1. **Introduction**

Over the last two decades, the world of tourism has seen the rise of a significant trend known as “social tourism”. Many tourists are interested in the local culture of their tour / vacation destination, wish to have some influence on the area they are visiting, and may even be willing to pay extra for what they call “authentic encounters” (Richards, 2014). This trend incorporates a specific tourism experience called “home hospitality” (Meagher *et al.,* 2022), which offers visitors a taste of the local community’s folklore, art, culture, and life stories. These visits are usually short in duration, limited to a few hours. The current research focuses on home hospitality that provide experiential content as tourism products, but do not include overnight accommodation.

The concept of home hospitality is elusive, and there is currently no single, accepted definition for it in the research literature in the field of tourism (Meagher *et al.,* 2022). Lynch (2005) coined the term “commercial home enterprise” to describe various types of accommodations, such as small hotels, B & Bs, and guest houses, at which paying guests interact with their hosts during the visit in a shared public space (Lynch, 2005). The term “homestay” refers to a vacation or overnight stay in the home of a local host family. This concept emerged from tourists’ increased demand for authentic experiences and accommodations that differ from the tourist products offered at standard hotels at tourist destinations (Moscardo, 2009).

The commonly used professional term in the tourism industry for this phenomenon is community-based tourism (CBT). CBT provides hosts and visitors with special opportunities to share personal experiences and develop relationships. This creates strong collaborations that can contribute to sustainable development of the local community and guests’ personal development (Sunsri, 2003). In the current study, the term “home hospitality” refers to experiences that take place in the homes of local hosts, who also present their creative works and life stories. During the encounters, hosts offer guests light refreshment or a full meal to give them a home-like feeling of being in a local authentic atmosphere. The visit is usually limited to several hours, depending on the content being offered.

There are many potential benefits to CBT in general, and home hospitality in specific. One notable benefit of this type of tourism is economic, since home hospitality may provide a way to earn income in areas with high levels of unemployment (Nguyen *et al.,* 2022). In addition, home hospitality increases the exposure of lesser-known tourist destinations. This, in turn, can reduce the negative impacts of congestion from over-tourism in well-established, popular tourist destinations. Many researchers in the field of tourism are concerned with the necessity of preserving local culture and tradition (Paulauskaite *et al.,* 2017). Home hospitality ventures offer a solution to this issue, as they contribute to preserving local traditions, crafts, cuisine, folklore, family stories, and more (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017).

The current research examined the social potential and impacts that home hospitality ventures have on the hosts and local community in Arad, a city in the southeastern Negev desert in Israel. Additionally, the study addressed the impact of home hospitality on the hosts’ social perceptions and attitudes. To meet the research objectives, a qualitative research method based on semi-structured in-depth interviews was used. The interviews were conducted with business owners who host tourists in their homes in Arad, Israel. The research findings contribute to understanding the complexity and difficulties characterizing the field of home hospitality. Further, the findings enable creation of a socioeconomic model for the development and management of CBT and home hospitality. Such a model may be used as an administrative tool in the development of CBT destinations.

1. **Literature Review**
   1. *Changes in the tourism industry*

Multiple significant changes in the tourism industry have been identified over the last two decades, resulting from the dramatic revolution taking place in social, economic, and cultural realms in terms of the consumption and sharing of information. This change is also reflected in the growth of “networking” (Booyens and Rogerson, 2017) among business owners and businesspeople from different backgrounds who gather socially for the purpose of creating opportunities for potential business collaborations (OECD, 2014). The development of social networks allows consumers to follow the supply chain of tourism services and to be actively involved in the production of their own tourism experiences (Richards, 2018). The rise of the cooperative economy and the growth of companies such as Couchsurfing, Airbnb, and Uber enable consumers to be in direct contact with a range of new producers of tourism products, who have little or no connection with the traditional and institutionalized tourism industry (Ochoa, 2015). One significant consequence of these developments is the blurring of the boundaries between tourists, hosts, and the local population (Paulauskaite *et al.,* 2017).

