HAVING 12 MILLION HOMES:

UNDERSTANDING COUCHSURFING

AS GIFT CULTURE

İBRAHİM SERTAÇ KASAPLAR

JUNE 2017

HAVING 12 MILLION HOMES:

UNDERSTANDING COUCHSURFING

AS GIFT CULTURE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
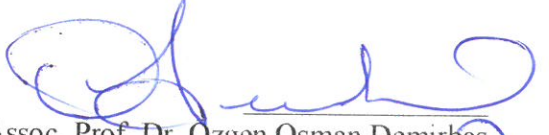
OF

IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

BY

İBRAHİM SERTAÇ KASAPLAR

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF ART

IN

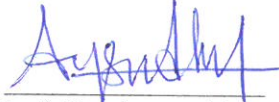THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

JUNE 2017

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Özgen Osman Demirbaş
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.
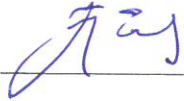
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gökçen Karanfil
Head of Department

This is the certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun Akan
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Asst. Prof. Dr. Zafer Fehmi Yörük

Asst. Prof. Dr. Zehra Zıraman

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun Akan

ABSTRACT

HAVING 12 MILLION HOMES:

UNDERSTANDING COUCHSURFING AS GIFT CULTURE

Kasaplar, İbrahim Sertaç

Media and Communication Studies Graduate Program

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun Akan

June 2017

This thesis attempts to generate insights into the use of online social networks as an extension of gift culture. Marcel Mauss and many other scholars state that human interaction is based on a gift exchange system. Gift exchange was the dominant and the only universal way of constructing relations even before the modern life emerged. The system, briefly, is based on offering a gift, accepting the offered gift, and paying back for the gift with another offer. Applying the gift theory, this research focuses on Couchsurfing website and discusses the experiences of Turkish Couchsurfers on this online social network. The Couchsurfing website is based on mutual trust and works as online hospitality exchange service, members of which from all around the world may arrange to stay in each other's homes as guests free of charge. This analysis draws on a preliminary online survey of 131 Couchsurfing members. It is followed by a comprehensive content analysis of 2261 reference comments of active Couchsurfing profiles. The comments are interpreted under four categories that are derived from the sample: time, accommodation, information, and feedback. How does the gift culture still survive? What kind of traditions are universally common among internet users? What are the reciprocal obligations for social network members? How does the gift culture affect the sustainability of human interactions on internet? This thesis seeks how reciprocal obligation is structured within Couchsurfing—a modern, internet based social network.

Keywords: internet, social networks, hospitality, gift culture, Couchsurfing

ÖZET

12 MİLYON EVE SAHİP OLMAK:
ARMAĞAN KÜLTÜRÜ OLARAK COUCHSURFING

Kasaplar, İbrahim Sertaç

Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları Yüksek lisans Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Aysun Akan

Haziran 2017

Bu tez internetteki sosyal ağları, armağan kültürünün bir uzantısı olarak incelemektedir. Marcel Mauss ve takipçisi olan diğer araştırmacılar çalışmalarında, insanlar arası etkileşimin bir hediye alışveriş sistemine dayandığını ortaya koyar. Modern yaşamın ortaya çıkmasından önce bile hediye alışverişinin baskın ve ilişkileri kurmanın tek evrensel şekli olduğunu öne sürerler. En basit şekliyle bu sistem bir hediye sunma, sunulan hediyeyi kabul etme ve alınan hediyeyi başka bir hediye sunarak geri ödeme üzerine kurulmuştur. Armağan teorisini izleyen bu araştırma, Couchsurfing internet sitesine odaklanmakta ve Türkiye'deki Couchsurfing kullanıcılarının bu çevrimiçi sosyal ağ üzerindeki deneyimlerini incelemektedir. Couchsurfing sitesi, site kullanıcılarının seyahatlerinde birbirinin evine ücretsiz misafir olduğu bir karşılıklı güven sistemi üzerine kuruludur. İki aşamalı araştırmanın ilk adımı olan pilot anket çalışması 131 Couchsurfing üyesinin katılımıyla tamamlanmıştır. Bunu, aktif Couchsurfing üye profillerindeki 2261 referans yorumunu içeren kapsamlı bir içerik analizi izlemektedir. Yorumlar, örnekten türetilen dört kategori altında yorumlanır: zaman, konaklama, bilgi ve geribildirim. Armağan kültürü nasıl halâ devam etmektedir? İnternet kullanıcıları arasındaki evrensel gelenekler nelerdir? Sosyal ağ üyeleri için karşılıklı yükümlülükler nelerdir? Armağan kültürü, insan etkileşimlerinin internetteki sürdürülebilirliğini nasıl etkilemektedir? Bu tez, karşılıklı yükümlülüğün modern, internet tabanlı bir sosyal ağ olan Couchsurfing'te nasıl yapılandığını anlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: internet, sosyal ağlar, misafirperverlik, armağan kültürü, Couchsurfing

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In grad school, a good support system is crucial for surviving and staying sane. Therefore, I am thankful to my all friends for providing the support and friendship that I needed. Aytunç Erçifçi, my fellow classmate traveler during my grad school journey, deserves my biggest acknowledgment. Our coffee breaks, your insightful thoughts and much laughter that you gave me were priceless.

Thanks to my friends because of their patience, understanding, and joyfulness during my research. I believe they supported me unsurprisingly because they are all colorful and simply very nice people. Tuğba Açar, your support with the statistics and survey research enlightened me. Cumali Özler, it has always been a pleasure to stay in touch with you and thank you to remind me the updated academic procedures all the time. A big and deep thank you goes to Mustafa Sandıkçı, for keeping me awake with the phone calls and conversations on photography and travel stories.

Çağlar Çetin-Ayşe, there are no words to thank you and no phrase to describe how you have influenced me. However, very basically I can say that you are my angel. And I am 100% sure about that I would never have been able to finish my thesis without your support, literally.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their endless support and encouragement throughout my study. They have always been just next to me whenever I have been in need. They are the best.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

Developments in new media have generated unprecedented possibilities on internet. Thanks to the emergence of online social networks (OSNs), people have found new opportunities for interacting each other such as creating their profiles and representing themselves as they wish, joining virtual communities, contacting with remote places, buying or selling goods, and sharing their talents. All these novel developments and more options for online interaction have been rendered possible with the concept of Web 2.0 infrastructure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Lai & Turban, 2008; Kräuter, 2009).

In the year and a half since, the term "Web 2.0" has clearly taken hold, with more than 9.5 million citations in Google. But there's still a huge amount of disagreement about just what Web 2.0 means… …Like many important concepts, Web 2.0 doesn't have a hard boundary, but rather, a gravitational core. You can visualize Web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core (O'Reilly, 2005)[1].

As O'Reilly (2005) stated above, different than the conventional internet experience (Web 1.0), Web 2.0 provides an interaction opportunity for internet users. One of the most important outcomes of the Web 2.0 infrastructure is the emergence of online social networks (OSNs) (Kräuter, 2009: 505). OSNs are virtual communities in which individuals may directly interact with each other online. This is a crucial development in the history of internet communications. Today, the communication between people and the relations among communities exceed the borders of states (Kräuter, 2009: 505-506).

As an international social network, Couchsurfing.com website works as an online hospitality exchange service. In this community, a member may be both a

---

[1] Tim O'Reilly is one of the pioneers who invented the term of Web 2.0 and also organised the first conference named Web 2.0. http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html (Reached on 28.04.2017)

guest and a host. Couchsurfing members from all around the world may interact with one another online to arrange a stay in each other's homes as a guest, which is for free. There are currently 12 million members of Couchsurfing website (Couchsurfers) from 200.000 cities across the world and the number is growing. This number was doubled in last four years (as of 2017) as previous research indicates Polish scholar Krzysztof Stepaniuk from Bialystok University of Technology shows that there were 5.5 million registered Couchsurfers in 2013 (Stepaniuk, 2014: 111). This is to say, Couchsurfing is a growing social platform and becoming more and more popular among travelers.

This research project focuses on Couchsurfing, which is as an expanding social platform, and analyzes how its' users construct and manage the exchanges. According to Mauss (1925), the gift is a form of exchange. This material of intercession can be anything. For this study for instance, it can be time, accomodation, food or information. The gift contains a sense of secrecy, hidden meaning in itself. This is because it has a spiritual meaning. So the meaning is a power that creates spiritual bonds within the system of obligations and assignments in the establishment of inter-human relations. The things that are exchanged have a meaning. The meaning is not an individual property, but an identification. But at the same time it is a meaning belonging to a person or an object (Akay, 1999, 37).

Godbout (2003) states that where the value of everything is clearly mentioned in the market world, the world of gift is a world where the hidden and non-spoken masses have relationships. Even if a situation that serves to create a sense of communication between the people in the sense of hedging and a desire to be desired, a response expectancy is hidden when all the subtle looks are looked at.

The gift is the foundation of the relationship before everything else. In the case of thinking of establishing every relationship, the prospect of return is within reach. Godbout underlines, since it already lacks mutual motivation and expresses a one-sided situation, the relationship is no longer. For this reason, a gift can be considered as a constructive element of a relationship.

Today's social structure transforms gift relationships. Even though the existence of the gift is not negated nowadays, when identities are almost defined through consumption relations, it does not exist in the form of open and challenging as it is in the relations and as the expression of social power. Gift and exchange culture studies reveal that the dynamics of pre-modern social life such as solidarity, competition, honor and dignity are expressed in a more indirect and civilized manner in contemporary societies.

In that sense, for understanding the cultural construction of online relations, this study focuses on Couchsurfing social web. Users host eachother and offer their time, their home, food, knowledge and other exchangable materials which will considered as "the gift" within this study. User references are investigated with content analysis method and the patterns are coded as seeking the gift culture references. Basically, four types of gifts are categorised which are the time, accomodation, knowledge and the reference (feedback). These categories consist of messages which actually written for free however refers to the material measurments which have economic values in contemporary world. This is why these categories and their sub titles are called as gift. By this analysis, this study tries to state that the gift culture, as it has been a dominant mode of human relations since the very first communes and societies, today still determines the individuals' behaviors in terms of social relations even in the internet.

CHAPTER I: KEY CONCEPTS

In this chapter, I first provide a brief overview of the key terms, concepts, and theories that I build my research project on. I then introduce the aim and scope of my project as well as my research questions and methods. Finally, I draw an outline for the remainder of the thesis.

1.1. Online communities and trust

As human interaction has become more international, the concept of trust gain importance with this new intercultural relation model. Liebeskind et al. (1995) define social networks as:

> A collectivity of individuals among whom exchanges take place that are supported only by shared norms of trustworthy behaviour. (Liebeskind et al., 1995: 7)

Like in any social environment relations, trust is one of the key elements in Couchsurfing as well. Members get to know each other through their virtual representations that are obtained by "user profiles". Members are asked to create their own profiles by sharing some personal information and their photos. Each piece of information appeared on one's profile page directly affects the trust level (Liu, 2012: 95-103-104). For instance, if a member does not clearly mention how old s/he is, the exact location of his/her house, how many people living in the house, what language s/he can speak, or which countries s/he visited before, then his/her profile looks sloppy, questionable, and even worthless to other members. This situation drives our research for focusing on the trust concept. Similar to other community models, online communities also stand on their members' trust. However, the question is whether this trust, or feeling of confidence, is in members of the community or the system's itself. In other words, what do Couchsurfing users trust more? What motivates them to use this website with confidence? In response to this question, Bialski (2006: 71) indicates that for

Couchsurfers, the community is ultimately for utility. What motivates them to use the website is not the trust for the community or the trust to other individuals but getting certain *guest/host* experiences. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the Couchsurfing website—as a modern, technological system—provides the security in the community, which ultimately motivates a group of internet users to become and remain to be Couchsurfers.

> We may define "security" as a situation in which a specific set of dangers is counteracted or minimised. The experience of security usually rests upon a balance of trust and acceptable risk. (Giddens, 1990: 35)

Similar to Giddens's conceptualization of security in modern world, it is possible to observe among Couchsurfers an attempt of balancing trust and acceptable risk for security reasons. To find a potential host, every member checks other members' profiles. This can be framed as considering possible risks before meeting with a "stranger" a previously unknown Couchsurfer, and staying at his/her house (Giddens, 1990: 26-27).

Couchsurfing website offers some security features to measure users' (guest/host) reliability within the efforts of providing a thrust worthy service to its all members.[2]

One of the useful features of the website is considered as the reference system. It works like an online shopping service in which buyers and sellers write opinions about the counterparty by giving a satisfaction point. The points are displayed on the user's profile page and cannot be deleted. In order to maintain the truthfulness of Couchsurfing system, members give negative, neutral, or positive points to each other. If a member gets negative points from other members constantly, his/her trust level decreases in the community. Eventually, the reference system becomes an essential feature for security in this kind of virtual communities.

