Non-Commercial Homestay;
an exploration of encounters and experiences of guests visiting the UK.
Noncommercial homestay; hospitableness; asymmetric hospitality; reciprocity.

Abstract

This paper explores the experiences of tourists travelling within the UK using hosts through the web based non commercial homestay organisations. The author, as a host explores the guests' expectations, experiences and views on hospitality within this unique but growing form of accommodation. In order to ascertain the benefits to the guest, within non commercial homestay it is necessary to review the concept of value for the guest, explore the different forms or dimensions of hospitality, and ascertain levels of reciprocity within the host guest relationship. The paper shows that reciprocity within this hospitality context is asymmetrical and that the sacrifice made by the guest is to the benefit of the host be it non financial.

Introduction

A new and interesting type of homestay accommodation is allowing the concepts of hospitality to be questioned due to its unique approach to the process of exchange. It is quite unlike the Australian homestay that is associated with accommodation for international fee-paying students, the UK's homestay that is frequently linked to English language schools or farmstays in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Germany (Lynch 2000). It is also different from homestay tourism that is growing in such countries as India, Nepal, Thailand, Borneo and Malaysia whereby the community-based tourism is located mostly in rural areas, and the homestay is where the visitors will be residing, having meals and being entertained by cultural performances and traditional activities by the host and participating villagers upon their visit (Ward, 2008). Whilst each of these have the similar focus of having guests enjoy the culture and company of local people each of them is based on a commercial exchange process.

While a number of studies have examined hospitality in the tourism industry from various perspectives, there appears to have been limited interest in extending the research to homestay tourism. Perceived value or rather the benefits to guests is also limited in research and tends to focus on service quality rather than overall benefits (Bolton & Drew, 1991). The perceived value to the guests is based on a broad definition since it is related to both the benefits received and the non financial offering made by the homestay visitors upon their visit and experiences with their host.

The issues raised clearly question much of the management oriented research that clearly defines hospitality as a set of service transactions or operational functions (Lashley et al (2007), Hemmington (2007) drew on developed themes from authors such as Olesen (1994), King (1995) and Lashley (2000) and moved the discussion away from operational issues within hospitality to two particular dimensions of the consumer experience; these being social and emotional. Hemington's work also took advantage of the open debate between Bob Brotherton and Paul Slattery (Slattery 2002, Brotherton 2002, Slattery 2003, Brotherton 2003) in a number of editions of JoHLST. Within this debate Slattery was particularly critical of the proposed three-domain approach to hospitality. This paper does not intend to offer an answer to the debate but it does intend to use issues raised from the debate to explore a part of the hospitality industry that does not conform well to many elements of commercial hospitality but fits, perhaps quite comfortably with the host guest relationship concept. Lashley (2000) states that, 'hospitality is essentially a relationship based on hosts and guests' and it is the host-guest relationship that is the key distinguishing characteristic of hospitality from which several other dimensions emerge. The notion of hosts and guests is fundamentally different to that of managers and customers and is much more socially and culturally defined. Lashley's argument that the economic definitions surrounding hospitality are limited and it is the relationship between host and guest that is essentially hospitality appears to find a comfortable home within the area of homestay. It is this non commercial homestay sector that is to be explored through this paper. Lashley's view did have a number of dissenters, however later work by Lashley et al. (2007) took much of the criticism on board through the development of the Hospitality Conceptual Lens which holds the dominant theme of "*hospitality as a human phenomenon within which the nexus is the host/guest transaction*". Taking on board the non commercial Domestic Discourse element of the Lens a review of a particular part of the homestay sector can really push the economic definitions to the very edge of the

essential elements of hospitality and move towards Derrida's (O'Gorman, 2000) concept of "pure" hospitality.

In order to ascertain the benefits to the guest, within non commercial homestay it is necessary to review the concept of value for the guest, explore the non commercial homestay sector, review the different forms or dimensions of hospitality, and ascertain levels of reciprocity within the host guest relationship.

Guest value

Traditionally the concept of value had a view in marketing literature that was mainly price-based. Moving into the millennium led to a view of value for money based view that is a behavioral approach to perceived value (Jamal Salamiah, & Othman, 2009) with the most quoted definition by Zeithaml (1988, p.14), "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given". Zeithaml (1988) proposed a perceived value model suggesting that formation of quality and value perceptions occur in a means-end way. She further elaborated that perceived value is a comprehensive construct that involve not only price variations, but also other psychological factors. Whilst this helps with non commercial transactions to some degree, traditionally perceived value has been simply defined as a trade-off between quality and price (Sinha & DeSarbo, 1998).

