The role of students as hosts to VFR travellers: Towards a conceptual framework

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Abstract

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) is one of the largest yet most neglected travel segments in tourism research. In particular, little is known about the ways in which hosts and visitors affect each other’s experiences from a quantitative perspective. This PhD project tackles this gap by developing a conceptual framework for the understanding of hosts-guests interactions looking especially at the way hosts’ affect their visitors’ experience.

To achieve this goal a sequential mixed-methods approach in two stages (qualitative -> QUANTITIVE) was used to research the population of students at the University of Surrey. Consequently, the study began with a series of 14 semi-structured interviews (1st stage), in order to explore the phenomenon in Guildford and provide the context for the framework. The findings from the first stage, together with further review of the literature led to including four main constructs in the model. These are: hosts’ destination knowledge, destination image, motivation to host and visitors’ experience. The second stage consisted of a survey completed by 458 groups of hosts and their visitors that measured these constructs and tested the model using Structure Equation Model (SEM).

The results suggest the model fits well with the data providing insights about the relationships between the constructs. For example, it was found that there is a virtuous circle of interactions between the host’s constructs and that destination image could be transferred from residents to visitors as generally assumed in literature. Overall, the model together with its interpretation and theoretical support provides the first conceptual framework for the understanding of the way hosts affect their visitors’ experience. These findings aid in the understanding of the internal dynamics of the VFR phenomenon filling a crucial gap in literature and helping Destination Marketing Organizations to better manage the VFR market through their local residents (the hosts).
Declaration of originality

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service Turnitin-UK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

Julio Munoz

1st of July 2018
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## List of Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFR</td>
<td>Accommodation with Friends and Relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AONB</td>
<td>Area of Outstanding National Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>Adjusted Good of Fit Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB-SEM</td>
<td>Covariance Based Structure Equation Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>Comparative fit Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIT</td>
<td>Critical Incident Technique</td>
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<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Composite Reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>Canadian Tourism Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMS</td>
<td>Department for Culture, Media &amp; Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMO</td>
<td>Destination Marketing Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFR</td>
<td>Exploiting Friends and Relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETC</td>
<td>European Travel Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAHS</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts and Human Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBEL</td>
<td>Faculty of Business Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEPS</td>
<td>Faculty of Law, Engineering and Physical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHMS</td>
<td>Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full Time Equivalent (student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>Goodness of Fit Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESA</td>
<td>Higher Education Statistics Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMO</td>
<td>Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIH</td>
<td>Mobility Influenced by a Host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML</td>
<td>Maximum Likelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSV</td>
<td>Maximum Shared Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFR</td>
<td>No Accommodation with Friends and Relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTB</td>
<td>National Tourism Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS</td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>Principal Component Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLS</td>
<td>Partial Least Squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLS-SEM</td>
<td>Partial Least Squares Structure Equation Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMR</td>
<td>Root-Mean-Square Residual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Structural Equation Modelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHTM</td>
<td>School of Hospitality and Tourism Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>Squared Multiple Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRMR</td>
<td>Standardised Root Mean Residual</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMO</td>
<td>Tourism Management Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSE</td>
<td>Tourism South East</td>
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<tr>
<td>2SLS</td>
<td>Two Stage Least Squares</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNWTO</td>
<td>United Nations World Tourism Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>Visit Friends and Relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>VF</td>
<td>Visit Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>VR</td>
<td>Visit Relatives</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The introduction to the thesis is structured in eight sections that present the most important elements necessary to understand the project’s context, the need and importance of the study and the way it was conducted. Accordingly, the chapter is organised following the chronological order in which the thesis was conducted, starting by discussing the background of the study that summarises the main aspects of VFR literature and practice that raised the need for this project. This leads to section two which explains the research problem behind the project that justifies the need for it, and therefore, the objectives of the study (section three). This could be seen as the final destination for the project which is reached following a step by step route (the map) that is provided by the research design in section four. Once the way and the final destination are described, section five presents the significance of the study which is strongly related to the contributions presented in chapter ten. Section six describes Guildford and the University of Surrey campus as the setting where the study was conducted and the reasons behind this choice. At the end of the chapter a detailed structure of the whole thesis and a summary of the chapter are presented.

1.1 - Background of the study

According to Backer & Morrison (2015), Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) is arguably the largest and oldest tourism segment in the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017), has reported that almost 27% of all international travellers stated that VFR was their main purpose of travel. For example, in South Africa VFR represented 28% of all international arrivals and 72% of all domestic trips (Rogerson, 2015). Here in the United Kingdom (UK), according to Visit Britain (2017) the phenomenon is also very significant, VFR arrivals accounted for 30% of all international visits and 37% of all domestic travel. While in Guilford, according to the most updated information available, VFR was responsible for approximately 62% of all trips and 7.6% of all jobs (Visit England, 2014; Visit Guildford, 2013).
In economic terms, tourism in the EU and OECD countries is responsible for around 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) direct spending, 8% of GDP indirect spending and around 5% of total employment (OECD, 2018). In the UK the figures are slightly higher, tourism is directly responsible for 4.1% of the UK’s economy and 5.4% of total employment, and indirectly responsible for 9.0% of the country’s GDP and 9.6% of all jobs (Visit Britain, 2013). Since VFR represents at least a quarter of the UK’s tourism industry, this means that VFR is responsible for approximately 1%-2% of the whole of British economy. To put this fact in perspective, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2015) the whole of the agricultural sector in the UK contributes almost the same amount to the British economy, however, the amount of research done in VFR and the British agricultural sector is considerably different.

Unlike other travel segments, VFR also offers a set of specific benefits to the tourism industry and the local communities. For example, VFR travellers tend to return many times to the same destination which makes them more profitable in the long term than other travellers, which Meis et al. (1995) called as having a higher ‘lifetime value’. They tend travel at any time throughout the year, which is useful to overcome the seasonality of the tourism industry; and they are not affected as much by economic fluctuations which is important to overcome the volatility of the tourism industry (Hu & Morrison, 2002; King, 1996; Seaton, 1994). Additionally, during the visits, hosts also participate in the activities increasing the party size, and thus, the group expenditure, which Meis et al. (1995) named as hosts’ ‘invisible multiplier effect’. VFR travellers also tend to stay for longer periods that again increase the total expenditure and spreads it throughout the local economy reaching a larger number of residents (Griffin, 2013b). Moreover, VFR has also been pointed out as less ‘intrusive’ for local communities, less harmful for the environment and overall more ‘sustainable’ than other types of tourism (Griffin, 2013b). Still, in spite of it large size and benefits, according to most authors VFR remains one of the most neglected areas in tourism research (Backer & Morrison, 2017; Capistrano & Weaver, 2017; Munoz et al. 2017; Provenzano, & Baggio, 2017; Rogerson, 2017).

The lack of research in VFR is even bigger in some particular areas, such as the role that hosts play in the VFR experience and tertiary students’ involvement in VFR. Most authors argue that hosts play a crucial part in the VFR experience having a very strong influence on their visitors’
Chapter 1. Introduction

(Humbracht, 2015; Lehto et al., 2001; McKercher, 1994; Meis et al., 1995; Pavolic et al., 2014). VFR travellers place a high degree of trust in their friends and relatives to make decisions about their trip. For example, Backer (2009) found that in Queensland, Australia, 80% of all VFR travellers rely purely on word of mouth from their friends and relatives to plan their trip. Consequently, hosts have also been described in literature as ‘local guides’, ‘destination experience brokers’, ‘tourism mediators’ and ‘ambassadors’ of the destination (Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Humbracht, 2015; Morrison et al., 2000; Zátori et al., 2017). However, there are very few studies such as Young et al. (2007), Shani & Uriely (2012) and recently by Griffin (2017) and Dutt & Ninov (2017), which have directly analysed mainly from a qualitative perspective the role of the host and only one published article that has addressed the issue of VFR in university cities, written by Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis in (2007).

The neglected status of VFR research compared to its large size and numerous benefits to the tourism industry and the local communities is one of the main characteristics of VFR literature. This is consistently mentioned throughout VFR studies, however, despite several efforts to overcome it, including the recent publication of the first compiled book about VFR by Backer & King (2015), the amount of research in VFR remains noticeably low compared to other topics. There have been two published literature reviews that have measured the number of VFR articles by Griffin (2013a) and Yousuf & Backer (2015). The former stated that until 2010 there were only 46 published articles and the latter counted 57 articles until 2015. This is extremely small compared to concepts such as ‘sustainable tourism’ or ‘authenticity in tourism’ were a search can reach around 200 to 1000 articles, not to mention that there are several journals about sustainability and other topics, such as, event tourism or gambling in tourism, however, there is no journal about VFR travel.

The second most distinctive characteristic of the VFR phenomenon is its multifaceted and heterogeneous nature. There are several implications of this issue, first there is confusion among researchers about what is VFR and how it is defined, which directly impacts the quality of the data available about VFR and the amount of research (Backer, 2007; Munoz et al., 2017). Secondly, the heterogeneity of VFR travellers and the fact they tend to blend-in with the community makes them hard to find and obtain representative samples (Backer, 2007; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007). Additionally, hosts play a crucial role in the phenomenon, and
therefore, it is also necessary to include them in the research which represents an additional challenge although it can also help facilitate the measurement (McKercher, 1994). As a result, DMOs have often assumed that VFR travellers are hard to reach and are not possible to influence through marketing techniques (Morrison et al., 1995; Muri & Sagesser, 2003). VFR travellers however, are not more difficult to influence or reach but as a special segment it is necessary to use special techniques to target them, such as reaching them through their hosts and employing tailor-made campaigns (Backer, 2014; Muri & Sagesser, 2003).

Nevertheless, in spite of the heterogeneous nature of the segment, academia have approached the category more as a basic economic activity than a social phenomenon having a narrow positivist approach to researching VFR (Backer, 2007). VFR literature evolution can be divided in four stages. First during the early nineties there was a strong emphasis in using quantitative methods and secondary data of standard tourism indicators, in order to, justify the importance of the new segment (e.g. Jackson, 1990). Later researchers continued to focus on basic indicators but began to collect their own data to create taxonomies and typologies of VFR travellers to somehow map what is inside this heterogeneous segment (e.g. Chen & O’Leary, 1998 and Moscardo, 2000). This was followed by the arrival of the first qualitative studies about VFR (e.g. Duval, 2003) that aimed to understand the rich social aspects within the phenomenon. However, although it is hard to think of a more social segment than visiting ‘friends and relatives’, the number of qualitative studies is still very low compared to the quantitative ones and there are only three studies that have used mixed-methods (Griffin, 2013a). Now the segment is having an introspective turn with the publication of two literature reviews and a compiled book that summarises previous research (Griffin, 2013a). Yet, according to Griffin (2013a) there is an imminent need for new ideas and methodologies and in particular for research that quantifies many of the social aspects within VFR.

Not understanding the particular characteristics of the VFR phenomenon has also been pointed out as a reason for its neglected status (Backer, 2007; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Shani & Uriely, 2012). If there is no available information about VFR, it is harder to conduct any type of research. Simple steps that are often needed to complete at the beginning of any study, such as: defining the construct, obtaining general data about the population or understanding the internal dynamics of the segment (e.g. how hosts influence the experience of their
visitors) are not clear in VFR literature which creates a vicious circle of ‘VFR illiteracy’. The recent trend in VFR literature to review previous research instead of creating new knowledge might be a reaction to improve the understanding of the phenomenon. However, in a subject of research as small as VFR, the amount of analysis that is possible to do on previous research is limited and an influx of new ideas, topics and views is extremely necessary.

1.2 - The research problem

As noted in the previous section VFR is one of the largest tourism segments and offers several benefits for the tourism industry and the local communities, however, it has also been pointed out as one of the most neglected areas in tourism research. There are several issues associated to this situation, VFR is a distinct multifaceted phenomenon that sparks confusion in academia and practice and requires tailor made solutions (Lehto et al., 2001). For example Morrison et al. (2000) who interviewed 221 DMOs in four different continents, found that DMOs’ main marketing approach towards VFR is based on ‘common sense’ assumptions that have not been tested in research. Nevertheless, as seen in section 1.1 VFR is a special segment that combines travel with social relationships, and thus, the approach taken by DMOs towards the VFR market should be further evaluated to test if it actually satisfies the special needs of the segment.

It has been noted that the lack of research in general and in particular about specific aspects of VFR creates a vicious circle of ‘VFR illiteracy’ because it is harder to develop new research when basic information about VFR is missing. There are problems associated to what is understood as VFR, basic statistics are missing or provide conflicting information and several specific aspects about the internal dynamics of the phenomenon are still unknown. Especially noticeable is the lack of research about the role of the host in VFR although it has been repetitively mentioned in literature as a crucial aspect of the phenomenon (Backer, 2009; Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Humbracht, 2015; Morrison et al., 2000). For example, Zátori et al. (2017, pp. 18) argued that “the local knowledge and passion for the given place of the hosts are seen as crucial factors of involving VFR travellers in local tourism; however, little empirical evidence
is available”. Likewise, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007, pp. 480) stated that “more research is needed into the role of hosts in VFR tourism”, and argued that “perhaps hosting friends and relatives or ‘HFR’ would be a more appropriate label for this type of research.”

In the same line, several authors have called for the need to analyse social aspects of the VFR phenomenon associated to the relationship between hosts and their visitors (Capistrano, 2013; Griffin, 2013a; Shani & Uriely, 2012). For example Zátori et al. (2017, pp. 18) stated that “more in-depth analysis could be useful to analyse the host–guest relations, such as the impact the host exerts on the guest’s tourist behaviour”. Additionally, Griffin (2013a) called for the need of research that quantifies social aspects of the VFR phenomenon. This research aims to fill these gaps in research providing a model that quantifies the influence that hosts have on their visitors’ experience which provides new insights into the interactions between hosts and guest and the role that hosts play in this phenomenon.

In terms of methodology, a sequential mixed-methods approach in two stages (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE- in capitals due to its dominance in the study) was chosen to overcome the lack of information about VFR as the qualitative stage provides the context for the study. This approach introduces an original methodology in VFR research which is a contribution to the field as the lack of different methodologies has also been pointed-out as reason for its neglected status. The data analysis was conducted using CB-SEM that is a very popular technique in the social sciences because it allows for the measurement of the interrelation between several constructs (Hair et al., 2006). This is extremely useful in VFR due to the large number of social aspects involved in this heterogeneous segment. However, a thorough review of literature revealed that this would be the first time it is used in VFR research. Consequently, the project goals and methodology were tailor-made for the needs of this distinctive phenomenon as suggested by Lehto et al. (2001).

In practical terms students were chosen as the most suitable candidates for the study because they tend to receive more visitors than other residents (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007). Guildford and the University of Surrey were seen as the ideal location because the South East Region (SER) has the highest percentage of VFR arrivals in the UK (60% in Surrey the highest within the SER), and the city has several attractions but is not considered as a well-known
destination which could bias the response of the participants (Visit England, 2014). Additionally, there is very little research about VFR in university cities like Guildford, although these cities are significant centres of VFR, on account of the large population of students who receive visits regularly from their friends and relatives (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007). Moreover, this setting provided an invaluable opportunity to survey hosts and their visitors together and in large numbers during the graduation periods. Collecting data from two separate but related parties (hosts and guests) increases the difficulty of conducting research in any subject, thus most tourism research has been done in single participants; however, VFR travellers’ heterogeneous nature can make it even more complex. Therefore, the study’s methodology and findings are particularly novel for VFR research but are also a contribution to knowledge to tourism research in general.

1.3 - Research objectives

Although, literature has acknowledged the importance of the host in VFR, there is very little information about it and no research on a question as crucial as: how do hosts influence their visitors’ experience of the destination. Evaluating the relationship between hosts and visitors is at the core of the VFR experience. As noted above there is an imminent need for quantifiable research into social aspects of VFR such as this one (Griffin, 2013a). Not understanding the particular characteristics of the VFR phenomenon has also been pointed out as a reason for its neglected status in research (Backer, 2007; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Shani & Uriely, 2012). This PhD project therefore, aims to provide a better understanding of how hosts influence their visitors’ experience of the destination. It aims to answer this question from various methodological perspectives in order to provide a holistic but also quantifiable view of this phenomenon, which can be summarised in the following objectives for the whole thesis project:

1. Critically analyse the current academic and non-academic literature about VFR and students’ involvement in this market, in order to, provide a solid base for the understanding of the VFR phenomenon and the thesis.
2. Explore the role of students as hosts of visitors at the University of Surrey to identify the most relevant issues and situate the context of the study.

3. Based on literature and the findings from the first stage of the study identify the key constructs and develop a theoretical framework for the understanding of the ways hosts affect their visitors’ experience.

4. Using the theoretical framework test the influence hosts have on their visitors’ experience by measuring the identified key constructs (hosts’ destination knowledge, destination image and motivation to host) and their visitors’ experience.

5. Provide a practical contribution to the management of the VFR market by helping DMOs to better understand the possibilities of using the residents as a marketing tool. Understanding the connection between hosts and their visitors and in particular how hosts affect their visitors’ experience will allow DMOs to make better use of the local residents (the hosts).

As mentioned earlier in section 1.2, the project is composed of two sequential stages that can be seen almost as separate studies, and therefore, each stage also have different goals. The first stage of the research is qualitative and aims to explore the context of the VFR phenomenon in a university city in order to provide necessary information to frame the second stage of the research and develop the questionnaire. Based on this information and further review of literature a theoretical framework for the understanding of hosts’ impact on their visitors experience was developed. Consequently, the first stage can be linked closer to objectives two and three of the thesis. The second stage of the research is composed of the survey to hosts and their visitors and aims to test the model developed in the theoretical framework, and thus, can be linked closer to objectives four and five. This stage it could be argued is the dominant method in the thesis project because it absorbs the findings from the first stage and all the literature presented in the thesis. As a result, the objectives of the second stage are subdivided into 12 hypotheses that test the relationships between the key constructs measured in hosts and visitors. These hypotheses are presented and discussed in detail in the theoretical framework.
1.4 - Research design

As mentioned in section 1.1, the VFR phenomenon is particularly heterogeneous and multifaceted (Moscardo et al., 2000); however, in terms of research methods and paradigms VFR literature has often been exactly the opposite. Most VFR research has focused on searching for standard quantifiable data, such as expenditure, number of visitors or nights of accommodation (Mena, 2007), as if the segment was just an economic activity rather than a social phenomenon, yet, it is difficult to think of a more social segment than ‘visiting friends and relatives’. Recently, there has been an increase in qualitative studies that tried to uncover these deep social aspects embedded in VFR, though according to Griffin (2013a) there is still a pressing need for research that quantifies crucial aspects of these relationships. As a result, it was decided to use a sequential mixed-method approach in two stages (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE). This approach allowed to first collect qualitative data that was necessary to frame the study and was not currently available due the lack of research in VFR. Using this information and with a further review of the literature a survey was developed to collect data from hosts and their visitors which quantified several aspects of their relationship and is the dominant method in this study.

According to Bryman (2005) mixed-methods approaches could also be seen as ‘multi-strategy’ approaches, because each method implies a particular worldview and a particular strategy almost as independent studies on their own. In this case these ‘independent studies’ are carried out separately and sequentially one after the other. Each of them serves a particular purpose and also supports the development of the next stage, in the same way that previous literature supports any research. Yet, in this ‘multi-strategy’ research, this particular ‘literature’ is tailored for the needs and context of this project. As a result, the strategy of the first phase of the research consisted of a round of semi-structured interviews that aimed to explore the context of the situation in order to guide the second phase of the research.

In practical terms, the first phase consisted of 14 semi-structured interviews with students and their visitors. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method that best suited the needs of this phase because it allows for sufficient control over the topics to be discussed in
order to focus on VFR issues, but leave enough leeway for the interviewer to explore other related topics that might arise during the conversation (Saunders, 2016). Students were recruited using convenience sampling and saturation was reached with ten interviews although four more were conducted to confirm this was the case (Guest et al., 2006). The decoding and analysis was done using thematic analysis, one of the most common ways to analyse interviews in the social sciences (Denzin, 2009). All of this information is discussed in detail in chapter four that presents the methodology for the first stage of the research.

Using the findings gained in the qualitative phase of the study, the second phase aimed to test a model for the understanding of hosts and visitors’ relationships. Testing the qualitative and theoretical basis on which the model was developed calls for the need to generalisation and a quantitative approach. In practical terms, the survey was collected by the researcher in person during 2015-2016 graduation weeks. 458 pairs of host’s and visitor’s questionnaires were collected during these periods which represents almost 3% of the total population of students. Further analysis of the quality of the data (in section 8.1), concluded the sample was sufficiently representative and the quality of the data was above average. Finally, the data was first analysed descriptively using Microsoft Excel and later a complete CB-SEM was run using IBM-SPSS and Amos 23. All of this information is discussed in detail in chapter seven that presents the methodology for the second stage of the research.

1.5 - Significance of the study

The study contributes to several areas of tourism research and especially to VFR literature and practice. The main contributions of the study are in terms of theory. This is the first study that presents a model aimed at better understanding the internal dynamics of the VFR phenomenon and in particular the way in which hosts affect their visitors’ experience. The model also proposes a new host construct i.e. motivation to host in addition to the two extant hosts’ constructs (destination knowledge and destination image). This new construct to VFR research ‘motivation to host’ agglomerates several aspects of hosts’ attitude towards the act of hosting that are seen as crucial in VFR and had been mentioned separately throughout
literature. By analysing the way these constructs interact between each other the model also introduces the concept of a ‘virtuous circle of hosting’, which links all the hosts’ constructs and the number of visits they receive into a positive circular relationship that can further spread and increase in any of the variables.

Moreover, the results confirmed several theoretical assumptions found in the literature, but most notably the fact that destination image can be transferred from one person to another (in this case from hosts to guests). Destination image is a key concept in tourism marketing and research evidence this as one of the main aspects that influences people’s choice of destination, their behaviour during and after travelling, and their level of satisfaction with it (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Lu, 2011). Therefore, there is a large amount of research and marketing initiatives that use this construct and in particular the idea that destination image can be passed from one individual to another. This idea had until now been assumed in the literature based on extensive testing of single individuals (e.g. asking travellers what influenced their trips). Due to the difficulties of surveying pairs of related individuals separately, this had not been tested directly in pairs where one person influences the other (in this study destination image is measured in host and their visitors). Consequently, this study by providing the first measurement of how one individual can transfer his/her destination image makes an important contribution to the field of tourism.

In terms of methodological contributions, the study introduced a sequential mixed-methods approach, which is not common in VFR literature although it fits well for overcoming the lack of knowledge in the field and the need to understand and quantify crucial social issues inside the phenomenon. This methodology adds to the diversity and complexity of the research methods in VFR which was found to be a deficient aspect of VFR literature, further discussed in section 2.9. Moreover, from a broader perspective the study measured constructs in related pairs of individuals which is rare in tourism research because of the practical difficulties it implies. This provided the opportunity to compare how constructs’ relationships can change significantly if the measurement is in one single individual or different people that affect each other.
In relation to the study’s contribution to practice, the project confirmed the efficacy of several practices that are common when DMOs aim to target the VFR market. In particular, the study confirmed that teaching residents about the destination’s local attractions is crucial for influencing their visitors’ experience. It found evidence that that residents have power to attract visits and that their destination image can directly affect their visitors’ destination image, and thus, also their experience. However, it also found evidence that not all the relations worked as expected by DMOs managers. For example, it seems that teaching hosts about the destination might lead more to making hosts better ‘local ambassadors’ or ‘tour-guides’ of the destination which is not so directly conducive to motivating them to attract more visits. Moreover, the model suggests that it is better to target all aspects in the model instead of one or two and the effects from targeting any of the hosts’ constructs can last for long periods due to the inertia of the circular relationship between the hosts constructs named ‘virtuous circle of hosting’. Therefore, based on this model DMOs can now better target the residents knowing their efforts can last for long periods and with more certainty that previous practices do have a positive impact on the visitors’ experience.

In terms of contribution to knowledge the findings suggest that hosts’ destination knowledge place a crucial role in the visitors’ experience through the host becoming a better ‘tour-guide’ and their ‘interpretation of the place’. Hosts’ destination image does not seem to have a direct effect on their visitors experience, however, it does have a direct effect on their visitors’ destination image (destination image transfer) which mediates the effect to the visitors’ experience. Motivation to host has a direct impact on the number of visits they receive that also positively influences their destination knowledge and destination image creating the mentioned ‘virtuous circle of hosting’. The power between these relationships has also been tested, which contributes to the understanding of hosts and visitors interactions. Finally, further information about the particular characteristics of VFR within university cities was also collected that helps for a better understanding of this particular market. All of the topics mentioned in this section are further discussed in the conclusion chapter.
1.6 - Research setting

The research setting is discussed in Chapter Three ‘Guildford and the British tourism sector’ that provides a detailed introduction to the context where the research was conducted and Chapter Four provides a brief justification why it was chosen for the study. In summary the physical context of the study is the main campus of the University of Surrey and the city of Guildford. Located in the south-east of England, Guildford is a quiet and scenic old market town, which due to its proximity to the Greater London area, in the last decades it has been slowly becoming an affluent ‘suburb’ of London, one of the most visited cities in the world (Maitland & Newman, 2014). As such, Guildford has often been voted one of the best places to live in the UK and has some of the most expensive property prices outside of London (The Telegraph, 2013). From a tourist perspective it could be said that Guildford is a beautiful small English town with some picturesque attractions that gets completely overshadowed by London. The campus of the University of Surrey is located at walking distance from Guildford’s city centre and it is the home of 5000 students who live at the university owned accommodation, and approximately 9000 more who either live in private accommodation around campus or commute from other towns. The research was conducted in campus during 2015-2016 autumn and spring semesters, using the university library and campus cafes to conduct the interviews and distributing the questionnaires during the main graduation periods in April and July.

This setting was selected because of three reasons. First according to Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) students tend to receive more visits than other residents and are more open to participate in studies, which makes them the perfect subjects for the study. This project found that students received a similar number of visits which confirmed the Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) findings. Secondly, according to Visit England (2014) the South East of England is the region with the highest number of VFR trips in the UK and within this region the county of Surrey has the highest percentages with 60% of trips associated to VFR. Likewise, 62% of travellers to Guildford’s are also VFR (Visit England, 2014), of whom it could be expected that a high number are visitors to the students that is again ideal for the study.
Thirdly as noted above Guildford is not a widely recognised tourist destination, hence it could be expected that visitors’ views of Guildford are more influenced by their hosts than by previous preconceptions of the city, as it could be the case with larger or more famous cities. However, for a city of only 98,000 inhabitants Guildford has a fair number of attractions that justify having a visitors’ information centre, a museum and a tourism board that regularly organises event and plans the promotion of the city. Additionally, since the city is not ‘famous’ many of the attractions are not ‘obvious’ and have to be searched by the new residents (students), which is excellent for the project to test the influence different hosts have on their visitors experience. This overall situation is actually not too different from many other cities around the world, which makes the case of Guildford a useful one in terms of transferring the results of the study.

1.7 - Structure for the thesis

The thesis is structured in ten chapters that followed the process of conducting the study. As explained in the research design section, a sequential mixed-methods approach in two stages (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE) was chosen for the project. According to Bryman (2005) this methodology can be seen as a multi-strategy research because both methods were conducted separately one after the other almost as individual studies. Therefore, the structure of the thesis follows that process starting with a literature review that grounds the whole of the thesis project, followed by a first methods chapter that discusses the overall methodological aspects for the whole thesis and the first stage of the research (qualitative). Then the findings from the first stage are presented in chapter five, which provides the context for developing the theoretical framework (chapter six) for the second stage. Once the theoretical underpinning for the quantitative stage is exposed, chapter seven presents the results of the survey and the thesis finishes with a discussion and a conclusion chapters for the whole thesis. Figure 1.1 below provides a visual representation of the process including the two stages in the research.
More in detail this chapter provided an introduction to the thesis included the background of the research, the research problem, the value of this project, a summary of the whole research process and the rationale behind the most important choices taken during this process. Chapter two provides a thorough review of the most important aspects of VFR literature with special emphasis in discussing what is VFR, the benefits and difficulties when conducting research in it, DMOs and students involvement in this market, and the role of the host in VFR. This chapter provides the theoretical underpinning for the whole of the research project. Chapter three introduces the reader to the local tourism sector, which is useful to better understand the context of the study but also is used as a real-life example of multiple issues discussed in the literature review chapter.

Chapter four presents the first methods chapter which includes all the general methodological aspects that affect the whole study, such as, the epistemological approach of the project, the research strategy, ethical considerations and an overall view of the research design. Later the chapter discusses the particular methodological issues associated to the first stage of the research that prepare the scene for chapter five that present the findings from it. The first stage of the research was composed of a round of 14 semi-structured interviews, therefore, chapter five is organised based on the themes found when analysing these interviews. These themes are associated to the constructs measured in the second stage of the research that are further discussed from a theoretical point of view in chapter six.
Based on the literature review chapter and the findings from the first stage of the research, Chapter Six presents the theoretical framework for the second phase of the research. The chapter first provides the main theoretical underpinning behind each of the constructs measured in the second stage, destination image, knowledge, motivation to host and experience. Later the chapter presents the most important literature to explain the way the constructs’ relate to each other that leads to discussing the logic behind the 12 hypotheses tested in the second stage. The end of the chapter provides a summary and a full operational model for the quantitative and main phase of the study.

Chapter seven presents the second methods chapter that discuss the most important methodological aspects of the second phase, which includes the research design, questionnaire design and data analysis. The first section (research design) focuses on the practical aspects of collecting the survey, while the questionnaire design section discusses the process of developing the questionnaire which is strongly connected to the theoretical framework and the findings from the first stage. The data analysis section presents all the statistical justifications for the analysis of the data which includes a discussion of the measures of validity and reliability used in the study.

Chapter eight presents the results from the survey that could be divided into initial measurements such as demographics, representativeness of the sample, data screening and descriptive statistics; and the core measurements which include mainly the measurement model (EFA & CFA) and the structural model using CB-SEM. At the end of the chapter the hypotheses proposed in the theoretical framework are tested and a summary of the chapter is provided. The hypotheses’ are further analysed in Chapter Nine that provides a thorough discussion of each of them under the light of VFR literature, the theoretical framework and the findings from the first stage of the research. This chapter is organised in four major themes that are correlated to the four constructs presented in the theoretical framework. This is the discussion chapter for the whole thesis and also introduce the reader to implication of the results. The last chapter of the thesis provides a conclusion of the findings and results presented earlier, as well as, a discussion of the limitations of the study and potential areas for future research.
1.8 - Summary of the chapter

The chapter is composed by eight sections that provide a thorough introduction to the project. The chapter is structured in a chronological order starting with the background and need for the study that is later answered by the objectives, research design and finally the significance of project. Consequently, the first section explained the background of the project which includes practical aspects and the key elements of VFR literature that are expanded in the next chapter. In few words the section discussed that VFR is a large tourism segment that offers several benefits to the tourism industry and local communities, however, it has been neglected in research and practice due to its multifaceted nature and special characteristics. This is the basis for developing the research problem (section two) as the issues that justify the need for the study are strongly related to the current state of VFR research and the practical needs of the DMOs. Accordingly, the project goals and methodology were tailor-made to satisfy the particular needs of the VFR phenomenon as suggested by Lehto et al. (2001). Based on these needs section three presents the research objectives that can be seen as the final goal of the study, while the research design (section four) could be seen as the map that provides all the steps to reach those goals. This map is mainly composed of a sequential mixed-method research approach in two stages (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE) that can also be seen as multi-strategy approach because both methods were designed to support each other but were conducted almost as separate studies. Once the map was laid-out section five presented the significance of the study that is strongly related to the contributions of the project presented in chapter ten, in other words what are the gains from following this map and reaching those goals. The chapter finishes with a detailed structure of the thesis and a discussion of the setting where the research was conducted and the reasons behind that choice.
Chapter 2. Evolution of VFR research

2.1 - Introduction

This literature review aims to support the whole of the research project, providing the appropriate base of theoretical and practical knowledge to better understand the phenomenon and exposing the most relevant information available in literature. Within the literature regarding VFR, there are two main issues that were mentioned in all the articles reviewed, these are the multifaceted nature of the VFR phenomenon and the neglected status of VFR in literature (Backer et al., 2017; Munoz et al., 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2017). These two issues strongly influenced all the topics related to VFR, and thus, it could be said that these are the most distinctive characteristics of the VFR phenomenon and literature. Their influence is so widespread that in order to review them it would be necessary to include almost all the information inside this review. Therefore, the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon is discussed throughout the chapter within each section and the neglected status of VFR is also mentioned, but reviewed in more detail at the end of this chapter and linked to earlier sections. To review the reasons why VFR has been neglected, it is important to understand problems that might directly or indirectly affect the development of this research project.

2.1.1 - Structure of the Literature Review

The heterogeneous nature of the VFR phenomenon comes back into play, when structuring this literature review. Moscardo et al. (2000, pp. 1) stated that “the VFR phenomenon is multifaceted making it hard to integrate research findings”. There are many topics that have a direct impact on different aspects of the VFR phenomenon but also on one another, creating an entangled array of topics that are difficult to organise in a logical manner for the purposes of this literature review. Consequently, it was decided to organise the core of the review beginning with the most theoretical issues to the most practical implications. Hence, the review begins by discussing the question ‘What is VFR?’ and continues with an account of the evolution of VFR literature and the typologies developed from it. Subsequently, the chapter
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evaluates areas with more practical implications, such as, the roles of the host and the students in VFR, the benefits of this segment to communities and the tourism industry, and the connection of VFR with local tourism authorities. The last part of the review includes a discussion of the reasons why VFR has been neglected in literature and conclusions drawn from the literature.

2.2 - What is VFR?

At first glance this appears to be a simple question; VFR tourism seems for most people an obvious idea. However, when trying to define it more specifically, in particular when needed for practical purposes such as gathering data, it can become a complex issue (Barnett et al., 2010; Griffin, 2013b; Moscardo et al., 2000). Currently, there is no broadly accepted definition for VFR. According to Pavolic et al. (2014), the concept remains unstructured and chaotic. In most tourism statistics, VFR is categorised by “main purpose of travel”, owing to the fact, that the information is gathered from surveys that include that same sentence “main purpose of travel” next to four different alternatives: business, leisure, VFR or others (Backer, 2009). Yet sometimes VFR has also been described by the accommodation type used at a destination, in this case derived from the survey question: type of accommodation? Commercial accommodation vs. friends or relatives (Boyne & Hall, 2002).

These two different ways for describing a VFR trip can already make a big difference when discussing the concept more in depth. For example, in terms of data most often the number of VFR visitors by accommodation type is completely different to the number of visitors by purpose of visit, which creates confusion about the real size of the VFR market (Seaton & Palmer, 1997). For instance, in Canada according to the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC, 2013) the total amount of international VFR trips by purpose of travel is 28%, but by accommodation type is 24%. This can vary even more within some groups, such as the British travellers to Canada where the amount of VFR trips by “main purpose of travel” is 39% and by accommodation type is 31% or the French where VFR by “main purpose of travel” is 36% and by accommodation type is just 25% (CTC, 2013).
Furthermore, Morrison et al. (2000) proposed two additional ways to describe VFR; these are, by the motivation to travel and by the activities done within the trip. Morrison et al. (2000) argued that the motivation to travel can often be different from the main purpose of the trip. For example, a traveller’s main purpose of travel could be to have a holiday or to close a business deal, but the motivation to have a holiday or do business in that particular country is to visit a close relative that lives there. Moreover, by activity a VFR traveller is a person who spends time participating in activities together with friends or relatives at the destination. As a result, a tourist’s main purpose of travel may not be VFR, the tourist may not stay with friends or relatives nor be motivated to see them, but if the tourist spends time together with friends or relatives during the travel, the trip could also be classified as VFR (Moscardo et al., 2000).

Morrison et al. (1995) also provided a good example of this situation; they noted that 69% of visitors to Queensland participated in activities with friends or relatives during their trip. However, VFR visits in the same region by purpose of travel were only 33% and by accommodation type around 40% (Nielsen, 1995). Similarly, in Canada the CTC one of the few DMOs that record data about VFR as an activity, accounted that 44% of all international travellers had at least one activity with local friends or relatives, however, international VFR arrivals by accommodation type accounted for 24% and by purpose of travel was 28% (CTC, 2012). Furthermore, it is unknown how many visitors overlap between all those measurements and how many of them have at least one VFR component in their trip. As a result, Seaton & Palmer (1997) argued that VFR is often just one of many different reasons for travel or one of the many different activities travellers do, so VFR could be seen as just one element of a “hybrid travel” that may also include business and leisure components all together in one trip.

VFR has also been confused with other types of tourism, for example King & Gamage (1994) and King (1996) argued that VFR could also be synonymous with “ethnic tourism”, because of the strong relationship between migration and VFR and the view that the immigrants’ visits to their countries of origin are really “ethnic reunions” (Hughes & Allen, 2010). Pearce & Moscardo (2006) and recently Dwyer et al. (2014) confirmed this relationship, noting that most VFR research involves members of migrant communities returning to visit their places.
of origin. Moreover, according to Hu & Morrison (2002) there is no universally accepted
definition of ‘ethnic tourism’ to refute that statement, yet, they argued that ‘ethnic tourism’
and VFR are different because the first one is based on motivations to visit and VFR classifies
travellers by type of accommodation. Nevertheless, as discussed VFR can be described from
multiple perspectives including motivation, purpose of travel and accommodation type.

As a result, it is very difficult to say exactly what VFR is, and thus, accurately estimate
information as crucial as the size of the segment. After all, it seems that two researchers could
easily be talking about VFR but thinking about completely different concepts. Generally, in
tourism literature it is possible to find considerable amounts of research trying to define
ambiguous tourism terms such as ‘destination’ or ‘holiday’, which at first sight also seem
simple, but after years of discussion it has been proven are clearly not (Tribe, 2008). To better
define VFR seems to be a crucial goal in tourism research due to the apparent large size and
influence of the segment. From an analytical point of view, not having a good definition also
increases the difficulty to conduct any study (Backer, 2009). Nevertheless, it has been barely
discussed by tourism scholars and it is rare to find any definition of VFR in literature (Backer,
2009).

Most authors seem to assume that the question is obvious and everybody knows how the
VFR segment is composed. Then most often the only comment found in their publications is
that the data was gathered by “main purpose of travel”, which somehow implies a definition
of VFR (Backer, 2009). Moscardo et al. (2000) who reviewed eight relevant studies published
before the year 2000 found that in seven of them the term VFR was utilized by “main purpose
of travel”, only in one by “accommodation type”, and none of them had any definition apart
from mentioning the method by which data was collected. There are only a few authors who
have included a definition of VFR within their articles, and all of them have only reworded the
description by “main purpose of travel” or “accommodation type”. For example, Yuan et al.
(1995, pp. 19) one of the first to propose a definition stated that a “VFR traveller is one who
reported visiting friends and relatives as the major purpose for the trip”. Boyne & Hall (2002,
pp. 246) later on proposed a definition by accommodation type when they stated that “a VFR
tourism trip is a trip to stay temporarily with a friend or relative away from the guest’s normal
place of residence”.

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According to the literature, one of the first researchers to directly note the importance of defining the VFR construct were Seaton & Palmer (1997) in their study of the British VFR sector. However, they did not even offer a reworded definition adopting the implied definition of “main purpose of travel” of the survey they used to obtain data. It was not until Backer (2007) that a researcher not only acknowledged the problem but also discussed the topic, briefly reviewed it in literature and proposed a new definition, rather than rewording the traditional “main purpose of travel” or “accommodation type”. Backer (2007, pp. 369) proposed that “VFR travel is a form of travel involving a visit whereby either (or both) the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/or relatives”.

Although, the definition proposed by Backer (2007) represents a great step in developing the understanding of VFR, she did not create something completely new. Backer (2007) combined the two most traditional descriptions of VFR in one bigger definition, which did not include other important components already discussed in literature, such as, the view of VFR as an activity, VFR as a motivation to travel or VFR as one element of a multi-purpose multi-activity hybrid trip. Most of all, Backer (2007) did not offer any degree of abstraction to attain a deeper and broader understanding of the VFR phenomenon. As a consequence, the problem of quantifying the total amount of VFR travellers remains, and for example it is difficult to classify new phenomena such as Couchsurfing or hybrid travels.

Since, Backer (2007) no other researcher has discussed the topic in detail until recently Munoz et al. (2017) acknowledged the problem described earlier and proposed a completely new definition of VFR based on the mobilities paradigm. In order to avoid the previous problems with the existing descriptions of VFR, Munoz et al. (ibid) proposed a new definition that is rooted in the needs of a theoretical understanding of the construct, as well as, practical usability of it (e.g. accurately measuring it). Therefore, the authors begin discussing all the different ways in which literature so far has defined VFR (purpose, accommodation, motivation and activities), which the authors see as important “components” of any trip that can help to describe the concept. However, these components alone or in groups (e.g Backer, 2007) will always fall short to provide a deeper understanding of it because they are not the most essential characteristic of the concept.
Consequently, Munoz et al. first frame VFR as a type of mobility instead of a type of travel or tourism activity. The authors claim that VFR experiences are not often related to what is generally seen as “tourism”, such as, visiting an ailing friend or attending a family obligation. Moreover, they argued that Backer’s (2007) view of VFR as a type of travel is too synthetic and does not acknowledge all the social implications involved in VFR experiences (e.g. power relationships, gender and place identity). Once they located VFR as a type of mobility they introduced the “influence of a host” as the most essential characteristic of VFR which is used to distinguish it from other forms of, what the authors called, Mobilities Influenced by a Host (MIH). Finally, in order to distinguish VFR from other types of MIH, such as, Couchsurfing or Airbnb, the authors stated that hosts and visitors must have a “previous personal relationship” and there must be some kind of co-presence at the destination. As a result Munoz et al. stated that:

“VFR is a specific type of mobility influence by a host that includes a prior personal relationship between host and visitor and some face-to-face interaction or co-presence between them during the act of mobility” (Munoz et al., 2017 pp. 483)

This new definition of VFR as a MIH clearly distinguishes the construct from others and puts the host at the centre, offering a broader and new perspective of the VFR phenomenon without discarding previous understandings of VFR. Hence, all the previous descriptions of VFR (and any potential future one) are included in this definition and can be used as VFR “components” depending on the researchers’ needs. Consequently, this thesis utilizes Munoz et al. (2017) definition from the broadest perspective possible including all previous types of “host influence” already existing in literature and any potential new one. For a visual representation of this definition please see the figure below:
2.3 - Development of VFR research

Tourism is a relatively new subject in academia but a very old social phenomenon (Tribe, 1997). Evidence of it are for example the medieval pilgrimages or the origins of modern tourism two hundred years ago in the Grand Tour (Cohen, 1984). Similarly, visiting friends and relatives is also an ancient social custom. Backer (2012, pp. 74) stated that VFR is also “likely to be the oldest form of travel as travelling to visit friends and relatives has always been socially important”. The Roman conquerors used to come back to Rome to visit their families and also during the Grand Tour an important part of the journey for the young aristocrats was to visit status peers and old foreign relatives (Seaton, 1994).

In research literature though, VFR has had a very recent appearance only about 30 years ago. According to Cohen (1984), the first scientific studies in tourism were born early in the last century by authors, such as Bodio (1899) and Von Wiese (1930) in Italian and German
languages respectively. Later during the 1930s the first scientific analyses of tourism in English were written by Ogilvie (1933) and Norval (1936). However, in none of these studies was the phenomenon of visiting friends and relatives discussed or included as a tourism category. Hay (2008) noted that Ogilvie acknowledged only two different tourism categories; the wealthier travellers (mainly businesses travellers) and the less wealthy travellers (everybody else). In 1937 the League of Nations statistical committee provided the first official definition of tourism, where they presented four official tourism categories which also did not include VFR (Leiper, 1979). Consequently, Ward (1929) in his analysis of the new-born travel industry noted that travellers visiting friends and relatives were clearly not tourists when he stated:

“Even air travellers who paid their own way were not necessarily travelling as tourists: for instance, wealthy people flew on errands to be with ailing friends and relatives” (Ward, 1929, cited in Pirie 2009 pp. 52)

The concept of VFR as a travel segment was finally born after World War II. During the war years, many people emigrated within Europe and outside of Europe to North and South America which separated many families and friends. Later during the 1950’s, travel became freer again, transport technologies largely improved and the economy began to grow, as did personal income levels in Europe and America. As a result, a lot of people took the opportunity to start travelling and visit their family and friends who had moved years earlier. Finally, in 1955, the European Travel Commission (ETC) for the first time included VFR as a travel category within their tourism surveys (Hay, 2008). Though the significance of VFR had already been noted, in most of the world the phenomenon was still not taken in consideration. For example, Hay (2008) in his analysis of the Scottish Tourism Board found that during the fifties the category was generally rejected by the travel agent associations. Moreover, the International Union of Official Tourism Organizations (former UNWTO) continued utilising the categorisation developed by the League of Nations in 1937 that did not include VFR. Consequently, according to Paci in (1994) there were still many countries that did not even identify VFR as a distinct travel category, and thus, did not collect any information about it.
It was not until 1994, only 24 years ago, when the UNWTO adopted the use of visiting friends and relatives as an official tourism classification (Middleton & Lickorish, 2007). Although, this was a clear recognition of the segment, the UNWTO only started to record statistical information by main purpose of travel of “VFR and others” not including all the previous descriptions of VFR and adding unknown travellers with “other” characteristics (UNWTO, 2017). This somehow recognizes the segment but does it only as a residual category and not a category on its own. Furthermore, organizations such as the OECD and the European Union still do not record information about VFR focusing mainly in policies and economic indicators related to tourism (OECD, 2018; ETC, 2014).

2.3.1 - VFR research since 1990

In tourism research some of the first articles focusing in VFR were the ones written by Chadwick (1984), Devas (1986) and Liu & Timur (1984) who analysed the VFR markets from Europe to Turkey, Canada and South America respectively. However, the category was almost completely ignored until the seminal article of Jackson “VFR Tourism: Is it underestimated?” (1990). This article represents a major landmark in the study of VFR, because its publication triggered a boom in research during the mid-nineties which really gave birth to this segment in tourism literature (Asiedu, 2008; Griffin, 2013a; Moscardo et al., 2000; Muri & Sagesser, 2003). Utilising the data available from the UNWTO and the Australian Tourism Bureau, Jackson (1990) made five very important observations. First, he noted the large number of people that this segment moved around the world, and thus, its importance in tourism. Second, the inaccuracy and lack of data about VFR in many countries. Third, the problem existing in the way VFR data was recalled; Jackson was the first one to note the inconsistencies between VFR data by “main purpose of travel” and by “type of accommodation” and the underestimation of the total amount of VFR travellers this involved. Fourth, he mentioned the lack of previous research in the field and the large potential to develop research in the area. Finally, Jackson also noted some of the benefits of the segment for the tourism industry, such as repeat visitation and longer stay.
Later during the mid-nineties new research in VFR was published mainly motivated by the findings of Jackson, including an international conference “VFR tourism: issues and implications” (1996) and a special issue of the *Journal of Tourism Studies* (1995) completely dedicated to VFR. In both publications many new articles were presented with findings from different parts of the world, proving the significance of VFR in each region and the need for more research in the area. Some of the most relevant articles and their findings presented in those publications are the following ones:

- Seaton & Tagg (1995) argued that VFR was not a homogeneous segment and there was a clear difference between those who visit friends and those who visit relatives. This fact opened the door for future studies focusing on the analysis of the differences within the segment and the development of typologies and taxonomies of the VFR market.

- Meis et al. (1995) proposed hosts’ “invisible multiplier effect”, this is when hosts participate in activities with their visitors increasing the party size, and thus, “multiplying” the expenditure of the group.

- Braunlich & Nadkarni (1995) also tested the significance of VFR expenditure in their study of VFR travellers who stayed in commercial accommodation. This study and the previous one from Meis et al. (1995) opened the door for future expenditure related research in VFR.

- Morrison et al. (1995) claimed that VFR can also be defined in relation to the activities participated in at the destination.

- King & Gamage (1994) in their study of Sri-Lankan immigrants in Australia noted again the strong relationship between emigrational movements and VFR. Using secondary data they found that 62% of immigrants travelled back home at least once in their lifetimes.

In most of these articles, the conference and the aforementioned journal there were also some important topics mentioned across, these are: the strong influence of hosts’ “word of mouth” in this segment; the fact that VFR is not homogeneous, and therefore, each subgroup
should be approached differently; and the lack of VFR data in many countries or the inaccuracy of it. In general terms, the main goal of most of these articles in this new segment was to prove how important VFR was, somehow answering the questions posted earlier by Jackson (1990) “VFR Tourism: Is it underestimated?”, and thus, they mainly focused on economic indicators (most often expenditure), utilized quantitative techniques and conducted their research using secondary data gathered from governmental tourism offices (Griffin, 2013a).

The early 2000s also saw new research that furthered some of the ideas presented earlier. However, researchers began to collect their own data which allowed them to conduct more specific research (Griffin, 2013a). The economic focus remained but more social issues related to VFR came to the front, as a result, many marketing issues became important, such as the research of Hu & Morrison (2002) that created a VFR “tripography” and Morrison et al. (2000) that analysed the marketing efforts related to VFR in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. At the same time other socially related topics as the connection of VFR with migrant’s communities also grew in importance and new qualitative research appeared, such as the one of Duval (2003) who conducted ethnographic fieldwork within the Eastern Caribbean islands community of Toronto and discussed the “fluidity of diasporic spaces and transnational identity structures” (Duval, 2003, pp. 267).

Moscardo et al. (2000) is a clear example of the aforementioned period and it was also the most significant study in VFR research at the time. Moscardo et al. (2000) took over the notion of VFR as a heterogeneous segment and developed a set of typologies of VFR travellers in order to classify different kinds of visits. Moscardo et al. (2000) proposed four different classifications based on the most referenced categorizations previously presented in literature. This typology has been instrumental in the understanding of the VFR phenomenon and is still in use nowadays. The classifications included in Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology and the research born from it are analysed more in detail in section 2.4 - VFR Typologies and Taxonomies.

During the second half of the last decade, VFR literature has diversified into new areas of research and deepened some of the already mentioned topics. For example, in relation to expenditure
patterns, there is deeper analysis of combined host/visitor expenditure in Backer (2007) and the use of commercial accommodation by VFR travellers in Backer (2009). Within the new areas of research the analysis of the real motivations behind VFR visits stands out. For instance, Carmichael & Smith (2006) and Backer (2008) argued that many VFR travellers were really interested in the destination and used their friends or relatives as an excuse to visit it. Backer (2008) in her study “VFR Travellers: Visiting the Destination or Visiting the Hosts?” compared a popular destination versus an unpopular one and found that the popular destination received many more and much longer VFR visits than the unpopular destination. Hence, she argued that VFR travellers do have other motivations apart from visiting their host and care considerably about the appeal of the destination.

During this period there was also a new interest in the role of the hosts, largely recognised as a crucial component of VFR (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2009; Lee et al., 2005). In this area there are three studies that directly analysed the hosts written by Brocx (2003), Young, et al. (2007) and Shani & Uriely (2012) who followed Moscardo’s et al. (2000) example and developed new taxonomies and typologies but this time of hosts (these three studies are analysed more in detail in section 2.5 - The role of the host in VFR research). Likewise, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) and Lockyer & Ryan (2007) directly surveyed hosts instead of visitors as it has been done traditionally in VFR research. It is also interesting to note that VFR literature continued to diversify including more qualitative research approaches and new specific areas of research, such as, VFR research in university cities in Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) or the analysis of the domestic VFR drive market in Pennington-Gray (2003).

