



Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

THE IMPACT OF USING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR DIRECT PURCHASING OF TRAVEL-RELATED GOODS AND SERVICES IN AN ORGANISATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

LUVUYO KAKAZA

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Supervisor: Dr S Enow

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Date

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the purchasing of accommodation services. More importantly, the increasing organisational efficiency when managing costs through the use of online technologies when making bookings for accommodation. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the challenges that restrict the application of online decentralised technologies that can assist in the purchasing of accommodation within organisations. The study identified the persistence of organisations in subscribing to rigid procurement policies that do not permit the organisation to make use of emerging online decentralised solutions for purchasing goods and services such as accommodation.

The rationale for this study is the ability of organisations to reduce travel accommodation expenses and the ability to reinvest these savings in other operational expenses.

To answer the three main research questions posed by the study, a case study design was adopted. The study makes use of qualitative research methods such as interviews to answer the research questions posed. Purposive sampling was undertaken to draw data from respondents who could provide meaningful information for the study.

The findings of the study indicated that there are varying concerns for the organisation. Staff showed concerns regarding the implementation of online decentralise purchasing. However, staff also showed that there was an opportunity for the organisation as well as for the staff travelling. However, various factors need to be looked into such as value for the organisation versus value for staff. The key finding of the study is that the challenge restricting the implementation of online decentralised purchasing is the operationalising of the purchasing system. Various factors around operationalising this system are discussed in the finding. The impact on staff roles was also found to be a factor impacting the implementation of decentralised purchasing. This finding was classified into the various levels of responsibility among staff in the organisation.

The study concluded that online decentralised purchasing can be accommodated by the organisation given sufficient preparatory work being done before implementation. The study also recommends the present considerations for implementation as well as future studies to be undertaken to ensure that staff are allowed to direct their work travel and the purchase of their materials and services in an attempt to create a more cost-effective purchasing system for the organisation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BnB	Bed and breakfast
OTA	Online travel agency
DMO	Destination management organisations

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Online decentralised purchasing	The purchase of services using online platforms by individuals within an organisation for business travel
Bed and breakfast	Independent accommodation services by vendors in their private residences
Travel related services	Transportation and accommodation services
Human capital	Human resources and/or staff working in an organisation

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Booking for accommodation is fast becoming more digital and more accessible through online platforms. According to Saito and Takahashi (2019), due to the introduction of information and communication technologies, there has been a notable increase in hotel bookings that are made via online platforms by hotel customers. From this statement by Saito and Takahashi (2019), it can be determined that there has been greater acceptance of buying this type of service online.

This study focuses on exploring ways to create an “agile” organisation. Agile organisations are organisations that can adapt to the changing environment to maximise their output. Yusuf, Sarhadi and Gunasekaran (1999) suggest that agility is the successful application of competitive tools such as speed, flexibility, innovation and being proactive in addressing potential challenges or threats to the organisations’ operations; while Patri & Suresh (2017) are of the view that agile concepts such as the above are crucial when it comes to improving service delivery. These two definitions of the term “agile” indicate that the meaning of the term has remained constant over two decades, without any contradiction.

Online decentralised purchasing is an operational strategy that is part of an agile organisation. For this study, online decentralised purchasing will be referred to more frequently as it is more specific than agile purchasing, primarily because “agile” encompasses many different methods that can lead to an organisation being agile.

This study will focus on the application of decentralised online technologies to increase the efficiency of cost management for organisations undertaking travel. More focus will be placed on the used of decentralised online platforms for booking of accommodation, and the possible implications of such a migration on organisational culture.

1.2 Problem Statement

Organisations persist in subscribing to rigid procurement policies that limit their ability to take advantage of emerging technologies when purchasing goods and services such as travel accommodation. According to CPUT (2013), all hotel and accommodation bookings must be made through a single designated travel agency. This has led to increased expenditure due to entering into a fixed-term contract with an intermediary service provider who sources accommodation services. Ambe (2016) argues that “procurement is a strategic tool that is meant

to assist an organisation to achieve its goals.” Yet to the contrary, Ambe (2016) also states that “in post-apartheid South Africa, procurement has been a tool also used to address the socio-economic climate and imbalances”. The above citations indicate clearly that procurement can also be viewed as a political tool as opposed to purely a business process that is meant to guard the effective and efficient use of organisational resources as it should be.

According to Business Insider (2019), “the draft amendment bill on tourism seeks to regulate online booking for accommodation, therefore impacting on platforms such as AirBnB and Booking.com.” This is in an attempt to ensure that income from trade is also distributed to traditional bed and breakfast accommodation, commonly known as Bed and Breakfasts (BnB’s).

Organisations not utilising the opportunity of online decentralised booking when making arrangements for business travel are not capitalising on the possibility of reducing expenses for travel in the organisation. The accommodation expenses within the organisation remain as they were before the development of the online platforms although online platforms provide an opportunity to reduce the cost of travel by increasing the ease of making bookings and the competition within the whole accommodation services sector.

1.3 Background to the problem

Ambe (2016) stated above that procurement is a tool that is meant to achieve organisational goals through the efficient use of resources. Centralising this tool would allow organisations to take charge of and oversee purchases made by the individual arms of an organisation at a central point.

This would be regulated through the use of internal institutional policies that were developed in accordance with the public financial management act 1 of 1999, which was promulgated to regulate the use of public funds by all publicly funded institutions.

Organisations developed policies to regulate their buying of goods and services to align with national regulations. The challenge, however, arises when the developed policies are not regularly reviewed to align with industry developments, to a point where the policies are limiting the organisation from capitalising on developments such as technologies that could reduce organisational operating costs. As stated in the problem statement above, the policies developed often lock the organisation in supply agreements with one service provider, not allowing the organisation to take advantage of services by new service providers that have more innovative and cost-effective products as services.

Developments in the information technology (IT) sector have had an impact on the booking of accommodation through the use of platforms such as Airbnb, Booking.com and SafariNow among others. Certain organisations, specifically the ones being studied, have not accommodated these platforms in their travel policy and still subscribe to a single vendor for the provision of accommodation booking services.

1.4 Rationale and significance of the study

The study looks at a unique segment of the population - staff members who undertake travel as part of their duties, specifically making use of accommodation services during travel. Travel within some institutions is an everyday activity. However, the use of emerging technologies is still not widely accepted due to policies that prevent an individual staff member from procuring goods and services at an individual level. This ultimately promotes the creation of a more agile organisation by optimising the economics of expenditure.

Rigby and Sutherland et al. (2016) argue that agile principles or practices do not work in all circumstances. They also indicate that although agile principles may not best serve the administrative task of procurement, they serve to improve the solving of supply chain challenges that an organisation may be dealing with at a strategic level. Accordingly, in this study the researcher will not be dealing with administrative purchasing tasks, but strategic challenges that face the supply chain as a bigger concern within an organisation that purchase travel-related services.

Application of the results of this study is anticipated to significantly reduce the expenses placed on the travel budget, specifically for the accommodation line item, should they be accepted and implemented. These savings would be used for other operational expenditure of the organisation; with quality being maintained, and latitude being granted to employees on where to stay during travel.

The study is also expected to have an impact on the workflow of an organisation, although it is not easy to predict that impact. The centralised travel arrangement responsibilities placed on one person may now be shifted to a more decentralised model than the status quo allows; the extent of this decentralization will then be dependent on the organisation and its structure and policy allowances. This applies to all organisations that undertake travel, specifically the booking of accommodation. The main focus of this study is to assess the phenomena in large organisations, as smaller private organisations have already ventured into this form of booking, due to their having less stringent policies and increased flexibility.

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

1.5.1 Research Aim

The research aims to explore the application of online decentralised accommodation procurement services and the impact of such a migration on an organisation.

1.5.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

- a) To determine the challenges restricting organisations from using online decentralised purchasing when procuring accommodation services.
- b) To investigate the impact of online decentralised accommodation purchasing on roles and responsibilities of affected human capital in the organisation.
- c) To determine the economic impact of online decentralised accommodation purchasing on the organisation.

1.6 Research Questions

- 5.1 What challenges restrict organisations from using online decentralised purchasing when procuring accommodation services?
- 5.2 What impact would online decentralised purchasing of accommodation have on the roles and responsibilities of staff members working on purchasing within the organisation?
- 5.3 What economic impact would online decentralised accommodation purchasing have on the organisation?

1.7 Definition of key concepts

Agility – The ability of an organisation to be flexible and adapt to market changes in a proactive manner

Online platform – An online marketplace that brings one party into contact with another, such as buyers and sellers

Procurement – The act of buying goods and services

Emerging technologies – Technology previously not used or not used widely in an industry

Travel-related services – services relating to booking or buying of accommodation

Disruptive – Unexpected changes to the known means of operation used by the majority of the stakeholders

1.8 Demarcation/Delimitation of the study

The current study will be limited to one organisation and one business unit of the organisation. The business unit is similar to all other business units, therefore findings from the selected business unit will be representative of all other business units.

1.9 Nature of the study

The study was designed to be in a case study format. It uses qualitative methodology to answer the main questions posed by the research. Singh (2007) states that qualitative research allows the researcher more focus on the data rather than focusing only on numerical values when analysing data; a deeper study of the data allows for determining relationships between elements of the extracted data.

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents who were able to contribute to the study. The qualitative data was extracted using interviews. After the collection of data from interviews, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was applied to determine the codes and themes that emanated from the data extracted.

1.10 Outline of the dissertation

Chapter 1 - Introduction to the study

This chapter is an introduction to the study. It indicates the problem leading to this study, the research aims and objectives, the methodology as well as the delimitations and the nature of the study.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

This chapter reviews the literature available on the use of online platforms for travel. This chapter informed the researcher about what was known and what was not yet known and should be uncovered.

Chapter 3 – Research Approach and Methodology

Chapter 3 discusses the methods employed to achieve the research objectives. This chapter also addresses how the findings were analysed and presented. The themes identified in this study are also stated in this chapter.

Chapter 4 – Finding and Discussions

The research findings are presented in this chapter. The findings are discussed under the themes that have been identified from the data extracted.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter is the concluding chapter of the study, which discusses and analyses the findings. The chapter will also make a recommendation regarding the use of an online platform based on the findings.

1.11 Research Limitations

Due to the decision to use a single case study, the findings are not generalisable to all organisations. However, the findings will be generalisable to all units of the case study institution as well as organisations similar to the case study institution. They will also be indicative of a need for further research to be undertaken to further understand the phenomenon at a deeper level.

1.12 Chapter Summary

As noted in this chapter, there is an increase in travellers booking travel and accommodation using online platforms. However, organisations are not taking advantage of this new development

within the travel industry, where more cost-effective accommodation may be found through the accessibility of accommodation through online platforms.

This research aims to explore the application of online decentralised technologies for the procurement of accommodation as well as what impact this mode of buying accommodation would have on the organisation under study.

This chapter also clarified the research objectives, namely, determining the challenges that prevent organisations from using online decentralised purchasing, investigating the impact of this form of purchasing and lastly, determining the economic impact of this purchasing on the organisation.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter reviews the literature relevant to this study. The chapter also presents an overview of travel-related services to determine which services are relevant to this study.

The chapter also considers the evolving economy. Travel is a sector of an economy, and therefore its impact is subject to the changing economy in South Africa and across the South African borders.

The chapter reviews relevant literature on emerging technologies that could potentially affect the results of this study. All known factors regarding the study must be uncovered as they will have to be considered in order to make recommendations based on the findings.

Travellers within the organisation have different needs when arranging for travel. It is these needs that the chapter also studies further as they have a direct bearing on the decisions that are taken by travellers when booking accommodation. The chapter pays specific attention to the needs of these travellers.

2.2 Theories and models of change management

This section details the theories and models that impact the study.

2.2.1 Lewin's force field analysis model

2.2.1.1 Description of the model

The force field analysis model by Kurt Lewin assumes that there are forces acting on any situation (Kondi, 2013). The forces are acting for a particular change as well as against a particular change. The point where the forces meet may be viewed as the equilibrium or the current status of a situation. The figure below is a graphic representation of Lewin's force field analysis model.

The forces are those situations that have an impact on change. Driving forces can be viewed as those forces that motivate for change, such as productivity, learning new technologies and cost saving. Whereas on the other hand, restraining forces can be factors such as fear, reluctance, or lack of commitment, among others.

