchsurfer-gashere gehuisves is. Internasionale gashere het couchsurfers langer as Suid-Afrikaanse gashere gehuisves en het couchsurfers ook meer keer as Suid-Afrikaanse gashere gehuisves. Kruis-tabulasie analises het 'n baie swak verhouding tussen land van verblyf en sosio-demografiese veranderlikes soos vlak van onderrig aangetoon.

Die finale doelwit was om gevolgtrekkings af te lei, en aanbevelings te maak met betrekking tot die studie. Bydraes van die studie word ook in hierdie hoofstuk bespreek. Hierdie studie

maak 'n betekenisvolle bydrae tot die literatuur deur 'n Suid-Afrikaanse perspektief van Couchsurfing te verskaf, asook die veiligheidsmaatreëls wat gashere gebruik wanneer hulle aan hierdie virtuele gemeenskap meedoen. Hierdie studie dui ook aan dat verblyfvoorsiening nie die enigste manier is om aan Couchsurfing deel te neem, maar ook aktiwiteite soos om as toergids te dien en om gebeure by te woon om met ander gashere en couchsurfers te kommunikeer. Daar word sterk aanbeveel dat die terreinbestuurders die belangrikheid van die verifikasie-veiligheidsfunksie beter bemark omdat die meeste gashere dit nie as belangrik of noodsaaklik beskou nie. In die toekoms kan hierdie studie gebruik word om 'n raamwerk vir die verbeterde bestuur en bemarking van hierdie gasvryheidsnetwerk te ontwikkel.

Sleutelwoorde: Couchsurfing, gasheer, gasvryheid, nis verblyf, outentieke ondervinding, toerisme, verblyf.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATI	ON LETTERII
FUNDING ST	TATEMENTIII
ACKNOWLE	DGEMENTSIV
ABSTRACT	v
OPSOMMING	GVIII
	I: INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH1
1.1	INTRODUCTION1
1.2	BACKGROUND TO STUDY3
1.2.1	Accommodation and its changing trends3
1.2.2	Couchsurfing phenomena5
1.3	PROBLEM STATEMENT 8
1.4	GOAL OF THE STUDY9
1.4.1	Objectives9
1.5	METHOD OF RESEARCH9
1.5.1	Literature review9
1.5.2	Empirical study10
1.6	DEFINING CONCEPTS14
1.6.1	Tourism14
1.6.2	Accommodation
1.6.3	Host

1.6.4	Couchsurfing	. 15
1.6.5	Authentic experience	. 16
1.6.6	Hospitality	. 16
1.6.7	Niche accommodation	. 16
1.7	CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION	. 17
CHAPTER 2:	ACCOMMODATION IN TOURISM	. 18
2.1	INTRODUCTION	. 18
2.2	THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR	. 19
2.3	A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ACCOMMODATION SECTOR	. 20
2.4	ACCOMMODATION AND ITS ROLE IN TOURISM	. 22
2.5	FORMS OF REGULATION IN ACCOMMODATION	. 23
2.5.1	Purpose of accommodation classification	. 24
2.6	TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION	. 25
2.6.1	Serviced/Non-serviced	. 27
2.6.2	Paying/Non-Paying	. 27
2.6.3	Purpose of visit	. 27
2.6.4	Static/Mobile	. 27
2.6.5	Owned/Rented	. 28
2.6.6	Primary purpose/ Secondary occupation	. 28
2.7	CATEGORIES OF ACCOMMODATION	. 28
2.7.1	Backpackers and hostels	. 28
2.7.2	Bed-and-Breakfast	. 28

2.7.3	Caravan and Camping	. 29
2.7.4	Guesthouse	. 29
2.7.5	Country house	. 29
2.7.6	Hotel	. 29
2.7.7	Lodge	. 30
2.7.8	Self-catering	. 30
2.8	MANAGEMENT LEVELS IN COMMERCIAL ACCOMMODATION	. 30
2.9	TRENDS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR	. 31
2.9.1	Globalisation	. 31
2.9.2	Safety and security	. 31
2.9.3	Diversity	. 31
2.9.4	Service	. 31
2.9.5	Technology	. 32
2.9.6	Price and value	. 32
2.9.7	Changing profile of the accommodation sector	. 32
2.9.8	Environmental issues	. 33
2.9.9	Authenticity	. 34
2.10	CONCLUSIONS	. 35
CHAPTER 3:	COUCHSURFING AS NICHE ACCOMMODATION	. 36
3.1	INTRODUCTION	. 36
3.2	WHAT IS COUCHSURFING?	. 37
3.3	WHY COUCHSURFING?	. 38

3.4	HOW DOES COUCHSURFING WORK?	. 39
3.5	THE SYSTEM OF RECIPROCITY	. 40
3.6	COUCHSURFING AND AUTHENTICITY	. 42
3.7	TRUST IN COUCHSURFING	. 42
3.8	BENEFITS OF COUCHSURFING	. 43
3.9	STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF COUCHSURFING	. 44
3.10	SAFETY WHILE COUCHSURFING	. 45
3.10.1	Safety guidelines for Couchsurfing	. 46
3.11	POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS ON TOURISM	. 48
3.12	PREVIOUS STUDIES AND FINDINGS ON COUCHSURFING	. 48
3.13	COUCHSURFING IN SOUTH AFRICA	. 55
3.14	CONCLUSIONS	. 55
CHAPTER 4:	RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL SURVEY	. 57
4.1	INTRODUCTION	. 57
4.2	RESULTS OF THIS STUDY	. 59
4.2.1	Results from the combined data set	. 59
4.2.2	Results: South African hosts vs International hosts	. 72
4.2.3	Reasons for hosting strangers	. 77
4.2.4	Results of the Independent sample t-test	. 81
4.2.5	Cross tabulation analysis	. 84
4.3	CONCLUSIONS	. 87

CHAPTER5:	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS89
5.1	INTRODUCTION
5.2	CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY90
5.2.1	Conclusions with regard to accommodation in tourism90
5.2.2	Conclusions with regard to Couchsurfing as a form of accommodation in tourism
5.2.3	Conclusions with regard to the socio-demographic profile and motives of Couchsurfing hosts
5.2.4	Conclusions with regards to Couchsurfing hosts' motives for hosting couchsurfers
5.3	CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY95
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE STUDY96
5.5	RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO FUTURE RESEARCH 97
5.6	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY98
REFERENCE	S99
APPENDICIE	S 114

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Purposes of accommodation classification24
Table 3.1: Types of niche accommodation
Table 3.2: SWOT analysis of Couchsurfing44
Table 3.3: Previous studies on Couchsurfing48
Table 4.1: Combined socio-demographic profile of couchsurfer hosts59
Table 4.2: Combined couchsurfer host behaviour60
Table 4.3: Reasons for not accepting guests63
Table 4.4: Reasons for hosting couchsurfers64
Table 4.5: Respondents' reasons for hosting couchsurfers
Table 4.6: Safety measures67
Table 4.7: Reasons for verifying/ not verifying account
Table 4.8: How Couchsurfing has improved understanding of other cultures 69
Table 4.9: Sociodemographic profile: South African hosts vs International hosts 72
Table 4.10: Couchsurfer host behaviour: South African hosts vs International hosts 74
Table 4.11: Factor analysis of the reasons for hosting couchsurfers77
Table 4.12: Results of the t-test: Socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics 82
Table 4.13: Results of the cross tabulation analysis: Socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Types of South African accommodation	4
Figure 2.1: Commercial accommodation sector	26
Figure 2.2: Non-commercial accommodation sector	26
Figure 3.1: Reciprocity in Couchsurfing	41
Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 layout	58



INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND METHOD OF RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2018:3), the total contribution of tourism to the South African economy in 2017 was R412 billion. This contribution highlights the importance of this industry to the economy. The hospitality sector is a part of the tourism industry which consists of subsectors such as accommodation and food and beverage sectors. The hospitality sector is based on the culture of providing guests with a service which makes them comfortable at a destination by providing a 'home away from home' (Swain & Kumar, 2011).

One of the main aspects required for the operation of the tourism industry is the accommodation sector; it involves the provision of a place to sleep overnight while travelling. Types of accommodation can include camping sites and cabins in national parks, resorts, hotels, guesthouses bed-and-breakfast, and hostels (Walker & Walker, 2011:12). The type of accommodation offered to tourists can differ in level of service, luxury, tastes, markets, price sensitivity and available technology (Robinson *et al.*, 2013:155). Accommodation provision is important because the tourists who make use of these facilities are away from their place of residence and will, therefore, require a temporary place to sleep for the duration of their stay (Wilson-Mah, 2016:44). The latter implies that the other aspects of tourism, such as attractions, would be less accessible if accommodation was unavailable or unaffordable to a certain percentage of people.

In South Africa, the accommodation sector hotels to be specific, generated R16 629 billion in revenue in 2017¹ which is close to a R1 billion increase from 2016 (PwC, 2018:12). This figure

1

¹ This was still the latest available statistics by the time of study submission.

is projected to increase to R21 800 billion by 2022 (PwC, 2018:12). From the figures, the importance of accommodation in the tourism sector becomes apparent. A large contributing factor during travel is people's level of income, meaning people can only afford certain types of accommodation or destinations and, therefore, a lack of affordable accommodation discourages people from travelling (Djeri et al., 2014:220). There has been a rise in peer-topeer platforms collectively known as the sharing economy such as Airbnb, which is aided by technology and supply side flexibility (Zervas et al., 2017:2). This is when individuals make use of under-utilised inventory via fee-based sharing, in the case of Airbnb, extra beds or rooms (Zervas et al., 2017:2). However, another peer-to-peer platform known as Couchsurfing has emerged. Unlike Airbnb, Couchsurfing differs from other types of accommodation because it is not for profit purposes but rather serves as an online hospitality exchange platform (www.couchsurfing.com) where people meet and offer each other free temporary accommodation (Lee, 2017). Therefore, Couchsurfing is a new phenomenon that acts as a link between tourism aspects and individuals who cannot afford 'paid for' accommodation. Couchsurfing is a specialised form of accommodation that connects like-minded strangers which, in the past, has proven difficult unless you had met while travelling (Grant, 2017). Another reason that this trend exists is due to a dynamic tourist market that is seeking a more authentic, inexpensive tourism experience. Couchsurfers pay for other tourism activities, transport and catering at the destination that they visit, just not accommodation. Couchsurfing is an informal platform; therefore, results of the research will provide an insight as to which management practices can be employed to ensure that members get the best experiences. In South Africa, Couchsurfing is not well known, thus it is necessary to market it more efficiently. This study forms part of both the management and marketing theoretical frameworks.

The rest of this chapter examines the following:

- Background to study- This section examines the contribution of tourism accommodation
 to the economy, the trends in this sector and, finally, the Couchsurfing phenomena. It is
 important to examine this so that the concept of the study may be understood.
- **Problem statement-** This section illustrates the problem or gap that lies in the current available literature with regards to the concept of Couchsurfing. This gap presents a few questions that will be answered in the rest of the study.
- **Goal of the study** This is the main reason for undertaking the study, i.e. what the research aims to achieve. The secondary objectives of the study are also outlined in this section
- **Method of research** The method by which the research was conducted is outlined here.
- Defining concepts- The concepts used throughout the study are defined in this section.
 This provides an understanding of the context in which these concepts are used.

• Chapter classification- An outline of the whole dissertation.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

The tourism industry is a very important sector of the South African economy and contributes to economic growth, attracts foreign currency and creates employment (StatsSA, 2016a). Tourism's contribution in these areas is further discussed from the latest available StatsSA (2016a) report. According to the National Department of Tourism (NDT) (2017), in the second quarter of 2017 (April to June), 731 398 individuals were directly employed by the tourism industry in South Africa, a 6.3% increase from 2016. Comparable employment data from 2008 shows that tourism generated more jobs in the economy than other industries such as trade, agriculture and manufacturing. Regarding economic growth, tourism contributed 3% to the South African economy which was 0.5% higher than the agricultural sector (StatsSA, 2016a). Tourism is also a source of foreign income; tourists spend money at the destination and local citizens spend money outside the country as foreign tourists. The difference between inbound tourism expenditure and outbound tourism expenditure, is known as the tourism trade balance with the rest of the world (Amadeo, 2017).

South Africa's tourism trade balance with the rest of the world has remained positive since 2005; that is, more foreign exchange has been earned than has been lost due to tourism. In 2014, this figure was at R38 311 million in 2016 it increased to R42 907 million (StatsSA, 2018b:16). This information shows some of the areas to which tourism contributes positively and therefore highlights its importance to the South African economy. The next section examines accommodation in depth, its trends and the Couchsurfing phenomenon.

1.2.1 Accommodation and its changing trends

Tourism is a very broad industry which consists of different components. These are attractions, transport, food and beverage and, lastly, accommodation (Saayman, 2002:5). Attractions act as a pull factor in tourist motivation to travel. It can therefore be concluded that attractions are probably the strongest pulling factor for travel. However, to reach a destination, one needs transport. When one reaches the destination, it is also important to be able to eat and drink. Therefore, the other component is the food and beverage sector; this consists of restaurants, food service, vending and contract institutional food services (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:169). The food and beverage sector also made a significant contribution to the economy in 2014 generating R15 239 billion (StatsSA, 2016b:15).

The definition of tourism implies that one has to stay at least 24 hours at a destination to be considered a tourist, hence the need for accommodation (George, 2008:22). Middleton and

Clarke (cited by George, 2008:22) state that it is the provision of temporary shelter on a commercial basis to all categories of visitors. George (2008:22) further states that accommodation is a facility that makes it possible to participate in the main reason for travel and that tourists choose a destination based on the perceptions and expectations of the accommodation available. Thus, enabling travel to further destinations and prolonged stays at these places thereby increasing expenditure by tourists.

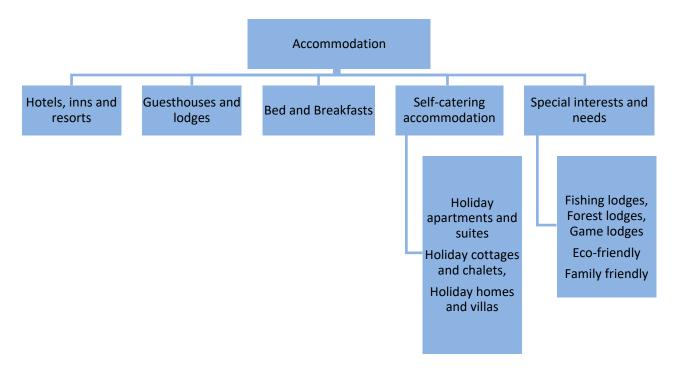


Figure 1.1: Types of South African accommodation

Source: SA-Venues, (2017)

SA-Venues (2017) classified South African accommodation into the following types as shown in Figure 1.1. These accommodation types have a specific South African grading system which ranges from one star (most basic) to five stars (most luxurious). The accommodation types are hotels, inns, resorts, guesthouses, lodges, bed and breakfasts, self-catering units such as holiday homes and villas and, lastly, special interest and need accommodation such as fishing lodges. The types show the variety in tourists' needs and preferences in terms of accommodation.

Page (2003:172), also states that there are two types of accommodation, serviced and non-serviced accommodation. Serviced accommodation is when a tourist is provided with all the necessary services such as food and beverages at hotels, while non-serviced accommodation, includes only the provision of a bed and is usually self-catering - for example holiday flats (Singh, 2008:154). The industry has changed from mass tourism to smaller groups, and so has the accommodation sector. Before 1945, tourists mainly used serviced

accommodation and, since then, there has been growth in non-serviced accommodation (Page, 2003:171).

The accommodation sector has evolved from hosting people in apartments and inns during the Grand Tour in the 19th century to large hotels, guesthouses, lodges and Bed and Breakfasts in the 21st century (Rosenberg, 2018). Technological advancements such as online booking reservation systems and automatic check-in and check-out have emerged in the tourism accommodation sector (Carter, 2017), hence 'a holiday destination is now a click away'. The tourism industry now has more social involvement in the form of interactive websites such as www.tripadvisor.co.za and www.trivago.co.za, where potential tourists interact with each other and even the service providers. The emergence of smaller accommodation facilities such as guesthouses and Bed and Breakfasts has led to more social involvement. Learning and understanding other people's cultures is important because it provides an educational experience and also reduces the chances of conflict between hosts and the tourists (Williams, 1994). Some tourists deem an experience with more social involvement as authentic because they get an insight into the host's lifestyle (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:264). There has also been a rise in the sharing economy such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing.

Overall costs are rising in terms of living expenses, this is evidenced by the increased inflation rate from less than 5.2% in December 2015 to 6.23% in January 2016 (Inflation.eu, 2018:internet), and therefore tourists are looking to make their holidays cheaper. This increase reveals the need for a cheaper or even free accommodation, in this case, known as Couchsurfing. Couchsurfing not only enables those who are already travelling to travel more and save more money, but also helps those who are inhibited by financial constraints from travelling to also be able to travel (Djeri *et al.*, 2014:220). An authentic experience is one that tourists perceive as real (not fake) and it is a fulfilment of internal goals which moves beyond goods and services and on to experiences (Yeoman, 2008a). Issues of unaffordability of accommodation and the need for authentic experiences are addressed by Couchsurfing since it provides free and authentic experiences, as explained in the next section.

1.2.2 Couchsurfing phenomena

Rosen *et al.* (2011:982) defined Couchsurfing as an organisation that seeks to bring people from all over the world together to share knowledge and facilitate cultural understanding. It was created in 2003 by an American known as Casey Fenton (Molz, 2013:218). The hosts and travellers meet on a website (www.couchsurfing.com) where each has to create their own online profile with their demographic information, personality traits as well as home details and rules (e.g. how the host expects the traveller to behave during their stay) (Couchsurfing,

2016a). They also include pictures of themselves as well as their living space and indicate on their profile if they are, at that moment, open to hosting tourists or not. After signing up on this site, the members engage with other couchsurfers through attending meetings or events which are listed on the site depending on the city in which they are based. The members then choose a status of the availability of their couch, room or bed, i.e. whether they want to host, or they are just available to socialise and have a drink. The traveller then sends a request to the potential host, then the host reviews the intended dates of stay, the traveller's profile and decides whether to host them (Couchsurfing, 2016b). There is a feature on the site that allows members to link themselves to others and may obtain references, get verified through payment of a certain amount of money or even vouched for by others (Rosen et al., 2011:983). This feature forms the foundation for building trust in this virtual community. The hosts and traveller write reviews about the stay, and others can make decisions based on these reviews. This type of platform allows the consumers (tourists) and the suppliers (hosts) to communicate directly, thereby bypassing travel agents. Couchsurfing is heavily dependent on information technology such as the Internet (Chen, 2011:280). Some tourists see Couchsurfing as a more authentic tourist experience than the superficial packaged tours offered by the commercial sector (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:262).

Couchsurfing allows the tourist a close insight into the host's daily life; this means the real way of life (reality), and not staged authenticity. The hosts are the people who welcome these strangers (travellers) into their homes for a certain period. Therefore, because of this close interaction between tourists and hosts, Chen (2012:280) further states that Couchsurfing is not only a hospitality exchange platform but also promotes cross-cultural interaction between tourists and locals. Some of the benefits of Couchsurfing include meeting and interacting with new people, visits to authentic (pristine) places also referred to as 'living like a local', a cultural exchange between hosts and tourists and, above all, this service is free (Mest, 2016; Bitton, 2018). Tourists who make use of Couchsurfing usually do not make use of the formal facilities provided to them by the tourism industry but search for that which is untapped, that is, visit places not usually described as attractions, or eat at places where locals eat (Mest, 2016; Bitton, 2018). McFadden (2014) also adds that Couchsurfing is not only for accommodation purposes, but also for events and to get local advice on the good spots at the destination. These tourists' contribution to the economy includes consumption of products outside the scope of the average visitor (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:262). This means that these tourists go to places that locals go to and these places are usually not official tourist attractions.

Couchsurfing involves an exchange, which therefore brings to light the aspect of reciprocity (McFadden, 2014). Reciprocity involves three things - the obligation to give, the obligation to

receive, and the obligation to give back (Muthu, 2016:52). These three are, however, not written rules; they are more like moral guidelines. According to Chen (2012:282), when someone has been given something, there is a feeling of gratitude which makes the person feel obliged to reciprocate. This is supported by the social exchange theory which states that social interactions have either positive or negative outcomes and those with positive outcomes are most likely to be repeated (Stephens, 2017). The rewards vary from a simple smile to money (Crossman, 2018).

Couchsurfing as a contemporary form of accommodation sector is growing tremendously worldwide, as shown by just over 3 million users of the Couchsurfing website in 2011 (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:262) to 12 million users as of 9 September 2018 (Couchsurfing, 2017b), therefore the need to examine this growing phenomenon arises. To ensure the success of this platform, there is a need to do research to understand it. Previous studies reveal that Couchsurfing is a growing phenomenon which is under-researched in South Africa. Previous studies outline how trust and a sense of belonging are very important in Couchsurfing. Couchsurfers who have not had face-to-face encounters are likely to feel like they do not belong, as opposed to those who have (Rosen et al., 2011). Seeing as there are no external rules and laws in this hospitality exchange, there has to be trust amongst the members. The study by Bialski (2012) also shows that although strangers meet by coincidence, Couchsurfing provides a platform for them to interact and plan these face-to-face encounters. Studies by Bialski (2012), and Steylaerts and Dubhghail (2012) focused on the demand side of Couchsurfing, examining tourism authenticity and how Couchsurfing can be a platform that provides an authentic experience for its users. The studies also focused on the development of planned encounters between travellers and hosts which is aided by technology. While Chen (2012), Pietilä (2011), and Toeniskoetter (2013) focused their studies on the supply side, examining issues such as motivations for hosting couchsurfers, safety, implementation of Couchsurfing by different cultures and issues of trust. However, all these studies, both supply and demand side have focused on an international perspective and this study will therefore add a South African perspective on motivation for hosting travellers and issues regarding safety.

South Africa is not amongst the top ten Couchsurfing countries and is lagging behind this worldwide phenomena (Inforgr.am, 2014). Couchsurfing involves cultural exchange and South Africa, being one of the most diverse countries regarding culture, can be regarded as most suitable for Couchsurfing

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tourism is one of South Africa's most important industries as it generates a large percentage of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generates various other benefits. Accommodation is an important part of the tourism industry, without which many people would not be able to travel to destinations which are deemed by them as too far from their homes to drive there and return the same day. Markets have changed and now seek more authentic accommodation experiences. Apart from being commoditised, accommodation is seen as a mostly expensive service and is not accessible to all. This could have a negative impact on tourism because if one cannot afford accommodation for the duration of a holiday, it discourages one from travelling altogether (George, 2008:22). Couchsurfing, therefore, presents an opportunity for all to travel and spend money on tourism related activities for less while staying for free. This could potentially help grow the vital South African tourism industry even further which, for instance, would contribute to the growth of the country's economy. The problem, however, is to manage and promote this more contemporary form of accommodation since previous studies have focused mainly on the European, American and Asian perspective and not, to the researcher's knowledge, on the South African situation. South African Couchsurfing seems to be lagging compared to international Couchsurfing regarding uptake. It is, therefore, important to investigate this phenomenon with the aim of better managing and promoting it. South Africa is rich in culture; hence the hosts can provide personal cultural experiences to the travellers. More people now seek authentic experiences which can be provided by hosts through Couchsurfing. South Africa has been labelled the 'crime capital' of the world and this raises safety concerns for tourists (Perry & Potgieter, 2013:101). It is thus important to examine issues of safety from the Couchsurfing hosts' perspective because crime not only affects tourists but hosts as well. When examining Couchsurfing in South Africa, it is especially important to understand the Couchsurfing hosts' perspective as they are the people who allow other people ('strangers') to stay at their homes at no fee which, in turn, might promote travel and more spending in other tourism sectors such as attractions.

The phenomenon of Couchsurfing brings some questions to mind. Firstly, who are the people (hosts) who temporarily allow visitors (strangers) into their homes and why? Secondly, what do hosts expect in return? Lastly, how do South African hosts compare to international hosts? Do South Africans share interest in authentic experiences? How do hosts approach safety issues? Obtaining this knowledge will assist in the understanding of the global trend, as well as how and to what extent it is absorbed by the South African market. Furthermore, understanding the differences between the local and international market will help direct the management and marketing of Couchsurfing in future studies. This will outline why

Couchsurfing is more popular internationally than locally and therefore enable devising strategies to promote it locally.

1.4 GOAL OF THE STUDY

In this section, the goal and objectives for completing this study are discussed. The goal of this study is to analyse Couchsurfing as niche accommodation in tourism from the hosts' perspective. The study was examined from as supply side to get an understanding of the underlying reasons for participation in a hospitality exchange platform which is virtual in nature with no safety guarantees. It is therefore important that the accommodation providers (hosts) are understood.

1.4.1 Objectives

The following secondary objectives have been achieved to reach the goal of this study.

- (a) To examine accommodation trends and the role of accommodation in the tourism industry by means of a literature review.
- (b) To examine the emergence of Couchsurfing as a contemporary form of accommodation experience by means of a literature review.
- (c) To interpret the results on the Couchsurfing hosts regarding their motives and behaviour from both a South African and international perspective by means of an empirical survey.
- (d) To draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding the management, understanding and possible promotion of Couchsurfing in South Africa.

1.5 METHOD OF RESEARCH

This research was conducted through a combination of a literature study and an empirical study.

1.5.1 Literature review

A literature study is an in-depth evaluation of previous studies which provides a basis on which new research can be built (Oliver, 2012:1). It allows the reader to understand the reasons behind a particular research study. It should identify survey, synthesise, critically analyse, evaluate and present the literature in an organised way (Royal Literary Fund, 2017; Firk, 2014:3). It is important because before new information can be discovered, previous studies should be studied to establish what has been done and what has not been done on the topic. The literature is, therefore, a guideline as to which part of a topic is under-researched if at all researched. The literature study was conducted through the use of the North-West University library resources as well as other online sources. For the purposes purpose of this study, textbooks, journals, websites and articles were used as sources. The scholarly articles were

obtained from electronic databases such as Science Direct, Google Scholar, Emerald and EbscoHost. The following key concepts are investigated in the literature study: tourism, accommodation, host, and Couchsurfing.

1.5.2 Empirical study

This section explains how the data was collected, how the sample was selected, as well as the development of the questionnaire.

1.5.2.1 Research design and method of collecting data

A research design is a framework for fulfilling objectives and answering questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2008:89). For the purpose of this study, the quantitative research method was used. Quantitative research method was chosen because the results of the study can be used to provide a general view of Couchsurfing hosts unlike with qualitative research where there is a few participants whose responses cannot be applied to the rest of the population. In this method there is little room for researcher bias and the results are analysed objectively because the researcher did not meet the respondents face to face. This research method was also convenient for the researcher due to financial constraints. Quantitative research 'is a distinctive research approach that entails the collection of numerical data, regards the relationship between theory and research as deductive, prefers a natural science approach in general and adopts an objectivist conception of social reality' (Bryman & Bell, 2011:31). An empirical study is the physical collection of new data and, for this study, an online questionnaire was developed to obtain this information. An online approach was used because Couchsurfing is an online hospitality platform with users all over the world hence it would have been difficult to have all the respondents in one place to physically distribute questionnaires.

The following are the advantages of quantitative research as stated by Bryman and Bell (2011:49):

- Inexpensive to conduct
- Very specific research problem and terms
- Eliminates subjectivity of judgement
- It achieves high levels of reliability of data because of controlled observations

1.5.2.2 Selection of the sampling frame

The study is based on Couchsurfing hosts residing in South Africa's top ten tourism cities. These are Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Polokwane, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, Durban, Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg and Nelspruit (South Africa, 2017a) as well as global Couchsurfing hosts. These South African cities are the top tourism destinations; hence these

cities will experience high numbers of tourists at a given time and therefore might have a more significant need for accommodation provision. South Africa is famous for its scenic beauty such as Table Mountain, its beaches, Kruger National Park, Robben Island, culture, the shopping malls such as the Victoria and Alfred Mall at the waterfront in Cape Town as well as various other attractions. In 2016, Table Mountain alone recorded over 1 102 189 million visitors (Steyn, 2017:internet). These attractions are located in the top ten tourism cities; hence these cities were chosen for their popularity as tourism destinations and they experience high volumes of tourists at a given time. In 2017, a total of 10 285 197 million tourists visited South Africa (StatsSA, 2018a:8). Due to the high tourist numbers and tourist attractions, it is important that these cities be able to provide accommodation to people from all social classes to allow them to experience these areas. It is important to gain a collective view of South African hosts and compare them to international hosts. This survey was an online survey focused on Couchsurfing hosts.