---

[2] http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/safety/ *(Reached on 11.04.2017)*

1.2. Social Capital Theory

Many social researchers who study community relations, social values, and trust issues prefer to utilize social capital theory (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Putnam, 1996; Grabner & Kräuter, 2009). Social capital theory has been defined in many ways: Kräuter & Bitter (2013: 56) summarize it as an "umbrella theory" which brings together the concepts of social networks, trust, social structure, and personal relationships. Although there is still not an exact and clear definition of the term, majority of the social scientists agree with the following understanding of social capital theory, which is described by Field (2008): "a way of defining the intangible resources of community, shared values and trust upon which we draw in daily life".

> Relationships matter. By making connections with one another, and keeping them over time, people are able to work together to achieve things they either could not achieve by themselves… […] People connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with other members of these networks… (Field, 2008: 5)

Although many scholars have made contribution to social capital theory, three main approaches of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam come into prominence. Bourdieu defines social capital as follows:

> Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 119)

Bourdieu refers this term mostly in his studies on "social inequalities" as modern society indicates the value between the individuals in the groups. When Bourdieu describes the social capital, he mostly refers to elite communities and their benefits. Since it considers mostly economic indicators and physical benefits, Bourdieu's approach may not the best way to understand the online social communities in which we seek to find a pattern beyond the financial expectations.

Correspondingly, Coleman (1994) links social capital with economics.

Different than Bourdieu, Coleman does not refer only to elite communities. He evaluates social capital as for all kinds of communities, such as families, relatives, and student groups.

> Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production. (Coleman, 1994: 302)

Because most of the online social networks are open to public for everyone and because Coleman's approach to social capital is more for public than private, it helps to analyze the online social networks and member relations that occur in these networks.

The latest important approach belongs to Putnam, who is the first scholar linking the social capital theory with daily social life (1995). He mentions individuals, as the group members, have responsibilities toward each other not only when it is needed but also as a basis of a sustainable community. He refers to communities with rules and their common values.

> "Social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital. (Putnam, 1995: 2)

> ...the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so too social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups. Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. (Putnam, 2001: 14)

According to Putnam, the main idea behind the social capital is that there

is a value between social groups and social networks. This value is based on the productivity of the individuals for common benefits of their social group. Putnam also brings the concept of "trust" in his discussion of social capital. Therefore, this thesis utilizes Putnam's approach study social capital indicators.

1.3. Gift Culture

The gift culture and accordingly the gift economy concept may be used to study online social networks as well. An individual in a gift culture can only exist in his/her community through giving/receiving gifts and promising of giving/receiving gifts (Mauss, 1925). Similarly, in Couchsurfing, a member can get feedback and become visible in the community if s/he offers his/her home for other members for temporary stays. The community itself grows as their members temporarily open their homes to one another. This gesture seems free of charge in terms of money; however, it still asks for reciprocity: the ones who receive the gift (the guests) are asked to write comments about the gift givers (the hosts).

Therefore, the gift economy approach, in which "giving" is considered more important than taking or consuming, may be beneficial in analyzing Couchsurfing as a site of hospitality exchange. The Gift Theory and its' structure in Couchsurfing is deeply discussed below, in content analysis part.

1.4. Aim and Scope

By applying the theories of social capital and gift culture, this study seeks to better understand how online networking instruments like Couchsurfing can generate trust and facilitate face to face meetings in real life. At the first part of the research, drawing on a survey on experiences of 131 Couchsurfing users in Turkey, it analyzes the following:

1. The reason behind, and the frequency of, Couchsurfing use
2. The level of trust towards Couchsurfing website and its users

Then, at the second part of the research focuses on the user reviews and by using the qualitative content analysis method, it seeks how the the gift culture revival in this online social network.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this study. It first provides general descriptions and discussions on the internet, social networks, and online exchange systems. Second, it analyzes social relations as an extension of Web 2.0 and asks whether they change with the emergence of social network websites. Third, it inquires the concept of trust in online communities. Finally, it discusses the changes in relationships as they transition from online into offline, i.e. they begin on the internet and then continue in the real world, in reference to the fundamental principles of Couchsurfing.

2.1. The Internet and Society

When we think of the internet we must acknowledge that it encompasses multiple definitions and experiences. Rather than "one" internet, there are multiple, intersecting imaginings and understanding of the internet that are informed by the user's background and experiences (Hinton & Hjort, 2013: 7).

Internet is one of the most essential technological advances of the modern world. As the authors point above, there is not an exact and universal definition of this concept. Instead, there are many. Although not a single definition can explain the concept, plenty of scholars express several common points in their approaches to the internet. Some of the key foundational works that advanced internet studies belong to Manuel Castells (1998) and Sherry Turtle (1997). These pioneer scholars frequently describe the internet as the *paradigm shift*, which is a key concept defined by Thomas Kuhn (1970).

According to Kuhn (1970: 8, 9, 22), paradigm shift is a fundamental change in the main concepts and experimental practices of a scientific discipline. For Castells, the internet is the last biggest paradigm shift element on changing the

World in terms of leaving or restructuring the pre-internet era's scientific paradigms (2011: 69-80). Castells also argues that the modern world is in the process of structural transformation since the 1980s. This structural transformation has also a multidimensional process, which is associated with the emergence of a new technological paradigm. This paradigm, i.e. the internet, is based on information and communication technologies (Castells, 2006: 3).

Today, society and its structures are influenced by technological changes. The emerging society in the 21st century is being characterized as the knowledge, or the information society (Castells, 2006: 4). Moreover, the information society may also be called as the *network society*, which is, in Castells's words, "…a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (2004: 3).

Information and communication technologies also influence networked society. Because on the vast changes and outcomes that this new medium yield, previous beliefs, values, and the ways of thinking need to be re-questioned and reconstructed as well. Considering the characteristics of this invention parallel to the processes of globalization, an important area of renegotiation is the idea of living borderless around the World. In that sense, national boundaries no longer have meaning since the internet transcends physical distance and borders and makes it possible to instantly connect individuals in different geographical locations. In this virtual realm, it seems that time and space lose its importance in comparison to the old paradigm. Castells conceptualizes time and space in our era as *timeless time* and the *space of flows* (2011: 407). He points that the internet provides an universal space in which time is desequenced and compressed, and place is extinguished. Basically, every person can interact with every other person in anywhere at any time. Castells underlines the importance of this new paradigm and claims that this change and its effects will sustain in all contemporary societies for a long time: "new electronic communication system characterized by its global reach, its integration of all communication media, and its potential interactivity is changing and will change forever our culture" (Castells, 2010: 357).

Similar to Castells, Turkle (1995: 9) states that, on the internet "we have the opportunity to build new kinds of communities, virtual communities, in which we participate with people from all over the world, people with whom we converse daily, people with whom we may have fairly intimate relationships but whom we may never physically meet".

Before the popular network society discussions occurred, in the field of communication studies, Marshall McLuhan predicted the fast approaching change. According to him, the most intense changes in society would happen with the introduction of new technology and especially new media. In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan, 1962), he coins the *global village* concept which is created by the interconnectedness in the new and virtual environment. In his theory, McLuhan scales down the world into a village and by referring to the electric technology, he explains the movement of information from point to point. Because of this idea, Castells refers to McLuhan by calling him as "the great visionary who revolutionized thinking in communications" (Castells, 2011: 357).

One can argue that it is almost impossible to comprehend our contemporary society without these concepts. Globalization cannot be thought apart from internet as well. Thanks to the fast-growing technology, it is possible to reach the internet almost at any time from any place. This drives us to reconsider the globalization concept.

2.2. Giddens' Conceptualization of Modernity and Place

Globalization is a popular concept in the academia and has been studied innumerous times with many different approaches. One of the prominent conceptualization of globalization belongs to Anthony Giddens, who was listed as the fifth most referenced author of books in the humanities.[3]

Giddens is one of the most famous modern sociologists whose well known studies are based on modernity, its politics and impacts, and globalization. *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) is one of his major books in which he, with a provocative approach, criticizes the structure of modernity and its' consequential effects on society. He interprets some social concepts such as security, danger, trust, disembedding, with arguing not only about these concepts themselves, but also their paradigmatic relations to premodern, modern and postmodern periods (1990: 4-53).

Before discussing the globalization and the issues of internet, Giddens suggests one should be more pessimistic for a better understanding of the dynamics of modernity. In that sense, he finds the perspectives in classical sociology, specifically of Marx and Durkheim, inadequate. He claims Marx, Durkheim and even Weber were not pessimist enough to see the two sides of modernity (1990: 7-12, 50, 61).

According to Giddens, modernity has two sides: first one is white, the "opportunity side", which has been analyzed in social sciences repeatedly, during the last century. This white side is the one which Marx, Durkheim and Weber indicate, and the approaches of most social disciplines are based on. Nevertheless, Giddens claims there is another side of modernity, a "darker side", which should have been considered for a better social analysis of the dynamics of the modernity. He points the similarities between "despotism" of the premodern era and the totalitarianism of the national states in modern era (e.g. The Holocaust, Stalinism, etc.). He argues how bitter the modernity is. Totalitarian rule connects

[3]https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/most-cited-authors-of-books-in-the-humanities-2007/405956.article?sectioncode=26&storycode=405956 *(Reached on 13.04.2017)*

political, military, and ideological power in more concentrated form than was ever possible before the emergence of modern nation states (Giddens, 1990: 8). He frames the war industry because of modernity. Giddens calls the 20th century as "the century of war" since more than hundred million people were killed in wars. Giddens also refers to the nuclear confrontation and other ecological concerns to support his claims related to the darker side of modernity, which may have overlooked by the early social scientists.

Giddens refuses to call today's world as "postmodern". According to him, modernity is becoming more radical and global. This transformation creates the illusion of postmodern world, which in fact does not exist at all. Giddens states that the world, as a consequence of modernism, became more severe, forceful, and diversified (1990: 21). As a circumstance of this wild modernity, the concept of *globalization* can be better perceived as an expression of the distanciation of *time* and *place* (1990: 17).

According to this approach, relations and human activities are no longer necessarily connected to the physical locations. With its capability of reaching the global easily, the internet became the dominant communication apparatus and it rules out the distance of *time* and *place*. Accordingly, new and different types of relations were created. Communities and institutions were disembedded from their participants' physical locations and they started to produce online interactions (1990: 20, 24, 63, 79).

2.3. The Rise of Social Interaction: Web 2.0

> Once the internet change the world; now the world is changing the internet. Its mainstreaming is well and truly over, and the forgettable Web 2.0 saga has run its course. Now that society has overruled their freewheeling ethic, the notion of the internet as an exceptional, unregulated sphere evaporates. The moment of decision bears upon us: which side are you on? (Lovink, 2011: 1)

As the author suggests above, the internet is engaged with the everyday life. The concept of *Web 2.0*, which can also be called as *social web*, is used for describing the internet content which is related with the interactivity among the internet users. Before Web 2.0, the internet was pretty much like the mainstream media such as TV, radio, and the newspaper (Hinton & Hjort, 2013: 10). It was one directional way of communication between producer (the website) and the consumer (the user). Similar to the Shannon–Weaver model of communication,[4] website owners were publishing content only (a process, which makes them only 'senders') and regular internet users were receiving that content while surfing on the internet (a process, which makes them only 'receivers'). This mono directional way of internet communication is called Web 1.0.

The name Web 1.0 was coined only after the emergence of Web 2.0. Before, there were the internet and the web only, without numbers or model names such as 1.0 or 2.0. However, when the concept of Web 2.0 came out and when people started talking about Web 2.0 as a new paradigm, previous internet model was started to be called as Web 1.0. It is likened to "the way historians used to break history into the time before the birth of Jesus Christ (BC) and after (AD)" (Hinton & Hjort, 2013: 12).

---

[4] A very first model of the communication theories. Basically, there is a sender who sends a message and the receiver who receives the message. TV or radio broadcastings are very good examples of that model where the station sends the signals to be got by the receivers. It is the one way communication in which the receiver does not have an option of sending a signal back to the sender. The first internet websites were opreating on this principle: there was not at user interaction. For more information, see Mattelart, 1998: 43, 44.

Tim O'Reilly is known as the first person who used the "Web 2.0" phrase and made it popular.[5] According to O'Reilly (2005), Web 2.0 is not a technology, but an attitude (Hinton & Hjort, 2013: 16). In 2004, the phrase came out when O'Reilly's media company organize the "Web 2.0 Conference" and at the opening remarks, he outlined that "customers are building your business for you". This phrase might be called as a reference to today's famous term: *User-generated content*.