Figure 2.1 below depicts forces acting against each other to cause an equilibrium.

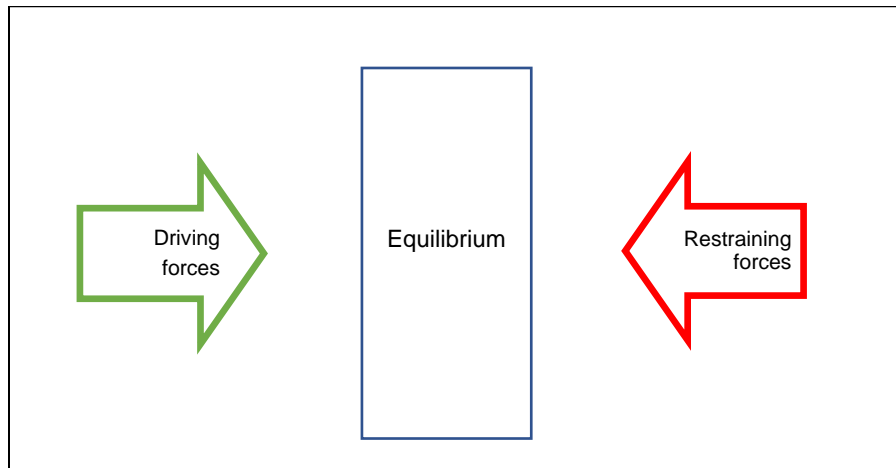


Figure 2.1 Lewin's Forcefield Analysis Model (adapted from Kondi, 2013)

Due to the equilibrium that exists between the two forces, there will be no change. Change will be experienced if the driving forces start to exceed the power exerted by the restraining forces. However, Lewin argues that for change to be experienced, it is not necessary to increase the driving force for the change; the organisation can simply reduce the restraining forces.

2.2.1.2 Application to the study

Lewin's force field analysis is a means of analysing and understanding a situation before implementing changes. This model also emphasises a plan for implementing change to best determine how the change should be implemented. The driving forces for any change need to be identified and weighed against the restraining forces against the change.

Although it is not possible to determine all variables that impact the situation, whether driving or restraining. It is important to determine what is possible and prepare accordingly.

2.2.2 Lewin's three-step model

2.2.2.1 Description of the model

This model was also created by Kurt Lewin and complements the force field analysis as it describes the implementation of change. The model suggests that there are three main steps in change management implementation (Cummings & Worley 2008).

The figure below is an adaptation of Cummings and Worley (2008) by Kondi (2013), which indicates that the third stage of Lewin's three-stage model should be reversed to create an equilibrium between change and a refreezing step, in line with the force field analysis model.

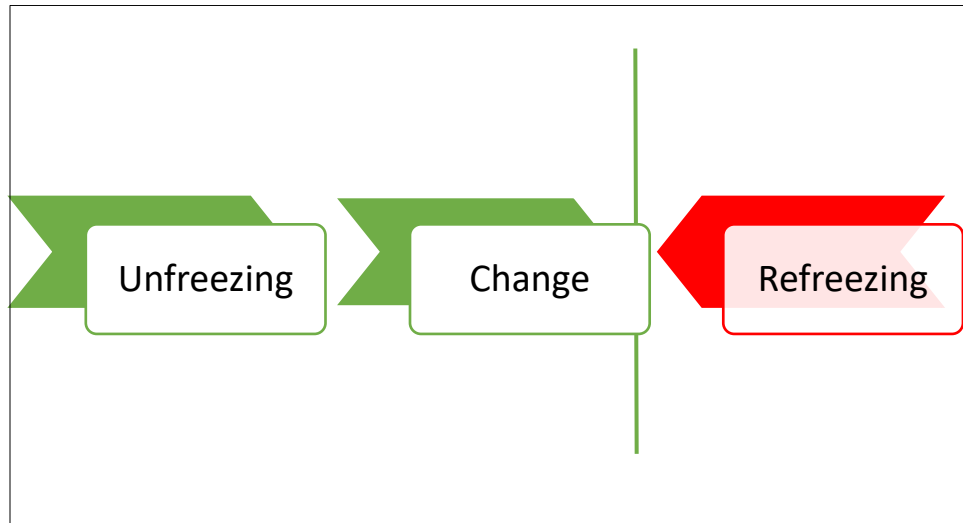


Figure 2.2 Lewin's 3-Step Model (adapted from Cummings and Worley (2008) by Kondi (2013))

Unfreezing

The unfreezing step is mainly concerned with getting the organisation ready for the change (Cummings and Worley. 2008). This is where preparations are made for the change to be accepted by all concerned parties within the organisation (Kondi, 2013).

Cummings and Worley (2008) also indicate that this step is where the restraining forces are reduced as opposed to increasing only the driving forces for change.

Change

This is the step where all the elements and different levels of an organisation all act in the same direction towards change. It involves changing the current way of doing things to the proposed new way (Cummings and Worley. 2008).

Refreezing

This step is the maintaining of the organisation at the new equilibrium. In some cases, the organisation may have to put in place mechanisms to support the new equilibrium. This may be

in the form of rewards and acknowledgements for staff performing as per the requirements of the new change.

2.2.2.2 Relevance to the study

The three-step model is relevant to the study as it represents the potential implementation of the planned change. The three-step model indicates that for online decentralised purchasing to be successful, preparation for the change has to be made, which may be in the form of either increasing and supporting the driving forces or reducing the restraining forces.

Implementation should then be undertaken, followed by supporting mechanisms to ensure that the change is accepted and lasts as a new equilibrium within the organisation.

2.2.3 Discussion of the theories and models

The two models discussed above have a greater impact on the study when applied together. Lewin's forcefield analysis model indicates that an organisation needs to recognise that there are always forces acting for any particular change, as well as factors acting against the change. Upon identifying the factors, an organisation may then start planning.

When planning to implement change, Lewin's 3-step model for change implies how the change should be affected to make it impactful. The two models applied together provide a better opportunity for the organisation to make a meaningful shift or adjustment towards the desired state.

Lewin's 3-step model for change applies to this study in its current form. However, the model, specifically the "change" implementation step is not indicative that change may be a long process. The representation of the model (Fig 2.2) suggests that the "change" step is merely a simple step in a process versus a process in itself, thus taking into account that the change or the implementation may last longer than a short step before the refreezing.

2.3 Regulating purchasing of goods and services

It is important to regulate the buying of goods and services; however, the review of those regulatory processes, procedures and framework often takes as long to carry out as it did to put the regulations in place. This leaves a situation where policies and guidelines, once put in place, limit organisations from exploring alternative means of purchasing that could be more cost-effective. Jackson (2004) articulates the importance of institutional and regulatory policy for the

financial stability of an institution; however, as important as regulations may be, they should not limit or degrade the financial position of an institution.

Based on the CPUT (2013) student and staff travel policy, all hotels and accommodation must be made through the appointed travel agency. This is evidence that organisations still rely on traditional means of purchasing travel-related goods and services such as travel agencies for facilitating travel arrangements. Amaro and Duarte (2015) attribute this reliance on the attitudes of individuals or the organisation, as well as perceived risk.

Inversini and Masiero (2014) state that out of all online sales, hotels and accommodation are the second largest items purchased, after airline flights. Online technologies have allowed smaller service providers to enter the hospitality market, thus creating competition for those seeking to pay competitive prices. Not accessing this competitive market through available technology means that the organisation is paying more than what it should for similar goods and services.

Based on the above statement by Inversini and Masiero (2014), it is evident that the purchase of travel and accommodation services online does provide some benefit to the traveller and the organisation. If rigid organisational policies do not allow the organisation to benefit from the use of online platforms to purchase travel and accommodation services, it means that the organisation is not paying the most competitive price available for those goods and services.

As seen from the travel policy cited above (CPUT, 2013), some organisations are not utilising the opportunity of online booking when making arrangements for business travel. This means that they are not capitalising on the possibility of reducing expenses for travel in the organisation and that the expenses remain as they were before the development of the online platforms, which seek to lessen the cost of travel by increasing the ease of making bookings and introducing competition within the tourism sector.

2.4 Digitisation of travel accommodation purchasing

Booking for accommodation is fast becoming more digital and more accessible through online platforms such as online travel agencies (OTAs). According to Saito and Takahashi (2019), due to the introduction of information and communication technologies, there has been a notable increase in hotel bookings made via online platforms by hotel customers. The statement by Saito and Takahashi (2019) implies greater acceptance of the practice of buying services online among certain consumers.

According to Stangl et al (2016), the use of online platforms to sell accommodation does not only benefit the platforms themselves, but it also benefits the hotels and accommodation establishments as well as the travellers. The statement above alludes to the notion that travellers book their travel through online platforms as they derive some form of benefit from the online platforms. Should this benefit be cost, this could mean a lot for this research, as business travel costs within the organisation are funded by the organisation.

Bilgihan (2020) studied the extent to which consumers engage with online platforms to book travel and accommodation and found that the tourism sector contributed the most to e-commerce in terms of the number of payments made electronically. To be precise, according to Bilgihan (2020) accommodation and hotels are the second-most purchased service within the tourism sector, which is the highest contributor to online sales.

The citation above demonstrates that there are more and more travellers booking accommodation using online platforms or OTAs. This suggests that there is value to be derived from the use of OTAs.

This study will focus on the application of decentralised (self-managed) OTAs to increase the efficiency of cost management for organisations undertaking travel, specifically the booking of accommodation.

The literature demonstrates that the growing use of OTA has a benefit for the accommodation service providers as well as the traveller. This suggests that with correct parameters put in place, an organisation funding travel has an opportunity to benefit from the use of OTAs. This would be the case if the organisational traveller could take control of the cost of the travel using predetermined parameters.

The ability to direct cost within certain parameters is not only a management function in an institution. The responsibility for cost management is the responsibility of every individual working for an organisation. Delegation of this responsibility should also come with the power and authority to action cost management. Cost efficiency should be instilled in every employee's work responsibility, including the purchase of travel-related services.

2.5 Overview of emerging technologies

According to Sigala (2018), technology has had a major impact on tourism as a whole; not only for the benefit of the customer alone but for that of the business, ranging from brand identification to automation and streamlining of services for the customer.

Sigala (2018) also suggests that three words symbolise emerging technologies in tourism, namely “connectivity, data and smartness”.

The above indicates that technology is a tool that can be used to enhance travel, either for the service provider or for the buyer of the service, by connecting either buyers and service providers, collecting and interpreting travel data for better decision making, or integrating multiple elements relating to travel to allow for ease of access and use.

A new technology that is fast changing the face of travel-related technologies is 360-degree imaging, which allows the traveller to get a sense of their destination before they book the accommodation (Rahimizhian & Ozturen et al. 2020)

The above statement is key to this research as it is argued that that flexibility in utilising travel services is important; where the traveller can exercise choice of service to purchase, considering the quality versus the cost of the service through the use of emerging technologies.

The 360-degree view may allude to the quality of the service and also impact the satisfaction of the traveller, within predetermined financial parameters.

2.6 Organisational agility

Business success is largely dependent on its ability to use techniques such as speed, flexibility, innovation and proactiveness (Yusuf, Sarhadi and Gunasekaran. 1999). This statement implies that a business should not hesitate to adjust its operations to meet the requirements imposed by the statement. Flexibility and innovation imply that a business should be prepared to accommodate new ways of operating.

The improvement of cost efficiency relates to a key concept of this study, which is the creation of an “agile” organisation. The definition by Yusuf, Sarhadi and Gunasekaran (1999) aligns with the notion posed by Patri & Suresh (2017), who are of the view that agility within an organisation is important when it comes to the improvement of service delivery to customers in the field that it operates in. The two authors cited above concur on the definition of the term “agile”, which indicates that the definition of the term has not changed over the two decades in which it has been current. The extent to which agile principles are applied is dependent on the nature of the organisation. Regardless of how much agility an organisation employs in its operations, the intention is to improve efficiency.

Rigby (2016) notes that agile principles or practices do not work in all circumstances, but indicates that although agility may not best serve the administrative task of purchasing, it can provide

solutions at a strategic level to supply chain challenges that an organisation may be dealing with. Accordingly, the researcher will not be focusing on administrative purchasing tasks in the case study organisation, but on strategic challenges that face the purchasing or supply chain as a bigger concern within an organisation that purchases travel-related services.