Twenty years after the publication of Jackson’s (1990) seminal article that somehow gave birth to the study of VFR, researchers in the field also started to take an introspective view of the previous research. Consequently, Backer (2007; 2009) and Asiedu (2008) discussed issues in VFR literature such as the lack of definitions and the reasons why VFR is still under-researched. The Journal of Tourism Studies reprinted the seminal article of Jackson in 2003 to note the importance of the segment but also to discuss why the article is still relevant and most authors believe the VFR market remains under-researched, Backer (2009, p 1) stated then “VFR travel remains well-known but not known well”.
2.3.2 - Current issues in VFR research

Lately the introspective view of VFR culminated with the first publication of a comprehensive literature review about VFR; Griffin’s (2013a) ‘Content analysis of articles on visit friends and relatives 1990—2010’ utilized Google-Scholar search engine to find 46 articles, which he classified by: origin of the author, country where most of the research was conducted, the methodological technique utilized and the main topics approached. Consequently, Griffin (2013a) found that most of VFR research has been conducted by researchers from the US, Europe and Australia/New Zealand in similar proportions, however, most European researchers did not conduct their research in Europe making the US and Australia/New Zealand the main regions under research.

Griffin (2013a) also found that research has been growing at a very slow pace since 1990 and the methodological techniques have shown some diversification by the end of the last decade, including new qualitative approaches that focused on the social relationships around the VFR phenomenon. Griffin (2013a) also noted that there has been a growing interest in the hosts, however, he pointed out that most of these studies had a qualitative approach and further research from a quantitative or mixed methods perspectives is needed. He argued that there is still a clear divide between qualitative and quantitative studies and there was only one article by Young et al. (2007) that aimed to quantify a social issue related to VFR.

Griffin (2013a, pp. 798) finished his review noting that VFR research is at its “infancy” but it “shows maturation that culminates in considering VFR as an agent of community cohesion and pride”. Later studies of Griffin (2013b; 2015) connected these themes to discuss how VFR might be more beneficial for local communities and sustainable than other tourism segments. Apart from the articles of Jackson (1990) and Moscardo et al. (2000), the one of Griffin (2013a) is probably one of the major events in VFR literature providing a clear and simple description of the first 20 years of VFR research. Unfortunately, Griffin’s research was finished at the end of 2010, this chapter recreated his articles selection method using Google Scholar, in order to explore what has happened in the last seven years and compare it to the previous research.
Overall, the growth in published articles remained similar to the average found by Griffin (2013a) before 2010. This review found and analysed 28 articles published in a period of seven years between 2010 and 2017. It is important to note that there were around 30 other publications including: conference proceedings, theses, books and book chapters that were not included in this analysis in order to mimic Griffin’s (2013a) research which only included published articles. In general though, those publications followed a very similar pattern as the one presented now.

In terms of methodological techniques used in VFR articles, the ratio between qualitative and quantitative studies also remained similar when compared to the second half of last decade (around 30%/70%); however, an interesting phenomenon occurred as there was a considerable increase of articles that review previous literature as a main methodological technique. This was discernible before 2010 as the subject was turning into a more “introspective” view of VFR research, but it greatly increased in the last seven years becoming the most used technique. This includes the content analysis of Griffin (2013a) but also Capistrano (2013), Griffin’s (2013b; 2013b; 2014; 2017), Palovic et al. (2014), Rogerson (2015), Rogerson & Hoogendoorn (2014), Munoz et al. (2017) and Yousuf & Backer (2015).

In relation to the countries where research was conducted, as before most researchers were originally from or associated to EU, US and Australia/New Zealand universities. However, apart from two studies conducted in Australia by Backer (2012) and Dwyer et al. (2014) all the areas under research during the last four years were not in the US nor the EU, including: Israel by Shani & Uriely (2012) and Shani (2013), China by Ying-xue et al. (2013), Costa Rica by McLeod & Busser (2014) and the cited articles about South Africa of Rogerson (2015) and Rogerson & Hoogendoorn (2014).

The topics under study also showed an interesting development, the connection between migration and VFR continued its previous growth to become the most researched topic together with social issues within the VFR phenomenon. Accordingly, the University of Surrey organised a Think-Tank that aimed to reconceptualising VFR and led to a special issue in Population, Space and Place a leading journal in the field of population geography (Wiley Online, 2018). The seven articles included in this special issue presented qualitative findings
with a strong emphasis on the linkages between migration and VFR seen as “constitutive of the essence of the migration experience” (King & Lulle, 2015, pp. 599). For example, Von Koppenfels et al. (2015) explored the transnational experiences of the visits of highly skilled migrants; Mueller (2015) evaluated lifestyle migrants’ trans-local subjectivities and ambivalent views of home; Wagner (2015) discussed the diasporic belonging of Moroccan immigrants’ visits to their ancestral homeland; and King & Lulle (2015, pp. 599) used “time-geography and rhythm-analysis to explore the ways that migration and VFR are enfolded within each other”.

All these articles enhanced the understandings of VFR by expanding the number of qualitative research in VFR and introducing new concepts from migration and mobilities studies, such as: transnationalism, trans or multi-locality, rhythm-analysis, belonging and identity. As a result, Janta et al. (2015, pp. 585) proposed an “explanatory framework for conceptualising and analysing VFR mobilities that draws together threads from migration, mobilities and tourism studies”. This framework is mainly composed by five key elements: social relationships (expectations, norms and trust), the provision of care in VFR, affirmations of identities and roots in migration and mobilities, maintenance of territorial rights and preferential consumption, and the enfoldment with leisure tourism.

In relation to residents and visitors interactions a myriad of new topics also appeared such as: community capital & sustainability in Griffin (2013b), the host-guest interaction from a phenomenological perspective in Capistrano (2013) and a typology of the hosts in VFR by Shani & Uriely (2012). Additionally, there were some new interesting topics such as: the analysis of VFR as a subject of study by the mentioned article of Griffin (2013a) and the article of Munoz et al. (2017) who proposed a new definition of VFR. Moreover, there was new research about second-home ownership in VFR (Rogerson & Hoogendoorn, 2014; McLeod & Busser, 2014) and about the particular characteristics of VFR tourism in developing countries like South Africa by Rogerson (2015).

The last two major events in the VFR literature are: the publication of a second content analysis by Yousuf & Backer (2015), and more importantly the release of the first compilation book dedicated to VFR edited by Backer & King (2015). Interestingly, these two publications
confirm the growing introspective view of VFR and the understanding of it as a more mature subject of research on its own. More specifically, Yousuf & Backer’s (2015) new content analysis differs from the previous one of Griffin (2013a) because it increased the range, aiming to review all publications including theses, book chapters and conference proceedings and increased the length of time from 1990 to June 2015. Additionally, Yousuf & Backer’s (2015) review had a stronger focus on authorship providing a ranking of most published authors and article citations.

Backer & King’s (2015) new book includes previous research from various authors already mentioned in this review mainly related to: marketing, immigration, size of the segment and typologies in VFR. These articles comprise the main theoretical section of the book providing a general view of VFR research. The second part of the book though, includes many new regional studies that tested previous research from: Iran, Sicily, UAE, South Africa, the US and the Asia-Pacific region; deepening the trend to expand VFR research to new geographical areas. This part of the book aims to discuss the differences of the VFR phenomenon in regions with very diverse cultures and levels of development. The need to analyse VFR in different contexts was already pointed out by Rogerson (2014) in his article about the VFR sector in South Africa’s poor areas and also by Cohen & Cohen (2015) from a broader “mobilities” approach.

Finally, in the last year two articles by Zatori et al. (2017) and Gafter & Tchetchik (2017) have answered the call to quantify social aspects of the VFR phenomenon using slightly more complex statistical techniques (multivariate regression). Zatori et al. (2017), surveyed 879 participants in Hungary and used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to group a number of different activities done during their VFR visits such as, doing sports, chatting, eating out and going to the cinema. The authors later used these groups and basic variables like age, length of stay and if the visitor was a friend or a relative as independent variables in a multiple regression to test their impact on how “touristic” was the experience of the visit. Concluding that friends, older visitors, longer stays, water related activities, events and recreation tend to lead to more touristic experiences. On the other hand, relatives, social interaction and passive activities (e.g. watching TV) tend to lead to less touristic experiences.
Gafter & Tchetchik (2017) survey 300 participants in Israel and also used multiple regression analysis but tested the impact that income, distance, residency, the strength of the social tie, amount of contact and the use of Communication Technologies (CT) have on the number of times participants visit or receive visits from only friends (not relatives). The authors used a General Methods of Moments (GMM) estimation which is a common econometric technic to control for the endogeneity of the variables because they used received visits and performed visits are independent and dependant variables in two separate regression equations. The authors concluded that CT had a slight negative impact on travelling to visit foreign friends, place of residence does not seem to have a significant impact and tie strength does lead to more visits. These two articles are a good example of a potentially new wave of research in VFR that includes this thesis project.

2.4 - Typologies and Taxonomies

Young et al. (2007, pp. 500) in their taxonomy of VFR hosts stated that “classification is a central process in conceptual and empirical advancement in social research”. As mentioned in section 2.3, one of the landmarks in VFR research was the development of typologies of VFR travellers. Accordingly, authors such as Braunlich & Nadkarni (1995), Chen & O’Leary (1998) and Hay (1996) based their research on the idea of Seaton (1994) who noted that the VFR market was very heterogeneous and it was necessary to analyse each sub-segment separately.

One of the main differences within VFR, which is unique to the segment, is the variation between travellers visiting friends (VF) or travellers visiting relatives (VR). This was first noted by Seaton & Tagg (1995) who also added the category of travellers visiting both (VFVR). Utilising statistical data from the Irish tourism board they founded there were significant differences in the behaviour of these three groups. For example, VRs tended to visit more often, stay for longer and spend more than VFs. Within the context of a university city according to Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) this is also the case as parents tend to visit more often and pay for most of the expenses. Backer et al. (2017), argued that research in this topic has mainly focused on two aspects: the difference in the size of VF and VR and other differences such as, number of visits and expenditure.
In terms of size Seaton & Tagg (1995) found that international visits in Ireland were composed by 77% of VR, 20% of VFs and 3% of VFVRs. Using data from the UK, Hay (1996) also found that VRs are much larger than VFs with 54% versus 37% and 9% of VFVRs. Hay (2008) argued that VRs represent approximately 60% of VFR travellers while VFs represent 40%. Backer and Lynch (2011) found that VR accounted for around two thirds of VFR travellers in Melbourne and VF for one third, while Seaton and Tie (2015) argued that 52% of VFR travellers are VRs, 30% VFs, and 18% are VFVRs. In the latest study of its kind Backer et al. (2017) who used 67,024 responses from the Australian domestic and international tourism surveys to analyse the difference between VF and VR, confirmed previous assumptions and found that domestically VR represents 75% of trips versus 25% of VFs but internationally both groups are much closer with 48% of VRs, 44% of VFs and 8% of VFVRs.

In terms of other differences Seaton & Tagg (1995) also found that VFs tended to be younger than VRs which was also confirmed by Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) in a Swansea where most VRs are parents of students. That might point out that this age difference could also be the reason behind many of these differences instead of the status of the relationship between hosts and visitors. In terms of expenditure Hay (2008) confirmed that VRs tended to spend more while Seaton and Tie (2015) supported Seaton & Tagg (1995) findings that VRs visit more often and tend to stay longer. Backer et al. (2017) confirmed all these findings in both the domestic and international contexts. From a different perspective, Zátori et al. (2017) examined how different were both groups tourist experiences and found that VFs tended to have better tourist experience while VRs had more static visits that led to a worse touristic experience.

Another differentiation is based on the activities done at the destination and their type of accommodation. Chen & O’Leary (1998) and Morrison et al. (1995) focused their attention trying to test VFR travellers by activity patterns, which is to segment travellers depending on whether they participate in activities with friends and relatives or not. For example, travellers who participated in activities with friends and relatives tended to avoid crowded touristic places and also tended to spend more because the size of the party was larger (Backer, 2007; Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007).
Braunlich & Nadkarni (1995) and Beioley (1997) continued this type of analysis, but they focused on the differences between VFR travellers who have accommodation with friends and relatives (AFR) and those who use commercial accommodation (NAFR). For example Braunlich & Nadkarni (1995) showed that VFR hotel users tended to stay for longer but spend less per night than recreational tourists and NAFR tended to stay for even longer periods and have similar expenditure to AFRs. Seaton & Palmer (1997) analysed the differences between international and domestic VFR travellers and found that the groups differ noticeably in demographic and behavioural characteristics. For example, they noted that international VFRs tended to spend more on tourist activities than domestic VFR travellers.

As a result, Moscardo et al. (2000) summarized and tested this line of thought in VFR research, joining together inside one mega-typology the most relevant typologies available up until that point and then test this mega-typology with real data obtained from the Queensland Visitor Survey. Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology included: scope of the trip (domestic vs. international), effort (short haul vs. long haul), accommodation used (AFR vs. NAFR), and focus of visit (VF, VR or VFVR). Their typology is developed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Effort</th>
<th>Accommodation used</th>
<th>Focus of Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Friends</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Short Haul</td>
<td>AFR (Accommodated solely with Friends and/or Relatives)</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Relatives as:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFR (Accommodated at least one night in commercial property)</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Main Purpose or</td>
<td></td>
<td>Long Haul</td>
<td>AFR</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. As one Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFR</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short Haul</td>
<td>AFR</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFR</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Long Haul</td>
<td>AFR</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFR</td>
<td>VF, VR, VFVR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2. Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology of VFR.
This is one of the most influential articles published in VFR literature because it showed the value of using typologies in VFR research and provided some sort of “map” of the content inside this heterogeneous segment. This new map has helped to improve the understanding of the phenomenon and encouraged future research in this area. As a result, many authors have applied Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology in different contexts, validating it and also developing new classifications. For example, Hu & Morrison (2002) argued there was also a big difference between travellers who visit many destinations and the ones who visit just one destination and proposed a fifth classification to Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology by “destination use pattern” single-destination vs. multi-destination. Moreover, Lehto et al. (2001) and Lee et al. (2005) successfully proved that Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology in terms of visitor expenditure in the US market and Pennington-Gray (2003) applied the typology within the “drive tourism” context in Florida.

Pearce & Moscardo (2006) who followed this line of research argued that Moscardo’s et al. (2000) typology could also be seen as an extended definition of the phenomenon. Backer (2009) applied this idea and presented the following “definitional” typology of VFR:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Visit: VFR</th>
<th>Purpose of Visit: Non-VFR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Commercial</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Commercial</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3: Backer’s (2009) definitional typology.

In her typology Backer (2009) only included two dimensions “purpose of travel” and “type of accommodation” which she used to define the VFR travellers but also to distinguish which ones are VFR travellers and which ones are not. Backer (2009) named the top left corner the pure VFR travellers because both their purpose and their accommodation are VFR. The top right corner signifies the travellers whose purpose is VFR but who, for a number of possible reasons, such as need for more independence or lack of space at the host’s place, choose
commercial accommodation. The bottom left corner signifies travellers who stay with friends and relatives but their main purpose of travel is different (not VFR). Backer (2009) called these travellers the EFRs (Exploiting Friends and Relatives), because they seem to use the host’s resources but they are not interested in the host. Lastly the bottom right corner signifies other travellers who are not VFR tourists.

Backer (2009) also used this typology to graphically show the extent of her definition of VFR. This is an interesting advancement in literature because since 1995 VFR researchers had been trying to categorise the differences within the VFR market, but never categorised the phenomenon boundaries. Munoz et al. (2017) in their new definition of VFR extended Backer’s model to demonstrate how several other “components” can also help to describe a VFR depending on the particular needs of each study. The authors argued that adding more components to the matrix can better describe specific groups such as travellers whose main purpose is business and stays in commercial accommodation but spends time with friends or relatives or how Backer’s exploitative visitors can be reach another level of exploitation by receiving accommodation and advice but not participating in activities nor having any motivation or purpose to see the host.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backer (2009) components</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>non-VFR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>non-VFR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Visit: VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity non-VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Visit: non-VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity non-VFR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, there are two other relevant typologies by Brocx (2003) and Shani & Uriely (2012) and one taxonomy by Young et al. (2007). All of them deal mainly with the host’s behaviour in VFR and are not as extended and influential as Moscardo et al. (2000), therefore, these are reviewed with more detail in the following chapter.

2.5 - The role of the hosts in VFR

As mentioned in the introduction section 1.1, many authors during the last decade have noted the importance of the role of the host within the VFR phenomenon (Backer, 2010; 2012; Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Capistrano, 2013; Griffin, 2013a; Lehto et al., 2001). In terms of size, Lister (2007) for example, noted that 68% of the total population of Queensland hosted somebody in 2006 which accounted for more than a million travellers hosted by locals.

Moreover, in terms of influence over the visitors’ behaviour, most authors believe that VFR travellers place a high degree of trust in their friends and relatives to make decisions about their trip (Gitelson & Kerstetter, 1995; Lehto et al., 2001; Meis et al., 1995; Morrison et al., 1995; Young et al., 2007). For example, Backer (2009) in her study of VFR travellers in the Sunshine Coast found that 80% of them relied only on the information obtained from their hosts to plan their trip. Therefore, according to Morrison et al. (2000, pp. 111), hosts have often been compared to “unpaid tourist guides” and ambassadors of the destination by DMOs. Likewise, Humbracht (2015, pp. 649) in his VFR study of immigrant groups in Sweden got to call the hosts “semi-autonomous tourist agencies” because when receiving visitors the hosts “package their local context, daily lives and knowledge of place into tourist experiences”.

During the visits the hosts often become part of the group as another tourist, but in this case a local tourist who can affect many aspects of the trip. A larger party size may increase the total expenditure of the group, the mentioned host’s “invisible multiplier effect” (Boyne & Hall, 2002; Meis et al., 1995). A larger party size also changes the behaviour and possible activities of the group, for example they may be more inclined to rent a car or a whole house that could not be suitable for a smaller group. The behaviour of larger groups is also often different, they tend to be louder and feel safer at the destination, particularly if one of the
members is a local, which may encourage them to participate in more activities or take more risks (Arnold, 2005). Furthermore, the host as the leader of the group will influence the whole group to behave more similar to a local group, taking them to less touristic places and teaching them the customs of the locals (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2009).

In spite of the important role of the host and the particular way they influence VFR travellers, there has been little research done in this area (Capistrano, 2013; Lister, 2007; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). Backer (2008) mentioned that typically the focus has been on the “demand side”, meaning the visitors. There are mainly two kinds of research in VFR literature that have included the hosts; the studies that have surveyed the hosts to obtain information about the visitors, the trip and secondarily the hosts and the articles with an explicit focus on the hosts alone. The former includes for example the research done by Backer (2007; 2010), Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007), Capistrano (2013), Duval (2003), Lockyer & Ryan (2007) and McKercher (1994). These authors have surveyed the hosts to obtain different kinds of information about the visitors, their trips and the hosts themselves with successful results. McKercher (1994) argued that it was more cost effective and statistically reliable to survey the hosts instead of the visitors. This is an important issue when surveying VFR travellers because they tend to blend very easily with the local population and it is often very hard to survey them in conventional ways (Baker, 2009). For example, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) took advantage of the university resources in Swansea to obtain 629 responses from students with information about themselves as hosts, their visitors and visits.

The second group of articles are five studies that had a specific focus on the hosts. These are Young et al. (2007), Brocx (2003), Shani & Uriely (2012) and recently Griffin (2017) and Dutt & Ninov (2017). The first three articles proposed either a taxonomy or typology of hosts and the last two most recent articles used either qualitative or quantitative techniques to discuss different aspects of the relationships between hosts and visitors. According to Bailey (1994), a typology is a conceptual categorisation while a taxonomy is an empirical categorisation made by statistical differences found in research. Consequently, the first article by Young et al. (2007) used random-dial, structured telephone interviews to collect a sample of 250 respondents from Las Vegas, Nevada and then used cluster analysis to identify four different segments based on two empirical dimensions, the “number of tourists received” (high/low)
and “word of mouth behaviour” (high/low). Then the four dimensions were profiled as the: Ambassadors (high/high), Talkers (low/high), Magnets (high/low) and the Neutrals (low/low).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Tourists Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassadors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.5. Young et al. (2007) Taxonomy of Hosts

Each of these groups had particular characteristics, for example Young et al. (2007) noted that Ambassadors and Talkers behaved more like “salespeople” because they tried to convince their friends and relatives to visit and then they also joined them in the activities. Magnets on the other hand, were seen as “reluctant hosts” not calling or joining their guests as much as the previous categories, however, receiving as many visits as the Ambassadors. From this analysis Young et al. (2007) drew conclusions such as: providing Talkers with promotional material could help them to become more successful in convincing their friends and family to visit, and thus, increase VFR numbers and expenditure.

The second study by Brocx (2003) is an unpublished Master’s thesis that developed a typology of VFR hosts based on 600 structured interviews with residents of Auckland, New Zealand. Brocx (2003) developed a typology that segmented the VFR market by the attitude of hosts towards the visitors in four different groups: 1) The prolific hosts who guide many visitors; 2) The free/non guiding hosts who takes visitors mainly to free activities or allows them to go on their own; 3) The inactive/non hosts who do not do anything with their visitors or do not receive visitors; and 4) The moderate hosts who are an average of all other categories. Brocx (2003) later connected these types of hosts with different demographic segments. For example, Asian people tended to be more often inactive/non hosts and Pacific Islanders tended to be prolific hosts.

The third study by Shani & Uriely (2012) also created a fourfold typology of hosts by conducting 51 in-depth interviews with inhabitants of Eliat, Israel. Differently, from the
previous ones Shani & Uriely’s (2012) typology used two main themes “orientation of hosting” which could be guest-oriented versus self-oriented and the “zone of hosting” which meant if the visit included mainly outdoor activities or indoor activities at the host’s house. As a result the typology identified four groups:

- **Guest-oriented/Outdoor hosts** were seen as “local tourist guides” because they often joined their visitors to many attractions where they would behave as local experts.

- **Self-oriented/Outdoor hosts** were seen as hosts that behave like any other tourist, just like the “guides” these hosts also joined the group to touristic attractions, however, their main motivation was to feel like a tourist and enjoy the experience of it with their friends and family.

- **Self-oriented/Indoor hosts** were the ones that did not have much interest in their visitors, not wanting to spend much time with them or doing any special effort maintaining the normal course of their daily life.

- **Guest-oriented/Indoor hosts** focused on offering “home hospitality” having special interests in their relations and the benefits of being close together with their guests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation of hosting</th>
<th>guest-oriented</th>
<th>self-oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone of hosting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainly outdoor activities</td>
<td>Local tourist guides hosts</td>
<td>Host behaves like any other tourist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainly indoor activities</td>
<td>Home hospitality host</td>
<td>Host doesn’t change his/her daily life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.6. Shani & Uriely (2012) Typology

Shani & Uriely’s (2012) study had a strong qualitative approach to the relationship between hosts and guests, focusing mainly in the experiences and feelings of the hosts when living in a popular tourist destination and having a constant demand to host friends and family. This is clearly seen in the themes developed in the typology (e.g. self-oriented vs guest-oriented)
and groups such as the Self-Oriented/Indoor hosts who are fed-up to receive people and often do it just because of family or friends pressure.

The last two articles by Griffin (2017) and Dutt & Ninov (2017) focused on specific aspects of hosts and guest relations. The former article by Griffin took a strong constructionist stance to provide a narrative analysis of nine participants in Toronto where he dug deeper into the participants’ lives (hosts) and the way receiving visits influenced them. On the other hand, Dutt & Ninov (2017) surveyed 3058 participants using an online platform of expatriates in Dubai with more than 100,000 members and focused on hosts’ learning experience through receiving visitors. The authors found that hosts tend to think they have learnt more about the destination after receiving a visit if the guests are relatives, they stay with the host, were younger than them and if the main purpose of the visit was VFR. In summary these five studies are useful because they help us to see the multiple types of host situations and the fact that hosts are also affected by receiving visitors.

2.6 - Students in VFR research

Traditionally, students have also been neglected in tourism research (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Shoham et al., 2005). Similar to VFR travellers there is the mistaken idea that students are not a profitable segment (Chadee & Cutler, 1996; Xiao et al., 2015). However, during the last decade it has been proven that the student market can also be very profitable because students tend to travel more and for longer periods than other travellers (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Field, 1999; Xiao et al., 2015). Additionally, the backpacker phenomenon (the most common way to travel for students) is currently very large and is spread all over the world (Hampton, 2013). As a result, there has been an increase in tourism research about student travellers and especially backpackers (Scheyvens, 2002).

Unfortunately, the focus of most studies involving students has been on them as travellers mainly backpacking but not as hosts and generators of VFR trips (e.g. Kim et al., 2007; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Nash & Bruce, 2012; Richard & Wilson, 2004; Shoham et al., 2005; Yu-cui, 2011; Xiao et al., 2015). There are few articles that have explored the VFR market generated by
students and almost all of them focus on the VFR trips generated by international students in countries with high percentages of foreign students, such as Australia and New Zealand (Hunter-Jones, 2008; Xiao et al., 2015). As is frequently the case, domestic tourism seems to be neglected in research when compared with international tourism (Scheyvens, 2007). However, traditionally the students’ migration to undertake tertiary studies in a different city inside the same country is one of the largest emigrational movements in western societies (King, 2002). Moreover, domestic students generate many more VFR visits than international students because their friends and relatives are closer and they are proportionally a much larger group than international students (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007).

From an international perspective, Frost & Tekle (1999), Liu & Ryan (2011), Min-En (2006), Michael et al. (2004), Shanka & Taylor (2003) and Taylor et al. (2004) analysed the VFR tourism generated by foreign students. Most of these studies examine particular Asian cultures in particular settings in Australia and New Zealand, and thus, it is very difficult to extrapolate their findings. Taylor et al. (2004) however, in one of the largest studies in the topic found that international students’ VFR market was accountable for 1.7% of all international tourist expenditure in Western Australia. Furthermore, Michael et al. (2004) found that most international students in Melbourne, Australia received an average of 2 visits a year.

From a domestic perspective Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) is the only published study that has analysed the VFR market generated by all students. Their study analysed the VFR market in Swansea using an internet survey that was uploaded into the university database and collected 629 completed questionnaires. Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) questionnaire contained 58 questions and was developed in line with the English Tourism Council study of (2002), therefore, enquired about standard information related to the students, their visitors and their visitors’ trips. Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) found for example that most domestic students received on average 3.8 visits from relatives and 4.2 visits from friends, which makes approximately eight visits a year. Consistent with Michael’s (2004) research in Melbourne, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) also found that international students received less than two visits a year in Swansea, but he noted that these visitors stayed for longer periods, spent more, did more touristic activities and most of them were relatives. Finally, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) also confirmed suspected facts, such as that relatives tended to pay for most
expenses while visiting the students, they used commercial accommodation more frequently than friends and other VFR travellers, and that younger students received more visits from relatives than older students who received more visits from friends.

2.7 - Benefits of VFR

It is common that VFR articles begin by arguing that VFR tourism has been barely researched in literature, however, it is a very large segment and can offer many benefits to the tourism industry (e.g. Griffin, 2013a; 2013b; Jackson, 1990; Palovic, 2014; and Rogerson, 2015). Apart from the large size of the segment, the benefits of VFR tourism seem to be the main reason to justify and validate this segment in academia. Accordingly, the benefits of VFR tourism have been studied since the very beginning of the VFR research in 1990 and have become a major topic in literature. This section discusses them and is divided in two parts starting with the economic benefits of VFR tourism followed by the non-economic benefits. As mentioned in section 2.3 ‘Evolution of VFR research’, VFR academia traditionally has had a strong business approach to research, therefore, there are many more studies with a focus on the economic impacts of VFR since the early nineties. On the other hand, the non-economic benefits of VFR tourism have appeared more recently in literature mainly related to social aspects of the VFR phenomenon.

2.7.1 - Economic Benefits

Many authors have stated that VFR has been neglected in research because traditionally it has been seen as a less profitable segment (TsaoFang et al., 1994; Yaman, 1996; Young et al., 2007; Yuan et al., 1995). This is also the reason why there has been a special interest in researching expenditure patterns of VFR travellers, which have proven that VFR can be a very profitable segment (Backer, 2007; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995; Meis et al., 1995). The idea that VFR was less profitable was originally born from the belief that VFR travellers do not use commercial accommodation neither spend in touristic activities (Lehto et al., 2001; Muri & Sagesser, 2003). This is partly true, on average VFR travellers do spend less on accommodation because a large amount of them stay with friends or relatives (Muri &
Sagesser, 2003). However, not all VFR travellers stay in private homes; Backer (2009) found that 26% of them used commercial accommodation in the Sunshine Coast of Australia and Braunlich & Nadkarni (1995) found similar results in the north-eastern region of the US. Taking into consideration the size of the VFR market in those countries, these authors noted that in general VFR travellers are responsible for approximately 10% of the sales of commercial accommodation.

It is also generally believed that VFR travellers spend less on tourist activities per visit (Moscardo et al., 2000). This might be because VFR travellers tend to return many times to the same destination, and thus, they do not visit all the touristic attractions every time they return, as most one-time tourists tend to do. However, Meis et al. (1995) in their study of American VFR travellers in Canada noted that over their life-times VFR travellers visit the local attractions many more times than one-time visitors. It is important to note that per visit VFR travellers’ expenditure is not lower than other travel segments but their expenditure patterns are different, with a tendency to spend much more on services like cafes and restaurants that are more difficult to determine (Backer 2007). This situation also makes their expenditure to spread through the economy reaching various levels which is often more beneficial for the local communities (Griffin, 2013b).

VFR travellers also tend to stay for longer, and thus, their expenditure per visit also increases reaching similar or higher levels than leisure or business travellers (Backer, 2009; Lehto et al., 2001). Poel et al. (2004) in their study of VFR visits from Holland to Surinam noted that VFR travellers normally stayed two times longer than leisure travellers and almost three times longer than business travellers. Additionally, VFR travellers often include their hosts in their activities increasing the party size, and therefore, also the total expenditure; the mentioned “invisible multiplier effect” (Boyne & Hall, 2002). Asiedu (2005) in his study of VFR return visits to Ghana also noted the direct contribution in donations and other investments often done by visitors from developed to developing countries.

From a longer term perspective it has been noted already that VFR travellers tend to return to the same destination many times, which strongly increases their “lifetime value” (Meis et al., 1995; Paci, 1994; Tiefenbacher et al., 2000). For example, Meis et al. (1995) found that
American VFR travellers in Canada spend in total 20 times more in Canada during their lifetimes than American one-time visitors. Moreover, King (1996) noted that VFR travellers are influenced less by market fluctuations than the volatile leisure travel market. There are two reasons that may explain this phenomenon; the prioritisation of family and friends relations over leisure and the fact that VFR travellers often save money on accommodation. Likewise, VFR travellers tend to travel any time throughout the year, not following seasonal patterns as much as other tourists, which is also very useful for the tourism industry during low seasons (Hu & Morrison, 2002). In other words, visiting friends and relatives is an “attraction” that is not affected by seasonal factors as much as other attractions, such as a beach or a ski resort. From an economic point of view, this means that the VFR travel demand is less “elastic” than the leisure travel demand which makes it permanently more stable, similar to the demand for food versus luxury products (Mill & Morrison, 1998).

2.7.2 - Non-economic benefits of VFR tourism

As noted in section 2.3.2 ‘VFR research today’, the study of the broader impacts of VFR is one of the most recent topics of research in the field. However, from a social perspective it has been tangentially mentioned already in various articles since Duval’s (2003) study of the Caribbean community receiving guests in Toronto. Most authors who have conducted qualitative research in VFR at some point of their studies always mention the positive impacts of meeting friends and family, such as: preserving their traditions and culture, re-enacting rituals, renewing family ties or just improving their well-being by engaging in social activities. Shani & Uriely (2012) is one of the few that also noted negative aspects, such as feeling the pressure to receive guests and the complications of doing so during the visit. Although, mentioning these situations have become a common practice in those studies, there is only one article by Griffin (2013b) that have discussed the broader impacts of VFR from a non-economic perspective. Griffin (2013a) in his content analysis of VFR literature already noted that there was a gap in that aspect of VFR research, and thus, he used Flora (2004) and Flora & Flora (2008) “community capital” framework to explore the influence of VFR tourism for local communities and the relation of that to sustainability (Griffin, 2013b).
The article of Griffin (2013b) analysed previous literature, in order to evaluate the following seven aspects of “community capital”: culture, human capital, natural resources, infrastructure, social capital, financial resources, and political capital. Griffin (2013b) noted that VFR travellers, for example seems to be better for the environment than other tourism segments because they tend to travel shorter distances and most often by car. He also noted that based on his review of Becken et al. (2003) VFRs had the lowest “daily energy” consumption compared to all other tourism categories. Griffin (2013b) added that because of their lower use of commercial accommodation and in particular high-end commercial accommodation, VFR travellers require very little infrastructure, and thus, the city does not need to expand for receiving them. In cultural terms, it was noted that VFR travellers unlike other tourists are less intrusive and disruptive to the local communities because they blend-in almost as a local. In terms of human capital, VFRs bring new ideas and induce the locals to see their own cities from a different perspective. Lastly, Griffin (2013b) argued that the locals’ social capital also improve by engaging in social activities and connecting with their visitors.

Griffin (2013b) also discussed the concept of sustainability and the extent to which VFR might be more sustainable than other tourism segments. Based on his review, Griffin (2013b) argued that VFR tourism might be the “best fit for all” meaning that it was good for businesses, the community and better for the environment than other tourism segments. He then noted that VFR is also more stable, reliable and easier to maintain on the long-term which are characteristics strongly associated to sustainability, and therefore, it could be said that VFR tourism is overall more “sustainable” than any other tourism segment.

Finally, there’s only one negative aspect of VFR tourism that was consistently mentioned in literature. This aspect however, comes from the travel medicine literature. Griffin (2013a), noted that around one third of VFR related articles come from the travel medicine field and argued that being such a different subject it was not included in his review. Indeed, medicine studies have major differences with tourism research, however, it is interesting to note that in this case it becomes appropriate to mention the health implications of VFR tourism.

Travel medicine literature is overall negative about VFR, most articles (e.g. Angell & Cetron, 2005; Barnett et al., 2010; Behrens et al., 2010; Behrens & Leder, 2012; Ericsson et al., 2006;
Leder et al., 2011; and Slinko et al., 2008) begin stating that VFR travellers are at greater risk of being infected with multiple diseases than other travellers because they often travel to high-risk environments, they seek less pre-travel health advice and they are in direct contact for long periods with the locals. This seems to be especially dangerous for second generation immigrants travelling back to developing areas because they will tend to blend-in with the locals, however, they do not know the environment well and have not developed the same immune-systems that the locals and their parents have (Behrens & Leder, 2012). Another case, are VFR travellers from developing areas traveling to developed countries; these travellers are not often at risk but they might bring diseases and put their hosts at risk (Behrens & Leder, 2012). There is one final point thatInterestingly to resembles tourism literature, travel medicine literature also argues that the most effective method to communicate with VFRs is through community-based programs where the residents (the hosts) again become crucial (Leder et al., 2011).

2.8 - Local Tourism Organizations and VFR

From the perspective of most local tourism authorities, the VFR market has traditionally been seen as a segment that cannot be influenced, and therefore, have not been taken into consideration (Morrison et al., 1995; Muri et al., 2003). Pearce et al. (1995) in their study of the local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) in Australia found that only 40 out of 56 DMOs interviewed recognised VFR in their campaigns and only seven of them (12%) implemented specific programmes to target it. Later, Morrison et al. (2000) surveyed 221 DMOs in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA obtaining similar results and noted that, although, in Australia and New Zealand DMOs had a better attitude towards the VFR market, in general DMOs did not believe in the importance of this segment or the possibility of influencing it. However, as noted in section 2.8 ‘Benefits of VFR’ there is great potential in VFR tourism and since in most destinations it has not been targeted yet, it is possible to obtain a substantial long term impact with very low costs (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Lee et al., 2005; Lehto et al., 2001; MacEachern et al., 2007).
There are two important questions DMOs need to answer when targeting VFR travellers: how to reach them and how to motivate them. How to reach them, at first sight, can be difficult because VFR travellers are heterogeneous and come from all over the country or the world. Most authors claim that the answer is to reach the visitors through their hosts because hosts are permanently at the destination which makes them easier to find and reach. As noted in section 2.5 ‘The role of the hosts in VFR research’, hosts are also the main and most trusted source of information for their visitors, DMOs have access to a lot of information about their residents and local media is generally cheap offering many possibilities to target them (Backer, 2014; Lehto et al., 2001; Meis et al., 1995; Young et al., 2007). Morrison et al. (2000) added that targeting the hosts is generally simpler, more effective and requires less investment than using traditional strategies. For example, by reaching hosts it is possible to successfully target subgroups within the VFR market such as students or pensioners (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007).

The second question of how to motivate VFR travellers is also difficult; for years it was believed that VFR travellers’ only motivation was to visit their friends and relatives, and thus, it was not possible to change their minds or offer them other tourism products. However, Seaton et al. (1997) noted that VFR travellers can also have multiple motivations/purposes, noting the segment’s multifaceted nature. Backer (2008) and Carmichael (2006) showed that VFR travellers are also strongly influenced by the appeal of the destination. As mentioned in section 2.2 ‘What is VFR’, VFR travellers can have many different purposes and motivations which are often specific to their segment; therefore, Lehto et al. (2001) argued that DMOs should tailor their communication strategies to motivate different groups. Morrison et al. (2000) was more specific to argue that VFR travellers are not harder to influence but they are just different than the conventional travellers, and thus, it is necessary to use different strategies to reach them.

Morrison et al. (2000) later argued that there are mainly two ways to motivate the visitors through the hosts: encouraging residents to learn about the destination by using local attractions and encouraging residents to attract their friends and family to visit. Pearce & Moscardo (2006) agreed with Morrison et al. (2000) that it is important that residents are familiar with the attractions available at the destination, so they show them to their friends.
and family and act as “ambassadors”. McKercher (1995) got to blame the hosts directly when VFR travellers did not utilise the full potential of local attractions. This is one of the objectives of most “local tourist” campaigns, such as “Residents’ first weekend in York” and “Birmingham’s ‘Be a Local Tourist” that offered special deals at the city attractions for residents alone or accompanied with a visitor to encourage their visit (Backer, 2014; Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007).

In the extant literature about VFR it is difficult to find examples of tourism campaigns directed to the VFR market, there are only four studies and one book chapter that have looked into the topic by: Backer (2014) who examined three VFR marketing campaigns in Australia; Morgan et al. (2003) who analysed Wales’ homecoming campaign; Morrison & Hay (2010) that looked into Scotland’s homecoming campaign; Backer & Hay’s (2015) book chapter that summarised the previous articles and added British Airways/Tourism Australia campaign and Ireland homecoming campaign; and Morrison et al.’s (2000) study that surveyed DMOs in three continents about their approaches to VFR marketing. All these cases are discussed in further detail in section 4.6.1 ‘VFR marketing campaigns’ because they are used as support for the theoretical framework for the second phase of the research.

2.8.1 - DMOs opportunities in the student market

University students as VFR hosts can offer many benefits for the local tourism industries. Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) in their study of the university VFR market in Swansea, found that the student market followed a predictable pattern of visits closely related with the events of the academic year. According to Shanka & Taylor (2003) who analysed the tourism possibilities of international students’ graduations in Perth, these events are major dates for visits. Later Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) and Shanka & Taylor (2003), argued that DMOs can take advantage of these dates in order to retain visitors for longer periods and show a better face of the city. Additionally, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) found that university cities’ VFR market seems to be very homogeneous, which makes it easier to reach and understand this sub-segment. The only exception to that homogeneousness was the
difference between domestic and international students reviewed early in section 2.6 - Students in VFR research.

Students are also more receptive to advertisements, tend to be more open to answer surveys than the general public and can be easily found altogether at their tertiary institutions (Xu et al., 2009). Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) also noted that first year students are especially accessible and final year students, although less open, were also important because of the possibility of building long-term relationships with them as alumni (Schofield & Fallon, 2012). In both cases, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) noted that as new “immigrants” in the city, students did not have any knowledge of the local attractions and was very important to inform them. Finally, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) noted that the VR part of the student VFR market (mainly parents) had a much higher purchasing-power than the VF part, the friends of the students (mainly other students), and that there was great potential to sell more accommodation nights to this richer segment.

2.9 - VFR neglected status

As noted in section 2.7 ‘Benefits of VFR’, most of the studies reviewed begin by arguing that VFR is a very important tourism segment, however, it has been greatly neglected in tourism research. This is easy to prove, following the methodology of Griffin (2013a) it is just a matter to write the words ‘VFR or Visit(ing) Friends and Relatives’ in Google Scholar and the amount of results is around 70; however, if concepts such as ‘sustainable tourism’ or ‘authenticity in tourism’ are searched the results are around 500 to 5000. More precisely, Hashemkhani et al. (2015) recently conducted a comprehensive literature review of ‘sustainable tourism frameworks’ finding 132 articles between 1993 and 2013. Similarly, Lu & Nepal (2009) analysed 341 articles from the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, published between 1993 and 2007. These two reviews of sustainable tourism, found almost three or even seven times more articles than the 46 articles related to VFR found by Griffin (2013a) between 1990 and 2010. Not to mention that there are several journals about ‘sustainability’ and other topics, such as ‘event tourism’ or ‘gambling’ in tourism, however, there is no journal about VFR.
There are several reasons behind this phenomenon which have been discussed throughout this chapter from various perspectives and form the most distinctive aspects of VFR research. For example, one of the most important aspects are the considerable problems related to the data collected about VFR and the confusion among researchers about what is VFR. Section 2.2 ‘What is VFR research’, discussed two main problems related to the data about VFR travellers: the lack of data and the inconsistencies of the data. The first one is related to the general lack of interest in auditing the VFR market by DMOs which undermines the production of VFR research because there is not enough reliable data available to base further research (Paci, 1994; Jackson, 2003). The second problem is closely related to the definitional problems of VFR as the different descriptions of VFR also provide completely different statistics of the total size of the segment. These two problems create confusion and underestimate the total size of the VFR segment which discourages the production of research about VFR tourism (Griffin, 2013b; Jackson, 1990; Backer, 2007).

According to Backer (2007; 2009), the particularities of the VFR market, especially when aiming to conduct research on it, have also discouraged the production of research in the field. This chapter identified three main problems researchers have to face when trying to research the VFR market. First, the heterogeneity and dispersion of VFR travellers makes it difficult to find them and obtain a representative sample of the whole population (Backer, 2007; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007). Second, the hosts play a crucial role in the phenomenon, therefore, it is also necessary to include them in the research; this presents challenges but can also help to facilitate the measurement if it is used appropriately (McKercher, 1994). Third, the fact that VFR travellers tend to blend in with the community makes them hard to find (Paci, 1994; Pearce, 1993). All these topics were mentioned more in detail in section 2.5 - The role of the hosts in VFR research.

Additionally, Backer (2007; 2009) noted that the lack of diversity in terms of research methods and paradigms is a negative aspect of VFR literature that has also affected further research. VFR academia have had the tendency to approach the category more as an economic activity than a social phenomenon, having a strong positivist view in terms of research paradigms. This is negative because the inclusion of different perspectives would help to obtain a broader understanding of the phenomenon, and thus, solve many problems that undermine the
Chapter 2. Evolution of VFR research

production of research, such as the lack of discussion about the definitional problems of the VFR construct (Backer, 2007).

Moreover, the business-oriented researchers who may be attracted to this segment as an economic activity, are also discouraged by the beliefs that the VFR market is neither profitable nor able to be influenced by marketing techniques. Traditionally, DMOs have assumed that VFR travellers are hard to reach and is not possible to influence using marketing techniques (Morrison et al., 1995; Muri & Sagesser, 2003). This is clearly negative for the development of research as DMOs are important consumers of tourism research. Literature presented in section 2.8 ‘Local tourism organizations and VFR’, explains why this perception is not accurate. VFR travellers are not more difficult to influence or reach but as a special segment it is necessary to use special techniques to target them, such as reaching VFR travellers through their hosts and employing tailor-made motivational campaigns (Backer, 2014; Muri & Sagesser, 2003). In terms of profitability, research during the last twenty five years has proven that the belief that VFR less profitable is not accurate. According to literature discussed in in section 2.7.1 ‘Economic Benefits’, VFR travellers can be very profitable because they: stay for longer, tend to visit the same destination many times, they include the hosts and their expenditure in the trip activities, they do not follow a seasonal pattern as much as other segments and they are also influenced less by market fluctuations (Backer, 2009; Griffin, 2013b; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995).

Furthermore, there is a great lack of understanding of the non-economic benefits of VFR. These benefits can range from social, cultural, environmental or even political and are a new subject of research in literature, in general terms unknown until recently (Griffin, 2013b). As a result, it is likely these “new benefits” have not been able yet to become a pull factor to attract more researchers to study the VFR phenomenon. As topics like “sustainability” or “slow tourism” continue growing strongly in tourism research (Hashemkhani et al., 2015), it is likely that the non-economic benefits of VFR could attract more interest and research (see section 2.8.2 ‘Non-economic benefits of VFR tourism’).

In practical terms, various authors have pointed out that the lack of an interest group to promote VFR is one of the major reasons behind it neglect in academia and industry (Backer,
Chapter 2. Evolution of VFR research

2007, 2009; Hay, 2008; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Seaton & Palmer, 1997). Backer (2007) argued that most DMOs are run by boards mainly composed by representatives of the local tourism businesses. In particular the accommodation industry is often one of the most influential tourism industries represented in those boards (Smith et al., 1998), which most often has very little interest in the VFR market since it has traditionally seen as a segment that does not use commercial accommodation (MacEachern et al., 2007). On top of all these difficulties, Backer (2009, pp. 7) argued that VFR research is just not attractive for researchers, stating that “VFR is just not sexy... marketing to ‘Aunt Betty’ is not as glamorous” when compared with international tourism marketing. According to Backer (2009), there is a perception that VFR as a research subject is not attractive when compared to other topics like international or recreational tourism. Moreover, Scheyvens (2007) argued that domestic tourism has always been neglected in terms of research in comparison with international tourism just because it sounds less glamorous. This fact might reinforce this unattractive view of VFR as it proportionally tends to be much larger domestically than internationally.

As a result, VFR is also not included in tourism educational materials. For example, ‘Tourism: principles and practice’ by Fletcher et al. (2013) and ‘Tourism: principles, practices and philosophies’ by Goeldner & Ritchie (2012), which are some of the most popular tourism textbooks, do not mention VFR tourism in any of their sections or sub-sections, however, they have comprehensive chapters about “sustainable tourism”, “event tourism” and even “crisis tourism”. Additionally, ‘The SAGE handbook of tourism studies’ that is a compilation of 39 articles including the most relevant topics in tourism research, often aimed for higher tourism courses, also does not mention nor has any article about VFR tourism (edit. Jamal & Robinson 2009). According to Backer (2009), this has contributed to a lack of knowledge about VFR by future managers and researchers. This lack of content is also an accurate reflection of the image the segment has in tourism research and shows how many of the misconceptions about the subject are still alive in the minds of many tourism researchers and practitioners.

Finally, not understanding the particular characteristics of the VFR phenomenon has also been pointed out as a reason for its neglected status (Backer, 2007; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Shani & Uriely, 2012). As noted earlier in section 2.2, if there is no available information about VFR, it is harder to conduct any type of research; simple steps that are often needed to
complete at the beginning of any study, such as: defining the construct, obtaining general data about the population or understanding the internal dynamics of the segment (e.g. how hosts influence the experience of their visitors) are not clear in VFR literature. This situation creates a vicious circle of ‘VFR illiteracy’ that it is hard to break if the segment is not attractive to researchers. The recent trend in VFR literature to review previous research instead of creating new knowledge might be a reaction to improve the understanding of the VFR phenomenon. However, in a subject of research as small as VFR, the amount of analysis that is possible to do on previous research is limited and an influx of new ideas, topics and views is extremely necessary.

2.10 - Summary

The previous section has already summarised most of the topics discussed in the chapter in relation to the neglected status of VFR, which was noted as one of the most distinctive characteristics of VFR literature. In summary the chapter began discussing ‘What is VFR?’ in order to ground the study and show how multifaceted and complex the understanding of VFR can be. Based on this information it was decided to use the definition proposed by Munoz et al. (2017) that see VFR as a segment that is framed by hosts’ power to influence their visitors’ experience. A detailed account of the evolution of VFR literature was then presented, followed by a discussion of several typologies and taxonomies of VFR travellers which aimed to explain what is inside this heterogeneous segment. Later on, the role that hosts play in VFR was discussed and in particular student involvement in the segment that are two areas greatly under-researched in VFR literature. The chapter then presented a review of the main benefits that VFR has for the local communities and the tourism industry, which is later linked to what has traditionally been DMOs’ approach to the VFR market. These elements are important to justify the need for further research into VFR and understand the context of VFR marketing. At the end of the chapter the reasons why VFR has been neglected are discussed in more detail in relation to the previous information presented in the chapter.
3.1 - Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the particular characteristics of the physical location where the study was conducted in order to clarify the context, and thus, the findings of the PhD project. The chapter also serves as a practical example of some of the problems related to the data and the definition of VFR discussed in chapter two. The research was conducted between 2015 and 2016 at the campus of the University of Surrey in Guildford, United Kingdom (UK). Therefore, the contextual statistics included in this chapter were also obtained during 2015 in order to better describe the context at the time the research was conducted. The chapter begins providing an introduction to the tourism profile of the UK, the South East region and the county of Surrey, and finishes with a description of the town of Guildford, the campus of the University of Surrey and key demographics of students.

3.2 - Tourism in the United Kingdom

According to the UNWTO (2014), the United Kingdom (UK) is the world’s 8th largest destination in terms of international tourists’ arrivals. Visit Britain (2015) accounted 34.9 million international arrivals on a “year ago in June” basis. In the long term, according to Visit Britain (2015) the UK has shown steady growth since 1979 that has only been affected by major economic crises (see figure 3.1). From a domestic point of view, according to Visit England (2014), British residents made 114.2 million trips inside the UK which represents more than three times the amount of visits received by international tourists.
In terms of tourism organization, the UK has three National Tourism Boards (NTB) responsible for the tourism promotion for each of the countries of the British Isles, these are: Visit England, Visit Scotland and Visit Wales. However, there is only one NTB in charge of the marketing and branding of the UK to foreign markets which is Visit Britain (DCMS, 2015). As a result, all the data related to international arrivals is provided by Visit Britain and all the data related to domestic tourism is collected by the local NTBs using their own protocols which often differ from Visit Britain in particular related to VFR tourism. Visit England, as the largest NTBs also provides aggregated domestic data about the whole of the United Kingdom.