User-generated content (UGC) (or user-created content) might be any type of content that is created by a user of a system or a website. Then the content becomes available publicly on that system.[6] As users of a website write a text or post a visual, they basically create content in, and for, the website. Entries to social media websites, blogs, YouTube or similar online video channels, as well as comments on these entries are all significant examples for UGC (Walther et al., 2010: 25).

Web 2.0's new infrastructure allows collaboration, sharing personal interests, and generates user-created contents on the internet. User created contents are mostly seen as blogs, wikis, podcasting and social networks. Lai & Turban indicate that the user-generated contents are the essential difference between Web 2.0 and the traditional Web. With user-generated content opportunity, there is considerably more collaboration among internet users (Lai & Turban, 2008: 390).

---

[5] http://www.oreilly.com/tim/bio.html
[6] http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/U/UGC.html

2.4. Social Networks

> What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made (Boyd & Ellison, 2007: 211).

According to Boyd & Ellison (2007: 210-211), social networking internet sites are web-based services that allow individuals to create public profiles within a bounded system. Also, individuals develop a connection with other users and they share not only posts but also their connection lists. In other words, they share their friends-lists as well. Joinson's (2008) study reveals that, internet social networks are not limited with the posts; rather, they are limited with their user population and their users' willingness to devote their time, labor, and energy to produce content for the networks.

Since the Web 2.0 made it easier, creating personal pages and sharing ideas became popular on the internet. Kaplan & Haenlein claim that, in the online world, all improvements of human relations, interactivity options, and other developments have been generatedby the Web 2.0 technology (2010: 60-62). The Web 2.0 technology enabled the emergence of social media and social networks (Lai & Turban, 2008: 389). Therefore, one of the most interesting internet development for online human to human interaction in the recent years has been the burgeoning of virtual communities (Kräuter, 2009: 505).

2.5. The Couchsurfing Website as a Social Network

Previous discussions on Couchsurfing frame the website as it provides all the requirements for being considered as a social networking site. Based on the Web 2.0 infrastructure, Couchsurfing created its own virtual community. In other words, Couchsurfing is one of the online social networks where people exist for a common purpose, which is to meet with other travelers.[7] Moreover, the website itself declares how the social interaction works in their network and what type of community is aimed to be constructed.[8]

Jingqi Liu from Uppsala University describes the Couchsurfing website as:

CouchSurfing is better described as a Social Networking Site, as the primary functions of the service are to build connections between strangers and create new relationships. Via the profile search, messages are exchanged regarding potential real-life encounters and relationships are generated through the interactions of people who do not have previous experiences with each other in real life. (Liu, 2012: 15)

When Couchsurfers travel to a destination, the Couchsurfing website offers a communication technology for travelers to connect with other members. In terms of accommodation and meeting with local people, the Couchsurfing network enables plenty of possibilities for travelers such as finding a host for free accommodation, meeting with local members to get around the city together, having a drink together, and taking some advice from them.

The relation between members starts online, on the website level. Then, if individuals agree to meet, they come together in real life. From now on, their relation becomes more 'real', beyond the written texts of virtual world. However, if Couchsurfing as a virtual community aims at creating reliable relationships in

---

[7] http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/about-us/

[8] In the Couchsurfing website, five topics are listed in the company values part. These five items, which may be called the mottos, are respectively the following: **1.** Share Your Life, **2.** Create Connection, **3.** Offer Kindness, **4.** Stay Curious, **5.** Leave It Better Than You Found It. These headlines and their descriptions clearly reveal what kind of a community constructing is targeted (aimed). http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/values/

both virtual and real world, it must provide a secure place where members can trust each other easier.

According to Giddens (1990), trust relates to "contingency", rather than risks. He argues that there is a balance between the trust and the acceptable risk for modern human. Today, people tend to trust their environment which is built by an expertise. For instance, most people frequently trust in airplanes or high-speed trains, even though they do not have technical knowledge about those transports (Giddens, 1990: 28, 33, 88).

In terms of online social networks, Kräuter (2009: 514) suggests that, the website members, the website itself and the technical infrastructure can all be considered as objects of trust. As the Couchsurfing community is expanding, social capital values seem to be the most crucial elements that should have been considered in the first place.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Gift Culture

"*The Gift*", which is a pioneer book of Marcel Mauss (1925), offers a new theory to the social sciences: "the gift culture". In his study, Mauss examines and compares the institution of the gift among many different pre-modern cultures. His study also has an importance on understanding the logical structure of the communication, exchange, interaction and other socio-economic aspects of pre-modern societies. Mauss's study helped to generate an economic approach to the anthropological field by revealing the importance of gifts instead of money in the societies preceded the capitalist system. Mauss indicates that before the industrial era, there was a common way of communication among people as well as an exchange system in very different and distanced parts of the world. Although the system was not operating exactly in the same way in everywhere, the gift concept was the mutual basis of communication and exchange in all those pre-modern societies (1925: 6-45).

Emphasizing that donation and gift giving are a necessity for societal solidarity and continuity, and that giving is a duty as important as receiving. Mauss states that primitive societies are reciprocal obligations and that communities, not individuals, are engaged in exchanges or agreements. The clans, tribes, and families that are involved in this process are those who are engaged in exchanging.

In this process, things that reinforce and exchange social ties are not just goods, but a vast field of virtually all social phenomena, such as courtesy, festivities, rituals, military services, women, children, entertainment, festivals and fairs. As a result, these obligations and countervailing obligations are often fulfilled in a voluntary manner and with gifts, although they are not strictly necessary (1925: 3, 44).

The organizer is the social values that are internalized in the process of socialization that enables them to be perceived as spontaneous and based on

reason. Social moral values, beliefs, discourses, everyday routines, and the gift relationship, that is, reciprocity and solidarity, settlement of the settlement provides.

Mauss' gift concept is crucial on expressing the formation of societies. Social rituals such as receiving, giving, exchanging, mourning, sacrificing are the main concepts that define all the social institutions and events that lead to the formation of social structure. Akay (1999: 131) points out the possibility that these concepts, which determine the anthropological socialites of primitive societies by Mauss, can also be used for Western societies. And the gift economy continues in monotheistic religions with gifts such as giving gifts, wearing gold, putting money, and setting a table after death (1999: 14).

Godbout (2003) contributes to Mauss' theory by discovering the resemblances of the aged gift culture in today's social relations. He argues that, not only in the economic circle, but also the hierarchical positions that occur in social relations and their importance are disguised under the symbolism of "giving/receiving gift". Gifts, not only in pre-modern societies but even today, are the hidden identifier of all relations in societies, with carrying more meaning than only being material (Godbout, 2003: 141-149). Consequently, one can notice the continuous functions of gift in contemporary society. To understand how the gift culture has survived until today, Godbout suggests studying daily lives and traditions, since "the gift culture is in everywhere" (2003: 22).

The gift and counter-gift are transforms into a social cycle, which establishes the social bond. Hence, the forms of identity, the expression of the individuals by themselves are formed through this connection. (Akay, 1999: 160).

Because the individual is the person and he or she carries out the action with his own will. Even if it seems like a personal act, the gift relationship is a social event as it happens within certain social rules. However the gift relationship is social because it also happens at the same time depending on the tradition.

Demez (2011) argues that when the union of social life is thought to be based on reciprocity, it can be said that there is a gift relation in all social unities at different time and space dimensions. The boundaries of this area are that it preserves its presence in all conditions, even if its characteristics change. In this

context, it is necessary to deal with the way of presenting in the modern society in the traditional meaning of gift relationships, reciprocity and dependency. In this way, it is necessary to look at whether the gift is a form of behavior imposed.

The reciprocation may sometimes be a statement of feelings that is felt against the other. This response may not always be material, considering that every presentation should have a reciprocation in social life. The return, the inclusion of social, cultural meanings such as service, emotion, dignity, should be regarded as the basic anticipation of the gift (2011: 88, 89).

3.2 Reciprocal Obligation

"…civilizations contracts are fulfilled and exchanges of goods are made by means of gifts. In theory such gifts are voluntary but in fact they are given and repaid under obligation." (Mauss, 1925: 1)

Not expecting material rewards does not mean that the gift is gratuitous. It is thought that the conscience will always be paid in a way to comfort the conscience, to give confidence and to be protected in the form of gift, to protect the gift of the individual who thinks he will be free from evil. It can be said that even in special relationships involving the feeling of love and trust, such spiritual expectations are associated with the gift.

Mauss' study reveals that, despite the conventional understanding, gifts are actually not given voluntarily. Rather, giving and receiving a gift is an obligation in all societies (1925: 37-41). Because of this obligation, Mauss claims that the natural economy had never existed. Since all the exchanged goods (gifts) are a representation of a social status and a result of an obligatory rule of being/existing in society; then, the outcome of the exchange is "prestige" (1925: 6, 21, 35). For sustainable prestige, the exchanges should not include only valuables. Banquets,

rituals, festivals are the garish ways of a high-level sharing. Therefore, the economic transaction does not play the main role but it is merely one side of the greater social contract in the gift system.

When the obligation of giving and receiving gifts is vital in the social contract, refusing to give or refusing to receive a gift means rejecting the solidarity of alliance. This is why such refusals are considered as non-acceptable in many social and communal relations.

As a contribution to the gift theory, Adanır (2007) refers to an old Turkish tradition which is still effective today in Turkish society. When a neighbor brings some food to other neighbor in a plate, one must accept that as a gift. According to Adanır, this is not only accepting the food, but also an acceptance of the donor neighbor's superiority. This acceptance is also a beginning of a bigger relation circle which continues with a payback: the neighbor who receives the food in first place should give the plate back not empty but with some food in it. Giving the neighbor's plate back empty is not considered acceptable. Adanır underlines that this tradition was the same in Ottoman Empire era, i.e. 500 years ago, and it has survived in the modern times. In short, maintaining one's existence in society means maintaining one's prestige (as well as contributing to the construction of others' prestige) by getting involved in the system of gift giving and receiving.

3.3 The Gift Approach to Couchsurfing

According to Bauman (1998: 102), there are two types of decisive principles that often conflict with each other in human interactions: Equivalence exchange and gift. These are the determinants of social relations which means that modern human life is realized through these two principles between a personal and an impersonal context.

The gift culture and accordingly the gift economy concept may be used to study online social networks. An individual in a gift culture can only exist in his/her community through giving/receiving gifts and promising of giving/receiving gifts (Mauss, 1925). Similarly, in Couchsurfing, a member can get feedback and become visible in the community if s/he offers his/her home for

other members for temporary stays. The community itself grows as their members temporarily open their homes to one another. This gesture seems free of charge in terms of money; however, it still asks for reciprocity: the ones who receive the gift (the guests) are asked to write comments about the gift givers (the hosts).

Therefore, the gift economy approach, in which "giving" is considered more important than taking or consuming, may be beneficial in analyzing Couchsurfing as a site of hospitality exchange.

The gift culture is important to analyze giving/receiving *(sharing)* in online social networks beyond economy and economic priorities. The relationship between the host and the guest in Couchsurfing community, as mentioned above, may be understood through a non-verbal agreement, the norm of which is to keep the monetary aspect of hosting unspoken and never make the guest feel indebted. On the other hand, the guest may be expected to be duty bound to reciprocate the favor by other ways than the economic ones.

This is to say, the obligatory system of reciprocity is not the same with pre-modern societies, can be traced in online social networks. It can be used to understand, for instance, the reference system. Couchsurfing, like many other online social networks, has a reference system. Each member writes comments and gives a satisfactory point to the other members with whom s/he interacted for being a guest or host. One can argue that writing a comment about their hosts is almost an obligation for the guests. In return, written feedback is expected from the hosts, too. This unwritten obligation contributes to keep the community alive. The opposite, which is not writing comments, would result in losing prestige in the community for the both sides. This system can be interpreted as an analogy to sending back the neighbor's plate empty.

For this study, despite their similarity, the concepts of *the gift* and *exchange* refer to slightly different terms. The concept of gift refers to more material and economical aspect of the relation, in which some measurable values exist. However, the concept of exchange is more like a process involving emotional investment and anticipation, which is a symbolic value rather than material value, which is realized in the personal field and expresses the interaction between the persons.

With the light of the followed discussions above, it is simplified for this study that how the gift culture structured in Couchsurfing. Therefore, this structure scheme is used as a guide of content analysis of the study.