Online decentralised purchasing is an operational strategy that contributes to an agile organisation. For this study, online decentralised purchasing will be referred to as more than agile purchasing; primarily because “agile” encompasses many different methods that can lead to an organisation being agile. However, this study will focus only on decentralised purchasing.

This study will consider the possible implications for organisational culture of such a migration to decentralised online platforms. The study will also assess the view of possible users on how the potential migration to a self-managed online booking platform may affect them, be accepted and also best implemented. This study also details literature on the problem of the rigidity of larger institutions when it comes to altering institutional policies in an attempt to adapt to changes in the economy and the environment.

2.7 The evolving economy and the agile business

Chang (2005) articulates the differences between financial training and financial education. The author emphasises that institutions of learning should focus more on financial education, as training speaks more to preparing the incumbent for routine tasks that will not change, equating that to vocational training. However, financial education speaks to developing a capable individual who can adapt through understanding the ideas and theories behind finance to deal with unforeseeable changes that may occur in any industry.

When considering changes that have taken place in the travel industry, the literature reveals that there are various benefits afforded to a traveller, as well as the organisation, when using online systems to book accommodation, versus the traditional means such as travel agents. Online systems provide the traveller with control of various factors regarding the service required. According to Kwangsoo, Jooyeon and Jeong-Yeol (2017), travellers consider certain information before deciding on where to stay. This is information such as the number of rooms sold at a specific price, availability of rooms, and consumer ratings of the establishment under consideration.

2.8 Overview of travel-related services

According to Glaesser and Kester et al (2017), two categories are used to classify travel, the first one being local travel, and the second being global travel, which is often referred to as international travel. Global travel trends are measured by the number of international visitors arriving at another country's borders. This could include the number of visitors coming from a particular country into another country's borders. Local travel is determined by the amount of travel that happens within a country's borders, when citizens of a particular country travel for business or pleasure within the borders of their country.

In a discussion by Ukpabi and Karjaluo et al (2018), substantive evidence is presented showing that the hospitality industry is now embracing artificial intelligence. This implies that the tourism industry is changing from a labour-intensive sector to a more automated industry.

Sigala (2018) states that travel-related services are provided in two main ways:

- Traditional services
These would include actors such as tourism suppliers or destination management organisations (DMO)
- New tourism actors
These would include various technological advancements in the provision or utilisation of travel-related services; through the use of robots, chat boxes and automated booking systems and artificial intelligence.

The above two ways of providing travel services indicate that some travellers still prefer to use the traditional services as stated above. There is a growing contingent that chooses to use the 'new tourism actors'. As mentioned in the introduction, Saito and Takahashi (2019) argue that the purchase of travel-related services is fast becoming more an online activity, versus the traditional means of arranging travel. In other words, travellers are now accepting and becoming more familiar with the new technologies that drive travel.

2.9 The need for control

Based on the preceding statement, not being involved in the booking process through using these new technologies takes the control away from the traveller. However, the statement above takes

into consideration the cost of bookings. This means that travellers' decisions are largely influenced by price, which implies that travellers are keen on reducing prices.

Cost-effective decisions, as argued by Keane, Deschamps and Maguire (2015), are not necessarily made by understanding that the smallest size is best, but by using a properly researched matrix for decision making and the use of a well-designed policy. Upon these being in place, Keane and Deschamps et al. (2015) note that the person responsible for the decision will then be able to take the most cost-effective decision.

If such a policy and a decision matrix are in place, the organisation can manage costs and expenses by using these mechanisms to guide decision making, without taking away the right of employees undertaking travel to decide on various factors of their travel.

Kwangsoo et al (2017) argue similarly that travellers also consider the ratings of establishments as reviewed by previous travellers, which implies that quality is a factor that influences booking decisions. All this, as argued, is information available to travellers, and used to make their decisions.

The importance of these reviews for the assurance of future travellers is noted in a study conducted by Zhao and Wang et al (2015). They posit that although positive reviews do not significantly impact the accommodation service provider by increasing the number of bookings, bad reviews do harm future bookings. This also illustrates the importance of a self-facilitated process, where travellers can make their own decisions.

Making use of online platforms does not go without concerns. According to Schaarschmidt and Hober (2017), many travellers still view transactions online as risky. This perception is a concern that would need to be studied further for this research, also ensuring that ways around the challenge are investigated.

According to De Carlos, Araújo and Fraiz (2016), the use of online platforms for bookings accommodation allows the traveller to get access to multiple options simultaneously. This means that through the use of filtering tools, the traveller can select a price, the number of rooms and other filtering categories, and compare those with various offers available on the platform.

The advantages are obvious compared to the traditional means of making a telephone call to individual establishments or having an agent view and make the decision on the traveller's behalf based on what they indicated on a form, as personal preferences may not all have been captured.

Based on the above, it is evident that the different platforms available have a collection of service providers registered on their databases, thus making it easier and faster to reserve accommodation.

Thus far, the importance has been argued of travellers taking charge of their travel arrangements to ensure that the expected quality and service are obtained at the most economical price. However, making use of online platforms does not go without concerns.

2.10 Chapter Summary

The literature review for this study undertook to determine what literature exists within the travel space. Based on the literature uncovered, it showed that the process of buying goods and services in organisations is no longer operating in the same environment which allowed traditional travel agencies to thrive. The changing economy and other factors have changed the perspective of travellers.

Travellers are becoming more involved in the booking or purchasing of travel-related services, even at the organisational level and not only at a personal level.

The development of online platforms, at times referred to as OTAs, has allowed the traveller and the consumer to become more involved in the booking of travel, therefore taking away control from traditional travel agencies into the hands of the traveller for several reasons linked to control.

The traveller:

- feels more comfortable with making online purchases;
- has the ability to review establishment ratings ;
- can control the cost efficiency (service vs cost) of the travel.

Organisational leaders are charged with creating agile organisations that can adapt to environmental and economic changes happening inside and outside of the organisation. The literature reviewed suggests that the education provided to the organisational leader is key. The literature advocates for business leaders to receive financial education rather than financial training to be able to adapt and create agile businesses.

Policy development under the leadership remains a challenge for many organisations. Where policy inhibits the organisation from taking advantage of technological advancements in the industry, those policies need to be reviewed to create a more agile organisation.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two of this study scrutinized the literature that was relevant for this particular study. Chapter three describes the design as well as the methodology that was employed to achieve the aim of this study. A case study design with qualitative methods was used to collect the data needed to answer the research questions posed by this study. This chapter also clarifies aspects such as the research population, the sample selected for this study, how the data was collected as well all ethical considerations undertaken by this study.

3.2 Research paradigm

As there is a connection between the research approach, as well as the research paradigm, a parallel is drawn between them to highlight the connection between the two concepts, as the research paradigm informs the research approach appropriate for the study.

Veal (2005) states that a research paradigm is a shared framework of assumptions within a discipline. Veal (2005) also states that it reflects a set of philosophical beliefs about the nature of the world. It is important to note that the research paradigm chosen for this study is therefore more interpretive by nature, rather than positivist.

Veal (2005) also clarifies that “the interpretive paradigm posits that human behaviour may not be studied in the same way as non-human elements; the interpretive paradigm emphasises the view that the social world is subjective to the actor in the real world”. This then means that for this study, the reasons why the problem persists lie in the decision-makers' interpretation of the uses of emerging technologies in the real or physical world. The philosophical beliefs impacting this study would be those of the custodians of policy within the organisation. Without considering those beliefs and views, the findings of a study would not be truly representative of all factors impacting a phenomenon.

The purpose of selecting the interpretive paradigm for this study, as opposed to the positivist paradigm, is that organisations persist in making use of traditional, policy-based, single-supplier arrangements to facilitate travel. This is despite the development of new technologies such as OTAs. The traditional, policy-based, single-supplier arrangements are dependent on the organisation itself and on the individuals in the organisation who are tasked to develop and inform those policies. An interpretive paradigm will allow the use of the correct approach which will

determine the underlying factors motivating the continuous use of traditional means to book business/institutional travel.

On the contrary, the positivist approach seeks to find a more systematic, rigidly objective interpretation of the phenomena (Head & Xiang, 2016). Based on Head and Xiang, it is evident that a positivist approach would be better suited if the study sought to determine factors that were not subject to human intervention or interpretation. This means that objectivity from the data source or the variable is key for a positivist paradigm. Because perceptions of policymakers, administrators and managers are a crucial factor for this study, it can then be determined that the positivist approach will not be suitable.

Due to the limited availability of information regarding the problem, the ontological position of the research will be subjective. Brynard and Hanekom (2006) define the ontological approach as the study of reality and the improvement of the understanding of phenomena and/or the nature of being in the social world. This lack of information about the phenomenon requires the researcher to create new information through acceptable and widely practised research methods.

It can therefore be gathered from the ontological position, as well as the interpretive paradigm, that the research aims to explore the application of online decentralised purchasing of accommodation and its impact to gain a better understanding of what causes the circumstances surrounding the phenomena and how they can be addressed.

From the above, it means that the researcher has to present the epistemological position of the research as exploratory. Mishra (2015) states that in exploratory research, the researcher tries to explore the behaviour of the variable/s and their relationships in the physical and social sciences. The latter statement by Mishra (2015) means that this research will allow the researcher to manipulate the data variations without altering them to see how they would affect the institution had they been applied in different scenarios.

There are various ways in which the researcher could be able to gather data for this research. However, given that the study's ontological position is subjective, it means that the researcher had to rely on the use of qualitative methods to gather meaningful data. According to Crawther (2009), qualitative data includes descriptive accounts of observations and other kinds of subjective data. This type of data collection allows the researcher to interact more with the numeric and non-numeric data, seeking to find relationships and commonalities between the two.

A deeper concern for the study is the reasons why corporate institutions, such as universities among others, do not make use of emerging technologies to facilitate travel arrangements within

the organisation. This can only be uncovered through a qualitative study as previously indicated, thus requiring interviews to be conducted with executive management. A quantitative study, which seeks to prove or correct a phenomenon, may not be able to provide an understanding of the reasons behind the phenomenon. According to McCusker & Gunaydin (2015), quantitative methods seek to determine factors such as how many people are affected by the phenomena or the extent of the phenomena but not the reasons behind the phenomena. This means that qualitative methods would not be able to extract the correct data for this study as the study does not seek to find out numbers or an extent, but more interested in the reasons and views of the respondents. The use of quantitative methods would impact the tools used to extract data for the study. Therefore limiting or restricting the use of interviews which would extract the qualitative data required for the study.

An interpretive paradigm is thus best suited to an inductive approach, where the researcher seeks to take a specific idea or phenomenon observed, analyse it and determine various factors of interest regarding the phenomenon, such as what, why and how. This does in turn allow the researcher to generalise the causes and effects of the phenomenon, and how it may best be dealt with going forward to achieve the best results for an organisation. Armat et al. (2018) suggest that the inductive approach is best suited for qualitative research as it allows for the findings to be discussed in a “general conversational” manner. Armat et al. (2018) also indicate that this approach is suited for when there are limited theories or previous research findings on the phenomena being investigated.

3.3 Research approach

The methodology that was used for this study was qualitative. According to Singh (2007), qualitative research allows the researcher to look deeper than numerical values when analysing data; this is to determine relationships between all data extracted.

A qualitative study allowed the researcher to use data triangulation to answer the question posed by the research.

3.4 Research design/strategy

The research was designed to be in the form of a case study, where a selected case was examined thoroughly to determine the causes or results of a particular situation. According to Geels (2001), case studies allow the researcher to study qualitatively various elements of the phenomenon as they can focus on all elements of the phenomenon. Yazan (2015) defines case

study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates the case or cases conforming to the abovementioned definition by addressing the “how” or “why” questions concerning the phenomenon of interest. Although case studies are used widely, there is still concern from many critics on the validity of data due to undefined protocols (Yazan, 2015).

The case selected for this study was a geographically dispersed organisation, where the staff members are required to travel to other sites and also other parts of the country and abroad for business purposes. This requirement leads to extensive travel costs for the institution, thus leading to a requirement for staff to be aware and proactive when it comes to the reduction of travel expenses.