1.5.2.3 Sampling

For this study, two methods of sampling were used: purposive sampling, by which only those from the top 10 tourism cities in South Africa who make use of Couchsurfing, logged into their Couchsurfing profile within a month prior to the survey and indicated that they will or might accept guests, were selected. This technique helps to ensure that only active hosts are used in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method. Maree and Pieterson (2007:178) define purposive sampling as a method of sampling with a specific purpose in mind. It is also known as judgemental sampling whereby the researcher selects the respondents based on his/her knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of research aims. The researcher must be able to apply the findings to the specific group with the chosen characteristics, not the whole population (Latham, 2007).

After the respondents have been filtered accordingly, a probability sampling method, known as systematic sampling was used whereby every second person on the database was sent a message detailing the purpose of the questionnaire as well as a link to the questionnaire. It means that each unit of the population has an equal chance of being selected. This method was selected because there is little room for human bias because of the subjective criteria (Bryman & Bell, 2011:173). Latham (2007) agrees that with this method, each member must have an equal chance of selection and also adds that once a unit is chosen, it has no chance of being selected again. Members were selected independently of each other and the respondents are not physically there for selection. An online survey was chosen because it is both cost effective and convenient since respondents are already registered and available on the Couchsurfing website and it is physically impossible to reach each host. For the

international hosts, the survey was distributed online by joining various international Couchsurfing Facebook groups and by posting the survey there. The groups with the most respondents from various parts of the world were chosen to receive the most questionnaires from as wide a range as possible. The international survey was thus done through convenience sampling as the researcher has no control of who completes the questionnaire from the Facebook sites. According to Couchsurfing (2017a), as of 12 March 2017 there were a total of 16 765 South African Couchsurfing hosts from the top ten tourism cities distributed as follows:

- Cape Town 7453;
- Johannesburg 4959;
- Pretoria 2054;
- Durban 1401;
- Bloemfontein 236;
- Nelspruit 134;
- Polokwane 160;
- Pietermaritzburg 171;
- Kimberly 68 and;
- Port Elizabeth 129.

This number includes all hosts even those who are not accepting guests but, for this study, only those who are accepting or may be accepting guests were chosen. The data from the various cities was pooled together to obtain a combined sample of approximately 200 respondents. According to SurveyMonkey (2019) for a population of 16765 at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 376 respondents is acceptable. Krejcie and Morgan (1970:608) state that for a population of 1 million, at least 384 respondents are required to have a significant sample. The questionnaires received from the international survey were added to the pool, and this allowed for statistical analysis to be done. Total responses received totalled 624 with international Couchsurfing hosts accounting for 427 responses and 197 responses for South African hosts.

1.5.2.4 Development of a questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based on studies focused on Couchsurfing by authors such as Pietilä (2011), Bialski (2012), Molz (2013), Rosen *et al.* (2011), and Chen (2012) as well as guidelines provided on the Couchsurfing website. The questionnaire was designed in Google Forms, which generated a link that was sent to the users on the Couchsurfing website of which, upon completion, they clicked submit. The first section of the questionnaire focused on general socio-demographic characteristics such as the respondents' age, gender, language,

occupation, income, marital status and level of education. The second section measured respondents' overall behaviour such as years hosting; living arrangements and how many couchsurfers they have hosted and how many times they did so. It included a question on safety precautions taken by hosts. The last section was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (where '1'=totally disagree and '5'=totally agree) to determine the extent of influence that the statements had on the hosts' reason to host. The statements on the Likert scale, for example, included the following statements from the studies by Pietilä (2011), Bialski (2012), Molz (2013), and Rosen *et al.* (2011) on the reasons for hosting strangers:

- I want to share my life with other similar people;
- I am curious to meet new people;
- Someone else hosted me, and I want to return the favour.

Statements on hosts' expectation were adapted from Chen (2012)'s concept of reciprocity and include the following:

- Absolutely nothing, they can come and go as they see fit;
- Just their company from time to time;
- I want them to meet my friends and make them part of my friend circle.
- This questionnaire contained both open-ended questions, dichotomous questions, and Likert-scale questions.

1.5.2.5 Data analysis

The questionnaire that was completed by the respondents was automatically captured in Google Forms. The data was then transferred to Microsoft Excel. A program known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSPS) was used for statistical analysis. Pieterson and Maree (2007a:183) state two methods of statistical analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics and they defined descriptive statistics as a number of methods used to represent data in an organised and understandable way. There are two ways of describing data, graphical and numerical. Data analysis helps to understand the raw data. For this study, descriptive statistics form the first step in analysing the data. Firstly, the socio-demographic, as well as behavioural data were examined through descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables.

Secondly, an exploratory factor analysis was done to reduce the aspects on the Likert scale questions on reasons for hosting to their latent variables (factors), which aids in easier interpretation of why other people are hosted by Couchsurfing hosts. Further analysis can then be done on the factors. A factor analysis is a method used to determine which items are similar to each other in the sense that they are answered in a similar way and therefore measure the

same factor (Pieterson & Maree, 2007b:219). Exploratory factor analysis "could be described as organised simplification of interrelated measures. Exploratory factor analysis has been used to explore the possible underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables without imposing a preconceived structure on the outcome" (Suhr, 2006:1).

Thirdly, t-tests and cross-tabulations were performed to determine how the various socio-demographic and behavioural aspects, as well as factors, differ between South African and international Couchsurfing hosts. The *t*-test is used when comparing two independent groups based on their average score on a quantitative variable - for example, comparing the average age of males and females (Pieterson & Maree, 2007c:225). The *t*-test is appropriate to use when it is known that the variable has a normal distribution in each population and both groups have 30 or more respondents.

Cross-tabulation analysis, also known as contingency table analysis, is most often used to analyse categorical (nominal measurement scale) data. A cross-tabulation is a two or more dimensional table that records the number of respondents that have the specific characteristics described in the cells of the table. Cross-tabulation tables provide an in depth view of information about the relationship between the variables (Qualtrics, 2011). According to Grover (2011), cross-tabulation analysis has the following benefits:

- Little or no understanding of concepts is necessary for interpretation.
- Readers can easily observe patterns of association.
- Readers can also see if the pattern is weaker across some rows.
- Can put either variable in rows or columns.
- Very flexible you can easily take the information from cross tabulation and create a visual chart or graph.
- Cross-tabs can be done with almost any variable.
- Accessible interpretation.

1.6 DEFINING CONCEPTS

This section looks at the definition of concepts such as tourism, accommodation, host, Couchsurfing and authentic experience.

1.6.1 Tourism

Tourism is the movement of people from their place of origin for more than 24 hours but less than a year for leisure, business and purposes other than that of employment. This definition makes it easier to identify international and domestic tourism (Page, 2007:10). According to Saayman (2002:3), tourism is defined as an experience which is a result of the interaction

between tourists and the different sectors of the economy. Weaver and Lawton (2010:2) agree that tourism is as a result of an interaction between different sectors of an economy and the tourist but add that it is a sum of all processes arising from the interaction. From the above definitions, it is evident that tourism involves travel, lodging, spending money and interaction with different people. Tourism involves activities such as sightseeing, birdwatching, safari drives, and cruises.

1.6.2 Accommodation

Tourism involves being away from the place of residence hence the tourist will need a place to stay. Accommodation is the provision of temporary shelter to all types of visitors (Middleton & Clarke, 2001 cited by George, 2008:22). George (2008:22) adds that accommodation is a facility that makes it possible to partake in the main reason for travel and that tourists choose a destination based on the perceptions and expectations of the accommodation available. The sector includes facilities such as hotels, guesthouses, cabins, inns and bed and breakfasts. Accommodation can be classified as commercial and non-commercial, serviced and non-serviced. Accommodation establishments such as hotels usually have restaurants and bars where tourists can eat and drink.

1.6.3 Host

A host is someone who welcomes and entertains a guest, especially in their home. In tourism, a host community is the people from the destination area. In tourism, a host community is the inhabitants of the destination area (UKEssays, 2016). 'A host community consists of all the people in the destination, whether they are homogeneous or heterogeneous and regardless of whether the impacts of tourism are beneficial or otherwise' (UKEssays, 2016). For this study, a host refers to the person who opens up his or her home to other people at no charge as part of the Couchsurfing phenomenon.

1.6.4 Couchsurfing

Rosen *et al.* (2011:982) state that Couchsurfing is an online hospitality exchange between strangers and involves intercultural exchange through organising social gatherings. The online platform where these travellers meet is known as Couchsurfing.org; the travellers rely solely on each other's online profiles. Therefore there is a need for interpersonal trust to exist (Luo & Zhang, 2016). These online profiles help the travellers to obtain an estimated idea of who they will be staying with. This form of accommodation is free and is based on moral grounds. This means there are no written rules as to how hosts and travellers should interact. It is a system of reciprocity meaning that once a host has shown hospitality to a traveller, it is up to the traveller to show some gratitude either by offering to cook a meal from their home country

for the host or by other means (Chen, 2011:282). Sometimes a simple thank you is enough for some hosts.

1.6.5 Authentic experience

According to Webrezpro (2016) travellers do not simply want to see a place but want to experience it. Hotel stays are not only about the services and facilities provided anymore, but rather about the memorable experiences that enhance travel adventure. An authentic experience in terms of accommodation could therefore be defined as unique stay experiences through which tourists can connect more genuinely with the location and its people (Yeoman, 2008a). 'More and more travellers demand to stay in hotels that are immersed in the local culture. They want local space, local touches and local insight. They are tired of the tourist traps and are craving more local attractions' (Mussio, 2017). From this quotation, it is clear that authenticity is closely associated with culture or locality, therefore authentic experiences involve cultural elements.

1.6.6 Hospitality

The hospitality sector is defined as 'the economic activity which organises, provides and meets the needs of guests for overnight stays, food and beverages' (Batinić, 2013:91). Dikmen and Bozdağlar (2017:1) state that the hospitality sector is a vital part of the economy known as the service industry. Batinić (2013:91) further adds that the hospitality sector contains a 'production' component, which is the preparation of food and beverage while the service component is the provision of accommodation and the serving of the food and drink to guests. The hospitality sector can therefore be summarised as a service provided to guests to make them feel comfortable at a destination through provision of short-term accommodation, entertainment and food and drink at a cost to the guest.

1.6.7 Niche accommodation

The term niche refers to the tailoring of products to meet specific needs of consumers, therefore in tourism this is the breaking down of tourism products such as accommodation, attractions and events to suit a specific tourist market (Ali-Knight, 2011:2). Niche accommodation is therefore accommodation products that have been tailored to suit tourist needs for example holiday resorts, eco-friendly establishments and Couchsurfing. Novelli (2007:9) defines niche tourism as special interests, culture and/or activity-based tourism, involving fewer tourists in more authentic environments. Niche tourism seeks to minimise the negative impacts of tourism and maximise positive socio-cultural and environmental development (Lötter, 2016:66). It can therefore be concluded that niche accommodation is the

provision of consumer-oriented products and services based on the needs and interests of the consumer.

1.7 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION

The dissertation consists of five chapters. The chapters contain the following sections:

- Chapter 1: This chapter includes the introduction, problem statement, goals and objectives along with the method of research that was used and specific key concepts which the study focused on. In this section, the research and what it entails was examined.
- Chapter 2: In this chapter, the researcher examines accommodation and its role in the tourism industry by means of a literature review. This chapter also examines the development of accommodation from the beginning of formal tourism to the more modern perspectives.
- Chapter 3: This chapter critically analyses Couchsurfing as growing phenomena, also by
 means of a literature review. An examination of Couchsurfing as a platform for authentic
 cultural and social exchange was conducted. The current literature on Couchsurfing was
 examined to better understand current global trends, as well as to provide direction when
 creating the questionnaire.
- Chapter 4: This chapter contains the results of the empirical study, where an online questionnaire completed by the South African and international respondents was analysed to establish the reasons that the respondents engage in Couchsurfing. The chapter includes information on who Couchsurfing hosts are, the safety measures they have in place, as well as the clear and underlying reasons why they participate in Couchsurfing. The statistical analysis was displayed in tables and described in text.
- Chapter 5: This chapter consists of the findings, recommendations and conclusions that
 were made about the use of Couchsurfing in the accommodation sector of tourism. The
 information from the literature study and the empirical study was used to identify the
 findings of the study as well as draw conclusions and make recommendations.



ACCOMMODATION IN TOURISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is defined as travel to a place away from a person's usual place of residence for a period of more than 24 hours for the purposes of leisure or business (Biederman *et al.*, 2008:5). To get to the destination, tourists use different facilities provided by various suppliers such as transport, attractions, food and beverage, entertainment and accommodation. The different sectors in tourism are explained briefly to show the integration between them and how they are dependent on each other.

Attractions are the main reason for travel and are divided into man-made, natural and socio-cultural attractions. Studies show that the natural environment is regarded as a major drawcard for overseas tourists. Natural attractions have their origins in the natural environment and, therefore, are geographically bound (Bennett *et al.*, 2005:7). Natural attractions include South Africa's nature as well as activities such as hiking, game drives, sightseeing and birdwatching. An example of a natural attraction is the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve in Mpumalanga (South Africa, 2017b). Man-made attractions, also known as built attractions are a result of human influence - for example, the Sun City resort and convention centres such as the Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban (George, 2008:476). The purpose of these attractions is for fun, amusement and enjoyment with activities such as riding the big wheel, and water slides.

Socio-cultural attractions relate to history, religion or way of life of certain people. The bigger the difference between the host and tourist culture the more likely the tourist will visit the place. These attractions depict a way of life or history of a certain community or people - for example, the Robben Island and the Iziko Museum in Cape Town (Bennett *et al.*, 2005:7). StatsSA (2016b:15) states that cultural activities/attractions generated over R370 million for the South African economy in 2015, while sport and recreational activities contributed just over R10 billion.

Transport is an important component of tourism because tourists use transport to get to and around the destination. According to Bennett *et al.* (2005:50), the different modes of transport include air, motor vehicle, railway and sea transport. The transport sector, unlike attractions, caters for the public and not only for tourists. Tourism involves both luxurious, expensive and affordable modes of transport, such as air and road transport. The transport system has different elements, way, terminals, carrying capacity and motive power. 'Way' refers to the medium which different modes of transport use - for example, cars use roads; ships use water, and aircraft use air. Terminals provide access to the way or act as a point of interchange between the different modes of transport - for example, airports, bus terminals and parking areas. The carrying unit refers to the means of transport that facilitates movement - for example vehicles, trains, ships and aircraft. Motive power is the power that is used to provide energy - for example, steam for steam ships and trains (Bennett *et al.*, 2005:49-50). Bennett *et al.* (2005:50) state that, in Southern Africa, road and air travel are the most important. The transport sector contributed over R80 billion to the tourism industry in 2015 (StatsSA, 2016b:15).

On the other hand, the food and beverage sector consists of restaurants, food service, vending and contract institutional food services (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:169). The entertainment industry sustains the growth of tourism because of the role it plays in the tourist decision-making process. Entertainment is used in conjunction with tourism products and services to make tourism destinations more attractive to tourists (Gowreesunkar & Sotiriadis, 2015:3). Entertainment includes cinemas, shopping facilities, casinos, sports complexes and theme parks. Tourism, however, is greatly dependent on the type and quantity of accommodation available (Bhatia, 2006:175).

2.2 THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

The hospitality sector is a part of the tourism service industry that aims to meet the need of consumers through the provision of accommodation, entertainment, food and drink for an economic benefit (Batinić, 2013:91). The hospitality sector involves making guests welcome at a destination. Hospitality dates back to the times of Greek god Xenia- the protector of outsiders and Romans also gave shelter and protection to strangers (Toeniskotter, 2013:9). The subsectors in the hospitality sector include accommodations and lodging, recreation and entertainment, travel services, food and beverage services, conventions and event management and clubs (Skripak, 2016:335; Batinić, 2013:92; Popova, 2012). Apart from provision of accommodation, the hospitality sector also provides social, cultural and health services to meet the needs of consumers for example wellness health spas (Batinić, 2013:94).

Pizam and Shani (2009:136) state that there are four approaches to understanding the nature of the hospitality sector and these approaches are:

- Professionalism- the hospitality service providers act in a professional manner when
 dealing with guests i.e. the skills, attitudes and personality traits of employees should
 be of a high standard.
- **Hospitableness-** the focus is the cultural and social aspects of this sector and not just the commercial gains of providing this service. This is the cheerful welcoming of guests at an establishment.
- Hospitality as an experience- provision of hospitality services is not about the actual
 product, but the memorable experiences derived by the consumer from the provision
 of these services. To provide this experience, there must be an integration of the
 services provided by an establishment i.e. the establishment must function as one unit
 not separate departments.
- Hospitality as a philosophy- this is viewing hospitality as a service that can be applied to other service sectors of the economy to help provide genuine and sensitive care to consumers.

Popova (2012) states that for the hospitality service sector to be successful focus must be on the customer/guest, understanding of the role of contact employees, education and training systems should incorporate a service culture and establishment should thrive on change i.e. Easily adapt to change. Toeniskoetter (2013:9), adds that hospitality be a process by which societies change and grow. Pizam and Shani (2009:135) mention that accommodation is vital to the hospitality sector, hence the focus of this study is the accommodation sector. The accommodation sector, its history and importance in tourism is discussed in the rest of the chapter.

2.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ACCOMMODATION SECTOR

To understand the modern-day accommodation sector, it is important to examine how the accommodation sector has developed over the years. As early as 40BC, hospitality was a culture amongst the Greek/Romans (Global Hospitality Portal, 2018); they travelled for business, religion, health research and for leisure purposes (Branislav, 2014:8). During the medieval period, there were also English travellers who made use of accommodation establishments known as inns where people used their private homes to provide food and shelter for the travellers (Global Hospitality Portal, 2018; Miller, 2013). However, due to the decline of the Roman Empire, the need for inn-keeping and development declined because people travelled infrequently (Bhatia, 2009:172). Due to the high volume of travellers in the 16th century, also known as Renaissance period, there was a high demand for inns and taverns

(Miller, 2013). It was during this period that the first hotel was built in Europe and the development of coffee houses began (Santos, 2012). Travel increased for religious purposes; monasteries and cathedrals offered free accommodation to the religious travellers (Bhatia, 2009:172).

During the Grand Tour in the 17th century, travel was only for the wealthy aristocrats who travelled for educational purposes (Keyser, 2009). During this time, people offered the spare rooms in their houses as a form of accommodation; there was also the use of roadside inns and apartments. McIntosh *et al.* (1995:45), concur that the earliest guest rooms were parts of people's private homes and travellers were hosted like members of the family; that is, the hosts provided a comfortable environment for the travellers to stay. In the 18th and early 20th century the first railways were built and, as a result, depot hotels were developed. These hotels were mostly located in train stations and therefore accommodation and transport were dependent on each other.

The discovery of gold in the 1850s led to the demand for hotels, taverns, inns and refreshment rooms becoming opportunities for the expansion of the hospitality sector. In 1851, the number of travellers seeking food, drink and lodging services along the Gold Route in Colonial Victoria increased rapidly (O'Mahony & Clark, 2013:175). According to Goeldner *et al.* (2000:53), the reason for travel shifted from educational to leisure travel. As a result of this change, there was the development of spas which were accompanied by accommodation establishments because leisure travellers needed places for temporary lodging (Keyser, 2009:283). They were mainly places for relaxation. After the spas, there were seaside resorts. The main reason for travel to these places was for medical purposes. The travellers believed in the healing powers of sea water after a publication by a doctor about the topic (Keyser, 2009:283).

Due to mass tourism, which was a result of developments in the railway transport sector (Gyr, 2010:17), there was a high demand for accommodation establishments, hence the development of motels, more hotels, lodges and guest houses. These motels were previously known as tourist courts/cottage courts in the 1930s (Wood, 2017). The 20th century saw the rapid growth in air travel because of its availability to the public and, during this period, most guests in the accommodation sector were business travellers. This was because the meetings industry became a very important part in business success - for example conventions and conferences (Santos, 2012). Today, the accommodation sector is a very broad sector comprising different establishments such as hotels, motels, camps and cruise ships (Kapiki, 2012:1). Henama (2012:79) adds guesthouses, youth hostels, caravan parks, boutique hotels and bed and breakfasts to the list of accommodation establishments available to different types of travellers. For the purpose of service quality in countries such as South Africa, these

establishments should be graded by grading councils such as the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) (TGCSA, 2016a). The grading council provides these establishments with a star rating system, from acceptable service 'one star' to luxurious 'five-star' establishments). The establishments need to meet certain requirements/criteria set by the TGSCA regarding the level of service and amenities available (Du Plessis & Saayman, 2011:131).

2.4 ACCOMMODATION AND ITS ROLE IN TOURISM.

The definition of tourism implies travel away from one's usual place of residence and one normally stays at far away destinations. This brings accommodation into the picture. Accommodation is defined as a temporary place to sleep provided to the tourist by the supplier (hotels, lodges and guesthouses) at a fee for the duration of their trip. Henama (2012:78) and Bhatia (2006:175) state that accommodation is a vital component of tourism infrastructure and is an important feature of the total tourist image of a country. For this reason, 'many countries have coordinated their activities with the accommodation sector by providing attractive incentives to suppliers of tourist accommodation, which have resulted in building various types of accommodation' (Bhatia, 2006:175). This sector creates a home away from home for the traveller, that is, the tourist settles in as though it were their own home. Both the traditional and supplementary forms of accommodation are very important to the tourism industry - for example hotels and hostels both contribute to tourist satisfaction (Tsyganok, 2013). Tourists pay for the lodging services, consume and leave the hotel or establishment with an experience which is an intangible product (Tsyganok, 2013).

Poudel (2013:1) agrees with Tsyganok (2013) that accommodation is vital to tourism because the tourist moves away from their usual place of residence and will, therefore, require temporary accommodation. Hotels play a vital role in the provision of facilities for the transaction of business, meetings and entertainment. Tourists tend to spend more when they are on a trip than they would normally spend at home and accommodation establishments provide facilities that encourage this spending (Page *et al.*, 2001:133). For this reason, commercial accommodation establishments exist and provide various services to the tourists depending on their needs. Page *et al.* (2001:134) provide the following components of the accommodation product: location i.e. where the establishment is based - for example in the city or rural area and its accessibility to tourists, its facilities that is bedrooms, meeting rooms, restaurant and a bar, the level of service offered according to its grading, the image which is how tourists view the establishment and the price.

Tourism is dependent on the quality and quantity of the accommodation facilities. When developing tourism, it is important to choose the correct type of accommodation for a particular market (Poudel, 2013:13). The availability of accommodation encourages longer stays at a destination and is of great influence on a tourist's choice of a particular destination (George, 2008:22). Henama (2012) states that accommodation is a necessary facility which makes it convenient and comfortable to engage in the primary reason for travel and further states that availability of accommodation will influence the volume as well as the value of tourism at a destination. Accommodation, therefore, plays a major role in destination competitiveness. Accommodation development at a destination should be a priority before other developments are made (Nuntsu *et al.*, 2004 as cited by Henama 2012:78). Therefore, if an accommodation establishment has high-quality services and facilities, tourists are more likely to visit that destination thereby boosting other tourism activities in the area which would otherwise have been unknown to the tourist. Poudel (2013:13) further states that it is important but difficult for the sector to serve people from different economic backgrounds, meaning people who earn different incomes at a given time.

From the above information, it is evident that accommodation is a core aspect of tourism and its absence will have negative impacts on tourism - for example tourists will not spend longer periods at the destination. However, rapid tourism development has several disadvantages - for example pollution, cultural differences and overcrowding, therefore the development of this sector should be controlled through enforcing policies that state limits for acceptable development (Poudel, 2013:15).

2.5 FORMS OF REGULATION IN ACCOMMODATION

Due to the intangibility of the accommodation product, there is a need to control or regulate the development and marketing of accommodation products and services. Bhatia (2006:186) mentions three forms of regulating this sector, classification, grading and registration. Classification aims to maintain a standard of services and security for tourists and helps all stakeholders in the tourism industry to distinguish between different types of accommodation establishments (Ali, 2015:74). Accommodation establishments can also be classified according to the following as stated by Popova (2012:48) and Wilson-Mah (2016:48-49):

Location: Classified according to their geographical location - for example city centre
hotels and suburban hotels. Saayman, (2002:20) also adds that accommodation
establishments can be classified according to the relationship they have with a particular
mode of transport - for example airport hotels and highway hotels/motels.

- Function: Establishments are classified according to the purpose for which they were designed - for example convention hotels. Tourists' purpose for visit can also be used to classify accommodation establishments (Saayman, 2002:20)
- Market segment: The type of clientele that the establishment wants to attract (target market) for example health spas, timeshares/vacation ownership and casino hotels.
- Distinctiveness of property: This refers to what sets the hotel apart from its competitors for example all-suite hotels, boutique hotels, extended-stay hotels, historic conversions
 and bed and breakfast inns.
- Price (Slabbert & Saayman, 2003:17) and staff/room ratio.
- Size: These establishments are classified according to the number of rooms on the premises. Saayman (2002:20) also adds that size could also be in terms of the number of beds.
- Rating (grading): These are classified according to the grading system used for example one-star to five-star or one-diamond to five-diamond (Saayman, 2002:20).

Grading is used to ensure that accommodation establishments continue to improve the quality of their products and services (Du Plessis & Saayman, 2011:131). Grading enables tourists to choose the preferred quality of accommodation suitable for them. Suitability could be in terms of facilities, food and other amenities available at the tourist's disposal. Accommodation establishments are graded by way of numbers, letters or symbols. The TGCSA uses a star grading system where one star represents the most basic establishment and five stars represents the luxurious establishments (TGCSA, 2016b). Registration ensures that a record of accommodation types is available and makes it easier to monitor the quality of service and products of the registered establishments. This inventory list should be administered by the government for it to be comprehensive. The registration should be inclusive of all the tourist accommodation types.

2.5.1 Purpose of accommodation classification

The purpose of accommodation classification according to Fletcher *et al.* (2013:363) is divided into standardisation, control, marketing, consumer protection, revenue generation and investment incentive. These are briefly explained in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Purposes of accommodation classification

Purpose	Description
Standardisation	To provide a system on constant service and product quality which, in turn, helps create an organised travel market distribution system for both tourists and service providers

Marketing	To inform travellers of the variety of accommodation types available at the destination.	
Consumer protection	To ensure that different types of accommodation establishments operate under the set guidelines for facilities and services.	
Revenue generation	Accommodation establishments pay certain amounts to different associations in the form of licensing fees and buying guideline books amongst other things. This generates revenue.	
Control	To provide a means of controlling the sector in general.	
Investment incentive	To give operators an opportunity/incentive to improve their facilities - for example from one star to three-star hotel.	

Source: Adapted from Fletcher et al. (2013:363)

According to Table 2.1, classification of accommodation is done to create a system by which service quality can be measured and to provide information to travellers about the accommodation products available at a destination. Classification aids consumer protection through the set rules and guidelines which service providers must operate by. Accommodation establishments pay fees to different associations responsible for the classification of accommodation establishments, which generates revenue for these associations. The classification system gives operators an opportunity to improve their service quality through grading systems and is also used as a means of controlling the accommodation sector. The different types of tourism accommodation available to tourists are discussed in the sections that follow.

2.6 TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION

The tourism industry consists of a variety of accommodation types available to tourists. This section describes these accommodation types briefly. Figure 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate the two main classifications of accommodation- commercial and non-commercial accommodation.

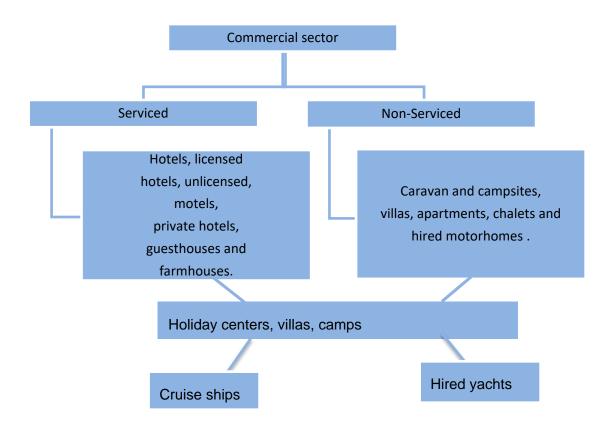


Figure 2.1: Commercial accommodation sector

Source: Bhatia (2006:178),

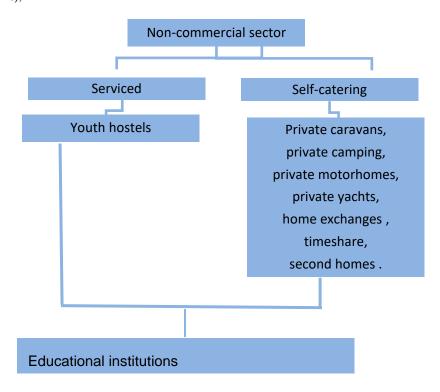


Figure 2.2: Non-commercial accommodation sector

Source: Bhatia (2006:179),

As illustrated in Figure 2.1 and 2.2, accommodation is divided into two main categories-commercial and non-commercial accommodation. The commercial accommodation sector is profit driven - thus tourists pay for the services and products offered by the commercial accommodation sector such as hotels (Haneef, 2017:37). The non-commercial accommodation sector, however, is not for making profit and includes privately owned establishments, home exchanges, youth hostels and second homes. Bhatia (2006:178-179) provides the following as a classification of commercial and non-commercial sector. Some of the accommodation types are discussed later in this chapter.