Gifts In Couchsurfing	Exchanges In Couchsurfing
• Time • Accommodation • Knowledge • Reference	• Conversation • Game • Personal Information • Reference

(Structured by the author for this analysis)

Time as a gift: When time and gift relation are considered, time is something given like gift. In this sense, "time" is one of the most precious gifts in the sense that it is something that can not be concreted, that is not material, but which is self-assertion. Especially in today's capitalist societies, the economic value of time and the fact that the time of the modern man is very limited, the time management turned into a professional work, brought the time to be perceived as a valuable gift. Taking time away from him, he is given the message that s/he is worthy, and so it is implied that he was sacrificed for his sake (Demez, 2011: 93).

In her study, Zajac (2016) examines the commercial aspects of Couchsurfing. With the interview of 50 Couchsurfing users, her study reveals that "Travelling and spending leisure time showing around town some newly met visitors are not easily termed labour." (2016: 213). Since Couchsurfers do not consider the time they spend for other Couchsurfers (guest/host) as a labour, their time can be addressed as a gift. Zajac also points that becoming a Couchsurfing web site member does not requires any specific set of qualities "apart from the willingness to put effort and time into meaningful interactions with other people in any place in the world." (2016: 218).

Accordingly, as the Couchsurfers share their time as a gift in the community, this study seeks to discover how it structured among Turkish

Couchsurfers. Therefore, two multiple choice type questions were asked in the pilot survey: 1. What are your three most important reasons to use Couchsurfing?, 2. How did you spend time together with your Couchsurfing hosts/guests? Majority of the participants (94%) answered those questions with mentioning how they spend time together with other Couchsurfers and these lead one of the content analysis categories. Within the scope of content analysis, mutual time sharing is investigated in the the reference comments.

Accommodation as a gift: Sundararajan (2016) studies on the universal sharing economy and examines the examples of modern world which are actually out of the capitalist economy. By doing this, he also compares the commercial accommodation web sites with Couchsurfing. The web sites such as Airbnb and OneFineStay are also provide people to share their home with visitors, tourists and travelers. However, the host asks for a certain amount of money in return for giving a room, a bed or even a full house. Sundarajan underlines that it is not different than renting a home and these websites' users do not join this platforms for offering a free accommodation as a gift, as it happens in Couchsurfing. Instead, hosts in Airbnb and OneFineStay aim to earn money. Apart from money exchange, these platforms work as the same as Couchsurfing. Travelers search for hosts and contact with them in their travels. Then, after the accommodation ends, they also give references for each other with writing comments and satisfaction points, such as Couchsurfing. However, Sundarajan argues that the money and the profit changes the purpose of use and despite Airbnb and OneFineStay offers an alternative accommodation, it can not be considered as a sharing system as much as Couchsurfing (2016: 40).

Accordingly, comparing with its' counterparts, Couchsurfing website provides free of charge accommodation for its' users which is why it is determined as a gift for this study.

Knowledge as a gift: One of the significant points of our pilot survey indicates that a big amount of Couchsurfers use the system for getting information from local people and also to learn about tips and tricks about the territory they visit.

Although it seems like a free information, in terms of travel budget, such kind of tips and suggestions might be significantly effective. Zajac (2016), by referring to Hardt (1999); argues the value of knowledge in social communities, in terms of consuming things within the capitalist era. She approaches to the knowledge as a produced product which requires labour however Couchsurfers produce it for free for each others. (2016: 210, 217) Terranova (2013) also examines the digital labour and the value of digital information and knowledge. She indicates that the digital labour is not necessarily confined to informational activities:

> These types of cultural and technical labour are not produced by capitalism in any direct, cause-and-effect fashion; that is, they have not developed simply as an answer to the economic needs of capital. However… they are a part of a process of economic experimentation with the creation of monetary value out of knowledge/culture/affect. (Terranova, 2013: 39).

Since Couchsurfers provide an important amount of knowledge for their guests and hosts, its' material value can easily be considered as a gift. Such kind of informations not only help to use visitor's budget rationally, but also contribute for having a unique experience with not overlooking some local details.

Reference as a gift: Although giving reference was not considered reciprocity and necessity for many Couchsurfers, reciprocity was often provided in references. The reciprocity here begins as the latest phase of the Couchsurfing interaction, after the accommodation is over. Both the host and the surfer leave a reference.

Reference system is the key element in Couchsurfing, in terms of trust. Reference includes written text about the other Couchsurfer with whom was interacted as a host or guest. Moreover, a rating point is also given as positive, negative or neutral. A given reference is equal to the payback behavior in the gift culture. Because it can not be deleted by the profile owner, references are the important determiners of a Couchsurfer's reliability value.

Teng, Lauterbach, and Adamic (2010) states that the ratio of negative comments to positive ones in all Couchsurfing comments is 2.500: 1. That is to say, receiving a positive feedback requires some effort. Since a positive feedback contribute one's reliability in the community, it can be considered as a forward investment and this measurable value determines it as a gift for his study.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH

4.1. Methodology

For understanding the Turkish Couchsurfers' attitude, an online survey was conducted between 7-21 April 2017. The survey was announced on the active Turkish pages on Couchsurfing forum. Couchsurfing members were asked to participate in this study only if they had ever used Couchsurfing either as a guest or host or both. A total of 131 Couchsurfing members completed the survey voluntarily in two weeks. Majority of the participants were active Couchsurfers, who joined this community more than three years ago (68,5%), and they used the website at least once as a guest or host in the last two years (84,6%). Hence, their recent experiences might be more applicable in order to understand the current perception.

4.1.1. Online Survey Method

Mert (2014: 88, 94) points that today the online survey method is generally accepted as a reliable method in both new media and social studies. Since conducting an online survey is not only affordable but also comes with the opportunity of reaching a wider mass (large mass) (2014: 89), this method might be considered as one of the most useful methods for measuring the websites' user behaviors such as Couchsurfers. This is why online surveying is selected as the research method of this study.

Online surveys can be conducted in several ways. One of them is called *e-mail survey*. In this way, the questionnaire is sent via e-mail to the addresses of the selected sample and they are asked to participate. The survey can be embedded in the e-mail. Although e-mail surveys seem old fashioned today, they are still in use (Geray, 2011: 143, quoted in Mert 2014)

Another way to conduct online surveys is called *web survey*, which is used wider than e-mail survey (Poynter, 2010: 5). In this method, the questionnaire is

prepared with the help of a software or a website. Then, the link is sent to participants asking them to click on it and participate in the survey that appears on an external web page, rather than on an e-mail. With this way, the data is collected digitally in the system where the questionnaire is hosted (2010: 5)

This study utilized the web survey method. The questionnaire was prepared on Google Forms and its link was shared with Turkish Couchsurfers with asking them to participate. All answers and data were collected on Google's system and only the researcher had the password to see the results.

Neuman (2012) underlines both the web based and e-mail based surveys are fast and affordable while providing the opportunity of flexible scanning. However, they also have three weaknesses, in terms of conducting and reliability:

1. The Scope: The sampling of the research is limited to participants who have access to the internet at the time of the study.
2. Privacy and Verification: This weakness refers to the participation of a participant to the survey only one time. This should be controlled with the technological supervision (IP address etc.) In other words, the online survey system should provide the participation only once from the same computer and the privacy of the participant.
3. The Design: Since there is not a standard way of using computers, all web browsers, operating systems, and even the speed of connection influence the participation to the online survey. Therefore, the system must also provide the standardization of the survey conduction both technically and visually (Neuman: 2012: 437, 438).

Reflecting the results on Couchsurfing use drawing on a web survey, this study acknowledges the weaknesses of online surveying and its limitations for generalization.

4.1.2. Questionnaire and Scale

The questions in the survey were designed to elicit responses primarily regarding the key concepts of interest, namely profile presentation; motivation, trust behavior, and perception of Couchsurfing (see Appendix 1). Such categories were not presented to the respondents, while the general goal of the research was made known to them in advance.

31 questions were asked to the participants. 11 of them were multiple choice questions aiming to reveal the demography of the participants and measure their frequency of Couchsurfing usage. 7 ordinary scale type questions were asked to understand the general decision making type of participants based on their previous experiences. Interval scale was used in 10 questions for clarifying the most important factors of the participants' decisions on contacting with another member. Interval scale questions were also used to measure the participants' general perception on, and their reliability level to: a) other users' profiles, b) the reference system, and c) the Couchsurfing website itself. In addition, 3 open ended questions were asked to see if there is a cluster on specific topic related to trust issues, cultural values or any probable overlooked subject.

4.1.3. Sampling

Survey studies utilize a variety of sampling methods such as random sampling, limited sampling, and snowball sampling (Neuman 2012). Ackland (2013: 27), on the other hand, claims that only two types of major sampling are suitable for online surveys:

1. Probability based (random) sampling, which includes randomly selected participants from a community. In this method, everyone in the population has the equal chance to be a part of the study.
2. Non-probability sampling is a type of sampling in which the sampling unit is unknown and it may widen through friends and other contacts.

For this study, the latter was used as the participants, who joined the study voluntarily, were unknown to the researcher. None of the participants was chosen from a specific community. The only common trait is that they all are members and active users of the Couchsurfing website. The survey study was announced on the Couchsurfing forum (embedded on the website). The announcement was also shared on Couchsurfing Turkey Facebook page. It was asked to the active members to click to the online questionnaire and participate the survey, which was accessible to the public. At the end of two weeks, 131 participants filled the questionnaire. When this number is compared to the Couchsurfing population in Turkey; which is approximately 223.000,[9] 131 participants constitute a sample which is barely enough to reflect the general dynamics of the population. One of the reasons of reaching a limited number of Couchsurfers is conducting an online survey with limited time and budget. The distribution of the questionnaire was restricted mainly with the researcher's online environment. However, despite the limitations of this study, experiences of 131 participants shed light on Couchsurfing use in Turkey and may lead to further study on online social networks.

According to Rescoe (1975), the sampling should be between 30-500 people in ideal research; and should involve at least 30 participants for each sub-variable. Roscoe suggests several rules which can be used for a proper sampling in behavioral research. These can be summarized as the following:

1. A statistical analysis with less than 10 participants is not recommended.
2. An experimental research can be conducted with a smaller sampling such as 10-20 participants and it still might be accepted as valid.
3. In behavioral research, however seldom it is, less than 30 or larger than 500 participants might be also accepted.

---

[9] The user population is taken from Couchsurfing website by using the search engine with the narrowed settings to the users only live in Turkey. Since the Couchsurfing search engine displays the active users only, there might be +/-5 difference with the real user population. This is why the number of 223.000 is stated as an approximate currently in May, 2017.

Roscoe indicates that as long as all the responsibility belongs to the researcher, any sampling size can be used. Accordingly, for our study, because there is not less than 30 participants without answering any of the questions in this study, this research project can still be acceptable as valid with acceptable amount of sampling. Fully aware of the cause of possible errors, this study does not focus on the sample's representativeness, instead, seeks to provide insights from diverse angles. As this research is fundamentally not a quantitative study, the interpretation of numbers is peripheral.

4.2. Analysis

All the questionnaires filled by total of 131 participants were accepted as appropriate for this analysis and none of them was excluded from the analysis.

4.2.1. Descriptive Analysis

61.5% of the participants are men whereas 35.4% are women. 2.3% of the members are couple users (using the Couchsurfing account with a partner). The demographic characteristics of the sample roughly reflects the general Turkish Couchsurfing community in which 73% are men, 25% are women and 2% of total members are couple users (2017).
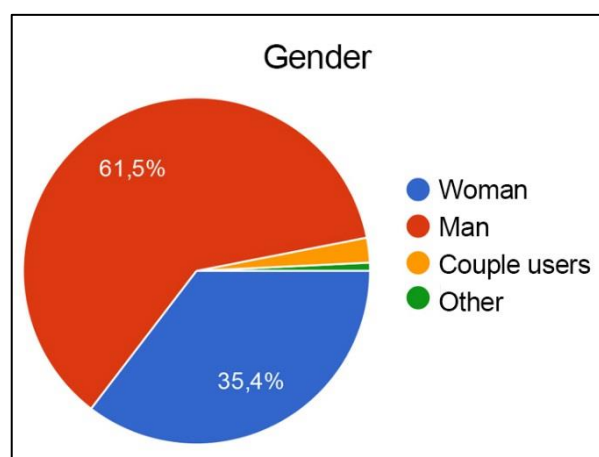
Graphic 1 – Gender distribution of survey participants

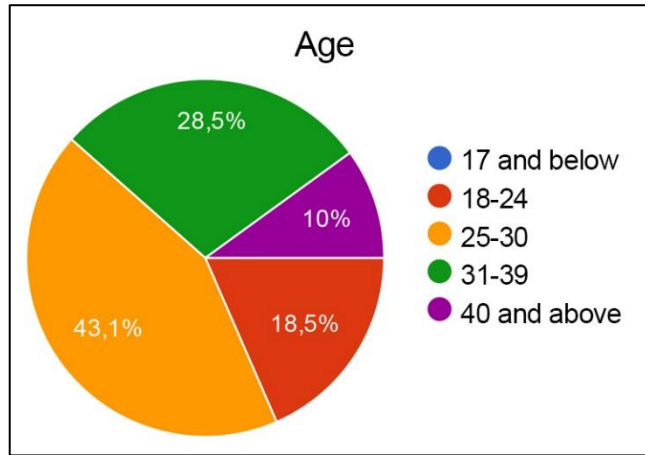Majority of our participants are young Couchsurfers and their average age is 29. This is coherent with the Turkey average, where 78,8% of the internet users in Turkey are between 25-34 age group.[10]

Graphic 2 – Age distribution of survey participants

94% of the respondents have a higher education level (a bachelor's degree or higher). This is also coherent with TUİK's study, in which 95,6% of all population who use internet have bachelor's degree or higher.[11]

98,5% of the participants can communicate with English while 13% of all know German and 8% know Spanish.