This blurring intensified following the “open skies” revolution and the introduction of low-cost flights into the world of mass tourism, which has led in recent decades to the spread of tourism into places around the world that had previously been considered “less touristy” (Richards, 2018). Many researchers assert that in the past it was easier to identify and define tourists, but nowadays people increasingly travel for a wide range of leisure, work and study purposes that have little or no connection with the classic idea of a “vacation” (De Loryn, 2022). One manifestation of changes in modern tourism is the trend of short trips for refreshment and revitalization. This is illustrated by the “city break” phenomenon; short leisure trips to a single city, without overnight accommodation or visits to other destinations (Chen *et al.,* 2016; Dunne *et al.,* 2010). In large cities, tourists meet with locals, including immigrants, students, or others who may be considered temporary residents, even if they have been living in the area for a relatively long period.

Modern tourists are seeking novel, exciting, unique, and “authentic” experiences, which are no longer provided by classic and iconic historic and cultural attractions (Park and Santos, 2017; Richards, 2018). Tourist experiences must be memorable and provide long-term satisfaction, because they directly affect tourists’ happiness and consequently their future behavioral intentions (Kim *et al.,* 2014). As motivations for going on vacation have shifted, various niches in cultural tourism have developed as part of the “experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). In the experience economy, consumers are willing to pay extra for experiential value, such that revenue increases as experiential value increases (Pizam, 2010). Products or services have value if they offer special and memorable experiences to consumers, so in order to increase their profits, tourism businesses must develop and plan memorable experiences for consumers (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) and transform ordinary tourism activities into memorable experiences (Russo and Quaglieri-Dominguez, 2012). This requires giving the tourist destination a special and attractive atmosphere and differentiating it from competing destinations. To meet this demand, locals offer various commercial hosting and accommodation options in their personal living space, which they share with tourists (Paulskaite *et al.,* 2017).

Kumar *et al.* (2014) found that experiences provide longer-lasting happiness and satisfaction than purchasing material products does. In the last decade, it has become clear that many tourists are seeking authentic experiences that cannot be found at mass tourism destinations with standard hotel accommodations and a trained and professional staff, as these generally do not allow for direct personal contact and interaction with local population (Jovicic, 2014). It is now widely accepted that classic tourist sites are less likely to provide the interactions with locals and authentic experiences that tourists enjoy (Agarwal and Singh 2022; Maoz, 2006).

In response to reports of the negative impacts of mass tourism, Krippendorf (1987) advocated promoting CBT, in order to maximize benefits and minimize damage from tourism for key stakeholders: tourists, the host population and the tourism industry, and without causing irreversible damage to the ecological and social environment. This issue of relations between tourists and the local community has been explored in tourism research (see, for example, Davis and Morais, 2004; Krippendorf, 1987; Smith, 2012). A study on guest-host relationships examined risks, benefits, and opportunities arising from the growth of tourism, and the importance of involving the local community in planning and development processes (Bosselman *et al.,* 1999). Their study examined the case of Whistler, a ski resort in British Columbia, Canada, to illustrate how local residents can contribute to planning an effective strategy for managing local tourism, through their involvement in developing a multi-year master plan that considers the needs of both tourists and locals (Bosselman *et al.,* 1999).

2.2 *Home hospitality as an expression of CBT*

The academic research literature generally addresses home hospitality in the context of overnight accommodation with families living in rural areas, which offers direct interaction between guests and local hosts. Lynch (2005) referred to home hospitality as type of “commercial home enterprise” at which guests pay to stay in private accommodations, and interact with their hosts in a common space during the visit. Following this definition, home hospitality represents the commercialization of a private home, so that the residential space is used for profitable purposes (Janjua *et al.,* 2021).

The term “homestay” is also used in the academic literature to refer to a vacation or visit hosted in the home of a local family, which has become popular with tourists seeking authentic experiences and accommodations that differ from standard hotels (Moscardo, 2009). By offering a local alternative to conventional accommodations, home hospitality caters to travelers seeking novelty, personalized service and “real” social interactions with hosts (Wang, 2007).

Lynch (2005) noted the following distinctive characteristics of commercial home enterprises: family involvement in the operation of the business venture, benefits to the local community, guests being involved in use of the property, guest-host interaction, property owners participating in the design of the hospitality product, involvement of “lifestyle entrepreneurs” and finally, the importance of gender, personal networks, social values, and the daily life cycle of the family.