Keyser (2009:103) identifies different types of accommodation, serviced or non-serviced, paying or non-paying, primary purpose or secondary occupation, the purpose of visit, static/mobile and lastly owned/rented.

2.6.1 Serviced/Non-serviced

Page (2003:172) defines serviced accommodation as when a tourist is provided with all the necessary services such as food and beverages. An example of such an establishment is a hotel. Keyser (2009:103) adds that serviced accommodation "ranges from luxurious and extensive services found in five-star hotels to basic services such as cleaning in self-catering apartments services". Non-serviced accommodation is when the tourist is provided with certain services such as a bed only or bed and breakfast, these are usually self-catering. Examples are guesthouses, camping and caravanning.

2.6.2 Paying/Non-Paying

Paying accommodation is when tourists pay for the services rendered to them by the accommodation establishment. Non-paying accommodation relates to private homes that tourists use when visiting a destination with friends and relatives close by (Keyser, 2009:103). Couchsurfing (see www.couchsurfing.com) is also a form of non-paying accommodation.

2.6.3 Purpose of visit

Accommodation can be designed to serve a specific purpose of visit (Keyser, 2009:103). For example, holiday resorts cater for holiday tourists and are not necessarily suitable for business tourists. Some establishments have guests with different purposes of visits and provide services accordingly.

2.6.4 Static/Mobile

Most accommodation establishments cannot be moved from their location, meaning that they are fixed at one location. Some, however, can be moved to any location - for example tents,

camper homes and caravans. Robinson *et al.* (2013:162) classify this type of accommodation as campgrounds, stating that this is where motorhome and caravan lots are set up while other types of accommodation such as hotels cannot be moved.

2.6.5 Owned/Rented

Accommodation can be provided on a rental basis to tourists. Owned accommodation includes timeshare, second homes and caravans. Fletcher *et al.* (2013:355) add that timeshare or fractional ownership is a type of accommodation provided to tourists for a limited amount of time - for example one or two weeks a year.

2.6.6 Primary purpose/ Secondary occupation

There is accommodation that can be provided in units designed specifically for that purpose for example, a tourist resort is designed specifically for tourists. While other accommodation is provided in establishments whose purpose is not for tourists. Fletcher *et al.* (2013:355) further state that secondary accommodation such as university campus residences can be rented to tourists during student vacation periods.

2.7 CATEGORIES OF ACCOMMODATION

These types of accommodation can be further classified into the categories below (Keyser, 2009:104).

2.7.1 Backpackers and hostels

An accommodation facility that provides communal facilities including dormitories. Robinson *et al.* (2013:159) state that these accommodation establishments are designed to cater for low cost travellers who also get to interact with people of similar interests.

2.7.2 Bed-and-Breakfast

This is an establishment that provides a bed for the night and breakfast the following morning. It is usually in a family home and the owner lives on the premises or in a separate house which is on the property (Robinson *et al.*, 2013:160). The bathroom facilities can either be en-suite and/or private. These facilities usually offer between 1-5 rooms (Slabbert & Saayman, 2003:21) and are often found in charming places. They may be in the vicinity of great recreation or maybe are known for great food. They offer a homelier approach to lodging (Studylib, 2017:3).

2.7.3 Caravan and Camping

This facility provides ablution and toilet facilities and space for guests to bring their own accommodation (Robinson *et al.*, 2013:162) - for example tents and caravans.

2.7.4 Guesthouse

This can be an existing home, a renovated home or a building that is meant specifically for overnight accommodation purposes. It has facilities for use by guests only and it is for commercial purposes. Slabbert and Saayman (2003:21) add that this establishment offers minimum services to guests such as breakfast and should consist of not more than 16 bedrooms.

2.7.5 Country house

This establishment can be defined as a residential building designed for providing overnight accommodation and is usually located in a natural setting - for example near botanical gardens or a lake (TGCSA, 2011:1). It provides the facilities of a hotel including dinner.

2.7.6 Hotel

An establishment that provides food, beverages and, if needs be, overnight accommodation to travellers able to pay for this service (Slabbert & Saayman, 2003:17) and has a reception area where guests can check-in and out and enquire if they need information or have questions. According to Studylib (2017:2) there are different types of hotels such as full-service and limited service hotels. The following are the different types of hotels:

- Convention hotels Cater mostly for business travellers and provide facilities for the business travellers to conduct meetings in comfort.
- Luxury hotels Provide the highest levels and quality of products and services such as the rooms, technology and public spaces. These are the most expensive and cater for rich people.
- Resort hotels –Designed to cater for leisure tourists on vacation (Slabbert & Saayman, 2003:17). They have specific characteristics that attract visitors - for example Cape Town for its beaches and vast attractions.
- Extended stay hotel These hotels are designed for people who stay longer than five days at the hotel and they have kitchen, dining, and sleeping areas.
- **Limited service hotels** Designed to offer medium level of service and midrange price. Many offer a continental breakfast, swimming pools, restaurants, and room service.
- **Budget hotels** These offer service to tourists that are on a small budget and provide basic amenities such as bed and a bathroom. They have the least prices and service.

2.7.7 Lodge

This is an accommodation establishment which is located close to nature and charges an all-inclusive price to its guests, that is meals and the experience at the lodge. Apart from rooms the lodges also provide housekeeping for guests participating in a recreational activity. These range from 10-100 rooms and are located in the proximity of the recreational activity (Studylib, 2017:2).

2.7.8 Self-catering

This can be a house, cottage, villa, houseboat or a flat where facilities and equipment such as stoves and cutlery are provided to guests to cater for themselves (Fletcher *et al.*, 2013:160). The facilities should be sufficient for the number of guests to be accommodated in the establishment.

Before the 20th century, tourists used to share dormitory-like rooms where there was no privacy because there would be five or more tourists sharing the room. There were also issues of the cleanliness of these establishments. However, tourists used them because of the unavailability of alternative accommodation. The emergence of smaller establishments such as guesthouses encourages more social interaction between the host and the guests and amongst the guests themselves. A tourism experience with more social involvement is considered authentic because the tourist gains knowledge and insight about the hosts in their natural setting (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:264).

2.8 MANAGEMENT LEVELS IN COMMERCIAL ACCOMMODATION

Day-to-day operations of accommodation establishments need to be managed for profitability and sustainability. Wood (2013:5) provides the following skills necessary for effective accommodation management: **front office management** (comprising bookings, night audit and, in high-end establishments, the bell captain's office and the concierge); **housekeeping management** (aspects that have to do with the cleanliness of the establishment, with the exception of kitchens which are the responsibilities of the chef in charge); **engineering and maintenance** (comprising aspects such as repairs to equipment, renovations etc., these two can, however, be separate departments); **revenue management** (relates to financial aspects of the business) and **safety and security management** (comprises aspects that have to do with the safety of the guests and staff in the establishment).

2.9 TRENDS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Kapiki (2012:2) identifies the following current trends in the hospitality sector and the tourism industry:

2.9.1 Globalisation

Tourists are now free to move around and travel across countries. Page *et al.* (2001:135), define globalisation as "the process of internationalisation which is now associated with the growing trends towards products and tastes among consumers that are now being recognised and fulfilled by international companies". Globalisation is leading to the standardisation of the tourism product that is, for example, the level of service of an accommodation establishment in one country is the same as the one in another country. This takes away the uniqueness of a product but can be advantageous should the consumer require assurance about the level of a service in another destination (Page *et al.*, 2001:136).

2.9.2 Safety and security

Tourist safety and security is a very important aspect of tourism and should not be taken lightly by tourism establishments. Adusei (2017:2) states that the personal safety of guests should come first at an establishment. Tourists are less likely to visit places where their lives and belongings are at risk. Therefore, the establishments should have security programmes that include actions and procedures that prevent or discourage incidents. Personnel should also be trained to handle threatening situations (Singh, 2015:4).

2.9.3 Diversity

The tourism industry involves people travelling from all over the world, hence the assortment of different cultures at a destination. The industry presents an opportunity for cultural interaction between the hosts and the guests. It is important for the tourism supply side personnel to understand and appreciate different cultures to enhance interaction with different tourists. According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2011) diversity not only facilitates easy understanding of cultures but also tourist satisfaction because if tourists' cultures are understood there will be no cultural clashes between tourists and hosts. Guest satisfaction is dependent on provision of outstanding service, professionalism, creativity and paying attention to the guest (Gehrels & Suleri, 2016:61).

2.9.4 Service

Due to increased competition and changes in market consumption, service quality plays a vital role in attracting and retaining service clients (Chanoux, 2012). The degree of satisfaction

obtained from a certain level of service is very important because it can be used to identify the gaps in service delivery and aid in the identification of areas for improvement. In the accommodation sector, increased competition has forced establishments to constantly seek the competitive advantage through improved service quality.

2.9.5 Technology

Technology presents opportunities for tourism efficiency and improved guest satisfaction. Due to technology, guests can now easily access information faster and be able to make bookings from the comfort of their homes. Technology also enables effective communication for employees to deliver faster service to the guests. Technology has eliminated long queues to obtain a service. In the accommodation sector, technological advancements include devices that enable guests to check in and out and to be able to print receipts easily or obtain electronic receipts (Carter, 2017). Technology also reduces human error and enables standardisation of certain services. The latter furthermore aids establishments to be more efficient and also integrate their services (Chanoux, 2012).

2.9.6 Price and value

Price is the amount charged by the seller for a product. Price of a product can also be referred to as value for money by the buyer. Service quality and the price charged are very closely related. Value for money is defined as the degree of satisfaction from consuming a certain product compared to the amount paid for it. Kapiki (2012:5) provides five elements that increase value without lowering the price:

- Guest room design;
- Physical property;
- Interpersonal service (friendliness of staff, attentiveness, professionalism and personal recognition);
- Functional service (check-in and check-out efficiency);
- Food and beverage related services (atmosphere, sanitation, variety and good prices).

2.9.7 Changing profile of the accommodation sector

Bhatia (2006:190) adds that changes in demand and environmental issues are part of tourism accommodation trends. Changes in demand have been due to the younger market being more involved in international travel. New types of accommodation such as holiday villages have been very successful and might even be replacing traditional hotels and boarding houses. According to Bhatia (2006:190), the UNWTO conducted a study on future developments in the accommodation sector and the following were some of the findings:

- Growth in the accommodation sector will continue because of chain operators, management contracts and franchise agreements;
- Accommodation will further diversify as the need for competitively priced accommodation arises, that is budget hotels and supplementary forms of accommodation;
- Costs of operations and building will increase, and more environmental concerns will emerge, this will influence the design of accommodation;
- There will be an increase in demand for recreational facilities and the standard of accommodation facilities will continue to rise;
- Technological advancements will influence traditional construction methods as well as traditional methods of hotel operation;
- There will be luxurious hotels with advanced technological services such as broadband services (Wi-Fi);
- Low cost budget hotels with no frills;
- More voluntary chains in the form of boutique and design hotels will emerge and offer members marketing power of the chain;
- The power of the internet which has significantly changed the way consumers seek and book travel products that is online booking systems and social media marketing.

2.9.8 Environmental issues

Various environmental bodies concerned with accommodation are now examining issues such as environmental protection, energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling waste and education of staff and guests about the environment (Bhatia, 2006:191). Accommodation establishments should, therefore, incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their dayto-day operations. Fletcher et al. (2013:365-366) divide environmental issues into energy use, water use, waste disposal, fragile nature and recycling. Tourists use high volumes of water and many major tourist destinations are located in areas of potential or actual water shortage. Accommodation establishments should reuse paper from the reception, use dispensers instead of shampoo sachets in the bathrooms, reduce energy use, dispose of waste properly (especially large hotels) and protect the fragile environment in which they are located, that is to not damage the flora and fauna (Fletcher et al., 2013:365-366). Kapiki (2012:6) states that there has been an increase in development of eco-friendly types of accommodation establishments. This is a result of the growing concern for the natural resources without which tourism cannot survive. The increasing number of environmentally sensitive tourists has also influenced hotels and other establishments to go green. Failure to employ sustainable practices will result in loss of revenue.

2.9.9 Authenticity

Another trend involves tourists who seek 'authenticity', that is tourists who seek something which they perceive as 'real' (not fake) and it is a fulfilment of internal goals which moves beyond goods and services and on to experiences (Yeoman, 2008a). This is in line with Maslow's self-actualisation need in his hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Tourists want to interact with host communities on a personal level and it has been noted that most tourists aged between 55 and 64 years avoid areas and activities where there are other tourists (Yeoman, 2008b:175). Authenticity is relevant to some forms of tourism such as ethnic, history or culture tourism, which involve the representation of the past (Wang, 1999:350). Wang (1999:351) also states that there are two types of authenticity 'that of tourist experiences' and that of toured objects such as art paintings by local communities. The accommodation sector of tourism is not left out from this trend; hence some establishments have cultural interior designs and offer local cuisine in their menu. To conclude the concept of authenticity, it should have the following characteristics:

- **Ethical** "An authentic experience should be founded on the principles of community involvement, sustainability and ethical consumption" (Yeoman, 2008b:179).
- Natural Tourism should be a natural phenomenon, which is original and not modified nor
 manufactured. Natural tourism products are those which are exclusively associated with
 the destination or region. Lundup (2013:8) states that the interaction between hosts and
 tourists should not lose its true meaning.
- Honest Tourism service providers should not promise something which cannot be
 delivered or produce something tainted by falseness that will spoil the authentic
 proposition. Gisolf (2010) adds that an authentic experience creates an image of honest
 people for the tourists.
- **Simple** An authentic experience should be easy to understand (Manthiou *et al.*, 2018:39) and something in which the visitor can see the benefits of participating in such an experience. The more complex the experience, the more unrealistic it will be. As the world is full of complications, an authentic experience should be effortless and pure and consumed in a manner which does not attract attention (Yeoman, 2008b:179).
- Beautiful Authentic destinations have a beauty about them, this beauty element implies
 a sense of uniqueness of an experience to a particular place which cannot be reproduced
 elsewhere (Yeoman, 2008b:179)
- Rooted Authenticity is highly connected to the history of the community or the
 destination. In terms of tourism authenticity, tourists seek places where there is a
 connection between the present and the past (Gisolf, 2011).

Human - A human experience is something that evokes a personal connection to the
activity and is people-focused. This means that the tourist wants human contact which is
local and real. Gilmore and Pine (2007:49) stress that it is important that these experiences
have a personal and individual touch when executed.

2.10 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the role of accommodation in the tourism industry and the changing trends thereof. The accommodation sector forms part of the tourism industry as a subsector of the hospitality sector together with transport and food and beverage sectors. These sectors all play a role in providing tourists with experiences. However, accommodation is a vital part of tourism infrastructure. Tourism involves travel away from one's place of residence for at least 24 hours, hence tourists need a place to stay for the duration of their visit. Accommodation infrastructure is important to a tourist destination and the quality and quantity of the structures should suit the intended target market. Availability of accommodation encourages tourists to spend more time and money at the destination.

The accommodation sector has evolved from hosting people in inns, motels and hostels to luxurious hotels, guesthouses, lodges. Tourists have a variety of establishments to choose from, unlike in the past where they had to use the accommodation available at the time. The emergence of smaller accommodation establishments such as guesthouses and bed and breakfasts has encouraged some form of social interaction between guests and hosts. Tourist needs have shifted from seeking commodified experiences to more authentic experiences. Authenticity refers to experiences that the tourists can relate to or attach emotion to. Due to this growing trend of authenticity, Couchsurfing (an online hospitality exchange platform between strangers) has emerged and because of the nature of interactions between travellers (couchsurfers) and accommodation providers (hosts) it is considered as an authentic form of tourism accommodation (Skog, 2012:16). It is also free accommodation for those who want to spend less during holidays. This new alternative form of accommodation is discussed at length in the next chapter of this document.



COUCHSURFING AS NICHE ACCOMMODATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourist preferences have changed over the years (Pulido-Fernández & López-Sánchez, 2016:2) and this has led to developments in the lodging sector such as more tourist-oriented accommodation establishments aimed at satisfying the consumer and increasing the success of the establishment (Caan, 2014). Niche accommodation as emerged because of the increased number of tourists seeking more personalised tourism experiences (Ali-Knight, 2011:3). Therefore, tourists are drivers of change in the hospitality sector. The challenge is to cater for all the tourist needs considering their differences in culture, lifestyle, income and backgrounds. However, tourism accommodation has been developed in such a way that all tourist tastes are catered for from holiday villages that encourage longer stays and spending to basic overnight establishments at low costs (Page *et al.*, 2001:134).

Table 3.1: Types of niche accommodation

Form of journey	Purpose of travel	
	Business	Leisure
Route	Airport hotel	
	Motels	
	Inns	
	State run establishments	
Destination	Urban hotels	Farm stays
	All types of hotels for conferences and exhibitions	Gites (furnished French holiday homes)
	Executive residences	Caravans
	University accommodation	Villas
		Forest villages

Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2001)

Table 3.1 illustrates the various forms of accommodation that have been developed to meet individual and group needs. Tourists use these establishments either en route to the destination - for example inns and motels or upon arrival at the final destination such as urban hotels. The table also shows the types of accommodation that travellers use according to the

purpose of travel that is leisure and business. Business travellers usually require establishments of a formal setting with facilities such as conference rooms whilst to leisure travellers, facilities such as a swimming pool or recreational activities are very important.

A current trend in tourism is that tourists seek a more personalised tourism experience rather than a generic service (Duminy, 2016). The 'travel like a local' trend has gained popularity because tourists want to connect with the destination and its locals. As a result, quite a number of online hospitality networks have developed. These networks form part of the sharing economy - for example Airbnb, Vacation Rental By Owner (VRBO) and Couchsurfing (Martucci, 2014). Airbnb is an online platform where ordinary people rent out their homes as tourist accommodation (Guttentag, 2015). VRBO is also an online hospitality exchange platform similar to Airbnb which offers travellers the opportunity to book homes as tourism accommodation for a price cheaper than traditional hotels (VRBO, 2017:internet). Couchsurfing takes the ideas of Airbnb and VRBO a step further by providing a platform for travellers to access free accommodation from hosts registered on the Couchsurfing website.

3.2 WHAT IS COUCHSURFING?

Due to the 'authentic experience' trend, a new type of niche accommodation known as Couchsurfing has emerged. Couchsurfing is an international online hospitality exchange network that connects like-minded travellers from places all over the world (Liu, 2012:2). In this study, the accommodation providers are referred to as 'hosts' and travellers as 'couchsurfers'. The terms travellers and couchsurfers will be used interchangeably. Like-minded travellers come together for cultural exchange; friendship and learning experiences. Couchsurfing facilitates encounters between strangers that would otherwise never have happened. Such travellers exchange hospitality with one another, and this exchange is considered a unique, rich form of cultural exchange interaction. Since the travellers go to the hosts, this gives the travellers an opportunity to experience different cultures in the comfort of the hosts' homes (Couchsurfing, 2016a). Skog (2012:1) also defines Couchsurfing as an online hospitality exchange between complete strangers in the form of free accommodation, company and a wide range of activities and social gatherings while travelling. Couchsurfing is for people of all age groups, single or married and even families with children.

Zgolli and Zaiem (2018:132) classify Couchsurfing as "integrated tourism" which connects hosts and guests together through collaborative consumption. Characteristics of collaborative consumption are summarized as follows (Zgolli & Zaiem, 2018:132):

- When the tourist experience becomes about more than just seeing places but creating
 memories and attaching emotions to these experiences. Chen (2018) goes further to
 say that Couchsurfing has become a stylish way of traveling i.e a lifestyle of sorts.
- The need to make social ties- guests seek to socialize with the host and other locals as much as possible and derive pleasure from sharing experiences.
- The research for entertainment through human encounter- locals take part in welcoming tourists through offering guided tours and organizing events. This can be entertaining for the guest to experience such with the locals.

3.3 WHY COUCHSURFING?

The primary purpose of Couchsurfing is not for profit or tangible benefits, but to provide a platform for cultural exchange and understanding between people of different characteristics such as race, tribe, economic backgrounds, occupation and ethnicity (Skog, 2012:1, Couchsurfing, 2016b). In 1999, Casey Fenton scored a cheap ticket to Iceland, but needed a place to stay. He sent an e-mail to more than 1,500 students in Reykjavik asking for a place to stay--even on someone's couch. The result was a new network of friends who offered to show him the "real" Reykjavik. After spending a weekend immersed in the culture of the area, Fenton walked away with disdain for the typical sanitized tourist experience--and an idea for a new non-profit" (Couchsurfing, 2017b). In 2004 he then went on to solicit the help of his former colleagues to develop Couchsurfing- Daniel Hoffer, Sebastian Le Tuan and Leonardo Bassani da Silveira in 2004 (Couchsurfing, 2016b).

Couchsurfing is also referred to as a network hospitality which is defined as a platform which allows hosts and guests to provide accommodation and other services in their own terms through the use of the internet (Yi & Bouchon, 2017:196). Travellers needs are not the same hence network hospitality platforms are marketed as platforms for tourists who seek different experiences. Couchsurfing is a part of the accommodation sector because the hosts provide free lodging services to the travellers and this leads to reduced costs of travel (Couchsurfing, 2016a). As a result of the reduced cost of the journey, the tourists are most likely to spend more time at the destination and also spend on tourism related products (Harcombe, 2015:12). Couchsurfing is reliant on technological advancements such as the internet, hence developments in this regard aided the existence of Couchsurfing and other peer-to-peer networks.

Hounder (2009:3) illustrates Couchsurfing's growth in terms of users since its inception- from 6000 users in 2004 and weekly sign ups of a 100 members to 10000-13000 sign ups in 2009. This growth has been attributed to media coverage and word of mouth by the users. The

hospitality platform has grown tremendously since its inception as evidenced by 14 million users of the site (Couchsurfing, 2017b)

3.4 HOW DOES COUCHSURFING WORK?

Couchsurfing is a member-based community where each member has an online profile created on the Couchsurfing website which shows their details such as name, surname, hobbies, movies, books and interests. The profiles on Couchsurfing are more detailed than other social networks such as Twitter and Instagram and members disclose as much personal information as they want to share with others (Bogdan, 2017). The aim of Couchsurfing is to bring together people from all walks of life to share their culture experiences and general views about life (Skog, 2012:15). The Couchsurfing platform connects travellers with locals who offer accommodation and other services such as tour guiding or providing information about culture and other activities in the area free of charge. Because these encounters develop between strangers at no cost, it is not only about the provision of tourism services but travelling now becomes a social experience (Dén-Nagy & Király, 2014:33).

The Couchsurfing community also engages in event planning; that is the social gatherings organised by the members to get to know each other better (Dén-Nagy & Király, 2014:33). Bradbury (2013:3) identifies two roles within Couchsurfing, the host - a person who opens their home to a stranger and the 'surfer' who is visiting the host's city and will be a guest for the duration of their trip. Some members make it clear that their couch is available, and they want to host travellers while others may just be open to getting a cup of coffee or attending a form of gathering and not necessarily offering accommodation. Therefore, it is evident that not all members actively participate in accommodation provision, but since Couchsurfing is a platform for hospitality exchange, members engage in social interaction if they are unable to host or surf at the time (Bradbury, 2013:4; Bogdan, 2017). Bogdan (2017) states that the more similarities there are between a guest and the host the more likely that the Couchsurfing experience is beneficial and valuable the stay will be for both the guest and the host. This phenomenon is heavily dependent on information technology and the internet; hence it is not limited to any specific group of people (Chen, 2011:280). Therefore, anyone with access to the website can participate. These encounters develop between strangers which then raises concerns on issues of safety and trust. The network currently has 12 million members in 200 000 cities and hosts more than 550 000 events. The organisation supports 4 million couchsurfers, 400 000 hosts and 100 000 events annually (Couchsurfing, 2016b). From this information, it is evident that Couchsurfing is an extensive online network. The next section discusses the different aspects of Couchsurfing in detail.

3.5 THE SYSTEM OF RECIPROCITY

As mentioned in the definitions of Couchsurfing, there is no monetary benefit to the hosts for providing accommodation to the travellers. Therefore, it brings to light the system of reciprocity. Couchsurfing is regarded as a reciprocity system whereby hospitalities, friendships, cultures and experiences are exchanged among different cultures (Chen, 2011:282). There is no attempt by the guest to compensate the host in return for free accommodation. As a policy, Couchsurfing encourages members to exchange gifts as a reminder of friendships created during the Couchsurfing experience (Bogdan, 2017). Reciprocity is based on the threefold obligation; the requirement to give, the obligation to receive and the duty to give back (Chen, 2011:282). This threefold obligation is not a written rule but is rather based on a moral standing. Therefore, one is not obliged to carry it out but when someone does something good or gives there is a feeling of gratitude from the receiver which leads them to give back as a way of showing their appreciation. Chen (2012:282) states that for the reciprocity system to work, motivations of reciprocity are also important. There is no single approach to assessing motivation for reciprocity but the utilitarianism and antiutilitarianism approaches have been identified. In the utilitarianism approach, the recipient's expectations are the primary concern.

"The anti-utilitarian approach emphasises how recipients conjecture and respond to others' needs and expectations to explore the altruistic aspect in reciprocity."

Chen (2012:282).

Geiger and Germelmann (2015a:534) state that both monetary and material compensations pave the way for non-material compensations. Intangible compensation includes knowledge sharing and traditional meals cooked by the couchsurfer(s). These facilitate a joint experience. Such acts are considered more valuable than monetary or material compensations. The rewards for sharing can be in the form of psychological and social benefits (Celata *et al.*, 2017:352).

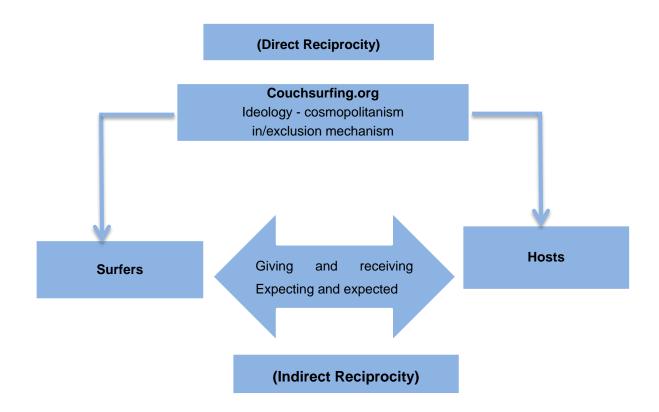


Figure 3.1: Reciprocity in Couchsurfing

Source: Chen (2012:284)

Figure 3.1 illustrates that the two types of reciprocity between hosts and couchsurfers can be direct and indirect. Direct reciprocity is when there are repeated interactions between two individuals while indirect reciprocity is when the repeated interactions are within a group. Celata et al. (2017:351) add that indirect reciprocity is when-for example a host provides accommodation to a surfer in the hope that the surfer will in turn do the same for others seeking accommodation. Couchsurfing has the indirect reciprocity system because the exchange of hospitality is not limited to two individuals but ranges across a group of members. Under indirect reciprocity hosts and couchsurfers share the same ideas on life and value which is cosmopolitanism and they expect to easily find someone who shares the same values as they do to host them (Chen, 2012:284). The surfer can show appreciation to the host by, for example, sharing their culture with the host or through any other good acts. In a country as diverse as South Africa (Meier & Hartell, 2009:180), the reciprocity system will be ideal because couchsurfers and hosts can share culture, food and languages as a way of appreciation to the host or surfer.

3.6 COUCHSURFING AND AUTHENTICITY

The need to standardise tourism products has led to commodification and staged authenticity (Can *et al.*, 2017:268). Modern day tourists seek that which is authentic - for example the host's real life, not the staged experience they provide. These types of tourists consider Couchsurfing a more authentic experience than the standard commercial package tours (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:262). Because the surfer lives in the host's home, they have insight into the host's daily life with close contact and interaction. Couchsurfing not only provides a platform for hospitality exchange or provision of free accommodation but also an opportunity for cross-cultural interaction between hosts and locals (Chen, 2012:280).