---

[10] TÜİK Reports: TurkStat, Survey on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Usage Survey in Households and by Individuals, 2016.
http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/HbGetir.do?id=21779&tb_id=11 *(Reached on 10.05.2017)*
[11] TÜİK Reports: TurkStat, Survey on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Usage Survey in Households and by Individuals, 2016.
http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/HbGetir.do?id=21779&tb_id=11 *(Reached on 10.05.2017)*
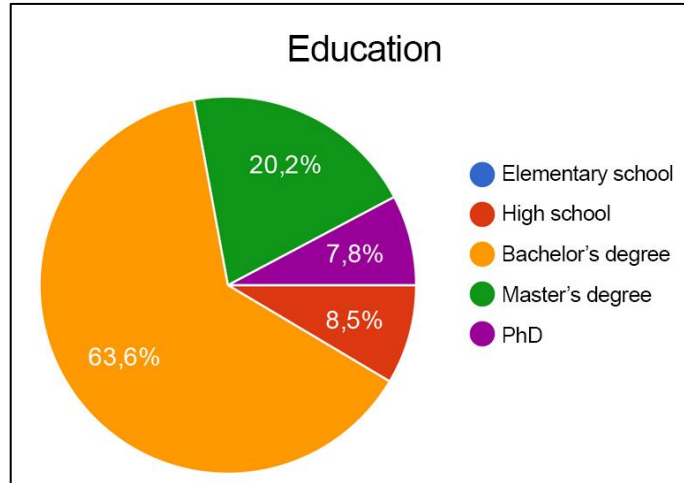
Graphic 3 – Educational distribution of survey participants

Furthermore, the average income of respondents is around 2600 TL. This is an important finding considering the average income in Turkey is 1400 TL.[12] This finding suggests that the economic aspect may not be the main reason for using the Couchsurfing website (for free travel accommodation).
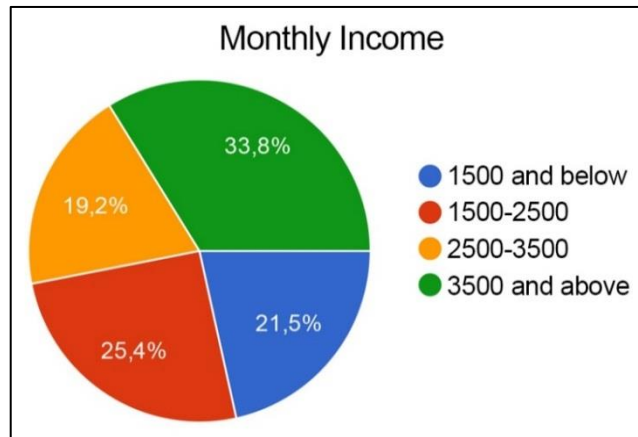
Graphic 4 – Income distribution of survey participants

---

[12] https://www.csgb.gov.tr/home/Contents/Istatistikler/AsgariUcret *(Reached on 03.05.2017)*
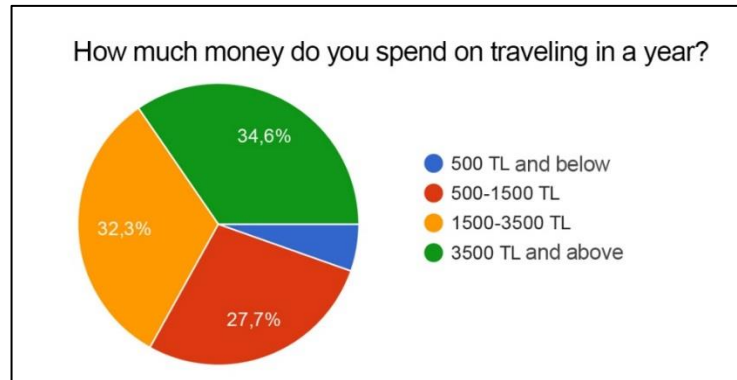
Graphic 5 – Spending budget for travels

Interestingly, in relation to the finding above, "the economic accommodation" is chosen as the third important reason why the survey participants use Couchsurfing website. The first two reasons are, respectively, meeting with new people/to get socialize and learning the tips and tricks of the territory from locals.

Graphic 6 - Cross-tabulation of travel expenses and the main reason of Couchsurfing use

| | | | What is your main reason for using Couchsurfing? | | | | | | Total |
			Free accom modatio n	To discover new cultures	Flirting	To learn tips and tricks of the territory from locals	My 1st priority is not on the list	To meet with new people / socializ ing	
How much money do you spend on traveling in a year?		Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
		% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	,8%	,8%
	1500-3500 TL	Count	0	12	4	0	4	0	22	42
		% of Total	0,0%	9,2%	3,1%	0,0%	3,1%	0,0%	16,8%	32,1%
	3500 TL and above	Count	0	12	7	1	4	1	20	45
		% of Total	0,0%	9,2%	5,3%	,8%	3,1%	,8%	15,3%	34,4%
	500 TL and below	Count	0	3	1	0	0	0	3	7
		% of Total	0,0%	2,3%	,8%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,3%	5,3%
	500-1500 TL	Count	1	8	3	0	1	1	22	36
		% of Total	,8%	6,1%	2,3%	0,0%	,8%	,8%	16,8%	27,5%
Total		Count	1	35	15	1	9	2	68	131
		% of Total	,8%	26,7%	11,5%	,8%	6,9%	1,5%	51,9%	100,0%

χ^2=12,121, Sig.=0,979>0,050

Since χ^2=12,121 statistical value is found pointless on 0,05 level of importance, it is detected that the main reason of Couchsurfing usage is independent from the travel budgets. (This issue is particularly discussed below.) Free accommodation that the website members offer to each other is not the main reason for any spending group. In fact, "*meeting with new people and socializing*" option is significantly higher than any other options in the list.
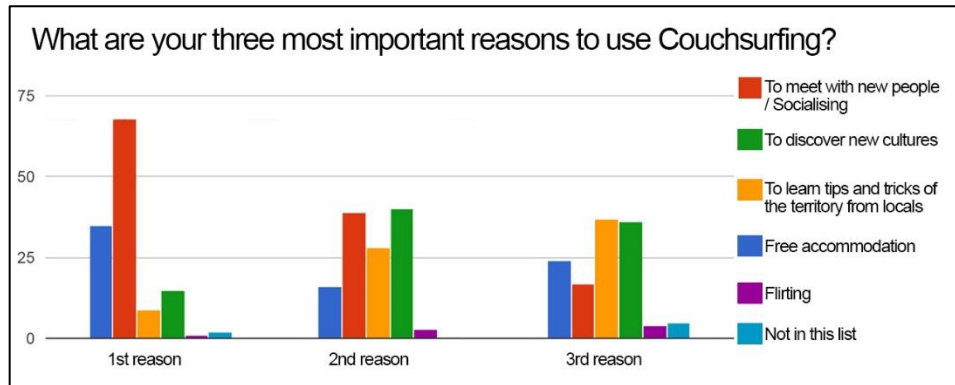
Graphic 7 – Reason priorities of Couchsurfing usage

Since there are three different types of Couchsurfing usage (as a guest, as a host or both), it was asked to members how they had experienced Couchsurfing. Used as a guest, as a host or both types.
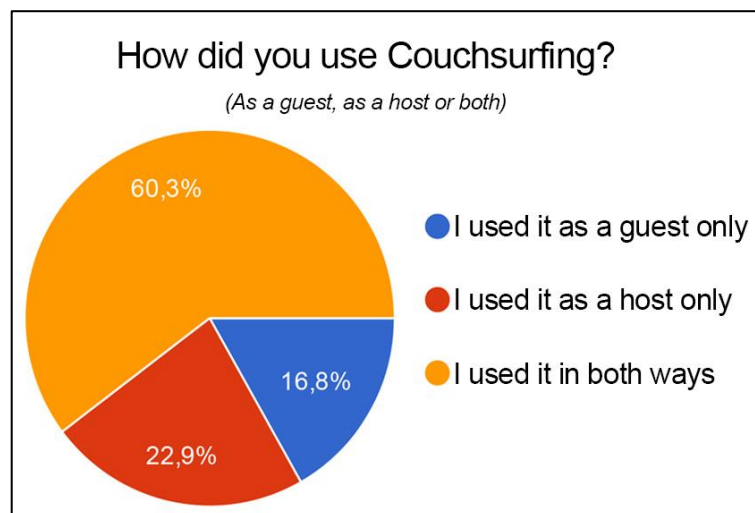
Graphic 8 – Using experience type of participants

One of the aspects what this study seeks is to understand if there is a clustering on a specific gender and Couchsurfing usage. In this respect, being a guest means stay at some other people's homes and similarly, being a host means accepting some other people to your own home. Therefore, before interpreting the data on security, comfort and other decisions, it is better to find out if any of gender prefers to use Couchsurfing system in a specific way.

Graphic 9 - Cross-tabulation of gender and Couchsurfing using type

		Couchsurfing using type			
		Both - as a guest and as a host	Only as a host	Only as a guest	Total
Gender	Man Count % within Gender	53	16	11	80
		66,2%	20,0%	13,8%	100,0%
	Woman Count	24	11	11	46
	% within Gender	52,2%	23,9%	23,9%	100,0%

χ^2=2,883, Sig.=0,237>0,050

66,2% of the male members use Couchsurfing as both (guest and host) where female members are 52,2%. 20% of male and 23,9% of female members experienced Couchsurfing only as a host, which means they accepted other Couchsurfers. Using only as a guest ratio is 13,8% for male and 23,9% for women. Being a guest ratio is slightly higher in female users. Since χ^2=2,883 statistical value is found pointless on 0,05 level of importance, it is detected that Couchsurfing using type is independent from gender.