3.5 Demarcation/delimitation of the study

The study was limited to one organisation and one business unit within the organisation. The selected business unit is identical to all other business units in the organisation, operating with similar structures and under similar conditions and regulations. Therefore, the findings from the selected business unit will be representative of all other business units within the organisation. The results of the findings are applicable to the organisation as a whole and generalisable to other organisations that are similar to the selected case.

3.6 Research population and sample selection

3.6.1 Target population

The target population selected for this study was the higher education environment. A university of Technology in the Western Cape, South Africa was selected as the case. for this The reasons for the selection of this target population were the strict regulations involved in undertaking travel for work purposes, and the frequency of travel requests. The case in point is the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Western Cape, South Africa).

3.6.2 Case description

As previously stated by Geels (2001), case studies allow the researcher to qualitatively study various elements of the phenomenon as they can focus on all elements of the phenomenon. The section below describes the case to be studied, as well as the reasons for the selection of the case.

3.6.2.1 The case

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) was selected as the case for the study. The university employs 1896 staff members (CPUT, 2018) that are eligible to travel for work purposes, depending on the core function and responsibility in their respective units.

3.6.2.2 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for the study are the engagements that staff members have with the process of booking accommodation. This includes the challenges they experience and possible ways of improving the process, with specific reference to the impact self-driven online platforms may have on the booking process and the organisation as a whole.

3.6.2.3 Unit of observation

The units of observation in the study are the staff members of the chosen organisation who undertake travel for business/academic purposes. This mainly refers to the management which makes the policy decisions, as well as the administrators who facilitate the bookings.

3.6.2.4 Sampling

Polit and Hungler (1999) describe a sample as a collection of all the objects, subjects and members that fit the same description as sought by the researcher. For this study, non-probability sampling was used in selecting a sample for interviews. Gray, Burns and Gove (2013) state that in non-probability sampling, not all members of the identified population have an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. This means that within the organisation, not all staff members will have an opportunity to be selected to respond to the questions posed. This allows the researcher to select respondents to respond to the questions by way of identifying key respondents who are experienced and knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied.

To purposefully or purposively identify respondents is a characteristic of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to purposively select the respondents in the study because of the qualities that they possess (Etikan et al. 2016). This is useful for this research as not all staff members of the chosen population are involved in making decisions on which policy direction to take when designing institutional policies relating to travel. Etikan et al. (2016) confirm that purposive sampling is best suited when the researcher has a specific group of respondents in mind who are best suited for the study. This aligns with this study, as the researcher has specifically targeted staff members who undertake travel within an organisation for business purposes.

To the contrary, probability sampling allows everyone equal opportunity to respond to the study. According to the definition by Gray, Burns and Gove (2013), probability sampling can be taken as sampling that allows every member of the population an equal chance to be selected for a part of the study. This, in turn, would have allowed respondents who are not necessarily able to respond to certain questions such as those that inform policy direction.

The sample was selected from administrative staff members who are directly involved in the purchase of travel-related goods and services (Category 1); middle to senior management and academic staff members who undertake travel for business purposes (Category 2); and executive management who are in line to make decisions regarding the institutional travel guidelines (Category 3).

For this study, 10 staff members were interviewed. Each has a role in the purchase of travel-related goods and services such as accommodation.

3.6.3 Participation Criteria

The criteria that were used to identify staff members who should participate in this study is as follows:

Executive Management level

- must be in a position to impact procurement policy
- must be in a position to decide on expenditure priorities
- must be in a position that allocates resources

Mid-Senior Management Level and Academic Staff

- must oversee staff undertaking travel
- must oversee the use of the travel budget
- must have undertaken travel (accommodation) for work purposes

Operational level staff

- must be involved in the administrative booking of travel (accommodation)
- must be involved in the administrative buying of travel (accommodation)

Table 3.1: Participant demographics

Participants	Experience in years	Years in Current Role	Operating level	Designation	Gender
1	32	12	Exec Management C3	Non-academic	Male
2	15	1.5	Administration C1	Non-academic	Female
3	19	3.5	Management C2	Academic	Male
4	18	5	Management C2	Academic	Male
5	22	5	Administration C1	Non-academic	Female
6	7	2	Administration C1	Non-academic	Female
7	15	5	Management C2	Academic	Female
8	23	4	Exec Management C3	Non-academic	Male
9	20	3	Management C2	Academic	Female
10	17	5	Exec Management C3	Non-academic	Female

3.7 Data Collection

Singh (2007) states that a survey can be classified in a few ways; it can either be questionnaires or interviews and possibly a combination of the two. For this study, interviews and existing documents were the main sources of data.

3.7.1 Interviews

The interview data collected was done through the use of semi-structured questions with different respondents at different levels in the organisation. The interviews were conducted online via the use of the Microsoft Teams application. The interviews were carried out on this platform as a response to the Covid-19 restrictions. All interviews were recorded for ease of analysis.

3.8 Data analysis and interpretation

The study used the qualitative data analysis technique that analyses the varying degree of qualitative responses discussed below:

3.8.1 Thematic analysis

The qualitative data extracted were analysed using thematic analysis. According to Braune and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be used to classify and code qualitative data. This helped in finding correlations between the different responses and specific details for analysis.

The process followed for using thematic analysis for this study is summarized in the table below:

Table 3.2: Thematic analysis stages

Phase	Phase description
Transcribing and studying the interviews	Listen to all voice and video material and transcribe the discussion. This includes studying the material
Generating initial codes	Documenting notable data that seems interesting to the researcher and arranging that data according to the codes.
Searching for themes	Arranging the coded data into initial themes and aligning all codes into the potential themes.
Reviewing identified themes	Reviewing if the codes align with the themes and intention of the study
Defining and naming the themes	Developing theme names as the study progresses to ensure the correct naming and definition of each theme
Producing the report	Compiling the report based on the themes and data extracted in the attempt to answer the research questions.

(Braune and Clarke. 2006)

3.8.1.1 *Transcribing and studying the interviews*

To fully understand what is contained in the data, the recordings were transcribed into text. This allowed the researcher ease of reference between the two formats when reviewing certain elements of the data. The transcriptions were checked against the recordings for correctness.

3.8.1.2 *Generating initial codes*

The researcher used Microsoft Word tables to code the data. The transcribed responses were first coded using the nature and content of the response. Thereafter, the coded responses were grouped by similarity to identify potential themes. The table below shows how the responses were coded to identify potential themes.

Table 3.3: Generating the initial codes

Interview Extracts	Initial Codes
<p>Not knowing the impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not easy to predict the outcome or success of this without conducting a comprehensive trial. • Staff take time to adapt to changes that are implemented in the organisation. • Consultation with all stakeholders is key before the introduction of changes in an organisation. • Staff are always cautious of scams on the internet, and this may hinder their acceptance. • Managers need to be cautious of potential abuse and fraud when making a booking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual rollout • Level of comfort • Consultation • Internet fraud • Online navigation
<p>Organisational, regulatory and operational environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If line managers can authorize and account for travel, this would make the process more efficient. • Travel is booked using a credit card that has a monthly limit. If more travel is done, the limit may be reached, and others won't be able to travel. • Sometimes the credit card provider does not have agreements in place with a smaller service provider for payment. • Costs above a certain value will require more, quotations; the higher the value, the more quotations that will need to be sought. • Who will take accountability for misuse of travel when staff book for themselves? • This may raise audit queries when staff make bookings without all relevant documents and approvals. • Administrative challenges would mean that this change would be a nightmare. • There would be less administration when everyone manages their accommodation. • Quotations received from travel agents are valid for a short period and often expire before all relevant approvals are obtained. • Human Capital Learning and Development Unit does not proactively respond to the needs of the support departments. HC facilitates its training plan and does not assist support departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorization • Credit limitation • Procurement procedures • Accountability • Audit requirements • Administration • Technology infrastructure capability • Validity of quotations • Training needs
<p>Differing roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative staff make the booking for line managers. • Some academic staff are not administratively inclined and may make mistakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff designation and focus • Administrators make bookings • Oversight and authorization by line managers • Intermediaries

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line managers are entrusted with the responsibility of oversight and authorization and reporting. • Booking platforms play an intermediary role in the booking of accommodation. • Procurement is involved in the sourcing of service providers, not the management of the expenditure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation
<p>Choice and control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little choice when it comes to booking of accommodation. You take what is provided. • Due to non-familiarity, staff would have to choose where they need to be vs what they prefer. • The ability to choose allows you to contact hotels directly for cheaper prices. • Some staff may book at the conference centre even if it is more expensive and not consider value for money. • If you book close by to the venue, you may get better value at the cost of just a short walk to the venue. • For unknown establishments, travellers rely on pictures and photos on the internet when booking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of choices • Unfamiliar destinations • Communication lines • Best value • Proximity • Images and pictures
<p>The value of a service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel agent fees are inclusive of back office functions such as claims and refunds. • Saving somewhere may increase costs elsewhere. • Staff would not consider health facilities available when booking. Hotels adhere to safety standards vs smaller establishments. • Building a relationship with a travel agent allows for quicker support in cases of uncertainty. • Staff search for accommodation and tell the travel agent where they want to book when they know the area. • Travel rewards for consistent travel may encourage staff to partake in more travel for business such as research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive service needs • Additional labour costs • Health and Safety as an option • Relationship building • Duplication of the search • Added services and benefits
<p>Technology related responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are currently working on online platforms and would not have any challenges. • Connectivity is a challenge that the institution would have to deal with. • Sometimes using online platforms is not easy for some staff members which would make booking a challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity • Online navigation challenge • Familiarity with online platforms

<p>Finance related responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution would need to establish an internal travel office. • Conference/publication and productivity will add to the university's income. • No refund guarantees when travel does not take place as per the cancellation policy. • The institution takes insurance for all its staff; if safety cannot be assured, this will affect the insurance premium • Booking directly will allow for staff to negotiate, and search for, better rates • When staff use their research accounts, they will be able to select accommodation that fits with the available budget. • Hotels require individual travellers to pay before arrival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin costs may increase • Conferences participation • Insurance costs and premiums • Refunds • Better rates • Using the budget as a guide • Pre-payment
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3.8.1.3 Reviewing data for themes and the subthemes

Braune and Clarke (2006) indicate that reviewing data for themes and subthemes is focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the codes, where the codes may be interpreted further to identify themes and sub-themes.

Table 3.4: Identification of the themes

Codes	Theme and Subtheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual rollout • Level of comfort • Consultation • Internal fraud • Online navigating 	<p>Discovering the unknown</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorization • Credit limitation • Procurement procedures • Accountability • Audit requirements • Administration • Technology infrastructure capability • Validity of quotations • Training needs 	<p>The operational and regulatory environment</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff designation and focus • Administrators make bookings • Oversight and authorization by line managers • Intermediaries • Regulation 	<p>Delegation of responsibilities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of choices • Unfamiliar destinations • Communication lines • Best value • Proximity • Images and pictures 	<p>The effect on choice</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive service needs • Additional labour costs • time resources • Health and Safety as an option • Relationship building • Duplication of the search • Added services and benefits 	<p>The value of a service</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity • Online navigation challenge • Familiarity with online platforms 	<p>Technology infrastructure</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative costs may increase • Conferences participation • Insurance costs and premiums • Refunds • Better rates • Using the budget as a guide 	<p>Monetary impact</p>

3.8.1.4 Refining the themes

Theme 1: Discovering the unknown

The data that emerged from the study indicated that, although there was a general understanding of the impact of online technologies used when booking accommodation, there was a general concern about the unknown impact that this migration would have. This theme emerged as a result of the multiple responses received from respondents at all levels within the organisations.

Theme 2: Operational and regulatory environment and requirements

The operational and regulatory environment and its requirements were identified as a theme as they consistently came up when analysing the responses. Respondents consistently mentioned factors within the environment that would need to be duly considered when planning to implement the decentralised form of booking for accommodation.

In certain instances, these would be mentioned as hindrances; in other instances, these would be mentioned as factors to be considered, not necessarily preventing the implementation of a decentralised booking system.

Theme 3: Delegation of responsibilities

This theme emerged due to responses that indicated that staff at different levels (operational, management and executive) have different concerns with the implementation of the decentralised booking system. This alluded to the delegation, as well as the assumption, of certain responsibilities among employees of the institution.