Services in Couchsurfing include accommodation and also some hosts may even be tour guides and show the couchsurfers around the area in which the accommodation is located, teach them the local culture amongst other activities which are all provided at no cost to the host (Chen, 2018:116). Therefore, tourists visit places beyond the official attractions, eat in places where locals eat and, as a result, their spending includes consumption of products outside the scope of the average visitor (Steyaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012:262).

A study by Casey (2012:24) states that the problem with authenticity is that it is an ambiguous incorrectly defined concept used as a tangible marker of value. Casey (2012:25) noted that 'when the interviewees spoke of Couchsurfing regarding authenticity, it was from the perspective of guests, of getting (as opposed to giving) a local perspective'. Authenticity, therefore, seems more relevant to the guest than the host, as they are the seekers of the local experience. When tourists question the authenticity of a product or service they are not questioning its origins but the lack of emotional connection to it (Casey, 2012:26). Horolets (2015:276) brings to light that the search for authenticity can lead to stereotypes of a guest or even the host's culture for example finding African cuisine in the European world may lead to the assumption that the food is not authentic.

3.7 TRUST IN COUCHSURFING

Due to the virtual nature of initial Couchsurfing interactions, there is a need to establish trust among the members. Luo and Zhang (2016:108) state that:

- Trust exists in situations where there is uncertainty;
- Trust comprises expectations;
- The degree of trust is directly related to the magnitude of these expectations;
- The strength of the trust is related to the confidence;

 Trust requires mutual understanding or agreements and trust likely results in a good outcome for all parties involved.

Members who have not met face-to-face with other members have a lower sense of belonging to the community than those who have (Rosen *et al.*, 2011:990). Liu (2012:29) adds that, apart from being a social networking site, Couchsurfing is also a system where people's feedback (known as "references" in Couchsurfing) from previous experiences can be used to form an opinion regarding one member's trustworthiness for other community members (Celata, *et al.*, 2017:352). The reputation system is critical in fostering trust in Couchsurfing, and it involves references, vouching and physical verification which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter (Lauterbach *et al.*, 2009). 'In Couchsurfing, placing trust relates to the trust of the site in general, trusting the person contacted (host/surfer), or merely the faith in the single activity they plan on engaging in together' (Liu, 2012:30).

3.8 BENEFITS OF COUCHSURFING

This form of accommodation has advantages to its users, and these will be discussed briefly in this section.

- Cost- Accommodation is one of the most significant costs of travel. Therefore, Couchsurfing provides a means to travel to exotic or expensive destinations that travellers would otherwise not be able to afford. Although there are other costs to consider such as transport and food, Couchsurfing reduces the overall cost of travel significantly (Jackson, 2018). Due to such hospitality networks, travellers not only stay at different destinations at no cost but also save that money and spend it on other activities or even travel more often (Zaki, 2015:46). It therefore contributes positively to the economy of the destination.
- Meeting new people- Couchsurfing involves staying with local residents. Hence the traveller has the opportunity to make friends with local residents. Exposure to the local culture and people is considered as a more authentic form of travel experience. Before going to the host's home, the surfer may choose to share a meal and conversations with their host and the locals thus getting to know the host better (Jackson, 2018). Couchsurfing provides a platform to those who like to travel solo and later find new company or locals when they reach their new destination. This way they are flexible to organise and plan their trip according to their desires and not be liable to anyone (Zaki, 2015:46).
- Restores a sense of pride- Having complete strangers visit your country fosters a sense
 of pride in the destination. Couchsurfing is even better. These people stay in the host's
 home, and the host gets to show them around the city which gives them pride in their
 culture and resources (Nz Muse, 2013).

- Promotes cultural diversity- Interaction between people from different cultures promotes
 the understanding of diversity and leads to tolerance and understanding of other cultures
 (Williams, 1994).
- **Self-development-** According to Zaki (2015:46), Couchsurfing helps to improve self-development skills for example, it encourages risk taking when meeting with total strangers and also social interaction with others, being more open in the case of introverts.
- Connects like-minded people- When members create their online profiles they include details about what they like and what they do not like, hence they get requests from people with similarities to them (Zaki, 2015:46).

3.9 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF COUCHSURFING

The following section examines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Couchsurfing.

Table 3.2: SWOT analysis of Couchsurfing

Strengths	Weaknesses	
 Connects people from all walks of life Facilitates better cultural understanding, lifestyles and tolerance Economically and environmentally sustainable Free accommodation 	 No guarantee of safety No guarantee that people exercise caution when choosing a host or accepting a surfer People are unpredictable therefore intentions can never be truly known 	
Opportunities	Threats	
 Increase in numbers means more variety of people and destinations Facilitates friendships across international borders More budget airlines to curb the high cost of travel 	 People being untrustworthy and taking advantage of the system Use to suit other needs such as dating Increased risk with increased numbers Uneasiness of staying with a stranger 	

Source: Adapted from Skog (2012:100)

Table 3.2 outlines the strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses of Couchsurfing as stated by Skog (2012:100). It is a network that connects people from all over the world to come together and share hospitality, thereby fostering cultural understanding, lifestyles and tolerance of that which is considered different from normal life. Encouraging more members to join increases the variety of people, culture and destinations to visit and leads to the development of international ties through friendship. The network, however, is not without fault there is no guarantee of 100% safety or that people are careful when choosing couchsurfers and hosts. Lastly one can never truly know what the host/surfer's intentions may be. The purpose of Couchsurfing is to connect like-minded people and foster understanding (Rosen *et al.*, 2011:983) but other people might only be members because of the free accommodation;

hoping to find love using Couchsurfing as a dating site and when members increase so does the risk.

3.10 SAFETY WHILE COUCHSURFING

While travelling, people want to feel safe. If they feel unsafe they tend to change their plans to destinations where they feel more secure and these factors have a significant impact on the destinations that people choose (Patterson, 2006:44). Buhalis and Costa (2006:26, 67) state that trust is a key factor in Couchsurfing and the media has the power of influencing the image that people get of a destination and the media usually magnifies the situation, thus making couchsurfers feel more uneasy. According to Liu (2012:95), the core values and activities of Couchsurfing are based on the interactions of members.

Members build trust based on online presentation (Dén-Nagy & Király, 2014:39) which is risky because of the possibility of members being untruthful. Couchsurfers should, therefore, be extra vigilant when engaging with other members. When the temptation to engage in Couchsurfing activities is high, couchsurfers are more likely to take the risk and disregard the element of the trustworthiness of the other person (Liu, 2012:96). For some members, trust is the aspect that they care about least; all they care about is free accommodation which means the ability to travel to places they would otherwise not have visited due to financial constraints (Liu, 2012:96). Women are more likely than men to be concerned about personal safety while the hosts would be concerned about the safety of their belongings.

Skog (2012:35) identifies the following measures by the Couchsurfing website to ensure safety and foster trust amongst members:

- Posting a reference- This is a safety feature that all members can use and write. It is easier to stay with someone who has hosted other people before and has positive references. The reference can be based either on face-to-face encounters or the online encounters and it appears on members' profile pages both the one it is meant for and the one leaving it. This process, however, is not mandatory but is highly recommended. Toeniskoetter (2013:32) states that the referencing system is essential in creating trust among the users. There are three types of reference; positive, neutral and negative. The references are based on the Couchsurfing member's experience. Therefore, a negative reference does not necessarily mean someone is a bad couchsurfer, but the circumstances leading to the reference might be the negative ones.
- Verification process- According to Couchsurfing (2016c) it is a process used to check
 whether members (hosts and couchsurfers) are truly whom they say they are and to
 confirm whether they live at the registered address. Members who go through the

verification process pay \$60.00 (Couchsurfing, 2016d) and, in turn, receive a postcard at their registered postal address which contains a code that they enter on the Couchsurfing website (Couchsurfing, 2016c). Getting verified makes other members keener to host you or to be hosted by you. The verification fee is a once off fee regardless of how many times you change your address. This fee is used for running the website since it is a non-profit organisation and helps Couchsurfing facilitate free accommodation (Couchsurfing, 2016c). Verified members receive special privileges such as being able to mark your couch available for last minute couchsurfers. Members can also provide their address and phone number as a way of verification. This process is entirely optional.

- Vouching- Travellers and hosts tend to be cautious. Vouching was a way for a member to say they trust you. Vouching identifies members who are active and trustworthy through other members' eyes. This process was regarded as an honour because it shows how much the voucher trusts you. Members needed at least three people to vouch for them before they could vouch for others (Teng et al., 2010:3). Teng et al. (2010:3) further elaborate that members should only vouch for the people they have met in person and know well enough to deem them trustworthy. Although the system has since been discarded, members who received vouches in the past would still have 'vouch badges'.
- Ambassadors- these active members of Couchsurfing not only host travellers but volunteer to keep the community together. They welcome the new members and share information about the website, they schedule meetings and organise events (Couchsurfing, 2017c). On the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section of the Couchsurfing website ambassadors also share their answers.

3.10.1 Safety guidelines for Couchsurfing

The following safety basics and tips were obtained directly from the Couchsurfing website (www.couchsurfing.com) and these are applicable to both couchsurfers and hosts (Couchsurfing, 2017d):

- Review profiles and references carefully- Both couchsurfers and hosts should take the
 time to review member profiles carefully. Read what members say about themselves and
 what other members have said about them. If a member is uncomfortable they should
 move on to the next profile.
- Trust your instincts- If a person, situation or profile seems unsafe for any reason, move
 on. There should be clarity on boundaries. Members should communicate clearly with
 others and take care of themselves. If staying alone with a member of the opposite sex is
 uncomfortable, consider staying with families or with someone of the same gender.

- Have a backup plan- If something does not work out with the host, or if they
 misrepresented themselves or their home, the surfer should make sure they have an
 alternate place to stay. They should identify the nearest hostel or hotel or have a backup
 host in place before they go.
- Be informed about the culture of where you are travelling- Conduct research about
 the destination before travel; be sure to be aware of cultural and religious differences,
 sensitivities, and general safety recommendations for each place that is visited. Gender
 roles and expectations can differ wildly.
- Communicate through Couchsurfing- Use the Couch Request and Messaging systems within the website to communicate. Confirming trips and keeping all communication on Couchsurfing helps the Trust and Safety team to identify issues and react quickly.
- **Know your limits-** Couchsurfing users should not engage in activities that may put their lives at the mercy of others for example becoming too intoxicated.
- Report adverse experiences- When members have negative experiences they should report these to the Trust and Safety team immediately to ensure their safety and that of others. Reporting such experiences may prevent other members from having the same experience.
- Do homework- Travellers should look for hosts or couchsurfers whose profiles are complete with a real name, clear photos, and detailed descriptions of themselves and, if applicable, their couches. Read reviews of hosts or travellers to get a sense of others' experiences.
- **Communicate-** When using Couchsurfing, members should ask questions about whatever concerns they might have rather than making assumptions. This prevents misunderstandings between the hosts and couchsurfers.

During host/surf experience

- Upon meeting, spend some time getting to know the host or surfer.
- Get to know the rules of the house.
- Should an uncomfortable situation with your surfer/host arise, address the situation politely and directly to see if you can find a resolution.
- In case of any situation where there are safety concerns, immediate danger, the
 member should contact the local authorities such as police or emergency services right
 away. Once the member is no longer in danger, the incident should be reported to the
 Trust and Safety team. All reports are confidential.

3.11 POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS ON TOURISM

From the previous information presented, it is evident that Couchsurfing reduces the cost of travel and facilitates cultural understanding between strangers. Lower cost of travel means that there would be an increase in tourism-related activities other than accommodation which means more income for the area where the tourist is present. It is regarded as a more authentic form of travel, hence more tourists are likely to use it to connect with the locals and promote diversity. According to Sicot (2013), traditional hostels are becoming less attractive to budget travellers. Muller (2010) argues that the hostel sector is, however, not threatened by Couchsurfing at all and have introduced a new service known as the "flash-packer" which targets people who want to travel later in life when they have more disposable income. Some tourists will always want formal accommodation as it offers more guarantees of safety, security and satisfactory service.

3.12 PREVIOUS STUDIES AND FINDINGS ON COUCHSURFING

This section examines previous studies that have been carried out by various authors on Couchsurfing. The focus and findings of the previous studies are presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Previous studies on Couchsurfing

Focus of studies	Author	Findings
Couchsurfing as a travel style	Chen (2018)	 Instead of just a tourist experience, Couchsurfers have a local experience, experience the host's everyday life in their living space as opposed to general mass tourists. Couchsurfers have different behaviours with hosts and when they are alone or when they use commercial accommodation. After online interaction with hosts, only suffers who fit the host's 'ideal' surfer are selected for offline interaction (hosting, meet ups)
Keys to sustainable hospitality exchange (homogeneity, reciprocity and trust)	Liu <i>et al.</i> (2016)	 Hosts and couchsurfers work together to complete the Couchsurfing experience. Generalised reciprocity keeps flowing amongst members. Couchsurfing members are people who share similar interests and travel motivations.

		Members rely on
		community evaluation systems such as references and vouching to build trust.
		 Homogeneity, reciprocity and trust are of vital importance for the success of Couchsurfing experiences.
Hosts understanding of sharing and motivations to host	Geiger and Germelmann (2015b)	• Hosts feel disappointed and, in some cases, exploited when their expectations are not met by the surfer - for example not being able to spend quality time with the surfer.
		 Reciprocity is an integral part of Couchsurfing. Although there is no monetary exchange involved, there is some form of intangible interpersonal exchange in return for hosting.
Hospitality exchange: Couchsurfing	Zaki (2015)	 Most participants became aware of Couchsurfing through their friends.
		Couchsurfing was an excellent way to meet new people.
		Couchsurfing improved self-development skills.
Motivations of Couchsurfing and its effect on satisfaction	Zgolli and Zaiem (2018)	The study identified six motivations for Couchsurfing:
with the stay.		Financial reasons. Cultural averagiones
		Cultural experience.The need for social
		interaction.
		 Professional reasons.
		 Emotional entertainment.
		Social responsibility.
Identifying the motivations for couchsurfers.	Decrop and Degroote (2014) as cited by Zgolli and Zaiem (2018)	Motivations for participation in Couchsurfing were- socialising, learning, accomplishment and changing the world, environmental preservation and support of locals.
An explanation for Couchsurfing's success	Dén-Nagy and Király (2014)	Trust should play a big role as a personality trait in Couchsurfing engagements. Members build trust based only on online information.
		 Being a surfer is riskier than being host because they are in a foreign country with no

	T	I be all the delice of the second
		local knowledge putting them at the 'mercy' of the host. • Members did not
		understand the other trust building mechanisms (verification and vouching) but regarded references as the most important.
Overcoming safety, trust, and gender concerns in the Couchsurfing community	Toeniskoetter (2013)	The success of Couchsurfing relies on keeping users safe and creating feelings of trust between members, which is actualised through the security features on the website.
Analysing familiarity ad ways of Couchsurfing marketing as a new tourist form amongst students in Croatia.	Juric <i>et al.</i> (2012)	The motivations for participating in Couchsurfing were- free accommodation, discovering new cultures and the search for new friendships.
Analysis of motivation, presentation and trust through Couchsurfing.	Liu (2012)	 People have different motivations for engaging in Couchsurfing such as financial reasons, cultural exchange and openness towards others. Some do not care about risks if they get free accommodation.
		Women were more concerned about personal safety than men.
Development of planned encounters between strangers.	Bialski (2012)	• Strangers interact on couchsurfing.org and then engage in face to face encounters.
		• It is inevitable for strangers not to meet and interact but technologies such as couchsurfing.org have made it possible or strangers to plan these encounters.
Couchsurfing as a choice for travellers	Skog (2012)	Participants who were unaware of Couchsurfing considered it to be risky but if they were to try it they would want to travel with friends. They had a positive
		They had a positive attitude even though they did not want to join.
		Those aware of it were open minded people willing to tell others about it.
		 Members had been members for two to four years, and most of them are active.

Belonging and trust in online networks	Rosen <i>et al.</i> (2011)	 Travellers who have not met face to face feel a lesser sense of belonging. Couchsurfing users prefer personal emails rather than group emails. Trust plays a crucial
Local practice of a global concept	Chen (2012)	role in virtual societies. • Different cultures interpret Couchsurfing differently and therefore differ in implementation. • Couchsurfing is a reciprocal system based on moral grounds, i.e. no written laws or rules. • Motivations for
		participation in Couchsurfing were cultural exchange and the need for long term friendships.
Authenticity of Couchsurfing	Steylaerts and Dubhghaill (2012)	• Tourists view Couchsurfing as a more authentic form of travel.
		 Tourists making use of Couchsurfing make use of local facilities rather than those designated for tourists.
		Couchsurfers travel to areas not considered as official attractions.
		Couchsurfing has led to the developments of websites such as 'Like a Local'.
Motivations for hosting Couchsurfers	Pietilä (2011)	Social: the need to meet new people
		Cultural: to exchange cultures with travellers
		Community: hosts to build the community, make the world better
		 Self-development: hosts to learn languages
Trust in an online hospitality network	Tran (2010)	Members on Couchsurfing make trust decisions based on the amount of information provided on the profiles. References seem to play a significant role in making trust decisions.
		Members trust the information provided online by other members because offline interactions and references may reveal discrepancies if members lie.

		Members indicated that there is more perceived risk in offline interactions than in online interactions because of the trust building mechanisms on the Couchsurfing site. Strategies to minimise risk include control, self-confidence, comparison and social networking sites.
Reputation and reciprocity on couchsurfing.com	Lauterbach et al. (2009)	 Couchsurfing members act as both hosts and couchsurfers (generalised reciprocity is when A hosts B but B may host C in return for being hosted by A). Reciprocity is enabled by the vouching system which is dependent on: direct interaction between members, degree of friendship, overall hosting or surfing experience and how the members met. High rate of vouching was between members living in cities with more Couchsurfing meetings and some members feel that these vouches are given too freely thus

(Author's own compilation)

From Table 3.3 it can be concluded that Couchsurfing does provide a platform for cultural exchange and is also considered an authentic form of travel (Steylaerts & Dubhghaill, 2012). The authenticity of this platform can be attributed to the close interaction between guest, hosts and other locals at the destination, hence the traveller experiences the local life not they typical 'tourist' experience. Chen (2012) states that Couchsurfing is a two-way system which is based on moral grounds; there are no written rules to enforce this system. In this system there is no monetary compensation for provision of accommodation but gifts and culture are exchanged instead of money. Geiger and Germelmann (2015b) concur with Chen (2012)'s two-way system for Couchsurfing, stating that reciprocity is an important part of Couchsurfing and the exchange between host and surfer in most cases is not monetary. Lauternbach *et al.* (2009) elaborate further on reciprocity stating that there is generalised reciprocity amongst members, a surfer may decide to host another member in return for being hosted. The guests and host build relationships that go beyond the Couchsurfing platform and this is facilitated by the system of reciprocity. As stated by Lauterbach *et al.* (2009), the vouching system is an integral part of reciprocity, however some members feel that the vouches are given too freely,

therefore making some members seem more trustworthy than they really are. The vouching system may therefore be less important when building trust amongst members.

Pietilä (2011) and Zaki (2015) agree that Couchsurfing facilitates self-development through learning new languages, cultures and an open-minded view of the world. Rosen *et al.* (2011) examined the sense of belonging and trust in online networks. The findings were that travellers who have not met face to face have a lesser sense of belonging and that Couchsurfing members prefer personalised emails rather than group emails. Personalised messages help in facilitating the building of trust and the member feels that they are not just a means to a free couch. Due to the virtual nature of Couchsurfing, Rosen *et al.* (2011) further state that trust plays a vital role during the encounters between strangers. Tran (2010) focuses on the trust-based decision-making process by members stating that members carefully examine each other's profiles and trust this information because of the possible offline interaction which might reveal lies told by members. Skog (2012) examined Couchsurfing as a choice for travellers, stating that people who were not aware of Couchsurfing considered the platform to be risky but would participate with friends. Participating with friends can evoke a sense of safety for the participants. Chen (2018) also adds that the hosts hold the ultimate power as accommodation providers to shape the guest's Couchsurfing experience.

Liu et al. (2016) identify three vital aspects of sustainable Couchsurfing experiences. These are homogeneity, reciprocity and trust, stating that hosts and guests work together to complete Couchsurfing experiences. Couchsurfing is based on the premise of connecting like-minded people to share accommodation and culture hence the importance of homogeneity, reciprocity and trust. Couchsurfing members share similar interests and rely on evaluation systems such as references to build trust. Toeniskoetter (2013) concurs with the findings of Liu et al. (2016), stating that trust is an important aspect for the success of Couchsurfing and adds that making members feel safe is important as well. Zaki (2015) and Bialski (2012) focus on what Couchsurfing entails as a hospitality exchange network. Bialski (2012) states that it is inevitable for strangers to meet and interact but platforms such as Couchsurfing make it possible to plan such encounters. The encounters therefore cease to become a coincidence but rather a gradual process which involves initial communication via the website and finally offline interactions upon hosting or being hosted.

Zaki (2015) found that participants mostly became aware of Couchsurfing through friends. It can therefore be concluded that Couchsurfing marketing is more word-of-mouth than mainstream media such as television and radio. Chen (2018) illustrates how offline and online performances, mutual selection, reputation systems, 'backstage' behaviour and the site organiser's skills are all vital in transforming Couchsurfing into an authentic and personalised

traveling style. Some hosts explicitly state the rules, expectation and guidelines they use in guest selection making it clear that Couchsurfing is not just about free accommodation (Chen, 2018). Such sentiments may lead guests' online performance to fit into the hosts' idea of an ideal guest, therefore hiding their true self to get free accommodation. Hence some offline interactions may not be as pleasant as the host or guest had hoped. Couchsurfers have a more authentic personalised tourist experience compared to mass tourists.

Pietilä (2011), Hounder (2009), Chen (2012), Zgolli and Zaiem (2018), Juric et al. (2012) and Liu (2012) examined the motivations for hosting travellers which is one of the main objectives of this study to understand the reasons for partaking in this global online community. Pietilä (2011) found four motivations; the need to meet new people (social), to exchange culture (cultural), to build the community and make the world a better place (community) and, lastly, the need to learn new languages and other things (self-development). Hounder (2009) and Chen (2012) also concur with Pietilä (2011)'s cultural and social motivations for engaging in Couchsurfing stating that meeting new people, the need for long term friendships/relations and cultural exchange were primary reasons for the hosts, while monetary reasons such as reducing costs were secondary. Juric et al. (2012) add openness towards others as a motivation for engaging in Couchsurfing.

Decrop and Degroote (2014) as cited by Zgolli and Zaiem (2018) identified financial reasons (Liu, 2012), cultural experience, the need for social interaction, professional reasons, emotional entertainment and social responsibility as motivations for engaging in Couchsurfing. Being around people of similar interests is emotionally fulfilling and some hosts participate for work reasons such as translation services, finding people who fit a certain profile for job opportunities. The findings suggest that engaging in Couchsurfing is about social interaction with new people so as to gain a fulfilling experience other than monetary compensation for the host, while the guest obtains a genuine service from the host for free. While Zaki (2015) pointed out that hosts have different motivations for engaging in Couchsurfing, stating that some engage in Couchsurfing for the free accommodation and have no regard for the risks and that women were more concerned about personal safety compared to their male counterparts. The studies presented in Table 3.3 and others were used to achieve objective 1 and 2 of this study which was to conduct a literature review. Although Zgolli and Zaiem (2018), Hounder (2009), Juric et al. (2012), Liu (2012, Chen (2012) Pietilä (2011) and Liu (2012) focus on motivations/reasons for hosting travellers through Couchsurfing, the understanding as to why South Africans take part in this trend is unknown.

3.13 COUCHSURFING IN SOUTH AFRICA

On 21 October 2017, there were 30 412 Couchsurfing hosts in South Africa of which only 1 890 hosts were active (Couchsurfing.com). The term 'active', refers to those who had logged in on Couchsurfing in the past month. The reasons why South Africa has fewer individuals who regularly make use of Couchsurfing, compared to other countries, is unknown. One possible reason for the lower number of active hosts may be the high crime rate in South Africa. Hosts and couchsurfers might not feel safe to accept strangers into their lives and homes. Over 2 million crimes are reported each year and a total of over 26 million crimes have been committed in South Africa since 2005 (CrimeStatsSA, 2015:internet).

Despite the alarming rate of reported crimes mentioned, there are South African hosts who participate in Couchsurfing while fully aware that their safety and that of the surfer is not guaranteed. Couchsurfing in more developed countries is more popular and more wildly used, but South Africa has the advantage of being diverse regarding to culture, and cultural exchange is one of the main reasons for Couchsurfing (Tran, 2009:4). Tourism is an important contributor to the South African economy, evidenced by industry's positive contribution to employment and GDP (Ramawela, 2017). The tourism industry is less likely to be affected by local issues and has potential for rapid growth and uplifting society, provided that visitor experience is not affected negatively (Ramawela, 2017). Therefore, Couchsurfing is important as an accommodation provider to tourism. It is very important to focus on South African hosts because, to the researcher's knowledge, previous studies have focused on other perspectives but not on the South African perspective. It is especially important to understand the Couchsurfing hosts' perspective as they are the people who allow other people ('strangers') to stay at their homes at no fee which, in turn, might promote travel and greater spending in other tourism sectors such as attractions.

3.14 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to examine Couchsurfing as a form of accommodation in tourism as well as the aspects involved in this platform. Couchsurfing is not based on a new concept, provision of hospitality at no cost dates to as early as the Before the Common Era (BCE) time. However, in this modern time it is interesting to examine Couchsurfing as a platform for hospitality provision. Couchsurfing is an online hospitality exchange platform between travellers and locals. The main purpose of Couchsurfing, apart from free accommodation, is to foster cultural exchange amongst members which would possibly lead to tolerance. Hosts play a significant role in Couchsurfing by being the providers of free accommodation. Trust is a vital component of Couchsurfing because of the virtual nature of the platform and there are several mechanisms employed by the platform to foster trust

amongst members. Hosts build trust with the guest prior, during and sometimes after hosting. The first interaction is online on the Couchsurfing website, then the members can decide if they want to interact offline. The hosts and guests build trusts through references, verification and vouching.

There is no monetary exchange involved but members can show gratitude in other ways such as learning or teaching culture and cooking food from your home country for the host/guest. Couchsurfing is also based on a system of reciprocity and is also considered an authentic form of travel. Guests get to experience the destination from the locals' point of view and to visit attractions which are not visited by mass tourists. For most members, references are the most important aspect when vetting a potential host or guest while systems such as vouching and verification are considered less important. Couchsurfing is not only about providing accommodation but members who are unable to provide accommodation can attend Couchsurfing events or meetups just to get to know the guests and show them around the destination. Hosts and guests must work together to ensure the sustainability of Couchsurfing. Benefits of Couchsurfing include, but are not limited to, cheaper travel, learning new cultures and meeting new people. The reasons that hosts provide accommodation services to couchsurfers at no fee are investigated in the empirical chapter. Also, approaches to safety as well as differences among South African and international Couchsurfing hosts are examined



RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL SURVEY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's research focuses on the tourism accommodation sector, the Couchsurfing phenomenon to be precise. Couchsurfing provides a platform for strangers (referred to as hosts and couchsurfers) to meet and offer each other free accommodation, host events, to just "hang out" or to show visitors around the destinations. The main aim of this research is, therefore, to examine Couchsurfing hosts' behaviour by means of an empirical survey to understand the reasons why they host couchsurfers at no fee. Furthermore, this chapter will aim at examining the similarities and differences between the South African and international Couchsurfing hosts.

The questionnaire used for this study consisted of three sections:

Section A consisted of questions regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. This included questions about gender, age, province of residence, occupation and level of education.

Section B focused on determining Couchsurfing host behaviour which includes questions such as how long they have been using Couchsurfing, how many couchsurfers they have hosted and their expectations of travellers. The respondents also indicated the reason for not being able to host couchsurfers by using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 represented "totally disagree" and 5 "totally agree".

In Section C, the respondents were required to indicate to what extent they agree with statements pertaining to their reasons for hosting travellers. This was done with the use of a 5-point Likert scale where 1="totally disagree" and 5="totally agree".