Jamal & Othman (2009) argued that consumers will evaluate non-monetary benefits in their assessment of the level of quality received but again this is against the price paid and according to Gale (1994) non-monetary costs include time, search costs, brand image, convenience and loss of prestige. A combination of monetary and non-monetary costs equates to an overall sacrifice made by the purchaser against their products and services. It is clear that most researchers agree that perceived value is a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices perceived by the customer in the suppliers' offering (Oh, 1999; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Woodruff, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988. IN Jamal and Othman 2009). All do however include the financial element in the exchange. It also leaves the query as to the level of quality of what product or service the free homestay guest expecting.

Jamal and Othman (2009) demonstrate that an affective dimension captures feelings or emotions generated by the products or services received. They further clarify this showing the service experience is comprised of the subjective, emotional and highly personal responses to different aspects of service delivery. This affective dimension can be divided into an emotional dimension (relating to internal emotions or feelings) and a social dimension (relating to the social impact of the purchase made) (Sheth et al., 1991). Hemmington (2007) came to the same two dimensions within hospitality.

Emotional value is the economic value or monetary worth of feelings when consumers experience an organization's products or services and social value on the other hand, is understood as an "interactive experience" with a particular social dimension. It is the perceived utility acquired through the consumption of an alternative as a result of its association with one or more specific social groups representing either similar demographic, socioeconomic or cultural ethnic (Sheth et al., 1991).

Several studies have taken place in the last few years to study the role of perceived value in Tourism and Hospitality and the concept of value including price as a core element remains. (Jamal and Othman 2009). This paper therefore remains faithful to the two dimensional approach; emotional and social.

Traditional Homestay

Homestay as a sector of the hospitality industry has specific cultural associations. Gu and Wong (2006) explain the definition of home-stay, which is connected to types of accommodation where tourists pay to stay in private and local people's homes. When taking it as a more generic term Lynch (2005a) tends it to mean types of accommodation where visitors or guests pay directly or indirectly to stay in private homes. He goes on to say

"It embraces a range of accommodation types including farmstay accommodation, host families, some small hotels, and bed and breakfasts. Accommodation such as guest houses, boarding houses, lodging houses whose terms are sometimes used synonymously with hotels and bed and breakfasts are also included as homestay establishments."

Homestay are therefore more often private homes where there is an interaction with the host / family who live on the premises. .Homestay tourists are often interested in interacting with the local host or family;

and due often to the nature of the physical provision the host and guest also share areas in the home such as the living room and bathroom. The sharing of areas of space within the home thereby make the spaces become 'public'. This can include a number of homestay accommodation varieties as well as some small hotels, bed and breakfast establishments, and host family types of accommodation, which span private, commercial, and social settings. In addition to the sharing of space guests and homestay hosts often eat the same food together (Lynch 2005b).   It is this concept of the home which may be perceived to distinguish homestay establishments from other forms of accommodation, such as those hotels where the host's (the manager, perhaps also staff) private home is not on the premises, and the boundaries distinguishing public space open to staff and visitors from private space open to staff only, are relatively distinct. Thus, one may refer to a sector of homestay accommodation to distinguish the accommodation from other types, which do not share all the characteristics.

It is apparent a key feature of the home-stay experience is that the hosts are a major part of the hospitality experience and the guest is not made to feel isolated and thereby returning to Lashley's definition of hospitality in that the relationship between host and guest is king. It is though a commercially led guest selected encounter.

Non Commercial Homestay

The homestay market has had a number of new players enter the market that questions a number of previous held beliefs and values surrounding hospitality management and business development. The new players are predominately web based organisations hosting thousands or even hundreds of thousands of members. Organisations such as Couchsurfing.net, the Hospitalityclub.org and GlobalFree loaders.com have been analysed by Bialski (2006), Molz (2007) and Farbrother (2008) with some initial analysis by Mintel (2006). This concept of hospitality has also appeared in the national press travel supplements on a number of occasions. One recent such example is with Bacher (2008). These new players appear to be quite different from other traditional homestay providers (farms, B&B, etc.) and require some exploration to see where the differences lie even though the similarity is clearly in the concept of hosting in a home. In this study, the name given to this new type of accommodation is free homestay. Perhaps misguided *The Guardian* categorises this new type of accommodation to the budget travel category (Bowes & James 2007). Some reporters consider these web-base organizations are a social network and an online community offering their couches to fellow travelers if they happen to be in town (Lanado 2006). There are many well-known free homestay websites, such as couchsurfing.org, hospitalityclub.org, and globalfreeloaders.com. Couchsurfing.com has 1.6 million members as of January 2010 (Couchsurfing.org, 2010).