The distribution of the tourism industry is also different between the international and domestic markets. According to Visit Britain (2015), in terms of “main purpose of travel” the leading international segment based on number of trips is “holidays” (39%) followed by VFR (28%) and business travel at 24% (see table 3.1). VFR tourism though, is the leading segment based on total nights of accommodation at 38% (see table 3.1). On the other hand, in terms of expenditure VFR tourism represents only 21% of the total tourism inbound spend and is the third segment just behind business tourism (23%) and far from holiday tourism at 40% (see table 3.1). These figures however, do not include the expenditure made by the host of VFR travellers while receiving visits. Visit Kent (2011) estimates that in the UK, hosts tend to spend around 116% of the visitors expenditure, which means that if the host expenditure would be included in the calculation, VFR expenditure would double its size becoming the largest segment in terms of value (see “host invisible multiplier effect”, section 2.3.1).
Due to the consistent use of the “International Passenger Survey”, Visit Britain (2015) provides excellent data on the evolution of these segments. Figure 3.3 below, shows the number of arrivals based on main purpose of travel since 1979; as a result, it is possible to see how the VFR segment is clearly more stable and unaffected by economic cycles than other segments, in particularly compared to the volatility of the holiday market (see section 2.8.1, “Economic benefits of VFR”). Figure 3.3 also shows how VFR has grown steadily for thirty years quadruplicating its size from 2.2 million visits in 1979 to 9.6 million visits in 2014 (see table 3.1). Proportionally compared to other segment, VFR has grown from being responsible for 18% of all visits in 1979 to 28% of all visits in 2014, which represents a total growth of 56% in last three decades (Visit Britain, 2015). From a domestic point of view, unfortunately, it is not possible to provide the same analysis due to the lack of data or the lack of consistency in the way VFR domestic data has been collected.
In terms of size by “main purpose of travel”, domestically according to Visit England (2015) the holiday segment dominates all categories (see table 3.2). Although, domestically VFR is proportionally larger than internationally, accounting for 37% of all domestic trips when compared to 28% inbound, VFR is not the leading segment in terms of nights of accommodation as it is in the inbound market (see table 3.2). This is mainly due to domestic holiday makers tending to have longer stays than those undertaking domestic VFR visits, internationally however, inbound VFR visits are often longer than inbound holiday visits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Travel</th>
<th>Trips (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Nights (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Expenditure £ (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>52.90</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>184.8</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>13,065</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>42.53</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>118.3</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>4,990</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>15.89</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4,101</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study/Other</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114.24</td>
<td></td>
<td>349.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,692</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Domestic tourism data by purpose of travel (Visit England, 2015)

It is important to note, that all the data presented earlier in this section was collected by two different organizations Visit England and Visit Britain. The former provides a detailed definition of what is understood as a VFR trip but the later does not provide any detail of what was accounted as VFR. It is assumed this was the direct answer from international visitors who took the “International Passenger Survey” at some port of entry into the UK.

Visit England is one of the few DMOs in the world that has partly tried to improve the problems related to collecting data about VFR travellers. Since 2005, Visit England has provided information about VFR travellers making a distinction between: “holiday–leisure”, “VFR–mainly holiday” and “VFR–other” (Visit England, 2014a). Even though, this can be useful when read in detail but it can also create confusions; for example, the percentage that Visit England sometimes present for holiday travellers includes “holidays–leisure” and “VFR–mainly holidays” (67%) and the data about VFR includes “VFR–mainly holidays” and “VFR–other” (36%) which counts “VFR–holidays” twice (see table 3.3).
On other occasions, the data about VFR travellers only implies the figure about “VFR–other” that are really the travellers described by the official definition Visit England provides in their glossary of terms (Visit England, 2014a). This figure in 2014 was just 15%, strongly underestimating the segment (see table 3.3 above). Visit England (2014a), defines VFR as follows:

“Visiting friends and relatives or ‘VFR’ is the term used for trips where the main reason for taking the trip is initially described as ‘visiting friends and relatives’, and which on subsequent probing is described as being mainly for some other reason rather than a holiday.” (pp. 117)

In the case of international arrivals, since Visit Britain does not provide a clear definition of VFR tourism, it is unknown if their data include “VFR–holidays” or not; and if it does how are these travellers counted. Reports from other organizations, such as Visit Kent (2011), imply that Visit Britain VFR data does not include “VFR–holidays”. This would mean that the current inbound VFR data of 28% includes only “VFR–other” which is very large when compared to 15% of “VFR–other” in the domestic market. If this is precise the total size of the inbound VFR market (“VFR–other” + “VFR–holidays”) could easily be larger than 50%, as “VFR–holidays” has normally shown to be similar or larger than “VFR–other” in the domestic market (Visit England, 2014a). As a result, it seems that the VFR segment could be largely underestimated and it is very difficult to accurately estimate the real size of the British VFR market.
3.2.1 - VFR in terms of accommodation

In terms of accommodation, according to Visit England (2014a) 38% of domestic travellers stayed with friend or relatives and 62% stayed in some kind of commercial accommodation (see table 3.4). Although, the figure for VFR accommodation (38%) is very close to the 36% of VFR travellers by “main purpose of travel” exposed previously (see table 3.3 above), this does not necessarily refer to the same travellers; there are 8.7 million travellers that answered “VFR” as their main purpose of visit, however, did not stay with their hosts (see table 3.4); this group represents 20% of all VFR trips by “main purpose of travel” (Visit England, 2014a). Conversely, 9.8 million trips made by people who stayed with friends or family, did not answer “VFR” as their “main purpose of travel”, and thus, were not accounted as VFR tourists by Visit England (2014a). This group of VFR travellers by accommodation - but not by main purpose of travel - represents 22% of all VFR trips by accommodation type (see table 3.4) and 9% of all domestic trips. If this 9% would be taken in consideration, VFR would account for up to 46% of all domestic trips comfortably overpassing the holiday tourism market in the UK.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Trips Accommodation</th>
<th>Main Purpose of Travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trips (m)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial accommodation</td>
<td>72.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR accommodation</td>
<td>45.37</td>
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Table 3.4. Domestic data by accommodation & purpose of travel (Visit England, 2014)

Based on international arrivals, Visit Britain (2014) reported that 59% of visitors used some kind of commercial accommodation and 41% of visitors stayed with friends or relatives (see table 3.5 below). In terms of nights of accommodation, VFR was the leading segment accounting for up to 53% of all nights spent by international travellers in the UK. As noted at the beginning of this section (see table 3.1), VFR travellers accounted for only 28% of all inbound trips based on “main purpose of travel”, which is very different from the 41% of inbound VFR trips by type of accommodation; this is mainly due to 5.6 million visitors staying with friends or relatives but not answering “VFR” as their “main purpose of travel” (see table
3.5 in shaded rows). These 5.6 million visitors represent almost half (42%) of all visitors staying with “VFR” (see table 3.5) and 17% of all inbound trips. If these travellers would be taken into consideration, VFR would reach to 46% of all trips becoming the main international travel segment in the UK. Visit Britain however, does not provide this information in the current format, it was necessary to access the raw data available in their site to conduct this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>All Trips Accommodation</th>
<th>Main Purpose of Travel</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trips (m)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial accommodation</td>
<td>19.43</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR accommodation</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>41%</td>
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</table>

Table 3.5. Inbound data by accommodation type & purpose of travel (Visit Britain, 2014)

It is also interesting to note how different, the relationships between VFR travellers by “main purpose of travel” and by “accommodation type” are in the domestic and inbound markets. First it is notable that in both, the domestic and inbound statistics, approximately 20% of people that answered “VFR” as their “main purpose of travel” did not stay with their hosts choosing some kind of commercial accommodation. This is a very stable result for two markets with very different characteristics. In contrast, the statistics about the people that stayed with “VFR” but did not answer “VFR” as their “main purpose of travel”, are very different. The domestic market in this case, seems to have a stronger correlation between “purpose of travel” and accommodation figures, having only 22% of people staying with VFR but not seeing themselves as VFR travellers (see table 3.5). These people represents 9% of all domestic travellers (Visit England, 2014a). On the other hand, in the inbound market almost half (42%) of people staying with VFR, did not see themselves as VFR travellers when answering the passengers survey, which represents one sixth (17%) of all visitors to the UK.

There are two potential explanations for the aforementioned phenomenon; either there were problems related to the data or different travel behaviour between international and domestic travellers. In terms of data, this could be due to a mismatch in the way Visit England...
Chapter 3. Guildford and the British tourism sector

and Visit Britain measure VFR travellers. As mentioned earlier in this section, Visit England includes data about “VFR–other” and “VFR–holidays” in their measurement of the total size of the segment; however, in the case of Visit Britain it is unknown though suspected that their measurement is closer to “VFR–other” alone. This would strongly underestimate the size of the VFR segment and create that larger difference between “main purpose of travel” and “accommodation” data within international visitors. This explanation is also consistent with that fact that in other countries such as Canada (presented in section 2.2 - What is VFR?), VFR data by main purpose of travel is consistently larger than the data by accommodation type which is suspiciously exactly the opposite phenomenon than the UK and probably has to do with the way VFR is accounted.

The second explanation is that international visitors might have a stronger tendency to become, what Backer (2009) called, EFR (Exploiting Friends and Relatives) travellers (see section 2.4) because although they stay with friends or relatives, they do not answer “VFR” as their “main purpose of travel”, hence, they seem to be more motivated to see the UK instead of their hosts. Domestic visitors instead, might be less interested in seeing their own country but be more motivated to meet their hosts; as a result, they are more likely to answer “VFR” as a “main purpose of travel” (78%) if they stay with their hosts.

Finally, within the VFR market the visiting relatives (VR) group seems to have the tendency to be much larger than the visiting friends (VF) group, in both the domestic and inbound British markets; this is also the case presented earlier in literature (see section 2.4). According to Visit Kent (2011), based on secondary data from 2003, in the UK approximately 52% of VFR trips are for visiting relatives, 27% for friends and 21% for visiting both. The same DMO using secondary data from 2002 argued that in the UK 64% of VFR travellers visited relatives, 32% friends and only 4% visited both. Most of these visits to relatives (83%) were done to direct relatives such as: parents, siblings or children (Visit Kent, 2011).
3.2.2 - Tourism in England

The English tourism industry is by large the biggest in the UK representing roughly 80% of the whole tourism economy of Great Britain. Consequently, England is subdivided into nine Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO) and more than 80 smaller DMOs at county and metropolitan levels (see figure 3.3).

In terms of size accounted by total number of trips, all regions are relatively similar; none of them account for more than 15% of all domestic trips nor is smaller than 7% apart from the exception of the North East region at 3% (see table 3.6). Scotland and Wales represent 10% and 8% respectively, which makes them comparable in size to all the other RTOs of England based on domestic tourism trips. In terms of nights of accommodation however, the South West region stands-out reaching to 20% of all nights of accommodation; this is mainly due to the strength of this region as a holiday destination since holiday trips tend to be longer than other types of trips (Visit England, 2014). Consequently, the average length of stay per-trip in the South West is of 3.8 days compared to 2.9 days that is the average for the rest of England (Visit England, 2014a).
In terms of distribution based on main purpose of travel, according to Visit England (2014) the South West is known for “holidays”, the South East have the largest VFR sector and London is the strongest for business tourism (see table 3.7). Visitors to London were also the ones spending the most per day (£102) compared to the average of around £60 per day in the rest of the country. London visitors however, were not the ones spending the most per trip, this was again the South West due to their longer stays (Visit England, 2014). Internationally though, London is by far the most visited destination in the UK (Visit Britain, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>GB Total 2013</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>East England</th>
<th>East Midlands</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>South East</th>
<th>South West</th>
<th>West Midlands</th>
<th>Yorks &amp; Humb</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trips (m)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nights (m)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenditure £ (m)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6. Regional Tourism Organizations size data (Visit England, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Holiday trips (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>VFR trips (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Business trips (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GB Total 2013</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East England</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humb</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7. RTO data by main purpose of travel (Visit England, 2014)
3.2.3 - Tourism in the South East of England

In terms of size based on number of trips, according to Visit England (2014) the South East region is the second largest just behind the South West receiving 17.9 million trips which represents 14% of the UK and 18% of England’s domestic market (see table 3.8). In terms of nights of accommodation, the South East region also stood up just behind the South West, the difference however, between both is larger than in terms of number of trips due to the strength of the holiday market (longer stays) in the South West. In terms of expenditure the region is further behind in the fourth place with 14% of all tourism expenditure in England.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trips (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Nights (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Expenditure (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>122.9</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>373.6</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>23,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>101.7</td>
<td>83% of GB</td>
<td>297.2</td>
<td>80% of GB</td>
<td>18,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>14% of GB</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>13% of GB</td>
<td>2,648</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8. Data by region (Visit Guildford, 2013)

According to the now ‘defunct’ South East Development Agency (2010), almost 80% of the region is classified as rural and 47% is protected. The region is well known for its natural beauty having approximately one third of England’s woodlands, meadows and lowland heaths. As a result, most of the tourism in the region is based on visiting natural and historic sites and is performed mainly by residents living in close areas (90%) which might include residents alone or residents receiving friends or relatives (TSE, 2009).

In terms of tourism distribution, as mentioned earlier, the region has a strong VFR sector, which is different to most regions, and is larger than the holiday and business tourism markets (see table 3.9). Consequently, VFR accounts for up to 46% of all trips compared to 39% of holiday tourism and 46% of all nights of accommodation compared to 39% of holiday trips in the South East Region (see table 3.9 below). Business travellers accounted for 13% and 15% of all trips and nights of accommodation respectively, which is very similar to the domestic averages in the whole country (Visit England, 2014a).
In light of the significant size of the VFR segment in the region, the local RTO “Tourism South-East”, has shown special interest in the VFR market providing a more detailed definition of what is accounted as a VFR trip in their reports. Tourism South East defines VFR as the follows:

“VFR trips are defined as a visit where the main purpose is visiting friends and relatives. Whilst many trips to visit friends and relatives will be accommodated in the homes of these friends/relatives, some will make use of other forms of accommodation. It should be also noted that other forms of trip, for instance for holiday or business purposes may stay with friends and relatives rather than in commercial accommodation”. (Visit Guildford, 2013, pp. 4)

Most DMOs define briefly VFR as a trip for which the main purpose is to visit friends or relatives, as noted this is also the case of Visit England (2014). This definition of Tourism South East uses the same wording but acknowledges some of the problems with this way of collecting data about VFR providing a ‘warning’ for the reader of their reports; however, not offering a substantial solution.

3.2.3 - Tourism in Surrey and the town of Guildford

According to the Office for National Statistics the county of Surrey has a population of approximately one million people (ONS, 2015). In terms of tourism attractions it is very similar to the South East region, having vast extensions of forests and protected land, such as, the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) and the western end of the North Downs walk that is one of the longest and most important tracks in Britain, crossing from...
Farnham to Dover through 150 miles (National Trust, 2015). Guildford is located in the heart of the county and the South East region (Figure 3.4).

In terms of tourism distribution, Surrey also shares many similarities with the South East region having a very strong VFR sector that overpasses the local holidays and business sectors (see table 3.10). In the case of Surrey however, the strength of the local VFR sector is even larger than in the South East region reaching to 60% of all trips, 63% of nights of accommodation and 43% of total expenditure (see Table 3.10 below). This last figure is particularly interesting because it is rare to find that “total VFR expenditure” is larger than the expenditure of all the other types of tourism. Another noticeable fact is that the business tourism sector is larger than the holiday’s sector in all items but nights of accommodation. This factor might be due to the proximity to Greater London and the county being located between two of the largest airports in the UK, Heathrow and Gatwick airports.
Chapter 3. Guildford and the British tourism sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trips (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Nights (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Expenditure (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>£40</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>£81</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>£58</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tourism in Surrey</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.10. Tourism in Surrey data (Visit England, 2014)

The town of Guildford is a particularly good example of the county of Surrey, according to Diana Roberts the manager of Visit Guildford:

“Guildford is very successful at business tourism because of its proximity to London, Heathrow and Gatwick and the good road and rail network. So Monday to Friday hotels have high occupancy rates for meetings and conferences” (Visit Guildford manager, 2015, direct communication)

More precisely Guildford is located 40 miles South West of London, 20 miles south of Heathrow airport and 25 miles west of Gatwick airport. Guildford, is the largest town in Surrey with approximately 96,000 inhabitants (ONS, 2015), and although, it is commonly referred as the city of Guildford because its size and cathedral, Guildford is officially a town and Surrey is a county without any city (Get Surrey, 2011). The town’s proximity to London has also pushed the prices of property up, as it became part of what it is known as the “stockbrokers’ belt” of London, an affluent rural/suburban area with large houses of people who regularly commute to London, according to the local media:

“Surrey (Guildford) is... home to some of the most expensive millionaire enclaves in England, a favourite migration route out of London... with ancient woodlands and villages full of smiling residents.” (The Telegraph, 2013)

Based on “main purpose of travel”, Guildford also presents a very similar distribution when compared to the rest of the county. VFR tourism however, is slightly stronger in all categories specially nights of accommodation and expenditure (see table 3.11). Business tourism has
very similar percentages in Guildford and Surrey but in Guildford it outperforms holidays’ tourism in all categories which is uncommon especially in terms of nights of accommodation. In terms of size, based on total amount of visits received, Guildford was ranked 152\textsuperscript{nd} out of 409 “local authorities” - towns and cities in the UK (Visit England, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trips (000\textsuperscript{'}s)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Nights (000\textsuperscript{'}s)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Expenditure (m)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>£6</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>£17</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>£9</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tourism in Guildford</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
<td>681</td>
<td></td>
<td>£33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.11. Tourism in Guildford data averages 2012-2014 (Visit England, 2014)

According to Visit Guildford (2013) most updated information (the local DMO sporadically requests tourism reports to external organisations), the town received 333,000 staying trips, of which around 237,000 were made by domestic visitors (71%) and 96,000 by overseas visitors (29%). This is in line with Visit England’s (2014) estimate for Guildford of 275,000 domestic trips per year (see table 3.11 above). Visit Guildford (2013) estimated that 1.3 million visitors’ nights were spent in the town during 2013, the average domestic trip was 2.79 nights and the average trip for an international visitor was of 6.72 nights, these values are in line with the country’s averages. Additionally, approximately 4 million ‘tourism’ day trips were made in 2013, which might be a bit misleading because Guildford, as the largest town in the region, receives regular visits from the entire county for multiple reasons but in particular for shopping (Visit Guildford, 2013).

Guildford is known to be an excellent shopping destination, since 34\% of visitors to Guildford “main purpose to visit” was to have a shopping trip (TSE, 2007). The average expenditure of the visitors was £30.5 which according to Tourism South East (2007) is well above the average for all other destinations in the South East that was of £12.3. Consequently, Guildford scored especially high in “range of shops” and “quality of shopping environment” in the TSE (2007) visitors study. Other aspects where Guildford stood-out were: “feeling of welcome” and “general atmosphere”; Guildford got average results however, in “places to eat and drink”, “range of attractions” and “enjoyment of the visit” (TSE, 2007).
It is important to note that since 2007 Tourism South East has not provided new regional visitors reports. This might be due to budget constraints imposed over all government spending in the last years, as noted earlier in section 3.2.3 all NTBs and RTOs are mainly funded through government grants. The main examples of this situation is the closure of all Regional developing agencies including the South East Development Agency in (2010) and the “Triennial Review of Visit Britain and Visit England” that according to the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) occurred in 2012 and in March (2015). It is expected that these reviews will lead to budget cuts in areas other than the most recognised work of these organizations (e.g. the “Great” Britain campaign) therefore, it is likely the research and data collection units will be under pressure.

The table below, describes some of Guildford’s tourism attractions, according to Visit England (2013b) Annual Survey of Visits to Attractions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Charge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clandon Park</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Historic House/Garden/Palace</td>
<td>50,086</td>
<td>£7.50-9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dapdune Wharf</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Heritage/Visitor Centre</td>
<td>16,794</td>
<td>£3.01-4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guildford Castle</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Castle/Fort</td>
<td>10,236</td>
<td>£3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guildford House Gallery</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Museum and/or Art Gallery</td>
<td>39,696</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatchlands Park</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Historic House/Garden/Palace</td>
<td>73,585</td>
<td>£7.50-9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHS Garden Wisley</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>964078</td>
<td>Charge DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalford Mill</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Other Historic Property</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>£3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Barn</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Other Historic Property</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guildhall</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Other Historic Property</td>
<td>4,771</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spike Guildford</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Heritage/Visitor Centre</td>
<td>3,680</td>
<td>£3.01-4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Undercroft</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Other Historic Property</td>
<td>3,166</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.12. Guildford tourism attractions, Visit England (2014b)

This list was built using the attractions that voluntarily sent their information to Visit England; therefore, it is only useful to gain an idea of the type of attractions the area has to offer. Other attractions not mentioned in this list, include Losely Park (famous state-house), the Guildford museum, the Guildford Cathedral, walks and boat trips along the river Wey and multiple walks in the Surrey Hills AONB. According to TSE (2007), Guildford seems to be particularly appealing to middle age and older travellers.
3.3 - The students and campus of the University of Surrey

This section aims to provide the most relevant information related to the students of the University of Surrey and the physical location of the university campus. The main characteristics of the students are helpful to understand their behaviour as hosts, the behaviour of their visitors and the types of visits they receive. The physical characteristics of the university campus are useful to better understand the context where the visits take place. As a result the main aspects discussed in this chapter are: campus characteristics, basic demographics of the students and the distance from the university to their places of origin.

There are approximately 13,695 students at the University of Surrey (2015) of which approximately 10,000 are studying full time in Guildford (University of Surrey, 2015). Most of the students in town live in campus which is highly concentrated; the university provides around 5000 rooms which are generally fully booked during the semester periods. Campus is located only 25 minute walking distance from the town centre, 15 minutes away from the university sport facilities, 10 minutes away from supermarkets, and there are various in-campus services, such as: convenience stores, laundry facilities, health services, cafes, pubs and restaurants. As a result, students do not need to leave the campus area unless they purposely want to explore the surroundings.

The university campus does not have any building or site of particular interest for tourists, the University of Surrey is relatively new, it was founded in 1966, therefore most of the buildings in campus were built around those years (University of Surrey, 2015). The main points of interests for visitors are some large statues spread around campus that students often use to take official photos and a small park with two large ponds an abundant birds and vegetation. Guildford’s Cathedral is located just over campus on Stag Hill and is recognize as one of Guildford’s attractions, it is a grade II listed building with a 50 metres tall tower that overlooks the town and it surroundings (Visit Guildford, 2013).

In terms of distribution, approximately 70% of students are domestic and 73% are following undergraduates programs (see table 3.13), hence the typical student (54%) at the University
of Surrey is between 18 to 21 years old and British (see table 3.13). Within the undergraduate programs 25% of student come from overseas (see table 3.14b) this represents only 18% of all students (table 3.13); and within the postgraduate programs almost half the students (44%) come from overseas (see table 3.14b), however, since postgraduate students represent only 27% of all students, international postgraduate students represent just 12% of all students (see table 3.13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK students</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
<th>non-UK students</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>7,453</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>2,514</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9,968</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>2,096</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1,632</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3,728</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>9,549</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>4,146</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13,696</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.13. Students by level & nationality (University of Surrey, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% UK students</th>
<th>% of non-UK students</th>
<th>% Undergrad. students</th>
<th>% Postgrad students</th>
<th>Total Students per group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students per group</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.14. Percentages of students by nationality (A) & level (B) (U. of Surrey, 2015)

Until 2015 the university was organized in four faculties of relatively similar size (this was changed in 2016), each of them accounting for about 19% to 28% of all students (see table 3.15). In terms of demographics however, the faculties of Business Economics & Law (FBEL) and Engineering & Physical Sciences (FEPS) had the largest amount of international students with 48% and 35% students coming from overseas respectively (see table 3.15). The other two faculties of Arts & Human Science (FAHS) and Health & Medical Sciences (FHMS) are mainly dominated by British students with 81% and 89% of domestic students respectively.
Chapter 3. Guildford and the British tourism sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Non-UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAHS</td>
<td>2,119</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2,616</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBEL</td>
<td>1,991</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>1,838</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>3,829</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEPS</td>
<td>2,594</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>1,397</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>3,991</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHMS</td>
<td>3,283</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3,689</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,549</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>4,146</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13,696</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.15. Composition of students by faculties (University of Surrey, 2015)

In terms of gender, approximately 56% of all students at the University of Surrey are female (see table 3.16). This is exactly the same average gender composition of all British Higher Education institutions (HESA, 2014). The gender composition remain similar within the undergraduate and postgraduate programs (see table 3.16), however, there are strong differences between faculties and degrees, for example, engineering having a much higher number of male students and health programs having a higher number of female students (HESA, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4,315</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>1,651</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5,966</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>2,078</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>7,740</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.16. Composition of students by gender (University of Surrey, 2015)

In terms of ethnicity, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency HESA (2014) the average of Black, White and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) students in British higher education is of approximately 38%, which is again very similar to the demographics at the University of Surrey, where 37% of all students come from a non-white ethnic background (see table 3.17). This figure might be slightly misleading though, because the University of Surrey has a higher percentage of international students than most British universities and these students are most often from BAME ethnicities; therefore, it would be expected that domestic students at the University of Surrey are under-represented by BAME students compared to the average of universities in Britain. Another example of this situation is the fact that the amount of BAME students within postgraduate programs (42%) is larger than the number of BAME students within undergraduate programs that is of 35% (see table 3.17); this is most likely due to a larger proportion of international students enrolled in postgraduate programs.
Chapter 3. Guildford and the British tourism sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6,314</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>2,142</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>8,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>3,426</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1,529</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>4,955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.17. Ethnic composition of students (University of Surrey, 2015)

One of the main aspects that might affect the visits of friends and family is the distance they need to travel to reach the university campus. This is particularly important for international students as the distances and arrangements their visitors need to cover are larger and involve greater effort. As noted earlier in tables 3.13, approximately 30% of students at the University of Surrey come from overseas which is larger than the British average of 18% (HESA, 2014). This is one of the most distinctive aspects of the University of Surrey, accordingly, Surrey is within the world’s top 50 most international universities (University of Surrey, 2015).

Table 3.18 below, provides a breakdown of the major regions of origin of international students in the UK provided by HESA (2014) and the University of Surrey (2015). It is interesting to note that although, the University of Surrey has a larger amount of international students than most British universities, the composition of these students by regions is relatively similar to the whole population of international students in the UK. The main differences being only within comparatively smaller groups, such as, Middle Eastern, North American and “Others” students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Non-EU</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Non-Europe</th>
<th>M. East</th>
<th>North A.</th>
<th>Others*</th>
<th>Total Non-EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surrey U.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All UK HE</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Others include mainly Oceania and Central & South America

Table 3.18. International students by region (HESA, 2014; U. of Surrey, 2015)

Taking in consideration the distances and arrangement overseas students’ visitors need to prepare in order to visit, two major groups were distinguished, these are students from the European Union (EU) and students from all other countries. This is the same division made by HESA (2014) in their data about international students. The main reasons in this case are
related to: distance, cost of transport, visa requirements and average income at the country of origin. Within the EU, distances are relatively short, cost of transport is low, there are no visa requirements and the average income is high. As a result, apart from language barriers and minor cultural differences these students could almost be seen as domestic students.

On the other hand, for most countries outside the EU the distances to travel are larger, so are the cost of the flights, there are often visa requirements and the average income is generally lower. Consequently, for example Russia, the largest non-EU European nationality at the University of Surrey, is not particularly far but there are strict visa requirements and higher costs of flying for a country with a lower income per capita; likewise the USA has a higher income and simplified visa requirement but the distance to travel and the cost of it are much larger which also complicates the visitors trip. For most other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin-America the distance and cost is several times larger than a flight within the EU so is the income per capita and there are strict visa requirements.

Table 3.19 below provides a breakdown of domestic, EU, non-EU and all international students’ percentages. As noted earlier, the proportion of major regional groups at the University of Surrey and the rest of the UK are remarkably similar. This is also the case as approximately one third of all international students at the University of Surrey and other British universities come from the EU. This means that approximately 9% of all students at the University of Surrey come from EU countries and 21% do not, likewise, 5% of students at all HE institutions in the UK come from the EU and 13% do not (see table 3.19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Non-EU</th>
<th>Total international</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Surrey</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All HE in the UK</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.19. Domestic, EU & Non-EU students (HESA, 2014; University of Surrey, 2015)

It is important to note that although the proportion of international students at the University of Surrey is larger than at other universities, this group still represent only 30% when compared to domestic students that represent 70% of all students, and thus, are by far the
largest group at the University of Surrey and the UK (81%). According to Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007), domestic students also receive many more visits on average than international students and are greatly under-researched as the few studies on the university VFR market have mainly focused on international students.

The distance that domestic students’ visitors have to travel in order to visit them also have a great impact on the types of and amount of visits students receive. After a thorough review of the University of Surrey student’s domicile obtained from HESA (2014), five major groups of domestic students based on their counties of origin were identified; these are students coming from: Greater London, Surrey, direct neighbouring counties, secondary neighbouring counties and all other counties (see figure 3.5).

![Figure 3.5. Students’ county of origin map](image)

Based on this classification the largest group of students at the University of Surrey (19% of the total, 28% of all domestic students) come from “direct neighbouring counties” (see table 3.20). The next group are students from further away counties and Greater London with approximately 16% and 17% respectively (23% and 24% of all domestic students). The students from Surrey are only 11% of the total population of students which represent around 15% of all domestic students (see table 3.20).
### Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Number of FTE(^#) students</th>
<th>% of all students</th>
<th>% of domestic students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct neighbouring counties*</td>
<td>2,265</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other counties</td>
<td>1,976</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater London</td>
<td>1,927</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary neighbouring counties**</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total FTE domestic students</td>
<td>8,223</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-EU</td>
<td>2,540</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total full-time equivalent</td>
<td>11,880</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Hampshire, Kent, East & West Sussex, Berkshire

**Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Dorset

Table 3.20. County of origin of the student (HESA, 2014)

It is important to note, that the information provided by HESA (2014) is based on Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students; the total amount of students based on this measurement is only 11,880 which is almost 2,000 students less than the total number provided by the University of Surrey of 13,695 students. This is due to an unknown number of part-time students, which is estimated to be around 3,000 to 4,000 mostly within the postgraduate programs (the university does not provide this information nor the details of the students domiciles).

### 3.4 - Summary and conclusion

This chapter discussed the most relevant information needed to understand the context where the research took place, as well as, providing examples of the various problems related to VFR research previously mentioned in literature. The first section of the chapter provided data to visualize the size and main characteristics of the British tourism industry. This information was useful to note the confusion between different NTBs and RTOs to measure VFR, for example, is not possible to compare inbound and domestic VFR data because Visit England and Visit Britain account for VFR travellers differently. It was also noted how VFR seems to be more stable in time than other segments and how inbound and domestic VFR visitors seem to have similarities but also strong differences (mainly in terms of the length of stay).
This chapter also showed how the understanding of VFR has changed over time, for example, Visit England started to include new categories to count VFR travellers ("VFR-Other" and "VFR-mainly holidays"); this brought new insights into the segment but also problems, such as, increased confusion and difficulties for comparing VFR data from different years and organizations. Another important aspect noted in this section is the confusion that exist between the various ways to account for VFR travellers (i.e. VFR data by “accommodation type” and by “main purpose of travel”) which leads mainly to underestimating the total size of the segment. If all travellers that either answered VFR as their main purpose of travel or stayed with friends and family would be accounted together, VFR would become the largest tourism segment accounting for 46% of the inbound and domestic markets.

The issue of underestimation of the segment arouse throughout the chapter on various occasions, this not surprisingly is also one of the main topics in VFR literature since the seminal article of Jackson (1990) “VFR tourism: is it underestimated?”. Another aspect related to it was that official statistics do not account for the expenditure of the hosts when measuring tourism expenditure of VFR travellers, strongly underestimating the total expenditure of VFR visits. According to estimations made by Visit Kent (2011), hosts in the UK tend to spend around 116% of their visitors’ expenditure, which means that if this would be taken in consideration VFR expenditure would double its size becoming the largest segment in terms of value.

This section also explained the administrative separation of tourism organizations in Britain, as well as, the main characteristics of each region while noting how the strength of different tourism segments affect the composition of the tourism industry in each region. For example, the South West region’s leadership in amount of trips, expenditure and nights of accommodation due to its strength in holiday tourism. It was also noted that the South East region and in particular the county of Surrey have very strong VFR sectors, being the leaders regionally and at county level. As concerns the organization of tourism it was discussed how government spending in these institutions has a direct impact in the quality and amount of data that is available about tourism.
The chapter finished with an overview of tourism in Guildford, the university campus and the students of the University of Surrey. Particular emphasis was made in the origin of the students in order to better understand the types and length of the visits students receive from friends and family. A brief overview of the countries of origin of the international students at the University of Surrey and the UK was provided and two major groups were identified, EU and non EU students. Domestically, based on information provided by HESA (2014) five major groups of British students were identified, these are students coming from: London, Surrey, direct neighbouring counties, secondary neighbouring counties and students coming from all other counties.
Chapter 4. Methodology: overall aspects and 1st stage

4.1 - Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a clear description and justification of the research design, analytical techniques, methodological choices and the epistemological position of the whole of the project and in particular for the first stage of the research. This PhD project was conducted under a pragmatist paradigm using a sequential mixed-methods research approach in two phases (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE in capitals due to the dominance of this method in the study). This type of approach is not common in VFR literature and it could be argued that in methodological terms is of higher complexity due to the inclusion of different techniques under an unconventional epistemological paradigm. Therefore, it is particularly important to provide a clear justification for these choices and every step of the research process.

In terms of structure, the chapter is organized as a “funnel” starting from the broadest theoretical topics related to the whole of the research project, such as the research philosophy, to the more specific and practical steps of the research, like data collection and analysis of the first stage of the research. Consequently, the chapter begins discussing the epistemological position of the research, then presents the research strategy and the argument for a ‘multi-strategy’ and the research objectives. The chapter finishes by discussing in more detail the practical steps used to conduct the first stage of the research. As explained in the introduction of the thesis, once the findings from the first stage are presented in chapter five and a theoretical framework for the second stage is proposed in chapter six another methodology chapter is then devoted specifically for the needs of the quantitative part of the study. At the end, the chapter discussed the ethical considerations of the research and presents a summary and conclusion.
4.2 - Epistemological position of the research

Stating the epistemological position of the research is always essential but in this case it is especially important because of two reasons. First, it is rare in VFR literature to find that authors discuss the epistemological position of their research, which might be due to the prevalence of positivist approaches in VFR literature (Griffin, 2013a). This situation could be perceived as a negative characteristic which might impede further discussion and advancement in the discipline (see section 2.9 in the literature review). Secondly, this research aims to use a mixed-methods approach which in epistemological terms could be seen as inconsistent for orthodox researchers of both epistemological extremes (positivism and interpretivism).

Generally, ontology could be described as the nature of reality and epistemology as the nature of knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Positivism and interpretivism are in many ways extreme opposing ontological and epistemological views, or in other words, extremes opposing views about the nature of reality and knowledge. While positivism in general terms proclaims the existence of one objective reality (realism) that in some extent is possible to find by isolating all other variables; interpretivism on the other hand, asserts that there are multiple contextual realities (nominalism) shaped by social interactions and the personal filter of the observer (Robson, 2011). There are many intermediate or alternative epistemological views between these two extremes, which somehow aim to explain why the complexity of our world does not seem to adjust comfortably to any of those two extremes. However, although the dominance of the positive paradigm has strongly diminished since the sixties (Robson, 2011), none of these new alternative views has become widely accepted and all of them fall under heavy criticism from the claimants of the other perspectives.

One of the most common of these new intermediate views is the post-positivist paradigm, which from an ontological perspective continues with the positivist tradition by accepting the existence of one objective reality. However, at the same time at an epistemological level it acknowledges the bias created by the filtering capacity of the observer when creating knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). As a result, in practical terms research based under
Chapter 4. Methodology, overall aspects and 1st stage

This paradigm is conducted in a very similar fashion to research conducted under a positivist paradigm. Yet, in this case the post-positive researcher would be more cautious to claim that his or her research have found the absolute truth because all results and findings have been “contaminated” by the filtering capacity of the researcher. Some would say that this is somehow a more honest or just apologetic view of positivism.

Similarly to post-positivism the “critical realism” paradigm that is another common alternative view, also accepts the existence of one objective reality at the ontological level (realism). Nevertheless, according to Bashkar (2013) who founded this paradigm in the seventies, this reality is divided into an observable part (all human perceptions), a hidden part due to the limitations of the filter, and a functional part that refers to social mechanisms. Therefore, introducing a “relativist” component at the epistemological level (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The importance of the social mechanisms that shape our world has also been used by another popular alternative view that is the “critical theory” paradigm. This worldview believes that reality, and thus, the understanding of the world for certain special groups, such as under-privileged or oppressed social groups, is different than the understanding of reality for most people (Patton, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to use a new epistemology that takes in consideration those particular realities and “oppressive” social mechanisms when conducting research on them.

The pragmatist paradigm, which is the one supporting this research project, is also an alternative epistemological view, however, it is not based on a theoretical explanation of the social world (social mechanisms) as the two previous paradigms. According to Pearson (2014), the pragmatic paradigm has been described as an “anti-philosophy” because it places “real-world” practical matters first (e.g. methods and the goals of the research) over the theoretical or philosophical understanding of the world. In other words it could be said that the pragmatist paradigm is somehow a philosophy that disregards philosophy.

The history of the pragmatic paradigm can be traced back to John Dewey, William James and George Herbert Mead in early last century (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Over the years various complex explanations about this paradigm have been discussed but in simple words according to Howe (1988) this paradigm is against the fixed separation of positivism and
interpretivism, seen as unrealistic and could be defined just as ‘what works’. This does not mean that it denies the existence of an objective truth or reality (positivism) neither the possibility of multiple contextual realities (interpretivism) but it accepts that both can occur at the same time. A great analogy to illustrate this “paradoxical” duality in practical terms, was given by Morgan (2007 pp. 48):

“Try to imagine acting in the real world for as long as five minutes while operating in either a strictly theory-driven, deductive mode (positivism) or a data-driven, inductive mode (interpretivism) – I certainly would not want to be on the same road as anyone who had such a fatally limited approach to driving a vehicle!”

Consequently, based on a pragmatic paradigm this research was ‘safely driven’ by a thoughtful mix of deductive and inductive thinking. Therefore, choosing the most appropriate research techniques to achieve the project’s goals and applying those techniques in the most appropriate way to serve those particular goals. This was generally inductive thinking to fulfil the need to explore and explain the phenomenon with social and contextual information (first stage of the research), and deductive thinking to analyse the quantitative data from the survey and produce generalizable information about the whole population of students. Particular attention was taken when reporting the results and findings of each phase in order to avoid unthoughtful inconsistencies such as making generalisations from qualitative data.

4.3 - Research strategy

As noted throughout the Literature Review chapter the VFR phenomenon is particularly heterogeneous and multifaceted (Moscardo et al., 2000). However, in terms of research paradigms VFR research has often been exactly the opposite. Most VFR research has focused on searching for standard quantifiable data, such as expenditure, number of visitors or nights of accommodation (Mena, 2007), as if the segment was just an economic activity rather than a social phenomenon, yet, it is difficult to think of a more social segment than “visiting friends and relatives”. Especially, during the nineties almost all of the articles about VFR tourism
utilized only quantitative techniques with secondary data and had a strong positivist approach to research which is an uncommon phenomenon in tourism research (Towner, 1988).

Later during the previous decades other approaches have slowly started to appear, such as the pioneer qualitative article of Duval (2003) and more recently the articles of Shani & Uriely (2012), Capistrano (2013; 2017), Humbracht (2015) and Griffin (2017) which have focused on the intangible aspects of the VFR visits. Griffin (2013a) confirmed this trend, yet, noticed that quantitative studies still double the number of the qualitative ones and there is a lack of mixed-methods research approaches (only three articles since 1990) and alternative techniques. This situation was also mentioned in the analysis of 2011-2017 presented in section 2.3.2 ‘Current issues in VFR research’, which added that there is the need for research that sits between the qualitative/quantitative divide, understanding but also quantifying crucial social aspects of VFR tourism. Interestingly though, the segment is turning into analysing previous studies instead of trying new paradigms and techniques in VFR in order to create new knowledge.

Tourism research has been regarded as one of the most multidisciplinary subjects, which has strongly encouraged the discussion, innovation and production of research (Przeclawski, 1993; Tribe, 1997). Moreover, the inclusion of multiple points of view has also helped to develop a holistic interpretation of the tourism phenomenon which is very necessary to understand such a complex subject (Tribe, 1997; 2008). On the other hand, in VFR research all of these benefits are clearly missing; the amount and production of research is low, there is no discussion about crucial topics like defining VFR, nor is there a good holistic understanding of it, which makes the topic seem dry and not attractive for other researchers (Backer, 2009).

Taking these facts in consideration, as well as the project’s research question and the restrictions and context of this PhD thesis, it was decided to design an innovative exploratory, descriptive and explanatory study in two stages. Exploratory because it aims to investigate a novel question within a very under-researched phenomenon, descriptive because it provides facts that improve the understanding of the relationship between hosts and their visitors, and explanatory because at some level it aims to confirm or provide an interpretation for these
relationships. Consequently, a sequential mixed-methods research design with two phases was chosen to conduct the project, these are: an introductory round of semi-structured interviews followed by a quantitative survey. Jick (1979 pp. 138) argued that mixed methods approaches are “better to capture a more holistic and contextual portrayal of the unit under study”. Bryman (1988) added that the mixture of qualitative and quantitative techniques provides a more complete image of the phenomenon under research because the mixture draws upon the strengths of each technique. As a result, it believed that this innovative approach not only fulfilled the needs of the research to generalize and gaining understanding of a relatively unknown phenomenon but also contributed to fill a gap in VFR literature, providing a holistic but also quantifiable view of the phenomenon.

According to Bryman (2005) mixed-methods approaches could also be seen as “multi-strategy” approaches, because each method imply a particular worldview and a particular strategy almost as independent studies on their own. In this case these “independent studies” are carried out separately and sequentially one after the other. Each of them serves a particular purpose and also supports the development of the next stage, in the same way that previous literature supports any research. Yet, in this “multi-strategy” research, this particular “literature” is tailor-made for the needs and context of this project.

As a result, the strategy of the first phase of the research consisted of a round of semi-structured interviews that aimed to explore the context of the situation in order to guide the rest of the research. Strauss et al. (1990 pp. 19) stated that qualitative techniques are excellent to “uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known”. Jarrat (1996 pp. 6) added that qualitative techniques are better when the research is “exploratory in nature and when the area for examination is unfamiliar to the researcher”. Therefore, due to the lack of research on the topic it is believed that a qualitative technique, such as semi-structured interviews, is the most appropriate method to start the research.

Using the findings gained in the qualitative phase of the study, the second phase aimed to test a model for the understanding of hosts and visitors relationships. This is the dominant method in the study as it includes the most crucial information from the first stage.
(questionnaire development) and obtains further results from a large number of participants. Testing the qualitative and theoretical basis on which the model was developed calls for the need for generalisation and a quantitative approach. This is also necessary so in the future the results can be used in different contexts, such as DMOs management of the VFR market or further academic research about VFR hosts-visitors dynamics. As mentioned earlier by Griffin (2013a), there is a lack of research that aims to quantify crucial social aspects of VFR tourism. Consequently, employing a qualitative technique alone would not fulfil all the objectives of this study.

4.3.1 - Mixed methods approaches and Case Study research

According to Robson (2011), the term case study can have multiple meanings and it is normally used very loosely in research and everyday life. For some researchers a case study might refer to the ‘educational case studies’ which are often used in management and other fields to teach different subjects exposing the ‘story’ of a case. For others, case studies might refer to legal or medical cases which are actually organized records used to support the practice in those fields (Robson, 2011). Many others think of case studies in a purely literal way as ‘the case that is under study’, referring to the phenomenon or subject that is under investigation. Nevertheless, according to Yin (2013) a case study is a comprehensive research strategy which involves an empirical investigation of a social phenomenon using various methods of inquiry. As a result, mixed-methods approaches have often been used in case study research, which may raise the question why this project is not a case study? Therefore, in order to avoid confusions it is important to briefly discuss the reasons why this is not a case study research.

According to Yin (2011, pp. 2), a case study aims to investigate “a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between context and phenomenon may not be clearly evident”. This is a fundamental characteristic of case study research, the relationship between the context and the phenomenon under study is so complex and interconnected that is very hard to distinguish one from the other. As a result, case study research depends on multiple sources of evidence (methods) and the use of
triangulation between that evidence to create a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon and its context (Yin, 2013). Likewise, the focus is not on few isolated variables but there is a wide range of topics analysed and the cases chosen tend to be unusual in order to provide more interesting or insightful findings (Robson, 2011).

This is clearly not the ‘case’ of this study and this research question. The phenomenon under research in this project, which are the visits of friends and relatives to university students, is easy to recognize and differentiate from the context of the hosts’ and visitors’ normal lives. Consequently, the research question of this project, although aims to provide some level of explanation of the phenomenon, has a main goal of testing the influence hosts have in their visitors’ experience which is very precise and requires to put the focus on few specific variables (e.g. destination knowledge, destination image, motivation to host and experience). Accordingly, there is a limited amount of topics discussed and the case under study is not unusual but a common situation occurring at a common British university campus.

The concept of triangulation, crucial in case study methodology, would also become problematic if applied to this project. This study aims to use a sequence of qualitative and quantitative phases. The results and findings from each phase were analysed separately and used to support the next phase of the research. All of this information was analysed paying careful attention to their ontological origin not to create inconsistencies. The concept of triangulation however, requires a higher level of integration between the findings which in this case would most likely lead to create those inconsistencies like generalising qualitative data.

Finally, from a methodological point of view, case study research is a strategy on their own and could not be seen as a multi-strategy research. The different methods used in a case study strategy are often applied concurrently in order to look at a phenomenon from multiple perspectives and triangulate the findings (Ying, 2011). On the other hand, this research aims to use multiple strategies sequentially supporting each other in order to dig deeper into one specific research question. As an analogy, a case study research would aim to take multiple photos of a phenomenon from different angles, in order to make sense of a complex situation.
Chapter 4. Methodology, overall aspects and 1st stage

This research however, aims to take one photo as a map (1st phase) and then make a zoom into a particular area of that photo and take another photo which is the survey (2nd phase).

4.4 - The setting

There are several reasons why Guildford and the campus of the University of Surrey were selected to conduct the study. First, according to Visit England (2014) the South East of England is the region with the highest number of VFR trips in the UK. Within this region Surrey has one of the highest percentages with 60% of trips associated to VFR, which largely overpass all other tourism segments in the county. Likewise, 62% of travellers to Guildford’s are also VFR (Visit England, 2014), of whom it could be expected that a high number are visitors to the students that is ideal for the study to find participants (for further information see chapter three - Guilford and the British tourism sector). As found by Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) students tend to receive more visits than other residents and are more open to participate in studies, which makes them the perfect subjects for testing the proposed model.

Secondly, Guildford is not a widely recognised tourist destination, hence it could be expected that visitors’ views of Guildford are more influenced by their hosts than by previous preconceptions of the city, as it could be the case with larger or more recognised destinations. However, for a city of only 98,000 inhabitants Guildford has a fair number of attractions that justify having a visitors’ information centre, a museum and a tourism board that regularly organises event and plans the promotion of the city. Additionally, since the city is not famous many of the attractions are not ‘obvious’ and have to be searched by the new residents (students), which is excellent for the project to test the influence different hosts have on their visitors experience. This overall situation is actually not too different from many other university cities around the world, which makes the case of Guildford a useful one in terms of transferring the results of the study. Finally, the setting is convenient and feasible because the project is based at the University of Surrey, therefore the setting is familiar to the researcher, it involves less costs and importantly it was approved by the university to collect data of its students and their visitors within campus.
4.5 - Research Design

According to Saunders (2016), the research design is the overall practical plan to conduct the research and answer the research question. The ‘plan’ described in this section, differently to the brief summary that has already been exposed in section 4.3 - Research Strategy, provides greater detail about various specific aspects of the research process, such as participants sampling, context and length of the research and the justification for each of those aspects. This section is also strongly connected to the research objectives of the project as every aspect of the practical application of the methods aim to directly or indirectly fulfil those objectives and in this way answer the research question.

4.5.1 - First stage: semi-structured interviews

The main goal of the first phase of the research was to explore the context of the students’ visits and their role as hosts at the University of Surrey main campus. This phase provided contextual information necessary to develop the questionnaire for the second stage. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method that best suit the needs of this phase. Using this method it is possible to maintain sufficient control over the topics to be discussed in order to focus on VFR issues, however, leaving enough leeway for the interviewer to explore other related topics that might arise during the conversation (Saunders, 2016). As mentioned, the main aim of this phase is to explore the situation, therefore, other more introspective and time-consuming methods, such as ethnographic analysis or focus-groups were discarded. Some elements of Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954), were also included during the interviews in order to help respondents to recount previous events (critical incidents) when they have hosted or being a visitor in Guildford (see interview guideline in Appendix C).

Data quality and sampling

Due to the qualitative nature of this phase of the study according to Lincoln & Guba (1985) there is no need to discuss the validity or reliability of the sample. Therefore, the sample was
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non-probabilistic and the individuals interviewed were chosen purposefully, including a varied range of hosts and visitors. According to Morrow (2005, pp. 255):

“Qualitative sampling is always purposeful – that is participants are deliberately selected to provide the most information-rich data possible. It is also always criterion-based – that is, one always uses specific criteria (people who have experienced a particular phenomenon, age, demographics) based on the questions guiding the research”.

Non-probabilistic or purposive samples depend on the concept of ‘saturation’ or ‘redundancy’ that is the moment when no new information or themes arise from the data (Guest et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). Mason (2010, pp. 2) argued that since the main focus of qualitative research is on searching for meaning and not making generalisations, frequencies are not important and “one occurrence of a piece of data, or a code, is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis framework”. Accordingly, “qualitative samples must be large enough to assure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered, but at the same time if the sample is too large data becomes repetitive and, eventually superfluous” Mason (2010, pp. 3).

Mason (2010) argued that the concept of saturation although widely accepted remains debated among researchers. Fusch & Ness (2015, pp. 1408) aimed to clarify it stating that “data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible”. Consequently, the number of individuals interviewed was determined based on this criterion. The data was first coded in order to search for themes and saturation was reached with ten interviews but four more were conducted to confirm this was the case (Saunders, 2016).

Morrow (2005), argued that in qualitative research far more important than the number of interviews is to assess the quality of it, which the author argued has also been referred as: rigor, trustworthiness, credibility and validity. Lincoln et al. (2011) proposed a ‘parallel criteria’ to the concepts of validity and reliability used in quantitative research in order to
assess the trustworthiness of qualitative data. As a result, Lincoln et al. (2011) argued that transferability is linked to external validity or generalisability, credibility is associated to internal validity, dependability to reliability and confirmability to objectivity (see sections 7.3.4 and 7.3.5 for a full discussion of validity and reliability in quantitative research). Transferability refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to other situations once re-contextualised. Lincoln et al. (2011), argued these can be achieved by providing sufficient information about the context, processes and participants in the study so others can assess how applicable are the findings to other contexts (this information can be found along this section and in section 5.1 in the next chapter).

