

Abstract

A significance of platforms based on sharing economy principle in tourism has been continuously increasing. Currently, the most significant phenomenon is Airbnb, which allows residents to offer their homes for tourists. Even though Airbnb still works on basic peer to peer principle of sharing economy, due to uncontrolled development, it has been leading to a diversion from values of sharing economy. Unlike Airbnb, couchsurfing still retains values of sharing economy and promotes sustainable tourism. However, there is not enough data about couchsurfing. For example, this platform does not have any public database, which would outline how many people were accommodated through Couchsurfing in particular destinations. The lack of data about couchsurfing is apparent in the academic sphere as well. The vast majority of studies is focused on sociological themes like motivations of people to use couchsurfing or mutual trust among its users. In the meantime, the spatial behaviour of these tourists has been therefore underestimated. Creation of a database of these tourists on international and Czech national scale including an exploration of spatial behaviour in Czechia is the main aim of this research. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted for this research. The quantitative research mainly consists of the systematic creation of the database of these tourists. The qualitative research examined spatial behaviour of these tourists using the narrative interview method. The results of the thesis showed that developed countries and their particular destinations are the the most popular among Couchsurfing users. In general, users of this platform travel to such countries as tourists according to UNWTO. In Czechia, there is the most significant demand for Prague, where 57 % of tourists were accommodated through Couchsurfing from 2004 to 2016. Even though these tourists usually visit more destinations during their stay in Czechia (inculding less significant destinations such as small towns), they rather gather in the city centres and visit the most popular places of the destinations. Considering the style of travelling and visiting of various destinations, tourists using Couchsurfing can be classified as a very specific group of tourists.

Keywords: sharing economy; couchsurfing; alternative tourism; sustainable tourism; spatial behaviour