The samples chosen for this study were hosts residing in the top ten tourism cities in South Africa as well as any international Couchsurfing hosts. Purposive sampling was used for the purposes of this study. This is when a specific group of people is selected because of the information only they can provide (Maree & Pieterson, 2007:178). The hosts had to have, at

the time of the survey, logged in to their Couchsurfing account within a month and their profile should indicate that they have hosted or are willing to host travellers. Furthermore, only hosts were targeted seeing as they would be able to provide the information needed for this research. A total of 624 combined questionnaire responses (South Africa (N=197) and international (N=427) survey) were obtained through Google Forms, then transferred to Microsoft Excel and put through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for further analyses.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the empirical survey in the form of tables and figures to simplify the data. Further analyses were conducted on the data. These were an independent sample test (t-test), an exploratory factor analysis and cross tabulation analysis. These analyses were used to compare South African Couchsurfing host behaviour to that of international hosts. The comparison is made to examine the extent to which South Africa is a part of this global phenomena and how the country differs in Couchsurfing management or approach.

The discussion of the results follows the process illustrated in Figure 4.1.

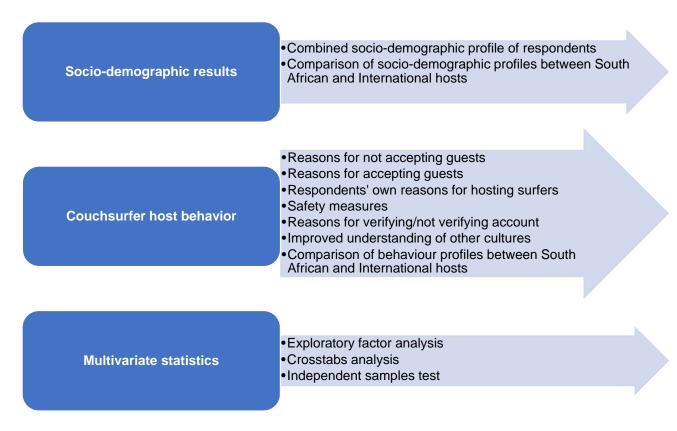


Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 layout (Author's own compilation)

4.2 RESULTS OF THIS STUDY

The results from the empirical survey conducted are presented in this section of the study and are divided into subsections and discussed accordingly.

Section A: An overview of Couchsurfing hosts

4.2.1 Results from the combined data set

This section presents the results from the combined South African and international hosts data set in the form of tables and brief discussions of the results. The results are discussed in this order- socio-demographic, couchsurfer host behaviour, reasons for not accepting guests, reasons for hosting couchsurfers, respondents reasons for hosting couchsurfers, safety measures, reasons for verifying or not verifying account and lastly how Couchsurfing has improved hosts' understanding of other cultures.

4.2.1.1 Socio-demographic results

The combined socio-demographic information of the couchsurfer host respondents was examined first to provide the general profile of Couchsurfing hosts and the results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Combined socio-demographic profile of couchsurfer hosts

Variable	Percentage	Variable	Percentage
Age		Gende	er
17 – 19 years	1%	Male	54%
20 – 29 years	38%	Female	46%
30 - 39 years	34%	Main lang	uage
40 - 49 years	13%	English	42%
50 – 59 years	8%	German	8%
60 – 69 years	5%	French	5%
70+ years	1%	Spanish	4%
Average age	35.43 years	Dutch	4%
Additional language		Other	37%
English	64%	Highest level of	education
Afrikaans	17%	Did not complete high school	2%
French	25%	Matric	7%
Spanish	27%	Diploma	20%
German	17%	Degree	37%
Italian	9%	Post-graduate	33%
Dutch	7%	Professional	5%
Other	32%	Other	0%

Average languages spoken	3 languages	
	Marital	status
	Single	57%
	Living together	11%
	In an open relationship	2%
	Married	11%
	Divorced/separated	5%
	In a relationship	13%
	Widowed	1%
	Other	0%

As shown in Table 4.1, the majority of respondents were male (54%), with 42% who mainly speak English, and are aged between 20 to 29 years (38%) with an average age of 35 years. Fifty-seven percent (57%) were single with 37% who were also degree holders. The lesser number of females could be attributed to the perceived safety concerns of engaging in this platform. Respondents indicated that they could speak three languages, on average. The most mentioned additional languages were English (64%), Spanish (27%), French (25%), German (17%), Afrikaans (17%) and other languages (32%) such as Portuguese, Russian, Greek, IsiXhosa, Hindi and IsiZulu. The results show that responds are multi-lingual which aids in cultural exchange through teaching and learning other languages apart from their main language.

4.2.1.2 Couchsurfer host behaviour

Table 4.2 illustrates the results of couchsurfer host behaviour. Host behaviour was examined to understand why and how the hosts participate in Couchsurfing and to gain perspective on the reasons for the respondents' behaviour.

Table 4.2: Combined couchsurfer host behaviour

Heard about Couchsurfing		Years hosting couchsurfers	
Television	2%	Less than year	20%
Radio	0%	1 year	13%
Couchsurfing website	7%	2 years	11%
Magazines	2%	3 years	13%
Newspapers	2%	4 years	11%
Facebook	2%	5 years	10%
Twitter	0%	6 years	5%
Word-of-mouth (family, friends)	70%	7 years	4%
Internet blog	11%	8 years	6%
Online searches	3%	9 years	2%

Other	2%	10+ years	6%
		Average	3.5 years
Account verified?		Times hosted couchsurfers	
Yes	47%	Never	10%
No	53%	Once	8%
Improved understanding of other	er cultures?	Twice	8%
Yes	91%	3 times	7%
No	9%	4 times	5%
Occupation		5 times	4%
Academic	9%	6+ times	58%
Administration	2%	Average times hosted couchsurfers	41 times
Customer service and sales	5%	Country of residen	ce
Entrepreneur	3%	South Africa	32%
Media and technology	8%	United States of America	7%
Professional	15%	Germany	4%
Retired	30%	United Kingdom	5%
Self employed	2%	Netherlands	3%
Student	2%	Other	49%
Technician	19%	Previously been host	ed?
Tourism and hospitality	1%	Yes	71%
Unemployed	2%	No	29%
Other	2%	Times previously been	hosted
Nights hosting couchsu	rfers	Once	15%
1 night	2%	Twice	14%
2 nights	27%	3 times	13%
3 nights	33%	4 times	6%
4 nights	10%	5 times	11%
5 nights	11%	6 ⁺ times	41%
6 ⁺ nights	17%	Average times been hosted	11 times
Average nights	5 nights	Average times been nosted	TT times
Ex	xpectations f	om couchsurfers	
		Absolutely nothing	56%
I want them to meet m	ny friends and	make them part of my friend circle	56%
	24%		
They should contrib	13%		
	10%		
They must share their culture	9%		
'Couchsurfers' must host r	8%		
	7%		
	They m	ust partake in sexual acts with me	0%
	3%		
		sk them to pay for accommodation	

Other	7%
Current living arrangements	
I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay with friends/family/partner	36%
I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay alone	23%
I own a flat/apartment/home and I stay with friends/family/partner	20%
I own a flat/apartment/home and I stay on my own	16%
Other	5%

Most respondents have been hosting couchsurfers for less than a year (20%) and heard about Couchsurfing from family and friends (70%). Ninety-one percent (91%) of the respondents agree that Couchsurfing has improved their understanding of other cultures. The details regarding how Couchsurfing has improved their understanding of other cultures are discussed in section 4.2.1.8.. Although their accounts are not verified (53%), on average respondents have hosted couchsurfers 41 times for an average of five nights per time. Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents have previously been hosted, with those having done so being hosted 11 times on average. In an open-ended question, the largest group of respondents indicated that they are retired (30%). Thirty-two percent (32%) were South African residents. Regarding hosts' expectations towards couchsurfers, 56% indicated that they expect absolutely nothing, or that they want the couchsurfers to meet their friends (See Table 4.2). Zero percent (0%) of the respondents disagreeing that couchsurfers must partake in sexual acts with them corelates with that Couchsurfing is not a dating site. Most respondents stay with friends/family/partner at a rented place (36%) and 5% indicated other living arrangements such as living in caravans and tents, fulltime couchsurfing and living in a dormitory set up.

4.2.1.3 Reasons for not accepting guests

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with statements provided on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is "Totally disagree" and 5 is "Completely agree". The descriptive results revealed that 10% (see 4.2.1.2) of the respondents have never hosted any couchsurfers, hence measuring the reasons for not accepting guests helps to understand why some hosts have been on Couchsurfing for years but have not hosted any guest yet. The results are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Reasons for not accepting guests

Reasons for not accepting guests	1: Totally disagree	2: Disagree	3: Slightly agree	4: Agree	5: Totally agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
I am currently travelling and cannot accept guests	19.5%	10%	7.9%	15.1%	47.5%	3.61	1.600
I am too busy to host but will do so again when less busy	8.4%	11.4%	17.1%	33.8%	29.3%	3.64	1.245
I don't really want to host people, but I keep my profile active so that others might accept me when I seek accommodation	56%	26.9%	8.7%	5.3%	3.1%	1.72	1.030
I examined a potential surfer's profile and found them to be 'dodgy'	13%	12.7%	21.6%	25.8%	26.9%	3.41	1.349
I examined a potential surfer's profile and found that they are incompatible with my expectations	11.4%	19%	22.9%	28%	18.7%	3.24	1.274
I am on Couchsurfing, but I don't really want to host	60.7%	23.8%	8.5%	4.7%	2.3%	1.64	0.976
I have someone staying with me who is picky about who I allow staying	40.1%	21.7%	16.4%	12.7%	9%	2.29	1.344
My living space is already occupied by someone staying long term	47.3%	20%	12.7%	10.5%	9.5%	2.15	1.362
I only allow people who I've stayed with, to stay with me	74.5%	19%	3.9	1.5	1.1	1.36	0.728

As indicated in Table 4.3, the following is stated as the most important (mean values greater than 3.5) reasons for not accepting guests:

- I am too busy to host but will do so again when less busy (3.64);
- I am currently travelling and cannot accept guests (3.61);

From Table 4.3, it can be concluded that Couchsurfing is about giving as much as it is about receiving, as evidenced by 56% of the respondents disagreeing that they are on Couchsurfing so that they can be hosted while they do not host. Respondents disagree with being on Couchsurfing but not wanting to host or that the people they live with are picky and that it is because they only host people who have hosted them. This shows that hots reasons for not accepting guests are not motivated by selfishness or personal gain but the fact that at the moment host is not in a position to host even if they wanted to.

4.2.1.4 Reasons for hosting couchsurfers

The statements shown in Table 4.4 were provided on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Totally disagree" and 5 indicated "Totally agree". The virtual nature of Couchsurfing warrants the need to understand the underlying reasons for partaking on this platform.

Table 4.4: Reasons for hosting couchsurfers

Reasons for hosting couchsurfers	1: Totally disagree	2: Disagree	3: Slightly agree	4: Agree	5: Totally agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
I want to share my life with other similar people	2.6%	7.4%	26.4%	38.3%	25.3%	3.76	0.997
I am curious to meet new people	1%	1%	8.2%	33.4%	56.5%	4.43	0.766
Someone else hosted me and I want to return the favour	15.1%	15.1%	19.8%	26.7%	23.4%	3.28	1.371
I feel that it is a kind thing to do	3.5%	6.1%	19.4%	38%	33.1%	3.91	1.036
I want to learn about the visitor(s)' culture and values	1.1%	1.1%	12.4%	37.6%	47.6%	4.30	0.815
I am simply trying to make new friends	3.8%	14.7%	34.2%	30.4%	16.9%	3.42	1.050
I feel part of a global community	3.6%	8.1%	17.6%	35.4%	35.4%	3.91	1.082
I want to provide visitors with an immersive experience	2.5%	6.9%	26.9%	39.2%	24.5%	3.76	0.978
I feel lonely and want company	41.6%	31.1%	18.5%	6.6%	2.1%	1.96	1.028
I accept visitors with the expectation that they will host me in future	33.1%	30.5%	22.6%	10.2%	3.6%	2.21	1.117
I want to broaden my understanding of the world	2%	2.6%	17%	36.9%	41.5%	4.13	0.922
I understand travel is expensive, and I am trying to lighten the visitor's financial burden	5.4%	8.5%	21.6%	32.7%	31.9%	3.77	1.144
I feel passionate about sharing my personal environment with new people	5.1%	14.5%	29.7%	30.1%	20.6%	3.47	1.121
You feel proud of your town/city and want to show it off	5.8%	11.2%	26.7%	28.3%	28%	3.62	1.170
It is adventurous as you welcome a stranger in your home without really knowing the background story	9.2%	19.1%	31.8%	25.5%	14.4%	3.62	1.168
I host so that I can get good referrals from my account	29.8%	29.3%	23.1%	12.6%	5.1%	2.34	1.175
It allows me to take part in Couchsurfing events that may be hosted in my area	38.6%	27.5%	18.2%	10.8%	4.9%	2.16	1.191
I do it as I hope to get some form of love relationship or sexual encounter from visitors	70.7%	18.6%	7.7%	2.5%	0.5%	1.43	0.780

I may receive gifts from the visitors	64.7%	21.5%	10.7%	2.3%	0.5%	1.53	0.837
The visitors can help me contribute towards buying groceries as well as other expenses, thereby lightening my financial burdens	71.7%	19.9%	6.4%	1.3%	0.7%	1.39	0.725
It provides me with the opportunity to learn or practise speaking other languages other than my own	10.2%	14.5%	27.3%	28.1%	19.9%	3.33	1.234
I am looking for people who share the same interests as me	5.8%	16.3%	31.7%	29.8%	16.4%	3.35	1.109
I only host people from specific countries that I want to visit with the hope that they will host me there	60.7%	28.9%	6.6%	2%	1.8%	1.55	0.847

As evidenced by the higher mean values (greater than 3.9), the following statements were indicated as main reasons for hosting strangers:

- I am curious to meet new people (4.43);
- I want to learn about the visitor(s)' culture and values (4.30);
- I want to broaden my understanding of the world (4.13);
- I feel it's a kind thing to do (3.91);
- I feel part of a global community (3.91).

From Table 4.4, it is shown that partaking in Couchsurfing is not for monetary gain for the host but more about social needs, kindness and to have a sense of belonging. The results also concur with the values of Couchsurfing which include promoting cultural exchange and provision of accommodation at no cost to the surfer.

4.2.1.5 Respondents' reasons for hosting couchsurfers

To ensure that the researcher truly captures the reasons why Couchsurfing hosts host couchsurfers, an open-ended question was provided where respondents could indicate their own reasons for hosting couchsurfers. This helps to validate or dispute some of the statements provided on the Likert scale and to broaden the information currently available on motives for hosting couchsurfers. The respondents' comments were categorised and are displayed in Table 4.5. The percentages do not add up to a 100% because respondents could mention more than one reason for hosting.

Table 4.5: Respondents' reasons for hosting couchsurfers

Reasons for hosting couchsurfers	Percentages
To make travel cheaper	3%
To meet new people/other cultures	34%
To share/learn culture/languages	48%
Because they needed a place for a short time	52%

Because I can/could	55%
To help people	61%
Entertainment/fun	65%
Show/ explore my city	66%
To feel like I am travelling	66%
Sense of community	66%
To connect with similar individuals	66%
Friendship	69%
Great/Interesting experience	69%
I also surf(ed)/want to surf in the future	73%
To share experiences	73%
To give back/return the favour	75%

As illustrated in Table 4.5, the following reasons were the most mentioned by the respondents:

- To give back/return the favour (75%);
- I also surf(ed)/want to surf in the future (73%);
- To share experiences (73%).

The results mean that of all the respondents, the majority mentioned the statements above as the most important reasons for hosting and not necessarily that they do not have other reasons which they did not mention. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents host to give back/return the favour and this means that 25% do not consider this reason as important not that it is not part of the reasons why they host. The least mentioned reasons are- to make travel cheaper (3%) and to meet new people/other cultures (34%). It should be noted that from the results of the Likert scale questions the reason 'to meet new people/other cultures' emerged as the most important reason for hosting couchsurfers while only 34% of the respondents mentioned this reason as important.

These results are similar to those that were measured in the Likert scale, thereby increasing the validity of the Likert scale statements.

4.2.1.6 Safety measures

Respondents were asked to indicate the safety measures they have in place (in an openended question) since Couchsurfing involves hosting strangers in their homes. Measuring these aspects provides insight as to how the hosts protect themselves prior, during or after hosting. Their answers were categorised as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Safety measures

Safety measures	Percentages
Check references/vouches	32%
Check profile verification/completeness	17%
Talk to the person beforehand	11%
Tell a friend/family	18%
Use locks	1%
I trust them/my gut feeling/instinct	35%
No safety measures in place	23%
Meet them outside home before hosting or giving them the key	12%
Common sense	4%
I keep valuables safe	20%
I don't give keys to couchsurfers	8%
I check their online presence (Facebook and other social media)	10%
Ask for a copy of ID or passport	36%
I prefer to host females/I do no host or surf with male travellers	24%
I ask for phone number	15%
I live with other people	7%
I accept them based on their request	2%
Guest profile must have photos	1%
I do not leave the house alone	16%

The top five safety measures respondents mentioned are:

- Ask for a copy of ID or passport (36%);
- I trust them/ my gut feeling/instinct (35%);
- Check references/vouches (32%);
- I prefer to host females/I do no host or surf with male travellers (24%);
- No safety measures in place (23%).

Couchsurfing provides the reference and vouching systems as safety measures for hosts and travellers. It is noted that respondents use references and vouches to ascertain if a member is trustworthy to be hosted or to host. Respondents take a step further by asking for copies of ID or passport to verify that the traveller is truly who they say they are and should anything go wrong the host has the necessary information about the traveller. Some hosts feel safer with female travellers as compared to males travelling alone. A significant number of hosts mention that they have no safety measures in place and this could be due to that they there is trust between the guest and host or the host just trusts their gut or instinct.

4.2.1.7 Reasons for verifying/ not verifying account

In this question, respondents provided reasons (in an open-ended question) why they verified or did not verify their Couchsurfing accounts. The verification feature on Couchsurfing is regarded as a safety measure, therefore examining why the respondents make use or do not make use of this feature is important. Table 4.7 indicates the reasons for verifying or not verifying Couchsurfing accounts.

Table 4.7: Reasons for verifying/ not verifying account

Reasons for verifying/ not verifying account	Percentages
I only host/have not travelled much/l'm not that active	1%
No need/reason	15%
Not sure it's worth it	1%
Lazy	2%
To give more trust/safety to couchsurfers/hosts	21%
I didn't want to pay because Couchsurfing should be free/it's too expensive	11%
Because I hosted or have reviews	6%
To support/help Couchsurfing community	23%
I do not have a permanent address	11%
It goes against the initial principles of Couchsurfing	7%
Need to pay/haven't paid	24%
References/reviews/recommendations are more important	13%

Table 4.7 summarises their answers and shows that the respondents verified their accounts:

- To support/help Couchsurfing community (23%);
- To give more trust/safety to couchsurfers/hosts (21%).

While respondents who did not verify their accounts did so for the following reasons:

- I need to pay/I haven't paid (24%);
- No need to/no reason to (15%);
- References/reviews/recommendations are more important (13%).

Couchsurfing is a non-profit organisation hence 23% of the respondents verified their accounts to support the Couchsurfing community, while 21% verified to give more trust and safety to the guests. There were more reasons for not verifying accounts with most hosts indicating that they have not paid the verification fee, some have no reasons why and other hosts stated that references/reviews/recommendations were more important than verification. Respondents indicated that verification is expensive, and Couchsurfing is supposed to be free, therefore paying a verification free goes against the very premise that Couchsurfing is based on.

4.2.1.8 How has Couchsurfing improved/ not improved your understanding of other cultures?

Table 4.8 shows the reasons why respondents agree that Couchsurfing has improved their understanding of other cultures. Couchsurfing has been said to facilitate cultural exchange and the results of this study have proven to that effect. The results provide how Couchsurfing improves understanding of other cultures for the host.

Table 4.8: How Couchsurfing has improved understanding of other cultures

How Couchsurfing has improved understanding of other cultures	Percentages
It has expanded my view on culture and the world/gives insight into other people's cultures	43%
I learnt about different countries and cultures	25%
Better understanding of other people, culture, beliefs and views on the world	6%
More open minded/hearted	3%
Through interacting with people from different parts of the world	24%
Through different foods	3%

The largest group of the respondents indicated that Couchsurfing has:

• Expanded my view on culture and the world/gives insight into other people's cultures (43%).

Through interacting with different guests, hosts indicate that their views about culture and the world have changed. This therefore leads to cultural understanding of cultural differences and less cultural conflict. Some hosts indicate that understanding of other cultures improved through different foods, learning other languages and that through culture they have a better understanding of other people and their beliefs.

4.2.1.9 Conclusions regarding Couchsurfing hosts

When examining the socio-demographic characteristics, Couchsurfing hosts, in general, are males in their mid-30s. Several studies also found the majority of hosts to be males, aged between 20 to 35 years; this corroborates the findings of other similar studies (Rosen *et al.*, 2011:989; Franz, 2013:42; Luo & Zhang, 2016:111; Dén-Nagy & Király, 2014:3). Furthermore, the hosts are single, highly educated individuals and this was also a finding by Luo and Zhang (2016:111). Hosts speak three languages on average, with English being their main language. The hosts are relatively new to hosting, evidenced by less than a year's hosting experience but they have previously been hosted 11 times on average.

Luo and Zhang (2016:111) and Franz (2013:43) support the finding that hosts are relatively new to Couchsurfing, stating that Couchsurfing hosts have been members of Couchsurfing for one to three years and have hosted and have also been hosted. Word-of-mouth was very influential in their awareness regarding Couchsurfing. The largest number of respondents were South African residents, followed by residents of the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Most respondents did not verify their accounts because they have not paid the verification fee and see no need to do so. The studies by Rosen *et al.* (2016), Franz (2013), Dén-Nagy and Király (2014), Luo and Zhang (2016) and Toeniskoetter (2013) focused only on a European and Asian perspective, with the exception of Luo and Zhang (2016) whose study had a 2% African respondent representation.

The studies mentioned above examined Couchsurfing in a developed world context where Couchsurfing is highly popular as evidenced by the number of members in these countries, while this study provides the perspective from South Africa as a developing country. South Africa has different levels of technological advancement in comparison to developed countries, people would feel safer in more formal forms of accommodation as they cannot rely on public transport and they might be cautious of high crime levels, therefore making a developing country perspective important. On average, respondents host couchsurfers for five nights and expect nothing in return, respondents just want the couchsurfers to be part of their friend 'circle'. The most common accommodation set up is where hosts rent a place and stay with other people (friends, family). When examining why some hosts could not host, most indicated that they were busy, and some were travelling at the time.

The Couchsurfing hosts' reasons for participating in this act of kindness (Couchsurfing) include but are not limited to; the curiosity to meet new people; to learn other cultures, broaden the view about the world, they want to give back and lastly they have also been hosted/would like to be hosted in future. Seeing as Couchsurfing involves interaction with complete strangers via the internet first, hosts provided safety measures they have in place to protect themselves. It is very interesting to note that hosts trust their gut feeling/instinct as a safety measure and that some do not have any safety measures at all. Hosts also check references/vouches before hosting someone. Couchsurfing has improved hosts' understanding of other cultures and the evidence of this is that hosts have broadened their views of the world/cultures and they have a better understanding of different cultures and people.

It is important to note that South Africa is different from the international community in terms of internet access, culture and development, as well as trust/safety due to high crime rate in the country. Therefore, a comparison between South African hosts and international hosts is needed to see how Couchsurfing in South Africa should be managed/approached apart from

the global perspective. The next section of this chapter therefore examines the sociodemographic results of international hosts vs South African hosts.

Section B: Comparison between South African hosts and International hosts

4.2.2 Results: South African hosts vs International hosts

This section of the study focuses on the results of the separate South African and international hosts data sets and comparisons are drawn between the results. The purpose of the comparison is ascertaining the similarities and differences between the South African and international hosts and therefore draw conclusions about possible reasons for these similarities or differences. Firstly, comparison is made about socio-demographic data and secondly, couchsurfer host behaviour.

4.2.2.1 Socio-demographic profile: South African hosts vs International hosts

The socio-demographic results of the comparison are shown in Table 4.9 and discussed briefly thereafter. Regarding additional languages spoken, the totals do not add up to 100% because hosts had the option of mentioning more than one additional language in an open-ended question.

Table 4.9: Sociodemographic profile: South African hosts vs International hosts

Variable		
Age	South Africa	International
<17 years	0%	1%
20 – 29 years	41%	38%
30 – 39 years	35%	33%
40 – 49 years	12%	13%
50 – 59 years	10%	8%
60+ years	2%	7%
Average age	35 years	36 years
Main language	English (61%) Afrikaans (27%) French (2%) German (2%) Dutch (2%) Other (6%)	English (32%) German (11%) Spanish (7%) French (6%) Dutch (5%) Other (39%)
Additional language	English (48%) Afrikaans (52%) Spanish (11%) Dutch (13%) French (14%) Italian (6%)	English (72%) French (30%) Spanish (35%) German (17%) Dutch (5%) Italian (11%)

	German (15%)	Other (36%)
	Other (21%)	
Number languages spoken	3 languages	3 languages
Marital status		
Single	58%	57%
Living together	10%	11%
In an open relationship	1%	2%
Married	13%	10%
Divorced/separated	6%	4%
In a relationship	11%	14%
Widowed	1%	1%
Other	0%	1%
Highest level of education		
Did not complete high school	0%	3%
Matric	10%	6%
Diploma	12%	14%
Degree	29%	41%
Post-graduate	42%	28%
Professional	7%	8%

Regarding socio-demographics, Table 4.9 shows that South African hosts and international hosts are generally similar, both being in their mid-30s in terms of age and speak an average of three languages each. It is interesting to note, however, that more than 60% of South African hosts' main language is English while for international hosts it was 32%. For 52% of South African hosts Afrikaans was the most indicated additional language followed by English (48%), German (15%), French (14%), other languages (21%) such as IsiZulu and Setswana. Majority of international hosts indicated English (72%) as an additional language followed by Spanish (35%), French (30%), German (17%), other languages (36%) such as Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Greek and Swedish. Both South African hosts and international are significantly multilingual. Most of both host groups are single and highly educated but South African hosts have slightly higher levels of education with 41% having attained a post graduate degree, as compared to international hosts (28%). The hosts are therefore generally homogenous with slight differences.