The new players shown above are non-commercial participants and their significant market growth is through the concept of *swapping not spending* (Trend Watch, 2008). I.e members reciprocate as host and guest across the membership. There is no payment from the guest to the host just an acknowledged community reciprocal arrangement. Molz (2007) raises the issue of reciprocity as being a key issue within these organisations. A different type of reward is clearly gained. This raises questions as to whether it is the desire to remove social isolation or whether there is a positive push to gain rewards whether tangible (a free stay somewhere else) or through self-fulfilment of enhancing social status and developing creative social skills, thereby fitting in with the social dimension.

Homestay success is determined by the interaction between hosts and guests (Tucker and Lynch 2004) and the growth of these web based community organisations is a way for the hosts and guests to choose like-minded people to meet.   As a guest the issue does not appear to be somewhere free to stay but to be with like-minded, yet culturally different people (Farbrother 2008) and doing something different. Bialski (2006) shows its success to be driven by the guest's need to be with other people and rather than have a travel experience of touchable tangibles have an emotional experience achieved through the closeness of being with others. Bialski clearly identifies with the emotional dimension. According to Molz (2007), members of the free stay organisations appear to want to be part of a global community yet it is one with clear borders. Each of the free stay organisations have guidelines on membership and behaviour; possibly, according to Molz, (2007) to keep people out.   This clearly identifies with Sheth et al's (1991) comment

earlier regarding association with specific groups or types.

Hospitality

The free homestay can reveal the nature of hospitality. People connect the nature of hospitality to the sharing of food, drink, and accommodation (Telfer, 1996). These people are not always members of this "home" and they can be strangers, neighbours, outsiders, and so on. Mostly, free homestay supply food, drink, and shelter in their house and share them with their guests without concern for monetary benefits. Guests looking for authenticity of hospitality (Wang, 2007) and an emotional experience (Bialski, 2006) expect to find it within a home and therefore look for hospitality within a unique and individual environment. It is clear that there are identifiable characteristics. The first of these is the non commercial element of the reciprocity between the house host and guest. The second is the desire for both hosts and guests seek to meet strangers, albeit ones in a web based community, and to learn more about the *other's* cultures and customs, whilst the guest looks for hosts the host can invite, or not invite, the guest to stay. The third is the role of the host welcoming the guest into their home just as they would a friend. The fourth is the role of the guest immersing themselves into the home and even taking on roles such as to wash the dishes or cook a dinner.

Reciprocity.

Commercial hospitality and tourism encounters between hosts, often staff and guests are normally part of the commercial exchange of goods and services of some form for financial payment be it direct or indirect. Within the homestay sector the concept of host and guest rather than providers and customers has been clearly identified (Lynch 2005a). Whilst the host guest model does not work within modern mass tourism (Aramberri, 2001) and can be criticised in many other commercial hospitality operations as Slattery (2002) clearly opinions homestay can, when applied to the commercial home claim the host guest model. Lashley et al. (2007) move from the term exchange to one of transaction when describing the relationship, responsibilities and duties between the host and guest. When removing the financial element of the transaction it is indisputable that the host guest model is clearly appropriate for free homestay hospitality. Brotherton's (1999) definition of hospitality clearly identifies the holy trinity of food beverage and accommodation and whilst his definition did not refer to the commercial elements a second definition a year later (Brotherton and Wood 2000) added the concept that hospitality is made up of commercial organizations. This cannot hold if the non commercial homestay are to be part of hospitality.

Lugosi (2008) raises the issue that these definitions exclude entertainment and social intercourse. Within a homestay environment and particularly a non commercial one the social intercourse in particular is an important element of the exchange experience for both host and guest.

Selwyn (2000 p 19) clearly identified the need for social intercourse as he suggested that hospitality is used *"to establish a relationship or to promote an already established relationship...; hospitality converts: strangers into familiars, enemies into friends, friends into better friends, outsiders into insiders, non kin into kin."* The provision of Brotherton's trinity, along with the social intercourse leads us to not a service exchange but hospitable behavior within a transaction. The host in a free homestay environment has an overt willingness to share his food, drink and offer accommodation to a stranger and in doing so also offer much of their private space at the same time. In doing so they are frequently achieving what Lugosi defines as Meta Hospitality through creating shared experiential space in which the participants become part of the contextually defined social entity (Lugosi 2008).