In Israel, home hospitality refers to experiential encounters between hosts and their guests. The Israeli Ministry of Tourism uses terms such as social tourism or encounter tourism to describe this phenomenon. This type of tourism enables guests and hosts to meet and create personal relationships, which contributes to sustainable local community development and can enrich guests’ personal development (Sunsri, 2003). This study examined home hospitality in Arad, during which hosts offer experiential visits to their homes, and present their creative works and share their life stories. During these meetings, hosts provide light refreshments or a meal that gives a home-like and authentic atmosphere. The visit usually lasts between 45 minutes and three hours, depending on the content of the experience being offered.

One of the many benefits of CBT and home hospitality is that is provides economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment and where the socioeconomic status is below the national average, such as among the Bedouin in the Negev, Arab society in northern Israel, or in development towns throughout Israel (Benita and Bekker, 2018). New trends in tourism indicate to the need to preserve local culture and tradition (Paulauskaite *et al.,* 2017). Home hospitality ventures contribute to this by preserving traditions, arts and crafts, family stories, legends, foods, and more (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017).

2.3 *Home hospitality hosts as tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs*

Since the 1990s, social scientists have conducted extensive research on entrepreneurship, in attempt to identify the characteristics of successful entrepreneurial thinking (Timmons, 2003). These characteristics were classified according to the entrepreneur’s personal motivations, behavior, and personality. Many studies have addressed entrepreneurial behavior, but there is a need for additional research on entrepreneurs’ perceptions of opportunities (Low, 2001). Since the tourism and hospitality industry does not require a high level of specialization, and barriers to entry into this field are low, it offers distinctive opportunities for entrepreneurs (Peters and Schuckert, 2014).

Burns and Dewhurst (1996) proposed the term “lifestyle entrepreneurs” to describe people who create their career around their lifestyle. They are differentiated from traditional entrepreneurs, who build their life around their career and are focused on economic growth. Lifestyle entrepreneurs often use the profits from their business ventures to support their way of life. Their focus is on maintaining their lifestyle and ensuring a certain standard of living for themselves. These entrepreneurs tend to be independent and view this type of business venture as providing them with opportunities for freedom, creativity, challenges, and flexibility in decision-making (Peters and Schuckert, 2014; Skokic and Morrison, 2011).

The tourism industry encourages the development of small ventures by lifestyle entrepreneurs, who may be identified primarily by their business management style. They combine economic goals with other, non-financial goals and their decisions do not necessarily stem from financial and business considerations (Hjalager *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.,* 2019). Lifestyle entrepreneurs working in tourism are active in the local community, and therefore play an important role in making tourist destinations more attractive (Czernek, 2017).

The current study examined the characteristics of home hospitality ventures in the city of Arad, from the perspective of the hosts. The research also sought to determine whether this occupation affects involvement in decision-making in the planning and development processes of the local tourism industry.

1. **Methodology**
   1. *Research setting: Arad, Israel*

Arad is a small city in the southern part of the State of Israel, on the eastern border of the northern Negev desert, and the southern border of the Judean desert. Its current population is around 30,000 inhabitants. The city was established in 1961. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arad attracted many international tourists, because it provided accommodations for people visiting the Dead Sea. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, modern hotels were established near the Dead Sea, and the flow of tourists to Arad dwindled.

**Figure 1:** Map of the area



Recently, a novel type of local tourism industry began to develop in Arad, based on home hospitality visits and accommodations. Currently, approximately 150 private entrepreneurs in the field of tourism and home hospitality are operating in Arad, and they provide some 1,500 beds in a variety of accommodation types. For several years, Arad’s municipal tourism department has joined in supporting this successful trend, and helps promote the community of people working in home hospitality, in order to improve tourists’ experience and encourage them to extend their stay in the city.

* 1. *Research objectives*

The overarching goal of the study is to examine the potential for developing CBT by promoting the home hospitality model, using the city of Arad as a test case. Specifically, the study examined the following questions:

1. How does engaging in home hospitality affect hosts’ quality of life?
2. What factors encourage or discourage involvement in home hospitality tourism ventures in Arad?
3. What are the impacts of home hospitality on the local community, and how can its benefits to the local population be increased?