4.2.2.2 Couchsurfer host behaviour: South African hosts vs International hosts

A comparison of couchsufer host behaviour is made so as to draw similarities or differences between international and South African hosts and make conclusions with regard to the results of the study. The results are illustrated by Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Couchsurfer host behaviour: South African hosts vs International hosts

Heard about Co	ng	Years hosting couchsurfers			
	S.A	International		S.A	International
Television	0%	2%	Less than year	35%	14%
Radio	0%	0%	1 year	14%	12%
Couchsurfing website	7%	7%	2 years	6%	12%
Magazines	2%	2%	3 years	12%	13%
Newspapers	3%	2%	4 years	6%	13%
Facebook	1%	3%	5 years	9%	10%
Twitter	0%	0%	6 years	3%	6%
Word-of-mouth (family, friends)		67%	7 years	5%	4%
Internet blog	9%	11%	8 years	3%	7%
Online searches	%	%	9 years	3%	2%
Other	•		10+ years	4%	7%
			Average	2.8 years	3.9 years
Account ve	rified?		Times h	osted couc	hsurfers
Yes	37%	52%	Never	23%	4%
No	63%	48%	Once	17%	4%
Improved understanding	g of othe	r cultures?	Twice	11%	6%
Yes	86%	93%	3 times	6%	8%
No	14%	7%	4 times	5%	6%
Occupat	tion		5 times 3%		4%
Academic	7%	10%	6+ times	35%	68%
Administration	2%	2%	Average times	7 times	56 times
Customer service and sales	3%	6%	Previo	ously been l	nosted
Entrepreneur	6%	2%	Yes	58%	77%
Media and technology	11%	7%	No	42%	23%
Professional	30%	29%	Times pre	eviously be	en hosted
Retired	0%	3%	Once	25%	13%
Self-employed	4%	1%	Twice	18%	12%
Student	23%	17%	3 times	13%	13%
Student Technician	23% 0%	17% 1%	3 times 4 times	13% 6%	13% 5%
Technician	0% 1%	1%	4 times 5 times	6%	5%
Technician Tourism and hospitality	0% 1%	1% 1%	4 times 5 times	6% 7%	5% 12%
Technician Tourism and hospitality Unemployed	0% 1% 1%	1% 1% 2% 17%	4 times 5 times 6+times Average times	6% 7% 31%	5% 12% 45%
Technician Tourism and hospitality Unemployed	0% 1% 1%	1% 1% 2% 17%	4 times 5 times 6+times Average times been hosted	6% 7% 31%	5% 12% 45%
Technician Tourism and hospitality Unemployed	0% 1% 1%	1% 1% 2% 17%	4 times 5 times 6+times 3 Average times been hosted g couchsurfers	6% 7% 31% 6 times	5% 12% 45% 13 times
Technician Tourism and hospitality Unemployed	0% 1% 1%	1% 1% 2% 17%	4 times 5 times 6+times 3 Average times been hosted g couchsurfers 1 night	6% 7% 31% 6 times	5% 12% 45% 13 times
Technician Tourism and hospitality Unemployed	0% 1% 1%	1% 1% 2% 17%	4 times 5 times 6+times 3 Average times been hosted g couchsurfers 1 night 2 nights	6% 7% 31% 6 times 1% 32%	5% 12% 45% 13 times 4% 25%

6 ⁺ nights	17%	16%
Average nights	5 nights	5 nights
Expectations from couchsurfers		
Absolutely nothing	63%	52%
I want them to meet my friends and make them part of my friend circle	44%	61%
They must teach me their language	8%	8%
They should contribute financially towards water and electricity bills	3%	1%
They must bring a present	0%	4%
They must share their culture with me my means of traditional dance or foods	30%	21%
'Couchsurfers' must host me in future when I ask them for accommodation	18%	6%
Just their company from time to time	15%	13%
I secretly ask them to pay for accommodation	0%	0%
I want them to buy food/drinks	9%	9%
Other	5%	8%
Current living arrangements		
I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay alone	15%	27%
I am renting a flat/apartment and I stay with family/friends/partner	42%	33%
I own an apartment/home and I stay on my own	18%	15%
I own a flat/apartment and I stay with friends/family/partner	18%	21%
Other	7%	4%
Safety measures		
Check references/vouches	34%	30%
Check profile verification/completeness	16%	17%
Talk to the person beforehand	13%	9%
Tell a friend/family	18%	18%
Use locks	2%	1%
I trust them/my gut feeling/instinct	8%	8%
Nothing	37%	34%
Meet them outside home before hosting or giving them the key	25%	22%
Common sense	15%	11%
I keep valuables safe	3%	4%
I don't give keys to couchsurfers	19%	21%
I check their online presence (Facebook and other social media)	8%	8%
Ask for a copy of ID or passport	11%	10%
I prefer to host females/I do no host or surf with male travellers	39%	35%
I ask for phone number	25%	23%
I live with other people	19%	13%
I accept them based on their request	3%	19%
Guest profile must have photos	0%	2%
I do not leave the house alone	0%	2%

Table 4.10 shows that 35% of South African hosts have less than a year's hosting experience compared to the 14% for international hosts and that both South African and international hosts heard about Couchsurfing through word-of-mouth, accounting for 75% of the South African hosts and 67% of the international hosts. The difference in number of years hosting couchsurfers could be attributed to that Couchsurfing was first introduced internationally hence international hosts have been on Couchsurfing longer than South African hosts. Couchsurfing has improved understanding of other cultures for 93% of international hosts and for 86% of South African hosts. The majority of international hosts' accounts are verified (57%) unlike 67% of South African hosts whose accounts are not verified. International hosts have hosted couchsurfers and have been previously been hosted more times than South African hosts.

Most of the hosts are professionally trained, accounting for 30% of South African hosts and 29% of international hosts. While the majority of both South African hosts (63%) and international hosts (52%) agree that they expect absolutely nothing from couchsurfers, it should be noted that 9% more South African hosts than international hosts agree. The majority international hosts agree more that they want couchsurfers to meet their friends (61%) as compared to only 44% South African hosts agreeing. It should be noted that respondents had the option of indicating more than one answer to the safety measure question, hence percentages will not add up to 100%. Both international hosts and South African hosts have these safety measures in place when engaging in Couchsurfing:

- Slightly more South African hosts check references and number of people who have vouched for the surfer (34%) as compared to international hosts (30%);
- Slightly more South African hosts have no safety measures at all (37%), while 34% of international hosts also had no safety measures at all;
- Slightly more South African hosts prefer to host females and do not host or surf with male travellers (39%) as compared to 35% of international hosts.

Section C: Multivariate statistics

4.2.3 Reasons for hosting strangers

To the researcher's knowledge, no studies on Couchsurfing hosts' reasons for hosting couchsurfers have been done in a South African context, therefore an exploratory research approach was used in this study. A Principle Component Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Oblimin rotation and Kaiser Normalisation was performed on the aspects that were identified as possible reasons for Couchsurfing hosts to host couchsurfers. The EFA method was used to reduce the Likert-scale statements into latent variables and to provide a general perception of why hosts host couchsurfers.

For the purposes of this study, only latent variables with suitable eigenvalues were considered; that is eigenvalues greater than 1 (Garrett-Mayer, 2006, Maree & Pieterson, 2007:220). Only statements with factor loadings of 0.3 or higher were included in the analysis (Costello & Osborne, 2005:3; Field, 2000:443). Cross-loaded items were categorised into the factors where they fit best rationally, or where they had the strongest loading. Furthermore, the total variance explained was 43.58% and only factors with a reliability coefficient of above 0.6 (Chronbach's alpha value) were used for this study (Hinton *et al.*, 2004:364). Once the reasons for hosting couchsurfers have been identified, hosts can be better understood and therefore Couchsurfing can then be better managed. The results of the EFA are discussed in the next section.

4.2.3.1 Results from the factor analysis: Reasons for hosting couchsurfers

Table 4.11 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis performed on the combined South African and international host data sets.

Table 4.11: Factor analysis of the reasons for hosting couchsurfers

Reasons for hosting couchsurfers	Factor 1: Socialising	Factor 2: Reciprocity	Factor 3: Kindness
I want to learn about the visitor(s)' culture and values	0.750		
I want to broaden my understanding of the world	0.695		
I feel part of a global community	0.694		
I am curious to meet new people	0.682		
I want to provide visitors with an immersive experience	0.661		
I feel passionate about sharing my personal environment with new people	0.652		
I am simply trying to make new friends	0.641		
I want to share my life with similar people	0.604		

I am looking for people who share the same interests as me	0.540		
I feel proud of my town/city and want to show it off to visitors	0.507		
It provides me with the opportunity to learn or practise speaking other languages than my own	0.505		
I may receive gifts from visitors		0.723	
The visitors can help me contribute towards buying groceries as well as other household expenses, thereby lightening my financial burdens		0.721	
I do it as I hope to get some form of love relationship or sexual encounter from the visitors		0.632	
I accept visitors with expectation that they will accept me in future		0.595	
I only host people from specific countries that I want to visit with the hope that they will host me there		0.578	
I feel lonely and want company		0.518	
I host so that I can get good referrals on my account			0.476
It allows me to take part in Couchsurfing events that may be hosted in my area			0.334
I feel that it is a kind thing to do			0.638
I understand travel is expensive, and I am trying to lighten the visitors' financial burden			0.602
Someone else hosted me and I want to return the favour			0.536
It is adventurous as I welcome a stranger in my home, without really knowing their background story			0.342
Mean value	3.77	1.68	3.12
Chronbach's Alpha	0.852	0.761	0.62
Inter-item correlation	0.356	0.298	0.218

The Keyser Meyer Oklin (KMO) overall measure of sampling adequacy was 0.85 and this value is highly acceptable as stated by Pallant (2016:184), the acceptable KMO value is 0.6 and above. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant with a p=0.000 (p<0.05), meaning that the factor analysis is valid. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.62 to 0.85, thus ascertaining the reliability of the factor analysis. The average inter-item correlation coefficients varied between 0.21 and 0.35 for the factors, and this also implies internal consistency for all factors. As stated by BrckaLorenz, Chiang and Laird (2013), the average inter-item correlation should be between 0.15 and 0.50. The statistical probability and the test indicated that there was a significant correlation between the variables, and the use of factor analysis was appropriate.

The Principal Component Analysis revealed the presence of six factors from the 23 variables, with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 24%, 14%, 6%, 5%, 4.8% and 4.8% of the variance, respectively. The scree plot, however, revealed a clear break after the third factor, hence the

decision to retain only three out of the possible six factors. To support this decision, the results of the Parallel Analysis showed that only three components had eigenvalues exceeding the criterion values for a randomly generated data matrix of the same size (23 variables x 624 respondents) (Pallant, 2007:183). The three-factor solution explained a total of 44% of the overall variance, with Factor 1 contributing 24%, Factor 2 contributing 14% and Factor 3 contributing 6%. Although the total variance explained is less than 50%, the three-factor solution was more logical. A higher factor solution presented lower reliability coefficients, therefore it would have rendered a factor analysis inappropriate for this study.

The three factors identified as reasons for hosting couchsurfers were then labelled according to similar aspects within each factor. The factors were labelled as follows: Factor 1: *Socialising*, Factor 2: *Reciprocity* and Factor 3: *Kindness* (See Table 4.11).

4.2.3.1.1 Factor 1: Socialising

The factor labelled 'Socialising' loaded with a mean value of 3.77, a reliability coefficient of 0.852 and an inter-item correlation of 0.356. This factor was the most important factor with regard to hosting couchsurfers as evidenced by the high mean value. The individual statements are referred to because the factors found in this study are not the same as other studies but there similarities in the individual statements. Socialising was made up of 11 statements and the most important statement was 'I am curious to meet new people (4.43)', 56.5% strongly agreed and 33.4% agreed. Pietilä (2011) categorised the statement 'to meet new people' under 'social factors' and also found that, for 93% of the respondents, meeting new people was the main motivation to engage in Couchsurfing. The other statements for this study were: I want to learn about the visitor(s)' culture and values (4.30); I want to broaden my understanding of the world (4.13); I feel part of a global community (3.91); I want to provide visitors with an immersive experience (3.76); I feel passionate about sharing my personal environment with new people (3.47); I am simply trying to make new friends (3.42); I want to share my life with similar people (3.76); I am looking for people who share the same interests as me (3.35); I feel proud of my town/city and want to show it off to visitors (3.62) and it provides me with the opportunity to learn or practise speaking other languages than my own (3.33).

Making new friends was also a finding by Pietilä (2011) with this statement being the second most important motivation aspect. Kim *et al.* (2018) concur with the findings of this study in that making new friends and improving relationships with other members is part of the motivation to host strangers. The findings by Kocher *et al.* (2014) also concur that hosts are motivated by the need to meet new people and share culture and experiences with strangers.

Kocher et al. (2014) state that Couchsurfing is not about free accommodation but about the experiences shared between hosts and couchsurfers. Statements relating to culture were categorised as a separate factor by Pietilä (2011), unlike in this study where they have been incorporated in the factor 'socialising'. Hosts participate in Couchsurfing to experience the guest's culture rather than to share their own culture with the guest (Pietilä, 2011). Zaki (2015) states that apart from providing free accommodation, hosts engage in Couchsurfing because it is nice to have people from all walks of life in your home and, for some hosts, to have company when they are lonely or bored.

4.2.3.1.2 Factor 2: Reciprocity

The factor labelled 'Reciprocity' loaded as the least important factor with a mean value of 1.68, a reliability coefficient of 0.761 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.298. The five statements which loaded in this factor are: I may receive gifts from visitors (1.53); the visitors can help me contribute towards buying groceries as well as other household expenses, thereby lightening my financial burden (1.39); I do it as I hope to get some form of love relationship or sexual encounter from the visitors (1.43); I accept visitors with the expectation that they will accept me in future (2.21); I only host people from specific countries that I want to visit with the hope that they will host me there (1.55); I feel lonely and want company (1.96). Pietilä (2011) categorised the need for company as a social factor. The most disagreed upon statement in this factor was 'the visitors can help me contribute towards buying groceries as well as other household expenses, thereby lightening my financial burden', 71.7% strongly disagreed and 19.9% disagreed.

The other statement worth noting was 'I do it as I hope to get some form of love relationship or sexual encounter from the visitors', 70.7% strongly disagreed and 18.6% disagreed. Kocher et al. (2014) state that, although not direct, there is some form of reciprocity expected by hosts and this correlates with the findings of this study with regards to expectations behind hosting strangers. Kim et al. (2018) found that aspects of reciprocity influence intention to share accommodation on Couchsurfing and labelled these aspects as factor 'reciprocity'. Statements such as 'knowing that benefits given to couchsurfers will be reciprocated' and 'other members will help me if I were in a similar situation' were categorised as reciprocity. The studies mentioned above only reveal the influential aspects but, however, do not show to what extent or how important or influential these aspects are for the respondents. This study therefore highlights the importance or less importance of the aspects measured.

4.2.3.1.3 Factor 3: Kindness

The factor 'Kindness' was the second most important factor with a mean value of 3.12, a reliability coefficient of 0.62 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.218. Kindness comprised the following six aspects: I host so that I can get good referrals on my account (2.34); it allows me to take part in Couchsurfing events that may be hosted in my area (2.16); I feel that it is a kind thing to do (2.91); I understand travel is expensive, and I am trying to lighten the visitor's financial burden (3.77); someone else hosted me and I want to return the favour (3.28); It is adventurous as I welcome a stranger in my home, without really knowing their background story (3.62). Evidenced by the highest mean value of 3.77 the statement 'I understand travel is expensive, and I am trying to lighten the visitor's financial burden' emerged as the most important aspect in this factor. In terms of percentages 'I feel that it is a kind thing to do' was the most agreed upon statement in this factor with 33.1% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing. The aspect 'it allows me to take part in Couchsurfing events that may be hosted in my area (2.16) was the least important aspect in this factor. Although the aspects relating to kindness were not grouped together or worded the same way as in this study, Kim et al. (2018) grouped statements such as 'I enjoy helping people', 'it feels good to help people solve their problems' and 'I enjoy helping people on the Couchsurfing website' as factor 'enjoy helping' and found that these statements have an influence on the intention to share accommodation.

Independent sample tests and cross tabulation analysis were also performed on the data to determine differences between international hosts and South African hosts. The next section describes the results of these analyses.

4.2.4 Results of the Independent sample t-test

Independent samples tests were performed to ascertain the differences between South African hosts and international hosts. For the purposes of this study, a comparison of socio-demographic characteristics well as host behaviour was made. For aspects to be considered statistically significant the value of the Levene's test for equality of variances should be p<0.05 (Pallant, 2001:180). All p values greater than 0.05 are not statistically significant at the confidence level of 95%, meaning that there are no differences between the two groups with regard to the particular aspects.

4.2.4.1 Differences in socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics

Table 4.12 shows the results of the independent sample tests (t-tests) conducted on the sociodemographic as well as behavioural characteristics of international and South African hosts. The scores for the following variables were calculated and compared: age, number of languages, years hosting couchsurfers, times hosted couchsurfers, nights and reasons for hosting couchsurfers.

Table 4.12: Results of the t-test: Socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics

Aspects	Country of residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.	Effect sizes
Ago	South Africa	176	34.64	10.384	0.205	0.00
Age	International	363	35.81	12.574	0.285	0.09
Number of lenguages	South Africa	201	2.86	1.253	0.005*	0.23
Number of languages	International	418	3.20	1.463		0.23
Voorabacting couphaurfors	South Africa	159	2.77	3.004	0.000*	0.27
Yearshosting couchsurfers	International	370	3.87	2.980		0.27
Times hested soughourfors	South Africa	197	7.19	15.468	0.000*	0.32
Times hosted couchsurfers	International	418	56.30	151.289		0.32
Nighto	South Africa	184	4.59	7.247	0.622	0.04
Nights	International	401	4.97	9.225		0.04
I am currently travelling	South Africa	201	3.41	1.710	0.032*	0.17
and cannot accept guests	International	420	3.71	1.538		0.17
I am too busy to host but	South Africa	201	3.74	1.214	0.171	
will do so again when less busy	International	420	3.60	1.258	01171	0.12
I don't really want to host	South Africa	201	1.87	1.117	0.018*	
people, but I keep my profile active so that others might accept me when I seek accommodation	International	420	1.66	0.980		0.19
I examined a potential	South Africa	201	3.38	1.374	0.756	0.03
surfer's profile and found them to be 'dodgy'	International	420	3.42	1.338		
I examined a potential	South Africa	201	3.04	1.284		
surfer's profile and found that they are incompatible with my expectations	International	420	3.33	1.259	0.008*	0.22
I am on Couchsurfing, but I	South Africa	201	1.80	1.092	0.006*	0.21
don't really want to host	International	420	1.56	0.908		0.21
I have someone staying	South Africa	201	2.24	1.290	0.569	
with me who is picky about who I allow staying	International	420	2.31	1.369		0.05
My living space is already	South Africa	201	2.18	1.403	0.696	
occupied by someone staying long term	International	420	2.13	1.344		0.03
I only allow people who I've	South Africa	200	1.43	0.786	0.083	0.14
stayed with, to stay with me	International	420	1.32	0.697		0.14
Footor 1. Conjuliaina	South Africa	198	3.7828	0.63301	0.750	0.00
Factor 1: Socialising	International	414	3.7650	0.66314	0.752	0.03
Factor 2: Expectations	South Africa	198	1.8164	0.57189	0.792	0.02
. Soloi Z. Expodiationo	International	415	1.8301	0.61209	0.792	J.UZ

Factor 3: Kindness	South Africa	198	3.4335	0.82764	0.081	0.15
racioi 5. Kiliuliess	International	414	3.3074	0.83680	0.061	0.15

^{*}Statistical significant difference: p≤0.05 (Pallant, 2007:190).

From the possible 11 variables, only six revealed statistically significant differences. Firstly, regarding socio-demographics, there was a slight difference between South African hosts (N=201, M=2.86, SD=1.253) and international hosts (N=418, M=3.20, SD=1.463) in terms of number of languages spoken (p=0.005 p<0.05). International hosts speak slightly more languages than South African hosts.

Secondly, the results revealed a statistically significant difference between South African hosts (N=159, M=2.77, SD=3.004) and international hosts (N=370, M=3.87, SD=2.980), with regard to behavioural characteristics such as the number of years hosting couchsurfers (p=0.000<0.05) and this therefore means that international hosts have been hosting couchsurfers longer than South African hosts. The test also revealed a significant difference between South African hosts (N=197, M=7.19, SD=15.468) and international hosts (N=418, M=56.30, SD=151.289) in the number of times they have hosted couchsurfers (p=0.000 p<0.05); South African hosts have hosted couchsurfers fewer times when compared to international hosts.

Pertaining to reasons why respondents were unable to host, the results of the test revealed a slight difference between South African hosts (N=201, M=1.87, SD=1.117) and international hosts (N=420, M=1.66, SD=0.980). South African hosts keep their profiles active so that they may be accepted when they seek accommodation but they do not really want to host. The test shows a small difference between South African hosts (N=201, M=3.04, SD=1.284) and international hosts (N=420, M=3.33, SD=1.249), in that international hosts were more inclined towards seeing a potential surfer's profile as 'dodgy' (untrustworthy) when compared to South African hosts (p=0.018 p<0.05). The test also revealed a statistically significant difference between South African hosts (N=201, M=1.80, SD=1.092) and international hosts (N=420, M=1.56, SD=0.908) being unable to host because 'they are on Couchsurfing but do not really want to host' (p=0.006 p<0.05). South African hosts strongly agree with this statement as compared to international hosts. Lastly the results of the test show a slight difference between South African hosts (N=201, M=3.41, SD=1.710) and international hosts' (N=420, M=3.71, SD=1.538) reasons for being unable to host couchsurfers because of travel. Slightly more international hosts than South African hosts agree that they were currently travelling and not able to accept guests (p=0.032 p<0.05). The researcher could not find studies of similar nature to compare the results.

^{*} Effect sizes are categorised as small (0.2-0.4)**; medium (0.5-0.8) ***: and large (greater as 0.8) ****

4.2.5 Cross tabulation analysis

A cross tabulation analysis was performed on the data to determine the statistical dependency or association of categorical data (Apramenya, 2016). For the purposes of this study, the socio-demographic as well as behavioural variables for South African and international hosts, gender, marital status, living arrangements, level of education and source of information to mention but a few, were used in the cross tabulation analysis. Cohen's (1988) criteria for interpretation of phi-values is: 0.1=small effect, 0.3=medium effect and 0.5=large effect.

4.2.5.1 Results of cross tabulation of socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics

Table 4.13 shows the results of a cross tabulation of socio demographic and behavioural characteristics.

Table 4.13: Results of the cross tabulation analysis: Socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics

Aspects	South Africa	International	Df	Sig. level	Phi-value
Gender			1	0.244	0.047
Male	57%	52%			
Female	43%	48%			
Living arrangements			4	0.011	0.145*
Rent staying alone	16%	26%			
Rent staying with someone	42%	34%			
Own flat staying alone	17%	15%			
Own flat staying with someone	18%	21%			
Other	7%	4%			
Marital status			7	0.236	0.122*
Single	57%	57%			
Living together	10%	11%			
In an open relationship	1%	2%			
Married	13%	10%			
Divorced/separated	7%	4%			
In a relationship	10%	14%			
Widowed	2%	1%			
Other	0%	1%			
Level of education			6	0.000	0.201*
Did not complete high school	0%	3%			
Matric	10%	5%			
Diploma	12%	14%			
Degree	29%	42%			
Post-graduate	42%	28%			
Professional	7%	8%			
Other	0%	0%			
Source of information			9	0.640	0.106*

T 1 ' '	407	001			
Television	1%	2%			
Radio	0%	1%			
Couchsurfing website	6%	7%			
Magazines	1%	2%			
Newspapers	2%	2%			
Facebook	1%	3%			
Twitter	0%	0%			
Word-of-mouth (family, friends)	74%	67%			
Internet blog	9%	11%			
Online searches	1%	4%			
Other	2%	2%			
Previously been hosted			1	0.000	-0.197
Yes	58%	77%			
No	42%	23%			
Verification			1	0.002	-0.125
Yes	38%	52%			
No	62%	48%			
Improved understanding of other cultures			1	0.007	-0.109
Yes	86%	93%			
No	14%	7%			
	1470	1 70			
Expectations				0.000	0.407*
Absolutely nothing	000/	500/	1	0.009	0.107*
Yes	63%	52%			
No	37%	48%			
To be polite, neat and respect house rules			1	0.085	-0.070
Yes	5%	8%			
No	95%	92%			
Just company					
Yes	44%	62%	1	0.000	-0.162
No	56%	38%			
Meet my friends					
Yes	14%	13%	1	0.736	0.014
No	86%	87%			
Contribute towards expenses					
Yes	3%	1%	1	0.108	0.065
No	97%	99%	· .	5.700	3.300
Buy food/drinks	<u> </u>	22,0			
Yes	9%	9%	1	0.993	0.000
No	91%	91%	'	0.333	0.000
	5170	3170			
Share culture	30%	21%	4	0.020	0.094
Yes No	30% 70%	79%	1	0.0∠0	0.094
	1 U 70	1370			
Teach me their language	061	001		0.07	0.004
Yes	8%	8%	1	0.974	-0.001
No	92%	92%			
Host me in the future					
Yes	18%	6%	1	0.000	0.185*

No	82%	94%			
Bring a present					
Yes	0%	4%	1	0.011	-0.103
No	100%	96%			
Secretly pay					
Yes	0%	0%	-	-	-
No	100%	100%			
Sexual acts					
Yes	1%	1%	1	0.949	0.003
No	99%	99%			

^{*}indicates significance at 5% level; phi-value: *small effect=0.1; **medium effect=0.3; ***large effect=05

There is a statistically significant difference between South African and international hosts with regarding level of education (p<0.000, ϕ =0.201). The phi-value, however, shows that the relationship between country of residence and level of education is weak. In terms of post-graduate qualifications, South African hosts are more educated than international hosts. A significant statistical difference exists between South African hosts and international hosts with regard to whether respondents have previously been hosted (p<0.0000 ϕ =-0.197). Despite the statistical significance, the relationship is very weak. International hosts have previously been hosted slightly more than South African hosts.

With regard to verification of accounts between South African and international hosts, there is a significant statistical difference (p<0.002, ϕ =-0.125). A very weak relationship exists between verification and country of residence. Regardless of the weak relationship, more international hosts have verified their accounts as compared to their South African counterparts. With regard to whether Couchsurfing has improved hosts' understanding of other cultures there was a statistically significant difference between South African and international hosts, however with a very weak relationship between improved understanding and country of residence (p<0.007, ϕ =-0.109). As a result of hosting couchsurfers through Couchsurfing, understanding of other cultures has improved for slightly more international hosts than South African hosts. More South African hosts than international hosts expect absolutely nothing in return for hosting from couchsurfers. This is evidenced by a significant statistical difference and a however weak relationship between expectation and country of residence (p<0.009, ϕ =-0.107).

A significant statistical difference exists between South African hosts and international hosts' expectation of company from couchsurfers in return for hosting (p<0.0000, ϕ =-0.162). Although the relationship between this expectation and country of residence is very weak, it exists nonetheless; international hosts expect company from couchsurfers more than South African hosts. A very weak relationship also exists between South African and international

hosts with regard to the expectation 'to share culture' (p<0.020, ϕ =0.094). Despite the weak relationship, a significant statistical significance exists between international and South African hosts. Slightly more international hosts than South African hosts do not expect couchsurfers to share their culture in return for being hosted. The results show that there is a significant statistical significance and a very weak relationship between South African hosts and international hosts with regards to the expectation 'host me in future' (p<0.000, ϕ =0.185). Slightly more international hosts than South African hosts do not expect couchsurfers to host them in future in return for being hosted. Regarding the expectation 'bring a present', a significant statistical significance and a very weak relationship exists between South African and international hosts (p<0.011, ϕ =-0.103). All South African hosts as compared to international hosts, do not expect couchsurfers to bring a present in return for being hosted. The researcher could not find studies of a similar nature to compare the results.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

The following questions were posed in the first chapter of this study. Firstly, who are the people (hosts) who temporarily allow visitors (strangers) into their homes and why? Secondly, what do hosts expect in return? Lastly, how do South African hosts compare to international hosts? Do South Africans share interest in authentic experiences? How do hosts approach safety issues? These questions have been answered in the results section of this chapter. The purpose of this chapter was to present and interpret the results of the empirical survey conducted on international and South African hosts.

The empirical survey was conducted to establish who the Couchsurfing hosts are, why they host strangers at no fee and what safety measures they have in place as well as to compare South African hosts with international hosts. Hosts are generally male, in their mid-30s and highly educated. The main aspects indicated as reasons for hosting strangers at no fee are; to meet new people, to learn about the visitors' culture and to broaden understanding of the view of the world. These aspects were grouped into three factors namely 'socialising', 'reciprocity' and 'kindness'.

The most important factor was 'socialising', with aspects such as meeting new people, learning about other cultures and providing an adventurous experience to the visitors. The least important factor was 'reciprocity' with statements such as; expecting gifts from visitors, sexual favours and to be hosted in future. It is, therefore, clear that hosts engage in Couchsurfing for the purposes of meeting new people and cultural exchange. There is no monetary reward involved for the hosts, although hosts may have intangible expectations, the surfer is not obligated to fulfil these expectations but it is a common decency to do so.

The Couchsurfing hosts are generally homogeneous with slight differences in some aspects such as that international hosts have been hosts or members of Couchsurfing longer than South African hosts. It is interesting to note that slightly more international hosts than South African hosts are on Couchsurfing but they do not really want to host any couchsurfers. More international hosts do not expect couchsurfers to share their culture in return for being hosted as compared to South African hosts. The results showed that there was a weak relationship between country of origin and account verification, revealing that more international hosts than South African hosts have verified accounts. On what the hosts expect from couchsurfers, hosts responses were unanimous with both international and South African hosts agreeing that they expect nothing just company and to make friends with the couchsurfers. Hosts also agree that they do not ask couchsurfers to secretly pay or to partake in sexual acts. It is therefore clear that there is no monetary exchange involved in Couchsurfing and that this is not a dating platform. Although the significant differences were small, the purpose of the t-test was to determine if there were any differences amongst the international and South African hosts and how big these differences were. Due to the small size of these differences it can be concluded that South African hosts are more like international hosts than they are different. The purpose of the cross-tabulation analysis was to establish if a relationship exists between country of residence and behavioural aspects. The test revealed a weak relationship between country of residence and certain behavioural aspects and this, therefore means that the respondents' place of residence has little influence on behavioural aspects with regard to Couchsurfing.

Couchsurfing has also improved hosts' understanding of other cultures. Hosts stated that, due to engaging in Couchsurfing, their view of the world and other cultures has improved/widened/broadened. These responses therefore prove that Couchsurfing does facilitate cultural exchange which will, in turn, lead to tolerance amongst different cultures.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the findings of this study, according to the aims and objectives regarding Couchsurfing as an alternative, niche form of accommodation, and those who choose to host Couchsurfers. The conclusions will facilitate the formulation of recommendations.