The responses received indicated the divisions drawn between the responsibilities of administrative, academic, and management and executive management staff.

Theme 4: The effect on choice

The ability to direct one's travel, whether for cost saving or convenience, was a pertinent issue during the data collection and analysis. Respondents constantly referred to this factor and therefore making it a very strong theme that emerged in the data analysis.

Theme 5: The value of a service

The data collected on this theme revealed that when looking at the changing of any system, there is much more to consider than just the financial benefits or disadvantages. Values other than financial need to be considered over and above cost.

This theme emerged as a result of respondents looking further than just the financial advantages or disadvantages of the centralised, as well as decentralised purchasing of accommodation.

Theme 6: Technology infrastructure

The responses received showed that there was a concern around the use of technology as well as the technology infrastructure. This theme was detected as the responses indicated the staff views on the technology available as well as its application to the online decentralised purchasing of accommodation. Staff views centred around network accessibility and reliability. The ability to navigate the online space was also raised by respondents under this theme.

Themes 7: Monetary impact

The financial implication of the migration to online decentralised purchasing was a major theme in the data analysis. Respondents were clear on how this could impact the institution, depending on the level at which they operated. Operational staff indicated the relief on workload, whereas executive level staff indicated the long term impact on the organisations' ability to prevent unintended expenses as a result of the decentralised model of purchasing accommodation.

3.8.1.5 Defining and naming the themes

This phase required that the themes be named and defined. This included detailing what was crucial about the theme and how it assisted in analysing the data for this study. This is presented in the form of Table 3.5 below:

Table 3.5: Defining and naming of themes

Theme	Definition
Discovering the unknown	This theme focuses on the concerns raised by the respondents about the unknown and possible effects the migration to online decentralised purchasing can have on the organisation. This theme assisted in analysing and reporting all those concerns.
The operational and regulatory environment	This theme looked at the operational as well as the regulatory environment as stated by the respondents. This theme assisted in analysing the environment from the perspective of the respondents, which either enabled or limited the implementation of online decentralised purchasing.
Delegation of responsibilities	The responses indicated that there was a vast difference between the responsibilities at the

	<p>different levels. Administrators and management staff have different responsibilities.</p> <p>This theme considered these responsibilities to best understand what the impact of this decentralised model would be at the different operational levels.</p>
The effect on choice	<p>Choice in this particular theme refers to the ability of a staff member to direct their travel. Respondents had varying views that were crucial to this study and all views needed to be looked into equally to have a balanced view of the importance to choose versus the need for convenience.</p>
The value of a service	<p>This theme focused on the responses relating to the services provided to travellers, not only from a financial perspective but from many other viewpoints of the respondents.</p> <p>This theme revealed that a service was not only to be considered from one viewpoint but multiple perspectives for all stakeholders with travel responsibilities.</p>
Technology infrastructure	<p>The migration to decentralised technologies was raised by respondents in several discussions. It became clear that the availability of technology infrastructure as well as connectivity needed to be discussed.</p> <p>Without a clear understanding of what was possible in terms of technology and infrastructure, migration to online decentralised purchasing of accommodation could be negatively affected.</p>
Monetary impact	<p>The financial impact as stated by respondents was dealt with under this theme. This was a pertinent point of discussion from respondents.</p> <p>This evaluated the financial impact as understood and responded to by different levels as well as designations within the institution.</p>

The themes identified in this study are represented in the thematic map below. The thematic map is a graphic representation of the themes uncovered during the data analysis process.

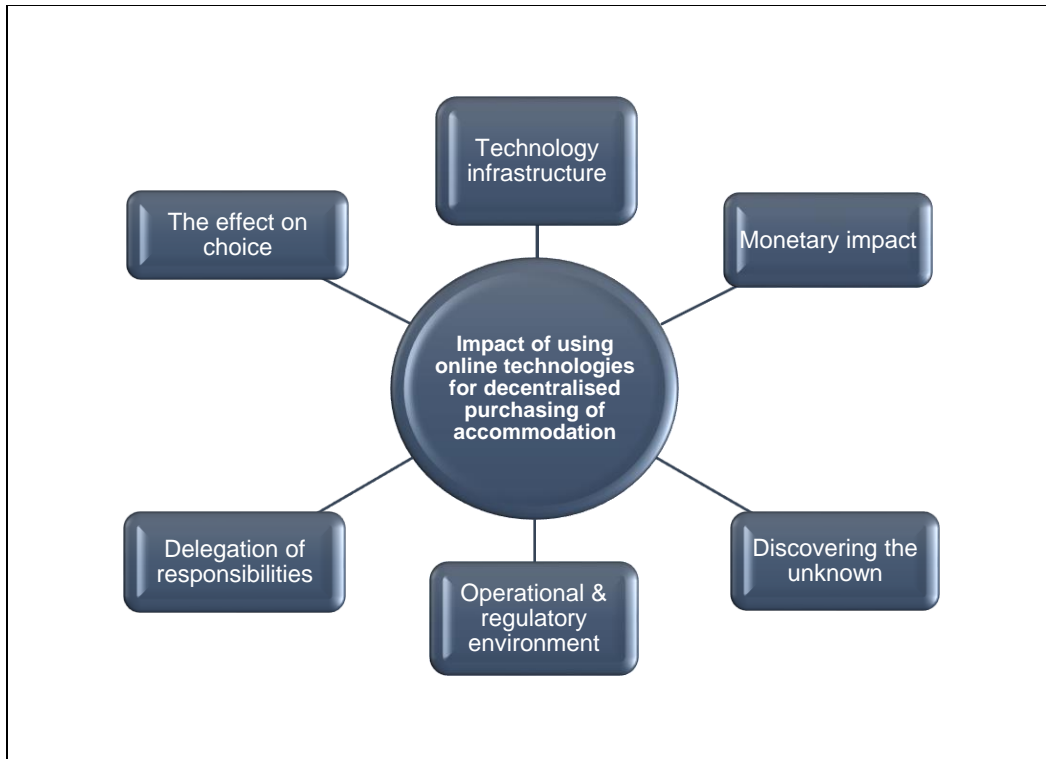


Figure 3.0.1 Thematic Map

3.9 Validity and reliability

The data extraction process was designed considering the need to ensure validity and reliability. This entailed considering the main types of validity that have an impact on this study, as well as reliability.

3.9.1 Validity

According to Taherdoost (2016), there are four main types of validity to be considered, namely; face validity, content validity, construct validity and criterion validity. These are to be considered together with the reliability of the survey tool.

Face validity

This refers to the researcher's subjective view of the assessment tools used for the study. This entails whether the instrument is appropriate and without bias (Oluwatayo, 2012). The development of the research tool was done before the study was conducted among the participants. The researcher took all necessary precautions to ensure that there was no bias in the survey tools used. However, the most informed and subjective stance as indicated by the

literature was adopted and existing data was adopted. The design of the questions in the survey ensured that no bias exists within the questions themselves, indicating that the researcher was not looking for information and in turn ignoring other relevant information.

Content validity

Content validity refers to the degree to which items in the research instrument reflect the universe to which the content will be generalised (Straub et al. 2004). When the researcher was designing the instruments used for this study, it was important to consider the generalisability of the findings and to determine if the findings only applied to the site surveyed.

The research tool used for this study ensured that the results uncovered were generalisable, firstly, to the different operating units of the organisation. The results are also generalisable to organisations that are similar to the one selected for this study.

The development of this study sought to ensure that the data gathered would be operationalisable. The content validity of the study was a key concern when developing data extraction tools.

Construct validity

Construct validity refers to the extent to which the idea that was conceptualised can be translated or transformed into actual reality and operationalised (Taherdoost, 2016). Based on this statement, it is imperative to consider the nature of the data that the study will uncover when developing a research tool. The tool must be designed in such a way that the data uncovered can be translated or transformed into actionable results.

This study considered construct validity by ensuring that the questions posed in the survey tool would not only provide answers to challenges around the booking of accommodation. The questions were formed with the intent of extracting actionable data that could be used to solve existing problems within similar organisations. This was done by ensuring that the research tool does not only extract data on what can be improved by the study. The research tool also extracted data on how the situation can be improved, as well as data on what the response from the staff on the ground would be concerning the new changes that would come as a result of the study. The literature already indicated that when change is implemented, there are forces that act for the change and forces that act against the change.

Criterion validity

According to Taherdoost (2016), criterion validity is the extent to which a tool is related to an outcome. The tool's ability to predict an outcome compared to another tool is also a concern dealt with in criterion validity.

The survey tool used for this study was considered to have better criterion validity compared to other survey tools available such as questionnaires. This study, being qualitative, used interviews to ensure that the data extracted was more detailed than data extracted from a questionnaire, thus allowing more accurate results and more accurate recommendations.

The results and recommendations are predicted to have the most accurate outcome for the organisation as a result of the criterion validity of the survey tool used for the study. A questionnaire would extract more quantitative data, and at best, extract vague or restricted responses from the respondents. This would be the case as a questionnaire would not allow the respondents to expand further on their responses. Nor would the questionnaire allow the researcher to clarify the questions posed or get further clarity on the responses provided should there be a need.

3.9.2 Reliability

Joppe (2000, in Golafshani, 2003) describes reliability as the extent to which a result is consistent over some time and is an accurate representation of the population studied. This means that for a study to be reliable, the tools used to conduct the study need to deliver the same result if the variables remain unchanged.

This study ensured reliability by designing the research tools and questions before conducting the survey. This meant that the tools used were not altered unintentionally (or intentionally) because of highly satisfactory or non-satisfactory findings. The researcher was not able to direct the responses by altering questions or changing the survey questions. The researcher was only able to use the tools already developed to ensure consistency in the results uncovered.

In designing the survey tools, the researcher ensured the reliability of the tool by ensuring that the survey would be able to produce consistent results when applied to a different sample that matches the characteristics (responsibilities and work circumstances) of the current sample.

Noble and Smith (2015) state that validity is the integrity, the application or the design and methods of the study; as well as the accuracy of the research procedures used for the study. Ensuring the validity of the study and all its components will ensure that the outcome of the study will address its objectives.

The accuracy of the data extracted by the tool was also a crucial factor when designing the research tool. The clarity and simplicity in the language used was able to ensure that respondents understand the questions posed. Clear linking of the research objectives to the research questions of the study was a point to consider. Upon designing the research question from the objectives of the study, the researcher was able to develop survey questions that would ensure that the responses provided by respondents address the research question directly. Therefore, ensuring the accuracy of the extracted data.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The researcher received consent from the institution to interact with the respondents concerning this study. The purpose of the research was to make clear to the institution that this was not an audit but an analysis of patterns to determine how the organisation could better use its allocated resources.

The data extracted was not accompanied by the names of the respondents. They were provided with a letter that explained the purpose of the study, as well as the guarantee provided to them of confidentiality.

The study was carried out at the researcher's place of employment. Jorgensen (2015) terms this "participant observation", which indicates that the researcher may interact with the subjects of the study by being part of the group being studied. Shah (2017) argues that participant observation not only allows researchers to question their assumptions about the world but also allows them to produce new knowledge that is not confined within the known boundaries.

This study was not intended to solve a problem that exists only in the chosen case, but a generic problem that exists in all organisations that use intermediaries to facilitate travel arrangements.

Coghlan and Brannick (2019) distinguish between two roles that the researcher has to be mindful of when researching from within an organisation. Having a worker researching from within the organisation can benefit the entire organisation if the researcher wants to learn from the research. This way the institution may also learn from the results.

With regard to the second role, Coghlan and Brannick (2019) state that having an executive manager or decision-maker conducting research may be more difficult, as the individual executive may be studying themselves and the decisions they have taken or implemented, therefore leading to some form of conflict that will need to be managed more critically.

The researcher, however, does not hold an executive position with the organisation and is therefore not in a position to influence the outcome of this research, nor executive power over anyone performing any function related to travel. In this case, the researcher conducting the study does not perform any executive management responsibilities in the organisation.