Majority of the respondents also use other social platforms. Three most used social platforms according to Turkish Couchsurfers are Facebook (96%), Instagram (73%), and Twitter (53%).
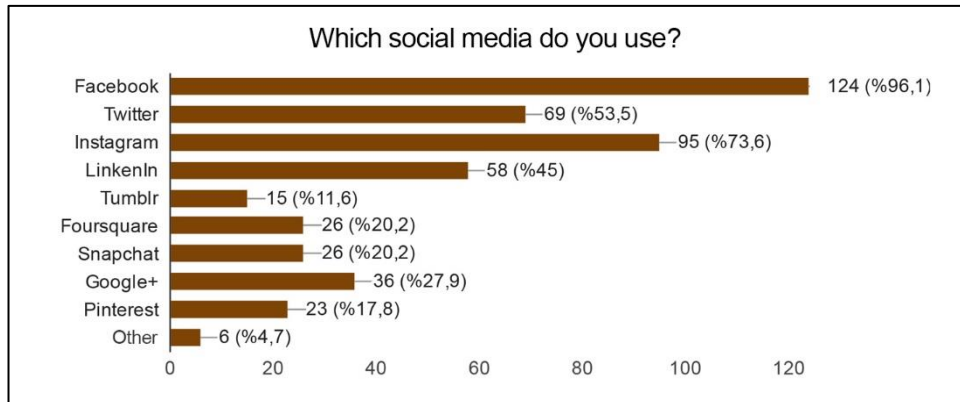
Graphic 10 – Other social web platforms which are used by survey participants

68,5% of the participants have been using the Couchsurfing website for at least three years. Most of the participants (84,6) have used the website recently (in the last two years) to find a host for their travels or to host other travelers. In this respect, participants of this study can be called active users whose knowledge about Couchsurfing is up to date.
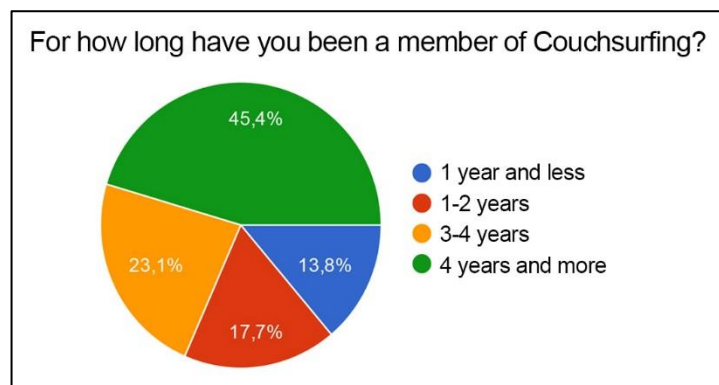
Graphic 11 – Membership period
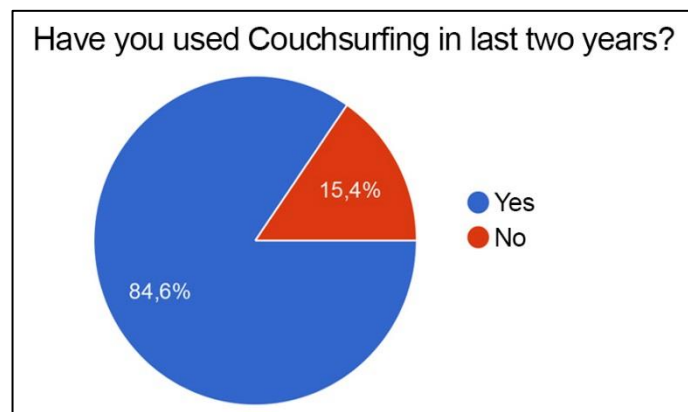
Graphic 12 – Couchsurfing usage of survey participants in last two years

While 43,8% of all the participants have utilized Couchsurfing more than 10 times, 81,4% of all have experienced it more than three times.
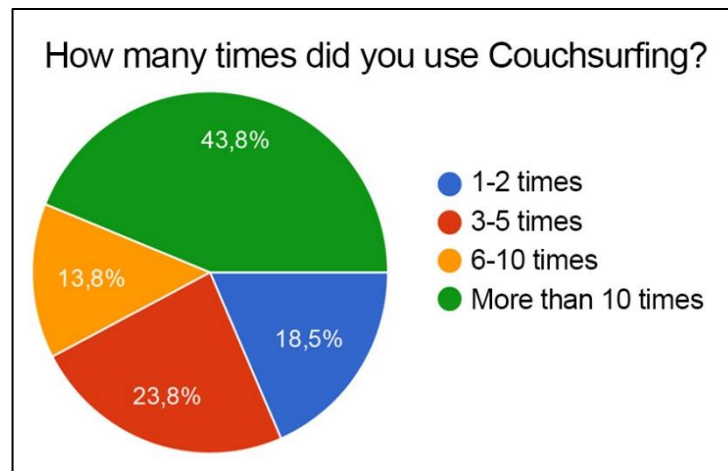
Graphic 13 – Frequency of Couchsurfing usage

Graphic 14 - Cross-tabulation of membership period and Couchsurfing usage time

			How many times have you used Couchsurfing?				
			1-2 times	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times	Total
For how long have you been a member of Couchsurfing?	Less than 1 year	F	12	3	1	2	18
		%	66,7%	16,7%	5,6%	11,1%	100,0%
	1-2 years	F	9	8	1	5	23
		%	39,1%	34,8%	4,3%	21,7%	100,0%
	3-4 years	F	1	11	5	13	30
		%	3,3%	36,7%	16,7%	43,3%	100,0%
	More than 4 years	F	2	9	11	37	59
		%	3,4%	15,3%	18,6%	62,7%	100,0%

χ^2=59,693, Sig.=0,000<0,050

One of the participants did not answer to the following two questions: "*For how long you have been a member of Couchsurfing?*" and "*How many times you used Couchsurfing?*" That respondent is excluded from this analysis. Most the participants who are members of Couchsurfing for less than 1 year have

experienced Couchsurfing 1 to 2 times (66,7%). These "new" members' usage ratios are respectively 16,7% for 3 to 5 times used, 5,6% for 6 to 10 times used and 11,1% for more than 10 times used.

The ratio for other users who are members of Couchsurfing for 1-2 years is 39,1% for 1-2 times used, 4,3% for 3-5 times used, 34,8% for 6-10 times used and 21,7% for more than 10 times used.

The members for 3-4 years used Couchsurfing for 1-2 times in proportion as 3,3% where 3-5 times used ratio is 16,7, 6-10 times used ratio is 36,7 and more than 10 times used ratio is 43,3%.

The participants who are Couchsurfing members for more than 4 years stated that they used Couchsurfing 1-2 time in proportion as 3,4%. 3-5 times used ratio is 18,6%; 6-10 times used ratio is 15,3%; and more than 10 times used ratio is 62,7%—which is significantly the highest level of experiencing in numbers.

It is clearly seen that the new members have less experiences of Couchsurfing. A member's usage of the website increases in time. Since χ^2=59,693 statistical value is found significant on 0,05 level of importance, it is detected that Couchsurfing usage experience is not independent from Couchsurfing membership period. The members who have been using Couchsurfing longer have more experiences as a guest or host.

For Couchsurfers as the guests, Europe is the most popular area in which 74,3% of all used Couchsurfing to find a host for their Europe visits. The platform is important for the domestic tourism as 44,8% of the participants have utilized Couchsurfing to find a host while traveling in Turkey.

4.2.2. Security and Trust

According to Turkish Couchsurfers, the reference system is highly important and they would like to be a part of the system of voting hosts. After using Couchsurfing as a guest or host, 59.7% of the survey participants stated that

they *always* wrote comments and gave satisfaction points on the experience with their hosts/guests. 33,4% responded as they gave a feedback for *most of* their guests and hosts whereas only 7% of the participants stated that they *never* wrote any comment.
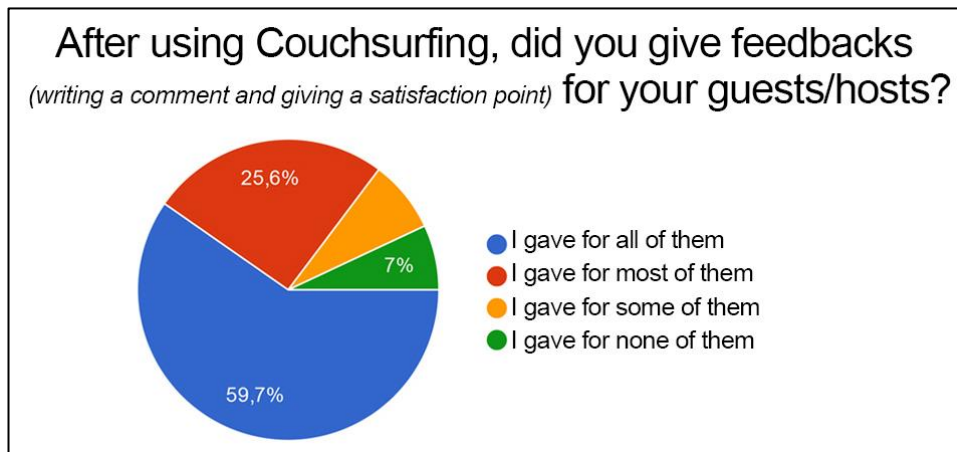
Graphic 15 – Feedback frequency

Moreover, 86% of the participants agree with the statement that giving a referential response is very important in terms of reliability which is successfully provided by the Couchsurfing website. Because of that, 95% of all participants recommend this website. On the chart "*I recommend this website to others*", the average agreement point is 4,5/5. However, there is still a group of participants who does not recommend the Couchsurfing website, which makes the 5% of the survey participants. To understand the possible reasons behind their decision, their demography, using frequency, and membership periods were compared with other 95% of participants who do recommend the website. After the comparison and cross check, no clustering on a specific area came out. In other words, this survey provides no evidence of a correlation between participants' opinion for "*I do/do not recommend this website to others*" and their background such as their age, gender, education, income, being a new or old member, using the website often or occasionally, and countries visited.

In terms of reliability, another important factor for users is the comments on the profile pages. The survey research in this study approves this assertion. For more than %90 of the users, comments about the guests or the hosts have a crucial

importance when it comes to the meeting in real life. Therefore, for becoming a reliable member, a Couchsurfer is expected to meticulously fill the user profile with honest information. Our survey results verify this expectation.
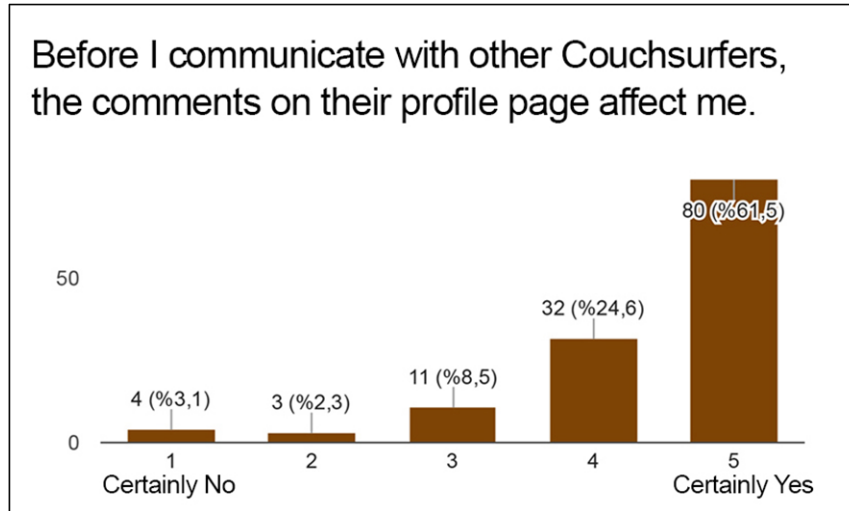
Graphic 16 – Importance of comments on profile pages

Comments and feedback are highly effective on users. 87% of the participants agree with that comments are very important. The level of "*Feedbacks affect my choice*" is 4,39 points on 5.
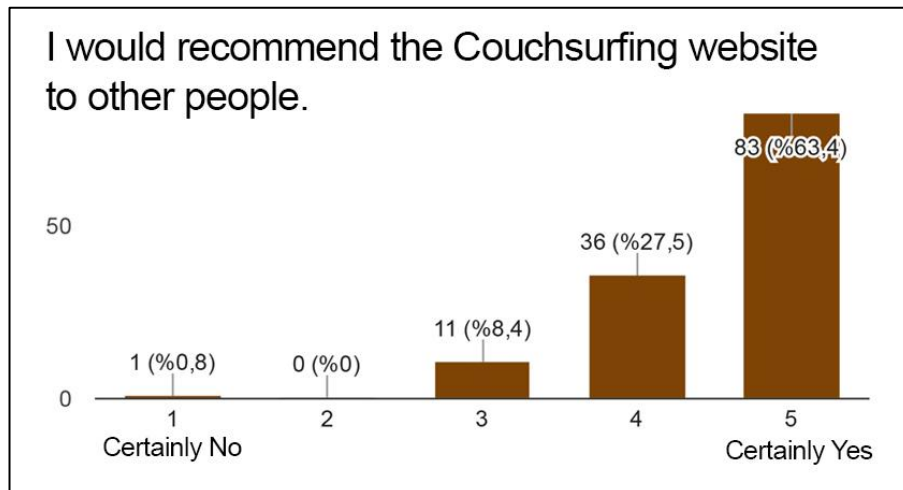
Graphic 17 – Recommend to others

90,4% of the participants suggests this website to other people and "I do suggest Couchsurfing to others" level is 4,52 points on 5. This can be interpreted

as the website might grow with new members.

4.2.3. Members' Opinions

The participants were asked to share their general opinions about their Couchsurfing experiences and provided a space for their open-ended answers. 53 of the participants responded this question with their own sentences.