The goal of this study was to analyse Couchsurfing as niche accommodation in tourism from the hosts' perspective. To achieve the goal of this study the following objectives were set in the first chapter and achieved in the subsequent chapters:

(1) To examine accommodation trends and the role of accommodation in the tourism industry. The different sectors of the tourism industry were examined in brief to ascertain the role of accommodation in the industry. The role of the accommodation sector was ascertained to reveal how crucial this sector is for the tourism industry. The history of the accommodation sector was discussed to understand how the sector has evolved over time and to make informed conclusions as to how the accommodation sector has improved. The different types of accommodation establishments available to tourists as well as how these establishments are classified were also examined. This enables market segmentation strategies of accommodation suppliers. Regulation and management of accommodation establishments was also discussed to understand how this sector operates and ensures that the set standards are met by the different stakeholders. The environmental impacts of the accommodation sector were also briefly examined to ascertain the negative impacts of this sector on the environment. Lastly, the trends in the accommodation sector were examined to understand the nature of this sector and the manner in which it changes and what influences these trends. Achieving this objective provides an overview of the accommodation sector about its history, regulation, management, trends and the integral role the sector plays in the tourism industry. This objective was achieved using the first literature review in Chapter 2.

- (2) The second objective examined the emergence of Couchsurfing as a contemporary form of accommodation experience. This was done to understand some of the underlying reasons for the existence of and participation in this hospitality platform and the aspects involved in the operation of this platform. To achieve this objective, previous studies were examined in the second literature chapter (Chapter 3).
- (3) The third objective was to determine Couchsurfing hosts' motives for hosting strangers at no fee as well as to conduct a comparison between South African hosts and international hosts. This objective was achieved using an empirical survey (Chapter 4).
- (4) The final objective was to draw conclusions from literature and the results of the study, as well as making recommendations with regards to the study and future research.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Conclusions will be drawn with regards to accommodation trends and their role in tourism, Couchsurfing as a form of tourism accommodation and the results of the study. This achieves the fourth and final objective of this study.

5.2.1 Conclusions with regard to accommodation in tourism

The following are the main conclusions with regard to objective 1 (c.f.1.4.2):

- Tourism is highly dependent on the type and quantity of accommodation available at the destination (c.f.2.1).
- Hospitality was a common practice amongst the Greek/Romans as early as 40BCE, and
 this shows that this is not a new practice. Travellers had various purposes for travel such
 as business, health, religion and leisure (c.f.2.3).
- The various forms of accommodation available to travellers developed and varied in type.
 Examples of accommodation establishments available from as early as 40BCE to the 20th century are inns, apartments, motels, guesthouses, lodges and hotels (c.f.2.3).
- In the 21st century, to ensure quality standards, governing bodies have been developed to govern, regulate and grade accommodation establishments. An example of such a governing body in South Africa is TGCSA (c.f.2.3).
- Accommodation plays a vital role in the tourism industry because tourism involves travel
 away from the place of residence, hence the need for a temporary stay for the duration of
 the trip. The type and availability of accommodation influences length of stay at the
 destination and the facilities available at the establishment encourage spending (c.f.2.4).

- Due to the intangibility of the accommodation sector, there is a need for governance of this sector through processes such as classification, grading and registration. Accommodation can be classified according to market segmentation, location, function, the distinctiveness of property, price, size and rating/grading (c.f.2.5).
- Accommodation is classified to standardise the quality of services, providing an incentive
 to suppliers to improve the standard of service, to protect consumers, informing consumers
 of the variety of accommodation available and for control purposes (c.f.2.5.1).
- There are two types of accommodation establishments in tourism, commercial and noncommercial accommodation which are further divided into hotels, lodges, camping sites, backpackers and hostels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts and country houses (c.f.2.8).
- Certain trends have emerged in the hospitality sector, globalisation (c.f.2.9.1), safety and security (c.f.2.9.2), diversity (c.f.2.9.3), service (c.f.2.9.4), technology (c.f.2.9.5) and price value (c.f.2.9.6).
- There is a growing concern for the impact of tourist accommodation establishments on the environment and accommodation governing bodies are encouraging establishments to implement environmentally friendly practices (c.f.2.9.8).
- The profile of tourists in the accommodation sector is also changing and a significant trend to note is tourists seeking experiences that they can attach emotions to. This is also known as an authentic experience (c.f.2.9.9).

5.2.2 Conclusions with regard to Couchsurfing as a form of accommodation in tourism

With regard to objective 2 (c.f.1.4.2), the following are regarded as the main conclusions:

- Couchsurfing is a virtual hospitality platform where people (Couchsurfing hosts) provide free accommodation and a wide range of activities to travellers (Couchsurfers) through the website http://www.couchsurfing.com (c.f.3.2).
- The purpose of Couchsurfing is not for profit but to facilitate a cultural exchange between hosts and couchsurfers (c.f.3.3).
- Members create online profiles where they share socio-demographic details, likes, interests, references, pictures of their homes to mention but a few (c.f.3.4).
- Couchsurfing is not only about the provision of accommodation but also organising meetups and events in the destination area (c.f.3.4). Therefore, hosts who do not have a couch/room available can participate in Couchsurfing through attending such events.
- The lack of monetary benefit to the hosts brings to light the aspect of reciprocity which entails reacting to a positive action with another positive action. The system of reciprocity

is based on three moral guidelines, the act of giving obligation to give, the act of receiving and the act of giving back (c.f.3.5).

- Reciprocity can either be direct or indirect (c.f.3.5).
- Couchsurfing is considered an authentic way of travel which can be attributed to the direct connection between the host and the traveller. The traveller stays in the Couchsurfing hosts' home and therefore has an insight into the real life of the host and their community (c.f.3.6).
- Tourists also consider Couchsurfing as a more authentic form of travel because the hosts act as tour guides to the travellers and take them beyond official tourist attractions (c.f.3.6).
- The virtual nature of Couchsurfing requires trust to exist between members of the platform and members build trust from information presented on each member's profile (c.f.3.7).
- Couchsurfing provides the following benefits (c.f.3.8):
- Reduced travel costs;
- Meeting new people;
- Restores a sense of pride to the host;
- Promotes cultural diversity;
- Self-development;
- Connects like-minded people.
- Couchsurfing also has strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (c.f.3.9).
- Safety is a concern for most travellers and is of even greater concern for online hospitality users due to the interaction with total strangers (c.f.3.10).
- Trust is essential in Couchsurfing and the following are measures taken by the Couchsurfing website developers to foster trust and ensure safety (c.f. 3.10):
- References- a feature that allows travellers to leave comments about their stay and travellers can be as detailed as possible on this section. Members use this feature when deciding who to host or to stay with
- Verification process- a process of proving that you are whom you say you are through
 payment, your address and phone number. This fosters trust amongst members and instils
 a sense of safety for the traveller. The process establishes that the member resides at the
 address provided on the website.
- Vouching- was a process of showing that a member is trustworthy. This system has since
 been discontinued because it could not be distinguished from the reference system and
 was being misused by members. However, members who had already been vouched for
 keep their 'vouch badges'.
- Ambassadors- these members volunteer to keep the Couchsurfing community together and educate other about Couchsurfing.

- Apart from these measures, there are safety guidelines available on the Couchsurfing website and a few will be mentioned here (c.f.3.10.1):
- Trust their instincts and have a backup plan;
- Review references and profiles of hosts and travellers carefully;
- Report negative experiences;
- Communicate before the meeting.
- Be informed about the culture they are travelling to.

Therefore, Couchsurfing provides an opportunity for travellers who cannot afford accommodation to travel to expensive destinations, and the hosts are major role players as providers of free accommodation. Thus travellers save money to spend on other tourism activities.

5.2.3 Conclusions with regard to the socio-demographic profile and motives of Couchsurfing hosts

The following conclusions were drawn with regard to objective 3 of the study (c.f.1.4.2):

- Couchsurfing hosts are generally single, English speaking (gender) and in their mid-30s. The hosts are highly educated, (degree and postgraduate degree holders) who speak three languages on average (c.f.4.2.2.1).
- South African hosts have been hosting couchsurfers for an average of three years as compared to international hosts who have been hosting couchsurfers for four years (c.f.4.2.2.2).
- Engaging in Couchsurfing has improved understanding of other cultures for both South African hosts and international hosts (c.f.4.2.2.2). This proves that Couchsurfing facilitates cultural understanding amongst members.
- More South African hosts do not use the verification safety feature as compared to
 international hosts. Verification was considered unnecessary and expensive by the hosts
 (c.f.4.2.2.2). This however may have negative safety implications because this feature is
 provided by Couchsurfing as a means to verify that the member is who they say they are
 and that the address they reside exists in hence not utilising this feature may cause
 distrust.
- Slightly more South African hosts than international hosts have no expectations from the couchsurfers, while more international hosts than South African hosts expect to build friendships with the couchsurfers (c.f.4.2.2.2).
- It is interesting to note that although South Africa has been dubbed the 'crime capital' of the world (c.f.1.3), the results show that slightly more South African hosts than international

hosts have no safety measures and only check references and the number of people who have vouched for the surfer. International hosts also share the same sentiments with South African hosts regarding to safety measures (c.f.4.2.2.2).

- International hosts are slightly more multilingual and have hosted couchsurfers more times than South African hosts (c.f.4.2.4.1).
- As compared to international hosts, slightly more South African hosts revealed that they
 keep their profiles active but do not really want to host (c.f.4.2.4.1). This could be the
 reason why Couchsurfing is not popular in South Africa because the hosts are not active
 members on the platform.
- A surfer's profile being 'dodgy' (untrustworthy) was the reason for being unable to host for more international hosts compared to South African hosts (c.f.4.2.4.1).
- Slightly more international hosts were unable to host couchsurfers because of travel as compared to their South African counterparts (c.f.4.2.4.1).
- Although differences with regard to socio-demographics exist between international hosts and South African hosts, country of residence has minimal influence on the outcome of socio-demographic variables - for example level of education, verification of Couchsurfing account and expectations from couchsurfers (c.f.4.2.5.1).

5.2.4 Conclusions with regards to Couchsurfing hosts' motives for hosting couchsurfers

The main conclusions drawn from the results of the empirical study are as follows:

- Couchsurfing hosts provide free accommodation to couchsurfers because of social reasons such as the curiosity to meet new people, cultural exchange, providing memorable experiences to travellers, making new friends and broadening understanding of the world to mention but a few (c.f. 4.2.3.1.1). Couchsurfing therefore encourages a personal interaction between hosts and guests unlike commercial accommodation such as hotels.
- The second most important motive for hosting couchsurfers was kindness and this involves
 aspects such as helping suffers lighten their financial burden, taking part in Couchsurfing
 events in the community and the adventure of welcoming a stranger into your home without
 knowing their background (c.f.4.2.3.1.2).
- Couchsurfing hosts do not host with an intention to make the traveller pay for their stay by
 means other than money. Hosts do not expect any form of financial or sexual reward from
 the surfer as this goes against the fundamental principles of Couchsurfing (c.f.4.2.3.1.3).
 This is in support of the notion that it is not essential to pay the host for your stay but more
 of a moral act of gratitude even when it is not expected of you to do so.

- It is important to note that most hosts did not mention reducing travel cost as a motivator for hosting and this is contrary to some literature stating that reducing cost is a motivator for hosts (c.f.4.2.1.5). This shows that Couchsurfing involves other activities such as events and sharing the host's local area with the surfer by showing them around.
- The results of this study show that Couchsurfing is truly a platform for hospitality exchange without any monetary benefits. There are no barriers to entry to this network, any person with access to the internet can be a member. Knowing the motivation and socio-demographic profile of the hosts help to distinguish what aspects the hosts consider important and which ones are not important. These aspects can therefore be used in encouraging more participation on the platform.

5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study contributes to the tourism industry, which is vital in South Africa and Couchsurfing might allow more people to travel because of reduced cost thereby allowing increased spending in other tourism sectors.
- This study contributes to the current literature by examining Couchsurfing as part of the
 accommodation sector within tourism, identifying the aspects involved in the hospitality
 platform and examining how all these aspects are integrated to operate Couchsurfing
 successfully.
- To the researcher's knowledge, this study was a first of its kind examining Couchsurfing hosts in a South African, and even a developing country context.
- The study provides hosts' 'own' motives for hosting suffers and safety measures they have in place, which means this information was provided by the hosts in an open-ended question, therefore not providing pre-determined options. This, therefore, adds more aspects to measure in the questionnaire for future studies. The study not only proves that Couchsurfing facilitates cultural understanding but also indicates how Couchsurfing has improved understanding of other cultures for hosts.
- The study is one of the few that provide demographic details about hosts and the quantitative method of study used is not common when examining Couchsurfing.
- The questionnaire used to determine hosts' motives for hosting, motives indicated by hosts in an open-ended question as well as safety measures indicated by hosts, can be used as a framework for future quantitative studies.
- The results of the study can be used for developing a framework for developing strategies to improve awareness and management of Couchsurfing in South Africa.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE STUDY

- It is recommended that the Couchsurfing website developers improve the website to provide advertisements about the benefits of meeting and interacting a meeting new people. This will help inform users who regard Couchsurfing as just a free accommodation platform.
- The Couchsurfing team should encourage members to practise word-of-mouth to market the hospitality platform and what it stands for. This can be done using members' social media sites such as Facebook to post videos and pictures of their experiences while Couchsurfing. To motivate hosts to partake in sharing experiences, Couchsurfing site managers could run competitions which require hosts to post, like and share details regarding their experiences on Couchsurfing.
- Couchsurfing ambassadors should host more events/meet-ups in South Africa to show that Couchsurfing experiences can also be in a public place with more than two hosts or couchsurfers. This will show that Couchsurfing is not only about the provision of accommodation to strangers at your house and this might reduce safety concerns for some members. South African hosts keep their profiles open but do not want to host, so these events can help them participate in the sharing experience without having to host.
- Site managers could create a reward system for hosts with a significant number of positive references to encourage hosting. The reward could be in the form of a free holiday with a host outside the country.
- Couchsurfing organisers should partner up with organisations that provide tourism services other than accommodation- such as travel agencies and attractions, so that they inform their clients about reducing the cost of travel through Couchsurfing. To create awareness of Couchsurfing, it is recommended that Couchsurfing be considered on websites of various attractions where it shows people who might be hosting in the areas where the attractions are located.
- Site managers should use Couchsurfing to market local attractions, filter hosts according to the attractions they are close to and not only the cities they live in.
- South Africa is considered a culturally rich country and one of the fundamental pillars of Couchsurfing is facilitating cultural exchange. This should be exploited by Couchsurfing administrators, hosts and ambassadors to popularise Couchsurfing in South Africa.
- South African hosts can use Couchsurfing as a platform to as a way to lessen couchsurfers' concerns by providing guidelines to travellers. For example, telling travellers not to walk alone at night and to keep cell phones out of sight. This is possible because the study revealed that Couchsurfing has broadened some hosts' understanding of the world and other cultures. Travellers should always ensure that they know the emergency

- numbers of the area visited and should let friends or family members know where they are going should anything happen to them.
- The website developers can add a video calling feature to the website so that the hosts and travellers talk and see each other prior to the meeting in person.
- Hosts and travellers can create a "neighbourhood watch" forum which will provide a sense
 of safety should any one of them feel uncomfortable with a host or traveller. If they have a
 negative experience, they should report it immediately so that others can be warned
 against interactions with the person in question as soon as possible.
- Verification is considered as one of the most important safety/trust building features but the study revealed that hosts do not consider this to be an important factor and that their accounts are not verified. The amount payable for verification should be reduced seeing that most couchsurfers and hosts are young budget travellers. The site should better market the importance of the verification feature because it enables couchsurfers and hosts to know that the person they are interacting with is who they say they are.
- There are travellers who will always prefer traditional forms of accommodation such as hotels and not Couchsurfing due to concerns such as safety. This, however, does not mean that these travellers do not long for authentic experiences hence hotel managers can incorporate genuine elements of local culture such as cuisine at discounted prices or host an intimate art exhibition by local artists.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research should focus on the South African surfer's travel motives and therefore conduct a comparison study of host and surfer motives to ascertain whether reasons for participation in Couchsurfing are similar.
- A qualitative in-depth study on South African hosts' motives can also be conducted therefore enabling a comparison with other similar qualitative studies available.
- An examination of other hospitality networks such as Airbnb and VBRO can be conducted
 to examine whether the experiences are different from those of Couchsurfers and whether
 there are any safety concerns.
- The growth of the sharing economy in South Africa can also be examined to determine the
 factors influencing this growth and how the sharing economy can be integrated in to the
 mainstream economy. A management model for the sharing economy can also be
 developed.
- The study could be expanded to other African countries to obtain a general African perspective of Couchsurfing.

Questions still remain with regard to the popularity of Couchsurfing and these include:
 Does technological advancement and modernisation influence the popularity of
 Couchsurfing? If yes, to what extent? What are the pros and cons of the government
 regulating Couchsurfing if at all possible? Future studies could therefore focus on
 answering these questions.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The major limitation of the study was that the researcher had no control on how quickly the online questionnaire was completed which therefore took a long time. The Couchsurfing platform does not have a contact person for research purposes; this would have helped in that respondents would have been more willing to complete the survey if the link was posted through official channels.
- The lack of similar studies to use as a framework for the development of the questionnaire unique to South Africa made this study exploratory in nature and no benchmark measuring instrument could be found.
- The study could also have measured other aspects of Couchsurfing such as event attendance, tour guiding and information provision regarding local attractions and activities. This would show the extent to which members participate in Couchsurfing apart from hosting couchsurfers.

REFERENCES

Adusei, O. 2017. Safety and security management practices in the hospitality industry: the Ghanaian experience.

https://www.academia.edu/8029348/safety_and_security_management_practices_in_the_ho spitality_industry_the_ghanaian_experience?auto=download Date of access: 28 Jul. 2017.

Ali, A.B. 2015. Travel and tourism management. Dhelhi: PHI Learning.

Ali-Knight, J.M. The role of niche tourism products in destination development. PHD thesis by Publish Works.

Amadeo, K. 2017. Balance of trade: favourable vs unfavourable. https://www.thebalance.com/balance-of-trade-definition-favorable-vs-unfavorable-3306261 Date of access: 17 Sept. 2017.

Apramenya, A. 2016. Cross Tabulation: how it works and why you should use it. https://blog.socialcops.com/academy/resources/cross-tabulation-how-why/ Date of access: 1 Sept. 2018.

Batinić, I. 2013. Current trends in hospitality industry. *Journal of process management,* 1(4):91-95.

Bennett, A., Jooste, C. & Strydom, L. 2005. Managing tourism services: a southern African perspective. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Bhatia, A.K. 2006. Tourism development: principles and practices. New Dheli: Sterling.

Bhatia, A.K. 2009. The business of tourism concepts and strategies. New Dheli: Sterling.

Bialski, P. 2012. Technologies of hospitality: how planned encounters develop between strangers. *Hospitality and society*, 1(3):245-260.

Biederman, P.S., Lai, J., Laitamaki, J.M., Messerli, H.R., Nyheim, P.D. & Plog, S.C. 2008. Travel and tourism: an industry primer. New Jersey, NJ: Pearson Education.

Bitton, S. 2018. The benefits of Couchsurfing. http://www.worldation.com/opinions/the-benefits-of-couchsurfing/ Date of access: 15 Sept. 2018.

Bogdan, M. 2017. Couchsurfing and the tourist experience value of its members. Aalborg: Aalborg University. (Dissertation- Masters).

Bradbury, R.L. 2013. Couchsurfing in North Texas: a localized view of a global phenomenon. Arlington: University of Texas. (Dissertation - Masters).

Branislav, R. 2014. Special-purpose travel in ancient times: 'tourism' before tourism? *Turističko poslovanje*, 2014(14):5-17.

BrckaLorenz, A., Chiang, Y. & Laird, T.N. 2013. Internal consistency. http://fsse.indiana.edu/pdf/pp/2013/FSSE13_Internal_Consistency_Reliability.pdf Date of access: 14 Oct. 2018.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2011. Research methodology: business and management contexts. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Buhalis, D. & Costa, C. 2006. Tourism management dynamics: trends, management and tools. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.

Caan, J. 2014. To succeed in hospitality, focus on the customer. https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/mar/05/succeed-hospitality-focus-customer-james-caan Date of access: 3 Aug. 2017.

Can, B.K., Ertaş, M., Yeşilyurt, H. & Küçükaltan, E.G. 2017. The relationship between tourism and commodification: a conceptual approach. *Dokuz eylül üniversitesi işletme fakültesi dergisi*, 18(2):265-282.

Carter, B. 2017. How technology is changing the hotel industry. https://www.rentokil.com/blog/how-technology-is-changing-the-hotel-industry/#.w5uvhc4zbiu Date of access: 9 Sept. 2018.

Casey, S. 2012. Facilitating authenticity: terms of exchange between host and guest in Couchsurfing.

http://www.seanjcasey.com/sites/default/files/uploads/facilitating%20authenticity%20%20ter ms%20of%20exchange%20between%20host%20and%20guest%20in%20couchsurfing.pdf Date of access: 20 Jun. 2017.

Celata, F., Hendrickson, C.Y. & Sanna, V.S. 2017. The sharing economy as community marketplace? Trust, reciprocity and belonging in peer-to-peer accommodation platforms. *Cambridge Journal of regions, economy and society,* 10(2):349-363.

Chanoux, M. 2012. Current and future trends in tourism and hospitality. https://prezi.com/nit320-ykcqw/current-and-future-trends-in-tourism-and-hospitality/# Date of access: 28 Jul. 2017.

Chen, D.J. 2011. Global concept, local practice: Taiwanese experience of Couchsurfing. *Hospitality and society*, 1(3):279-237.

Chen, D.J. 2018. Couchsurfing: performing the travel style through hospitality exchange. *Tourist studies*, 18(1):105-122.

Cohen, J. 1988. Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences. (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.

Cooper, D.R. & Schindler, P.S. 2008. Business research methods. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Costello, A.B. & Osborne, J.W. 2005. Best practices in exploratory factor analysis: four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis. *Practical assessment, research & evaluation*, 10(7):1-9.

Couchsurfing. 2016a. How do I sign-up and get started on Couchsurfing? https://support.couchsurfing.org/hc/en-us/articles/203625544-How-do-I-sign-up-and-get-started-on-Couchsurfing- Date of access: 9 Sept. 2018.

Couchsurfing. 2016b. About us. http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/about-us/ Date of access: 30 May 2016.

Couchsurfing. 2016c. What is verification? https://support.couchsurfing.org/hc/en-us/articles/214634407-What-is-Verification- Date of access: 17 Sept. 2018.

Couchsurfing. 2016d. Verification payment questions. https://support.couchsurfing.org/hc/en-us/articles/214633027-Verification-Payment-Questions Date of access: 17 Sept. 2018.

Couchsurfing. 2017a. Find accommodation in South Africa. https://www.couchsurfing.com/members/hosts?placeid=ChIJURLu2YmmNBwRoOikHwxjXe g&search guery=South+Africa Date of access: 12 Mar. 2017. Couchsurfing. 2017b. About us. http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/about-us/ Date of access: 9 Sept. 2018.

Couchsurfing. 2017c. Ambassador program.

http://about.couchsurfing.com/about/ambassadors/ Date of access: 17 Sept. 2018.

Couchsurfing. 2017d. Safety basics. http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/safety/ Date of access: 7 Nov. 2018.

CrimeStatsSA, 2015. Crime stats simplified. http://www.crimestatssa.com/national.php Date of access: 21 Oct. 2017.

Crossman, A. 2018. Understanding social exchange theory.

https://www.thoughtco.com/social-exchange-theory-3026634 Date of access: 16 Oct. 2018.

Dén-Nagy, I. & Király, G. 2014. How to explain CouchSurfing's success? *Review of sociology*, 24(4): 32-53.

Djeri, L., Amernski, T., Jovanovic, T. & Dragin, A. 2014. How income influences the choice of a tourist destination. *Acta oeconomica*, 64(2):219-237.

Dickmen, F & Bozdağlar, H. 2017. The role of service culture in hospitality industry. *International journal of business and social science*, 8(5):85-98.

Duminy, E. 2016. Cape Town tourism CEO: city on trend to offer travellers more personalised experiences. http://www.traveller24.com/news/cape-town-tourism-ceo-city-on-trend-to-offer-travellers-more-personalised-experiences-20160210 Date of access: 25 Sept. 2017.

Du Plessis, E. & Saayman, M. 2011. Grading and price in the accommodation sector of South Africa. *Acta academica*, *43*(1):130-145.

Field, A.P. 2000. Discovering statistics using SPSS for Windows: advanced techniques for the beginner. London: Sage.

Firk, A. 2014. Conducting research literature reviews: from the internet to paper. 4th ed. Califonia: Sage.

Fletcher, J., Fyall, A., Gilbert, D. & Wanhill, S. 2013. Tourism principles and practice. 5th ed. London: Pearson Education.

Franz, M. 2013. Experiences, reputation, references and decision-making in an online hospitality network. Finland: University of Jyväskylä. (Dissertation – Masters).

Garrett-Mayer, E. 2006. Lecture 8.

http://ocw.jhsph.edu/courses/statisticspsychosocialresearch/pdfs/lecture8.pdf Date of access: 9 Aug. 2018.

Gehrels, S. & Suleri, J. 2016. Diversity and inclusion as indicators of sustainable human resources management in the international hospitality industry. *Research in hospitality management*, 6(1):61-67.

Geiger, A. & Germelmann, C.C. 2015a. Thank me for hosting: the role of reciprocity in sharing. *Association for consumer research*, 43:534-535.

Geiger, A. & Germelmann, C.C. 2015b. Reciprocal Couchsurfing versus sharing's non-reciprocity principle. In Proceedings of the 44th EMAC Conference, Leuven, 25-27 May. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281859334_reciprocal_couchsurfing_versus_sharing's_non-reciprocity_principle_Date of access: 16 Oct. 2018.

George, R. 2008. Marketing tourism in South Africa. 3rd ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Gilmore, J.H. & Pine II, J. 2007. Authenticity, what consumers really want. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Gisolf, M.C. 2010. Authenticity. http://www.tourismtheories.org/?p=719 Date of access: 17 Sept. 2018.

Global Hospitality Portal. 2018. What is hospitality industry: historical background of the hospitality industry. https://www.soegjobs.com/2016/09/15/hospitality-industry-historical-background/ Date of access: 13 Sept. 2018.

Goeldner, C.R. & Ritchie, J.R.B. 2006. Tourism. 10th ed. New Jersey, NJ: John Wiley.

Goeldner, C.R., Ritchie, J.R.B. & McIntosh, R. 2000. Tourism: principles, practices, philosophies. 8th ed. New York, NY: John Wiley.

Gowreesunkar, V. & Sotiriadis, M. 2015. Entertainment of leisure tourists in island destinations: evidence from the island of Mauritius. *African journal of hospitality, tourism and leisure*, 4(Special edition):1-19.

Grant, L. 2017. Why you should use Couchsurfing to travel.

https://www.oyster.com/articles/60452-why-you-should-use-couchsurfing-to-travel/ Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.

Grover. P. 2011. Data analysis: cross tabulation, its benefits.

https://dataqresearch.wordpress.com/2014/08/01/data-analysis-cross-tabulation-its-benefits/ Date of access: 5 Mar. 2017.

Guttentag, D. 2015. Airbnb: disruptive innovation and the rise of an informal tourism accommodation sector. *Current issues in tourism*, 18(12):1192-1217.

Gyr, U. 2010. The history of tourism: structures on the path to modernity. Institute of European History (IEG): Mainz, Germany. http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-on-the-road/the-history-of-tourism#theboominmasstourisminthe19thcentury Date of access: 13 Sept. 2018.

Haneef, S.K. 2017. A model to explore the impact of tourism infrastructure on destination image for effective marketing. Manchester, UK: University of Salford. (Thesis- PhD).

Harcombe, D. 2015. The economic impacts of tourism.

http://81.47.175.201/stodomingo/attachments/article/9/economicimpactsoftourism.pdf Date of access: 25 Sept. 2017.

Henama, U.S. 2012. Tourism accommodation in Mangaung: current dynamics, immediate challenges and future prospects. *International journal of business, economics and law*, 1:76-84.

Hinton, P.R., Brownlow, C., McMurray, I., & Cozens, B. 2004. SPSS explained. London: Routledge.

Horolets, A. 2015. Couchsurfing cosmopolitanisms: can tourism make a better world?, *Journal of tourism and cultural change*, 13(3):275-277

Inflation.eu. 2018. Current inflation in South Africa-CPI inflation.

https://www.inflation.eu/inflation-rates/south-africa/current-cpi-inflation-south-africa.aspx Date of access: 4 Nov. 2018.