Credibility is associated to internal validity and according to Morrow (2005) it can be achieved by a thorough description of the source data also seen as ‘thick descriptions’ (e.g. providing detailed quotes and interview transcripts – see transcript sample in Appendix D), as well as, comparing findings from different sources (e.g. comparing qualitative and quantitative findings – see discussion chapter). Dependability is linked to reliability and the idea that it should be possible to replicate the findings if the same methods are followed under similar conditions (Lincoln et al., 2011). According to Morrow (2005) these can be achieved by keeping a detailed account of the research process (e.g. interview guideline – see Appendix C). Confirmability which is associated to objectivity can be achieved by first acknowledging the filter of the researcher aiming to avoid personal biases and again providing detail accounts of the process and context of the study in order to manage subjectivity. Finally, Morrow (2005) argues that although this criteria provide clear guidelines to assess and maintain trustworthiness in qualitative research, it has also been widely criticised because it creates logical and epistemological inconsistencies.

**Practical issues**

In practical terms the interviews lasted between 15 to 45 minutes and took place at the main university library study rooms which were booked in advanced. The main library is located in the middle of campus and is accessible for all students and non-students if accompanied by one. The library is staffed 24 hours and the study rooms have glass walls that ensure safety
The topics discussed were around the experiences of the hosts (students) and their visitors in Guildford. Various topics were covered in relation to: general student life, their personal background, traveling experiences in general and specially in relation to VFR, hosts and visitors perceptions of Guildford, activities done while visiting in Guildford and other locations, tourism activities done with and without visitors, knowledge of Guildford in general and its attractions, behaviour when hosting and visiting, characteristics of different types of visits (e.g. friends, relatives, foreigners, age or gender differences), motivation to visit, motivation to receive visitors and how practical issues such as, transport, costs and accommodation can affect their experience. These topics were chosen based on the research of Backer and Hay (2015), Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007), Dutt & Ninov (2017), Humbracht (2015), Janta et al. (2015), Moscardo et al. (2000), Munoz et al. (2017) and Stylidis et al. (2015), as well as, research methods authors such as, Saunders (2016) and Flanagan (1954), (see interview guideline in Appendix C).

Students were recruited using convenience sampling as suggested by Saunders (2016), which in practical terms meant to select them using advertisement in campus, direct referral from previous interviewees (snowballing) and through acquaintances. Consequently, five interviewees were recruited through advertisement, five were referred from previous interviewees and four were recruited through personal contacts. Since the main aim of this phase was to qualitatively explore the context and not to produce generalizable findings a non-probabilistic sample was suited as adequate to obtain a wide variety of views. The only criteria was to be a student (or a visitor of one) and live in Guildford, however, emphasis was put on trying to select students with different demographics to obtain various views about the VFR phenomenon at a university city. Each interview was recorded and briefly analysed before the next, in order to give time to the researcher to search for new themes, analyse the content and prepare for the next interview.
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Thematic analysis

The decoding and analysis was done by hand (no software was used for this stage) using thematic analysis one of the most common ways to analyse interviews in the social sciences (Denzin, 2009). According to Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 77) “thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method that offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data”. The authors argued that thematic analysis flexibility steams out of it non-adherence to strict epistemological positions, which is ideal in the context of a pragmatic paradigm such as this study. Accordingly, they stated that “through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 78).

In order to maintain rigor and avoid confusion with other methods to analyse qualitative data, Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 87) proposed six steps to conduct thematic analysis that have been widely used in research. First the authors suggested to “familiarizing yourself with your data” which could be done through transcribing it (see transcription sample in Appendix D), reading and re-reading the data and taking notes, which was done in this study between interviews and once all of them were completed. The second step is to “generate initial codes” by marking “interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 87). The third step involved collating these codes into wider themes. The fourth step is to review the themes “checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis” (for a full description of this thematic map see Chapter Five - Qualitative findings). Step five is to name the themes that according to (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 87) also helps to refine their main characteristics and step six it to “produce the report” that should provide a selection of “vivid, compelling extract examples”, which can be seen in the next chapter. Lastly, once all the steps were completed the themes that arose in the interviews were used to better understand the phenomenon, frame the second stage of the research and develop the questionnaire for the second stage.
4.5.2 - Second stage: Host and visitor survey

The research design and further details about data collection, questionnaire development and analysis of the data are discussed in detail in chapter seven (methodology for the second stage of the research). However, in summary the second stage was composed of a survey to hosts (students) and their visitors in Guildford collected at the University of Surrey campus during graduation periods in 2015 and 2016. This was seen as the most effective way to fulfil the projects goals and was made after considering several options discussed in chapter seven. Consequently, groups of graduates and their visitors were approached just after collecting their gowns and were given different questionnaires to hosts and visitors. Later these questionnaires were numbered, stapled together and transcribed as one ‘case’ into Microsoft Excel that was used to conduct an initial descriptive analysis of the data. The main analysis was conducted using Covariance Based Structure Equation Model (CB-SEM) using IBM Amos 23 software. As noted in section 4.3 (Research Strategy), this is the dominant method in the study as it includes the most crucial information from the first stage (questionnaire development) and obtains further results.

4.6 - Ethical considerations

According to the University of Surrey Ethical Committee online Self-Assessment SAFE (required for all research), the project did not require further ethical evaluation at university nor faculty level because the level of risk and personal information asked to participants was considered to be ‘low’. In practical terms, all data collected during the research was treated in strict confidentiality by the researcher and his supervisors only to be used in aggregated terms or by the use of a distinctive code number or pseudonym to refer to each participant. All questionnaires and other material with personal information about the respondents is keep in a secured storage accessible only either through password or a key. Answering the survey or participating in the interviews did not involve any emotional or physical risk for the participants or the researcher.
The study’s mixed methods approach posed two distinct scenarios to consider in terms of ethical implications and the well-being of participants. First the semi-structured interviews involved risks to confidentiality and anonymity because participants had to provide their names when signing the consent form to be interviewed. In order to avoid any breach of confidentiality, all the data collected during the interviews was either anonymised (names were deleted) or pseudonymised (an alias was associated to the data) to protect the privacy of the participants. Additionally, consent forms were stored separately from the interview recordings that are titled under a code number and not the name of the participant. Participants were also explained in detail about the aims of the study, the topics that were to be discussed and the fact that anonymised or pseudonymised extracts from their interviews could be use in this thesis or other research publications.

The second ethical issue that was potentially present during the interviews was the risk that the conversation could elicit sad or painful memories for the participants. This was controlled by explaining very clearly the aims of the study and the main topics to be discussed before the interviews, as well as, providing a detailed Participants Information Sheet (PIS). Moreover, the topics could be generally considered as less sensitive unless participants had a recent loss or a traumatic experience travelling or receiving visitors (see section 5.1 in the next chapter for the full list of probes). Although, this was not apparent in any of the interviews the researcher was prepared to provide support information that is freely available at the university campus, online or over the phone (e.g. university Well-being centre, Big White Wall, Nightline). In terms of power relations, participants were students or students’ visitors that had a very similar social status to the researcher who is also a student, therefore, it is highly unlikely that participants could have felt coerced or pushed to answer any question nor participate in the study.

During the collection of the survey the main ethical issues could be related to the content of the questionnaire and the interaction with the researcher during a special day for the graduates and their visitors. First in terms of content, the questionnaire was just one page long (took on average 3-4 minutes to complete) and focused mainly on participants views and knowledge of Guildford, how they rated their experience and their motivation to host visitors, which could be considered as simple and superficial. Secondly, as during the interviews there
were no apparent unbalanced power-relations therefore, participants did not feel pushed to answer the questionnaire. However, some people might have felt uncomfortable to be approached to participate in a study during a special event like graduation. This was improved by trying to be extremely polite and respectful with participants and giving a small souvenir of Guildford (card made by a local artist) as a complimentary gift for participating in the study. As a result, participants’ completion rate was high, there were many positive comments about the study, the short length of it and there were no negative remarks or complains.

The last point to consider during both the interviews and the survey was the safety of the researcher. During the interviews the researcher always had access to a phone and notified a third person of the time and place of the interview. All the interviews were conducted at the university main library study rooms that is generally a busy place with security cameras and university staff available 24 hours. While collecting the survey the researcher also advised his supervisors of the days and times of collection and the area where this took place (see section 7.1.1), which is a large square exactly in front of the supervisors’ office windows. This area is also busy all day long and there are university staff available, handling graduation tickets and answering questions.

4.7 - Summary and conclusion

The chapter has provided a detailed account of the theory and rationale behind the main methodological decisions of the project. It began discussing the epistemological position of the project which was based on a pragmatist approach to research. This research paradigm see the divide between positivism and interpretivism as unrealistic and focuses the attention on ‘real world’ practical aspects of the research over philosophical understanding of it (Pearson, 2014). This does not mean that it disregards completely the existence of other paradigms (e.g. positivism and interpretivism) and the importance of considering the philosophical aspects of knowledge creation but instead of putting these matters first it takes a more flexible approach where real life practical aspects of research are crucial (Pearson, 2014).
In terms of research strategy, it was noted that VFR literature has generally lacked alternative methodologies in particularly mixed methods approaches and quantifiable analyses of social phenomena. Consequently, a sequential mixed-methods approach (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE) was chosen for the project as it was found to be the best to achieve the projects’ goals and answer the research question. According to Bryman (2005) mixed-methods approaches could also be seen as ‘multi-strategy’ approaches because each method imply a different worldview almost as independent studies on their own. In this case these ‘independent studies’ were carried out sequentially, each of them served a specific purpose and supported the next ‘study’, in the same way that previous literature supports any research. Yet, in this ‘multi-strategy’ research, this particular ‘literature’ was tailor-made for the needs and context of this project.

The chapter finished providing a detail description of the research design for the qualitative part of the study, which included the setting where the research was conducted and the reasons why Guildford and the University of Surrey were chosen for that purpose. The research design was based on a round of 14 semi-structured interviews for the first phase of the research and a survey to 458 students and their visitors during graduation periods for the second phase. The details of the research design, data collection and analysis for the second stage of the research is provided in chapter seven. The last section of this chapter presented a discussion of the ethical considerations for the study.
Chapter 5. First stage: qualitative findings

5.1 - Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from the first stage of data collection that consisted of a series of 14 semi-structured interviews conducted with students and their visitors at the University of Surrey campus in Guildford. This first phase was qualitative and aimed to better understand the context of the VFR phenomenon in Guildford. The findings from this phase combined with the literature review chapter were used to guide the development of the theoretical framework and questionnaire for the second phase of the research. This chapter therefore, describes the main themes found in the round of interviews and how they influence the development of the next steps of the project. In practical terms, the interviews were conducted in different locations within the University of Surrey campus. Each interview was recorded and analysed using thematic analysis which is one of the most common techniques to analyse qualitative data in the social sciences (Denzin, 2009). This technique depend on the concept of ‘saturation’, that is the moment when no new information or themes arise from the data (Guest et al., 2006), which was reached with ten interviews but four more were conducted to confirm this was the case (Saunders, 2016).

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling through advertisement on campus and snowballing. As a result, the sample was composed by four males and ten females (although uneven there is a higher number of females compared to males in the university population, see section 3.3). Nine of the interviews were conducted with hosts and five with their visitors because the emphasis was on the hosting side, however, students were also asked about their experience visiting friends and relatives in other cities (see interview guideline in Appendix C). Interviewee ages varied from 20 to 29 years old and included a mix of undergraduate and post-graduate students; the survey was conducted with students (recent graduates) whose age is generally over 21 years old, therefore, it was deemed appropriate that interviewees would also come from that group. Below in table 5.1 is possible to see a full list of participants’ main demographic characteristics including their pseudonym which was used to differentiate them along this chapter.
As seen in table 5.1 there is a potential bias towards postgraduate international students when compared to domestic undergraduate ones which compose the largest group of students at the university (see section 3.3 for a full description of the student population). This might be due to the researcher being also an international postgraduate student that might have skewed the sampling selection. Although, this could be seen as a problem in quantitative research where the aim to generalise results, in qualitative research however, according to Morrow (2005) the main aim is to find meaning out the data, and thus, sampling is always purposeful to obtain different views over the subject under research. Consequently, frequencies are not important and one single mention to a topic can be enough to become part of the analysis that can lead to what could be seen as un-representative sampling from a quantitative point of view (Mason, 2010). Finally, in terms of the issues discussed during the interviews, various topics were covered related to the phenomenon of hosting and visiting in Guildford and other locations, however, participants were allowed to diverge to other topics to explore different angles of their experiences. For further information about the process of conducting the interviews please see the methodology chapter section 4.5.1, for the interview guideline see Appendix C and for the transcript of one sample interview see Appendix D.
Chapter 5. First stage: Qualitative findings

5.2 - Tourist and social experiences

The findings from the interviews suggest that although students seem to share many similarities, there are clear differences in the way they see and experience visits. The main differences observed were between domestic and international students that not only included cultural differences but also contextual differences of being away from one’s country of origin. First international students tended to receive fewer visits that lasted longer and had a stronger impact in their lives, which was also observed by Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) study in Swansea. These students’ therefore, seemed to prepare more when receiving visitors and participate in more touristic activities, for example Paul a participant from Germany explained that “when my mum visited me, I was planning the whole trip because she doesn’t speak English so I made sure that everything from A to C was organised”. These students seemed to see their new place of residence as a tourist destination on its own, as put by Claudia another participant “it’s like a small sample of England”. Their visitors also seemed to have a strong interest on seeing the place and its surroundings, as explained by Amelia a visitor from Spain (girlfriend) of an international student:

“On my first visit I was more focused on discovering Guildford I must say, so when I was here I was trying to find important places but once I've done it my second and third visits were more about going out of Guildford.”

On the other hand domestic students took visitation more lightly and often with a practical goal (e.g. moving houses or celebrating a birthday). Consequently, they tended to prepare less when receiving visits, do more everyday activities like going out for coffee and focus more on the social aspect of ‘catching-up’ with their visitors. As one William a British student explained about the times he visits friends: “so it’s usually my friends from home (Newcastle) so it’s kind of catching-up I guess... go out drinking (laugh). My friends don’t take me around really, maybe a bit during the day”. Similarly, Sarah another domestic student explained:
“When I visit my old friends from high-school, it happened often enough that we never got to see anything from the city, we just spent the whole time at home because we’ve so much catching up to do. But if I go on vacation to a city I definitely explore the city.”

These differences brought-up to light one of the main similarities between participants. This is that they seem to divide their VFR experiences in two main facets being their social interaction with their host of visitor and their touristic interaction with the place. This was clear between local and international students because as seen above local students had a much stronger focus on the social aspects of the visit and international ones put more emphasis on seeing the place that is newer for them. In both cases however, the two facets co-existed, both had a strong social aspect that is at the core of VFR but also a tourist interaction with the place, which could go as far as visiting museums and other cities (most often for international students or international visitors), or as simple as just walking around high-street and going to the local pubs. As mentioned by Leo one of the domestic interviewees:

“It was good having my parents here because they were happy just to go shopping and walk around and then go for dinner and that was like a nice eventful day. With my friends we often rather take a long walk and go to a pub and have a pub lunch.”

This divide between the social interaction with the host and a tourist or physical interaction with the place was also noted by Le-Bel et al. (2004) who classified tourist experiences as: physical, social, emotional, and intellectual, although, in this case participants only emphasised the first two and did not reflect deeper if their experiences were emotional or intellectual (this is further discussed in section 6.5.2 - Measurement of experience and satisfaction). Overall these findings led to further evaluation in the next chapter (theoretical framework for the second stage) of the concept of ‘experience’ in tourism research, the duality of social and place elements in VFR visits and how experiences can be measured.
5.3 - Motivation to host

It was also noted that all the students interviewed felt some level of duty to be a good host which has also been found with other groups such as, expatriates in Dubai (Dutt & Ninov, 2017) and residents of Eilat, Israel in Shani & Uriely (2012). For example, Julia one of the participants originally from Spain explained that she loved being a host but:

“you need to organise in advance even if you are busy you need to organise your life, you have to do the shopping, buying groceries because they are coming, you have to organise what this person would like to do, like you have to plan the weekend for example in advance even if you are busy or you’re studying, it’s a bit stressful.”

This experience of being a host and their liking or motivation to become one also influenced their interest in attracting visitors. Some of the participants were clearly more motivated to host than others and their visitors’ seemed to be more motivated to visit if their host was keen to receive visitors. For example, during one of the interviews with a host (Claudia) and her visitor (Barbara) the host stated “last summer I was in Hamburg (the visitor’s city) and we also met there and I think I also reminded you (talking to the visitor) that you can come to visit me anytime, if you feel like so...” then the visit to Guildford was arranged. Likewise, Julia from Spain demonstrated the power hosts have to initiate visits when she argued that:

“If every time I speak with them (friends and family) I tell them that Guildford is bad, that is boring, there’s nothing to do and the weather is awful. They wouldn’t be interested in coming but if I’m selling good the city they would like to come.”

Hosts not only influenced their visitors through encouraging visits and ‘selling’ the city to their friends and relatives but also through behaving as local tourist guides and interpreting the place for their visitors. For example, this visitor (Barbara) from Germany explained how her host’s positive interpretation of Guildford affected her perception of it:
“Well before I came here I actually didn’t know anything about Guildford and I just thought that’s just a very small British little city/town maybe even a little bit ... yeah very small and I thought there’s not that much to see but I’m quite impressed and I think (host’s name) enthusiasm sparked a little bit in me.”

Likewise, Maria a visitor from the Netherlands explained how her host knowledge of the local attractions and her decision to take her to some of those attractions strongly affected her view of Guildford:

“I think what I like so far (of Guildford) is that we went to this super lovely walk which changed my perspective in a positive way, because when I arrived I thought it was just an outskirt-sy kind of town and actually is really nice and vibrant and has lots of really nice nature that I didn’t see that when just arrived. So if I wouldn’t have gone on this walk I wouldn’t have seen the country-side around and a fox! I saw a fox!”

Barbara the host of this enthusiastic visitor however, has received only two visits in two and a half years living in Guildford which she attributes to her lack of motivation to encourage visits, although, she seemed to be an active host when her visitors are in the city. Accordingly, this host stated that “I don’t normally ask friends to visit me but this time I was free had a lot of time, I like when someone come to show as much as possible that is not a boring visit”. This situation depicts very well a divide between two key aspects in hosts’ behaviour, their motivation to encourage visits and their willingness to show the area and become ‘tour-guides’ as pointed by Dutt & Ninov (2017) and Humbracht (2015). This separation could be associated to the difference between social and touristic interactions discussed previously because the host could be either motivated by having social contact with their visitors or that their visitors see their place of residence. However, it could also be associated to particular circumstances, as noted by Maria who stated that “I do encourage people to visit me, I have an open house policy but I’m also usually quite busy so it’s hard for me to show someone around so I let my visitors do things by themselves”. Finally, this theme led to further theoretical evaluation of the concept of motivation within the travel context and the notion of hosting in general and in particular within VFR, both available in the next chapter.
5.4 - Perceptions as a place to live or visit

Another common trace between students was that their views about Guildford seemed to be very personal and was not possible to see any clear pattern between nationality, gender or age. However, similar to the division they made between the social and touristic aspects of receiving visits, they also made a distinction between their opinion of Guildford as a place to live and as a place to visit and do tourist activities. In general, the former was more positive than the latter, which is understandable since Guildford is not a recognised tourist destination but generally ranks high for quality of life standards. For example, talking about Guildford Julia mentioned that:

“I think is a good city to study, is really nice but I wouldn’t choose to come here if I wouldn’t have a friend”... when I have visitors in Guildford “normally we would go to the riverside, I show them the town centre but there’s not too much to see, the castle and there’re some pubs that I like, and then we go to London. We don’t really spend the whole day here”.

In the same way, Walter noticed that Guildford was not ‘spectacular’ enough for make it worth of visiting but “everything is nice and close together”, which he thinks is an important aspect for living in a place, as he stated that:

“I don’t know for visiting, I think is more of a town that is more suitable for living than for visiting, it’s nothing spectacular but everything is nice. I’m having a good living experience here because I’ve everything that I need for my everyday life close together and if I want something special I can always go to London.”

The comments provided when participants were asked what they thought about Guildford were also easy to categorise using place and destination image scales, which included comments about attractions, traffic, public transport, local scenery, night life, sports facilities and entertainment (Stylidis et al., 2015). For example, participants commented that “the
traffic is terrible”, “I love all the nature around and the Surrey Hills”, “there’s not too much to see, the castle and that’s it” or for example this Sarah a domestic student commented about the city’s nightlife:

“I think that Guildford is kind of a strange town cos there are only students and people with babies so the night life isn’t really much to desire I find that when I go out there are only 18 years old and I’m 25, so with my friends I’m not going to be like oh come (visit me) lets go out there lots of 18 years old. So every time I can, I leave Guildford.”

Participants however, tended to seem puzzled when asked about their ‘image’ of Guildford and the question had to be re-worded or re-explained as ‘what is your opinion about it or what do you think about Guildford’. Often then participants started answering using different categories such as: “I think is great for studying but I wouldn’t live here permanently” (Rachel) or “my visitors really liked it but I think is a bit boring for living permanently, I wouldn’t stay here after I graduate” (Andrea) or “I think is a good city to study, I think is really nice but wouldn’t choose to come here if I wouldn’t have a friend” (Claudia). In conclusion, this third theme discussed participants’ perceptions, feelings, beliefs and opinions of Guildford with an emphasis on the divide between living and touristic views of the city. These ideas can be conceptually blended under the notion of destination image that is further discussed in the next chapter.

5.5 - Destination knowledge

Similar to their perception of Guildford, students and their visitors did not have a clear pattern in terms of what they knew about the place. Some international students seemed to visit more attractions and explore more but others were completely uninformed and in three years of study had never seen the castle that is located in the middle of the city centre. On the other hand, local students seemed to explore less but have more common knowledge about the place. What was similar among all of them was again a division between the types of knowledge, there was clearly an experiential factor gained through exploring the area, there
was knowledge about local attractions and there was a common type of knowledge about the place and its functional aspects (e.g. public transport and shopping). For example, Katie an American master student noted the importance of the general type of knowledge when she commented that:

“For instance when my mum came I really didn’t know much about Guildford, it was this small town, we didn’t know where to go, where to eat, where to get anything. But then when she came in January it was easier, she also liked it better, she saw the city in a different way because I knew where to take her or not to take her so it was easier to move around.”

Likewise, Barbara one of the visitors noted how her host’s experiential knowledge affected her experience when she stated that:

“I think my host showed me Guildford from her perspective and from her experience, she showed me many places that she’s been visiting and in a way how she learned to explore the area and Guildford itself.”

The last aspect noted during the interviews was that most hosts seemed to learn about the destination from receiving visits, either from preparing or just from doing activities they would not do normally alone. For example, Walter mentioned that “I think I’ve seen the Guildford Castle for the first time when somebody came to visit me”. This seemed to be stronger with international students because they tended to prepare more for their visits but was clear in both groups. For instance, just going-out to eat with visitors offered opportunities for learning about the city that could later be used for other visits, as explained by Paul who was interviewed with his girlfriend:

“I've to also say that through her I've seen a new sight of Guildford, before I just knew the way from my place to the university and to the sports park and that’s it. I've learned more with her, we've discover Guildford together and I think I like it more now because we can do things together, like restaurants and the Surrey Hills that are really nice”
This feeling of discovery by receiving visits seemed to be common as most people were surprised to find new places and activities which improved their view of the destination and motivation to receive visitors. It was unclear if these feelings had to do with getting used to hosting people, and thus, becoming easier, less stressful and more entertaining or from the discovery and increase in knowledge. What was clear though, is that hosting seemed to be something that could be learned and improved through practice which was confirmed by the Dutt’s & Ninov (2017) study in Dubai. These findings led to conducting further analysis of the concept of destination knowledge in tourism research and the impact of receiving visits in VFR, which is possible to see in the next chapter (theoretical framework for the second stage).

5.6 - Summary and conclusion

The chapter presented the main findings from the thematic analysis conducted on 14 semi-structured interviews with students and their visitors at the University of Surrey campus in Guildford. The chapter was structured in four sections based on the main themes found from the interviews. The first theme was titled ‘tourist and social experiences’ and discussed the different types of experiences that hosts and their visitors have during the visit, which was found to be a major aspect of the VFR phenomenon. In particular this section found a clear division between the social experience hosts and visitors have and their touristic experience with the place. These findings led to further evaluation in the next chapter (theoretical framework for the second stage) of the concept of ‘experience’ in tourism research, the duality of social and place elements in VFR visits and how experiences can be measured.

The second theme in this chapter was named ‘motivation to host’ and discusses how this new concept was found to be a crucial aspect of the VFR phenomenon. The section discusses participants’ attitudes to receiving and taking care of visitors and how those attitudes might affect their visitors’ perception of Guildford and their motivation to visit. This theme led to further theoretical evaluation of the concept of motivation within the travel context and the notion of hosting in general and in particular within VFR, both available in the next chapter.
The third theme was titled ‘perceptions as a place to live or visit’ and discusses participants’ opinions, feelings and beliefs of Guildford, which were mentioned throughout the interviews. In particular, the section discusses participants differing views about Guildford as a place to live and as a place to do tourism/visit, which was found to be clear division within hosts and visitors opinions of Guildford. Participants’ perceptions, feelings, beliefs and opinions of Guildford were further analysed in literature under the concept of destination image that can theoretically agglomerate all these aspects. However, it was noted throughout the interviews that the concept of destination image or image alone seemed difficult for participants and the word opinion was generally used instead.

The last theme of the analysis was named ‘destination knowledge’ and discussed how participants saw that local knowledge was a crucial aspect of the way in which hosts’ affect their visitors’ experience. This section also discussed how participants learned about Guildford, which included different types of knowledge and specific situations that led them to learn. The main types of knowledge mentioned by participants were again associated to touristic and everyday life knowledge. Their tourism knowledge seemed to improve considerably by receiving visitors while the ‘everyday’ knowledge seemed to improve mainly through living in Guildford in particularly during the first months after arrival. These findings led to conducting further analysis of the concept of destination knowledge in tourism research and the way it is composed, as well as, the impact of receiving visits in VFR, which is possible to see in the next chapter (theoretical framework for the second stage).
Chapter 6. Theoretical framework for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage

6.1 - Introduction

As explained in the introduction, this thesis is composed of two data collection phases (qualitative interviews followed by a quantitative survey) that were conducted sequentially almost as two separate individual pieces of research. This research design poses some difficulties when it comes to structure the thesis in particular when it comes to presenting the literature to support the research. This is because there is literature that is necessary to better understand the project as a whole and other literature that became necessary after evaluating the findings of the first phase of the research (qualitative), and therefore would be out of context if presented before the qualitative findings. Consequently, the first literature review chapter of this thesis aims to support the whole of the thesis and this current chapter presents the theoretical framework and operational model for the second phase of the research that is based on the four themes found during the interviews. These four themes were translated into four constructs that were used to conduct a further analysis of literature and develop the questionnaire for the survey to hosts and their visitors. These four constructs are: destination image, destination knowledge, motivation to host and visitors’ experience.

As a result, in terms of structure, the first half of the chapter is divided in four sections that discuss the most relevant theories related to these four constructs and the main practical aspects to take in consideration for their measurement. Therefore, after the constructs have been reviewed in literature each section presents the rationale behind the questions chosen to test them, which also introduces elements from the thematic analysis exposed in the previous chapter (qualitative findings). The second half of the chapter begins presenting the most relevant literature used to estimate the direction of the relationship between these four constructs. The chapter finishes with a discussion of these relationships that leads to the presentation of the hypotheses and the operational model for the second phase of the thesis.
6.2 - Destination image

According to Pearce & Stringer (1991, pp. 143) “tourism, is essentially a social psychological phenomenon”. This could not be any truer than the case of VFR where the social interaction between hosts and visitors is deeply ingrained in the experience of traveling as mentioned by the interviewees in the previous chapter (section 5.4). In terms of destination image several authors have argued that the concept is socially constructed (Chen et al., 2013; Gkritzali et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2017). Consequently, Chen et al. (2013, pp. 240) argued that “the formation of destination image might also be a social psychological process and influenced by social factors”. However, according to Tasci (2009, in Chen et al. 2013, pp. 240) previous literature about destination image has “tended to regard it as a subjective construction without considering the importance of sociocultural factors in the process of destination-image formation”. This study aims to fill that gap by researching how destination image might be transferred from hosts to their visitors in probably the most socially constructed type of tourism, VFR.

The concept of image, perception or opinion of Guildford was found to be one of the most discussed themes during the interviews of the first stage of the research, and thus, became a key topic to include in the questionnaire. Not surprisingly, destination image is also one of the most discussed topics in tourism research, due to the belief that it is crucial or the most important attribute that influences tourists’ destination choice, experience and post-travel behaviour (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Lu, 2011; Nadeau, 2008; Pike, 2002; Phillips et al., 2013; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Walmsley & Young, 1998; Zhang et al., 2014). Nadeau (2008, pp. 85) argued that destination image is important because it provides a shortcut for “information processing”, and therefore, “influence tourists’ decision making and behaviour”. For marketing purposes destination image seem to be even more important than the perception customers have of physical products because of the distance, intangibility and complexity of the tourism product (Pike & Ryan, 2004). For example, McKercher (1998) founded that destinations with better market access, such as, closer flights, language or cultural similarities, do not necessarily receive more tourists. However, destination image
although vague and intangible is always favourable or unfavourable, and thus, strongly affect tourist behaviour (Milman & Pizam, 1995; Pike, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

According to Gallarza et al. (2002), the concept of destination image in tourism was born in the early seventies with the work of Hunt’s (1971). Since then multiple definitions have been proposed and there is no agreement between scholars (Gkritzali et al., 2017; Stern, 2001). Most authors believe that definitions are vague such as “impression of a place” or “perceptions of an area” (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Jenkins, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Stern, 2001). For example, Aksoy & Kiyici (2011, pp. 479) defined destination image as a “series of beliefs, opinions and impressions” and Embacher & Buttle (1989, pp. 3) as “ideas or conceptions” about a destination. Other more elaborated definitions state that destination image is “a sum of associations and pieces of information connected to a destination” (Murphy et al., 2000, pp. 45); a “mental representation of knowledge, feelings and overall perception of a particular destination” (Assaker et al., 2011, pp. 892); and just as the “subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist” (Bigne et al., 2001, pp. 607).

As seen above, destination image is much broader than just a visual representation of a place and can include feelings, opinions, perceptions, ideas, beliefs, information and impressions. Although there is no agreement in research about one precise definition for destination image, it is clear that for most authors destination image is a wide-ranging abstract concept that is larger than the sum of the words that compose it ‘destination + image’, and thus, is far from the narrow understanding of image just as a visual representation of a place. From a psychological perspective, according to Stern & Krakover (1993, pp. 132) in their study of urban image formation, they argued that “the common psychological referent for an image is a perceived stimulus, or a complex of stimuli, and therefore an image will not be different from perceptions because, psychologically, ‘normal’ people cannot make the distinction”. As a result, Stern & Krakover (1993, pp. 132) argued that any image and in particular the concept of destination image “can have elements that have been contributed by other senses besides vision”, and thus, “an image is a perception irrespective of the sensory mode in which this perception occurs”. Consequently, Tasci et al., (2007, pp. 200) argued that destination image is “an interactive system of thought, opinion, feeling, visualization and intentions toward a destination”.

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6.2.1 - Destination image theories

There are several theories that have tried to provide a better understanding of the concept of destination image. In terms of destination image formation, according to Gallarza et al. (2002) one of the most well-known theories is the one of Gunn (1972) who proposed three levels of destination image formation, these are: organic, induced and ‘modified-induced’. The first level refers to all the information that people gain about a place through life, such as, education, friends, family and media. Later Fakeye & Crompton (1991) added that this refers to all the “non-touristic” information gained before traveling to a certain destination. The second level is the formation of destination image through marketing material specifically developed to “induce” a particular idea in consumers’ minds. The third level, according to Fakeye & Crompton (1991) also referred as “complex”, is the destination image gained through the experience of traveling to the destination. Phelps (1986), simplified this model into secondary destination image (organic and induced) which refers to all the information gained externally, and primary destination image (complex or modified-induced) that is the perception gained through direct personal experience of the destination.

In relation to destination image conceptualizations, Gartner (1993) proposed a model that has been widely used in research and divides destination image in cognitive, affective and conative. Cognitive destination image is the one obtained through a rational logic process which includes factual information about the destination’s attributes. Affective destination image includes an emotional component that acknowledges the feelings and irrational sensations people have towards places. The third type of destination image named “conative”, is a behavioural dimension born after the cognitive and affective destination image are already internalized in the individual (Gartner, 1993). Baloglu & McCleary (1999) noted that this third element was born from the interaction of cognition and emotions but they saw it as the creation of an overall holistic opinion of the destination. Dichter (1985, pp. 871), proposed destination image as an “overall or total impression formed as a result of the evaluation of individual attributes which may contain both cognitive and emotional content”. This is an excellent example of a definition that recognizes the previous theories,
incorporating the cognitive and affective elements and the idea of an overall totalizing opinion or perception of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

A last unique approach was presented by Etchner & Ritchie (1991). They argued that research has not been able to incorporate the holistic and unique element of the destination image concept (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). However, instead of adapting previous models, they proposed a new one based on three dimensions with two antagonizing extremes. The dimensions are: “attribute-holistic” that describe the idea destination image can be specific as particular attributes (e.g. cheap accommodation) or holistic, such as romantic or exciting; “functional-psychological” describes the duality between measurable characteristics, such as, transport facilities or number of hotels or psychological aspects, such as, social recognition and mood; and “common-unique” that simply describes how special is the destination, whether completely unique like the Eiffel tower or common like any tropical beach (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). These three theories of destination image formation and conceptualisation (by Gunn 1972, Gartner 1993 and Etchner & Ritchie 1991) again re-affirm the idea that the concept of destination image is more multifaceted than just a visual picture of a place but a far wider expression that includes all sorts of perceptions, opinions, emotions and beliefs.

6.2.2 - Measurement of destination image

Similar to the definitions and theories about destination image, there are several perspectives in the literature about how to measure the construct. Many authors argue that due to the multifaceted nature of the construct, it is necessary to use lengthy multi-scales questionnaires that inquire about several specific aspects of the destination in order to gain an accurate measurement of it (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Stylidis et al., 2015). For example, Beerli & Martin (2004) identified 41 different items used in previous studies that included questions from transport facilities to multiple weather conditions. These multi-dimensional destination image scales tend to vary strongly depending on the context of different destinations and the participants under research. For example, in a ski area destination image attributes can include good après ski, snow security and cosiness (attributes used in Faullant et al., 2008), while in a seaside resort other attributes like beach
and sea conditions become crucial (Beerli & Martin, 2004). In terms of the participants under research, the destination image attributes that are important for residents can be different from the ones that are important for travellers or even tourism workers (Stylidis et al., 2015).

On the other hand, authors like Assaker et al. (2011) and Bigne et al. (2005) argued that because of the same multifaceted nature of the construct, it is better to use single item measurements that inquire about an overall perception of the destination to get a holistic view from all participants. Accordingly, Bigne et al. (2005, pp. 295), who also measured residents’ overall destination image in a path analysis model argued that:

“Attribute lists may be incomplete by failing to incorporate all of the relevant characteristics of the destination image. Therefore, the average or sum of the attribute scores is not an adequate measurement of the overall image”.

Hence, Zhang et al. (2014) argued that single rating items are the most common way to measure tourists’ holistic perception of a destination. Stylidis et al.’s (2017) study in Eilat, Israel, put both approaches to test measuring destination image using a multi-item scale and a single question that asked residents and tourists’ for their overall perception of Eilat and confirmed that both measurements are closely associated.

This study aims to measure overall destination image as one of the constructs of a larger path analysis and does not aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the construct. Therefore, based on the literature and the findings from the interviews discussed in the previous chapter (see section 5.4 - Perceptions as a place to live or visit), it was decided to measure hosts’ destination image using three single questions that inquire about their overall opinion of Guildford (plus one open question to check the results of the previous three). This choice also meant that participants could complete the questionnaire in less than five minutes. Consequently, using one to five Likert scales, hosts were asked for their overall opinion of Guilford, their opinion of Guildford as a place to live and their overall opinion of Guildford’s attractions. Additionally, an open question was also included which was used to obtain a more holistic impression from participants and to confirm if this approach was providing the attributes generally used in destination image scales. The word “opinion” was used instead
of “image” because it was considered to be closer to the wide-ranging meaning of “destination image”, and it was more commonly used by participants during the interviews as it refers to the perception ones has about something that is transmitted to others. This is important in this context because the research aims to explore how hosts’ perception of Guildford might be transmitted to their visitors (to see the full questionnaire please see appendix A).

6.3 - Destination knowledge

It was found during the interviews of the first phase of the research that participants believed that their level of knowledge of the destination could have a strong influence in their experience, and in particular that hosts’ knowledge of Guildford could strongly influence the experience of their visitors. If it is believed that visitors see the destination through the eyes of the host, the host’s level of knowledge of the destination will determine what the visitors get to see. As mentioned in chapter two, hosts can easily become informal tourist guides when receiving visitors (Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Humbracht, 2015; Morrison et al., 2000). Accordingly, Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 17) stated that hosts act as “destination experience mediators”. This might be particularly true in the context of students as hosts because due to their shorter residence they might have a lower or more diverse level of knowledge, which can affect their visitors’ experience of the destination. Additionally, it was noted in the previous chapter that visitors place a high degree of trust on their hosts to plan their trips (Backer, 2009) and later during the trip to lead the activities (Humbracht, 2015), which again leads to the importance of investigating the level of knowledge hosts have of the destination. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Murphy et al. (2007, pp. 517) stated that “in tourism information (knowledge) can be treated as one of the most or even the most important factor influencing and determining consumer behaviour”.

Knowledge or what is known has been the focus of philosophy since ancient times (Goldman, 1979). Plato defined knowledge as “justified true belief” (Nagel et al., 2013, pp. 652) which gave rise to more than two thousand years of discussion about the topic. In philosophy the
study of the nature of knowledge is called epistemology (DeRose, 2002), which is vast but slightly removed from the practical needs of this study. In tourism research, the study of knowledge has focussed on tourist knowledge which is a concept borrowed from marketing consumer product knowledge (Wong & Yeh, 2009). After a thorough review of the literature it was found that many authors fail to provide a definition of tourist knowledge assuming it is an obvious construct for everybody. However, Wong & Yeh (2009, pp. 10) argued that in tourism “knowledge” is generally referred as “product familiarity or prior knowledge” and based on consumer research literature the authors proposed that tourist knowledge should be defined as “the degree of tourist self-assessed destination knowledge” (Wong & Yeh, 2009, pp. 13).

There are several conceptualisations of knowledge in the tourism literature. According to Alba & Hutchinson (1987), tourist knowledge can be “objective” or “subjective” which they argued sometimes is also referred as “familiarity”. The former refers to all the “objective” or unbiased factual information tourists’ have about a destination while “subjective knowledge” are their “perceptions of what or how much they know” about it (Wong & Yeh, 2009, pp. 11). Wong & Yeh (2009) noted that often there is a clear mismatch between what tourists think they know (subjective knowledge) and what they actually know (objective knowledge) and argued that subjective knowledge is generally better for understanding tourists’ decision-making behaviour. Likewise, Alba & Hutchinson (1987) also proposed a dichotomy of knowledge types but in this case, they argue that knowledge can be “declarative” or “procedural”. “Declarative knowledge” refers to everything known about a destination that can be factual akin to “objective knowledge”, but “procedural knowledge” refers to everything that involves skills and knowing how to perform an action related to consuming a tourism product, which is somehow different and more specific than “subjective knowledge”. Additionally, Tsaur et al. (2010) noted that knowledge has also been researched as “familiarity” which they argue is related to accumulated experiences about a destination and “expertise” which is related to procedural knowledge because is based on the “ability to perform product related tasks successfully” (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004, pp. 964). Finally, Sharifpour et al. (2014) claimed that there are three types of knowledge, subjective, objective and previous experience adding another dimension to the previous description proposed by Alba & Hutchinson (1987).
As seen above there is a lack of agreement between researchers about the classifications of destination knowledge in tourism research. This might be due to the assumption that knowledge is a simple construct that does not need further discussion and the fact that most of the theories used to understand it are borrowed from other disciplines. In summary, it could be said that there is: an objective or declarative knowledge that refers to all factual information known about a destination; there is a subjective knowledge that refers to what people think they know about a tourism product; there is experiential knowledge gained from visiting the destination; and there is a procedural knowledge associated to the abilities needed to perform tasks related to the consumption of tourism.

6.3.1 - Measurement of destination knowledge

Similar to the measurement of destination image, there are two main approaches to measuring destination knowledge, these are: the authors who believe that several items are needed to obtain an accurate measurement and the authors who believe that single items asking about the overall level of knowledge are more effective than long multi-scales. For example, Pearce & Foster (2007) created a multi-scale with 42 items that aimed to measure tourist skills and knowledge related to the specific context of their study on backpackers. On the other hand, Gursoy & Gavcar (2003), Park et al. (1994) and Wong & Yeh (2009) argued in favour of single questions to measure destination knowledge in particular in the case of subjective knowledge.

Taking into account previous literature, the time restrictions participants have to complete the survey and the information gained from the first stage of the research, it was decided to use single item questions to measure hosts’ subjective and experiential knowledge. As mentioned in the previous section, Wong & Yeh (2009) noted that subjective knowledge is better than objective knowledge for understanding tourists’ behaviour. Consequently, two single questions were included asking hosts “what do they think” is their overall level of knowledge of Guildford and their overall knowledge of Guildford’s attractions, which aims to measure their subjective knowledge on these two topics. Additionally, a third question was included that provided a list of Guildford’s attractions and asked hosts and visitors to mark...
which of them have been visited (during the interviews section 5.5 participants noted the importance of their experiential and touristic knowledge). This question aimed to measure their experiential knowledge of Guildford, but their visitation would prove tangentially a basic level of objective and procedural knowledge of the destination (to see the full questionnaire please see appendix A).

6.4 - Motivation to host

The concept of hosting is crucial in VFR as it implies taking care of visitors, spending time with them, accommodating them at home or within ones’ lives/schedule, encouraging them to visits and showing ones’ home or place or residence. According to Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 7) “host attitude is one of the most important value factors for the guests...” and “play a crucial role in VFRs tourist experience formation”. Consequently, hosts’ attitude or motivation towards hosting also became a key topic during the interviews.

Motivation is a key concept in the understanding of behaviour and has been widely studied in several areas of human knowledge (Lu, 2011). According to Prebensen (2013, pp. 255) motivation can be defined as the “driving force behind all behaviour”. Yoon (2005, pp. 46) see motivation as “psychological/biological needs and wants, including integral forces that arouse, direct, and integrate a person’s behaviour and activity”. Consequently, there are several theories in tourism research that have aimed to explain tourists’ motivations, and therefore, travel behaviour (Lu, 2011). According to Jaapar et al. (2017), the most popular theories are: Pearce’s (1988) Travel Career Ladder (TCL), Crompton’s (1979) taxonomy of tourist motivations, Iso-Ahola’s (1980, 1982) social psychological theory and Dann’s (1977) pull and push factors model.

Pearce’s (1988) TCL is strongly influence by Maslow (1950) hierarchy of needs which is probably the most known general theory of motivation. The TCL proposed a similar pyramid but with each level directly linked to tourists’ travelling motivation, these are: relaxation (the most basic level), safety, relationships, self-esteem and fulfilment (the highest level).
Crompton’s (1979) taxonomy on the other hand, proposed an original classification of tourist motivations without a hierarchy that are divided into seven socio-psychological areas (escape, exploration of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, kinship relationships, and social interaction). Iso-Ahola’s (1980, 1982) social psychological theory proposed that tourists’ motivation can be divided by the desire “to escape” their everyday lives and their motivation “to seek” personal rewards from their experience. Finally, Dann’s (1977) push and pull theory divides motives to travel in people internal needs, such as, the need to relax or escape (push motives) and external aspects such as destination’s attributes or situational factors that might “pull” the traveller.

From the previous theories it is clear that motivation in tourism has mainly focused on tourists’ motivations to travel, which has been found to be an important aspect to explain destination choice and travel behaviour (Jaapar et al., 2017; Lu, 2011; Yoon, 2005). However, very little has been researched about other types of motivation in tourism, such as, the motivation to host visitors. Many of the theories mentioned earlier somehow could be adapted to this context, for example in Crompton (1979) it is clear the importance of social relationships and kinship which could be a strong component of hosts’ motivation to receive visitors. Similarly, this activity could be characterized with the TCL or Maslow’s hierarchy of needs or it could be argued that hosts are a pull factor for their visitors. However, they all fall short in specificity for this particular situation.

The only discussion in VFR literature related to this topic was provided by Shani & Uriely (2012), Dutt & Ninov (2017) and recently by Lee & Lai (2018). The first two articles conducted qualitative studies focusing on hosts and visitors’ relationship and found that that hosts tend to feel a “duty” to receive and look after their visitors. This “duty as a host” could be translated into a motivation or de-motivation to receive visitors. On the other hand, Schroeder (1996) and Stylidis et al. (2017) conducted quantitative studies where they introduced the concept of residents’ willingness to recommend the destination and compared it to other constructs such as destination image and support for tourism development. Similarly, Lee & Lai (2018) also conducted a quantitative survey but measured residents “hosting intention”, which was defined slightly different from the previous authors as residents’ willingness to recommend their friends and family to visit. All of these studies introduced a key aspect of what could be
understood as motivation to host, which is residents’ willingness to promote the destination. However, fall short to measure other aspects associated to residents’ motivation to host such as, their motivation to show the area (act as a host) and to attract people to visit them.

Motivation to host was a key topic mentioned by the interviewees and as noted it is at some extent a new construct in VFR literature. Two particular areas were discussed around this topic during the interviews, these are: hosts’ motivation to encourage friends and relatives to visit (act as a pull factor), and hosts’ motivation to show Guildford and it surroundings to their visitors, what Humbracht (2015, pp.649) described as the host becoming a “tourist agency” and Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 17) named as hosts being “destination experience mediators”. As a result, two questions were introduced in the survey that aimed to measure these two aspects; using one to five Likert scales the questionnaire asked hosts if they encourage visits and if they were motivated to show Guildford to their visitors.

6.5 - Experience satisfaction

The quality and characteristics of the visitors’ experience in Guildford was a key topic mentioned throughout the interviews during the first stage of the research. Tourist experience is also a key topic in tourism research which has been often been linked to consumer experience and the evaluation of these experiences in the concept of satisfaction Zatori et al. (2017). Most authors agree that satisfaction with a product or experience is a key aspect to explain people’s attitude and future behaviour towards that product (Huang & Hsu, 2010; Li et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Song et al., 2012). In tourism, according to Phillips et al. (2013, pp. 96), “literature has proven that tourists with higher levels of satisfaction are more inclined to visit the destination again, willing to give more positive WOM and to recommend the destination to others”. Consequently, satisfaction has been researched extensively in various disciplines and in particular in tourism and marketing research (Li et al., 2012). Accordingly, Phillips et al. (2013, pp. 95) stated that “consumer satisfaction has been one of the most researched variables in the marketing literature”. However, in spite of the interest the construct has attracted, similar to other highly researched constructs in tourism literature,
there is no agreement between researchers over a definition of tourist satisfaction (Phillips et al., 2013).

Generally, satisfaction has been seen as “the degree to which an individual believes that a consumption experience brings positive feelings” or “consumers’ holistic evaluation of an experience” (Phillips et al., 2013, pp. 95). According to Lu (2011, pp. 23), satisfaction could be defined as “consumers’ evaluation of the performance of a product and/or consumption experience”. In tourism research, Huang & Hsu (2010, pp. 83) defined satisfaction as the “post-consumption summary evaluation of the vacation experience”; and Phillips et al. (2013, pp. 95) argued that in tourism, satisfaction is “the overall contented feeling that a tourist felt from visiting a destination, which fulfilled his travel expectations and needs”. Although there is no agreement in literature about a definition of satisfaction, it is clear that satisfaction or consumer satisfaction is largely a term borrowed from marketing literature that was born out of the need to evaluate products and experiences. Hence, according to Phillips et al. (2013, pp. 94) “overall satisfaction of the destination is an important form of the visitors’ evaluations”. This becomes relevant to the context of this thesis because the final aim of it is to evaluate the influence that hosts have on their visitors’ experience, hence satisfaction with the visit is an ideal construct to evaluate their experience.

In the vast amount of literature related to consumer satisfaction, it could be argued that there are two major conceptualisations of it, satisfaction as a “process” and satisfaction as an “outcome” (Lu, 2011). According to Lu (2011), the view of satisfaction as a process is based on “discrepancy theory” which aims to explain satisfaction based on people’s expectations. There are several theories about satisfaction that were born out of this view, such as, contrast theory, assimilation-contrast theory, congruity model, the expectation-perception paradigm and the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm (Li et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). All of these theories are based on the idea that a difference between customers’ expectations about a product and the actual performance of it will explain their level of satisfaction. So for example, Sirgy’s (1984) congruity model argues that if there is a high level of congruity between consumers’ “ideal performance” of a product and its actual performance, consumers would also reach a high satisfaction. Similarly, Oliver’s (1980) expectation-disconfirmation paradigm, also measures satisfaction based on the difference
between expectation and actual performance, but it states that if the difference between both is positive (the actual performance is better than expected), customers would be satisfied. Conversely, if the difference is negative, so the performance is worse than expected, the customer would be dissatisfied.

According to most authors the view of satisfaction as a “process” has been overall the most popular one, however, currently the view of satisfaction as an “outcome” in particular in relation to satisfaction with an experience is gaining ground (Li et al., 2012; Lu, 2011). The view of satisfaction as an “outcome” places the attention on the nature of satisfaction instead of the antecedents of it e.g. expectations (Lu, 2011). As a result, emotions and feelings like fulfilment and arousal has been emphasized to measure and understand satisfaction which are seen as more adequate to measure experiences like tourism. The most popular model among this view of satisfaction is Pizam et al. (1978) performance-only model, which sees satisfaction only as a consequence of the product or service performance (Li et al., 2012; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). However, interestingly the main criticism of this model is actually not being able to know if their measurement of satisfaction is influenced by customers’ previous expectations (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000).

Outside of the discussion between satisfaction as a “process” or “outcome”, consumer satisfaction has also been classified depending on when it is measured. According to Olsen and Johnson (2003, pp. 185), “transaction-specific” satisfaction refers to customers’ evaluation with a particular transaction at any point in time, this was the main way of measuring satisfaction until the early nineties. On the other hand, “cumulative” satisfaction is defined as customers “overall evaluation of a product or service” and has grown in popularity after the nineties (Olsen & Johnson, 2003, pp. 185). Likewise, Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 2) argued that tourist experience “as a specific type of consumer experience” can also be divided in two similar conceptualizations. The authors argued that tourism experience can be referred to as the “specific services consumed by tourists (akin to the transaction-specific approach), and as the broader experience from the trip to which they collectively contribute (akin to the cumulative approach)”. Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 2) argued that the first approach tends to be of a more commercialised nature because it focused on specific aspects of the “transaction” and the second approach refers to the whole “experience of being a tourist”.