3.11 Chapter summary

Chapter three discussed the methodology that was used to collect and analyse the data that was used for this study. Qualitative methodology was used to extract data to best understand the impact of migrating from the traditional means to online decentralised platforms when booking accommodation for business travel. Interviews were conducted with the participants who had been selected based on the criteria outlined in the chapter.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis allowed the researcher to analyse the data and identify patterns relevant to the research objective of the study. The researcher followed all the steps as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the data into meaningful codes and themes. This process was done using tables in Microsoft Word to code the responses and determine the themes.

The chapter also looked at the questions of reliability and validity of the methods used to ensure that the data was interpreted correctly and could answer the research questions. Ethical considerations were also considered.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDING

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the findings of the study. These results were obtained from interviews conducted with staff members at various levels. The respondents comprised academic and executive staff members as well as administrative staff.

The questionnaire obtained qualitative results from the respondents which were analysed using thematic analysis

4.2 Findings

The findings in Chapter four are discussed and categorized as per the themes identified in the previous chapter.

4.2.1 Discovering the unknown

This theme pays attention to the discussions raised by the respondents about the unknown factors surrounding the implementation of online decentralised purchasing.

Respondent 3 discussed the challenges of implementing a project such as online decentralised purchasing for the first time:

“Since we don't have the system, we cannot predict at the moment what will be the disadvantages, including the advantage. But once we have the system, then probably we will be aware of any kind of abuse or if the system is not used as per the requirement”.

To add to this, Respondent 5 added that:

“You always going to get some staff who will resist the change and be hesitant to learn a new system”.

The statement by Respondent 5 indicated that there is a concern surrounding the implementation of new changes. This was echoed as well from a management perspective, not only from a worker's perspective when another respondent indicated a similar perspective regarding the acceptance of the change.

Respondent 2 noted that in some cases, line managers are the ones who are resistant to change within the organisational environment.

Familiarity and comfort are factors that were mentioned by many respondents who indicated the fear of using the internet to make purchases. Several respondents indicated their fear of the internet and cybercrime. Respondent 4 indicated that:

“It's easy to deceive using our online platforms. You could have customers who are their own employees, rating themselves. Maybe it's also a risk that you're taking based on the perceptions of others when booking at a certain place”.

All respondents alluded to the possibility of abuse of the system. Respondent 10 went as far as saying that:

“Although it would not be easy to manipulate a well-structured system with the correct controls and approvals loaded, abuse is even more of a possibility when a chain of processors collude together to manipulate the systems”.

4.2.2 Operational and regulatory environment

This theme focused on the environment in which decentralised online purchasing would be implemented. This involved the identification of core enablers and the inhibitors that have an impact on the phenomenon being studied.

Respondent 1 discussed the importance of establishing an environment that enables managers to take control of the resources they are entrusted with. This refers to the authority as well as accountability given to line managers.

“If line managers can authorize and account for the travel, this would make the process more efficient.”

Respondent 8, as well as respondent 10, indicated an operational matter to consider when assessing the impact of implementing online decentralised travel bookings:

“Travel is booked using a credit card that has a monthly limit. If more travel is done, the limit may be reached, and others won't be able to travel”.

Respondent 8 also indicated an additional matter to consider in this regard. The respondent stated that the provider of the credit card used for booking at times does not have agreements (payment) with smaller independent accommodation service providers.

Respondents 2, 8 and 10 showed concerns about adhering to the regulations as required by the organisation. An introduction of a new system would still need to adhere to such regulations.

“This may raise audit queries when staff make bookings without all relevant documents and approvals. The admin challenges linked to resolving those audit queries may be a nightmare”.

At an operational level, Respondent 1 stated that the quotations received needed to be processed within a certain period before they expired. If they did expire, the process of sourcing quotations would need to be repeated. This would increase the administrative work for the staff members liaising with the travel agent.

4.2.3 Delegation of responsibilities

This theme emanated from roles and responsibilities within the organisation, of which three main roles were identified. These roles showed a specific focus on certain concerns surrounding travel and accommodation.

Administrative staff:

Administrative staff showed concern about operational matters regarding the booking of travel. These included the ease of booking as well as the complications that could arise. Respondent 1 and Respondent 7 among others indicated that bookings are normally done by the administrative staff.

Respondent 1 explained from an administrative perspective how the process would ease their function:

“There will be a reduction in paperwork that we have to handle if everyone books for themselves. The process will also be less manual due to not having to walk the papers to the different offices and stages for approval”.

Academic staff:

Academic staff within the organisation do not often have the opportunity to undertake administrative tasks such as booking accommodation. Respondent 6 indicated that academic staff are not administratively inclined and may make mistakes when making bookings.

The study uncovered that academic staff members do actively search for accommodation for work travel. However, this information is then passed on to administrative staff for further processing. Respondent 3 stated that:

“The travellers currently do search for accommodation on their own time. This information is then sent to the travel agent for the finalization of the booking”.

Respondents 3, 6 and 7 all indicated the importance of staying close to the conference venue, which academic staff members try to achieve when searching for a venue.

“At times, the travel agent may not be aware of the accommodation closest to the conference centre”.

Respondent 1 indicated that depending on the priorities of the staff member, in some cases, booking closer to the conference centre may be more cost-effective than booking at the conference centre

Management and executive management:

Management and executive management staff showed concern around the reporting of activities relating to accommodation for travel. Respondent 8 indicated that:

“If every staff member is allowed to make their booking, any changes that are made to that booking would need to be accounted for. That admin around that would mean that the auditing process would be even more time-consuming”.

Approval of all accommodation and travel should reside with line management at any level. Respondent 10 indicated that no one individual should have the authority to approve their travel at any level.

4.2.4 The effect on choice

This theme covers the responses from participants who discussed the ability to choose as a factor impacting their function. The ability to choose became a notable theme throughout the interviews. Respondent 7 stated that:

“I have never had the option to choose my own accommodation and staff undertaking travel for work are frustrated as a result of the inability to choose for themselves”.

Respondents clearly indicated that there was little opportunity to choose their accommodation, despite the factors they considered as important regarding the travel. Respondent 3 stated that:

“The ability to choose your own accommodation allows you to contact hotels directly. This would allow you to pay cheaper prices for accommodation as there is no middleman”.

The discussion around the ability to choose by travelling staff also indicated that some staff were aware of budgetary constraints. This was indicated by Respondent 1 and Respondent 7, who stated that booking closer to the event venue can be cheaper, as opposed to booking at the event venue itself as that tends to cost more.

Respondent 9 indicated that value for money is what is lacking. The ability to choose would allow the traveller to look not only for affordable accommodation within the budget, but other added benefits could be received for the same cost.

4.2.5 The value of a service

This theme emanated from the respondents who indicated that there was more to a service than the accommodation required.

Respondents indicated that there were added services to consider when booking, over and above the accommodation that the organisation paid for. Respondent 8 indicated that a comprehensive service was crucial when buying goods and services:

“The fees that are paid to travel agent for making the bookings for accommodation are inclusive of back-office functions such as processing any claims that the organisation may have with service providers as well as the refunds that may be due to the organisation as a result of cancelled travel”.

If the organisation focused on savings alone, the savings might incur additional costs in other areas. Respondent 1 and Respondent 8 indicated that if the organisation focuses on cost saving in the short term, there is a possibility that additional costs could arise as a result of not being able to manage the changes that emanate from the decentralised purchasing.

“Saving in terms of booking rates may lead to additional administration for the organisation; therefore, requiring additional staff to process the refunds as well as collate documentation required for audits”.

From the interviews, it became apparent that the organisation needs to be aware of various other factors that could affect the organisation concerning travel:

Respondent 8 indicated the following, which was in agreement with Respondent 10:

“Staff in the organisation would not consider health facilities available when making a booking if the booking of accommodation was left fully up to the travelling staff member. Hotels that are in the travel agent’s system adhere to safety standards that are required unlike the smaller establishments such as airbnb service providers”.

A further note by Respondent 8 indicated that the institution provides insurance cover for travelling staff. This is discussed under the theme relating to the financial impact of the migration to online decentralised purchasing.

Respondents working directly with travel agents when making bookings indicated that the relationships that they have built with the agents was beneficial when it comes to complicated bookings, especially those that required accommodation in places they were not familiar with. Respondent 5 indicated that:

“Dealing with an agent is like having an expert assist you with the booking when help is needed. Special requests are best handled by experienced people who deal with those kinds of challenges more often to avoid any mistakes. Calling someone in that case helps”.

The respondents indicated that added services to the accommodation booking could be received if staff are allowed to book their accommodation. These services would not alter the nature, nor the cost of the booking, but would encourage the staff to travel for work purposes to increase productivity such as conference attendance. Respondent 9 indicated that:

“Travel accommodation rewards could be received by staff if they were allowed to book on their own. These rewards could be used to book future travel by the staff. The organisation could also use the rewards for transporting staff such as air miles, which could be collected to book future travel”.

If the organisation made use of rewards, this could translate to savings for the organisation. The nature of these savings is discussed in the theme relating to the monetary impact (section 4.2.7 below).

4.2.6 Technology infrastructure

This theme is based on the responses which indicate that there is cause to look further into the technological capabilities of the organisation as well as those of the staff when investigating the impact of implementing online decentralised technologies for purchasing accommodation.

Respondent 2 indicated that:

“System challenges would pose a challenge when it comes to staff having to book their own travel. If this problem is not resolved, it would mean that there may be some frustrations that may emanate from internet connectivity and reliability”.

Familiarity with navigating online platforms was also raised by the respondents. Respondent 1 alluded to the fact that it is not always easy to navigate online booking platforms when searching for accommodation.

Respondent 4 stated the following:

“If the use of online decentralised booking platforms is not easy to use for staff members, that could end up causing much anxiety for staff who are uncomfortable with navigating the online space but need to book travel”.

4.2.7 Monetary impact

This theme relays the findings of the study that refer to costs and the implications of implementing online and decentralised purchasing of accommodation.

Respondent 8 indicates that:

“Administration costs may increase as a result of staff making their own bookings. In certain cases, these bookings may be cancelled, and the recouping of those cancellation fees may require a department to be established to focus on the processing of refunds as well as the collation of documentation for auditing purposes”.

Academic staff who travel to conferences are expected to produce journal and conference papers as a result. The impact of allowing staff to select their accommodation was reported to have a possible impact on conference participation and research productivity. Respondent 7 stated that:

“Online decentralised purchasing will encourage users to attend conferences, therefore the conference and publication productivity will increase”.

The study uncovered the obligations placed on the organisation when it comes to the safety of staff members. Insurance for employees and their safety while they are travelling for work purposes is the responsibility of the organisation.

Respondent 8 indicated that:

“The organisation takes insurance for the traveller as well as for their safety when they are travelling for work purposes. When travellers use accommodation that cannot provide or assure certain safety standards, this will have an impact on the cost of the insurance premium the organisation has to pay”.

Respondent 1 stated that:

“When a booking is made by an individual traveller, service providers require upfront payments for the accommodation. Should there be a cancellation, a refund policy would apply depending on the service provider”.

The statement above was also supported by Respondent 8 who stated that there are no refund guarantees when a booking is made by an individual and not by a travel agent.

The respondents indicated that when searching for accommodation, they can source better rates. Respondent 7 indicated that the budget is a guide that can be used to determine which accommodation to book, therefore reducing the cost of travel.

4.3 Contradictory views in the study

The table below captures contradictory views reported by the respondents. This table is formulated as per the themes identified by the study.

Table 4.1: Contradictory views summarised

Discovering the unknown	
Staff have concerns about activity on the internet, citing the ability to navigate to fraudulent activity.	Staff indicated comfort with navigating the online space and experience with purchasing accommodation online.
The operational and regulatory environment	
Providing evidence for audits will be difficult due to staff who do their own booking and keep limited records.	Line management is in a position to review all travel and only approve travel that meets organisational needs and with all supporting documents attached
Delegation of responsibilities	
Line management and academic staff will have added administrative responsibility of dealing with bookings.	Administrative staff responsibilities will be reduced. Some staff are already engaged in sourcing their own accommodation to provide to travel agents.
The effect on choice	
Staff choosing their own accommodation can expose the organisation to risk or loss as well as fraud.	The ability to choose their own accommodation can promote research activity as some staff use their own research accounts to travel.
The value of a service	
Value is in the back-end services provided by travel agents such as claiming refunds and sourcing quotations to minimize time wasted by staff on administration.	Value of service lies in added benefits such as free points and rewards available for extensive travellers and buyers of travel that can be used later.
Monetary impact	
Saving in the short term may lead to higher losses in the long term due to unpaid claims from service providers due to cancellations as well as the inability to attract talent due to implied risks.	The ability for staff to choose their own travel may result in higher research participation due to reduced costs and thus a higher research output and income for the organisation.