Whilst some free homestay experiences may be mundane by its very nature of being short term within a host's home the generation of individual and unique experiences is highly likely. The traditional exchange element within hospitality demands reciprocity. Lynch at al (2007:p135) give an indication that the domestic setting *"affects behavior and constrains conduct that would not occur in a purely commercial setting."* The guest enters a host's private space but also enters the host's social and spacial control. Often a guest is completely immersed and thereby eats sleeps and participates in the home as would a friend or family member visiting. Darke & Gurney (2000) explored the expectations and taboos of domestic hospitality, and identified a number of social rules, such as not complaining, that are clearly at variance with the commercial manager-customer relationship. The motives for the relationship are fundamental and Telfer (2000) identified categories of motives for social hospitality, including *"other-regarding motives"*

and "*reciprocal motives*", that underpin the host-guest relationship.

The guest must conform to the host's rules and behaviours and may have little space to escape to; a couch in the living room, floor space in the bedroom or even a mattress in the hallway (Couchsurfing.org, 2009). The guest is giving up any anonymity by being a free guest. As lynch (IN Molz and Gibson 2007) conclude for the commercial home so can the noncommercial home be viewed. They say that the experience would be bittersweet due to the exclusions of much personal space and the challenges of the host. In free homestay however these are clearly part of the reciprocity and therefore welcomed. Molz (2007) attempts to measure the concept of reciprocity within freestay but is looking for a measurable payment, albeit non financial. However if the hospitality is asymmetrical (Farbrother 2008) then any reciprocity will differ in each host and guest encounter. Whilst a guest may bring a bottle of wine, or offer to do the washing up (Molz 2007) it could be that the giving of one's self is enough, each knowing that at another time, on another journey, and in another home, different roles will be being played, by the same or perhaps not the same people. The lack of finance within the reciprocity means that the benefits and sacrifices made by the guest are to be investigated in order to ascertain the emotional and social dimensions within the guest's experiences within the UK.

Methodology

This paper aims to assess the guest experiences within a free homestay encounter within the UK. The research has been conducted through three hosting experiences in July and August of 2009. This involved carrying out a set of in-depth and open-ended interviews and participant observation with each of the guests. The author is a member of more than one home stay organization and has been a guest as well as a host. The nature of the subject area and the investigation leads the author to a qualitative approach. As Creswell (1998) states *"Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p.15)."*

With the guests staying in the home and the limited amount of private space a close relationship with the guest and thereby discussion and observation could take place in, as Rudestam and Newton (2001, p.36) stress a " *socially constructed nature of reality, a close relationship between the researcher and the object of study, and the context that influences the inquiry."* Due to the small number of guests, not by the hosts choosing, it is reassuring that qualitative researchers can rely on a few cases and many variables (Silverman 2001). Observation and interviews are accepted methods. Of the five traditional dimensions in qualitative researches, phenomenology has been chosen to meet the research aim to understand the guests' free homestay experiences. The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy with the guests is critical to gaining a good depth of information that can be analysed.

In this study, the author has used two methods of phenomenological research, the first is in-depth interview and the second is observation. The authors' aim is to ascertain the several factors that influence the guests' reason for using free homestay as a choice of accommodation. Secondly an objective is to review the guests' experiences both with the host, and importantly, with other hosts within the UK. Observation is a method to discover the guests' behaviours while they stay and talk with the host. Observation also helps the author to establish the guests' behavior regarding the use of space and thereby the immersion into the home. The questions are categorised as four themes to fit the two emotional and social dimensions. The first is the reason the participant joins the web based organisations and the second part is the determinants that influence interviewees to choose their potential hosts. Thirdly, questions are posed to try to investigate the relationship between the host and the guest and the guest's experiences. The fourth and final element is the guest's expectation about their stay with the host.

All the participants are the members of free homestay organisations and they have one, or more than one, accommodation experience via free homestay organisation websites. The interviews took place in a non formal environment, with a drink in the author's home, one in the garden on a sunny afternoon, one in the kitchen after a meal and one in the lounge in the evening with a glass of wine. Each approach appeared to fit that guest at that time. Each interview lasted for about an hour. In addition the author observed the participants whilst they were resident in the home. The sample consisted of those staying with the host in

July 2010. One guest (married, retired, French male aged 63) stayed for just an afternoon and a night, two guests (single, student, German females aged 18) stayed for 3 days and 2 nights and a family of two adults (married, self employed professional Polish couple aged 40s) and 2 small children (female aged 4, male aged 1) stayed for 4 days and 3 nights. They are coded F1, G2 and P4 for identification in the discussion.