As it is mentioned above the most important function of Couchsurfing is offering its' users the possibility to search for hosts in different locations who are willing to provide a sleeping surface (a couch, or anything that one can sleep on), for a short period of time during one's visit. However, between guests and hosts, there are usually other activities during the Couchsurfing experience, such as guided sightseeing in the city, having breakfast, lunch and dinner together, language exchange and the like. Before interpreting the open-ended answers, let's look at the ways in which the participants spend their time with their hosts or guests during their Couchsurfing experiences:
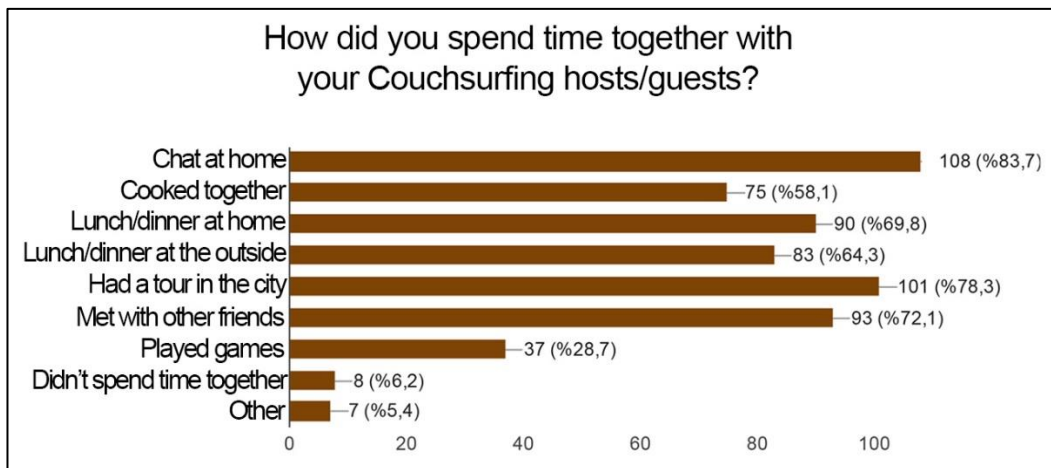
Graphic 18 – Time spending activities with hosts/guests

As it is mentioned above, Couchsurfing is more than just a platform where people find a place to sleep for free. Among users, more interaction happens and social values reveal with the face to face meetings. This phenomenon can be understood through the social capital theory, which is based on the maintaining

the mutual benefits. In other words, although none of the members has an obligation to spend some quality time together with their hosts or guests, more than 80% of the survey participants involved social activities with their hosts/guests. Having a conversation is the most common activity (83,7%) among members, which is followed by having a sightseeing tour around the city (78,3%). Meeting with other friends (72,1%) and having lunch or dinner together (69,8%) are slightly behind the first two common activities. These activities and their effects on members can be observed clearer with the help of the open-ended answers written by participants (See Appendix B).

Based on their content, open-ended answers are categorized in 5 major topics:

1. Cultural Experience
2. Helpfulness and Friendship
3. Economical
4. Entertainment and Adventure
5. Concerns

An answer is analyzed more than one time if its content involves more than one topic.

Cultural Experience: There are 22 answers that address to this category. Participants commonly mention about the benefits of learning different cultural traditions. When they visit a place, they seem to like to get some tips that can only be obtained from local people. One of the participants expressed the cultural interaction with locals as follows:

"... when we were in Bosnia, we listened stories about Bosnian War
and the history of the city from our hosts; you cannot find such an
opportunity in a hotel" (see Appendix B, 34).

Several participants pointed out how Couchsurfing was useful to them as a tool for practicing language. Moreover, 'feeling as a world citizen without borders

and boundaries' are mentioned by several participants. One of the participants wrote the following:

"[Couchsurfing] is a very good environment which cares about the concept of world citizen and sharing; it also gives an opportunity to young people for learning about other cultures through interacting [with locals]" (see Appendix B, 39),

Helpfulness and Friendship: 15 answers can be categorized under this category as the participants were mostly referring to their experiences with kind hosts. The answers speak to the idea that people who have a similar life perspective can come together for helping each other during/for traveling. Some of the contacts can turn into a long-time friendship. Participants also mentioned that they experienced the feeling of equality among humans while being open to meet new people based on building trust and peace.

"...rather than its being free, I prefer to use [Couchsurfing] because it provides strong communication based on trust" (See appendix B, 21).

Economic: Only four of the answers refer to the economic aspects of Couchsurfing underlining that the economic benefits of the platform are not limited to free accommodation but it also includes consuming food at a host's place, which helps traveling budget. It is stated that Couchsurfing is good for people who travel with a limited budget and who do prioritize comfort.

Entertainment and Adventure: 12 answers mention about the fun part of Couchsurfing: especially for curious travelers, Couchsurfing could be full of surprises with different people. These participants noted that while the system motivates travelers in general, each experience builds on one another

and inspires Couchsurfers to use it more.

Concerns: Answers in this category mostly involves the worries about the future of the platform. Some of the participants criticized that the website started asking money to provide an upgraded service. Although it is not a must, members who are willing to pay 25$ annually become more reliable in the system and they get the opportunity of sending unlimited messages to other Couchsurfers. (Members utilizing the platform for free are restricted with 10 messages in a day.) Some of the survey participants explained that they found the platform's update service offering as a capitalist move and as a business concern, which contradicts with how Couchsurfing started in the first place. There is another concern about the system's future if it becomes too much popular. Some answers to the open-ended questions claim that, while more people are joining Couchsurfing every day, some of the new members have no intention of traveling; instead, many new members are trying to convert the Couchsurfing website to a flirting platform. Approximately 1/5 of the participants believe that Couchsurfing could survive or maintain its structure only by avoiding new, young Turkish men's participation, who are expected to disturb foreign women Couchsurfers. According to these participants, Turkish men could sexually disturb the foreign woman Couchsurfers, which would eventually harm the reliability of the website. (There is no research available to question validity of this statement.)

Findings and Discussion

For users from all genders, a specific cluster on demographics can be found especially under the language skills, the education level, and the age groups Turkish Couchsurfers are mostly young as 29 years old in average, educated as at

least bachelor's degree (91,5%) and they have an occupation with earning more than the average salary in Turkey (79,5%). They have easy access to the internet and to other social platforms (96,1%), not only economically, but also with some knowledge of at least one foreign language, which is dominantly English (98,5). Besides, the Couchsurfing website does not offer an option of Turkish language. Therefore, one of the major findings of this study is that Couchsurfing as an online social platform is not for everyone in Turkey. This is the platform's main difference from other popular social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

The Couchsurfers participated in the survey use the website mostly for socializing and meeting with local people during their travels. Free accommodation and other financial concerns are not the first, but the third reason for their usage of the platform. Thus, one of the main purposes of this research has been completed successfully, which is to understand the reasons behind and the frequency of Couchsurfing use, by guest travelers.

As stated on the homepage of the Couchsurfing website, this network is for travelers who are open to meeting with new people and new experiences. It reads "*Stay with Locals and Meet Travelers - Share Authentic Travel Experiences".*[13] Since the platform offers the opportunity of face to face meetings, it becomes more than just an accommodation service. This study reveals that majority of Couchsurfers construct a friendly relationship with other members as they share a home together. Chatting at home, walking around the city, having breakfast, dinner, or lunch together, and hanging with the Couchsurfer's friends are the major outcomes of social interactions, when it is asked how the participants spent time with other Couchsurfers during their experience. This is also being verified through the answers to the open-ended questions. Majority of the Couchsurfers are happy to be a part of this society, glad about the previous experiences and want to experience it again. Moreover, some of the participants stated that they have built strong friendships during some of their travels, which is normally not expected in a regular touristic holiday. Overall, for Couchsurfers, Couchsurfing experience during traveling evidently

---

[13] https://www.couchsurfing.com

means much more than just free accommodation. One can suggest that even only this social interactional side of Couchsurfing and its influences on the tourism field could be investigated in further social research embracing psychological, financial, cultural, or even political approaches to understand the Couchsurfing phenomenon.

In behavioral terms, Couchsurfers have expectations from each other. As stated above, it contains some sort of cultural exchange between members while the traditions could differ spatially. For instance, while sharing food with guests has a vital importance in Middle Anatolia, it may not be the same in the West of the country or in big cities (Çınar, 1991: 68). Nevertheless, despite the local and regional variances of traditions and expectations, the gift culture occurs similarly worldwide: Give (offer), take back (accept), and give more to maintain the personal existence together with some gain (prestige) within a circle. This study shows the manifestation of the universal gift culture in an online social platform, members of which are expected to give feedbacks, write comments, and contribute to each other's accumulation of prestige within the Couchsurfing community. In parallel, the feedback system has the dominant influence on members' decision of getting in touch with another member in real life (87,8%).

Another outcome of this research is the concern about the system's future. Although they are glad of being a part of the community and suggest this platform to other people (90,4%), they still have a concern about the system's future if it becomes too much popular. Participants of the survey frequently mention in the part of open-ended questions with their own sentences that more people are joining Couchsurfing day by day and some of them have no intention of traveling; instead, many new members are trying to convert the Couchsurfing website to a flirting platform. Approximately 1/5 of Turkish Couchsurfing users believe that Couchsurfing could survive or maintain its structure only with avoiding new, young Turkish men's participation who are expected to disturb foreign women Couchsurfers. Without suggesting any solution, 20% of Turkish Couchsurfers state that there is a possibility of Turkish men could sexually disturb the foreign woman Couchsurfers, and because of this, the reliability of the website could get

harmed. However, there is no research/evidence to question the validity of this statement. However, the survey results show that the problems related to sexual disturbance that were experienced between Couchsurfers are 8,7%. Unfortunately, this survey has no capability for measuring where (in which country) and with whom this sexual disturbances happened.

When it is asked if the participants had ever experienced a problem with other Couchsurfers, 82,4% of all answered "no". The other 17,6% stated that they experienced problems because of the following reasons: the other Couchsurfer broke the promise and changed our predetermined plan without warning (43,5%); political differences of opinions (17,4%), made me feel uncomfortable at her/his home (17,4%); asked for money from me (13%); sexual disturbance (8,7%). Therefore, this survey based study shows that having a problem with another Couchsurfer is possible. Although its percentage is low (17.6%), experiencing a problem during Couchsurfing has a negative influence on the personal travel experience. One of the significant consequences of having a problem with another member is a decrease both in the trust level towards the community and the motivation of recommending the website to others. This finding contributes to fulfilling one of the purposes of this research, which is to understand the effects of bad traveling experiences due to another Couchsurfer.

Couchsurfers who took the survey are glad about the Couchsurfing website and with the network. They like to be a part of the community, they are happy with their experiences in this community; and they strongly suggest others to use the website. Their trust level to the community is high. Member profiles, feedback comments, and votes are the elements for maintaining an honest and sustainable system. This finding satisfies the another purpose of this research, which is to measure the level of trust towards Couchsurfing website and users.

4.3 The Content Analysis

The data obtained by the pilot survey show the importance of the reference system and comments. In this context, it has emerged that reference comments should be examined to see more clearly how reciprocity works among Couchsurfing users. A content analysis was conducted to examine the reviews that users wrote about each other. The profiles of 50 female and 50 male users living in Turkey and Couchsurfing members were randomly selected by the search engine and the reference review written on their rights were analyzed. Only reviews written in English have been included in the analysis. 2261 reviews from a total of 100 user profiles have been included for this analysis.

4.3.1 Findings And Discussion:

Most frequently used words and phrases:

Word / Phrase	Frequency	Percentage in Overall Reviews
Friend, friendly, friendship, friendliest	1360	60.15%
Talk, talking, talkative	791	34.98%
Turkish	396	17.51%
Cook, cooking, cooker, cooking	342	15.12%
Hope to see you	274	12.11%
Share	267	11.8%
Culture	175	7.73%

Offering the time as a gift in reciprocity is often seen in user comments. Couchsurfers in Turkey, especially in the experience that the user is hosted, expresses the satisfaction that the guests from abroad have heard from them. The examples that the hosts have sacrificed in their own time and which are appreciated by the guests are quite excessive.

- ...he shared all her free time with me and his mates and made everything to make me feel at home.
- ...he stayed up late when he had to get up early for work the next day to help me plan my trip.
- ...she is a diamond. She is generous with her time and great fun.
- She offered me her comfortable bed for two nights and helped me and my way around Istanbul...
- He was well tired but hosted me in her wonderful appartment

As it is seen in some of the reviews, hosts mostly do not hesitate to give their time for the guests. It is a generous gesture in a gift community and makes the giver more powerful.

Accomodation and its' economical value is argued above. Offering a free bed or bedroom is accepted as gift as well and the more comfortable the accommodation is, the stronger the return is.

- ...he tried his best to make me feel comfortable.
- It was really nice staying with her in her house and she made me feel really comfortable and home!
- It was so nice to be comfortable and relaxed in his great apartment.
- ...it was entertaining and very comfortable.
- ...he makes you feel very comfortable,lıke at home!
- I can say that I felt comfortable and welcome in their home. Thank you!
- I cannot say enough about this wonderful woman and her comfortable home. She made her place seem like my own domicile.