4.4 Discussion of the findings

The findings from the study cover a varying degree of elements that need to be considered. These have been represented by the various themes that emanated from the data extracted.

4.4.1 Fear of the unknown

This theme represents the uncertainty that was expressed by the respondents. This uncertainty carries the reluctance to migrate to a new way of operating within an organisation. Various reasons were cited by respondents for this fear, ranging from staff being resistant to change to the fear of learning new systems as indicated by respondents not wanting to engage in discussions of possible outcomes due to no evidence being available from past tests.

The responses provided by respondents showed a certain level of apprehension, therefore indicating that there would certainly be forces acting against the change as indicated by Lewin's force field analysis.

4.4.2 Operational and regulatory environment

This theme raised various factors relating to the operational environment as well as that which regulates the operations of an organisation. Line managers showed concern regarding the approval process. Based on the data extracted, line managers would welcome the migration on the condition that they retain their ability to approve and disapprove any travel accommodation booking that subordinates want to undertake. Should this responsibility be taken away from managers, the need to account would also need to be removed. However, taking both away would leave the manager without much ability to direct production within their unit as it could result in staff travelling without the manager's consent.

The means for payment of bookings was a crucial factor as indicated by the respondents. A credit card payment system is used and this has a limit set on a monthly basis. Should staff members undertake to book travel accommodation for themselves, this could take away the monitoring and approval ability from the central office, therefore, leaving the ability to prioritise payments in the hands of individuals who do not have an institutional view of the travel accommodation needs of the entire organisation. This could result in urgent travel not being possible as the monthly spend allowance on the credit has been reached due to confirmed bookings that would only happen later on in the year.

Spending of funds in organisations is followed by stringent audits of the operations of the organisation. Audits do not only focus on the use of funds in the organisation. It is however

worth noting that all operations have cost implications and those costs need to be accounted for. The concerns raised in this regard were around the audit queries that could be raised should staff not adhere to the set policies such as tourism industry ratings that are set in the institutional travel policy or the staff members not keeping record of the expenditure for submission to the organisation that will be audited.

4.4.3 Delegation of responsibilities

A migration to online purchasing would have an impact on the roles and responsibilities of staff in the organisation. Administrative staff who responded to the survey indicated that a potential relief on their responsibilities could be expected. This would indeed be the case, however, the challenge comes in when changes have to be made to the bookings due to inexperienced and non-administratively inclined staff attempting to make accommodation bookings. Administrators may have to step in to rectify an incorrect process followed or an incorrect outcome received from the accommodation booking.

It is evident that academic staff members currently search for their own accommodation and provide details to the travel agent as they are at times more familiar with the places they travel to. Migrating to the decentralised online purchasing of accommodation would then eliminate the duplication in the process of booking accommodation.

In all the discussions held in this regard, there was no reluctance detected that could be attached to this theme of the findings. This then indicates that although the potential challenges are raised, staff members were willing to undertake this migration with its challenges noted under this theme.

4.4.4 The effect on choice

This theme was quite prevalent in the discussions with respondents. Respondents indicated the need to be able to choose their own accommodation. What was notable about this theme is that it did not particularly indicate the respondents' desire to administer their travel accommodation but was largely linked to the need to choose where to stay when travelling.

Notably from the above, academic staff members and senior management staff members responded indicating the need to choose where they stay on work trips as a factor influencing their response. However, is not indicative of the level of willingness to undertake the administrative process of booking accommodation.

This in turn, means that the concept of online decentralised booking of accommodation is to some degree acceptable among all levels of staff. However, the staff that are not familiar with the process have reservations only with regards to the process, but would later, with some training, be accepting of this process as indicated by the references made to the human capital training department.

4.4.5 The value of a service

This theme revealed that the respondents were not only concerned about the service which is being purchased, that being accommodation. The respondents indicated that with every purchase, more factors influence the purchase for them to feel that they have received good value for money.

The influencing factors for good value for money as cited by respondents are the back-end services received from the administering travel agent, as well as the rewards received from hotels by travellers when administering their own booking.

From the responses, it became clear that respondents are of the view that rewards can either be used by the organisation to reduce the cost of future travel or used by the individual traveller to benefit from future personal travel. The respondents were not particular as long as the reward is maximised.

4.4.6 Technology infrastructure

The study premises on the fact that technological advancements happen faster and daily. Organisations need to remain agile enough to take advantage of these advancements in technology to maximise their resources available.

However, it needs to be recognised that in organisations that are not made up of primarily IT professionals or IT service providers, learning new systems and technologies may not be as easy. Meaning that staff may be cautious about new systems that may require them to undergo lengthy training on how bookings are done.

The second concern arising from the technology infrastructure theme was the strength, reliability and availability of the network for staff. It was indicated that staff do not all have access to a reliable internet connection outside of the campus. Although the network is available for all staff on campus, it is worth noting that some staff members would be completely reliant on the travel agency as not all staff have portable computers and internet access provided to them apart from those that are in their offices. This then means that the staff would have to only

make bookings after their classes have ended. For some staff, this would be past the working hours as their classes would end only at that time.

4.4.7 Monetary impact

This theme recognised several factors when it comes to the financial implication on the organisation. The first is the income generated from allowing online decentralised purchasing. Should staff members be permitted to undertake their own bookings with the potential of earning rewards from the accommodation booked, this would most likely increase travel to conferences and in turn, improve research outputs, which would later translate to income for the organisation.

Be that as it may, not all conference travel results in income for the organisation. A clear distinction between travel would need to be determined to regulate the booking of accommodation that would result in income and accommodation that would not. It is also important to note that accommodation is often linked to travel from one point to another. Although it is stipulated that for this study, the focus will be booking of accommodation, the fact that it is often preceded by travel from point A to point B is impactful on the study on the basis that there are additional costs alongside the booking of accommodation.

Another factor to consider under this theme is the additional expenses that could be incurred from migrating to online decentralised purchasing of accommodation. It often happens that staff members are not able to make it to engagements, if the cancellations are not managed as per policy and contractual agreements, it would mean that the organisation loses on the booking if it does not fall within the individual booking cancellation period. Organisations that centralise the booking of accommodation often enjoy more lenient cancellation policies due to the number of booking made. This would be an added cost to the organisation.

The factor of safety is key to every organisation. When staff travel for business, they expect to be provided with safety as well as various forms of assurance. Should staff undertake their own booking to accommodate cost, their safety could be compromised as some service providers take no responsibility for the safety of their guests. Therefore, increasing the insurance costs for the organisation.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter four articulated the detailed responses from the interviews conducted by the researcher, as per the 7 themes identified in the study. These themes were determined using the thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The chapter also included detailed quotations to indicate the responses that were provided by the participants in the study. A table depicting contradictory views of the responses gathered from the respondents was also presented in this chapter.

A lengthy discussion of the findings was undertaken in his chapter. This is meant to allow the reader to understand the impact of the findings on the research questions. The following chapter (chapter 5) will conclude the study.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The concluding chapter of the study describes the main points as uncovered from the data. It reviews the research questions and uses those questions to identify certain key findings that answer the research questions.

The chapter also concludes the discussion that has taken place thus far in an attempt to make meaningful recommendations as per the findings of the study. The recommendations are also discussed in this chapter. The recommendations presented are for current action as well as for future studies.

5.2 Research Questions

This section presents the research questions as well as the concluding remarks per question posed by the study. Below are the main questions posed by the study:

5.2.1 Research Question 1

What challenges restrict organisations from using online decentralised purchasing when procuring accommodation services?

The analysis of this question revealed several things that are pertinent to the operation of the institution. More prevalent among others was the hesitancy cited by respondents when it comes to the introduction of new methods. Fear or reluctance of learning something new hinders staff at all levels. Lewin's forcefield analysis model indicated that among the forces that drive change, there will be forces that act against the change. The fear and reluctance of staff found by the study indicated that the restraining forces would need to be identified and reduced before any changes could be made. These forces affect management and executive management when a decision must be taken about the new changes to be introduced. Changes such as these affect staff at different levels as they may have to undergo training on the new procedure.

The Human Capital Learning and Development (L&D) Unit was found to be a contributor to this reluctance by staff. Administrative staff reported that the Human Capital Department Learning and Development Unit was responsive. However, a contradictory view was shared by staff at the executive level. They stated that when a service department at the institutional level introduces a new system for the organisation as a whole, they need to arrange all training for users without the assistance of the Human Capital department.

All training sessions provided by the L&D unit are only in line with the objectives of the L&D, as determined from surveys conducted among staff within the organisation, and are not aligned to developments within other units.

The possibility of the system being abused is also a factor contributing to the concerns around implementing a decentralised system. Various forms of abuse could occur, all posing the risk of an audit query that might require extensive administration to resolve. Dealing with smaller establishments might may not assure the organisation of sufficient evidence when it comes to demonstrating that funds have been spent according to the prescribed regulations.

The organisation uses a credit facility to pay for accommodation; if the booking of accommodation were to be decentralised, this would pose a challenge when it comes to payment for the accommodation. Should travellers use their own resources to make the initial booking, the refunding of staff would cause additional administration.

This situation could be compounded by depletion of the monthly funds allocated to the credit facility, resulting in backlogged refunds that might impact the following month's allocation if claims are filed a month after the month of travel. To avoid such backlogs when it comes to processing staff claims, or the processing of refund requests on behalf of the institution for cancelled travel, the organisation would have to establish an office that would handle this work daily. This means that several permanent positions would have to be created to administer this function.

Using a travel agency to facilitate all bookings puts the organisation in a position where it can account for travel during an audit as mentioned, However, another crucial point that was uncovered is the safety standards that are necessary for the organisation to protect its staff as they travel for work purposes.

Smaller establishments, which may have lowers rates, will not be able to ensure the organisation of the safety regulations that are in place. This can extend up to health and first aid facilities, trained personnel on site, as well as fire prevention and alert systems that are found in hotels of rated accommodation establishments.

5.2.2 Research Question 2

What impact would online decentralised purchasing of accommodation have on the roles and responsibilities of affected human capital in the organisation?

The study found that the line managers would have added responsibility of ensuring that the travel requests submitted for staff do indeed comply with organisational travel guidelines and policies.

Should the evidence be submitted, line managers would be tasked with authorizing this travel using the information submitted to them. Currently, the system ensures that whatever is received by line managers for authorisation has been vetted by the travel agents to comply with the regulations of the organisation. The only consideration to make is that the cheapest accommodation must be selected. If the cheapest is not selected, then reasonable motivation must be provided.

Putting together documentation in preparation for audits may mean that there is added responsibility for the administrators as well as the line managers as all bookings would no longer be handled at a decentralised level. The travellers may then be expected to have all the necessary documentation to substantiate the need for the accommodation retrospectively.

However, some respondents indicated that the decentralised model would ease the administrative burden on them as travelling staff would be able to handle their own bookings. This alone would minimize the amount of deliberation that takes place before the confirmation of accommodation, thereby saving time for all involved.

Depending on how the booking of accommodation and travel is decentralised, this could have implications for certain staff designations having to familiarize themselves with the administrative task of sourcing accommodation.

The study revealed that staff who are currently involved with the booking of accommodation often have challenges with complex bookings. The ability to liaise or seek advice from a travel agent proves to be helpful in such cases. Decentralising the booking of accommodation could mean that the assistance from experienced agents could be lost, meaning that staff members booking travel would have to be without expert guidance in some cases.

5.2.3 Research Question 3

What economic impact would online decentralised accommodation purchasing have on the organisation?

The study has found that there is potential for the decentralised booking system to be abused. Although it is not feasible to estimate the level of abuse, a decentralised system could lead to financial losses if abused by staff who collude to defeat its controls.

It was also found that a well-developed system would lead to financial savings for the organisation, as this would eliminate the intermediary/middleman when booking accommodation. Although the

financial saving would be visible from the start, it is those costs attached to administering or complying with institutional rules that could harm the organisation.