Findings and Discussion

Each of the stays with the host commenced with an email exchange asking to be hosted for one or two nights across a range of dates. Each communication consisted of a number of short emails confirming availability of a "couch", location, directions and finally the confirmation of the wish to come by the guest. The communication did not include any other details regarding guest needs or wants nor confirmation of facilities available as the "couch" is described on the host's web page as a private bedroom with a double bed. This initial stage of the guest host relationship appears to be important to guests and host alike. It enables the starting process of moving Selwyn's strangers to friends. F1, G2 and P4 had each contacted the host though either Couchsurfing or Hospitality Club. Each guest initially contacted the host who was then able to check each web profile before *inviting* them to stay. The host rejected one potential guest as he was English looking for somewhere cheap/free to stay for a friend's wedding in the local area. This did not fit with the host's desires to host against the values of free homestay. All of the guests agree with the philosophy as highlighted by Briaski (2006), Molz, 2007 and Farbrother (2008) of free homestay and it was clearly shown during each discussion and through the guests actions and activities whilst traveling. G2, new to couchsurfing, stated *"at first we looked for just girls because our parents were a little bit scared so just girls or ladies or some one like you; a teacher or something like that, but after a while it doesn't matter if we look for other people."* As they felt reassured the importance of type rather than demography became important. F1 who has significant experience of free homestay still chooses hosts that would suit his needs of geography to fit into his travel plans and then by potential social company *"Of course when I look at profiles I don't always find the sort of people I expect to feel comfortable with. I would feel a lot more comfortable with people of your age group and background than I would with a 19 year old…"* P4 supports this by reading all profiles to find the best fit for their needs. Again geography comes first followed by potential good hosts *"Of course with the kids we're also looking for facilities, if they only offer a couch it's not going to be possible. We're looking for separate rooms and certain age groups. Looking for people with kids or families."* By clearly fitting into Sheth et al's (1991) social values each guest is looking for an interactive experience with a specific social group.   It is evident that the guests, knowing that they will be part of a home, look for a host who is able to fit their perceived social needs. Their motives for choosing each host clearly have an element of planned social reciprocity as argued by Telfer (2000). The physical place is less important than the person hosting being able to meet the social and emotional; needs of the traveling guest.

With the physical tangible expectations less important than the host's profile becoming clear it starts to reinforce the issue that this is not about budget accommodation but about travelling in a different cultural and physical environment from the commercial one. Each stay with each host appears to be a desire for a social experience; to be made to feel welcome. Most hosts offer a couch and company, only a few offer food beyond breakfast yet each guest F1, G2 and P4 all have experienced being fed by hosts on most occasions. This offering is perhaps something the host wishes to leave until they meet the guest or is part of the unwritten communication of understanding.

G2's first journey to the UK and with couchsurfing meant that they had daily surprises with British hospitality. On looking for the host's house, whilst hiking, they were lost in the village. *"We asked a man the way here and he took us by the hand and guided us. It was really funny."* Hospitality was therefore for them happening outside the home. The hospitable experiences then increased. The majority of welcoming appear to fit into a pattern of mundane but British hospitality where by guests are welcomed, they are offered a cup of tea, and are shown their room (couch) and then the social element builds through talking. As G2 states *"…a cup of tea that's the first thing! It surprised us a little bit at first but not any more."* F1 supports this *"Every one goes through the same process."* Though F1 has also had the experience where by the host was not present and told him to stay anyway and left a key under a brick as he stated *"… the woman's not there and I've only got the cats to talk to."* This was convenient but a loss of the social and

emotional needs being met.   He slept and left early.

Research showed that mundane hospitality moves very quickly beyond the trinity of food, beverage and accommodation to an experience of surprises. As each host is different the guests will have unique experiences with each one. As F1 states *"I'd be disappointed if it went here's your room and what time do you want breakfast? I'd be scratching my head you know."*   P4 and F1 are fairly independent and measure their experiences by their own time and by the social element. For P4 attending an end of term family party/picnic on Christchurch beach with the host and eight other families was a highlight of their stay, but mostly for F1 and P4 it is about the social element of sitting, eating and talking, getting to know each other and moving the relationship from stranger to friend. The 3rd evening with P4 resulted in a very late evening (morning) consuming a wine and whiskey and staying up late chatting as good friends would. Both the host and guest had moved from strangers to friends.