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6.5.1 - Experience

The view of satisfaction as an outcome, introduces the concept of ‘experience’ into the understanding of satisfaction. According to Huang & Hsu (2010), the traditional views of satisfaction focus on evaluating service quality, however in tourism, emotions and the quality of tourist’s experiences are often much more important to predict behaviour (Huang & Hsu, 2010). Travellers active involvement in tourism implies that they co-create their experiences instead of being detached evaluating an external service (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Consequently, Huang & Hsu (2010, pp. 80) argued that “tourism may better be evaluated in terms of their experiential and psychological abstractions, rather than their attributes or performance”. Consequently, Baker and Crompton (2000, pp. 787) stated that “quality of performance” can be very different from “quality of experience” arguing that the first is the traveller’s evaluation of the tourism provider but quality of experience is the evaluation of the travellers complete “emotional state of mind” at the time. The authors argued that “quality of experience” could be influenced by multiple aspects such as the mood the tourist brings, any kind of external event, site attributes and social group interactions.

Although this view of the evaluation of a tourist experience might seem more accurate to the reality of it, actually conceptualising it has proved difficult. According to Huang & Hsu (2010, pp. 80) “experience was credited as the most elusive area in tourism research” leading to wide confusion in literature about the construct. Similarly, it is unclear what is the difference between experience and satisfaction; while some authors like Cole et al. (2002) believe that “quality of experience” is an antecedent of satisfaction, others use the term interchangeably (e.g. Baker & Crompton 2000) or believe that satisfaction is antecedent of a pleasurable experience (e.g. Chan 2003). Experience has also been measured in several different ways. For example, Chan (2003) used Iso-Ahola’s (1980) escape and seek motivational theory; Oh et al. (2007) argued that experience had four dimensions which are education, aesthetics, entertainment, and escapism; and Le Bel et al. (2004) stated that tourist experience could be classified as: sensory/physical, social, emotional, and intellectual.
6.5.2 - Measurement of experience satisfaction

The previous conceptualisations of satisfaction have a major problem when trying to apply these models to the current research. Since most theories were borrowed from marketing research, there is a strong view of satisfaction as an evaluation of a purchase, in other words, how satisfied is the customer with a monetary transaction. In particular, the view of satisfaction as a “process” that includes customers’ expectations for some kind of consumption, always imply an evaluation of the transaction done for a product or service. On the other hand, most VFR travellers do not have a transactional view of their trip, visiting a friend or a relative is not generally seen as a ‘deal’ that can be evaluated from a monetary perspective. Although most VFR travellers pay for their transport, this is a secondary cost not associated to the final goal to spend time with friends and family in particular when the visit is in a destination not generally recognised for its touristic appeal like Guildford.

When discussing this topic with the interviewees during the first phase of the research, all participants did not have any expectation about Guildford apart from their wish to see the place where their friends and relatives live. This is a common phenomenon in VFR, according to Huang et al. (2017, pp. 423):

“VFR travel can be seen as differing from tourism in general, in that the imaginaries and expectations of the VFR traveller and their decisions to visit particular places are largely derived from interpersonal relationships with people at the destination, more so than sights and images.”

Consequently, it was decided to take an “outcome” view of satisfaction that aims to understand how enjoyable the experience of the visit was; and a “cumulative” perspective that enquired about the experience as a whole. During the interviews two main themes arose in relation to the experience of hosting and visiting in Guildford. There was a clear distinction among participants between their social experience of the visit and their touristic or physical experience of the city, which is in line with Le-Bel et al. (2004) classification of tourist
experiences as: sensory/physical, social, emotional, and intellectual, although, in this case participants emphasised the first two and did not reflect deeper if their experiences were emotional or intellectual.

In terms of the number of items required to measure experience satisfaction, there is also division among authors, however, according to the literature (Li et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2013) most studies have tended to use single questions to measure overall satisfaction (e.g. on a five-point scale, what is your overall satisfaction with this visit?) for example utilised in Assaker et al., (2011), Bekk et al. (2016), Bigne et al. (2005) and Chen & Tsai (2007). The critics of this method argue that similar to destination image and destination knowledge, experience satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that requires multiple items to obtain an accurate measurement (Song et al., 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). For example, Li et al. (2012) and Song et al. (2012) used a 21 item’s scale that included questions that ranged from hotels and other services evaluation to immigration and transport experiences. Several of these items do not apply to the context of this study nor to the aim to explore the influence hosts have in the visitors’ experience.

As a result, based on the literature discussed above it was decided to take an ‘outcome’ and ‘cumulative’ approach to measuring visitors’ overall experience. This approach was confirmed by the findings from the round of interviews discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.2 - Tourist and social experiences) that suggested that VFR visitors made a clear distinction of their touristic with the place and their social experience with their host. Consequently, three questions were included to evaluate visitors’ experience: a question asking visitors to rate their overall experience, another question that asked them to rate their social experience with their host and finally a question asking them to rate their touristic experience in Guildford.

6.6 - Foundations for the relationships between the variables

Most authors argue that hosts play a crucial part in the VFR experience having a very strong influence on the visitors’ behaviour (Humbracht, 2015; Lehto et al., 2001; McKercher, 1994;
Meis et al., 1995; Pavolic et al., 2014). Literature has suggested that hosts can become ambassadors of the destination (Backer, 2014; Backer & Hay, 2015; Stylidis et al., 2015), a trusted source of information before and during the trip (Backer, 2009; Murphy et al., 2007) and pseudo-tourist-guides who decide how to show the destination and provide an interpretation of the place (Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Humbracht, 2015; Morrison et al., 2000). Therefore, it could be expected that hosts have a strong influence on their visitors’ experience of the destination, however, there is a lack of empirical research that directly tests this influence and there is no specific theory or study that can accurately explain these relationships nor the relations between the four constructs under research.

This thesis proposes a very novel question in VFR literature and overall in tourism research. After a thorough and wide review of the literature there are very few cases where researchers have explored the influence of one individual into another one measuring specific characteristics of both of them, therefore, there is no direct literature that could explain the way the three chosen hosts’ characteristics might influence their visitors’ experience. The closest cases to explain these relationships come from literature about VFR marketing campaigns, literature about tour-guides and specific literature about how these four constructs influence each other within one person and not between different individuals. The figure below provides a diagram of the three groups of literature that can help explain the influence of hosts’ destination knowledge, destination image and motivation to host in their visitors’ experience.

Figure 6.1. Literature to explain the relationships between the variables
This section presents a theoretical foundation for the understanding of the relationships (and in particular the direction of the relationships) between the four constructs under investigation and brings that information to the context of VFR and this study. Consequently, this section presents an extensive review of literature about VFR marketing campaigns; Tour-guiding and its link to the act of hosting in VFR; and an introduction to the various literature that has looked into the four constructs’ relationship within one person. The full operational model is provided below for the reader to better understand the context of the relationship between the variables.

![Figure 6.2. Full operational model](image)

### 6.6.1 - VFR marketing campaigns

The literature about VFR marketing campaigns provides good indicators of how DMOs and other tourism practitioners expect these constructs to influence each other when measured in hosts and their visitors. VFR literature is generally scarce (a total of only 57 articles according to Yousuf & Backer (2015) and VFR literature about marketing campaigns is scarcer. There are only four articles and one book chapter that have looked into the topic, by Morgan et al. (2003) who discussed the case of Wales’ homecoming campaign; Morrison and Hay (2010) that examined Scotland’s homecoming campaign; Backer (2014) who examined three cases in Victoria Australia (Melbourne, V/line, and Mildura); Backer and Hay (2015) book chapter that summarised previous research evaluating all the cases mentioned earlier plus
two new cases from Ireland and Tourism Australia/British Airways; and by Morrison et al. (2000) who surveyed 221 DMOs about their marketing strategies towards the VFR segment. In addition to these publications, four other VFR marketing campaigns were evaluated for this research these are: “I love Frankston” from Victoria Australia, “it feels right like home” in Newfoundland Canada, “I know just the place” from Queensland Australia and “London from Londoners” here in the United Kingdom.

The first important aspect that arose from the evaluation of all of those eleven VFR marketing campaigns and 221 DMOs surveyed by Morrison et al. (2000), is the fact that all of the VFR marketing campaigns have a strong focus in at least one of the following three goals:

1. Educate residents (provide tourist knowledge) about the destination’s attractions.
2. Improve residents’ destination image and attitude towards their place of residence.
3. Motivate residents to attract visitors (use them as pull factor) and become “ambassadors” for their city.

Some of the campaigns mentioned earlier have focused in all these three aspects, such as, Mildura’s “be a tourist in your own town”, and Melbourne’s “discover your own backyard” and “London for Londoners. These campaigns have a strong message to educate the residents about the destination, motivate them to attract their friends and family to visit and improve residents’ attitude towards the destination. For example, Mildura’s tourism manager stated that “there could be nothing stronger than your friends, relatives and mates asking you to visit your town” (in Backer 2014, pp. 5) which denotes their belief in the power of residents to attract VFR travellers. Likewise, the manager argued that “there’s no stronger influence (on travellers) than word of mouth recommendations from proud and knowledgeable local ambassadors” (in Backer 2014, pp. 5) which points out at the importance put on educating residents to improve their attitude towards the destination and spread it as ambassadors.

In the case of Melbourne’s “discover your own backyard”, Destination Melbourne stated that residents were seen as “gatekeepers and the greatest source of influence over the behaviour of VFR travellers, and the hosts’ local knowledge can influence the VFR experience much more than any destination marketing campaign” (Backer, 2014, pp. 6). This comment clearly
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describes the importance tourism marketers give to hosts within the VFR market, and thus, they argue that “local government (themselves) is the best organisation to educate residents on becoming better hosts ... as it is local residents who create the VFR experience” (in Backer 2014, pp. 6). This again shows practitioners’ belief that the most effective way to influence the VFR market us through “educating residents on becoming better hosts”, which implies that the act of “hosting” can be improved through education.

The other campaigns mentioned earlier focused their efforts in one or two of the three goals mentioned above, for example Scotland, Wales, Ireland, V/Line, Tourism Australia and Newfoundland had a specific goal only on using the residents and a pull factor to attract visitors. In the cases of Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Newfoundland there was a strong message to “come back home” (Morrison et al., 2000, pp. 113) while in Tourism Australia’s/British Airways campaign the main aim was to use British immigrants in Australia to attract their friends and family and in Victoria’s V/Line “guilt trips” the residents of small towns outside of Melbourne were used to make their families feel “guilty” for not visiting. On the other hand in the ‘I love Frankston’ campaign the main emphasis was on improving residents attitude towards the destination as mentioned by the manager “it has been instrumental in helping change residents’ perception of Frankston” (Walker, 2016, pp. 1) and in Queensland “I know just the place” residents are used as ambassadors as explained by the local DMO “only locals know where to best enjoy (Queensland) and through this campaign they will share that knowledge with the world” (Tourism Queensland, 2016, pp. 1).

After an extensive review of the literature it was not possible to find any VFR marketing campaign that did not apply one of these three goals, which implies a firm belief in tourism practice that these are the most important elements to address when conducting marketing to VFR travellers. Morrison et al. (2000) in their analysis of 221 DMOs marketing approach to VFR confirmed these findings and emphasised the fact that DMOs most common approach is to educate residents and motivate them to encourage visits. However, in-spite of the wide use of these initiatives none of the articles that have analysed these marketing campaigns was able to provide empirical proof of its effectiveness apart from anecdotal evidence produced by the same DMOs that managed those campaigns (Backer, 2014). Therefore, the marketers in charge of these campaigns relied purely on common sense and the belief that
the market will react positively to these messages because of the logical argument behind them.

### 6.6.2 - Tour guiding and the act of hosting friends and relatives

Literature about tour guiding provides more specific insights into the way locals can influence tourists’ experience at the destination. This is useful because VFR literature has pointed-out several times to the similarity between tour-guides and VFR hosts (Brocx, 2003; Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Humbracht, 2015; Morrison et al., 2000; Shani & Uriely, 2012). For example, Dutt & Ninov (2017, pp. 263) in their study of VFR expatriates in Dubai noted that hosts “often felt obliged to act as a guide” as one of their participants explained “when they [participant’s family] were here, I was like a team leader of a small group of people to show them around the city and show them the touristic aspects”. Similarly, Humbracht (2015, pp. 649) called the hosts “semi-autonomous tourist agencies”, Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 17) named the “destination experience mediators” and Morrison et al. (2000, pp. 111) found that several DMO managers saw “locals are unpaid tourist guides”.

According to Reisinger & Steiner (2006, pp. 482), tour guides have been described as “information givers, sources of knowledge, mentors, surrogate parents, pathfinders, leaders, mediators, culture brokers and entertainers”, which already sounds similar to the description of VFR hosts. Cohen (1985) argued that tour guides had four main functions: instrumental, social, interactionary, and communicative. The instrumental function refers to solving tourists’ practical needs to experience the destination, such as transport and access. Social and interactionary functions focus on improving tourists’ social experience and the communicative function focuses on providing information about the destination, selecting what to see and interpreting it. Therefore, it is possible to argue that tour guides influence tourists is mainly associated with providing procedural knowledge (what to see and how to access it), factual knowledge about the destination (subjective interpretation) and a social role as leaders of the group, which is very similar to hosts’ roles in the VFR experience.
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This is a useful similarity to VFR hosting, especially when looking at the impact that destination knowledge might have on visitors’ experience of Guildford, as this is a question that tour guide literature has already investigated in detail. Under this context according to Zander et al. (2016, pp. 76) tour guides’ level of knowledge “is particularly important to establish a link between people and place”, as well as, having a positive impact on tourists’ satisfaction with the destination. Accordingly, Dahles (2002), Reisinger and Steiner (2006), and Zhang & Chow (2004) tour guides can also have a strong influence on visitors’ image of the destination which therefore could be used to assume that also hosts’ level of knowledge should have a positive impact on their visitors’ experience and destination image.

6.6.3 - Constructs’ relationships when measured using single individuals

There is a significant amount of literature that has looked at the relationship between these four constructs (destination knowledge, destination image, motivation and experience/satisfaction), however, these studies have always measured the constructs within single individuals. For example, a large number of authors have looked at the influence that destination image has on experience/satisfaction (e.g. Assaker et al., 2010; Bigne et al., 2005; Chi & Qu, 2008; del Bosque & San Martin, 2008; Faullant et al., 2008; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). In the same way authors such as, Baloglu (2000), Baloglu & McCleary (1999), Beerli & Martin (2004), Frias et al. (2008) have evaluated the influence that destination knowledge (most often information sources) have on destination image within one person. Motivation to host has not been measured before, however, Schroeder (1996) and Stylidis et al. (2007) measured residents’ motivation to recommend the destination finding a positive link with their destination image. Additionally, there are several articles that have tried to measure the influence of motivation to travel in several variables (e.g. Jang et al., 2009; Mansfeld, 1992; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Ritchie et al., 2010). These studies are further discussed in the following section together with the hypotheses for the second phase of the research.
6.7 - Relationships between the variables

Based on the literature presented along the chapter and in particular the previous section (6.6 - Foundations for the relationships between the variables), this section provides the rationale for the direction of the relationship between the variables. Together with this justification, the section also presents all the hypotheses for the second phase of the research. Accordingly, the section is organised in four subsections beginning with the relationships between hosts’ destination knowledge and the other constructs; continuing with the relationships between hosts and visitors’ destination image and the other constructs; and finishing with the relationships between motivation to host and visitors’ variables.

The full operational model including each of the hypotheses is provided below for the reader to better situate them in this section. The constructs in squares represent non-latent variables that were introduced sequentially to test for their mediation effects, this is further discussed in the next chapter (chapter 7 - Methodology for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage).
6.7.1 - Relationship between hosts’ knowledge and the other variables

As noted earlier in section 3.3, residents’ knowledge has been pointed-out as instrumental for improving VFR travellers’ experience of the destination. This has been mentioned by VFR marketing campaign managers, tour guides research and VFR literature. For example, Nickerson & Bendix (1991) in their study of VFR in South Dakota found that visitors had a low participation in tourism activities which they attributed to residents’ lack of knowledge of the local attractions, and therefore, recommended to educate the residents. Likewise, Dutt & Ninov (2017) in their study of expatriates in Dubai argued that residents’ knowledge of the destination (in this case expatriates) was a crucial element that affected their visitors’ experience of it. These findings were confirmed during the interviews conducted for the first stage of the research. Consequently, based on the interviews and previous research three questions were developed to measure hosts’ subjective and experiential knowledge of Guildford. Question nine and ten in the questionnaire (see appendix A) asked participants to describe from one to five their level of knowledge of Guildford and its attractions, these two questions aimed to measure hosts’ overall subjective knowledge. Question eleven asked participants to read a list of attractions in Guildford and mark the ones they have attended. This last question aimed to evaluate participants’ experiential knowledge of the destination which also provides insights of their procedural and objective knowledge about Guildford.

Based on these questions four hypotheses were developed to measure the relationships between hosts’ destination knowledge and the other constructs. The first two hypotheses focus on how hosts’ knowledge influence their visitors’ experience and destination image of Guildford, and the last two hypotheses evaluate the influence of hosts’ knowledge on their own destination image and motivation to host. A diagram of these relationships cut-up from the overall operational model is provided below:
In relation to the first two hypotheses tour-guiding literature becomes valuable here because it evaluates the impact of hosts or guides’ level of knowledge on travellers’ experience of the destination. Zander et al. (2016) argued that tour guides level of knowledge has a positive impact on tourists’ experience of the destination. Likewise, Dahles (2002) in her qualitative study of the politics of tour-guiding in Indonesia suggested that tour-guides can also have a strong influence on travellers’ destination image. VFR marketing managers have also argued in favour to educate residents about the destination’s attractions to motivate them to attract more visits and improve the destination image and experience of their visitors (Backer, 2014; Backer & Hay, 2015; Morrison et al., 2000). Accordingly, Morrison et al. (2000) in their study of 221 DMO marketing managers in three continents found that the most common way to conduct marketing in the VFR segment is by educating the residents about the destination’s attractions and stimulate them to encourage visits. Consequently, Mildura’s marketing manager for example stated that “there’s no stronger influence (on travellers) than word of mouth recommendations from proud and knowledgeable local ambassadors” (in Backer 2014, pp. 5). These findings were also observed during the interviews in particular in relation with preparing the visits and learning about the destination before receiving visits. As a result, it could be expected that hosts level of knowledge would have a positive influence in their visitors experience and destination image of Guildford, and thus, the first two hypotheses are:
Hypothesis 1: Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their visitors’ experience.

Hypothesis 2: Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their visitors’ destination image

The next two hypotheses focus on the relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge, their own destination image of the destination and their motivation to host. VFR marketing managers have repetitively argued in favour of improving residents’ destination knowledge in order to “sell” them the destination and improve their perception of it (Backer, 2014; Backer & Hay, 2015). For example, Frankston Mayor James Dooley stated that “I Love Frankston’ (campaign) sells Frankston to people who are already in love with Frankston,” (in Walker, 2016, pp. 1), likewise Destination Melbourne argued that “for the campaign (“Melbourne: discover your own backyard”) to succeed it needed buy-in from locals, and that nothing works better in tourism marketing than word-of-mouth advertising, in this case ‘selling’ the destination to the residents” (in Backer 2014, pp. 6).

In the same way, literature about information sources in tourism suggests that the way tourists obtain knowledge about a destination has a direct impact on travellers’ destination image formation (Baloglu, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Frias et al., 2008). For example, Baloglu & McCleary (1999, pp. 874) stated that information is “a force which influences the formation of perceptions” and that “the type, quality, and quantity of information would determine the type of destination image is likely to develop”. Murphy et al. (2007, pp. 517) in their study of VFR Word of Mouth (WOM) versus other travellers WOM also argued that the information tourists obtain about the destination “contributes to the development of destination images”. As a result, it could be expected that hosts’ level of knowledge about the destination would have a positive influence in their own destination image which leads to hypothesis number three:

Hypothesis 3: Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their own destination image.

In terms of motivation to host, the concept has not been measured as such in the past, therefore, there is only evidence from VFR marketing campaigns, qualitative research and similar concepts to suggest that hosts’ level of knowledge will motivate them to act as hosts.
The clearest example comes from VFR marketing campaigns which have been heavily built under the idea that residents will feel motivated to host visitors once they know more about the local attractions. This is the case of campaigns such as Mildura’s “be a tourist in your own town”, Melbourne’s “discover your own backyard” and “London for Londoners”. For example, by the end of the campaign Mildura’s marketing manager argued that “after they (residents) became much more aware of attractions of the town, acted as knowledgeable tourism marketing ambassadors by not only encouraging the original visit, but also in encouraging their visitors to make return trips.” (in Backer 2014, pp. 6). Within the context of VFR visits Dutt & Ninov (2017) provided qualitative evidence that hosts tend to learn about the destination after every visit which improves their attitude towards hosting and motivate them to encourage visits. Consequently, based on these findings it could be expected that hosts’ level of knowledge should positively influence their motivation to host which leads to hypothesis number four:

**Hypothesis 4**: Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their motivation to host.

### 6.7.2 - Relationship between hosts’ destination image and other variables

Destination image has been pointed out as a crucial element and sometimes the most important attribute to influence travellers’ decision-making process, travel experience and post-trip evaluation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Phillips et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). Consequently, it has been extensively researched in tourism during the last 45 years (Pike, 2002). Several authors have conducted research aiming to better conceptualise the construct on its own and the way it is formed in tourists’ minds (see section 3.2, e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gallarza et al., 2002). However, destination image has also been measured extensively as an independent and dependent variable in relation to other constructs such as: satisfaction, perceived risk, destination attitude, self-image, destination and brand personality, perceived value, service quality, involvement, place attachment, novelty seeking and travel motivation (Fuchs, & Reichel, 2011; George & George, 2012; Lee, 2009; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Yuksel &
Bilim, 2009). As a result, according to Dolnicar & Grün (2013, pp. 3) destination image is “among the most frequently measured constructs” in tourism research.

The importance of destination image in the tourist experience was also noted during the interviews of the first phase of this research as one of the key elements that influenced hosts and visitors’ behaviour and experience of Guildford (further discussed in chapter six). Literature presented in section 6.2 discussed the wide-ranging nature of ‘destination image’ and argued that the construct is much broader than just a visual representation of a place including ideas, beliefs and opinions. As a result, three questions were developed that asked participants for their overall opinion of Guildford their opinion of it as a place to live and their opinion of Guildford’s tourist attractions. Based on these questions four hypotheses were developed to measure the relationships between hosts’ destination image and the other variables. The first two focus on how hosts’ perception of Guildford influence their visitors’ experience and destination image of it and the last two hypotheses evaluate hosts’ destination image impact on their motivation to host and their visitors’ destination image impact on their experience. A guiding diagram of these relationships cut-up from the overall operational model is provided below:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 6.5. Relationship between image and other variables

Although, destination image has been widely researched, there is no investigation that has measured destination image in one person and tested how this might influence the destination image and experience of somebody else (e.g. hosts and visitors). In other words, there is no research that has measured until what extent destination image could be
transferred from one person to another through interaction, which presents an interesting gap in tourism research. The closer literature that has looked at this problem has focused on the impact of destination image on aggregated terms (e.g. e-WOM); or unilaterally for example measuring travellers’ destination image and asking them about their information sources (e.g. media, friends & relatives, others), however, without reaching and testing both sources. In the context of this study the closest example that can share some light about the direction of the relationship between host’s destination image, motivation to host, their visitors’ satisfaction and destination image is the literature about VFR marketing campaigns.

VFR campaigns have relied heavily on the idea that hosts’ perception of the destination will positively influence their visitors’ destination image before and during the visits. Previous to the visit, VFR marketing campaigns assume that hosts’ positive perception will motivate hosts to attract visitors and spread positive comments that will generate more visits. For example, according to Mildura’s “be a tourist in your own town” campaign manager, one of the reasons that originated the campaign was the “perception that, during the drought years, residents were talking down the town; effectively dissuading friends and relatives from visiting” (in Backer 2014, pp. 5). During the visits, VFR marketing campaigns have assumed that hosts’ destination image will positively affect their visitors’ perception and experience through the interpretation of the place they will provide to them (similar to tour guides interpretation).

As stated by Queensland’s marketing manager improving residents’ destination image “plays to our strengths, focusing on our natural assets and unforgettable experiences, as told by Queenslanders themselves” (Tourism Queensland, 2016, pp. 1).

In aggregated terms however, there are several studies that have evaluated the way travellers and residents affect the destination image and experience of other travellers through WOM. For example, Morgan et al. (2003) found that negative WOM can have a strong impact on destination image as “dissatisfied visitors spread unflattering comments related to their experiences” (in Jalilvand et al., 2012, pp. 136). Likewise, authors like Echtner & Ritchie (2003), Tasci & Gartner (2007) and Balakrishnan et al. (2011) have found a similar positive relationship between WOM and destination image. In terms of information sources, Murphy et al. (2007) and Hanlan & Kelly (2005) investigated the impact that different information sources had on travellers’ destination image obtaining mixed results. Murphy et al. (2007)
found no difference on travellers’ destination image between WOM from friend and relatives versus other travellers, and Hanlan & Kelly (2005) confirmed previous findings that friends and relatives had a direct positive impact on travellers’ destination image compared to other sources (mainly different types of media). Accordingly, Confente’s (2015) literature review about WOM studies stated that there is agreement among researchers that WOM has a direct positive influence on travellers’ destination image.

From another perspective, Schroeder’s (1996) study in North Dakota found that residents’ destination image positively influenced their willingness to recommend the state to potential visitors and suggested that “that improving the residents’ image could help make residents better ambassadors for their state or region” (Schroeder, 1996, pp73). Likewise, Stylidis et al., (2017) found similar results using both multi-item and a single item question asking for residents’ overall destination image. Additionally, Lee & Lai (2018), who evaluated the relationship between residents’ satisfaction and identity with their city and their intention to recommend their family and friends to visit found a positive link between the two. According to Stylidis (2012, pp. 84), “overall image of the place involves aspects that are related to residents' everyday life” that is also associated to the concept of community or place satisfaction. Similarly, according to Marine-Roig (2015), place identity has a significant role in the construction of destination image; and residents’ intention to recommend their relations to visit is also an important part of hosts’ motivation to attract visits. Consequently, based on the literature discussed above the first three hypotheses of this section are:

**Hypothesis 5**: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their visitors’ experience.

**Hypothesis 6**: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their visitors’ destination image.

**Hypothesis 7**: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their motivation to host.

The last hypothesis in this section focuses on the influence that visitors’ destination image has on their own satisfaction with the visiting experience. This question has been extensively researched in tourism literature by authors, such as, Assaker et al. (2010), Bigne et al. (2005), Chi & Qu (2008), del Bosque & San Martin (2008), Faullant et al. (2008), Prayag & Ryan (2012);
and there is wide agreement among researchers that destination image has a direct positive effect on tourists’ satisfaction. Consequently, the last hypothesis of this section is:

**Hypothesis 8**: Visitors’ destination image positively influences their experience.

### 6.7.3 - Relationship between motivation to host and visitor’s variables

The concept of motivation has been widely researched in the social sciences as it has been pointed out as a key antecedent of behaviour (Lu, 2011). Accordingly, motivation has been defined as the “driving force behind all behaviour” (Prebensen, 2013, pp. 255) and as “psychological/biological needs and wants, including integral forces that arouse, direct, and integrate a person’s behaviour” (Yoon 2005, pp. 46). In the tourism sphere, motivation has been mainly researched as motivation to travel by authors like Dann’s (1977), Jaapar et al. (2017), Lu (2011) and Yoon (2005). Motivation to host however, is a new concept developed for this study, and thus, has not been measured in the past. The concept was born out of the information provided by hosts and visitors during the interviews conducted for the first stage of the research, as well as, qualitative VFR literature that has suggested the importance of hosts’ motivation to encourage and receive visitors in the VFR experience (Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Shani & Uriely, 2012).

The concept of hosting is crucial in the VFR experience as it implies encouraging visits, spending time with visitors and taking care of them. These topics are discussed along several qualitative VFR studies, such as, Capistrano (2017), Duval (2003), Dutt & Ninov (2017), Humbracht (2015) and Shani & Uriely (2012). All these studies focus on the relationship between hosts and guests and at some level discuss residents’ behaviour as hosts without explicitly discussing residents’ motivation to host. The only studies that provided a closer look at hosts’ motivations are Dutt & Ninov (2017) and Shani & Uriely (2012). The former study analysed the VFR phenomenon in a highly attractive seaside destination in Israel (Eilat) where hosts experienced all the problems that implied hosting many visitors and expressed their “de-motivation” to host. Likewise, Dutt & Ninov (2017) in their study of expatriates in Dubai
found that hosts often felt a “duty” to receive and look after their visitors which could be translated into a motivation or de-motivation to host.

During the first stage of the research this became an important theme throughout the interviews and two more specific aspects of the motivation to host arose, these are: hosts’ motivation to encourage visits (act as a pull factor) and hosts motivation to show the destination that could be linked to hosts behaving as tour-guides as seen in Dutt & Ninov (2017) and Humbracht (2015). Consequently, two questions were included in the questionnaire that aimed to measure these aspects. Based on these questions two hypotheses were developed to test the level of influence that motivation to host has on visitors’ experience and destination image of Guildford. A guiding diagram of these relationships taken from the overall operational model is provided below:

![Figure 6.6. Relationship between motivation to host and other variables](image)

Since this is a new concept there is no literature that can accurately explain the direction of the relationship between motivation to host and visitors’ experience and destination image. However, there is evidence from VFR marketing campaigns to suggest that motivation to host should have a positive influence on visitors’ destination image and satisfaction with their experience of Guildford. As noted earlier in section 6.6.1 VFR marketing campaign have a strong belief in residents’ power to attract visitors and become local ambassadors of the destination for which the host needs to be motivated. Similarly, tour-guides literature has mentioned the influence that guides, and thus also VFR hosts, have on visitors’ destination image and experience. Although, there is no research that has looked into guides’ motivation to work, it could be expected that if residents are motivated to guide/host, their interpretation of the destination would improve, as well as, the quality and quantity of attractions they show to their visitors, which in turn would lead to a better destination image.
Chapter 6. Theoretical framework for the 2nd stage

and experience of their visitors. Accordingly, Zatori et al. (2017, pp. 7) argued that “host attitude is one of the most important value factors for the guests … their attitude, the destination characteristics and local industries play a crucial role in VFRs tourist experience formation”.

These findings were also observed during the first phase of the research which suggested that hosts motivation to host was clearly influential in triggering visits and improving the visitors’ experience and destination image of Guildford. As a result, the last two hypotheses are:

**Hypothesis 9**: Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ experience.

**Hypothesis 10**: Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ destination image.

### 6.7.4 - Motivation to host, number of visitor’s and the circular loop

The final part of the model involves the introduction of hosts’ average number of visits received per year as a single variable to evaluate two features: first the power hosts have to attract visits and secondly how they learn about the destination from participating in these visits. First in terms of attracting visitors it has already being noted throughout this chapter that most DMO managers believe that residents have a strong power to encourage visitation. This was noted by Morrison et al. (2000) who surveyed 221 DMO managers and concluded that the common ways to target the VFR market are by teaching residents about the local attractions and motivating them to encourage visits. Consequently, VFR marketing campaigns have had a strong focus on convincing residents to attract visitors, for example, Mildura’s (Victoria, Australia) VFR campaign manager stated that “after the residents became much more aware of the town’s attractions, acted as knowledgeable tourism marketing ambassadors by not only encouraging the original visit, but also in encouraging their visitors to make return trips” (in Backer 2014, pp. 6). Likewise, Victoria’s V/Line “Guilt Trips” also focused on pushing residents to attract their family and friends to visit but in this case using the emotional link that connect them. This was done by evoking to the guilt that people feel
when disappointing a close family member, since the campaign focused mainly on teaching older residents how to make their sons and daughters feel guilty for not visiting them.

Secondly, in terms of learning about the destination, according to Dutt et al. (2015) article “the effects of VFR on expatriates’ destination knowledge”, hosts tend to learn about the destination after every visit because of preparing for it but also simply by joining in the activities. Likewise, Griffin (2017) in his study about the role of VFR in immigrants’ adaptation to a new country, found that the experience of receiving visitors widened the knowledge that new residents have of the destination. Accordingly, these findings were also observed with students during the round of interviews who emphasised that by receiving visitors they (the residents) got to see the destination with different eyes (tourist/visitors’ eyes) which widened their understanding of Guildford. These findings are further discussed in Chapter six. As a result, based on the findings discussed above two hypotheses were developed:

**Hypothesis 11:** Motivation to host positively influences the number of visits they received

**Hypothesis 12:** The number of visits hosts received, positively influences their destination knowledge

A guiding diagram of these relationships taken from the operational model is provided below in Figure 6.7. The dotted arrows show relationships inside the circular loop already discussed in the previous hypotheses.
As seen in Figure 6.7 the introduction of number of visits created a circular loop between the host’s variables, which could be seen as a “virtuous circle” of VFR visitation, where an improvement in any of these variables leads to an increase in the other variables. Therefore, creating an integrated system where all elements are important. Thus, for example an external factor like a family visit could lead to an improvement of host’s destination knowledge, destination image and motivation to host which could potentially lead to receiving more visits. This can occur with any of these variables, for instance external factors that improve hosts’ destination knowledge (e.g. receiving tourist material at home or visiting a new area of the city) would lead to an improvement of all the other variables; or comments from other residents could improve the host’s destination image with the same consequences. This is a virtuous circle and not a vicious one because, although residents’ destination image and motivation to host could decrease, it could be argued that is not possible to decrease one’s level of knowledge or total number of visits. Therefore, the circle can only move to increase the variables or remain still. This could be a potential reason behind the results from Hernandez et al. (2007) and Lee’s & Lai (2018) who found a positive link between residents’ number of years living at the destination and their motivation to attract visitors. This has important consequences for DMOs because it means that any effort put into improving these elements could last for longer and have further positive implications.
6.8 - Summary

This chapter began by providing a theoretical overview of the main four constructs under research, which included a discussion of their definition, background, its main characteristics and how it has been used and measured in the past. Accordingly, the first construct discussed was destination image that in this thesis is understood as the “subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist” (Bigne et al. 2005, pp. 607). This “subjective interpretation” includes feelings, perceptions, ideas, beliefs, worldviews and impressions of the destination which in this study are summarized as participants’ opinion of Guildford. Later section 4.3 discussed the four main views of destination knowledge existing in literature, which are: objective/declarative, subjective, experiential and procedural. Based on the information it was decided to directly measure subjective knowledge, seen by Wong & Yeh, (2009) as better to understand tourism behaviour, and experiential knowledge which includes objective and procedural knowledge by implication. The third construct discussed was ‘motivation to host’ which is described as the motivation to encourage visits (pull visitors) and hosts’ motivation to show the destination (guide). The forth construct is experience that was seen as a non-transactional experience and does not include visitors’ expectations taking an ‘outcome’ and ‘cumulative’ (the whole experience) approach to the term.

Once the constructs were theoretically underpinned the chapter presented literature to support the direction of their relationships which included literature about VFR marketing campaigns, tour-guiding, the act of hosting and several other studies related to the matter. At the end all this information was used to provide a rationale for the direction of the relationship between the constructs that also included all the hypotheses for the second phase of the research. A summary of these literature together with each hypothesis is provided below in Table 6.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Literature Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Hosts’ Knowledge -&gt; Hosts’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>Backer 2014; Backer &amp; Hay 2015; Baloglu 2000; Beerli &amp; Martin 2004; Frias et al. 2008; Murphy et al. 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Hosts’ Knowledge -&gt; Motivation to host</td>
<td>Backer 2014; Dutt &amp; Ninov 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hosts’ Dest Image -&gt; Visitors’ experience</td>
<td>Backer 2014; Backer &amp; Hay 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hosts’ Destination Image -&gt; Visitors’ Destination Image</td>
<td>Balakrishnan et al. 2011; Confente’s 2015; Echtner &amp; Ritchie 2003; Hanlan &amp; Kelly 2005; Morgan et al. 2003; Murphy et al. 2007; Tasci &amp; Gartner 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hosts’ Dest Image -&gt; Motivation to host</td>
<td>Schroeder 1996; Stylidis et al. 2017; Lee &amp; Lai 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Visitors’ Destination image -&gt; Visitors’ experience</td>
<td>Assaker et al. 2010; Bigne et al. 2005; Chi &amp; Qu 2008; del Bosque &amp; San Martin 2008; Faullant et al. 2008; Prayag &amp; Ryan 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Motivation to host -&gt; Visitors’ experience</td>
<td>Backer 2014; Capistrano 2017; Duval 2003; Dutt &amp; Ninov 2017; Humbracht 2015; Shani &amp; Uriely 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Motivation to host -&gt; Visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>Backer 2014; Capistrano 2017; Duval 2003; Dutt &amp; Ninov 2017; Humbracht 2015; Shani &amp; Uriely 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Motivation to host -&gt; Number of visits</td>
<td>Backer 2014; Backer &amp; Hay 2015; Morrison et al. 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Number of visits -&gt; Dest. knowledge</td>
<td>Dutt &amp; Ninov 2017; Dutt et al. 2015; Griffin 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. Summary of the literature used to support the direction of the relationships
Chapter 7. Methodology for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage

This chapter presents the main practical aspects of the methodology for the second stage of the research. The methodology for the whole of the project and the first stage have already been discussed in chapter four. As explained in the introduction of the thesis and in detail in chapter four, the sequential mixed methods approach chosen for this project can be seen as a ‘multi-strategy’ research composed of two separate studies that support each other sequentially. Therefore, it was necessary to discuss the findings from the first stage of the research to present the theoretical framework, and thus, the methodology chosen for the second stage of the research. As a result, this chapter describes in detail the research design process and rationale, which includes the data collection and questionnaire development. The chapter finished with a thorough account of the data analysis techniques that is mainly composed by all the statistical choices associated to Structure Equation Model (SEM) analysis but also includes data entry, descriptive statistics and a detailed discussion of the validity and reliability of the data.

7.1 - Research design

Finding a suitable way to survey both hosts and their visitors is not simple and involves many difficulties, therefore, several options were considered. First, based on the experience of Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) in Swansea, collecting the questionnaires online seemed to be the most effective way to survey students, however, seemed very challenging to also convince their visitors to fill-out their questionnaire. Additionally, the University of Surrey does not allow access to their database to sample and contact students as done at the University of Swansea by the authors. It was also thought place ads around campus and offer a reward for participating (online or in paper) but it was not feasible due to the lack of available resources and the fact that this might also become an incentive to cheat in the survey. Another potential option was to leave paper forms of the questionnaires at the
students' rooms in their halls of residence, so their visitors could fill them out whenever they visit and post them back or just leave them at the reception of their halls. Though this option was not tested because of the potential bias that visitors won’t provide their real opinion or their hosts could fill-out both questionnaires for them.

Lastly approaching participants at touristic spots in the city (e.g. the castle) was deemed to be too difficult and time consuming. As mentioned in the literature review chapter, one of the difficulties of conducting research in VFR is that they tend to easily blend with the local population making them hard to recognize (Morrison et al., 2000). Additionally, after evaluating some of the touristic spots in the city, very few groups of students’ and their visitors were seen per hour, which would have made the goal of collecting around 400 questionnaires barely impossible. Therefore, after a thorough evaluation of all the possible options to collect the questionnaires, it was decided that the most effective way was to run the survey during graduation periods where there is a large agglomeration of students and their visitors. During these periods, especially before and after collecting the graduation dressing, hosts and visitors are together, they have spare time while they wait for the ceremony, are accessible in campus and are easy to recognize because hosts are wearing the graduation gown.

Although, in terms of control and accessibility, graduation week was clearly the most effective, it also presented some caveats which are mainly related to the special type of visit that is a graduation. The problems are mostly twofold: first the focus of the visit is not on experiencing Guildford but on celebrating the graduate’s achievement that is a very special occasion; and secondly the sample of hosts (only final year students) and their visitors (mostly relatives) is not representative of the whole population of students and their visitors.

In relation to the particular occasion that is graduation, first it must be noticed that VFR visits are not always for visiting the destination, are often special occasions on its own and commonly occur on special days, such as, birthdays or anniversaries (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007). Therefore, although graduation it could be argued that is different, within the context of VFR it might not be extremely out of the norm. The occasion might have led to participants being in a better mood than during other visits, which could have affected their answers.
positively. At first site this might not be a serious problem because it could be argued that all the participants are under the same condition (graduation), which could nullified it effect on the relationship between the variables (if all variables received the same treatment – e.g. they are all multiplied by ‘graduation mood’ - the relationship between them remains the same).

On the one hand, for the graduates many of them have recently moved out of Guildford, which combined with the happiness of the occasion, could lead to an idealistic view of the city. Likewise, for many of their parents this is a very special occasion and sometimes the last time they will visit the graduates in Guildford, which could also led to more positive answers.

On the other hand, for some of the younger visitors or anyone who is less comfortable during these occasions it could have led to more negative answers. Consequently, this condition might not have affected all people in the same way that could eventually distort the results.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to measure the level of distortion that graduation could have had over the results unless the study would be replicated under different circumstances (see section 10.3 limitations and future research).

The second aspect is that the composition of the visits during graduation is might trend to be different than during other visits, having a larger percentage of parents and close family members. This was also observed during this study, however, based on previous research presented in section 8.1.1, by most VFR visits come normally from close relatives and in particularly within parents/children relationships. This makes this sample just slightly over the usual values of parents seen in previous studies, this topic is further discussed in terms of the representativeness of the sample in section 8.1.1.

Yet in spite of the problems associated with collecting data during graduation discussed above, it was considered that the advantages outweighed it disadvantages and with no other feasible alternative it was the best method to achieve the project’s goals. Additionally, it was noted that most graduates lived in Guildford for approximately three years which gave them enough time to feel as ‘residents’, while first and second year students did not get that experience and were seen as less useful for the study’s goals. Therefore, the sampling population was all students who completed a degree at the University of Surrey and had lived in Guildford.
7.1.1 - Data collection

As a result, the sampling frame of the survey were the three main graduation periods at the University of Surrey in July 2015, April 2016 and July 2016, which are composed of three to four days within one week (graduation week). During each of these days three graduation ceremonies are performed, the first ceremony starts at 10am and is followed by another ceremony at 12:30 and a final one at 3pm. Within each ceremony approximately 150 to 200 students graduate who invite on average 2.9 visitors per graduate; consequently, around 600 to 700 people (including graduates) attended each of the ceremonies (for a detailed example of July 2015 graduation please see Table 7.1 below). As a result, approximately 2,000 students graduate during each of these graduation weeks and the graduates invite in total approximately 6,000 people to their ceremonies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceremony</th>
<th>Day &amp; Faculty</th>
<th>Number of tickets (incl. graduates)</th>
<th>Visitors per graduate</th>
<th>Number of graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Faculty of Business Economics &amp; Law</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>786</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total day</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Faculty of Engineering Physics and Sciences</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>519</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total day</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>815</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total day</td>
<td>2309</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>622</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total day</td>
<td>2044</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total week</strong></td>
<td><strong>8166</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>2072</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1. Detail of July’s 2015 graduation ceremony attendance (U. of Surrey 2015)
Since the sampling frame is only known in total numbers and the university does not provide the details to contact the graduates and their visitors, the researcher decided to take a convenience sample of the students and their visitors attending graduation. Accordingly, the researcher was led by serendipity to approach any group that had a graduate. This could have created a bias in the sample due to the unconscious decision of the researcher to survey some groups instead of others (e.g. smaller party sizes, or more approachable groups for the researcher). According to Baloglu & Assante (1999), the use of non-probabilistic sampling techniques like convenience sampling and the lack of a precise sampling frame are common problems in the social sciences and tourism research. This was mitigated by the conscious awareness of the researcher of avoiding biases and was checked by thorough analysis of the representative of the sample in section 8.1.1.

As a result the researcher approach any group that seemed to be waiting outside the graduation dressing area. This area includes a large piazza, a small café (Lakeside Café) and is in front of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM) as seen in Figure 7.1 and 7.2 below. The university recommend graduates to arrive two hours before the graduation ceremony in order to collect their gowns, take photos and walk up to the cathedral where the ceremony is performed. This leaves plenty of time for the graduates and their visitors to wait in that area of campus.
Once approached, participants were explained that the survey was part of a PhD project and asked to answer a questionnaire for the graduate and another for one of their visitors while the researcher waited next to them. The questionnaire took most participants three to four minutes to complete after which they were given a complimentary post-card of Guildford as a gift. Then questionnaires were stapled together and numbered to avoid confusion with other questionnaires. Due to the presence of the researcher, one of the possible drawbacks of this method was the potential of having social desirability bias defined by Grimm (2010, pp. 1) as “the tendency of research subjects to give socially desirable responses instead of choosing responses that are reflective of their true feelings”. This was controlled by leaving participants to answer the questionnaires by themselves and by the fact that according to Grimm (2010, pp. 1) this is “a major issue when the scope of the study involves sensitive issues, such as drug use, cheating, and smoking” which is far from the scope of this study. On the other hand, the presence of the researcher was useful to control that participants answered the questionnaires individually and not in groups.

As a result, a total of 458 pairs of a questionnaires (student + a visitor) were collected during the 32 graduation ceremonies of the three graduation weeks between July 2015 and 2016. Before each ceremony the researcher was able to survey around ten to fifteen groups in a space of 1.5 hours. Overall the response of most people when asked to complete the questionnaire was positive, on average only one every fourth groups approached did not agree to answer the survey. This includes groups that were not able to fill the questionnaire
because of language barriers which might have led to a bias towards British and European students in the sample (for further information see section 8.1.1 - Demographics and representativeness of the sample). This was not seen as a problem because domestic and EU students: represent by large the biggest segment of students, according to previous research they receive more visits, there is less research available about them and targeting mainly one cultural group (British/European) there are less potential for cultural bias. Apart from the problems to include non-European students this proved to be an effective technique in terms of representativeness as discussed further in section 8.1.1.

7.2 - Questionnaire design

The questionnaires’ content was decided based on the literature and theory discussed in Chapter six (Theoretical framework for the 2nd stage), and the context provided by the findings from the round of interviews discussed in chapter five. Two sets of questionnaires were developed for hosts and visitors that were both: feasible to apply under the constraints of a PhD project (time, length, ethics and other restrictions), and included the most relevant information to answer the research question. The aim was to measure hosts’ destination knowledge, destination image and their motivation to host; and their visitors’ experience and opinion of Guildford, together with some demographic information and other relevant aspects related to the visits. Consequently, two to three questions per construct were included in the questionnaires. Additionally, a set of “mirror” questions were introduced in the hosts’ questionnaire to check till what extent hosts were able to predict their visitors’ experience and opinion of Guildford (for a full copy of the questionnaires see Appendix A). This was done to evaluate the feasibility of conducting part of the study with students alone, and thus, minimise the difficulties of collecting data from hosts and their visitors. However, hosts’ level of “prediction” of their visitors’ experience was considered to be low, therefore it was decided not to collect data from hosts alone. Table 7.2 below provides a summary of the constructs and the way are understood for the use of this study taken from Chapter Six – Theoretical Framework.
Chapter 7. Methodology for the 2nd stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Understood in this study as:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>“Subjective interpretation of reality” (Bigne et al. 2005, pp. 607), it includes feelings, perceptions, ideas, beliefs, worldviews and impressions which in this study are summarized as participants’ opinion of Guildford (section 6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest. Knowledge</td>
<td>Based on literature presented in Section 6.5, it was decided to measure subjective knowledge seen by Wong &amp; Yeh, (2009) as better to understand tourism behaviour and experiential knowledge, which includes objective and procedural knowledge by implication (section 6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Host</td>
<td>This is described as the motivation to encourage visits (pull visitors to the destination) and hosts’ motivation to show the area (act as a guide), see section 6.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors’ Experience</td>
<td>Based on literature presented in section 6.5, this was seen as a ‘non-transactional’ experience and does not include visitors’ expectations taking an ‘outcome’ and ‘cumulative’ (the whole experience) approach to the term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2. Summary of constructs in the model

Each of the questions included in the questionnaire aimed to evaluate a different aspect of every construct. For example to measure destination knowledge there is a question that asks for general subjective knowledge, another one that demands knowledge about tourist attractions and then there is also a question that aims to measure hosts experiential knowledge. All the literature and theory behind each of the questions is explained in detailed in Chapter Six sections 6.2.2 - Measurement of Destination Image, 6.3.1 - Measurement of Destination Knowledge, 6.4 - Motivation to Host, and 6.5.2 - Measurement of Satisfaction and Experience. Table 7.3 below provides a summary of the rationale behind each of the questions and some of the most relevant literature to support it.
### Chapter 7. Methodology for the 2nd stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation to Host</strong></td>
<td>Q2 - Do you encourage people to visit you in Guildford?</td>
<td>Does the host act as a ‘pull factor’ (Dann, 1977) and tries to attract visitors to the destination (Backer, 2014; Morrison et al., 2000)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q3 - How motivated are you to take your visitors around?</td>
<td>Does the host act as a tour-guide (Dutt &amp; Ninov, 2017; Humbracht, 2015); or a “knowledgeable tourism marketing ambassador” (Backer, 2014, pp. 6)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hosts’ Destination Image</strong></td>
<td>Q4 - What’s your overall opinion of Guildford?</td>
<td>Aims to measure hosts’ overall destination image. According to Bigne et al. (2005, pp.295) “the sum of attribute scores (multi-items scales) is not an adequate measurement of the overall image”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q5 - Please rate Guildford’s tourism attractions?</td>
<td>Aimed to measure hosts’ destination image of Guildford as a place for tourism. The duality of destination as places to live or visit was noted during the interviews and by Stylidis et al. (2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q6 - How much did you like living in Guildford?</td>
<td>Aimed to measure hosts’ destination image of Guildford as a place to live. This was noted during the interviews and by Stylidis et al. (2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q7 - What do you think about Guildford?</td>
<td>Like Q4 aimed to measure overall destination image with an open question for further insights. Later using quantitative content analysis was compared to Q4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hosts’ Destination Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Q8 - How would you describe your knowledge of Guildford?</td>
<td>Four types of knowledge were found in literature (objective/declarative, subjective, experiential and procedural). This question aimed to measure hosts’ overall subjective destination knowledge as suggested by Wong &amp; Yeh, (2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q9 - How much do you know about Guildford’s attractions?</td>
<td>Based the four types of knowledge and living/visiting duality, this question aimed to measure subjective tourists’ knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q10 - Please mark if you have undertaken or visited any of the following attractions:</td>
<td>Provided a list of attractions and aimed to measure experiential knowledge that by implication also includes objective and procedural knowledge. Alba &amp; Hutchinson (1987) and Sharifpour et al. (2014) noted the importance of these types of tourist knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visitors’ Experience</strong></td>
<td>Q10 - How has the overall experience of your visit been?</td>
<td>Aims to measure overall experience. It takes an ‘outcome’ view that aims to understand how enjoyable the experience was without including expectations or transactional aspects (Lu, 2011); and a ‘cumulative’ perspective that enquired about the experience as a whole (Olsen &amp; Johnson, 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q11 - How has the social experience with your host been?</td>
<td>Aimed to measure social experience based on the duality of VFR social and touristic experiences seen during the interviews and mentioned by Le Bel et al. (2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q12 - How has your tourist experience of Guildford been?</td>
<td>Aimed to measure tourist experience (ibid above) keeping the outcome and cumulative approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visitors’ overall Dest Image</strong></td>
<td>Q5 - What’s your overall opinion of Guildford?</td>
<td>Same question as hosts question four (ibid Q4 above)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3. Summary of rationale behind each of the questions.
Accordingly, the host questionnaire was composed of 18 questions of which the first ten focused on hosts’ characteristics as seen in Table 7.3 above, and the later eight on their ability to predict their visitors’ experience (mirror questions). In the visitors’ questionnaire items 10 to 12 asked participants about their experience visiting and question five asks them about their overall opinion of Guildford as explained above in Table 7.3. The other questions in the visitors’ questionnaire asked participants for demographic information and various aspects of the visit, such as: accommodation, length of stay, origin, relationship with the host and attractions visited. As a result, the visitors’ questionnaire is shorter with only 15 questions (to see the full questionnaire please see Appendix A).

