1. **Introduction**

Many tourists are interested in the local culture of their destination. They may wish to have an impact on the area they are visiting, and they may even be willing to pay extra for “authentic encounters” (Richards, 2014). Over the last two decades, the tourism industry has witnessed a significant trend towards “social tourism.” This trend includes a specific tourism experience called “home hospitality” (Meagher *et al.,* 2022), which offers visitors access to the local community’s folklore, art, culture, and life stories. These visits are usually short– up to a few hours. This study focuses on home hospitality in the form of organized experiences without overnight accommodation.

A definition for the concept of home hospitality is elusive. No single, widely-accepted definition for it currently exists in the tourism research literature (Meagher *et al*., 2022). Lynch (2005) coined the term “commercial home enterprise” to describe various types of accommodation, such as small hotels, B&Bs, and guest houses, where paying guests can interact with their hosts during the visit in shared spaces. The term “homestay” refers to a vacation or overnight stay in the home of a local host family. This concept emerged from increased demand for “authentic” experiences and accommodation that differ from the tourist products offered by 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 opportunities to share personal experiences and develop relationships. This creates robust collaborations that can contribute to the sustainable development of the local community and guests’ personal development (Sunsri, 2003). In this study, the term “home hospitality” refers to experiences in the homes of local hosts who present creative works and recount life stories. During the encounters, guests are treated to light refreshments or a full meal to offer them the atmosphere of hospitality typical to a local home. Visits are usually limited to several hours, depending on the content offered.

CBT in general, and home hospitality specifically, offers several potential benefits. One notable benefit is economic because home hospitality may provide a way to generate income in areas with limited employment opportunities (Nguyen *et al*., 2022). In addition, home hospitality provides exposure to lesser-known tourist destinations. This, in turn, can reduce congestion resulting from overtourism in well-established, popular tourist destinations. Many researchers in the field of tourism are concerned with preserving local culture and traditions (Paulauskaite *et al*.*,* 2017). Home hospitality ventures can contribute in this regard by providing economic incentives to preserve local traditions, crafts, cuisine, folklore, family stories, etc. (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017).

This study examines the social potential and effects of home hospitality ventures on the hosts and local community in Arad, a city in the southeastern Negev desert in Israel. Additionally, the study addresses the impact of home hospitality on the hosts’ social perceptions and attitudes. The study employed a qualitative research methodology based on semi-structured in-depth interviews. 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 and are used to elaborate a socioeconomic model for the development and management of CBT and home hospitality. This model could be used as an administrative tool in developing CBT destinations.

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

Several significant changes in the tourism industry have been identified over the last two decades resulting from the dramatic revolution in social, economic, and cultural realms in terms of the consumption and sharing of information. Shifts are also reflected in the growth of “networking” among business owners and business people from different backgrounds who gather socially to create opportunities for potential business collaborations (Booyens and Rogerson, 2017; OECD, 2014). The development of social networks allows consumers to follow the supply chain of tourism services and be actively involved in producing their own tourism experiences (Richards, 2018). The rise of the cooperative economy and the growth of companies such as Couchsurfing, Airbnb, and Uber put consumers in direct contact with tourism product providers 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 resulted in tourism proliferating in places that had previously been considered “less touristy” (Richards, 2018). Many researchers assert that it used to be easier to identify and define tourists but now 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 seek novel, exciting, unique, and “authentic” experiences, which are no longer provided by classic and iconic historical and cultural attractions (Park and Santos, 2017; Richards, 2018). Tourists now expect memorable experiences that provide long-term satisfaction that 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 unique and memorable experiences to consumers. So 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 distinctive atmosphere to differentiate it from competing destinations. To meet this demand, locals offer tourists various commercial hosting and accommodation options in their personal living spaces (Paulskaite *et al*., 2017).

Kumar *et al*. (2014) found that experiences provide longer-lasting happiness and satisfaction than purchasing material products. In the last decade, it has become clear that many tourists are looking for authentic experiences that cannot be found at mass tourism destinations with standard hotel accommodation and professional staff, as these generally do not allow for direct personal interaction with locals (Jovicic, 2014). It is now widely accepted that classic tourist sites are less likely to provide 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 to maximize the benefits of tourism for key stakeholders – tourists, the host population and the tourism industry – 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 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 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 offering direct interaction between guests and local hosts. Lynch (2005) referred to home hospitality as a type of “commercial home enterprise” in which guests pay to stay in private accommodation and interact with their hosts in a shared 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 accommodation that differs from standard hotels (Moscardo, 2009). By offering a local alternative to conventional accommodation, 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 the 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 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. This contributes to sustainable local community development and can enrich guests’ personal development (Sunsri, 2003). This study examined home hospitality in Arad, where hosts offer experiential visits to their homes, 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 it provides economic opportunities in areas characterized by socioeconomic conditions below the national average and high unemployment, such as among the Bedouin in the Negev, the Arab community in northern Israel, or in development towns throughout Israel (Benita and Bekker, 2018). New tourism trends indicate the need to preserve local culture and traditions (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 to identify the characteristics of successful entrepreneurial thinking (Timmons, 2003). These characteristics were classified according to the entrepreneur’s 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 unprecedented opportunities for entrepreneurs (Peters and Schuckert, 2014).

Burns and Dewhurst (1996) proposed the term “lifestyle entrepreneurs” to describe people who shape their careers around their lifestyle. They differ from traditional entrepreneurs, who build their life around their careers and focus 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 essential role in making tourist destinations more attractive (Czernek, 2017).

This study examines the characteristics of home hospitality ventures in the city of Arad from the hosts’ perspective 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 south of Israel, on the eastern border of the northern Negev desert and the southern border of the Judean desert. It has a population of around 30,000 inhabitants. The city was established in 1961. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arad attracted many international tourists because it provided accommodation 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, based on home hospitality visits and accommodation, has begun to develop in Arad. Approximately 150 private entrepreneurs in tourism and home hospitality are now operating in Arad, and they provide some 1,500 beds in various accommodation types. Arad’s municipal tourism department has been supporting this trend for several years by helping the community of home hospitality hosts to improve tourist experiences and encourage them to extend their stay in the city.

* 1. *Research objectives*

The overarching goal of this 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 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 effects 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 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 directly involved in tourism activities.

* 1. *Research methods*

To date, the field of home hospitality has not received significant attention from tourism scholars. Since this is a 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 instruments*

To address the research questions, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with home hospitality hosts in the city of Arad. In-depth interviews explore how respondents perceive and understand reality. This qualitative study includes individual conversations conducted with a few respondents. Interviewees had significant freedom of expression in how they chose to answer the questions (Gabler, 2013). The interviews were conducted at 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 and then to speak in-depth about their perceptions of 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 can 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 authorities 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 in 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 affect 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 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 to benefit 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 the hosts’ homes, except for one interview that was conducted by telephone at the interviewee’s request. 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 to analyze the major themes. The data analysis offered an in-depth understanding of the effects 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.

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