P4 highlight the need for freedom of being a tourist to go out in the day but to ensure that there is time and an expectation for host and guest to meet at dinner.   As F1 highlights one experience, "*…great conversations it was totally relaxed, I'm relaxed anyway but they were relaxed with me, that's us as we are. It was an absolutely fantastic evening.*" This was staying with what he described as a hippy family living in a mobile home behind a pub. G2 appeared to have quire a different yet equally unique level of hospitality in that during their short stay on the South Coast they were taken to Brighton's Gay Pride by train; cycled round the New Forest on the hosts cycles; played Wii with the hosts children; went to a British Pub with the host and went sailing round Poole Harbour on a host's friend's boat. Only two of these activities were with the author. Each and everyone of these was unexpected, unique and as a non commercial activity offered by the hosts shows a level of hospitableness difficult to find in any part of the commercial sector.   These examples of meta hospitality (Lugosi 2008) show a clear movement from stranger to Selwyn's (2000) familiar but moving beyond that to friend.

The level of hospitality does not appear to be constrained or enhanced through the amount of room or space given to guests as by being guests with free homestay they are relinquishing some of their rights to anonymity.   Each guest appears to acknowledge this as part of the stay. As P4 *explains "For the guests it can get tiring."* They perceive the need to take on the role of a social guest giving their own time to the host as shown by Bialski (2006) whereby the host expects the guest's company. As P4 explains *"You have been entertaining people so you cannot go to bed at 8.30 and read a book because you are in someone's place and there are expectations."* The guest therefore is not purely taking from the host but is putting into the host guest relationship time and energy. This also moves some of the spatial control away from the host. The guest may take over the cooking and provide the wine but will also offer intot he transaction their own social and emotional inputs.

Darke & Gurney (2000) identified social rules, such as not complaining, that whilst at variance with the commercial manager-customer relationship are unhelpfully unwritten when you arrive at the host's home. As F1 explains as a host …"I *expect the guest to pick them up, if they've got any intelligence. If you can't pick it up then you shouldn't be in this."* As each home may have different social rules it is for to the guest to pick up the subtleties of behaviour.   He goes on to say *"as a guest it is my duty to conform myself to the culture of where I'm staying so I have to be observant and see, feel what the culture is so I know instinctively the things to do. It's not a massive challenge you just adapt in relation to the person you are with. Already I spotted a cross as you come into your door I saw a bible on the book shelve. I put 2 and 2 together maybe and made 3 I don't know …we all have our house rules which is cultural, each family cell has it's own set of cultural standards so you just have to conform yourself to those."* P4 agree stating *"Any social interaction will change your way of behaving depending on the context."* This again fits in with the home stay literature on the desire to immerse oneself, as a guest into another culture.

Conclusion

There are clear examples of hospitality and even elements and experiences of meta hospitality within this asymmetrical hospitality exchange of non commercial guests staying in the UK. Having removed the commercial element of the exchange there appears to be clear differences between non commercial homestay and commercial homestay beyond the financial element of any perception of value. Guests measure their satisfaction not in where they stay but who they stay with. The reciprocity is clearly about

the guest giving their time to the host thereby becoming part of the home for the period of their stay. Whilst offering to cook or wash up are tangible offerings, often supported with a small gift of flowers, chocolate or a drink, the real sacrifice is offering of self to the host.

The guest offers friendship, their time and their company in exchange for accommodation, drink, often food and certainly company but particulary emotional immersion within the host's home.

The motives for staying fit comfortably with Telfer's (2000) motives for social hospitality that included "other-regarding motives" and "reciprocal motives". In this instance the guest as well as the host is offering to the "other". It is apparent whilst initially the German girls (G2) looked for security as their criteria, confidence soon took over and choice of host was more about finding friendly people. The more mature couch surfers looked for host types to fit their social needs rather than the needs of the traditional and tangible trinity of food, beverage and accommodation. The social dimension of hospitality is clearly a dominant feature for both guest to choose and for the host to invite or reject a request. This is an option not often open to commercial homestay due to the limited pre-communication and the legal responsibilities of a commercial business.

The level of hospitableness experienced across the UK by the traveling guests clearly indicates meta-hospitality moments. These unexpected and often unplanned acts of hospitableness as a complete acknowledgement to the other is a sharing of experiential space in which the guest and host are part of a contextually defined social entity (Lugosi, 2008). Both social and emotional needs are clearly being met and it appears that the home is clearly a place for hospitality and this select but sizable community of over one million members of the web based organisations, through their beliefs, values and actions show that hospitality, whilst perhaps not quite pure can certainly be close.

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