One of the most important practical aspects taken into consideration when developing the questionnaire was the limited amount of time participants had to answer it. Therefore, the language in the questions and the instructions had to be as simple and clear as possible, without creating any ambiguity or compromising the content. Consequently, each question was chosen carefully and various versions of the questionnaires were tested with students and their visitors to check for their reactions. Once a final draft was developed it was tested with 15 student in a pilot study where the wording and consistency of their answers were checked again as suggested by Saunders (2016). At the end of the process it was deemed that two to three questions per construct was sufficient to fulfil the project goals and was within the recommendations proposed by Hair et al. (2006) when using SEM.

7.3 - Data analysis

This section describes in detail the technical aspects and theoretical justification of the statistical analyses conducted to examine the survey data, as well as, the rationale behind the measures of validity, reliability and fitness indices. The section is organised in four sub-sections beginning with simpler analyses such as, data-entry, representativeness and descriptive statistics and continues with more complex ones such as, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structure Equation Model (SEM). At the end of the chapter a review of validity and reliability measures is provided. Three software
programmes were used to analyse the data that also followed the same order. Microsoft Excel was used for data-entry and structure all the data, as well as, performing simple analyses like calculating the mean and standard deviation of the variables. IBM SPSS 24 was used to conduct the EFA, checking missing data, Cronbach Alpha and measuring the data distribution. IBM Amos 23 was used to conduct the CFA, SEM, calculate all the fitness indices and some validity and reliability measures.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, SEM was chosen as the best statistical method to answer the research question and test the thesis hypotheses because of its ability to use unobservable constructs (latent variables) and test multiple relationships simultaneously. According to Hair et al. (2006) SEM is a multivariate technique generally described as a mix of factor analysis and multiple regression, which has been vastly used in the social sciences to evaluate theory that involves multiple interrelated associations between observed and unobservable constructs. According to Tarka (2018, pp. 314), SEM has evolved from the early works of Spearman (1904, in Tarka) who is often referred to as the “founding father of factor analysis” and Wright (1918, in Tarka) a geneticist who developed path analysis using diagrams. Later their work was deepened in the field of econometrists and expanded to all the social sciences during the eighties with the introduction of software that made its calculation more accessible (Tarka, 2018). During this time Jöreskog is generally credited with developing Lisrel the first software devoted to SEM (Tarka, 2018). Currently, there are several other software such as, Mplus and Amos which is used in this project that provide easy-to-use visual interfaces to calculate SEM.

Consequently, the theoretical model presented in Chapter Six, was tested using Covariance Based SEM (CB-SEM) with Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation, which is the most used type of SEM in the social sciences (Paxton et al., 2011). CB-SEM is a full-information technique that provides efficient estimates when basic conditions such as, normality and sample size are met (Paxton et al., 2011). According to Westland (2016), full-information techniques are more efficient because they calculate all equations simultaneously compared to limited-information techniques that calculate equations separately. This has both benefits and disadvantages, full-information techniques tend to be more sensitive because can spread misspecification problems easier throughout the model; while limited-information
techniques, like Partial Least Squares (PLS) or Two Stage Least Squares (2SLS), isolate these problems, and thus, tend to be better dealing with cases such as, non-normally distributed data, smaller sample sizes and formative factors (Henseler et al., 2016). As a result, based on the characteristics of the model proposed in chapter six, the data distribution (discussed in section 8.1.3) and the needs of the thesis it was decided to use CB-SEM with ML.

7.3.1 - Data entry and descriptive statistics

Data was transcribed from the paper questionnaires into Microsoft Excel by the researcher using a series of codes (e.g. 1 = Domestic, 2 = EU, and 3 = non-EU students) apart from one open question which was transcribed verbatim and later analysed using quantitative content analysis (see section 8.1.3). In order to check the accuracy of the data entry process a sample of 5% of questionnaires were randomly selected and compared to the data-set entered into Microsoft Excel. No mistakes were found in the sample which suggest the data entry was sound. Additionally, the maximum and minimum possible values in all questions were checked and only two mistakes were found which also suggest an acceptable accuracy entering the data. Once the data entry process was completed the main demographics indicators were calculated and compared to the whole population of students at the University of Surrey to evaluate the representativeness of the data (see section 8.1.1 for the results of the analysis). A thorough data screening process was conducted (section 8.1.2) which included an evaluation of unengaged participants, abnormal distribution (kurtosis and skewness) and missing data as suggested by Saunders (2016). Lastly descriptive statistics including the mean, standard deviation and the distribution of the answers were calculated for the variables included in the model using Microsoft Excel (section 8.1.4).

7.3.2 - Measurement model

SEM is normally divided in two parts, the measurement model and the structural model (Hair et al., 2006). The former in simple words is about validating the relationships between the observed variables (each question) with the latent variables (unobserved constructs in this case destination image, destination knowledge, motivation to host and experience). On the
other hand, the structural model evaluates the relationships between all the latent variables and provide the estimates for their relationships (Wuensch, 2009). Since SEM is theory driven, the measurement model is generally tested through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), however Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is often used to guide the development of the measurement model (Golob, 2003), and thus, it was also included in this section.

**Exploratory Factor Analysis**

EFA is a crucial step in the development of SEM when latent variables that have not been previously validated by research are introduced in the analysis (Golob, 2003). Latent variables are broader underlying dimensions behind a series of specific questions, EFA as it stands aims to statistically explore these questions in search for common dimensions/factors that could be seen as latent variables (Wuensch, 2009). In this case for example, the host questionnaire was developed in order to measure three major constructs through a series of related questions that measured different aspects of each of these constructs. Accordingly, EFA can statistically test if these questions (generally referred as items) actually do that, by testing the shared variance between the items and the latent variables (Golob, 2003).

The first evaluation generally conducted in EFA is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement of sampling adequacy and Barlett’s test of sphericity (Field, 2013). According to Field (2013, pp. 647) KMO “represents the ratio of the squared correlation between variables to the squared partial correlation between variables”. Since this test is based on a ratio of correlations it varies from 0 to 1 where values closer to 1 mean that correlations’ patterns are “relatively compact and so factor analysis should yield distinct and reliable factors” (Field, 2013, pp. 647). Field (2013) proposed a threshold of 0.5 to suggest data will provide acceptable results. According to Field (2013, pp. 782) Bartlett’s test of sphericity tests “whether a variance-covariance matrix is proportional to an identity matrix” and is useful to evaluate if the variables’ variances are the same which would represent homoscedasticity, this is a significance test therefore the threshold level is 0.05.

In order to conduct the EFA, principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was chosen as suggested by Field (2013) who argued that this is the most common technique to conduct
Chapter 7. Methodology for the 2nd stage

EFA when looking at multiple dimensions. It must be noted though that in theoretical terms principal component analysis is not a factor analysis technique although it serves the same purpose and yield very similar results (Field, 2013). This was confirmed by Guadagnoli & Velicer (1988) and Stevens (2002) who argued that both techniques results are almost identical when sample sizes larger than 20 cases and communalities are over 0.4. Varimax rotation was chosen because it “attempts to maximize the dispersion of loadings within factors” which according to Field (2013, pp. 644) “it is a good general approach that simplifies the interpretation of factors”.

The factors were extracted using two methods as recommended by Stevens (2002). First Jolliffe (1986) criteria to extract factors with Eigen values over 0.7 was chosen over Kaiser’s criteria of Eigen values over 1. This is discussed in more detail in section 8.2 using the EFA results but in summary based on Jolliffe (1986) Kaiser’s criteria was seen as too strict in this case due to a relatively low number of items and one factor with only two items (motivation to host). The second method was the use of a Scree plot as proposed by Cattell (1966), which according to Stevens (2002) this is a reliable method for large samples (over 200 cases). This method is based on creating a graph with the Eigen values in the Y axis and the number of components in the X axis. The analysis is conducted by visually examining the graph for a point of inflection in the curve, this point represents the number of components that should be extracted (Field, 2013). Cronbach Alpha values were estimated and the rotated matrix loadings were examined for convergent and discriminant validity, these analysis is further discussed at the end in sub-sections 7.3.3 and 7.4.4 Validity and Reliability.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Similar to the EFA, CFA also aims to evaluate the shared variance between questions associated to the latent variables. As noted above, in the EFA all questions are free to associate and create latent variables, therefore, is used generally to explore the relationship structures that can be found in a data-set. In CFA though, the main goal is to confirm a structure decided a priory by theory (in this case provided by the theoretical framework), and thus, the evaluation of this structure of relationships is done through a number of fitness indices and factor loadings.
Due to the similarities of these two techniques, literature suggests that using both in the same data-set can be at some level redundant and ideally the two should be tested in completely different groups (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). In many cases however, this is not possible that has led to some researchers to argue in favour of splitting the data in two, in order to test each technique in different ‘groups’ (Byrne et al., 2004; Fabrigar et al., 1999). This approach has also been seen as controversial because using two different halves of the same data-set, can only test for minor random differences that occurred when splitting it, which according to Worthington & Whittaker (2006) is not the point of using different groups. Additionally, SEM is a sensitive technique that requires relative large samples sizes (Hair et al, 2006), therefore, reducing the data to half can create serious issues for studies where is difficult to collect large sample sizes. As a result, according to Worthington & Whittaker (2006) is common to see studies using just one of the two techniques alone without the appropriate support, although there is no adverse effect in using both, and though less ideal, there are still many benefits from doing so.

As mentioned earlier the theory driven structure of relationships used in SEM is generally evaluated through factor loadings and fitness indices. The former involves several measurements of validity and reliability that are further discussed at the end of this section (sub-sections 7.3.3 and 7.4.4, Validity and Reliability). With regard to the latter, according to Hox & Bechger (1998) the assessment of fitness indices is a crucial part of SEM because unlike multiple regression analysis, which assumes perfect measurement, SEM accounts for measurement error, and thus, it is necessary to test if the model as a whole fits the data. The most obvious way to do this is through a “Chi-Square global test of statistical significance” which according to McCoach et al. (2007, pp. 461) “assesses whether the discrepancy between the model-implied covariance matrix and the observed covariance matrix is likely to be due to sampling error”. This test however, is very sensitive to sample sizes leading to nearly always produce significant results with large samples sizes and non-significant ones with small ones (Hox et al., 2017). Therefore, to overcome this problem a large number of fit indices have been developed in literature to assess the fitness level of SEM models (Hox et al., 2017; Kline, 2006; McCoach et al., 2007). According to Hu & Bentler (1998), is good practice to report a number of well-regarded indices that have different measurement capabilities (e.g.
incremental indices such as CFI and residual-based indices like SRMR). Hence, based on a review of 212 articles conducted by Jackson et al. (2009), the nine more commonly referred indices and thresholds are reported below in Table 7.4. This selection of indices provides an equilibrated mix and were chosen to evaluate the fitness of the model in section 7.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common Fitness Indices</th>
<th>Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square/df (Cmin/df)</td>
<td>&lt; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square p-value</td>
<td>&gt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative fit Index (CFI)</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted GFI (AGFI)</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-Mean-Square Residual (RMR)</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised Root-Mean-Square Residual (SRMR)</td>
<td>&lt; .08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-mean-square error of Approximation (RMSEA)</td>
<td>&lt; .06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4. List of fitness indices and threshold from Jackson et al. (2005; 2009)

Finally, in technical terms it was decided to calculate the CFA using Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation, which according to Jackson et al. (2009), this is one of the most common estimation techniques when conducting SEM. Beauducel & Herzberg (2006, pp. 188) added that “ML estimation is the method of choice” when the observed variables follow a normal distribution and there are more than 200 observations, which is the case in this sample (distribution is discussed in section 8.1.2).

7.3.3 - Structural Model

As noted in the introduction of this section the structural model aims to provide the path estimates (Wuensch, 2009). These estimates are used to evaluate the strength and significance of the relationships between the variable and to provide further measurements of validity and reliability. In this case the structural model was developed in three steps, in order to introduce the two single item variables and test for their mediation effects and overall fitness of the model. First the core model provided in the theoretical framework chapter (section 6.8) was calculated using all the latent variables and their fitness was re-evaluated (see Figure 7.3 below taken from Section 6.8).
In the second step question five in the visitors’ questionnaire that aimed to measure visitors’ overall destination image was introduced as a mediating variable between the all the hosts variables and their visitors’ experience. Once the new variable was included the model was re-calculated and it estimates, loadings and fitness indices compared. In the third step hosts’ average number of visits was introduced to test if motivation to host leads to higher number of visits (hypothesis 11) and if the visits received had an impact on hosts’ destination knowledge (hypothesis 12). The whole process can be seen in figure 7.4 below, the circles in dotted lines highlight the two single items introduced in steps two and three, the model was taken from section 6.8 in the theoretical framework chapter. As done previously then the model was recalculated and all indicators were re-evaluated.
This last step created a circular relationship between the hosts’ variables (discussed in the theoretical framework for the 2nd stage chapter, section 6.7.2) that made the model ‘non-recursive’. According to Paxton et al. (2011, pp.2) a model is non-recursive if “two of the outcomes in the model affect one another (a reciprocal relationship) or there is a feedback loop at some point in the system of equations (i.e., a causal path can be traced from one variable back to itself)”. In recursive models on the other hand, all causal relationships are unidirectional, thus there are no reciprocal relationship or feedback loop and is assumed that all the error terms are completely uncorrelated (Berry, 1984). Non-recursive models have been widely used in economics but are rather infrequent and controversial in other social sciences (Berry, 1984). Therefore, Paxton et al. (2011) argued that it is important to discuss their main characteristics because ignoring the implications of having a non-recursive model can lead to biased estimates and erroneous interpretations.

According to Kline (2006), circular relationships can be direct or indirect. The former refers to the reciprocal relationship between only two variables directly (these are the most common in literature), and the second to models like this one where three or more variables mediate

Figure 7.4. Full operational model with two single items
the effects between them, and thus, the effects are indirect. This has two consequences, first indirect loops do not always require instrumental variables to reach identification, which represent a big part of the analysis in non-recursive models; and secondly there is little literature that specifically discusses the case of indirect loops, and therefore, most of this analysis was based on studies focused on direct reciprocal relationships.

Although direct and indirect reciprocal relationships are common in reality, these models create controversy because of two issues (Kline, 2006; Paxton et al., 2011). The first one is conceptual and has to do with the fact that cause and effect is generally understood to be unidirectional and occur at different times, i.e. cause in time one creates an effect in time two and not simultaneously (Wong & Law, 1999). Therefore, authors like Strotz & Wold (1960) recommended to test reciprocal relationships using time-lagged data in longitudinal models. This however, is often not possible and is common to find research using cross-sectional data in non-recursive models like this one (Wong & Law, 1999). The authors argued that this is mainly because the time lag between the potential cause and effect can be either: too short so it does seem to happen simultaneously (e.g. couples affecting their mood), it might not be possible to define exactly when cause and effect happen, or is not possible to collect data at those times. Therefore, they believe that in practical terms cross-sectional data is often the only or the best way to test reciprocal relationships.

Berry (1984) who wrote a seminal book about the matter, went further to argue that the idea that causality is strictly unidirectional and has a temporal lag, is a simplification used to understand reality like any other theory. However, reality itself is always more complex and theories need to be taken under that lens, hence, he stated that:

“In many cases it is unrealistic to assume that no two variables in a model are reciprocally related; furthermore, it is often impossible to provide a convincing justification for the assumption that each error term in a model is uncorrelated with all other error terms. In such cases, we must abandon recursive models, an employ nonrecursive multiequation.” (Berry, 1984, pp. 3)
The second issue associated to non-recursive models is related to stability. According to Wong & Law (1999), who tested the performance of a time-lagged versus a cross-sectional design in a Monte-Carlo-like study, found that the latter tended to be less accurate, more unstable and often required the use of instrumental variables to become identified. Thus, the authors recognised the value of non-recursive models as a proxy of reality but recommended to use them with caution. Likewise, Kline (2006) argued that:

“Feedback loops can still be viewed as a proxy or statistical model for a longitudinal process where causal effect occurs within some definitive latency. We do not expect statistical models to exactly mirror the inner workings of a complex reality. Instead a statistical model is an approximation tool that helps researchers to make sense of a phenomenon.” (Kline, 2006, pp. 43)

7.3.4 - Validity

Validity has been described as to whether the research measures what it aims to measure (Field, 2013). More elaborately Field (2013, pp. 795) defined it as “evidence that a study allows correct inferences about the question it was aimed to answer and that a test measures what it set out to measure conceptually”. There are several types of validity that focus on different aspects and measurements of the same idea. The first division it could be argue is between internal and external validity. Saunders (2016, pp. 718) defined internal validity as the “extent to which findings can be attributed to interventions rather than any flaws in your research design” which according to Burns & Bush (2014) is another way of asking if the research was conducted properly. External validity on the other hand is the “extent to which the results can be generalisable to all relevant contexts” (Saunders, 2016, pp. 716). These are broad views of validity that are useful to better understand the concept but still lack specificity to actually use them to evaluate if the project measured was it aimed to measure. After all everything that has been written in this thesis and particularly in this chapter aimed at conducting the research properly and produce generalisable results. Consequently, Saunders (2016) argued that internal validity in relation to a measurement is generally referred as measurement validity and is composed by: content/face validity, construct validity (which
Chapter 7. Methodology for the 2nd stage

includes convergent and discriminant validity), and criterion validity. All of them evaluate different aspects of the measurement that can lead to argue that it results are generalisable, it was conducted properly and measures what it intended to measure. This section provides a brief explanation of these types of validity and the way they were evaluated in this research.

**Content or face validity** has been defined as to the “agreement that a question, scale, or measure appears logically to reflect accurately what it was intended to measure” (Saunders, 2016, pp. 716). The author argued this is generally done by a “careful definition of the research through the literature reviewed” and through discussion with others, which can be done informally and through a panel of expert judges. In this case the theoretical framework provided a “careful definition of the research” and four expert judges were called-in to evaluate if the survey questions seem to measure accurately the concepts proposed in the thesis, which after some minor adjustments was agreed successfully.

Additionally, According to Bainter & Bollen (2014, pp. 1) construct validity can also be assessed by searching for interpretational confoundings, which is when “the empirical meaning of a latent construct departs from the meaning intended by a researcher”. Burt (1976) argued that this is important because if the meaning of a latent construct changes depending on the context, the inferences made based on the construct become ambiguous and less reliable. Hair et al. (2006) suggested to evaluate these changes by comparing the factor loadings in the measurement and structural models, which must not change abruptly to suggest that there are no interpretational confounding.

**Construct validity** also aims to test if the instrument measures what it intendeds to measure, yet with an emphasis on evaluating if the construct relates to other similar or different constructs (Field, 2013). Hence, construct validity is often the umbrella for convergent validity and discriminant validity. The former evaluates if the construct measurement correlates to other similar constructs and if it does it can be assumed that it does measure what it intends to measure. Discriminant validity on the other hand, tests if the construct is not correlated with constructs that are supposed to be different, and thus, provides evidence that the construct measurement is valid. Both concepts were tested in various ways. First in the EFA and CFA Cabrera-Nguyen (2010) argued that if all factor loadings are over 0.4 it can be
suggested that there is convergent validity within the factors because all the items are closely correlated to each factor (section 8.2 and 8.3). Then if the correlations between the factors is below 0.8, according to Field (2013) it can be argued that there is sufficient discriminant validity because factors supposed to measure different constructs and therefore should not be closely correlated.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which is another measure of convergent validity was calculated and compared to a threshold of 0.4 proposed by Huang (2013). AVE measures the “amount of variance that is captured by the construct in relation to the amount of variance due to measurement error” (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, pp. 45). The AVE was compared to the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) in the CFA which according to Hair et al. (2006) should be smaller to suggest a good level of discriminant validity. Later the square root of the √AVE was compared to the matrix of correlations between the factors, to test that all correlations are smaller than the √AVE as recommended by Hair et al. (2006) to suggest good discriminant validity (in section 8.3). Lastly a quantitative content analysis of the only open question in the survey was conducted and it results were compared to previous destination image scales and correlated to other items in the questionnaire to evaluate it: convergent, discriminant and criterion validity (in sub-section 8.1.3).

The last type of validity left to evaluate is criterion validity. According to Field (2013, pp. 784), criterion validity refers to “evidence that scores from an instrument correspond with or predict concurrent external measures conceptually related to the measured construct”. In other words if the results are similar to the findings from other studies who measured similar constructs under similar conditions. This was done in several ways, section 8.1.1 provides a thorough comparison of the results with data from the whole population of students and other literature to assess the representativeness of the sample. Additionally, section 8.1.3 compares the results from the quantitative content analysis with common items in destination image scales found in literature; and section 8.5 compare all the results of the structural model with previous findings used in the theoretical framework.
7.3.4 - Reliability

According to Field (2013), if a measure is reliable does not imply that is valid, however, for any measurement to be valid it must be reliable first. Joppe (2000, pp. 1) defined reliability as the “extent to which results are consistent over time and the study can be reproduced under a similar methodology obtaining similar results”. Similar to validity there are also various types of reliability that are assessed differently but the main two kinds of reliability are internal and external reliability. The former is generally referred as internal consistency and according to Saunders (2016) looks at the consistency of responses within one data-set. There are several methods to evaluating internal consistency but the most commonly used are the Cronbach Alpha coefficient and secondly Composite Reliability (CR) (Field, 2013). According to Hair et al. (2006), both measurements involve calculating (in different ways) correlations within specific groups of responses that aim to measure a particular concept, such as latent variables and were used to test the results of the EFA and CFA in sections 8.2 and 8.3.

External reliability on the other hand, looks at the repeatability of the research instrument in real life conditions at different points in time (Xu et al., 2009). According to Field (2013), largely the most common way to assess external reliability in the social sciences is using the test-retest method. In general terms according to Saunders (2016, pp. 451) this method “correlates data collected with those from the same questionnaire collected under as near equivalent conditions as possible”. This was done in two ways, first during the pilot study 15 participants were asked to complete the questionnaire twice after a period of two weeks which provided almost identical results. This is the most common way to conduct the test-retest method (Field, 2013). Saunders (2016) however, warned that participants might remember questions and do not read as carefully as the first time, and therefore, he suggest using this method only as a supplement to others. The second way was through the collection of data during three different graduation periods, which tested the instrument with a large number of participants under similar conditions and also produced consistent results.
Chapter 7. Methodology for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage

7.4 - Summary and conclusion

The chapter has provided a detailed account of the theory and rationale behind the methodological decisions for the second stage of the project. It began presenting the research design which discussed the available options for data collection and the pros and cons of these options. It described the data collection process and the questionnaire development which is strongly related to the theoretical framework for the second stage and the findings from the first stage of the research. Later the chapter described in detail the data analysis techniques used, which began with simple aspects such as data entry and descriptive statistics. The core of the third section was devoted to the theoretical and statistical considerations necessary to explain when using SEM. This section also discussed the process used to test the model mediation effects where two single item variables were introduced sequentially. Here a theoretical discussion of the issues associated to feedback loops and non-reciprocal models was also provided due to the changes created in the model once introducing these single items. The last two sections of the chapter provide a thorough discussion of the importance of the concepts of validity and reliability in quantitative research and the methods used to evaluate them in this data-set.
Chapter 8. Survey Results

8.1 - Introduction and initial measurements

This chapter presents the results from the second stage of the project which is the dominant method in this sequential mixed-methods approach. The second stage of this project took a quantitative examination of the influence that hosts have on their visitors’ experience using the model and questionnaire developed in the theoretical framework. Consequently, this phase consisted on a survey to 458 dyads of participants (student with a visitor) during graduation weeks in 2015 and 2016. The final aim of this phase is to be able to test the model, generalise the results, and thus, provide a first empirical measurement of the way hosts influence their visitors. This information will help practitioners to better manage the VFR market and will open the door for further research about the ways in which hosts and visitors interact and influence each other’s experiences of the destination.

The chapter is divided in three sections, it begins with an overview of participants’ main demographics, representativeness, data screening, descriptive statistics and an initial analysis of validity and reliability. The information presented in this section is also used to discuss the quality of the sample by comparing these results to previous studies such as Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) and data from the population of students at the University of Surrey and the UK. The second section presents the results from the measurement model which in this case included the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) that were performed to test the latent variables used in the structural model. It is important to discuss the findings from the measurement model because the latent variables are the basis of the structural model, as well as, providing important measures of validity and reliability that confirm the theoretical aspects that guided the development of the questionnaire. The last two sections of this chapter present the results from the structural model including the two single item variables that were used to test the mediation effects and a reciprocal relationship between the host’s variables. Based on these results the hypotheses of the project were tested in the last section.
Chapter 8. Survey results

8.1.1 – Demographics and representativeness of the sample

A brief array of basic indicators such as, nationality, gender, number of visits and place of origin, were used to assess the representativeness of the sample by comparing them to previous research and the whole population of students at the University of Surrey. First in terms of nationality the sample was composed mainly by domestic students (88%), European students (11%) and by only 1% of non-European students compared to 21% in the whole population (see Table 8.1 below). This is likely due to less non-European students attending graduation, attending without visitors, or that their visitors refused to answer the questionnaire because of a language barrier. Apart from this group however, the survey composition is almost exactly the same presented in the total population of students at Surrey University if non-European students are not accounted (see Table 8.1 third box to the right).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey sample</th>
<th>All students</th>
<th>Domestic + European</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n students</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>458</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1. Sample origin of students versus whole population (University of Surrey 2015)

In terms of gender, the sample was also found to be representative, accounting for 46% of males and 54% of females which is very close to the percentage of males (44%) and females (56%) in the population (see Table 8.2). There was however, a slight overrepresentation of males which is unusual compared to Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) who had a markedly higher response from females, which was backed-up by previous research of Sax et al. (2003) who noted that at university settings females tended to be more willing to answer surveys. Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) study was collected online, therefore, this difference could be due to the situation when the survey was collected, as the graduating experience can be different from men and women. For example, it was observed that women tended to take many more photos, socialise more with their peers and took more time arranging their graduation dressing, while men often sat to wait with their visitors, and thus, had more time to fill-out the survey.
Chapter 8. Survey results

Survey sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All students</th>
<th>Survey sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2. Sample gender of students versus whole population (U. of Surrey, 2015)

In terms of places of origin within the UK the sample was also deemed to be representative, although, there is a slight under-representation of students from Greater London and a larger representation of students from secondary neighbouring counties (see Table 8.3). The reasons behind this phenomenon are unknown but it might be possible that the students from London are more reluctant to answer questionnaires or they might come from more diverse ethnic backgrounds, and thus, some of their visitors refused to answer because of a language barrier. The students from secondary neighbouring counties might be overrepresented because they either attend graduation more often, arrive earlier or due to their distance they might be more motivated to answer a questionnaire about Guildford. For a full description of the counties selection please see section 3.3 - Students at the University of Surrey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>All students</th>
<th>Survey sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of FTE# students</td>
<td>% of domestic students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct neighbouring counties*</td>
<td>2,265</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other counties</td>
<td>1,976</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater London</td>
<td>1,927</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary neighbouring counties**</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Hampshire, Kent, East & West Sussex, Berkshire  # Full Time Equivalent  ** Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Dorset

Table 8.3. Comparison of places of origin by county (HESA, 2014)

Since this study was more precise than the county data provided by HESA (2014) by asking directly about the town or city of origin, it was possible to calculate the actual distances that visitors had to travel to Guildford. In Table 8.4 (below) it is possible to see that 39% students come from areas that are roughly one hour away from Guildford, which is relatively high compared to 18% in Bischoff’s & Koenig-Lewis (2007) study. Conditions though, in terms of traffic and population density in Wales and the South-East of England are very different.
In terms of students’ level (undergrad or postgraduate) the sample was less representative of the whole population (see table 8.5 below). The undergraduate group of students in the sample was of 85% compared to 73% in the whole population which although clearly different still is substantially larger than the post-graduate group. This is most likely due to the fact that many post-graduate students do not move to Guildford during their studies either commuting or studying via distance and that many one year master students often do not attend graduation. As seen earlier in this section (table 8.1) the survey had a focus on domestic and EU students, however, post-graduate students are more likely to come from abroad (non-EU), which could have also diminished it numbers in the sample. As seen below in table 8.5 once international students are removed the number of undergraduate students (78%) is much closer to the one found in the sample (85%).

The main implications of this have to do with the number of years students lived in Guildford, since it could be expected that living for more years could change their perception and knowledge of the city. This however, was not deemed to be a problem because although postgraduate students tend to live in Guildford for less years, PhD students tend to stay for three to four years and many master students actually are previous undergraduate students.
Therefore, the number of students in the sample that lived in Guildford for less than three years is under 10%. Additionally, even if there is a difference in terms of length of stay this could affect host variables but should not affect the relationship between hosts and their visitors’ variables because lower knowledge for example should lead to lower experience in all cases. Moreover, the study had an intentional focus on domestic undergraduate students that are the largest group at university, they receive more visitors and are more under-researched than international or post-graduate students.

In relation to number of visits, Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) found that students receive on average 3.9 from parents and 4.2 visits from friends per year in Swansea, which is lower than 5.1 and 4.6 found in this study. As noted earlier, distances from home for the students in Guildford seem to be lower and could be the reason for receiving more visits in particular from parents. In terms of sample, most of the visitors who answered the survey were parents accounting for 72% of all answers, which is an issue in terms of representativeness of the VFR university context. According to Visit Kent (2011) however, in the UK approximately 66% of visits come from direct relatives which is closer to the distribution in this sample (see section 3.2.3 - Tourism in the United Kingdom). The explanation behind this characteristic lies again in the fact that the survey was collected during graduation which is often a celebration for the parents.

In total number of visits, compared to non-university cities, such as, Albury-Wodonga, Australia with an average of 6 visits per year (McKercher, 1996) and rural parts of Scotland in Boyne (2001) with an average of 8.5 visits, Guildford is slightly above average with 9.7 visits per year. This was expected since according to Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) students tend to generate more visits than other residents. The authors also found that international students received lower number of visits and proportionally more visits from friends than relatives that is also the case in this sample. Finally, in terms of sample size the studies from McKercher (1996) and Boyne (2001) collected 225 and 272 questionnaires respectively, while Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) collected 629 of which only 477 were fully answered that represents 2.6% of all students at Swansea University. In terms of sample size this research is well above the first two studies and is similar to the one in Swansea, since 458 pairs of questionnaires were collected and 425 were fully answer that represents 3.2% of students at
Surrey University (this is explained in detail in the next section 8.1.2 - Data screening). The difference in the number of unanswered questionnaires (152 in Swansea compared to 23 in Guildford) is clearly due to the way the surveys were collected (online versus in-person) and the length of the questionnaires (58 items versus 18).

**8.1.2 - Data screening**

The first step to conduct further analysis is to screen the data-set for problematic cases such as, unengaged participants, abnormal distribution and missing data. As noted in the introduction 458 dyads of one host and one visitor were collected. This section discusses data in terms of cases or “dyads” because hosts and visitors questions were integrated to test the relation between them, and thus, problems in any of these questionnaires affect the whole of each case. In terms of unengaged participants, only cases that had all questions answered exactly the same (standard deviation of cero) were removed from the data-base as suggested by Field (2013), these were only three cases. Although other questionnaires might also have unengaged responses, it was deemed that any other threshold would be arbitrary, and thus, only those three extreme cases were removed. In terms of distribution, all the questions included in the analysis had Skewness ranging from -0.927 to 0.790 and Kurtosis ranging from -1.263 to 0.683, which according to Field (2013) who proposed a cut-off point of 2 and -2, are acceptable to suggest data is normally distributed. In terms of multivariate normality, Mardia’s coefficient was of 14.858 with a critical ratio of 7.755 which is above the cut-off point of 5 proposed by Bentler (2005) and suggest that from a multivariate perspective the data would be very mildly non-normal. According to Hair et al. (2006) however, in large sample sizes over 200 data-points this level of non-normality is negligible.

In terms of missing data, all questions that had more than 5% of missing cases were deleted, this did not occur with any of the variables used in the analysis. In terms of cases, the same criteria of 5% was applied which is equivalent to one question per dyad (only questions used in the analysis were included in the screening). This was equivalent to 7.1% of all cases (30 dyads). There were three clear patterns observed in the missing cases. First there was a tendency to find more missing questions at the end of questionnaires that might indicate
fatigue. Secondly there were 15 missing answers in questions number six (3.6%) that requested participant to rate how much they liked living in Guildford, which might indicate that these participants did not live in Guildford although this was always asked to participants before passing them the questionnaire (these questionnaires tended to have other missing questions as well). Thirdly there were 17 missing answers in question eleven and twelve that requested visitors to rate their social and touristic experience. Based on participants’ comments this might due to them not been able to see any touristic appeal in Guildford or not wanting to answer about their social experience with their hosts. This low level of missing questions is thought to be due to the short length of the questionnaires and the researcher collecting them in person one by one.

8.1.3 - Quantitative content analysis

This section presents the results and operation of a quantitative content analysis performed in the only open question in the survey (question seven in both questionnaires), which asked participants “what do you think of Guildford?” and provided a short space for their answers (see Appendix A to see the full questionnaires). The aim of this analysis is to provide additional measures of construct validity (convergent and discriminant) and criterion validity of the destination image construct and in particular of question four, which asked participants about their overall opinion of Guildford (further explanation about the various types of validity is provided in the 2nd methodology chapter, section 7.3.4).

According to Saunders (2016, pp. 713) content analysis is an “analytical technique that codes and categorises qualitative data in order to analyse them quantitatively”. This process involved two steps: first all the answers were dived into manageable units (in this case adjectives) and later these adjectives were coded quantitatively to compare them to the other questions in the survey. Adjectives were chosen as the manageable units because are words used to describe attributes of nouns (Oxford Dictionary, 2009), which was the goal of question seven (in which case the noun/destination is Guildford) and is the goal of all destination image multi-attribute scales.
Consequently, the first step of the analysis was to divide the open answers into adjectives or ‘descriptive groups of words’, for example the answer “I think it is beautiful but there are not many attractions” was divided into “nice” and “few attractions”. This example was actually one of the longest answers (11 words) compared to the median of 3 words and average of 1.5 adjectives per answer. Hence, most participants just wrote adjectives alone such as: “very good shopping”, “too small and boring”, “safe” or “nice nature and surroundings”. All these attributes/adjectives were compared to a sample of some of the most common destination image scales compiled by Stylidis et al. (2015) as suggested by Xiang et al. (2009). Table 8.6 below provides a visual comparison (the percentages refer to how often the adjectives were mentioned). From this visual comparison it is possible to see that almost all the adjectives from question seven can be associated to a destination image item specially within the 10 most used ones (denoted by *), which suggests good criterion validity of question number seven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7. What do you think of Guildford?</th>
<th>% of answers</th>
<th>Common items in destination image scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nice/lovely/prett/pretty/great/beautiful/love-it</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Scenic beauty *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet/pleasant/relaxing/peaceful</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Pleasant/Relaxing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Good value for money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good shopping</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Variety of shops *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/bad nightlife</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Good nightlife *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country-side/green/leafy/hilly</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Natural beauty/flora and fauna *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe/Clean</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Personal safety and security *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly/good/nice people</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Friendly local people *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring/too quiet</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Boring/Sleepy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Interesting historic sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good facilities/infrastructure/ sports/sports park/spectrum</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Developed infrastructure *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Opportunities for sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to London/rail/transport links/parking/traffic</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Ease of access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/attractions/lots or not much to see/do</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Convenient transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good uni/studenty/uni town</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Variety of tourist activities *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good size/not too big/small</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Well-known attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average/ok/Nothing special</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.6. Comparison of open question answers and destination image scale

Non-applicable items: exotic atmosphere, good reputation, crowded places, pleasant weather, nice beaches, quality hotels, good service quality, unique water sports, political stability
After dividing all the answers into adjectives, a simple sentiment analysis was conducted following the process proposed by Whissell & Whissell (2000). Sentiment analysis is a type of content analysis where words are associated to a ‘sentiment value’ (normally part of a dimension e.g. good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant or active/inactive), that later is used to compare the words alone or together as parts of sentences (Whissell, 2006). These values are normally obtained from previous studies that have created extensive ‘sentiment dictionaries’ such as, Gatti et al. (2016), Hu & Liu (2004), Liu et al. (2005), Nielsen (2011) and Whissell & Whissell (2000). In this case it was decided to use the sentiment dictionary developed by Hu & Liu (2004) which has been extensively used (5000+ citations) and values words using a simple dimension of positive/negative (the same dimension used in Likert scales questions about overall destination image). As a result, once all the adjectives were associated to a value, Whissell & Whissell (2000) suggest to add each word’s value within a sentence to obtain a total sentiment per answer that was later transformed into Likert scales by adding them to the neutral point of the scale (three).

The sentiment values per answer were later compared to all the questions in the host and visitors’ questionnaire, similar to what is done while conducting an exploratory factor analysis. In this context, according to Field (2012) correlations under 0.3 suggest the item does not measure the same underlying dimension. Accordingly, in the hosts’ questionnaire question seven obtained a correlation of 0.403 with the destination image latent variable and 0.383 with question four that asked hosts about their overall opinion of Guildford. The correlations obtained by the questions within hosts’ destination image latent variable were in similar ranges and all other questions obtained a correlation far below the 0.3 threshold. Consequently, the two other latent variables motivation to host and destination knowledge obtained 0.210 and 0.020 respectively. In the visitors’ questionnaire question seven obtained a correlation of 0.370 with question five that asked visitors about their overall opinion of Guildford, which is very similar to the results found in the hosts’ questionnaire of 0.383. All other questions in the visitors’ questionnaire were also below the threshold of 0.3.

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1 When testing question 7 in the measurement model, the EFA improved reaching an Eigen value over 1 for the three components and question 7 obtained a loading of .733, the CFA obtained similar fit indices and the structural model results remained the same.
The correlations observed with the destination image latent variable and in particular with questions four and five (overall opinion of Guildford) suggest good convergent validity between the measures, i.e. this is an indication that question four and five do measure destination image. The fact that the results did not correlate strongly with any other item suggest good discriminant validity, i.e. the construct is neither measuring motivation to host nor destination knowledge or any other question in the survey. Overall these results suggest that based on previous measurements of destination image, the questions within the latent variable seem to measure the destination image construct accurately.

8.1.4 - Descriptive statistics

This section presents the main indicators of all the variables included in the research in order to present an initial description of the survey results. Table 8.7 below provides the mean standard deviation and answers’ distribution in the hosts’ questionnaire. The answers’ distribution is based on a Likert scale from one (very negative) to five (very positive). The three main constructs, motivation to host, destination image and destination knowledge are divided with a box and presented in the same order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Likert scale answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 - Host encourage visits</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>7% 11% 23% 36% 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 - Host show visitors around</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3% 11% 30% 36% 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 - Hosts' overall destination image</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1% 1% 13% 45% 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 - Hosts' opinion of local attractions</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2% 19% 47% 28% 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6 - Hosts' opinion about living in Guildford</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1% 2% 17% 47% 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7 - Hosts' open question about Guildford</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1% 4% 15% 48% 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 - Hosts' overall destination knowledge</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2% 15% 33% 40% 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 - Hosts' knowledge of local attractions</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3% 23% 44% 25% 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 - Hosts' experiential knowledge²</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4% 37% 43% 12% 4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.7. Descriptive statistics of hosts’ questions

In Table 8.7 it is possible to observe that out of the three constructs destination knowledge obtained the lowest average scores, which might be associated to students being temporary.

² Q10 provided a list of 9 attractions and asked participants to mark to which attractions they have visited (see Appendix for the full questionnaire). Each attraction was given one point and the total was per participant was proportionally adjusted to a 1-5 scale.
residents, and therefore, not reaching a higher level of knowledge of the city. Destination image though, obtained average results ranging from 3.1 to 4.2 that suggest that students have a fairly positive opinion of Guildford. It is interesting to note however, that questions five, nine and ten that asked participants about their destination image and knowledge of the local attractions obtained the lowest scores (3.1 in both cases). This could be due to Guildford not being generally recognised as a tourist destination which might worsen participants’ destination image and knowledge of the local attractions. The standard deviation of most questions was relatively similar around 0.7 to 0.9 apart from questions two and three that were slightly above (1.0 and 1.2) and measured motivation to host. These means that students had more divergent opinions about their interest in attracting visitors and showing the area. Consequently, the distribution of their answers was also more evenly spread. On the other hand, most destination image and destination knowledge questions tended to be clustered between four and five with very few around one or two. Here is also possible to see that question seven discussed in the previous section (8.1.3) has a very similar distribution to the other questions in its construct and specially question four that ask for participants for their overall opinion of Guildford.

Table 8.8 below provides the same indicators for the visitors’ questions used in the analysis. Here is possible to see that visitors’ experience of Guildford seems to be very positive and as seen in the hosts’ questionnaire the touristic aspect scored the lowest compared to the other questions in the construct. On average visitors’ overall destination image of Guildford is also fairly high and slightly above hosts’ overall opinion (4.3 and 4.2 respectively), which was also found by Stylidis et al. (2015) in their study of residents and tourists’ destination image in Eilat, Israel. In that case the authors argued that Eilat “was developed over the years with an eye to tourism while neglecting the residential areas” that might be the reason behind the difference (Stylidis et al., 2015, pp. 712). In this case however, Guildford is not a recognised tourism destination which might explain that the difference between hosts and visitors scores is smaller than in Eilat’s study (5.1 - 4.4 for cognitive image and 5.4 - 4.9 for affective image out of seven points). Therefore, the difference between hosts’ and visitors’ destination image could be explained by other factors, such as: novelty since most visitors can enjoy exploring while for the residents most sites are already familiar; or the age group because according to TSE (2007) Surrey and Guildford have a special appeal for older travellers compared to young
students (for more information about this see section 3.2.3 - Tourism in Surrey and the town of Guildford). The standard deviation remains around very similar ranges compared to the host’s questionnaire (0.7 to 0.9) and the distribution of the answers as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q10 - Visitors’ overall experience</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11 - Visitors’ overall social experience</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12 - Visitors’ overall tourist experience</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 - Visitors’ overall destination image</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.8. Descriptive statistics of Visitors’ questions**

### 8.2 - Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

As explained in the methodology chapter (section 7.3 - Data Analysis), EFA is a crucial step to validate the latent variables used in the SEM (Golob, 2003). Accordingly, the eight questions of the hosts’ questionnaire were included first in the analysis. As noted in section 7.3, the initial evaluation generally conducted in EFA is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement of sampling adequacy which provided a result of 0.753 and suggests that the items should produce an acceptable factorial result as according to Field (2013) results over 0.5/0.6 provide acceptable results. The Barlett’s test of sphericity (Chi-Square of 972 with d.f. = 28) was statistically significant at 0.000 which also suggest the data is adequate for EFA. Accordingly, a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was performed as this is one of the most common ways to conduct EFA when looking at multiple dimensions (Field, 2013).

The analysis suggests that the data is composed of three components (latent variables) with Eigen values of 3.215, 1.361 and .971 based on Jolliffe (1986) criteria of Eigen values over 0.7. Based on Kaiser’s criteria however, the most common way to assess EFAs according to (Field, 2013), it is expected that the sum of squares loadings represented by Eigen values are higher than 1 to be constituted as a component. An Eigen value of 1 is equivalent to explain more than “1/number of questions” of the total variance over the previous component (with 8 questions is 12.5%). Therefore, it is generally easier to pass that threshold when more questions are available, and thus, the percentage needed to reach 1 Eigen value decreases.
This is one of the reasons why latent variables are normally composed of three or more questions and most components have the same number of questions. In this case component number three is in an unfavourable position having only two questions that is one less than the others. Hence, just one more question in any component would decrease the threshold to 11% and Kaiser’s criteria would be reached. Due to these issues Jolliffe (1986) argued that Kaiser’s criteria is too strict and factors should be extracted with Eigen values over 0.7.

Cattell (1966) proposed an alternative criterion to select factors based on a Scree plot, which according to Stevens (2002) is a fairly reliable method when samples sizes are over 200 cases. Cattell (1966), proposed that the point of inflection in the curve presents the cut-off point for selecting factors, which in this case occurs after including three factors confirming the previous assessment (see Figure 8.1 below). The total variance explained by these three components is 69.4% that is deemed as acceptable according to Field (2013). After rotation, factor one associated to destination image accounts for 25.5% of the variance, factor two that is related to destination knowledge accounts for 24.5% and factor three related to motivation to host is responsible for 19.4%. This represents an equilibrated result as all factors account approximately 19% to 25% of the variance. The items communalities when extracted are in the range of 0.56 to 0.84 that is also deemed as acceptable. No collinearity was observed within the data as no correlation between the items exceeded 80% (Field, 2013).

![Scree Plot](image)

Figure 8.1. EFA scree plot
The loadings of the rotated matrix provided below in Table 8.9 present how the EFA is grouping the questions under each of the three components. These groups fit perfectly with the constructs used to develop the questionnaire, therefore the EFA confirms some of the theory and logic behind the development of these questions. As explained by Churchill (1979, pp. 70), convergent validity is “the extent to which the measure correlates with other measures designed to measure the same thing”. Consequently, all the loadings in the matrix are well above the threshold which satisfy convergent validity, loadings under 0.40 were excluded from the analysis as recommended by Hatcher (1994).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Image</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 - Encourage visits</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 - Show visitors around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 - Overall destination image</td>
<td>.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 - Opinion of local attractions</td>
<td>.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6 - Opinion about living in Guildford</td>
<td>.805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 - Overall destination knowledge</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 - Knowledge of local attractions</td>
<td>.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 - Experiential knowledge</td>
<td>.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>.728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.9. Rotated components matrix and Cronbach Alpha values

In terms of discriminant validity, there are no major cross loadings or correlations between the factors over the threshold of 0.7 (Field, 2013). According to Churchill (1979, pp. 70), discriminant validity is “the extent to which the measure is not simply a reflection of other variables, since scales that correlate too highly may be measuring the same rather than different constructs”. In terms of reliability the consistency between the measurements of each of the components being close to each other within each group is also an initial proof of the reliability of the instrument (Field, 2013). Additionally, the Cronbach Alpha measurement for the three components had values above the cut-off point of 0.5 (Field, 2013). Component number one associated to destination image had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.735, factor two associated to destination knowledge obtained a result of 0.725 and component three related to motivation to host got a value of 0.728.
In the visitor’s questionnaire the three questions that aimed to measure visitors’ experience (questions 10, 11 and 12) were used to conduct the EFA. Accordingly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement of sampling adequacy was 0.669 which is over the threshold of 0.5/0.6 (Field, 2013) and the Barlett’s test of sphericity (Chi-Square of 257.634 with d.f. = 3) was statistically significant at 0.000, which also suggest the data is adequate. As a result, a principal component analysis was conducted in the same manner as it was done with the hosts’ data. The analysis confirmed that the three questions conform just one latent variable with 1.930 Eigen value that explains 64.3% of the total variance. The communalities are between 0.58 and 0.69 which are deemed acceptable (Field, 2013). Since this EFA found just one component there is no ‘rotated matrix’, the component matrix however, provides loadings from 0.76 to 0.83 that are within acceptable ranges (Field, 2013). In terms of reliability the Cronbach alpha indicator of the experience component is 0.709 which is also above the threshold of 0.5 (Field, 2013).

**8.3 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

As noted in the methodology chapter for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage (section 7.3.2) CFA aims to evaluate the shared variance between items and the latent variables using a structure previously decided by theory, which in this case was provided in the theoretical framework (Golob, 2003). This structure is the main difference between CFA and EFA where the variables are completely free to associate. In order to test these structured relationships a number of fitness indices and factor loadings are used which were discussed in section 7.3.2. Consequently, a CFA using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE), which is one of the most common estimation techniques when conducting SEM (Jackson et al., 2009) was run in SPSS AMOS 23 software. Different from the EFA presented in the previous section (8.2), the CFA is done using all the latent variables in the model which includes hosts and visitors’ latent variables as seen in Figure 8.2 below. This figure also provides the standardised coefficients between the latent variables which suggest good discriminant validity since none of factors have a correlation over 0.8 and acceptable convergent validity because all factor loadings are over 0.4 (Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010).
Chapter 8. Survey results

Figure 8.2. Results of CFA with standardised coefficients

Table 8.10 below provides additional measures of validity and reliability. Composite Reliability (CR) in all factors is over the cut-off point of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2006) that confirms the results obtained by the Cronbach Alpha in the EFA. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) that is another method to evaluate convergent validity is just below the threshold of 0.5 in two of the constructs (0.493 & 0.472). According to Malhotra & Dash (2011) however, this measure tends to be too strict, which was confirmed by Huang (2013) who argued that 0.4 is acceptable if CR is over 0.6 that is the case in this sample. Additionally, according to Hair et al. (2006), the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) should be smaller than the AVE to reach an acceptable level of discriminant validity that is also confirmed in this sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest. Knowledge</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>0.493</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Host</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>0.622</td>
<td>0.358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors’ Experience</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.10. Summary of validity and reliability measurements

Below Table 8.11 provides the square root of AVE in bold (diagonal) and below the matrix of standardised correlations between the variables. Here is possible to see that as noted earlier in Figure 8.2, no value is over the threshold of 0.8 (Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010). All these results are significant with p-values under 0.01 and none of the square roots of AVE is larger than
any of the correlations between the variables, which according to Hair et al. (2006) also suggest good discriminant validity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H. Dest. Image</th>
<th>H. Knowledge</th>
<th>Mot. to Host</th>
<th>V. Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest. Knowledge</td>
<td>0.424***</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Host</td>
<td>0.598***</td>
<td>0.419**</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors’ Experience</td>
<td>0.225**</td>
<td>0.275**</td>
<td>0.225**</td>
<td>0.687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.01; * p<0.05; (ns) non-significant

Table 8.11. Square root of AVE and standardised correlations between the variables

In terms of model fit according to Hu & Bentler (1998), it is good practice to report a number of indices that have different measurement capabilities (e.g incremental indices such as CFI and residual-based indices like SRMR). Based on a review of 212 articles conducted by Jackson et al. (2009), Table 8.12 below presents a summary of the most commonly used indicators that provide an equilibrated mix of different types of indices. The cut-off points have been taken from the same article and Jackson et al. (2005). Overall the model performs well under all those indicators which suggest good overall fit (see table 8.12). The only index that is under the cut-off point is the Chi-square p-value that indicates that the model should be rejected. However, according to Hox & Bechger (2007) this measurement is almost always significant with large sample sizes like the ones used in SEM, and thus, it should not be a considered (the alternative measurement is Chi-square/df which is within the cut-off point). Based on these findings no variable was deleted or adjusted from the original model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common Fitness Indices</th>
<th>CFA Model</th>
<th>Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square/df (Cmin/df)</td>
<td>2.099</td>
<td>&lt; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square p-value</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>&gt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative fit Index (CFI)</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted GFI (AGFI)</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>&gt; .9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-Mean-Square Residual</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RMR)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised Root-Mean-Square Residual (SRMR)</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>&lt; .08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-mean-square error of Approximation (RMSEA)</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>&lt; .06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.12. List of model and threshold fitness indices
8.4 - Structural Model

As discussed in the methodology chapter for this 2nd stage (Section 7.3 - Data Analysis) based on the research question, the characteristics of the model, the data and the needs of the thesis it was decided to use a Covariance Based SEM (CB-SEM) with ML estimation. This analysis was conducted in three steps to introduce the two single item variables and measure its mediation effects, change in coefficient and fitness indices. As a result, Figure 8.3 below presents the paths’ standardised coefficients for the core model using all latent variables taken from the theoretical framework chapter (section 6.8). The lines in dots are non-significant paths over a p-value of .05. The overall fitness statistics reported in the previous section remained unchanged, as well as, all the factor loadings. According to Bainter & Bollen (2014 pp. 1), this suggests that there is no interpretational confounding that is when “the empirical meaning of a latent construct departs from the meaning intended by a researcher”, and adds support to the model’s construct validity. For a full diagram with all the model loadings and coefficients please see Appendix B.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8.3. Theoretical model with path coefficients**

Overall these results indicate that hosts’ destination knowledge is the only and most powerful variable influencing their visitors’ experience of the destination (when controlled by their destination image and motivation to host). Here is also possible to note that there are no
mediation effects between hosts and visitors’ variables. This is the full model presented in chapter six, however as noted in section 6.2.2 - Measurement of destination image, visitors’ overall destination image was measured using one single item instead of a latent construct which still needs to be included to test the remaining hypotheses. Introducing this single dependent item at this stage will also allow the model to test for its mediation effects. Figure 8.4 below provides a diagram and estimates when including question five.