Addressing these questions is expected to improve to our understanding of the tourism phenomenon known as “home hospitality” and to contribute to the academic literature on CBT, particularly by addressing the experience of hosts who are directly involved in tourism activities.

* 1. *Research methods*

To date, the field of home hospitality has not received significant research attention. Since this is a relatively preliminary and exploratory study, we chose a qualitative research approach. Gibton (2001) defined qualitative research as “an analytical process, usually non-statistical, with intuitive elements or characteristics, aimed at providing meaning, interpretation and generalization to the phenomenon under study.” This approach is expected to reveal subjective worldviews and contribute to understanding the phenomenon of home hospitality tourist ventures in Arad.

* 1. *Research tools*

To address the research questions, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the main stakeholders: hosts who are members of the home hospitality community in the city of Arad. In-depth interviews explore how respondents perceive and understand reality. This qualitative research includes individual conversations conducted with a relatively limited number of respondents. Interviewees have significant freedom of expression in how they choose to answer the questions (Gabler, 2013). The interviews were conducted during face-to-face meetings at times and locations chosen by the interviewees.

During the interviews, informants were first asked to give some information about themselves and their families, then to speak in-depth about their perceptions pertaining to Arad and their business ventures as part of the tourist experience in the city.

Below are examples of the guiding questions to which interviewees were asked to respond:

* Why did you choose to live in Arad?
* What are the benefits of living in Arad?
* Why did you decide to start a tourism business in Arad?
* Was this decision made by default, or was it the result of a vision and desire?
* How did you get into the field of home hospitality?
* What are the benefits of starting a home hospitality business specifically in Arad?
* How does working in home hospitality affect your quality of life?
* What conflicts or dilemmas may arise from operating a business in a residential neighborhood?
* What challenges are involved in this type of work? Please share some of your experiences in addressing the challenges you mentioned.
* What role should the local authority play in encouraging community-based tourism in general and home hospitality in particular?
* What factors encourage involvement in home hospitality tourism ventures? What factors discourage involvement?
* How does the phenomenon of home hospitality affect the local community?
* What positive and negative impacts can this activity have on other people in the area?
* How can the local population benefit from home hospitality ventures?
* Do you think that your social involvement the community in which you live and work contributes to the success of your business?
* Do you think that entrepreneurs and small business owners in the field of home hospitality have an impact on the planning and development of tourism in the city? Please explain.
* What do you think about cooperation between owners of small tourism businesses?
* What benefits, if any, can collaborations among people operating businesses in this field have on the planning and development of the tourism industry in the city?
* Would establishing a non-profit association or other unifying entity for all those involved in this field help you? Please explain.
* What would you suggest that the mayor / city administration could do to help develop and promote tourism in the city?
  1. *Research population and sample*

For the purpose of the study, we used a sample derived from census records; that is, a sample of all those engaged in the field of home hospitality in Arad, according to records from the Arad municipality. All home hospitality hosts in Arad received professional training in entrepreneurship, marketing, developing a tourism product, crafting one’s personal narrative, etc. Beginning in January 2019, the municipality has organized meetings with a professional tourism consultant for the benefit of all members of this community. During 2019, tours were organized to increase exposure to the tourism market, which had significantly beneficial marketing results for members of the home hospitality community, which currently includes 19 home hospitality hosts.

Interviews were conducted with 18 of the 19 hosts who are members of the home hospitality community in Arad. Only one host did not agree to be interviewed, due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and the birth of a baby, which caused her to stop hosting activities. All interviews were conducted at hosts’ homes, except for one interview that was conducted by telephone at the request of the interviewee. The ages given in the findings section refer to the interviewee’s age on the day the interviews were conducted.

*3.7 Data analysis*

All interviews were recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analyzing the major themes arising from them. The data analysis offered an in-depth understanding of the impacts of home hospitality in Arad on the hosts and the local community. Data coding was used to identify key themes and to formulate insights regarding the research subject, namely the personality traits and behavioral patterns of entrepreneurs engaged in home hospitality in Arad. The themes that emerged in the data analysis allow for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of home hospitality tourism in Arad. From this, conclusions can be drawn regarding the phenomenon of home hospitality as a whole.