The respondents were clear in stating that although the middleman would be cut out, thus resulting in savings, the organisation would have the added responsibility of establishing a unit or an office that would process refunds for staff, process claims against service providers such as BnB's, as well as the collation of documents and evidence in preparation for internal as well as external auditors on behalf of the organisation. That then means that several staff members would need to be employed to function in the unit.

The cancellation policies of smaller organisations could harm the finances of the organisation. Independent organisations have varying cancellation policies that allow a full refund in some cases a month before check-in; in some cases, a 50 percent refund on cancellation two weeks before check-in; and with zero refund if cancellation is done less than two weeks before check-in. If these bookings are handled by staff members who are not familiar with these rules, this will affect the organisation negatively, resulting in fruitless and wasteful expenditure. This is especially as the study uncovered that all accommodation payments have to be made in advance, before the arrival of the traveller.

Academic staff, and management and executive office bearers are employed to perform specific functions within the organisation. They currently do not play a role in sourcing travel. The study found that if academic, management and executive staff invest organisational time in searching for and arranging their own accommodation, this could cost the organisation more, given the cost of employment per hour for those staff members.

The study found that there is a relationship between conference participation and how the organisation generates income. Conference participation, as well as publications, are instrumental to any institution of higher learning. The ability of staff to direct their own travel was cited by respondents as a positive contributor to the attendance of conferences by staff members. This is because publication of conference papers and journal papers has a direct impact on income received by the organisation, directly and through research grants.

It was found that the organisation pays an insurance premium to insure its staff who travel for business or academic purposes. It was also revealed that should safety not be assured because of the use of unregistered or unrated accommodation providers, it would be difficult to determine if minimum standards are adhered to by the service providers. This could affect the insurance

premium payable by the organisation to insure the lives and safety of staff in cases of accidents happening during working trips.

This would not only affect the organisation from a financial perspective but would also have implications for its ability to attract new talent and retain talent in the organisation.

5.3 Key findings

The overall key finding of this study were collated after a detailed analysis of the data, as well as the study findings. It was found that the challenge that restricts the implementation of online decentralised purchasing is that of operationalising it. More so with the lack of participation and assistance of relevant stakeholders and contributors such as the Human Capitals Learning and Development Unit working together on new developments. The safety mechanisms available to the organisation currently, those used to discourage fraud, mitigate risk, and allow for monitoring, do not easily permit the organisation to migrate to a decentralised model without challenges. Concerns about the security of the online decentralised model affect the traveller as well as the executive management.

With regard to the impact of online decentralised purchasing of accommodation on the roles and responsibilities of staff, there has been a spectrum of responses from respondents. This is because of the different designations within the organisation, such as administrative staff, academic staff and management staff of all levels. Administrative staff indicated that there would decrease in the administrative tasks placed on their portfolios as a result of each staff member being able to book their own accommodation. This would ensure that if any amendments had to be made, the staff member would be able to make their own amendments to the booking, therefore, drastically reducing the amount of administration placed on one person.

Management staff on the other hand currently have the responsibility of vetting the activities that staff request to travel for and approve the travel if deemed to be work-related. The study found that if decentralised online purchasing of accommodation was introduced, management staff would have the added responsibility of ensuring that the accommodation sourced and the procedures followed to source the accommodation were also in line with the travel and procurement policies. This would increase the administrative work to be done by management staff in line to approve the travel of subordinates.

The economic impact on the organisation as reported by respondents was discussed from a financial as well as a non-financial perspective. The financial impact is expected to positive in the

short term, through the savings of staff in being able to select more cost-effective accommodation as well as the removal of the agent's fees. However, the long term may bring about additional costs as such bookings will need to be managed internally to ensure compliance of the organisation towards audit requirements. This might add staffing costs. Losses caused by cancelled bookings will also have an impact on costs in the long term.

The non-financial economic impact is on talent acquisition and retention in the organisation. The inability to provide sufficient assurance to staff on benefits provided to them in cases of injury or loss when travelling for work due to high insurance costs may have a highly negative impact on attracting staff to the organisation.

5.4 Conclusion

The study evaluated the impact of introducing online decentralised purchasing of accommodation in an organisation. Based on the analysis of the findings, it is evident that there are factors that need to be considered before the introduction of such a decentralised model.

The concerns of the staff members at all levels indicate that consultation with all stakeholders is key to addressing the concerns that staff may have. These range from the technical capabilities of staff as the end user to the capabilities of the infrastructure within the organisation. Such capabilities include security concerns around the implementation of online decentralised purchasing for the organisation as well as for travellers.

Any change within an organisation is bound to have an impact on the human capital or talent within the organisation. Based on the findings as well as the analysis of the findings in the study, it is evident that the impact expected from the implementation of online decentralised purchasing of accommodation does not pose any material risk to the employment of staff members affected. In the cases reported by the respondents, there is a reduction in administrative duties for administrative staff. However, in some cases, especially for management staff, there is added responsibility placed on them due to the additional verification of the travel needed before authorisation. In all those changes, no indicated outcome suggests a possible inability for a staff member to discharge their duties if sufficient training is provided to them.

Based on the findings and discussion on the economic impact of online decentralised purchasing of accommodation, it can be concluded that the migration will have an impact on the organisation if not adequately planned for. The planning for this migration is what will make the impact positive or negative. However, the migration itself is moving in the right direction as it can free up financial

resources in the short term. However, the quality of planning for it determines the impact in the long term.

5.5 Recommendation for practice and future study

The study has uncovered various factors regarding the implementation of online decentralised purchasing of accommodation with the organisation. All these factors have been discussed under the various themes in Chapter 3 and in chapter 4, as well as concluded in Chapter 5. Based on those discussions, this section recommends various actions for practice as well as those for future studies.

Recommendation 1.

The organisation should consider developing guidelines for staff who wish to direct their own travel. This will pave the way for online decentralised purchasing of accommodation to be slowly implemented. Although this will not be a quick process, the conversation, as well as the planning need to begin within the organisation.

Reason for the recommendation

Online decentralised purchase is not without risk to the traveller as well as the organisation, nor is it without discomfort. However, as the findings showed, some staff members who undertake travel are comfortable with managing those risks based on their experience with making bookings online. They can manage the online navigation, avoiding fraud as well as material risk from booking in unrated establishments.

Recommendation 2

Following the development of the guidelines for online decentralised purchasing for staff who wish to manage their own booking of accommodation, a pilot phase needs to be rolled out for the organisation to determine the actual impact of the decentralised model.

Reason for the recommendation

As mentioned within the findings, for a project of this nature to be fully understood in terms of its impact on the organisation, a pilot phase needs to be rolled out. This will also allow the organisation to determine the training needs of staff.

Recommendation 3

After the completion of a pilot test, and necessary adjustments made, a hybrid model should then be implemented. A hybrid model would be a system that allows both online decentralised purchasing as well as centralised purchasing of accommodation, depending on the organisation's priorities.

Reason for the recommendation

As seen from the findings, in certain instances such as bulk purchases, centralising a purchase may be beneficial. However, when the opportunity presents itself to receive better rates, faster turnaround time or even better value for money when the purchase is decentralised, then the option should be available to the organisation. A hybrid model will also allow for gradual migration from one system to another without disturbing the workflow.

Recommendation 4

Future studies on a decentralised model of purchasing accommodation and all goods and services need to be undertaken. The centralized model and use of intermediaries when sourcing goods and services stretch further than accommodation alone. This extends to IT equipment and transportation of staff for work purposes.

Reason for the recommendation

Further studies are required as organisations stand to benefit when all these elements are fully understood. Studies conducted on procurement models will provide better insight into the application of decentralised purchasing. This will allow for the continuous development of policies and guidelines relating not only to the purchase of accommodation, but to the purchase of all goods and services.

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APPENDIX A – Site Use Approval Letter



POST GRADUATE OFFICE, FACULTY OF ENGINEERING & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
FACULTY ETHICS COMMITTEE

29 October 2019

Ref: 2019FEREC-ST-002

To whom it may concern

Re: Permission to collect data

This letter serves to confirm that Mr Luvuyo Kakaza, student number 201080192, has been granted permission enter and use the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (FEBE) for the purpose of data collection towards the completion of an M-Tech: Business Administration at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Faculty of Business and Management Sciences.

He has been granted permission to conduct the survey in the faculty (FEBE) as intended and as specified in the proposal document submitted with his request for permission to the faculty (FEBE) for the period this particular study subsists.

The site use authorisation is subject to ethical clearance being provided by the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences prior to the commencement of the survey to be conducted.



Prof TV Ojumu
Research Coordinator (Acting)

APPENDIX B – Ethics Form



P.O. Box 1906 • Bellville 7535 South Africa • Tel: +27 21 4603291 • Email: fbmsethics@cput.ac.za
Symphony Road Bellville 7535


Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	Faculty: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **19 November 2019**, ethics **Approval** was granted to **Luvuyo Kakaza (201080192)** for a research activity for **M Tech: Business Administration** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis/project:	The impact of using emerging technologies for direct purchasing of travel-related goods and services in an organisation in the Western Cape, South Africa. Lead Supervisor (s): Mr Jay Barnes
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Comments:

Decision: Approved

 <hr/> Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	17 February 2020 <hr/> Date
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Clearance Certificate No | 2019FOBREC740

APPENDIX C - Study Questionnaire



Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Ethics informed consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

<i>Staff/Workers</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Teachers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Parents</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Lecturers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Students</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other (specify)</i>									

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by **Luvuyo Kakaza** from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contribute towards (tick as appropriate):

<i>An undergraduate project</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A conference paper</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>An Honours project</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published journal article</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>A Masters/doctoral thesis</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published report</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Selection criteria

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are:

Working at any level within the concerned topic for this study. This means you work and a active within the process of booking accommodation or a user of accommodation for business travel, or in involved in the policy formulation for regulating travel accommodation.

.....
..

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:

The impact of using emerging technologies for direct purchasing of travel-related goods and services in an organisation in the Western Cape, South Africa

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The research involves assessing the application and use of online technologies on booking for travel accommodation. The study seeks to determine what would the impact of using these online platforms be for an organisation. The research also seeks to determine what challenges organisations face that deter them from using these technologies.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study the following will be done:

1. Describe the main research procedures to you in advance, so that you are informed about what to expect;
2. Treat all interviewees with respect by arriving on time for all the interview schedules and well prepared;
3. Conduct an introduction with the interviewee in order to break ice;
4. All the interviewees will be asked for permission to record the interviews and also take some note where applicable;
5. In a case where there is no clarity, the interviewees will be allowed to ask for confirmation or clarity of words/sentences/phrases to ensure accuracy of the data collected;
6. Participants will be told that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs;
7. Participants will be given the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable with;
8. Participants will be told that questions do not pose any realistic risk of distress or discomfort, either physically or psychologically, to them;
9. At the end of each interview all the interviewees will be thanked for their time and information provided for this study;
10. Participants will be debriefed at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study).

You are invited to contact the researchers should you have any questions about the research before or during the study. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any time without having to give a reason.

Kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

Tick the appropriate column		
Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand the purpose of the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand what the research requires of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I volunteer to take part in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I know that I can withdraw at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Comment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

Signature of participant	Date

Researchers

	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Luvuyo	Kakaza	0219596814
2.			
3.			

Contact person: Luvuyo Kakaza	
Contact number: 0219596814	Email: KakazaL@cput.ac.za

Q	Detail
1	CPUT buys all its travel accommodation from a single vendor, describe some of the challenges you experience from such an arrangement. A.
1.1	Sub: Are there any positive things that can come from such an arrangement? A.
2	Please describe your experience with booking accommodation online at any stage. A.
3	What challenges restrict the introduction of modern and decentralized purchasing platforms such as online purchasing. A.
4	How does staff in the organization react to change? A.
5	What impact would the introduction of online decentralized purchasing of travel accommodation have on your function/s? A.
6	Does the Human Capital - Training Department respond proactively to organizational training needs? A.
7	What advantages would online decentralized purchasing bring in your opinion? A.
7.1	What would the disadvantages be? A.
8	Who should be involved in drawing of policies to regulate online decentralized purchasing? A.
9	Does the possibility of the booking system being abused exist? A.

10	Would there be some financial benefit to organisations that implement a system of decentralized online booking when buying accommodation services? A.
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