![Diagram of structural model with visitors’ overall D. Image as mediating variable](image)

From Figure 8.4 above it is possible to see three new significant paths from hosts’ destination image and destination knowledge towards Q5 (visitors’ overall destination image), and then from Q5 towards visitors’ experience. These new paths suggest a full mediation from hosts’ knowledge to visitors’ experience through Q5 and an indirect effect from hosts’ destination image towards visitors’ experience. The former is believed because previously there was a significant effect between hosts’ destination knowledge to their visitors’ experience, which decreased from .20 to .10 and became non-significant with the introduction of the mediator, while its path to Q5 became significant with a coefficient of .15. The latter however, suggests only an indirect effect between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience, because the path between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience was not significant before the inclusion of the mediator. Both of these assumptions were tested by
bootstrapping the sample which confirmed that both of the indirect effects are significant, for more details please see Table 8.13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Direct effect</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Knowledge-&gt;Visitors’ D. Image-&gt;V.exp</td>
<td>.101(ns)</td>
<td>.180**</td>
<td>.281**</td>
<td>Full mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts’ Dest Image-&gt;Visitors’ D. Image-&gt;V.exp</td>
<td>-.037(ns)</td>
<td>.174**</td>
<td>.137(ns)</td>
<td>Indirect effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.01; * p<0.05; (ns) non-significant

Table 8.13. Direct and indirect effects of mediation

These results are interesting because hosts’ destination image became a valuable variable that has a positive effect on their visitors’ destination image and in that way also on their experience. This implies that “destination image” can at some extent be transferred from hosts to visitors that was something expected in literature and practice but was not previously tested. Additionally, visitors’ destination image (Q5) became a crucial item in this relationship, which confirms previous research about the importance of destination image in the tourist experience discussed in chapter six. On the other hand, “motivation to host” remains having very little influence in the model since all its paths are not significant. In terms of model fitness, the inclusion of this mediating item had a very minor negative impact on the indicators presented in the previous section but remained well above all the thresholds levels (Cmin/df 2.310<3; GFI .961>.9; CFI .960>.9; TLI .941>.9; SRMR .0364<.8; RMSEA .056<.06). For a full diagram with the model loadings and coefficients please see Appendix B.

The final step in the analysis is the inclusion of the variable ‘number of visits’ to test for the circular relationship between the hosts’ variables proposed in chapter six. Number of visits was calculated from question one in the hosts’ questionnaire which asked students to write on average how many visits they received in a year. Based on literature presented in chapter six and the interviews of the first phase of the research, it is expected that: motivation to host has a positive impact on the number of visits they receive -> which should positively impact their level of knowledge (the host learns by receiving visits) -> this improves their destination image and -> then again, their motivation to host increases. It is important however, to consider the issues associated to non-recursive models discussed in the 2nd methodology chapter (section 7.3.3). In particular, the fact that conceptually the causality of these models
is controversial and that it estimates can be more unstable than the ones from recursive models.

Taking this into account, ‘hosts’ number of visits’ was introduced as a single variable in the model without the need to use instrumental variables to identify it (this is generally necessary for direct reciprocal relationships). Overall the model remained unchanged by this new variable which is a good sign that no specification error was spread throughout the model. The two new paths that were created, to and from number of visits, became significant with estimates of .16 and .15 (for further details please see Figure 8.5 below). In terms of stability, the non-recursive sections of the model reached a Stability Index (STI) of .078 which is within the threshold of -1 and 1 proposed by Fox (1980) and suggest the model is sufficiently stable to produce accurate results (this index was developed especially for these type of cases). Overall model fitness slightly declined but remained within cut-off points apart from the RMSEA that reached .066 that is slightly above the recommended value of .06 (Jackson et al., 2009). Browne & Cudeck (1993) however, suggests that RMSEA values under .08 are still reasonable to accept and only values over .1 should not be considered (Cmin/df 2.863<3; GFI .946>.9; CFI .933>.9; TLI .905>.9; SRMR .046<.8; RMSEA .066<.06). For a full diagram with the model loadings and coefficients please see Appendix B.
These results also confirm the circular relationship between the hosts variables proposed in the theoretical framework (section 6.7.4). There are several implications of this relationship that are further discussed in the next chapter. However, at a glance it is possible to see from the diagram that now “motivation to host” has a direct effect on another variable (number of visits) through which has an indirect path to destination knowledge and their visitors’ destination image. Likewise, “hosts’ number of visits” also has an indirect path to the visitors’ variables. All of these indirect effects although distant and therefore small, were tested using Bootstrapping and were found to be significant. Table 8.14 below provides a detail of these effects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Standardised Indirect effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to host -&gt; N. of visits -&gt; D. Knowledge</td>
<td>.024*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to host -&gt; N. of visits -&gt; D. Knowledge -&gt; Visitors’ D. Image</td>
<td>.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits -&gt; D. Knowledge -&gt; Visitors Experience</td>
<td>.043*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits -&gt; D. Knowledge -&gt; Visitors’ D. Image</td>
<td>.036*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits -&gt; D. Knowledge -&gt; Hosts’ D. Image</td>
<td>.062*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits -&gt; D. Knowledge -&gt; Motivation to host</td>
<td>.064*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.01; * p<0.05; (ns) non-significant**  

Table 8.14. List of indirect effects

To finish this section, Table 8.15 below provides a detail of all the observed variables factor loadings before and after adding the each of the two single items. Here is possible to see that overall the loadings remained largely unchanged by the inclusion of the variables apart from a small change on the cased in bold. Motivation to host loadings changed slightly towards encouraging visits when the variable number of visits was introduced which is explained by the clear link between encouraging visits and receiving visitors. Likewise, there was a small change in visitors’ experience loadings when visitors’ overall destination image was introduced as a mediating variable. In this case there was a small switch from social experience to tourist experience that can be explained by the relation of destination image and touristic experiences. These two cases and its implications are further discussed in the next chapter, however, the fact that loadings remained mostly unchanged suggest that there is no interpretational confounding (Bainter & Bollen, 2014).
Chapter 8. Survey results

8.5 - Hypotheses testing

Based on the previous results this section presents the resolution of the hypotheses proposed in the theoretical framework. Further discussion of the potential reasons and implications behind the hypotheses’ results, is presented in the next chapter. A summary of the total standardised effects and if the hypotheses was supported by the results is provided in Table 8.17 at the end of the section.

**Hypothesis 1**: Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their visitors’ experience.

This hypothesis was tested with and without visitors’ overall destination image as a mediating variable. Without the mediator hosts’ knowledge was found to be the only significant variable in the model with a standardised coefficient of .20 (p-value of .007). When the mediating variable was introduced, hosts’ destination knowledge direct effect decreased to .10 and became non-significant (p-value .11). However, it’s indirect effect became significant with a coefficient of 0.187 and a p-value of .003, which represents a full mediation and a total effect of .284 (p-value of .009). For details of all the standardised values of the model direct, indirect and total effects see Table 8.16 below.
**Chapter 8. Survey results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Direct effect</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Hosts’ D Knowledge -&gt; Visitors experience</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hosts’ D Knowledge -&gt; Visitors’ Dest Image</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hosts’ D Knowledge -&gt; Hosts’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.409</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Hosts’ D Knowledge -&gt; Motivation to host</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.420</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hosts’ Dest. Image -&gt; Visitors’ experience</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hosts’ Dest. Image -&gt; Visitors’ Dest image</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hosts’ Dest. Image -&gt; Motivation to host</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Visitors’ Dest Image -&gt; Visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Motivation to host -&gt; Visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Motivation to host -&gt; Visitors’ Dest Image</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Motivation to host -&gt; Number of visits</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Number of visits -&gt; Dest. knowledge</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Status, S= supported hypothesis; NS not supported; IS indirect support

All values are standardised and were taken from the last model with all single variables included.

Table 8.16. Summary of all the standardised relationship direct and indirect effects

**Hypothesis 2:** Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their visitors’ destination image

This hypothesis was tested through the introduction of visitors’ overall destination image as a single variable. Based on the results of the analysis it is possible to suggest that hosts’ destination knowledge has a positive direct effect on their visitors’ destination image with a standardised coefficient of .157 and a p-value of .014.

**Hypothesis 3:** Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their own destination image

The results presented in the previous section also support this hypothesis with a standardised coefficient of .41 (p-value of .000) that suggests a strong relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge and their own destination image.

**Hypothesis 4:** Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their motivation to host.

This hypothesis was also supported by the results with a standardised coefficient of .20 and p-value of .001 (direct effect) in all the cases tested. When the indirect path through hosts’
destination image is included (.216, p-value .009) the total effect reach .420 (p-value .016) see Table 8.16 above.

**Hypothesis 5**: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their visitors’ experience.

Initially this relationship was not supported due to a low standardised direct effect of .09 and p-value of .29. However, when introducing visitors’ overall destination image as a single mediating item, hosts’ destination image gained a positive indirect effect of .180 (p-value of .004) through the mediating variable (the direct effect became even smaller and remained non-significant). Therefore, it could be argued that hosts’ destination image has a positive influence on their visitors’ experience, though this influence is indirect (see Table 8.16 above).

**Hypothesis 6**: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their visitors’ destination image.

This hypothesis was tested through the inclusion of visitors’ overall destination image as a single variable. The results support this relationship with a standardised coefficient of .18 and p-value of .018.

**Hypothesis 7**: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their motivation to host.

Based on the results this hypothesis was supported with a coefficient of .52 (p-value of .000). This is the second strongest relationship in the model (the first one is the link between visitors’ destination image and experience).

**Hypothesis 8**: Visitors’ destination image positively influences their experience.

According to the results this is the strongest relationship in the model with a coefficient of .68 (p-value of .000).
**Hypothesis 9:** Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ experience.

**Hypothesis 10:** Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ destination image.

These two hypotheses were not supported by the results with standardised coefficients of .02 (p-value of .811) and .09 (p-value of .194) respectively. These results did not change with the introduction of any of the single variables.

**Hypothesis 11:** Motivation to host positively influences the number of visits received

This hypothesis was supported by the results with a standardised coefficient of .16 and p-value of .011.

**Hypothesis 12:** Hosts’ number of visits positively influences their destination knowledge

This relationship was also supported by the data with a coefficient of .151 (p-value of .16).

The table below provides a summary of the total effects and the status of all the hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their own Dest. Image</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their motivation to host</td>
<td>.420</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences their visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>Indirect support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences their visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences their motivation to host</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Visitors’ destination image positively influences their experience</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Motivation to host positively influences number of visits received</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Hosts’ number of visits positively influences their Dest. knowledge</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All values are standardised and were taken from the last model with all single variables included*

Table 8.17. Summary of hypotheses resolution and total effects
8.6 - Summary and conclusion

The chapter presented the main results from a descriptive and SEM analysis of the survey data and its main measures of validity, reliability and fitness indices. The chapter began by providing some initial measurements which included some demographics and a comparison of them to the whole population of students at the University of Surrey and previous literature. This comparison was useful to evaluate the representativeness of the data collection and the case of University of Surrey representativeness compared to other cases. Overall based on this comparison it could be argued that the level of representativeness of the data and the case were high although there were some slightly problematic areas that were further discussed. These initial measurements also included the data screening that in summary deleted all cases (dyad) with more than 5% of missing answers and there was no imputation of data. In terms of distribution all items were found to be normally distributed based on a threshold of 2 and -2. However, a very mild multivariate normality was found based on Mardia’s critical ratio of 5 (Bentler, 2005), while the data presented a value of 7.755, which according to Hair et al. (2006) is negligible in large sample sizes over 200 cases. Later a quantitative content analysis of the only open question in the survey provided further measures of validity of the destination image latent variable. The first section finished with a presentation of the descriptive statistics which in brief noted that: visitors tend to have a better opinion of the Guildford than the residents also found by Stylidis et al. (2015); the questions about the local attractions obtained the lowest scores in the destination image and knowledge constructs; and motivation to host was the most disperse construct.

The second half of the chapter presented the results of the measurement model which included the EFA and CFA and provided several measurements of validity and reliability previously discussed in the 2nd methodology chapter section 7.3. Overall the measurements were within the proposed thresholds that suggests that the instrument measures what it intended to measure. Likewise, the factors found in the EFA fit the expected ones based on the literature presented in the theoretical framework which is also a proof of validity of the study. The CFA fit indices were also within the proposed cut-off points that implies that the model fits well the data sufficiently well. Once these basic requirements for conducting SEM
were reached, the structural model presented the paths estimates for the whole model, which were developed in three steps to test for the mediation effects of introducing two single items (visitors’ destination image and number of visits). The fitness indices were re-evaluated in each of these steps and the overall results were briefly discussed. In summary visitors’ destination image was found to mediate the relationship between hosts’ destination image and their visitors experience; the circular relationship between the hosts’ variables was significant; and hosts destination knowledge had the strongest influence in their visitors’ experience of all the hosts’ variables. The last section of the chapter provided the resolution of all the hypotheses in the model which also included a brief discussion. Overall as seen in Table 8.17 in the previous section only two hypotheses out of 12 were not supported by the data.
Chapter 9. Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the results and findings for the whole of the research project. As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis the dominant method in this project was the survey to hosts and their visitors because being the second method it also absorbs the findings from the first stage. Therefore, this chapter is structured based on the four major groups of hypotheses presented in the theoretical framework and tested in the previous chapter. This division represent four groups of relationships between the key constructs of the study that integrates the findings from the first (semi-structured interviews) and second phases (questionnaire survey). These groups were originally organised in the theoretical framework (section 6.7) based on the relationships created by the three main hosts’ constructs and the relationships associated to the feedback loop. In this chapter however, the title of each section (group of hypotheses), was changed to better describe the main topics found after analysing the results and findings.

Consequently, the chapter begins by discussing the four hypotheses that tested the relationships between hosts’ destination knowledge and the other constructs in the model, which was titled ‘the importance of destination knowledge’. It continues by discussing the four hypotheses that measured the relationships between hosts and visitors’ destination image, which was titled ‘destination image transfer and its importance for tourism research’. The third group was based on the two hypotheses between motivation to host and the visitors’ variables and was named ‘indirect influence of motivation to host’. The last group included the two hypotheses associated with ‘number of visits’ and the feedback loop and it was titled ‘a virtuous circle of hosting’. Regular reference is made to the theoretical framework chapter and the findings from the qualitative phase, in order to, explain and contrast the results with previous literature and real life examples. The chapter finishes by providing a summary and conclusion.
9.1 - The importance of destination knowledge

This section discusses the first four hypotheses of the study, which evaluate the relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge (as the independent variable) and the other constructs in the model as dependant variables. There are two clear groups within this section: the first two hypotheses discuss the relationships that hosts’ destination knowledge has with their visitors’ experience and destination image; and the last two hypotheses discuss it relationships with its own destination image and motivation to host. These two groups are useful in noting the differences between measuring constructs within the same person or between difference people (hosts->visitors). As seen in Table 8.17 in the previous chapter all the hypotheses measured within the same person (hosts or visitors) were supported by the data with moderate to strong coefficients; however, the relationships between hosts and visitors showed substantially lower coefficients and two un-supported hypotheses. This suggests that inter-personal influence is of course not as strong as the impact we have on ourselves, but it might also suggest that there are differences in the way respondents interpret their feelings about the constructs and the scales. This does not refer directly to response bias because the questions were tested exhaustively, instructions were clear and respondents seem to answer truthfully. Nevertheless, there can still be personal differences in the way people understand their feelings towards something, and interpret the values of the Likert scales used in this study. For example, for some people a great experience is a four, and a five is something they have never experienced in their lives, for others a regular experience is a four and an experience without major problems is a five. These feelings are adjusted when the measurements are made within one person but can decrease the power of the relationships between the measurements in different people. This is important to consider when discussing the following two hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1:** Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their visitors’ experience.

Based on the results presented in the previous chapter there are grounds to believe that hosts’ destination knowledge has a positive influence on their visitors’ experience. This was tested with and without their visitors’ destination image as a mediator of the relationship.
Without the mediator hosts’ destination knowledge was the only significant host’s variable affecting their visitors’ experience with a standardised coefficient of 0.20 and a p-value of 0.007. When their visitor’s overall destination image was introduced as a single mediating variable, hosts’ knowledge direct effect fell to 0.10 and became non-significant; however, its’ indirect effect became significant with a coefficient of 0.187 and a p-value of 0.003, which represents a full mediation and a total effect of 0.284 (p-value of 0.009).

These results suggest that hosts’ destination knowledge is the most important of the residents’ attributes that DMOs should take into consideration when trying to influence visitors’ experience. This was already hinted by the discussion of VFR marketing campaigns presented in section 6.6.1 and findings from tour-guiding literature in section 6.6.2. Hence for example Destination Melbourne’s manager stated that “the hosts’ local knowledge can influence the VFR experience much more than any destination marketing campaign” (in Backer, 2014, pp. 6). Likewise, as noted in section 5.5 by Katie one of the interviewees:

“For instance, when my mum came I really didn’t know much about Guildford, it was this small town, we didn’t know where to go, where to eat, where to get anything. But then when she came in January it was easier, she also liked it better, she saw the city in a different way, because I knew where to take her or not to take.”

Within the hosts’ destination knowledge latent variable there were three questions that aimed at measuring different aspects of destination knowledge discussed in section 6.3.1 - Measurement of destination knowledge. The question with the highest loading asked for hosts’ knowledge of the local attractions (loading of 0.82), which aimed at measuring hosts’ touristic knowledge of the destination. The second one was hosts’ overall subjective knowledge of the destination (as defined by Wong & Yeh, 2009 in section 6.3) with a loading of 0.73 and the last question aimed at measuring hosts’ experiential knowledge (Sharifpour et al., 2014) and had a loading of 0.53 (this question asked hosts to mark from a list of nine attractions the ones that they have already visited). Although this might indicate that experiential knowledge is less important than hosts’ subjective perception of their knowledge, it might also be a problem associated to the different types of scales used in this construct and the list of attractions provided to the participants.
Nonetheless, it is clear that hosts’ knowledge about the local attractions is a crucial aspect to take into consideration and confirms further assumptions of VFR marketing campaigns reviewed in section 6.6.1. For example, Mildura’s (Australia) VFR campaign manager stated that “after the residents became much more aware of the town’s attractions they acted as knowledgeable tourism marketing ambassadors” (in Backer 2014, pp. 6). Likewise, Nickerson & Bendix (1991) in their study of VFR in South Dakota also recommended to educate the residents about the local attractions. Consequently, Morrison et al. (2000) confirmed this view in their study of 221 DMOs when they found that the most common way to conduct marketing for the VFR segment is by educating the residents about the local attractions and stimulate them to encourage visits. This was also observed during the interviews, and mentioned in section 5.4 when Marlieke a visitor from the Netherlands was asked if her host influenced her view of Guildford she answered:

“I think a lot because I think what I like so far is that we went to this super lovely walk which changed my perspective in a positive way, because when I arrived I thought it was just an outskirt-sy kind of town and actually is really nice and vibrant and has lots of really nice nature that I didn’t see that when just arrived. So if I wouldn’t have gone on this walk I wouldn’t have seen the country side around and a fox! I saw a fox!”

The walk this participant refers to is one of the multiple walks available in the Surrey Hills, which was included in the list provided in question ten (experiential knowledge) and according to Visit Guildford, (2013) is listed as one of the city’s main attractions. The fact that the question measuring hosts’ knowledge of the local attractions obtained the highest loading in the latent variable, confirms these facts and specially DMOs suspicions that residents’ knowledge about the local attractions is a crucial element affecting the visitors’ experience at the destination.

In terms of descriptive statistics however, hosts’ destination knowledge in Guildford obtained the lowest average score of all the constructs in the model. This might be due to students’ lack of interest or the fact that most of them reside in the city for a relatively short period of time (around three years) which is little compared to other residents. For example, residents
in Kavala Greece surveyed in Stylidis (2012) resided on average 32 years. Nevertheless, considering the importance that hosts destination knowledge has on their visitors’ experience, it should be of importance for the local DMO to increase the students’ level of knowledge of Guildford. Within the destination knowledge construct, the question about the local attractions, although it has the highest loading, it obtained the lowest score compared to hosts’ experiential knowledge and their overall knowledge of Guildford. This was the case in all the constructs in the model that included a question about the local attractions (see section 8.1.4). Thus, in terms of destination image the local attractions also obtained the lowest scores in the latent construct, and visitors’ touristic experience obtained the lowest scores compared to visitors’ overall and social experience. This might be due to Guildford not being generally recognised as a known tourist destination, but it could also be associated to the impact that hosts have on their visitors’ experience which again should be critical for the local DMO.

**Hypothesis 2:** Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their visitors’ destination image

Visitors’ overall destination image was introduced as a single mediating variable to test this hypothesis. The results suggest that hosts’ destination knowledge has a direct positive impact on their visitors’ overall destination image with a coefficient of 0.157 (p-value 0.014). Visitors’ overall destination image was also found to be a full mediator of the relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge and their visitors’ experience (mentioned in the previous hypothesis). Although, according to Field (2013) a coefficient of 0.157 is not a strong effect, it has to be taken in consideration that this was calculated using one single item as dependent variable (generally more items are able to explain more variance); and as noted in the introduction these were questionnaires completed by different people which tend to dilute the effect.

The results confirm VFR marketing campaigns’ assumptions discussed in section 6.6.1 and tour guiding literature discussed in section 6.6.2. According to section 6.6.1, VFR marketing campaigns often rely on the idea that teaching residents about the local attractions improves their destination image, which then also improves their visitors’ experience and destination
image (Backer, 2014; Morrison et al., 2000). In this case hosts’ destination image was used as a control variable, therefore, it is possible to infer that the mechanism through which hosts’ knowledge affect their visitors’ destination image is not only through their own destination image (this relationship is discussed in hypothesis 6). Based on tour guiding literature in section 6.6.2, this effect is more likely to be associated to hosts becoming better “tour-guides” of their own city, as according to Dahles (2002) tour-guides knowledge can have a strong influence on travellers’ destination image.

This mechanism is similar to the way in which hosts’ destination knowledge affect their visitors’ experience in the previous hypothesis, which is expected due to the mediating effect of visitors’ overall destination image in that relationship. This means that the mechanism is actually stronger (direct) in visitors’ destination image than in its experience. As noted in the round of interviews, VFR experiences combine a ‘touristic’ interaction with the place with a social interaction between hosts and guests that can be far from tourism (also confirmed in Zatori et al., 2017). Therefore, it is understandable that hosts’ destination knowledge has a stronger effect into their visitors’ destination image, which it is more tourism related, than on their visitors’ experience that also has a strong social aspect not associated to the destination. Hence, in summary the host learns about the destination, so s/he becomes a better tour-guide, takes his/her visitors to better attractions (e.g. the Surrey Hills walks mentioned earlier) and can interpret the place better or more positively, which leads to a better destination image for the visitors, and thus, their overall experience improves.

**Hypothesis 3:** Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their own destination image

This hypothesis is supported with a standardised coefficient of 0.41 (p-value of 0.000), which suggests a strong relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge and their own destination image of Guildford. This confirms some of the assumptions used to develop VFR marketing campaigns mentioned in the previous hypothesis, in particular the idea that if the residents learn more about the destination, especially if they explore it more, their destination image should also improve (Dutt & Ninov, 2017). As well as, literature presented in section 6.6.3 where authors like Baloglu (2000), Baloglu & McCleary (1999), Beerli & Martin (2004), Frias et al. (2008) found that destination knowledge, most often as ‘information
sources’, have a positive influence on the same person’s destination image. For example, Baloglu & McCleary (1999, pp. 874) stated that information is “a force which influences the formation of perceptions” and that “the type, quality, and quantity of information would determine the type of destination image is likely to develop”. Likewise, Murhpy et al. (2007, pp. 517) argued that the information tourists obtain about the destination “contributes to the development of destination images”.

The link between the two constructs seems to be clear but the direction of this relationship can be disputed as it could be one of the examples of reciprocal relationships proposed by Berry (1984) in section 7.3.3. The author argues that reciprocal relationships are extremely common in reality and that the assumption that causality is always unilateral and time-lagged is unrealistic in most cases, which has led to wrong interpretations of the way many constructs interact. This is potentially one of those cases because although literature suggests that destination knowledge has a direct influence on destination image, it could be argued that the relationship is also the other way around, so people learn about the destination because they have a positive destination image of it. In this case it was decided to choose the direction of the relationship based on the mentioned literature and the findings from the interviews, which suggested that initially students do not have a strong destination image of Guildford and as soon as they arrive they need to gain knowledge about it that eventually shapes their destination image. For example, as seen in section 5.5 Paul one of the participants who learned about Guildford by receiving visits from his girlfriend stated:

“I’ve to also say that through her I’ve seen a new sight of Guildford, before I just knew the way from my place to the university and to the sports park and that’s it. I’ve learned more with her, we’ve discovered Guildford together and I think I like it more now.”

It could be argued that to have an opinion about a place, first it is necessary to have some level of knowledge because it is impossible to have a perception without any type of input (Stern & Krakover, 1993), which would suggest that knowledge comes first in this relationship. In the case of well-known destinations this initial knowledge comes either through the media, which leads to what Gunn (1972) called ‘induced’ destination image, or through general
knowledge leading to ‘organic’ destination image (see section 6.2). But in the case of less known destinations like Guildford, as seen in the interviews this initial knowledge is often gained in other ways. Knowledge however, is sterile on its own and cannot lead to gain further knowledge without the person’s motivation to learn, which is always linked to a perception (destination image), or other forces like the need to function in the city or in this example receiving visitors. Therefore, it could be possible that if these external forces are controlled, destination image and destination knowledge have a more reciprocal relationship during the time a resident live at a place. This would suggest to a potential limitation of the study but also a new approach for the understanding of destination image that could become interesting future research further discussed in the next chapter.

**Hypothesis 4: Hosts’ destination knowledge positively influences their motivation to host.**

This hypothesis was supported with a direct effect of 0.20 (p-value .001). When the indirect path through hosts’ destination image is included (0.216, p-value 0.009) the total effect reach 0.420 (p-value 0.016). As mentioned above, these findings also confirm the assumptions of VFR marketing campaigns presented in section 6.6.1 that are partly based on the idea that people tend to be more motivated to host (specially to attract visitors) when they learn more about the local attractions. The concept of motivation to host was composed by two questions that asked hosts if they like showing their visitors around and if they encourage visits. The first question has a stronger factor loading of 0.93 (0.89 with feedback-loop) compared to encourage visits that has a loading of 0.61 (0.65 with loop). This suggests that learning about the destination has a stronger impact on hosts’ motivation to show the area, which could be associated with becoming a better ‘tour-guide’ and wanting to show others what they have learned; instead of trying to attract more visitors, which might have to do more with actually wanting to see friends and family (this has been the emphasis in other campaigns mentioned in section 6.6.1, such as, Victoria’s V/line ‘guilt trips’).

This is partly contrary to what most VFR marketing managers believe. According to Morrison et al.’s (2000) study of 221 DMOs the main goals in VFR marketing is to educate residents about the local attractions and to stimulate them to encourage visitors. For example, Mildura’s (Victoria, Australia) marketing manager stated that “after the residents became
much more aware of the town’s attractions, acted as knowledgeable tourism marketing ambassadors by not only encouraging the original visit, but also in encouraging their visitors to make return trips” (in Backer 2014, pp. 6). Although this statement demonstrates DMOs belief that residents’ knowledge of the local attractions will make them better hosts/guides, in their words “knowledgeable tourism marketing ambassadors”, the emphasis is always in attracting more visitors which seems to be secondary in this relationship according to the data and needs to be considered by DMOs.

9.1.1 - Conclusion of the section

Hypothesis one provided a discussion about the importance that hosts’ destination knowledge has on the visitors experience and emphasised the power of the knowledge about the local attractions. This was confronted with the descriptive statistics that indicated that students have a relatively low level of general knowledge of Guildford and very low level of knowledge of the local attractions. Therefore, it was argued that the local DMO should try to improve these two aspects considering that destination knowledge was the most important host’s attribute that affected their visitors’ experience, and the fact that students receive many more visits than other residents (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007).

Hypothesis two provided a discussion of the mechanism by which hosts’ destination knowledge affect their visitors’ destination image and experience. It was argued that by improving hosts’ destination knowledge they become better ‘tour-guides’, which leads to a better visitors’ destination image and experience because the host would interpret the destination more positively and would take visitors to better and more attractions. These findings are important because they emphasise the idea that by increasing hosts’ destination knowledge they tend to become better ‘guides’ of the destination, which is slightly different from the focus of most VFR marketing campaigns that aim that residents attract more visitors (seen in hypothesis four). By the end of the section hypothesis three, provided a discussion of the relationship between destination knowledge and destination image. Although, based in literature and the interviews this relationship was chosen to be unidirectional, there is
Chapter 9. Discussion

evidence to believe it might be reciprocal, which has implications for the limitations of the study and future research discussed in the next chapter, section 10.3.

9.2 - Destination image transfer and its importance for tourism research

This section discusses the results and findings associated to hypotheses five to eight. The first two of them test hosts’ destination image as an independent variable and their visitors’ experience and destination image as dependant variables. Hypothesis number seven discusses hosts’ destination image influence on their motivation to host and hypothesis eight analyses the relation between visitors’ destination image and their own experience. As seen, the section could also be divided in two or three groups depending on the dependant variable but all of them have a discussion in common of the impact of destination image (of hosts or visitors) as the independent variable in the relationship.

**Hypothesis 5: Hosts’ destination image positively influences their visitors’ experience.**

At first this hypothesis was not supported by the data due to an un-significant p-value of 0.29 (standardised effect of 0.09). However, when introducing the visitors’ overall destination image as a single mediating variable the indirect effect between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience became significant with a standardised coefficient of 0.180 and p-value of 0.004.

According, literature analysed in the theoretical framework, VFR marketing campaigns generally expect that hosts’ destination image will positively influence their visitors’ experience, however, the mechanism through which this should happen is never explained. Based on their comments it seems to be assumed this will occur through the ‘interpretation of the place’ that hosts provide to their visitors. According to Humbracht’s (2015) and Dutt & Ninov (2017) findings that VFR hosts often tend to behave as tour-guides (see section 6.6.2), this process could be similar to the ‘interpretation of the place’ normally provided by tour-
guides to their clients. For example, Queensland’s marketing manager stated that “improving residents’ destination image plays to our strengths, focusing on our natural assets and unforgettable experiences, as told by Queenslanders themselves” (Tourism Queensland, 2016, pp. 1). Based on the results obtained though, the interpretation does not seem to be strong enough to produce a direct influence on the visitors’ experience.

This relationship could have also been expected because previous literature has extensively proven that tourists’ destination image has a positive effect on their experience of the destination (Assaker et al., 2010; Bigne et al., 2005; Chi & Qu, 2008; Faullant et al., 2008; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). These authors however, have measured this relationship in the same person (visitors), which can be very different from measuring the relationship between the concepts in different people e.g hosts and guests. These differences should not be attributed to issues associated to this study because hypothesis eight (below) measured both concepts in the visitors and like previous research, also obtained a strong significant association between the variable. Therefore, it seems that the mechanism through which destination image affects experience is different when measured in one person and between hosts and guests. This might be a good example of the differences between the ways in which constructs are associated within one person and different people and the challenges this implies.

Another line of research presented in section 6.7.3, is how Word of Mouth (WOM) seems to mediate the way destination image from one person might influence the experience of another. For example, Morgan et al. (2003) found that negative WOM can have a strong impact on destination image as “dissatisfied visitors spread unflattering comments related to their experiences” (in Jalilvand et al. 2012, pp. 136). Likewise, authors like Echtner & Ritchie (2003), Tasci & Gartner (2007) and Balakrishnan et al. (2011) have also found a positive relationship between WOM and destination image. According to Beiger & Laesser (2004 in Murphy et al., 2007, pp. 518) “the most commonly used information source for all travellers before the travel decision was made was WOM from friends and relatives”. However, Murphy et al., (2007) found that different sources of WOM did not affect travellers’ destination image once they reached the destination, which would imply that travellers’ experience of the place is stronger than previous WOM. Moreover, all of these studies have tested the effect of WOM based on aggregated terms (generally analysing internet threads) and not individually from
one person to another, yet, it is possible this might be the missing link between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience that was not measured in this study.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that by introducing visitors’ overall destination image as a mediating variable linking hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience. The loadings of the visitors’ experience latent variable changed slightly giving more importance to question 12 that measured touristic experience (grew from 0.59 to 0.65) and less to social experience that decreased from 0.67 to 0.61, while question 10 that measured overall experience remained stable. These changes suggest that the destination image construct seems to be more relevant when aiming to improve visitors’ touristic experience, and thus, should be taken in consideration by DMOs when trying to focus on VFR traveller’s touristic experience of the destination.

**Hypothesis 6:** Hosts’ destination image positively influences their visitors’ destination image.

This hypothesis was supported by the data with a standardised coefficient of 0.18 and p-value of 0.018. VFR marketing campaigns have relied heavily on the idea that hosts’ destination image will positively influence their visitors’ destination image before and during the visits (see section 3.6.1). For example, Destination Melbourne see residents as the “gatekeepers and the greatest source of influence over the behaviour of VFR travellers” (Backer, 2014, pp. 6). The assumption that destination image can be transferred from one person to another is not only present in VFR marketing campaigns but is also spread throughout tourism literature. For example, in relation to WOM literature, authors like Balakrishnan et al. (2011), Echtner & Ritchie (2003), Hanlan & Kelly (2005) and Tasci & Gartner (2007) found a positive relationship between WOM and destination image, which was confirmed by Confente’s (2015) literature review about WOM studies. In terms of residents support for tourism, Schroeder (1996) and Stylidis et al., (2017) found that residents’ destination image positively influenced their willingness to recommend the destination and argued that this should also be translated into visitors gaining a better destination image of it. All of these studies however, measured destination image in single individuals (visitors or residents) asking them either how do they believe they gained it (WOM studies) or how they think it will influence visitors (residents’
support for tourism). Nevertheless, this relationship has not been confirmed separately between hosts and their visitors until this study.

The findings from this thesis confirm previous assumptions that destination image can be transferred from one person to another, which provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between VFR hosts and their guests, as well as, the ways in which destination image can be spread. This is important because there is a great body of literature that is based on these assumptions and as noted in the previous hypothesis (number five), the relationships between constructs can change radically if measured in just one person or in different individuals. In relation to the mechanism through which destination image is transferred from hosts to visitors, since previous assumptions in literature were confirmed it could be possible to argued that the mechanism is similar to the one claimed in literature. Therefore, different from the previous hypothesis, in this case hosts’ ‘interpretation of the place’ seem to play a major role for transferring destination image from host to their visitors. This could also be the reason why visitors’ overall destination image creates an indirect relationship between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience, as it could be argued that an interpretation can only directly affect perceptions and not practical experience.

In terms of the strength of the relationship, having measured destination image in both hosts and visitors now it is possible to provide a more accurate evaluation, when compared to previous research using single participant responses (e.g. Hanlan & Kelly, 2005; and Schroeder, 1996) or just common sense (VFR marketing managers). These results were obtained using a single item as a dependant variable and surveying different people that might have diluted the results. However, as mentioned in hypothesis two, according to Field (2013) a coefficient between 0.1 and 0.3 (in this case 0.18) is generally considered as ‘weak/moderate’ that it could be said is relatively weak compared to the general beliefs about this relationship; as noted above by Destination Melbourne residents are the “the greatest source of influence” (Backer, 2014, pp. 6). According to Stylidis et al. (2017), although overall destination image can be applied to both residents and tourists, it seems that visitors tend to be more emotional about their destination image which could also be a reason for the lower relationship between the variables.
Finally, in terms of descriptive statistics, it was interesting to note that on average visitors’ destination image was more positive than their hosts’ destination image. This was also observed by Stylidis et al. (2015) in their study of residents and tourists’ destination image in Eilat, Israel. In that case the authors argued that Eilat “was developed over the years with an eye to tourism while neglecting the residential areas” that might be the reason behind the difference (Stylidis et al., 2015, pp. 712). In this case however, Guildford is mainly a residential town, hence the difference between hosts and visitors’ destination image is lower than in Eilat and should be explained by other factors like: novelty since most visitors can enjoy exploring while for the residents most sites are already familiar, or the age group because according to TSE (2007) Surrey and Guildford have a special appeal for older travellers compared to younger ones (see section 3.2.3). This could be interpreted as a good sign for the local DMO because visitors seem to leave Guildford with a positive impression, but a negative one for the city council because, although this is a residential town the residents are less happy about it than the visitors.

**Hypothesis 7:** Hosts’ destination image positively influences their motivation to host.

This is the second strongest relationship in the model (the first one is the link between visitors’ destination image and their experience in hypothesis eight) and was supported with a coefficient of 0.52 (p-value of 0.000). This is understandable since both constructs were measured in the same person (not from hosts to visitors) and it is expected that hosts will be more motivated to show the area and encourage visits if they have a positive opinion of the destination. Consequently, this is also one of the strongest ideas behind VFR marketing campaigns in particular in terms of attracting visitors. For example, according to one of the DMO managers interviewed by Backer (2014, pp. 5) “there’s no stronger influence (on travellers) than word of mouth recommendations from proud and knowledgeable local ambassadors”.

As expected by DMOs managers, Schroeder’s (1996) study in North Dakota found that residents’ destination image positively influenced their willingness to recommend their home state to potential visitors. Hence, the author suggested “that improving the residents’ image could help make residents better ambassadors for their state or region” (Schroeder, 1996,
This was confirmed by Stylidis et al., (2017) who used a multi-item scale (cognitive and affective) and a single overall question to measure destination image and found a positive link of all the measurements with residents' willingness to recommend the destination. Likewise, Lee & Lai (2018), who measured the influence of two related concepts to destination image (place satisfaction and identity) on residents’ intention to recommend family and friends to visit also found a positive link between the two. As noted in hypothesis four however, due to the lower loading of question two (0.61) that measured hosts motivation to encourage visits, compared to question three (0.93) that measured their motivation to show visitors around; hosts’ destination image seems to have a stronger impact in motivating residents to become better ‘tour-guides’ than actually in their willingness to encourage visits.

**Hypothesis 8:** Visitors’ destination image positively influences their experience.

This is the strongest relationship in the model with a coefficient of 0.68 (p-value of 0.000), which might not be a surprise because within the constructs included in this model this is also the most tested relationship in literature. The link between destination image and experience actually might be one of the most investigated relationships in tourism literature, having been extensively researched by authors like Assaker et al. (2011), Bigne et al. (2005), Chi & Qu (2008), del Bosque & San Martin (2008), Faullant et al. (2008) and Prayag & Ryan (2012). The fact that this study found similar results to previous authors might not contribute much more to the field but validates the methods and results of this research. In particular, this was useful to confirm the fact that hosts’ destination image does not have a direct relation to their visitors’ experience (hypothesis five), is not due to issues associated to this study but to the fact that the relationship between the constructs is different when measured in different people.

**9.2.1 - Conclusion of the section**

The section has discussed several issues associated to destination image and the way is transferred or affects other constructs. First, hypotheses five and eight discussed how destination image can interact very differently with other constructs (in this case visitors’
experience) if these are measured within one person or between different people (e.g. hosts and guests). The great majority of research in tourism has been conducted by measuring constructs within single participants that might lead to expect findings would hold when measured in different people, yet the results from this study point out that this does not seem to always hold true.

Hypothesis six, discussed the importance of confirming that destination image can be transferred from one person to another (in this case from hosts to guests), which is an assumption taken by a large amount of tourism research and practice (including VFR marketing campaigns), however, it was not previously tested directly in different individuals. It was noted though how the relationship strength might not be as strong as expected by previous research. At the end, hypothesis seven confirmed the relationship between destination image and motivation to host, which had already been partly tested in literature using residents’ ‘willingness to recommend’ the destination. These findings validate ‘motivation to host’ as a new construct and provide a new angle of this relationship because it was noted that similarly to hypothesis four, destination image also seems to have a stronger impact in motivating residents to become better ‘tour-guides’ than into attracting visitors.

9.3 - Indirect influence of motivation to host on the visitors’ experience

This section discusses the results and findings of hypotheses 9 and 10, which tested the relationship of motivation to host as an independent variable and their visitors’ experience and destination image as dependant variables. These were the only two hypotheses in the study not supported by the data, and thus, this section discusses the implications and potential reasons behind it.

_Hypothesis 9: Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ destination image._

_Hypothesis 10: Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ experience_
Hypotheses 9 and 10 were not supported by the data with p-values of 0.811 and 0.194 respectively (standardised coefficients of 0.02 and 0.09). Although, as seen in the literature review the idea of hosting is crucial in the VFR experience, as it implies encouraging visits, spending time with visitors and taking care of them, the concept of ‘motivation to host’ was developed specially for this thesis and was not tested before. Therefore, these two hypotheses were created based on the findings from the round of interviews and VFR literature. During the interviews most participants believed that hosts have power to attract visitors and improve their experience and perception of the destination. For example, Julia (see section 5.3) one of the hosts demonstrated their belief in attracting visits when she argued that:

“If every time I speak with them (friends and family) I tell them that Guildford is bad, that is boring, there’s nothing to do and the weather is awful. They wouldn’t be interested in coming but if I’m selling good the city they would like to come.”

Additionally, hosts’ motivation to show their visitors around also seemed to have a positive impact on their visitors’ experience and their destination image, as Barbara one of the visitors explained in section 5.3:

“Well before I came here I actually didn’t know anything about Guildford and I just thought that’s just a very small British little city/town maybe even a little bit … yeah very small and I thought there’s not that much to see but I’m quite impressed and I think (host’s name) enthusiasm sparked a little bit in me.”

VFR marketing campaigns also believe strongly in residents’ power to attract visitors and become local ambassadors (Backer, 2014), for which it could be assumed hosts need to be motivated. Consequently, it could be argued that if residents are more motivated to host, their ‘interpretation of the place’ would be more positive, as well as, the quality and quantity of attractions they show to their visitors, which in turn could lead to a better destination image and experience for their visitors (see section 6.7.3). This mechanism however, might have two problems. First the assumption that motivation to host would lead to a more
positive ‘interpretation of the place’ implies that motivation to host is related to the host’s perception of the place. However, as seen in the qualitative findings (section 5.3) sometimes hosts who have a positive opinion of the destination are not always motivated to host visitors; and hosts who like to receive visitors are sometimes focused mainly on the social aspect of it and might have a bad opinion about the destination. In terms of theory according to Pearce’s (1988) TCL travelling motivation scale discussed in section 6.4 (relaxation the most basic level, safety, relationships, self-esteem and fulfilment the highest level), it could be possible that hosts prioritise their relaxation (often disturbed by visitors as discussed by Shani & Uriely in section 2.3.1) over their relationships that is further in the scale. Therefore, not becoming a pull factor (Dann, 1977) by encouraging visitors (Lee & Lai, 2018), although they might have a very positive image of their place of residence.

Secondly, if the link between hosts’ perception of the destination and their motivation to host exists, as in the case of Walter a student from Germany who noticed how his motivation changed when he changed cities:

“I've always liked to receive friends, I use to promote it and do it more in Munich than in Guildford though, I don’t know why, I get the feeling that I could show more in Munich and here is mainly just about London.”

The link implies a less direct effect between motivation to host and their visitors’ experience through ‘interpretation of the place’ and knowledge of the destination (knowing about the quality and quantity of attractions). Therefore, it should not be unexpected that when including hosts’ destination image and destination knowledge as control variables in the model, the two constructs became significant and explained all the variance (in the visitors’ variables) that motivation to host could have explained. Accordingly, when ‘number of visits’ was introduced in the model creating a feedback loop (discussed in the next section), motivation to host did gain a significant, although small, indirect effect on the visitors’ variables, through ‘number of visits’ and hosts’ destination knowledge, which would be in line with the aforementioned mechanism.
9.4 - A virtuous circle of hosting

This last section of the chapter discusses hypothesis 11 and 12 that were created when the variable ‘number of visits’ was introduced to link motivation to host and their destination knowledge. Consequently, hypothesis 11 evaluates the relationship between motivation to host and ‘number of visits’ and hypothesis 12 discusses the relationship between ‘number of visits’ and hosts’ destination knowledge. The introduction of ‘number of visits’ also created a feedback loop between the hosts’ variables because hosts’ destination knowledge and their destination image are also linked to motivation to host. This section also discusses the implications of this loop, which was re-named as a ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ because unlike a ‘vicious circle’ it tends towards an increase in the values of the variables involved over time. This is discussed in more detailed at the end of the section in the conclusion.

**Hypothesis 11: Motivation to host positively influences the number of visits received**

The hypothesis was supported by the data with a standardised coefficient of 0.16 and p-value of 0.011. These results confirm the power that hosts have in attracting visitors, which was noticed during the interviews (see quotes in hypothesis 9 and 10) and is one of the strongest assumptions used to develop VFR marketing campaigns. For example, according to Mildura’s ‘be a tourist in your own town’ manager, one of the reasons that originated the campaign was the “perception that residents were talking down the town; effectively dissuading friends and relatives from visiting” (Backer, 2014, pp. 5). However, according to the same manager after the residents learned about the local attractions they “not only encouraged the original visit, but also encouraged their visitors to make return trips” (in Backer, 2014, pp. 6). These ideas of teaching residents and stimulate them to encourage visits were also the most common goals of VFR marketing campaigns used by the 221 DMOs surveyed by Morrison et al. (2000).

Therefore, it was expected this relation to be significant, though, in terms of strength a coefficient of 0.16 (considered as moderate by Field, 2013) seem to be lower than most marketing managers expectations. This could be due to three reasons: over-expectations by
the managers, statistical issues associated to the feedback loop and the use of a latent variable that diluted the power of the question about encouraging visits. First in relations to over-expectations, it might be possible that in practical terms motivating residents to encourage more visits is indeed the most effective way to increase visitation, although hosts might not have such a strong power to attract visits. Secondly, non-recursive models like this one, tend to have issues that might underestimate the power of hosts to increase visitation (discussed in section 7.3.3). The third reason is that motivation to host latent variable was created out of two questions, motivation to ‘encourage visits’ and motivation ‘show visitors around’ that might have diluted the power of ‘encourage visits’. This was partly confirmed by a slight increase in the factor loadings of ‘encourage visits’ (from 0.61 to 0.65) and a decrease in ‘show around’ (from 0.93 to 0.89) when ‘number of visits’ was introduced into the model.

**Hypothesis 12: Hosts’ number of visits positively influences their destination knowledge**

This hypothesis was also supported by the data with a coefficient of 0.151 and p-value of 0.16. This relationship was based on the findings from literature presented in the theoretical framework (section 6.7.4) and the interviews discussed in section 5.5. In terms of literature, Dutt & Ninov (2017) article and Dutt’s et al. (2015) chapter “The effects of VFR on expatriates’ destination knowledge” took a qualitative approach to evaluate how the experiences of receiving visitors affected hosts’ level of knowledge for a group of expatriates in Dubai. The authors found evidence that hosts tended to learn about the destination after the visits because of preparing for it or simply by becoming a ‘local tourist’ while joining the activities. Likewise, Griffin (2017, pp. 51) in his study of VFR and immigrants’ adaptation to their new country, found that through receiving visitors, new residents “experiences of Canada widened and evolved”.

During the interviews it was often mentioned by the hosts that they learned about the destination every time they received visits. For example, an engineering student mentioned that “I think I’ve seen the Guildford Castle for the first time when somebody came to visit me”. Hosts seem to learn because of preparing for the visit but also because receiving visitors allowed them to do activities they would not normally do alone as explained by the comment
from the student below (Paul also seen in section 5.5) who was receiving a visit from his girlfriend:

“I've to also say that through her I've seen a new sight of Guildford, before I just knew the way from my place to the university and the sports park and that's it. I've learned more with her we've discover Guildford together and I think I like it more now because we can do things together like restaurants and the Surrey Hills that's really nice”

Confirming the qualitative findings from literature and the round of interviews is important because it validates the results of the survey but also proves the existence of a crucial path in this ‘virtuous circle’ of hosting that until recently was missing from literature. The fact that hosts tend to learn about the destination after receiving visitors is relatively a new topic in VFR literature (Dutt & Ninov’s article was published in 2017) and was the only path in the loop that was neither mentioned previously by other authors nor it has been introduced into VFR marketing campaigns. This study for the first time presented all the literature that supported each of these paths together, as most of them have been discussed separately by various authors, in order to theoretically justify the ‘virtuous circle’ of hosting (in the theoretical framework) and went one step further by testing these relationships quantitatively in one single model.

9.4.1 - Conclusion of the section

The findings from these two hypotheses confirm important aspects considered in VFR literature that have shaped the approach DMOs have taken towards the VFR market. The feedback loop was created by the introduction of ‘number of visits’ that linked motivation to host with hosts’ destination knowledge, and thus, led to the two hypotheses discussed in this section. By creating these two paths all of the hosts’ constructs in the model became interconnected in a circular relationship that could be seen as ‘virtuous circle’ of hosting (see section 7.3.3 and 8.4). There are several implications from this virtuous circle. First every aspect of the host became important to consider for DMOs thinking to target the VFR market. In the past according to Morrison et al. (2000) VFR marketing campaigns focused mainly in
teaching the residents’ about the local attractions and motivate them to encourage visits, which according to the model results are effective methods to target the VFR market. However, the model adds that other elements like destination image and motivation to host (become a local ambassador/tour-guide) are also important and due to the interconnection between all the constructs in the model it could be argued that a more integrated approach that includes all of them might provide better results.