Inforgr.am. 2014. Couchsurfing. https://infogr.am/couchsurfing-statistics Date of access: 15 Mar. 2017.

Jackson, S. 2018. What is Couch Surfing? Advantages & disadvantages. http://www.elitetravelblog.com/what-is-couch-surfing-advantages-and-disadvantages/ Date of access: 4 Nov.2018.

Juric, B., Vukovic, D. & Markovac, N. 2012. Analysis of familiarity and ways of couchsurfing marketing as a new tourist form in Croatia's student population. International journal of management cases, 14(4): 219-237.

Kapiki, S. 2012. Implementing sustainable practices in Greek eco-friendly hotels. *Journal of environmental protection and ecology*, 13(2A):1117-1123.

Keyser, H. 2009. Developing tourism in South Africa: towards competitive destinations. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Kim, S., Lee, K.Y., Koo, C. & Yang, S.B. 2018. Examining the influencing factors of intention to share accommodations in online hospitality exchange networks. *Journal of travel and tourism marketing*, 35(1):16-31.

Kocher, B., Morhart, F., Zisiadis, G. & Hellwing, K. 2014. Share your life and get more of yourself: experience sharing in Couchsurfing. *Advances in consumer research*, 42: 510-511.

Krejcie, R.V. & Morgan, D.W. 1970. Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 30(3):607-610.

Latham. B. 2007. Sampling: what is it? https://docplayer.net/20989579-Sampling-what-is-it-quantitative-research-methods-engl-5377-spring-2007.html Date of access: 4 Nov. 2018.

Lauterbach, D., Truong, H., Shah, T. & Adamic, L. 2009. Surfing a web of trust: reputation and reciprocity on Couchsurfing.com. *IEEE SociaLCom*, 4:346-353.

Lee, B. 2017. Couchsurfing 101: everything you need to know. http://www.brenontheroad.com/couchsurfing-101/ Date of access: 28 Mar. 2017.

Liu, J. 2012. The intimate stranger on your couch: an analysis of motivation, presentation and trust through Couchsurfing. (Master's Thesis - Uppsala University).

Liu, Y., Nie, L. & Li, L. 2016. Homogeneity, trust, and reciprocity: three keys to the sustainable hospitality exchange of Couchsurfing. *Tourism analysis*, 21(2-3):145-157.

Lötter, M.J. Aconceptual framework for segmenting niche tourism markets. Pretoria: Tshwane University of Technology. (PhD- Thesis)

Lundup, T. 2013. Culture, commodification and tourism.

http://www.ipcs.org/issue_briefs/issue_brief_pdf/ib238-ladakhfiles-tashilundup-tourism.pdf Date of access: 16 Sept. 2018.

Luo, Q. & Zhang, H. 2016. Building interpersonal trust in a travel-related virtual community: a case study on a Guangzhou Couchsurfing community. *Tourism management*, 54:107-121.

Manthiou, A., Kang, J., Hyun, S.S. & Fu, X.X. 2018. The impact of brand authenticity on building brand love: an investigation of impression in memory and lifestyle-congruence. *International journal of hospitality management*, 75:38-47.

Maree, K. & Pietersen, J. 2007. Sampling. (In Maree, K. ed. First steps in research. Pretoria: Van Schaick Publishers. p. 171-181).

Maslow, A.H. 1943. A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review*, 50(4):370-396.

Martucci, B. 2014. What is the sharing economy- example companies, definition, pros & cons. https://www.moneycrashers.com/sharing-economy/#comments Date of access: 25 Sept. 2017.

McFadden, M. 2014. The benefits of Couchsurfing.

https://theatlasheart.com/2014/03/27/the-benefits-of-couchsurfing/ Date of access: 15 Sept. 2018.

McIntosh, R.W., Goeldner, C.R. & Ritchie, J.R.B. 1995. Tourism principles practices, philosophies. New York, NY: John Willey.

Meier, C & Hartell, C. 2009. Handling cultural diversity in education in South Africa. *SA-eDUC journal*, 6(2):180-192.

Mest, S. 2016. Couchsurfing: pros and cons of the cheapest accommodation option. https://www.fundmytravel.com/blog/2016/09/16/couchsurfing-pros-and-cons-of-the-cheapest-accommodation-option/ Date of access: 15 Sept. 2018. Miller, B. 2013. History of the hospitality industry.

https://www.slideshare.net/27101985/history-of-the-hospitality-industry Date of access: 13 Sept. 2018.

Molz, J.G. 2013. Social networking technologies and the moral economy of alternative tourism: the case of Couchsurfing. *Annals of tourism research*, 43:210-230.

Muller, N. 2010. Couchsurfing posing a threat to hostels. https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-couchsurfing-posing-threat-to-hostels-article1214 Date of access: 19 Oct. 2018.

Mussio, M. 2017. How hoteliers can capitalize on the "authentic experience" trend. http://blog.lesroches.edu/the-industry/how-hoteliers-can-capitalize-on-the-authentic-experience-trend/ Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.

Muthu, A.R.M. 2016. The ambivalence of gift-giving. *International review of social sciences and humanities*, 11(2):52-72.

NDT (National Department of Tourism). 2017. Global tourism performance. https://www.tourism.gov.za/aboutndt/publications/quarter%20two%202017%20volume%202 _20%20november%202017.pdf Date of access: 5 Sept. 2018.

Novelli, M. 2009. Niche tourism: contemporary issues, trends and cases. Kidlington: Butterwoeth-Heinemann.

Nz Muse. 2013. Unexpected benefits of Couchsurfing (or how to fall in love with your own country again. http://nzmuse.com/2013/02/thoughts-on-couchsurfing/ Date of access: 19 Oct. 2018.

Oliver, P. 2012. Succeeding with your literature review: a handbook for students (open up study skills). Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

O'Mahony, G.B. & Clark, I.D. 2013. From inns to hotels: the evolution of public houses in colonial Victoria. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, 25(2):172-186.

Page, S.J. 2003. Tourism management: managing for change. 1st ed. Elsevier: Oxford.

Page, S.J. 2007. Tourism management: managing for change. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier.

Page, S.J., Brunt, P., Busby, G. & Connell, J. 2001. Tourism: a modern synthesis. London: Thompson Learning.

Pallant, J. 2001. SPSS survival manual: a step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Pallant, J. 2007. SPSS survival manual: a step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS version 15. 3rd ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press..

Pallant, J. 2016. SPSS survival manual: a step by step guide to using IBM statistics. 6th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Patterson, I. 2006. Growing older: tourism and leisure behaviour of older adults. Oxfordshire: CABI.

Perry, E.C. & Potgieter, C. 2013. Crime and tourism in South Africa. *Journal of human ecology*, 43(1):101-111.

Pieterson, J. & Maree, K. 2007a. Statistical analysis 1: descriptive statistics. (In Maree, K. ed. First steps in research. Pretoria: Van Schaick Publishers. p. 182-196).

Pieterson, J. & Maree, K. 2007b. Standardisation of a questionnaire. (In Maree, K. ed. First steps in research. Pretoria: Van Schaick Publishers. p. 218-223).

Pieterson, J. & Maree, K. 2007c. Overview of statistical techniques. (In Maree, K. ed. First steps in research. Pretoria: Van Schaick Publishers. p. 224-259).

Pietilä, O. 2011. Couchsurfer's motivation to host travellers in Spain. Spain: Laurea University of Applied Sciences. (Bachelor's dissertation).

Pizam, A & Shani, A. 2009. The nature of the hospitality industry: present and future managers' perspectives. *Anatolia: an international journal of tourism and hospitality research,* 20(1):134-150.

Popova, D. 2012. Hospitality management lecture notes. http://vfu.bg/en/e-learning/hospitality_management.ppt Date of access: 1 Jun. 2017.

Poudel, S. 2013. The influence of the accommodation sector on tourism development and sustainability. Case study: strand camping, Larsmo. Finland: Centria University of applied sciences. (Bachelor's dissertation).

Pulido-Fernández, J.I. & López-Sánchez, Y. 2016. Are tourists really willing to pay more for sustainable destinations? *Sustainability*, 8(12):1-20.

PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers). 2018. PwC Hotels outlook: 2018-2022: positioning for future growth (South Africa, Nigeria, Mauritius, Kenya, Tanzania). https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/hotels-outlook-18-2022.pdf Date of access: 7 Nov. 2018.

Qualtrics. 2011. Cross tabulation analysis. https://www.qualtrics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/cross-tabulation-theory.pdf Date of access: 5 Mar. 2017.

Ramawela, M. 2017. Tourism has the ability to pull the economy and society out of the mire https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2017-07-28-tourism-has-the-ability-to-pull-the-economy-and-society-out-of-the-mire/ Date of access: 19 Oct. 2018.

Robinson, P., Lück, M. & Smith, M. 2013. Tourism. 10th ed. Boston, MA: CAB International.

Rosen, D., Lafontaine, P.R. & Hendrickson, B. 2011. Couchsurfing: belonging and trust in a globally cooperative online social network. *New media & society*, 13(6):981-998.

Rosenberg, M. 2018. Grand tour of Europe: the travels of 17th & 18th century twenty-somethings. https://www.thoughtco.com/grand-tour-of-europe-1435014 Date of access: 2 Nov. 2018.

Royal Literary Fund. 2017. What is a literature review? https://www.rlf.org.uk/resources/what-is-a-literature-review/ Date of access: 15 Mar. 2017.

Saayman, M. 2002. Hospitality leisure and tourism management. 2nd ed. Potchefstroom: Leisure Publications.

Santos, B. 2012. Chapter 1: history of the lodging industry. https://www.slideshare.net/polyphone/chapter-1-history-of-lodging-industry Date of access: 4 Aug. 2017.

SA-Venues. 2017. South Africa accommodation. http://www.sa-venues.com/accommodation south africa.htm Date of access: 24 Apr. 2017.

Sicot, T. 2013. Sharing economy squeezing traditional tourism businesses. https://atelier.bnpparibas/en/smart-city/article/sharing-economy-squeezing-traditional-tourism-businesses Date of access: 19 Oct. 2018.

Singh, J. 2015. Safety & security concerns in hospitality industry. *International journal of management and commerce innovations*, 2(2):1-5.

Singh, L.K. 2008. Fundamental of tourism and travel. Dheli: Gyan.

Skog. C. 2012. Couchsurfing, a choice for travellers. Haaga-Helia: University of Applied Sciences. (Bachelor's dissertation).

Skripak, S.J. 2016. Fundamentals of business. Virginia: Virginia Tech Libraries.

Slabbert, E. & Saayman, M. 2003. Guesthouse management in South Africa. 1st ed. Potchefstroom: Institute for Tourism and Leisure Studies.

South Africa. 2017a. Natural attractions.

http://country.southafrica.net/country/us/en/articles/landing/category/natural-attractions Date of access: 3 Aug. 2017.

South Africa. 2017b. Top ten cities.

http://country.southafrica.net/country/us/en/top10/entry/top-10-cities-enus Date of access: 28 Feb. 2017.

StatsSA (Statistics South Africa). 2016a. Tourism: employment, economy and foreign income. http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=6166 Date of access: 4 Nov. 2018.

StatsSA (Statistics South Africa). 2016b. Tourism satellite account for South Africa, final 2012 and provisional 2013 and 2014. http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-04-05-07/Report-04-05-072014.pdf Date of access: 4 Nov. 2018.

StatsSA (Statistics South Africa). 2018a. Tourism migration: December 2017. http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/p0351/p0351december2017.pdf Date of access: 29 Sept. 2018. StatsSA (Statistics South Africa). 2018b. Tourism satellite account for South Africa, final 2014 and provisional 2015 and 2016. http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-04-05-07/Report-04-05-072016.pdf Date of access: 7 Nov. 2018.

Stephens, M.A. 2017. Social exchange theory. https://quizlet.com/186066102/social-exchange-theory-flash-cards/ Date of access: 15 Sept. 2018.

Steylaerts, V. & Dubhghaill, O.S. 2012. Couchsurfing and authenticity: notes towards understanding an emerging phenomenon. *Hospitality & society*, 1(3):261-278.

Steyn, L.L. 2017. Record numbers at all Cape Town's major attractions and there's more to come. https://www.traveller24.com/explore/businesstravel/record-numbers-at-all-cape-towns-major-attractions-and-theres-more-to-come-20170117 Date of access: 5 Oct. 2018.

StudyLib. 2017. Lesson 2: four segments of hospitality and tourism. http://studylib.net/doc/8789690/lesson-2--four-segments-of-hospitality-and-tourism Date of access: 21 Jul. 2017.

Suhr, D.D. 2006. Exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis? http://www2.sas.com/proceedings/sugi31/200-31.pdf Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.

SurveyMonkey. 2019. Sample size calculator. https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/ Date of access: 5 Feb.2019.

Swain, S.K & Kumar, J.M. 2011. Tourism, principles and practices. New Delhi: Oxford University press.

Teng, C., Lauterbach, D. & Adamic, L.A. 2010. I rate you. You rate me. Should we do so publicly? Paper presented at the 3rd Workshop on Online Social Networks, Boston, MA, 22 June. https://www.usenix.org/legacy/event/wosn10/tech/full_papers/teng.pdf Date of access: 17 Sept. 2018.

TGCSA (Tourism Grading Council of South Africa). 2016a. About TGCSA. https://www.tourismgrading.co.za/about-the-tgcsa/ Date of access: 10 Sept. 2018.

TGCSA (Tourism Grading Council of South Africa). 2016b. What is star grading? https://www.tourismgrading.co.za/get-graded/what-is-star-grading/ Date of access: 10 Sept. 2018.

TGCSA (Tourism Grading Council of South Africa). 2011. Minimum requirements: guest accommodation. https://www.tourismgrading.co.za/assets/assets/guest-accommodation-minimum-requirements-of-entry.pdf Date of access: 1 Oct. 2018.

Toeniskoetter, C. 2013. Hospitality exchange: overcoming safety. Trust, and gender concerns in the Couchsurfing community. Michigan: University of Michigan. (Senior Honours- dissertation).

Tran, L.D. 2010. Trust in an online hospitality network: an interpretive study of the CouchSurfing project. Parma, Italy: University of Parma. (Dissertation – Masters).

Tsyganok, I. 2013. Accommodation as a basic component of tourism. http://dspace.nuft.edu.ua/jspui/bitstream/123456789/8801/1/accommodation.pdf Date of access: 9 May 2017.

UKEssays. 2016. The relationship between host community and guest tourism essay. https://www.ukessays.com/essays/tourism/the-relationship-between-host-community-and-guest-tourism-essay.php?vref=1 Date of access: 4 Nov. 2018.

UNWTO (World Tourism Organisation). 2011. Tourism and travel: celebrating diversity, linking cultures and promoting dialogue between civilizations.

http://europe.unwto.org/event/tourism-and-travel-celebrating-diversity-linking-cultures-and-promoting-dialogue-between-civ-0 Date of access: 17 Sept. 2018.

VRBO (Vacation Rental By Owner). 2017. A passion for vacation homes: a better way to stay. https://www.vrbo.com/info/about-the-family Date of access: 25 Sept. 2017.

Walker, J.R. & Walker, J.T. 2011. Tourism concepts and practices. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall.

Wang, N. 1999. Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of tourism research*, 26(2):349-370.

Weaver, D. & Lawton, L. 2010. Tourism management. 4th ed. Milton: John Wiley.

Webrezpro. 2016. Not just a pretty room: selling an experience.

http://www.webrezpro.com/not-just-pretty-room-selling-experience/ Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.

Williams, A. 1994. Resolving conflict in a multicultural environment. (Article summary). http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/will5746.htm Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.

Wilson-Mah, R. 2016. Accommodation. (In Morgan, W., Introduction to hospitality in BC Vancouver. Canada: Capilano University. p. 44-70).

Wood, A. 2017. The rise and fall of the great American motel.

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/twilight-mom-and-pop-motel-180963895/ Date of access: 13 Sept. 2018.

Wood, R.C. 2013. Key concepts in hospitality management. London: Sage.

WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council). 2018. Travel and tourism impact 2018 South Africa. https://tbcsa.travel/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/wttc-report-southafrica2018.pdf Date of access: 5 Sept. 2018.

Yeoman, I. 2008a. The authentic tourist.

https://www.hospitalitynet.org/opinion/4037066.html Date of access: 2 Jun. 2017.

Yeoman, I. 2008b. Tomorrow's tourists: scenarios and trends. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Zaki, T.A. 2015. The study of online hospitality exchange: the case of Couchsurfing network. Vaasa, Finland: Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. (Thesis).

Zervas, G., Proserpio, D. & Byers, J.W. 2017. The rise of the sharing economy: estimating the impact of Airbnb on the hotel industry. *Journal of marketing research*, 54(5):687-705.

Zgolli, S & Zaiem, I. 2018. Couchsurfing: a new form of sustainable tourism and an exploratory study of its motivations and its effect on satisfaction with the stay. *International journal of culture, tourism and hospitality research*, 12(1):130-142.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A: South African Couchsurfers questionnaire

Appendix B: International Couchsurfer questionnaire

Appendix C: Letter from language editor

APPENDIX A: SOUTH AFRICAN HOSTS QUESTIONNARE

Couchsurfing Host Survey

In order to better understand Couchsurfing, it is also important to understand the hosts. It is the purpose of this questionnaire to analyse who the hosts are, what their behaviour is like, as well as why they host Couchsurfers.

*Required

1.	What is your city/town of residence?
2.	Gender Mark only one oval.
	Male Female
3.	Year of birth
	Example: 15 December 2012
4.	What is your main language Mark only one oval. English
	Other:
5.	Except for your main language, what other languages can you speak/understand Tick all that apply.
	English
	Afrikaans
	isiZulu
	Setswana
	German
	[Italian
	Dutch
	Spanish
	Other:

What is your current occupation?

7.	What i	is your annual income?
	Mark o	only one oval.
		<r20 000<="" th=""></r20>
		R20 001 - R140 000
		R140 001 - R221 000
		R221 001 - R305 000
		R305 001 - R431 000
		R431 001 - R552 000
		R552 001 - R670 000
		R670 001>
8.		is your current living arrangements? only one oval.
		I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay alone
		I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay with friends/family/partner
		I own a flat/apartment/home and I stay on my own
		I own a flat/apartment/home and I stay with friends/family/partner
		Other:
9.		I status only one oval. Single Living together In an open relationship Married Divorced/seperated
		In a relationship
		Other:
10.	_	st level of education only one oval.
		Did not complete high school
		Matric
		Diploma
		Degree
		Post-graduate
		Professional

Other:			

Section B: Couchsurfer Host behaviour

_	approximately how long have you been hosting 'surfers' at your home through
	chsurfing? conly one oval.
	Less than a year
) 1 year
)2 years
)3 years
)4 years
)5 years
)6 years
)7 years
)8 years
)9 years
	,
	10+ years
	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time?
Whe	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time?
	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? s only one oval. Television
Whe	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? s only one oval. Television Radio
	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? only one oval. Television Radio Couchsurfing website
Whe	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? conly one oval. Television Radio Couchsurfing website Magazines
Whe	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? conly one oval. Television Radio Couchsurfing website Magazines Newspapers
Whe	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? conly one oval. Television Radio Couchsurfing website Magazines Newspapers Facebook
Whe	re did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time? only one oval. Television Radio Couchsurfing website Magazines Newspapers Facebook Twitter

5.	If you have hosted 'surfers', shortly state WHY you did so.
	Have you previously been hosted by someone else? Mark only one oval.
	Yes No
7.	
	If yes in the previous answer, please indicate how many times have you been hosted. Please only write a number.
	Is your Couchsurfing account verified? Mark only one oval.
	Yes
	No
9.	Please explain your answer in the previous question shortly.

20.		t do you expect from 'surfers' who stay with you? (You may choose more than one option) all that apply.
		Absolutely nothing, they can come and go as they see fit
		Just their company from time to time
		I want them to meet my friends and make them part of my friend circle
		They should contribute financially towards water and electricity bills
		I want them to buy food/drinks
	tradit	They must share their culture with me by means of cooking traditional foods or teaching me a tional dance
		They must teach me their language
		'Surfers' must host me in future when you ask them for accommodation
		They must bring a present
		I secretly ask them to pay for accommodation
		They must partake in sexual acts with me
		Other:
21.	stay	now many nights do you allow 'surfers' to at your place? Please only indicate a ber (eg. 2)

22. Please rate to what extent the following statements explain why you may not accept guests * Mark only one oval per row.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Completely agree
I am currently travelling and cannot accept guests					
2. I am too busy to host, but will do so again when less busy					
3. I don't really want to host people, but I keep my profile active so that others might accept me when I seek accommodation					
4. I examined a potential sufer's profile and found them to be 'dodgy'					
I examined a potential surfer's profile and found that they are incompatible with my expectations					
6. I am on Couchsurfing, but I don't really want to host					
7. I have someone staying with me who is picky about who I allow to stay					
My living space is already occupied by someone staying long-term					
9. I only allow people who I've stayed with, to stay with me					
Seeing as Couchsurfing is a virtu meeting, please state what safety					o you are
Has couchsurfing improved your Mark only one oval. Yes	knowledge a	und understal	nding of otl	ner culture	es?

25.	If 'yes' in the previous question, please explain	shortly	

Section C: Reasons for hosting surfers at your home The aim of this section is to determine what motivates you to allow surfers to stay at your home.

26. Mark only one oval per row.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Totally agree
I want to share my life with other similar people					
I am curious to meet new people					
3. Someone else hosted me and I want return the favor					
4. I feel that it is a kind thing to do					
5. I want to learn about the visitor(s)' culture and values					
6. I am simply trying to make new friends					
7. I feel part of a global community					
8. I want to provide visitors with an immersive experience					
I feel lonely and want company					
10. I accept visitors with the expectation that they will accept me in future					
11. I want to broaden my understanding of the world					
12. I understand travel is expensive, and I am trying to lighten the visitor's financial burden					
13. I feel passionate about sharing my personal environment with new people					
14. I feel proud of my town/city and want to show it off to visitors					
15. It is adventurous as I welcome a stranger in my home, without really knowing their background story					
16. I host so that I can get good referrals on my account					
17. It allows me to take part in Couchsurfing events that may be hosted in my area					
18. I do it as I hope to get some form of love relationship or sexual encounter from the visitors					
19. I may receive gifts from the visitors					
20. The visitors can help me contribute towards buying groceries as well as other household expenses, thereby lightening my financial burdens					
21. It provides me with the opportunity to learn or practice speaking other languages than my own					
22. I am looking for people who share the same interests as me					

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Totally agree
23. I only host people from specific countries that I want to visit with the hope that they will host me there					

Powered by
Google Forms

APPENDIX B: INTERNATIONAL HOSTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Couchsurfing Host Survey

In order to better understand Couchsurfing, it is also important to understand the hosts. It is the purpose of this questionnaire to analyse who the hosts are, what their behaviour is like, as well as why they host Couchsurfers.

*Required

1.	What is your country of residence?
2.	Gender Mark only one oval. Male Female
3.	Year of birth
4.	What is your main language Mark only one oval.
	English Other:
5.	Except for your main language, what other languages can you speak/understand Tick all that apply. English French Italian Dutch Spanish Portuguese Other:
6.	What is your current occupation?

7. What is your current living arrangements? Mark only one oval.	
I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay alone	
I am renting a flat/apartment/home and I stay with friends/far	mily/partner
I own a flat/apartment/home and I stay on my own	
I own a flat/apartment/home and I stay with friends/family/pa	ırtner
Other:	
8. Marital status	
Mark only one oval.	
Single	
Living together	
In an open relationship	
Married	
Divorced/seperated	
In a relationship	
Other:	
9. Highest level of education	
Mark only one oval.	
Did not complete high school	
Matric	
Diploma	
Degree	
Post-graduate	
Professional	
Other:	

Section B: Couchsurfer Host behaviour

The aim of this section is to better understand why the Couchsurfer hosts prefer to host.

	· approximately how long have you been hosting 'surfers' at your home through uchsurfing?
Ma	rk only one oval.
	Less than a year
	1 year
	2 years
	3 years
	4 years
	5 years
	6 years
	7 years
	8 years
	9 years
	10+ years
11. W h	ere did you hear about Couchsurfing the first time?
Ma	rk only one oval.
	Television
	Radio
	Couchsurfing website
	Magazines
	Newspapers
	Facebook
	Twitter
	Word-of-mouth (family, friends etc.)
	Internet blogs
	Other:
hos	proximately how many times have you sted 'surfers'? Please only write a number . 1)
13. Ho Ple	w many 'surfers' have you hosted in total? ase write only a number (eg. 2)

1	If you have hosted 'surfers', shortly state WHY you did so.
	Have you previously been hosted by someone else? Mark only one oval.
	Yes
	No
	If yes in the previous answer, please indicate how many times have you been hosted. Please only write a number.
	Is your Couchsurfing account verified? Mark only one oval.
	Yes
	No
	Please explain your answer in the previous question short

19. What do you expect from 'surfers' who stay with you? (You may choose more than one option Tick all that apply.
Absolutely nothing, they can come and go as they see fit
Just their company from time to time
I want them to meet my friends and make them part of my friend circle
They should contribute financially towards water and electricity bills
I want them to buy food/drinks
They must share their culture with me by means of cooking traditional foods or teaching you a traditional dance
They must teach me their language
Surfers' must host me in future when you ask them for accommodation
They must bring a present
I secretly ask them to pay for accommodation
They must partake in sexual acts with me
Other:
20. For how many nights do you allow 'surfers' to stay at your place? Please only indicate a number (eg. 2)

21. Please rate to what extent the following statements explain why you may not accept guests * Mark only one oval per row.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Complet agree
I am currently travelling and cannot accept guests					
2. I am too busy to host, but will do so again when less busy					
3. I don't really want to host people, but I keep my profile active so that others might accept me when I seek accommodation					
I examined a potential sufer's profile and found them to be 'dodgy'					
5. I examined a potential surfer's profile and found that they are incompatible with my expectations					
6. I am on Couchsurfing, but I don't really want to host					
7. I have someone staying with me who is picky about who I allow to stay					
8. My living space is already occupied by someone staying long-term					
9. I only allow people who I've stayed with, to stay with me					
Seeing as Couchsurfing is a virtu neeting, please state what safety					o you are
Has couchsurfing improved your Mark only one oval. Yes	knowledge a	and understa	nding of otl	ner culture	es?

24.	f 'yes' in the previous question, please explain shortly				

Section C: Reasons for hosting surfers at your home The aim of this section is to determine what motivates you to allow surfers to stay at your home.

25. Mark only one oval per row.

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Totally agree
I want to share my life with other similar people					
2. I am curious to meet new people					
3. Someone else hosted me and I want return the favor					
4. I feel that it is a kind thing to do					
5. I want to learn about the visitor(s)' culture and values					
6. I am simply trying to make new friends					
7. I feel part of a global community					
8. I want to provide visitors with an immersive experience					
9. I feel lonely and want company 10. I accept visitors with the					
expectation that they will accept me in future					
11. I want to broaden my understanding of the world					
12. I understand travel is expensive, and I am trying to lighten the visitor's financial burden					
13. I feel passionate about sharing my personal environment with new people					
14. I feel proud of my town/city and want to show it off to visitors					
15. It is adventurous as I welcome a stranger in my home, without really knowing their background story					
16. I host so that I can get good referrals on my account					
17. It allows me to take part in Couchsurfing events that may be hosted in my area					
18. I do it as I hope to get some form of love relationship or sexual encounter from the visitors					
19. I may receive gifts from the visitors					
20. The visitors can help me contribute towards buying groceries as well as other household expenses, thereby lightening my financial burdens					
21. It provides me with the opportunity to learn or practice speaking other languages than my own					
22. I am looking for people who share the same interests as me					

22 Lonly host poorlo from		
23. I only host people from specific countries that I want to visit with the hope that they will host me there		

Powered by
Google Forms

APPENDIX C: LANGUAGE EDITING LETTER

Rod Taylor

Language editor & proofreader
Trading as
Direction Training

215 Republic Road Randpark 2194

Telephone: 084 716 6588 Email: dtraining@iafrica.com

29 October 2018

To whom it may concern

Language Editing – Masters dissertation – P. Ndebele

I have reviewed the dissertation entitled "Understanding niche accommodation in tourism: The case of Couchsurfing hosts" in terms of spelling, language and grammar and have made recommendations to the author concerning the changes necessary.

R. Taylor MBA BSc DTM

Chief Executive: Rod Taylor MBA BSc DTM (British) Reg No. CK 88/21843/23