Secondly, the virtuous circle implies that the benefits for DMOs of targeting the residents can last for long periods because it takes time for the constructs in the circle to have an effect on each other. This is particularly related to the ‘number of visits’ variable as it can take a fair amount of time for a resident to attract a visit and then it can take more time for the visit to actually take place. Additionally, any improvement in the virtuous circle’s constructs can spark a chain reaction that can keep the effect of the initial marketing intervention for longer due to the inertia of passing the positive effect from one construct to the other. Moreover, this inertia is always positive because destination knowledge and number of visits cannot decrease its values, which can only lead to a worst case scenario of not having the inertia if the host learns about unpleasant aspects of the destination when receiving visitors.

In the case of university cities like Guildford, this virtuous circle suggests that is important to target students when they arrive into the city, in order to spark this chain of reactions as soon as possible. Due to the slow time-lag of this chain of reactions and students’ short term of residency in their university cities, DMOs’ should target students early into their degrees, in order to take full advantage of the virtuous’ circle benefits. As found by Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis (2007) and this study (section 8.1.4) students tend to receive more visitors than other residents which should increase the speed of the chain or reaction to reach a plateau earlier than with other residents. Additionally, although an integrated approach seems to be more effective, it was demonstrated that students generally have a good opinion about their university cities; however, they lack general knowledge and in particular knowledge about the local attractions, which could be a good starting point for DMOs.

Finally, future research is needed to better understand this virtuous circle, in particular how does the power of the inertia between the variables change during the years of residency in
the city and the number of visitors received. It could be expected based on the qualitative findings from this study’s interviews and Dutt & Ninov’s (2017) that the first visits have a stronger impact in the circle because the host is new and has a low level of destination knowledge. Yet for hosts who have received several visits during a number of years a new visit or learning something new about the destination should have a smaller impact. If this is drawn in a graph with number of visits or years of residency on the x axis and destination knowledge or destination image in the y axis, it should be described as a round curve with a steep start up that leads to a plateau after a number of years of receiving visitors. This again suggests that targeting students early is the best approach so they get to reach the plateau as soon as possible. This is further discussed in the next chapter.

9.5 - Summary and conclusion of the chapter

This chapter was divided in four sections that discussed the results and findings from the hypotheses associated to the three hosts’ constructs and the feedback loop. By discussing the implications of the hypotheses, it was also possible to discuss broader topics such as: the importance of destination knowledge and in particular the knowledge about the local attractions, destination image transfer, the potential mechanisms through which hosts’ affect their visitors experience and the difference between testing relationships within one person or between different people (in this case hosts and guests). The first section of the chapter discussed the importance of hosts’ destination knowledge and emphasised hosts knowledge of the local attractions. This section also used descriptive statistics to discuss the case of Guildford and introduced the reader to the potential mechanism to explain how hosts affects their visitors’ destination image and experience. This section also discussed a potential reciprocal relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge and their destination image which is further discussed in the next chapter.

The second section discussed several aspects associated to destination image and especially the importance of confirming that destination image can be transferred from hosts to their visitors. The section also discussed how constructs’ relationships can be very different
depending if they are measure within the same person or between different people. These was noticed in hypothesis five that measured the relationship between hosts’ destination image their visitors’ experience and hypothesis eight that measured the same relationship within the visitors with very different results. These findings are important because the great majority of research in tourism is done by measuring constructs within single participants which can lead to wrong assumptions when translated to different contexts.

Section three discussed the only two hypotheses in the model that were not supported by the data and were associated to motivation to host. Therefore, the section discussed the rationale behind these paths that led to the same mechanisms explained earlier in sections one and two (interpretation of the place and hosts behaving as ‘tour-guides’). These mechanisms were used to provide two potential reasons behind the results, first it might be possible that motivation to host is completely unrelated to hosts’ perception about the destination, and thus, it does not affect the visitor through their ‘interpretation of the place’. Secondly, if that is not the case, it seems that hosts’ destination image and knowledge are better at explaining the mechanisms through which motivation to host could affect the visitors’ variables. Therefore, when introducing these two constructs in the model (hosts’ destination image and knowledge), there is no variance in the visitor’s variables (visitors’ experience and destination image) left to be explained by motivation to host.

The last section presented the hypotheses associated to the number of visits variable and provided a discussion of the implications of the feedback loop that created a ‘virtuous circle’ of hosting. This virtuous circle implies that all the constructs in the model are important and therefore, an integrated approach to marketing including all the constructs seem to be the most effective way to target the VFR market. Additionally, the effects of improving any of the constructs can trigger a chain of reactions that can make the effects of any marketing intervention have a stronger and longer lasting effects. Finally, throughout the sections it was noted that the fact that most of the hypotheses in the model were supported by the data is evidence of the validity of the results. See Table 9.1 below for a summary of the status and the total effect of all the hypotheses in the study.
### Table 9.1. Summary of status and total effect of all the hypotheses in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their own Dest. Image</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Hosts’ knowledge positively influences their motivation to host</td>
<td>.420</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences their visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>Indirect support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences their visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Hosts’ Dest. Image positively influences their motivation to host</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Visitors’ destination image positively influences their experience</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ experience</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Motivation to host positively influences visitors’ Dest. Image</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Motivation to host positively influences number of visits received</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Hosts’ number of visits positively influences their Dest. knowledge</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All values are standardised and were taken from the last model with all single variables included.
Chapter 10. Conclusion

This chapter aims to discuss the main theoretical and practical contributions of the study, as well as its limitations and future research. In order to achieve this goal, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the original aims and objectives of the project and compares them with its final outcomes. Section two provides a detailed discussion of the contributions of the study that were divided into: theoretical, practical, methodological and contributions to knowledge. Section three discusses the limitations of the study and future research that have arisen from the findings of the study, these two topics are together because many of the weaknesses of the study can also become interesting possibilities for future research.

10.1 - Research objectives

The research objectives of the thesis were presented in the introduction (section 1.3) and were based on the current stage of VFR research and DMOs approach to the VFR market. In this section each of the five objectives proposed for the thesis are reviewed in order to evaluate if the project fulfilled its main goals.

1. Critically analyse the current academic and non-academic literature available about VFR in general and students’ involvement in this market, in order to, provide a solid base for the understanding of the VFR phenomenon and the thesis.

This objective was achieved through the preparation of a detailed review of literature about VFR mobilities, the theories and relationships associated to the main constructs used in the model and DMOs approach to the VFR market. In summary, the literature review chapter found that VFR provides several benefits to the tourism industry and the local communities and constitutes one of the largest travel segments, however, it is also one of the most neglected areas of tourism research. There are several reasons for this situation, VFR is a multifaceted phenomenon that creates confusion in academia and practice, and thus, less
efforts are put into the segment. Additionally, the lack of research in the segment creates a vicious circle of VFR illiteracy because it is hard to conduct research in an area where there are definitional problems and the amount of theory and data is low or inconsistent. This is particularly true about the role that hosts play in the VFR phenomenon, which has been seen a crucial area in VFR, as well as the social aspects between hosts and visitors. VFR research has mainly focused on investigating standard tourism indicators, typologies of VFR travellers and recently into a qualitative analysis of these social aspects. Nevertheless according to Griffin (2013a) there is a pressing need to also quantify these aspects and produce further research about the role that hosts play in this relationship.

The theoretical framework provided further tourism literature to conceptualise the four key constructs used in the model for the second stage of the research. These four constructs were found to be crucial elements in the way hosts affect their visitors’ experience. The theoretical framework also provided literature to help understand the relationship between these constructs and how they are connected to the VFR phenomenon. The literature presented combined with the findings from the first stage of the research were also used to develop the questionnaires used in the second stage of the project. In conclusion, all the literature presented in the theoretical framework together with the literature review chapter helped to situate the whole thesis within tourism literature and in particular within VFR research.

2. Explore the role of students as hosts of visitors at the University of Surrey campus to identify the most relevant issues and situate the context of the study.

This objective was achieved by completing a thorough review of literature about students’ involvement in VFR research (in section 2.6 of the literature review), but most of all through the analysis of the 14 interviews conducted with students and their visitors during the first stage of the research. The findings from the round of interviews revealed four major themes that led the development of the theoretical framework and the questionnaire for the second stage. These four themes were: ‘tourist and social experiences’ which noted the importance of visitors’ experience and emphasised how participants tended to divide them into the social experience between hosts and guests and their touristic interaction with the place. The second theme was named ‘motivation to host’ and was based in all the aspects associated to hosting visitors and students motivation to participate in ‘hosting’, which was seen as their
interest in receiving visitors but also in showing them the area. The third theme was called ‘perceptions as a place to live or visit’ and discussed participants’ views about Guildford, which were divided into their opinion of the city as a place to live or as a place to do tourism.

The last theme was named ‘destination knowledge’ and was based on the importance participants gave to knowledge about the destination in general and in particular about the local attractions and how this seemed to affect the experience of their visitors. As noted these themes became the four main constructs used in the model and strongly influenced the questionnaire development. The findings from the survey provided further insights about students’ involvement in VFR and some specific characteristics of the phenomenon at university cities were confirmed from previous literature. For example, it was also found that students tend to receive more visitors than other residents (in Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007) and that students as other residents also tend to have a worse opinion of the destination compared to the visitors (in Stylidis et al., 2015). In terms of new findings it was seen that their destination knowledge and in particular their knowledge about the local attractions was low compared to their destination image of Guildford.

3. Based on literature and the findings from the study identify the key constructs and develop a theoretical framework for the understanding of the ways hosts affect their visitors’ experience.

This objective was achieved through the analysis of the round of interviews of the first stage and the development of the theoretical framework. As noted above, the interviews led to four themes that were translated into four major constructs, these are: destination knowledge, destination image, motivation to host and visitors’ experience. These findings combined with findings from the literature review led to the development of the theoretical framework that: provided the theoretical foundation for the constructs, the way they have been measured in the past and how literature suggests that these constructs interact with each other. The literature introduced in the theoretical framework was varied bringing a large number of studies from tourism literature and the social sciences into the context of VFR. These key constructs were later measured in the survey and tested using CB-SEM which confirmed the validity of the model and the constructs themselves.
4. Based on the theoretical model test the influence hosts have on their visitors’ experience by measuring the identified key constructs (hosts’ destination knowledge, destination image and motivation to host) and their visitors’ experience.

This objective was achieved by measuring the constructs in the survey and testing the data and the model developed in the theoretical framework using CB-SEM. The results of the model show that the data fit well the model, which is an indicator of the validity of the constructs and the model. The EFA tested if the questions in the survey were able to capture the similarities and differences between the latent variables (constructs) providing acceptable results. Likewise, the CFA that aimed to test if the latent variables found in the EFA remained after structuring them in a set of relationships (the model), provided acceptable fitness indices. Finally, the structured model also obtained acceptable fitness indices from a range of indicators under all the conditions tested. The fact that most of the relationships between the variables (hypotheses) obtained significant results is also an indicator that the model fits well the data-set collected (Hair et al., 2006).

5. Provide a practical contribution to the management of the VFR market by helping DMOs to better understand the possibilities of using the residents as a marketing tool. Understanding the connection between hosts and their visitors and in particular how hosts affect their visitors’ experience will allow DMOs to make better use of the local residents (the hosts).

This objective was achieved throughout the thesis in the first and second stages of the research. Therefore, the main elements to achieve this objective were presented in the previous chapter that discussed all these findings and provided recommendations for DMOs in general and in particular for the local DMO in Guildford. In general, first it was confirmed that many of the approaches generally taken by DMOs towards the VFR market are useful to reach the visitors. For example, it is crucial to teach the residents about the local attractions because this leads to a better visitors’ experience and destination image through ‘interpretation of the place’ and hosts becoming better ‘tour-guides’. Confirming these beliefs is useful because so far these practices were based on DMO managers’ ‘common sense’ assumptions. Secondly, it was also confirmed that residents do have power to attract visitors and if their destination image and destination knowledge improve they will be more
motivated to attract more visits. However, the impact will be stronger in their motivation to behave as ‘tour guides’ instead of attracting visitors, which might be related to other aspects of their personality and not only their opinion or knowledge of the destination. Additionally, it was noted that all the hosts’ variables are associated in a circular relationship named in this study as the ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ that means that an improvement in any of them leads to improvements in the other variables. This means that VFR marketing campaigns can have longer lasting effects and that might be better to target more than just one constructs in the model. In practical terms, in the case of university cities this means that is better to target students early in their degree to obtain all the benefits from the ‘virtuous circle’.

10.2 - Contributions of the study

The second section of this chapter presents the contributions of the study divided in four subsections: theoretical, practical, methodological and contributions of knowledge.

10.2.1 - Theoretical contributions

The study provided the first model to better understand the internal dynamics of the VFR phenomenon and in particular the way in which hosts affect their visitors’ experience. As noted in the literature review chapter, one of the most noticeable characteristics of VFR is its neglected status in tourism research, although it is one of the largest segments and provides many benefits for the tourism industry and the local communities. In particular, it was noted the lack of research about the role of the host in VFR and the social aspects between hosts and guests from a quantitative perspective. This model fills those gaps providing a conceptual model for further understanding the VFR phenomenon, which has been supported by previous theory and tested with hosts and their visitors.

The model proposed in this study also introduces the concept of a ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ that links hosts’ destination knowledge, destination image, motivation to host and number of visits into a positive circular relationship. This ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ is an important part
Chapter 10. Conclusion

of the model because the circular link between the variables can further spread an improvement in any of them creating a chain reaction of positive effects, which increases the length and strength of the effects. Additionally, the inertia of the chain reaction is always neutral or positive because it could be argued that destination knowledge and number of visits cannot decrease its values. Therefore, if a host has a negative experience the chain of reactions will stop but will not create a ‘vicious circle’. This ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ is important in terms of theory because combines the findings from various authors that analysed each path separately (seen in the theoretical framework) together and tested the whole set of relationships together in one single model with successful results.

The results from the study also confirmed several theoretical assumptions found in literature, such as, the fact that destination image can be transferred from one person to another (in this case from hosts to guests). This was assumed in literature based on extensive testing in single individuals but had not been tested directly in pairs where one person influence the other. Destination image is a key concept in tourism research, therefore, confirming that it can be transferred through social relationships it is an important finding that can serve a large number of future studies. Finally, the study also introduced a new construct to VFR research ‘motivation to host’ that agglomerates several aspects of residents’ attitude towards the act of hosting. According to literature, hosting is a crucial aspect of the VFR phenomenon, however, the motivation that residents have towards all of its facets (in this case encouraging visits and showing them the area) was not proposed as one single concept before.

10.2.2 - Practical contributions

Some of the aspects presented in this section were already discussed while revising objective five (practical contribution) in the previous section. Overall the project contributed to practice by confirming the efficacy of several practices that are common when DMOs aim to target the VFR market. In particular, the study confirmed that teaching residents about the destination’s local attractions is crucial for affecting their visitors’ experience in general and specially to affect their touristic experience of it. The project also confirmed that hosts’ motivation to encourage visits can lead to hosts receiving higher number of visits. However,
the study also found evidence that not all the relations worked as expected by DMOs managers. For example, improving hosts’ destination knowledge and destination image seems to lead more to making hosts better ‘local ambassadors’ or ‘tour-guides’ of the destination than to motivating them to attract more visits. Hence, residents’ motivation to encourage visits seems to be linked to their destination image and knowledge but it is also strongly related to other aspects that were not tested in this model such as, their personality/sociability, number of friends or family, accommodation conditions or available time for receiving visitors.

Additionally, due to the ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ the model suggests that it is better to target all the constructs in the model instead of one or two as it is currently done by most DMOs (Morrison et al., 2000). Moreover, the effects from targeting any of the hosts’ constructs can last for long periods due to the delayed chain reaction of the circular relationships between the hosts constructs. For DMOs this ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ means that the money spent in targeting the VFR market can produce more and longer lasting benefits for the local tourism industry and the community compared to other segments. However, due to the delayed reaction in this circular relationship is it also recommended to target residents early after their arrival so the benefits from the circular relationship can reach the destination earlier, especially in the case of temporary migrants like university students. Lastly, DMOs can now be more certain that if they target the VFR market through the residents, there is proven research that their effort will reach their visitors, which is useful for justifying their spending in front of their tourism boards that are often reluctant to target the VFR market (seen in literature review section 2.8 and 2.9).

10.2.3 - Methodological contributions

The study presents several methodological contributions to VFR literature and tourism research in general. From a broader perspective the study measured constructs in pairs of individuals that affect each other, which is rare in tourism research because of the practical difficulties it implies. Most of the research done in tourism and even in the social sciences is done by surveying or interviewing single participants and evaluating how constructs interact
within the person or asking the participant about its interaction in others. Though, it is very rare to find examples where instead of asking participants how this affect others, the research actually measures this effect in others. This project was able to actually do that through testing of key constructs in one participants and measuring how they affected the experience of another one. This provided the opportunity to compare how constructs’ relationships can change significantly if the measurement is in one single individual or different people that affect each other. Section 9.2 in the previous chapter provided an example of that difference using the impact of destination image on experience, which has been widely researched in tourism using single participants. The study found the same results when measuring these constructs in single visitors, however, the results were completely different when measured in hosts and their visitors separately.

In terms of VFR methodology, the study presented two innovations. First, it introduced an innovative sequential mixed-methods approach in two stages (qualitative -> QUANTITATIVE), which is not common in VFR literature although it fits well to the needs of the phenomenon. According to Lehto et al. (2001), VFR is a distinctive phenomenon that requires tailor-made solutions to its particular needs. This approach worked almost as separate sequential studies (multi-strategy) that were developed for the needs of each stage and the VFR phenomenon. The literature review chapter noted how the lack of research in VFR make further production of research difficult because of lacking theories and information. This approach overcame that difficulty because the qualitative phase provided the missing information from VFR literature to develop the theoretical framework for the second phase. Additionally, literature also suggests that there is an imminent need to quantify social aspects within the VFR phenomenon (Griffin, 2013a), which was achieved by the second stage of the research.

10.2.4 - Contributions to knowledge

In terms of general contributions to knowledge the study’s findings suggest that hosts’ destination knowledge place a crucial role in the visitors’ experience through the host becoming a better ‘tour-guide’ and the ‘interpretation of the place’ they provide to the visitor. Hosts’ destination image does not seem to have a direct effect on their visitors’ experience,
However, it does have a direct effect on their visitors’ destination image (destination image transfer), which mediates the effect to the visitors’ experience. Motivation to host has a direct impact on the number of visits they receive that also positively influences their destination knowledge and destination image creating the mentioned ‘virtuous circle of hosting’. Moreover, the power between these relationships has been tested, which contributes to the understanding of hosts’ and visitors’ interactions.

As a final point, further information about students’ involvement in the VFR market and the particular characteristics of VFR within university cities was also collected that helps to better understanding this particular market (these were already partly discuss in objective two of the previous section). For example, it was confirmed that students received more visitors than other residents and have similarities with other residents that also have a worse opinion of their destination compared to the visitors. Additionally, students’ level of knowledge about their university city seems to be low which might be due to their short residence in the city, lack of interest in learning about it or lack of time due to the university schedule. Their destination image of the Guildford is positive although visitors’ destination image is comparatively better. Lastly, their motivation to host presented the highest variance of all the constructs which might be due to different personal reasons associated to participants’ motivation to become hosts.

10.3 - Limitations and future research

This section presents some of the main aspects that might limit the findings of the thesis. The study’s research question is novel in VFR and posed several challenges that were not tackled by previous studies, therefore, there are a series of limitations to take in consideration. The section also includes the discussion of possibilities for future research because many of the shortcomings of the study offer opportunities to develop new and improved research. The section is structured in four sub-sections that discuss the issues associated to the reciprocal relationships in the model, the questionnaire design, the setting and the participants of the study and the last section also provides some speculative recommendations for DMOs.
10.3.1 - Non-recursive relationships

Non-recursive models, feedback loops, circular and reciprocal relationships involve many challenges when testing the association between constructs. Section 7.3.3 in the quantitative methodology chapter provides a thorough discussion of the issues associated to these models when tested using cross-sectional data. In summary, the section explains that most statistical analyses are based on the assumptions that causality is always unidirectional, time-lagged and there is no correlation between the error terms. However, authors like Berry (1984) and Paxton et al. (2011), argue that in reality most relationships are not just one way, it is impossible to provide a convincing justification that that all the error terms are completely uncorrelated, and the time between cause and effect can be either inexistent or impossible to measure. The ideal way according to the authors to test these relationships is through longitudinal studies and panel data, yet this is not always feasible in practical terms and cross-sectional data has been widely used in this field as an approximation.

This is the first limitation and possibility for future research in the study. According to Gafter & Tchetchik (2017, pp. 352) “further studies should thus consider employing panel data with a time series dimension, which would also enable researchers to study the dynamic nature of the VF phenomenon”. Accordingly, the ‘virtuous circle of hosting’ would have better been tested using panel data to measure the same variables at different times throughout the year to evaluate the influence that each visit had in the other constructs of the model. Ideally, the time between the measurements should be after receiving every visit but since students tended to receive approximately 9.7 visits per year, the measurement could be done each month or every second month. Unfortunately, surveying large numbers of hosts and their visitors together at one time is already challenging, trying to reach them at different times throughout the year seems particularly difficult unless a large cohort of residents sign-up to do it online.

This type of research would also allow to find the pattern through which the visits affect the other variables. As explained in section 9.4.1 in the previous chapter, it could be expected
that the first visits or years living at a new destination have a stronger impact on residents’ destination image, knowledge and motivation to host. If this is drawn in a graph with number of visits or years of residency on the X axis and destination knowledge or destination image in the Y axis, the graph should describe a round curve with a steep start up that leads to a plateau after a number of years of receiving visitors. The length of time or number of visits to reach that plateau is unknown in this study and would be useful to know, in order to plan any marketing effort towards the residents and better understand how residents’ relation to their destination change over time.

The last issue associated to the non-recursive associations in the model is the potential reciprocal relationship between hosts’ destination knowledge and their own destination image. Due to the particular characteristics of VFR in Guildford, where students do not have a previous destination image or knowledge of the city and they live for a relatively short period of time at the destination. It can be argued that this should not have an impact in the results of the model because destination knowledge seem to be clearly first in this causal relationship. However, this situation might be very different with other residents and would be interesting to test in a longitudinal study how these two constructs interact between each other. For example it would be interesting to see if this is an ‘automatic’ reciprocal relationship with a very small time-lagged between cause and effect or how much time does it pass for the constructs to affect each other, and thus, how many circles are done in a year.

10.3.2 - Questionnaire design

There are some limitations associated to the questionnaire design. As noted in section 6.2.2 the most common way to measure destination image is using lengthy multi-item questionnaires that measure several aspects of the destination. Authors like Assaker et al. (2011) and Bigne et al. (2005) have argued against these multi-item scales and in favour of single items that test participants’ overall destination image. According to Stylidis et al. (2017) multi-item scales are very closely related to single overall measurements of destination image. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to test the differences between both measurements in the context of this model and the VFR phenomenon, which was not possible.
due to the limited time that participants had to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, single variables are able to explain less variance that multi-item scales, which might have decreased the coefficient of the relationships between the host’s constructs and visitors’ overall destination image (introduced as a single mediating variable).

Another issue associated to the research design was the different scale that was necessary to use for testing experiential knowledge of the destination in question ten. As noted in the questionnaire (Appendix A), question ten provided nine attractions for participants to mark if they have attended them. The list was taken from the local tourism board and was proven to have a strong correlation with the other questions that also measured destination knowledge. However, the different method and scale used in question ten might have led to a lower correlation than the real one between experiential and subjective knowledge. Further testing of other lists or potential scales could lead to a more precise measurement.

It was also noted in section 9.2 in the previous chapter that not including WOM as a variable in the model might have affected the results of the relationship between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience. Although the study was based on Murphy et al., (2007) findings that different sources of WOM did not affect travellers’ destination image once they have reached the destination, which implies that travellers’ experience of the place is stronger than previous WOM. There are several aspects of WOM that could have been measured during the visits such as, amount of communication with VFR, method (person or ICT), topics and closeness of the relationship. Introducing WOM as a potential mediator of the relationship between hosts’ destination image and their visitors’ experience could lead to interesting new research about the power and implications of WOM in VFR. Moreover, it would have also been interesting to test other variables such as, views about hosting, time available for receiving visitors and approach to hosting that could have shared some more light about the reasons why hosts encourage visits.
10.3.3 - The setting and participants

In terms of the setting, it would be interesting to test the model in cities with other characteristics, such as, cities with fewer attractions to see if the model holds true if new residents become disappointed when they get to know more about the destination; or well-known locations to test the effect that pre-conceptualisations (expectations) have in the model. As noted in the theoretical framework section 6.5 expectations are an important factor when measuring experience, which in this case was not included due to participants’ lack of expectations about Guildford seen during the interviews. For most visitors of the students the main purpose of their visit was to see their friend or relatives and the place where they live, which happens to be Guildford that is not a well-known destination. Therefore, visitors did not tend to have expectations about it that, according to Oliver’s (1980) expectation-disconfirmation paradigm (in section 6.5 of the theoretical framework), this could trigger a positive disconfirmation, and thus, satisfaction with their experience. Consequently, according to Park & Almeida (2017, pp. 16) “anticipation and expectations, largely constructed prior to traveling, strongly influence on-site experiences in terms of the ways individuals experience a destination and hosts”. Therefore, it would be interesting to test the role of expectations in the model at different locations.

Furthermore, it would be useful to test the model in different populations and within the student population to test it in different groups and not just graduates. As noted earlier, surveying hosts and their visitors in large number poses several challenges, therefore, finding a method to achieve that was a great advantage of this study. Additionally, students seem to have similar characteristics to other residents when comparing the results with studies such as Stylidis et al. (2017). However, taking in consideration the difficulties this might imply, it would be interesting to see if the model obtained similar results with other residents in Guildford and other cities, or other temporary residents like the group of ex-pats tested by Dutt & Ninov (2017) in Dubai. In terms of population, the sample also had a tendency to survey close-relatives due to the nature of the graduation periods where data was collected, which is also a limitation of the current study. As noted in the literature review the strength and type of relationship (VF or VR) can have a significant impact on the dynamics of VFR
Therefore, it would be interesting to further test the model with a more varied type of relationships between the respondents.

10.3.4 - Speculative recommendations for DMOs

Based on the findings from the study it could be possible to provide some speculative recommendations for DMOs in particular in university cities. First it could be of great benefit for both the university and the local DMO to collaborate to target the student generated VFR market. This could be done through producing conjoint marketing material or a program of discounts in some specific services. For the university this could improve the overall experience of their students, which is of great importance at the moment, and the public opinion about the destination that is also strongly linked to people’s overall opinion about the university.

In practical terms this could be translated into targeting new students early in their studies. It could be possible to organise free tourist activities for first year students so they learn early about the destination without having to receive a visitor. This could kick-in ‘the virtuous circle’ early in their stay in the city. Likewise, it could be positive to provide touristic material during the beginning of the year and include some tourism elements during their induction to the university. This could also be done throughout the year to avoid overwhelming new students with information. Even before moving into the city, it could be possible to target potential students during the ‘applicant days’. During these days potential students often visit the university campus with their parents, therefore, it could be a great moment to show them the tourism/leisure options in the city (improving their overall opinion of it) and spreading the destination image of the city even to people who might not become students.

In this line, the university could also approach the local heritage/tour-guide association, which are often charitable organisations run by retired members of the community, to offer regular touristic activities for students throughout the year. In the case of Guildford this organisation provides several types of tours (e.g. overall tour of Guildford, Medieval tour of Guildford,
Ghost tour of Guildford) and visits to local attractions (e.g. Cathedral tower, Guildford Museum, George Abbot hospital) for free or at low prices. However, none of them – including the Cathedral tower which is just over the university – are publicised at the university campus and according to the survey (question 10) less than 5% of students and 2% of visitors have taken any kind of tour in Guildford.

In terms of diffusion, for example it could be possible to organise a regular photography competition about the area for students and staff to raise more awareness of the local attractions. Most universities have art galleries within campus that are regularly visited by the students where a photo explosion about this could fit very well. Moreover, it could be good to advertise in the local university magazines (student, staff and alumni magazines) and include a column or regular article about the local attractions and potential activities in the city. Likewise, it would be good to deploy touristic information material throughout the waiting areas around the university where most often it is only possible to find the university magazine.

In relation to accommodation the university together with the local DMO could facilitate accommodation for the visitors of the students at a preferential rate. This could be done either through a partnerships with local hotels and B&B or providing unoccupied campus housing when available. For many parents who visit regularly it is not affordable or attractive to spend a night in the city at the normal rates, however, if this were discounted (e.g. university accommodation) it could be a lot more comfortable for them to stay instead of driving for the day. Additionally, simple arrangements to help students when receiving friends (e.g. spare mattresses in halls of residence or discounted campus accommodation for students of other universities), could greatly improve the experience of hosts and their younger visitors who normally stay in their hosts’ student room.

Finally, as mentioned in chapter two and chapter five VFR tends to blend in with the local communities and do many of the normal activities their hosts do. Therefore, in order to ease this experience it could be possible to provide discounted or free entry for students’ visitors when attending some of their normal activities. For example, allow entry to university sports facilities for visitors accompanied by a student or night life activities in campus. Moreover, in
terms of transport, bike sharing schemes with short term visitor passes can be useful so visitors can access to bicycles, which is a common method of transportation between students. Likewise, short term bus and train passes associated to the student pass could also be of great help.

10.5 - Summary of chapter

The chapter presented a conclusion to the thesis divided in three sections. The first part revised the outcomes of the project compared to the five objectives proposed in the introduction of the thesis. This section is closely related to the contributions of the thesis in the next section because as expected the thesis reached its objectives which became the contributions of the study. Accordingly, the second section provided a detailed account of the thesis’ contributions divided in: theoretical, practical, methodological and contributions to knowledge. The last section discussed the limitations of the study and future research, which were grouped together because many of the limitations can become interesting possibilities for future research. This section also provides some speculative recommendations for DMOs to approach the VFR in university cities.

In summary the main theoretical contribution could be argued that is testing and developing a conceptual model for the understanding of host-guests interactions in VFR, and in particular the way hosts affect their visitors’ experience. The main practical contribution for DMOs is the confirmation of several assumptions that shaped their approach to the segment but also the fact that targeting residents can make their efforts last longer and stronger through the ‘virtuous circle of hosting’. In methodological terms, the study was able to measure the way that different individuals affect each other, which is rare in tourism research where most studies measure constructs in single individuals. Moreover, the thesis introduced an innovative and tailor-made methodology for the needs of the VFR phenomenon, which was noted as a reason for the lack of research in VFR. In terms of contribution to knowledge, it was noted the importance that destination knowledge has on the visitors’ experience. The study confirmed the power hosts have to attract visitors and that destination image can be
transferred from one person to another. Further aspects of VFR in university cities and the involvement of students in VFR were also highlighted.

Finally, the chapter discussed the limitations of the study and future research, which were divided in three areas: issues associated to non-recursive relationships, questionnaire design, the setting and participants in the study. The first sub-section focused on the possibilities to use longitudinal studies and panel data in the understanding of the relationships within VFR (in particular in relation to the effects of receiving visitors). The second sub-section proposed other potential variables that could have been introduce into the measurement and the last sub-section discussed how testing the model in different settings and participants would be valuable for validating it and further understanding the relationships within VFR. The recommendations for DMOs were mainly along the lines: to create a close collaboration with the university, target student early in their degrees to take advantage of the ‘virtuous circle of hosting’, provide and promote more touristic activities at the university and provide discounted programs for transport and accommodation.
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Appendix A - Survey questionnaires

Survey for Hosts (students)

15th July 2016

Age .......... Gender M☐ F☐ Domestic student☐ International student☐ Hometown ........................................

1. On average, how many visits did you receive in a year? From parents.............. Friends ........ Other ........

2. Do you encourage people to visit you in Guildford? Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Yes regularly

3. How motivated are you to take your visitors around? Not motivated 1 2 3 4 5 Very motivated

4. What’s your overall opinion of Guildford? Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive

5. Please rate Guildford’s tourism attractions? Very bad 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

6. How much did you like living here? Did not like it 1 2 3 4 5 Liked it a lot

7. What do you think about Guildford?..................................................................................................

8. How would you describe your knowledge of Guildford? Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

9. How much do you know about Guildford’s attractions? Nothing 1 2 3 4 5 A lot

10. Please mark if you have undertaken or visited any of the following attractions:

    Guildford Castle ☐ Tourist information centre ☐ St. Martha’s on the Hill ☐
    Guildford High-street ☐ Guildford city tour ☐ Wey river boat trip ☐
    Guildford Museum ☐ Surrey hills/Wey river walks ☐ Loseley Park ☐

This section is about your current visitors:

11. What do you think is their opinion of Guildford? Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive

12. Would they recommend Guildford to their friends/family? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Yes definitely

13. Are they normally motivated to visit Guildford? Not motivated 1 2 3 4 5 Very motivated

16. How has their overall experience of the visit been? Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive

17. How has their social experience with you been so far? Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive

18. How has their tourist experience of Guildford been? Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 Very positive

Many thanks for your participation!

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Survey for Visitors

Age ..........  Gender M F  Hometown ..................................  Country of residence ..................................

1. Are you visiting a:  Friend ☐  Son/Daughter ☐  Other relative ☐

2. How many times have you been here in Guildford (including this trip)? ........................................

3. For how long (days or hours) do you normally stay when you visit Guildford? .................................

4. Where do you normally stay?  Ho(s)tel ☐  Friends/Relatives ☐  No overnight ☐  Other ......................

5. From 1 to 5 what’s your overall opinion of Guildford?  Very negative 1  2  3  4  5  Very positive

7. What do you think about Guildford? ..........................................................................................................

8. Would you recommend Guildford to your friends/family?  Never 1  2  3  4  5  Yes definitely

9. Are you normally motivated to visit Guildford?  Not motivated 1  2  3  4  5  Very motivated

10. How has the overall experience of your visits been so far? Very negative 1  2  3  4  5  Very positive

11. How has the social experience with your host been?  Very negative 1  2  3  4  5  Very positive

12. How has your tourist experience of Guildford been?  Very negative 1  2  3  4  5  Very positive

13. Have you asked/searched for tourist information in Guildford?  No ☐  Yes through my host ☐  Yes other ☐

14. Who usually organized the activities during the visit?  Your host ☐  Yourself ☐  Both ☐  Other .............

15. Please mark if you have undertaken or visited any of the following attractions (this visit or previous ones):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guildford Castle</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guildford High-street</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guildford Museum</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Information Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guildford city tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surrey Hills/Wey river walks</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Martha’s on the Hill</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wey river boat trip</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loseley Park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many thanks for your participation!
Appendix B - Loadings tables and full diagrams

Figure B.0.1. Structured model with standardized coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Un-standardised loadings</th>
<th>Standardised loadings</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2_Encourage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3_Show_around</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4_DI_living</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q5_DI_Attractions</td>
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<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>2.703 0.007</td>
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<td>0.078</td>
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*** Significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level (two-tailed).
### Table B.0.2. Structural model with mediating variable loadings

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*** Significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level (two-tailed).
Figure B.0.3. Full model including mediating and reciprocal variables (standardized)

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<th>Variables</th>
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Table B.0.3. Full model loadings
Appendix C - Interviews guideline

These questions were adjusted depending if the interviewee was a host or a visitor or if both were interviewed at the same time. These were semi-structured interviews, therefore, these questions were only used as a guideline and conversation often diverged to other topics.

Introduce myself, the study, provide Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and consent form.

- First please tell me a bit about yourself
- Where are you from? What do you study?
- For how long have you been living in Guildford? Or visiting Guildford?
- Why did you decided to study at the University of Surrey?
- Why did you move here? Or why did you decided to visit?
- Do you enjoy your time here? Why?
- Do you like the university? Why?
- Do you go home often? Why?
- Do you travel often? What kind of travelling do you like to do? Why?
- Do you visit friends or family in other cities?
- How are those experiences? Why?
- Please tell me more about that.... experience:

- How is it when you receive visitors?
- Do you like to receive visits? Why?
- Do you try to convince your friends or family to visit you here? Why?
- Do you like to take them around? Where do you take them? Why?
- Do your guests tell you what they would like to see? Do you ask?
- Who organize the activities? Why?
- Do your visitors like to visit? Why?
- Who are mostly your visitors?
- Friends if so from home? Parents?
- Where do they normally stay? Why?
- What’s the best and worst part of having a visit? Why?
- How it would be your perfect visitor? Why?
- When was the last time your received a visitor?
- Please tell me about that ... visit, how was it?

- What do you think about Guildford? Why?
- How that changed throughout the time living here? Why?
- What do you think your visitors think about Guildford? Or for you host? Why?
- How that changes after visiting? Why?
- Do you think you had any influence in that change? Why?
- What do you think influences what you think or feel about Guildford? Why?
- What do you think affects your visitors’ experience? Why?
- Do you prepare for the visits? Or visiting? Why?
- Where do you normally take your visitors? Why?
- If you can take your visitors to only one or two places in Guildford where would be that? Why?
- What’s your favorite place in Guildford? Why?
- Where have you been in Guildford?
- What tourism attractions do you know here? Have you visited them?
- Do you try to learn more about Guildford or where to go? Why?
- If so where do you search for information?
- When have you done that? Why?
- Do your visitors’ search for information before coming?
- How do you move around car, bus, walk? How that affects the visit?
- What about your friends and flatmates, do they prepare when they get visitors?
- Where do they take their visitors?
- Do you talk about that with them? Is that a common topic?
Appendix D - Interview sample transcript

This is a sample of one of the interviews conducted with a student host and her visitor both of them are originally from Germany.

**Interviewer:** So, as I was explaining before the interview is about your experience of Guildford. I know you have been visiting here a student, isn’t it?
**Visitor:** Yes, I’m a visiting student.
**Host:** And I study here at Surrey University.
**Visitor:** I’m visiting my friend. She showed me the surroundings of Guildford a little bit. I’m mainly enjoying my time over here.

**Interviewer:** For how long have you been here?
**Visitor:** I’ve been here for two days now. I will be here in total for four days, it’s just a very short stay, my Easter trip. Well before I came here I actually didn’t know anything about Guildford and I just thought that’s just a very small British little city/town maybe even a little bit ... yeah very small and I thought there’s not that much to see but I’m quite impressed and I think (host’s name) enthusiasm sparked a little bit in me, she said “yeah, Guildford and Freiburg are connected and it’s a bit similar to Freiburg” which established a link for me. She created a very good base for discovering Guildford.

**Interviewer:** All of that was before you coming here?
**Visitor:** No, it happened when I came here. Yeah, I mixed it a little bit. I said I didn’t know anything, but within a couple hours once I arrived my friend started to tell me a little bit about Guildford.

**Interviewer:** Did you feel that your host knew a lot about Guildford?
**Visitor:** She showed me Guildford from her perspective and from her experience, I think. She showed me many places that she has been visiting and in a way how she learned to explore the area and Guildford itself. For example, the first time exploring Guildford, we went to the city centre and she told me which was the main street and showed me the twin city symbol in Guildford. This is how we established the link and I had this idea that Guildford is similar size of Freiburg and it’s got an old ancient city centre and lovely small houses around it. There’s the university. There are parks where people can just hang around. And some small shopping centre.

**Interviewer:** By the way, you are from Freiburg?
**Visitor:** Yes, I am.

**Interviewer:** How many visits do you (host) receive normally?
**Host:** Not many. Actually, I think you are the first one who is staying here overnight. I had someone coming for the day once.

**Interviewer:** Did you prepare for this visit?
**Host:** Not too much. I wanted to be open to what my visitor wants to do. Because I live here I can do those things I like anytime I want. So, one day I think you (my visitor) wanted to go to London to have a look there. The other day exploring a bit more of Guildford. I just kind of tried to match that.

**Visitor:** I think it was a pretty good mix, because before I came here, I told my friend that I would like to go to London again, but other than that I’m quite flexible about what we do. I arrived on Friday morning and we went to London on the same day. We explored London a little bit, it’s city centre. I was keen to see Helena Rubinstein’s house, where she once lived. We did that. So, I could tick that on my list. And then we just took it easy and wandered around, had a nice walk through Hyde Park. We ended up in a lovely restaurant. All of this
was more or less not planned. We had some ideas and then we just carried them out. Incidentally, my friend’s flatmate had his girlfriend over, so they hired a car and went to a trip to the Stonehenge which is something very local. Something that you can find only here, I really enjoyed that. Then we went to another smaller city called Salisbury.

Host: Salisbury is not too far from Stonehenge.

Interviewer: Have you (host) been there before?
Host: I’ve seen the Stonehenge before, but not the town next to it. So, that was also new for me.

Interviewer: Did you (visitor) search for information online before coming here?
Visitor: To be honest, I prepared myself for London, because I was interested in this Helena Rubinstein House. So, I knew when I come back to London this is where I really want to go. But I didn’t do much preparation regarding Guildford. I was more like on a holiday mode and just wanted to see what evolves. I was pretty confident to go and just get the impression of the city by exploring the city centre. I knew that my friend lives here and she knows how people live here and that I would get a locally influenced experience when I go there.

Interviewer: For how long have you been living here?
Host: Two and a half years.

Interviewer: Where do you know each other from?
Visitor: We know each other from our pharmacy studies.
Host: We used to study together.
Visitor: Our ways cross each other again, because we both went abroad to New Zealand. We had this connection and from time to time we would just catch up and spend some time.
Host: Last summer, I was in Hamburg and we also met there. And I think I also reminded you (the visitor) that you can come to visit me anytime if you feel like so.

Interviewer: How do you (visitor) normally travel? What kind of trips do you normally take in the year?
Visitor: There was a time where I really enjoyed natural trips, like going hiking. Trips where I would have to pack a backpack, food and my sleeping bag. I would just go on a round trip, sleep in catered huts where there’s not much catering only the simple things that you need, like a bed or a bunk and some gas to cook your food. Such things, I really liked. But recently I also enjoy exploring cities and to get to know the atmosphere of a city in comparison to a smaller city and what do people do, what’s typically for this city and in bigger cities or in smaller cities. I enjoy travelling by train, because in a train you have time to observe the landscape. But depending on what kind of people you meet you also start talking to each other.

Interviewer: How often do you visit friends or family?
Visitor: I go to my hometown three to four times a year. Normally, I would take the train to go to Freiburg, which is the most convenient. Other than that, I really like to travel by plane as well if it’s not too long.

Interviewer: Would those trips be about places that you would like to visit or also to visit somebody you know?
Visitor: I think it’s both. Sometimes I just go to a place to visit a friend and I do not have any other interest in this place. But then I would also just go to a place, because I’m interested in nature or because I would like to do a hobby, like swimming in summer. Or I go to places to look at plants, I really enjoy rose gardens. So, if I know that a city has rose gardens I would plan a trip to see the rose gardens. So, many reasons, visiting friends or nature or exploring how other people live by just going to other cities. But I would also say that my choice is
limited to places that are of my interest, like nature, sports. I enjoy going to English speaking countries.

Interviewer: You mentioned earlier how your host’s enthusiasm influenced your experience. Did she motivate you to come here?
Visitor: She didn’t particularly advertise Guildford for me. She did it in a very subtle way when I came here. Like I mentioned before about the twin city of Guildford is Freiburg. And I think if you can find something that you connect with personally, you immediately get a certain impression of a city based on your own experience of what you imagined it could be.

Interviewer: Do you (host) normally ask your friends or family to come here?
Host: No, I’m actually not advertising it much. I’m not inviting too much, but I’m actually happy if people come. I really look forward. This time it was good that I’m also free all the time. It’s not like I want to spend every second with my friend, but I’m actually quite happy that I don’t have to go and do something and let my friend on her own. I really like when someone’s coming to show as much as possible or maybe also include other friends or some activities so that the visit is not boring.

Interviewer: And all of these activities are normally previous activities you have done?
Host: Yeah, for example, we actually planned to go shopping, but the shops in town were closed because of Easter Sunday. Then I was proposing to walk up to St Martha’s Hill, because it’s something I enjoy doing. I’ve done it already a couple of times, so felt confident about how to get there and back, though we did a little detour on the way back, but I still felt comfortable because I’ve done it several times before. And I enjoyed it myself. I was actually happy that someone else enjoyed it with me.

Interviewer: Did you (visitor) enjoy it as well?
Visitor: Yes (laughing). I enjoyed it a lot, because I like nature, like I mentioned before hiking. This was a very nice walk. The nature up there is beautiful, we saw bluebells in the forest. They were like a carpet on the ground. Very beautiful.

Interviewer: How did you (host) get to know about these places?
Host: From other people living here. If I would ask they would tell me that they’ve spent their Sunday maybe walking up there.

Interviewer: How about online or the tourist information centre?
Host: Not really, it’s more what I heard from other friends or people saying. Just by asking what they do and what is enjoyable in terms of nature, what is enjoyable in terms of restaurants here. Only very few times I would go online to check those things.

Interviewer: How would you say your experience of Guildford has changed during the years?
Host: It definitely changed. I think I didn’t like it too much in the beginning. I had some prejudices about the weather. I was not expecting much. But the longer I stay here, the more I like it. I actually like the weather. I was telling my friend today how I don’t mind if it rains two days if on the next day there’s a blue sky, that’s all I need, it’s cool.

Interviewer: How would you (visitor) describe your experience so far?
Visitor: From the perspective of this being a short holiday Easter trip it’s been a very good experience. I had some relaxing days and I’m having a good company. I’ve seen things that are very typical for the region. I’ve seen the nature, how people live here, what kind of shops they have. I’ve seen the weird Stonehenge. I’ve seen the typical British culture of how they arrange nature and parks, which is in a way a very romantic way. It’s been a good way to broaden my perspective and just take off my mind from my normal daily routine. I enjoyed the food especially.

Interviewer: For all the activities that you (visitor) have done have you organised or searched any information about anything or you mainly followed your host in this case?
Visitor: Except for the Helena Rubinstein House that I wanted to see in London, for the fact that I wanted to go one day to London to experience the city a little bit, I was pretty open to experience anything that is quite normal in Guildford and I trusted in my friend that she is going to be a great guide and a good host.

Interviewer: So, all the information came from your friend?
Visitor: Yeah, she asked me what I like doing and gave some options and I had some ideas and we would meet somewhere in-between.

Interviewer: When you are going back what are you going to tell your friends about Guildford or the places that you visited?
Visitor: I’d say that Guildford is a very lovely smaller city, typical British city with this romantic green gardens and parks and that the city and the whole area is quite green at the moment and there are many nice pubs and posy places to stay. It’s a rather relaxed atmosphere in the whole city.

Interviewer: Would you recommend it to friends or family if they are planning to go to the UK?
Visitor: Yes, I’d definitely recommend it. Especially, if you want to experience not only the vibrancy of London, but if you want to go to a little bit more quiet British retreat. It’s perfect for a week stay, especially if you like countryside and exploring nature and walking through smaller historic cities.

Interviewer: You (the host) said that you enjoy this visit. After this visit, do you think you would be keener to ask people to come?
Host: Actually, I was thinking so. I already had the feeling today, I had this moment of “wow this is going so well”. I’m enjoying it so much, I actually want more people to come and visit me here. And I was thinking about where I would take them and probably to the really same places. Maybe I would even develop like a typical Guildford tour and do always the same things. I kind of like the idea.
Visitor: It’s funny that you’re saying this, because I observed me doing the same when people came to visit me in Hamburg. I really like to show them the perspective from above. I would in many cases take them to the clock tower and from there you enjoy a very nice view on the city.
Host: Or the restaurants and pubs that I know. I know which ones serve good food, so I would be very keen that my visitors try that good food and they don’t risk having a bad meal.

Interviewer: Do you (visitor) like to receive visitors in Hamburg?
Visitor: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: Do you ask people normally to go and visit you?
Visitor: I’ve been doing that, especially, with people that somehow in my life had a positive influence. I feel like I want to see what they are up to. I wish that they’re having a good life as well and it’s nice to catch up again. I’d like to show them the city where I live and to have a good experience.

Interviewer: Have you (visitor) had any bad visit that you have done or that you have received? Any bad experience?
Visitor: No, but I think it’s always a bit easier if you don’t have too many visitors at once, because the moment when you receive more people it’s going to be more difficult to create a nice or pleasurable experience for everyone, because different people require or like different things. So, the moment when you have many people which you have to look after it always becomes a compromise. I feel not as satisfied as if I can totally focus on one person to show that one person places I’d go. Then I can also receive their opinion and trying to give
them what they are looking for. It becomes more satisfying if you are on a one-to-one or if I have a one-to-one visit.

**Interviewer:** What about you (host), did you have any bad experience visiting or receiving a visitor?

Host: No, it’s always fun to see friends and I always enjoy.

**Interviewer:** How do you travel normally? Do you visit friends and family or a different kind of holidays?

Host: Sometimes I go to places where I don’t know anyone, like a beach holiday with my boyfriend. Sometimes I’m visiting friends in their cities when I had also other reasons to go to the city. It actually happens a lot that I need to go to a city and I knew I had friends living there, so I was always trying to combine and see them as well. For example, when I went to Hamburg. It was more work related (conference), but I was really keen to extend my stay a little bit and have some fun with friends.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any other comments?

Visitor: Sometimes, for example, if I come to a new place and I don’t know this place and didn’t have time to prepare myself, I’d also just google and try to find out a little bit about the city. What it’s like, what the city is popular for. Then I’d google for nice restaurants where to eat, nice places to visit, natural places or in many cases I’d google for visitor information centres and sometimes go there and pick up some leaflets and browse. Or when I’m approaching a city flying in then normally you can always gather some flyers from the airport or sometimes even in the airplane itself you find some advertisement of where to go.

**Interviewer:** That’s what you would do when you don’t visit anybody?

Visitor: Yes, that’s when I have to go somewhere work related, I don’t really have time to prepare my visit. I’d just google and try to make the best out of it.

Host: I quite trust when I visit friends, because I have the feeling that since they live in that place, hopefully they’d take me somewhere where as a normal tourist I would have never end up just because sure you can google stuff, but maybe you only read the top five results or something. I’m always quite curious to do whatever my friends would do more or less. They can just take me somewhere. I had quite good experiences from just letting it happen and trust in my friends. And in that cases I don’t search anything, only if I don’t meet anyone and I know I’m going to be there then I do google or if I’ve heard something before like they have a great theatre there or they are famous for something then I would go and see if they have a show that night that I like and maybe do that.

**Interviewer:** Are you influenced by your friends before going in a way that if they motivate you or they push you to visit or they talk about the city or the place?

Host: I guess it’s differently, like if the same friend would live in different places and invite me to come and visit them. Apart from wanting to see the friend it also depends where that place is. I’m more into the places I’d like to visit at the same time. Or if I know that the friend lives in that place only for a year, I’ll try to make it in that year, because then I know that he’ll go back. It’s a bit circumstantial.

**Interviewer:** That was great. Thank you very much. I hope your stay continuous to be great here.

Visitor: Thank you.

Host: Thank you.