The knowledge offered as a gift in here is revealed in different contexts. Mostly it is the information about the city whish is given by the host. Guiding while sightseeing in the city and the tips and tricks are the other knowlede categories offered as a gift.

- ... she taught me many turkish words, gave me every piece of information I asked her, told me about turkish culture, history and traditions.
- ...he provided me with a lot of Information about Istanbul and Turkey.
- He provided me all required information for first time travelers to Istanbul. He guided about routes, modes of transport and fare costs.
- ...who knows about the history of Dersim well and they tired to give some information about zaza culture.
- ...provided me with useful survival information...
- ...you can learn many things from him.

Although each of the reviews are considered as a gift, since writing them requires some time, no matter how short it is; some of them consist the payback of the accomodation. Esspecially the ones in which guests invite their hosts to their place that is not even an obligation.

- ...now its my turn, come and visit me.
- I strongly advise everyone to host him. He is easy going, warmblooded, funny talktive friendly.
- ...she hosted me for 2 nights .My words will not be enough to describe their hospitality.
- Thanks for hosting us E... Hope to see you in Colombia and Mexico! :)

- He was without doubt one of the best hosts I have ever had the pleasure of sharing time with. Bright, funny and wise.
- I really could't imagine a better host. We stayed just one night at A.'s place but she took great care of us, she even picked us from the bus station! She's very kind and generous and I can recommend A. to absolutely everybody.
- You are welcome to our home anytime.

Apart from the gift offering, understanding the exchanges are equally important. The content analysis of Couchsurfing exchanges is framed in the following categories: *Conversation, game, personal information and reference*. Since exchanges do not have as much economic value as gifts, it is necessary to look at the whole context of interpretations rather than words in order to understand their functions in reciprocity. A small example in the chart below displays how the content analysis were categorised. The 2261 reference comment in the profile of 100 users is categorized and coded as ... *(tablo çıkarıldı)*

As it is seen in both, survey results and user reviews, conversations are the center of all sharings. "*Having conversation*" with an 83% average is the most popular activity among the survey participants make with other Couchsurfers. Likewise, *talk, talkative, talking* words are the second most frequently used commentaries in overall reviews (791 times). In addition, conversations (211) and chat (196) were also identified as other frequently used words serving the same exchange. It is to say, having conversation in the context of reciprocity is the most important structure element.

- We had long ınteresting conversations and got a lot of advices what to do in the region.
- it was nice to have a long conversation about everything especially the most coolest topic ' Kamchatka ':)
- We had long conversations about politics and daily life.
- our conversations about my home country and her experiences were very special. I do hope we can meet again soon.
- We had some deep conversations about life, love and everything in-between, and it was refreshing to meet someone who is so open-minded to everything.

Playing games are one of the significant activities in which hosts and guests exchanges many feelings, thoughts and even sometimes it becomes the determiner of the relation depending on who is the winner in the game. At first glance, games that are merely entertainment and time-lapse activities serve to construct reciprocity within a winning and losing relationship framework. So much so that no matter who has lost, the rematches of these games are absolutely teleported. This serves the continuity of this relationship regardless of the

relationship of the established domain-issuer. With a simple example, this can be likened to playing gambling. For example, guest and host play backgammon. This backgammon game's loser will buy the winner dinner. However, if the lost person is already home and has already prepared dinner, then the recipient of the reciprocity waives the award. Or when the guest loses and orders a meal for the host, this is actually a small repayment of staying at home in reciprocal mode, even though it does look like a paid price for the game.

- They are poor Wii players, though :)))
- She also thought us how to play tavla, and we then got to beat some Turkish people, so thanks to her!
- If you visit him you must play the silent cinema (trust me)

The exchange of personal information also plays an important role in building reciprocity. A guest who tells a secret to the host is actually sharing a part of himself/herself. The host then has to tell a secret or an important story from his own life. Thus, with the sincerity of staying in the same house, a state of trust is built between each other through a rapprochement and exchanges of secrets. The exchange of personal information is not only through secrets. Sometimes a guest or host who says s/he is interested in a topic that is curious is participating in this purchase by commenting on it, giving an idea, or even offering examples from his own life. In the analyzed reviews, this is mostly the case of foreign language learning and information exchange about country cultures.

- We exchanged music, stories, and alot of laughs.
- ...we shared stories, food, a night out...
- She has so many amazing stories to tell and also some wise life lessons if you are open to it :)

- Hope we may meet again in Ankara :) and share more more stories :)
- well he knows a lot about life too , his stories just made me die because of laughters..
- nice chats,exchanging stories were so lovely!
- It was difficult to no fall in love of her... ;)

References, once again, play an important role in the construction of reciprocity. Independently of the material, this time expresses gratitude for love, goodwill and good deeds. Earlier, these references contained selected words to raise the credit of the host in the eyes of other users, and were thus interpreted as gifts. In the settlement phase, there is no appeal to other users and there is no concern about affecting them. It is for the house owner to express the nice feelings that someone who is more likely to pay a conscience borrower and really feel when doing so.

- She is kind, talkative, creative, brave and easygoing person.
- you are lovely
- you are welcome to greece!it would be my pleasure to host u!
- you are more then welcome to come to our house if you ever visit Utrecht!
- you are always welcome in Munich.
- you are the most nonageing person i've ever me :D
- it's more like you are with someone from your family
- I am very happy,that I met you. You are always welcome in Slovakia :)
- You are very kind, thoughtful and sweet.

As a result, this content analysis has attempted to find out the means by which the gift system and mutual obligation are built among Couchsurfing users.

Once again, the free accommodation offer, the comfort level of this facility, the time spent for that guest, the tangible knowledge that can be contributed to the guest's travel budget, and the information, tips, tricks and tactics given about the region can be considered as gifts. Although these gifts do not require an absolute refund, the person who receives the gift, ie the guest, increases the creditworthiness of the host with the comments s/he writes. Thus, it counts a little equivalent to these gifts. On the other hand, exchanges that have as little financial consequences as gifts are developing more spontaneously. Though they seem ordinary, conversations, entertaining games, shared secrets and stories always require reciprocity. And even reciprocity in these exchanges is the main reason why most users use the Couchsurfing system. Survey findings confirm this.

The Couchsurfers, a small model among social network users, continues to maintain relationships within the reciprocal obligation system. The number of web site users increase year by year, and the long-standing users of these site have more experience, more references, consequently the reciprocity system in Couchsurfing is functioning properly.

CONCLUSION

Couchsurfing as an expanding online social network, not only in Turkey but also across the world, is growing expeditiously with the participation of new members. Although the users' demography that is represented in the network indicates a wide range of participants almost from every section of society, the findings of this research project belie its accuracy: its is not possible to claim that the Couchsurfing website is an umbrella platform. Language skills, open minded perception and sharing kindness are expected for using this platform properly.

The ability of reaching people from other parts of the world makes it possible for the formation of internet communities based not on geographical locations, but on mutual interests. Couchsurfing is an online network that connects people who share similar or different ideas about travel and life, and who identify themselves with Couchsurfing as a lifestyle. Though Couchsurfing was intended to get travelers connected (so that they can obtain free accommodation from locals and create meaningful experiences), the members' activities have been continuously creating a deeper sense of community despite the different physical locations and interests of the members.

As mentioned earlier, 131 users of the site volunteered to participate in the pilot survey to understand the general behavior and socio-cultural status of Couchsurfing Turkey users. Survey questionnaire provides considerable, visible data in some cases. The main topics that have been explored by the pilot survey method are:

- The basic reason for the interactions with Couchsurfing is that it has emerged as meeting new people, socializing and having knowledge about different cultures. Parallel to this, Couchsurfing experiences are not seen as an accommodation only. Hosts and guests spend time together; Social and cultural interactions such as chatting, cooking, eating, traveling together, playing games, exchanging information about culture, and getting to know other friends.

- The membership duration to the Couchsurfing website is directly proportional to the number of interactions established. That is, the longer a

user is on the site, the more guests are welcomed, and the more references (comments and points) they receive. Both experience is more and reliability is higher.

- Positive experiences in interaction with Couchsurfing are much more than negative experiences.
- Users want to continue their Couchsurfing experience.

In conclusion, social networks are wide and deep fields to investigate in social sciences. This study analyzes hospitality exchange experiences through online surveying the experiences of Turkish Couchsurfers. Further research could seek to understand the influence of other individual aspects, financial effects, psychological motivations, and cultural influences that intertwine with experiencing Couchsurfing as an online social platform. Since social platforms like Couchsurfing provide a different perception of the concept of "place," there is a very rich research area on its effects to both online fields and real life. Each paradigm can also be examined domestically and universally.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackland, R. (2013). *Web social science: Concepts, data and tools for social scientists in the digital age*. Sage.

- Adanır, O. 2007, "Simülasyon Kuramları", Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi'nde FTB3107 Simülasyon kuramı ders notları, İzmir

- Akay, A. (1999). *Armağan*. Bağlam.

- Bauman, Z. (1998). Sosyolojik Düşünmek, Çev. *A. Yılmaz, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul*.

- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago press.

- Boyd, D. (2010). "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications". *In Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites* (ed. Zizi Papacharissi), pp. 39-58.

- Castells, M. (2004). *Informationalism, networks, and the network society*: a theoretical blueprint. *The network society: A cross-cultural perspective*, 3-45.

- Castells, M. (2006). *The space of flows*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Castells, M. (2011). *The rise of the network society: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons.

- Castells, M., & Castells, M. (1998). The rise of the network society, the information age: economy, society and culture, Vol. I.

- Çınar, K. (1991). Konya Ovası Köy Yerleşmelerinde Misafirhaneler (Köy Odası). *Türk Halk Mimarisi Sempozyumu Bildirileri (5-7 Mart 1990, Konya)*, 57-71.

- Coleman, J. S. (1988). "Social capital in the creation of human capital". *American journal of sociology* 94(1): 95-120.

- Couchsurfing.com, *http://www.couchsurfing.com/about/about-us/ (20.03.2017)*. Couchsurfing.com, *search, hosts, Turkey*.

- Demez, G. (2011). Armağanın Değişen Sosyo-Kültürel Anlamları: Tüketim Toplumu Bağlamında Bir Hediyeleşme Örneği Olarak Çiçek

Gönderme. *Mediterranean Journal of Humanities*, *1*(2), 87-103.

- Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210-230.

- Field, J. (2008). *Social capital*. Bristol: Routledge.

- Field, John (2008). *Social Capital*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

- Geray, H. (2011). *Toplumsal araştırmalarda nicel ve nitel yöntemlere giriş.* Ankara: Genesis Kitap

- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Godbout, J. T. (2003). Armağan Dünyası, İletişim Yayınları, Çev. *Dilek Hattatoğlu, İstanbul*.

- Grabner-Kräuter, S. (2009). "Web 2.0 social networks: the role of trust". *Journal of business ethics*, 90(4), 505-522.

- Grabner-Kräuter, S., & Bitter, S. (2015). "Trust in online social networks: A multifaceted perspective". *Forum for social economics* 44(1): 48-68.

- Hardt, M. (1999). Affective labor. *boundary 2*, *26*(2), 89-100.

- Hinton, S., & Hjorth, L. (2013). *Understanding social media*. Sage.

- Joinson, A. N. (2008, April). Looking at, looking up or keeping up with people?: motives and use of facebook. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1027-1036). ACM.

- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media". *Business horizons* 53(1): 59-68.

- Karasar, N. (2004). Scientific Research Method Ankara.

- Kraut, R., Mukhopadhyay, T., Szczypula, J., Kiesler, S., & Scherlis, B. (1999). Information and communication: Alternative uses of the Internet in households. *Information Systems Research*, *10*(4), 287-303.

- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). The structure of scientific revolutions, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, vol. 2, no. 2.

- Lai, L. S., & Turban, E. (2008). Groups formation and operations in the

Web 2.0 environment and social networks. *Group Decision and negotiation*, *17*(5), 387-402.

- Lai, L. S., & Turban, E. (2008). Groups formation and operations in the Web 2.0 environment and social networks. *Group Decision and Negotiation* 17(5): 387-402.

- Liebeskind, J. P., Oliver, A. L., Zucker, L. G., Brewer, M. B. (1995). "Social Networks, Learning, and Flexibility: Sourcing Scientific Knowledge in New Biotechnology Firms". NBER Working Paper no. 5320.

- Liu, J. (2012). "The Intimate Stranger on Your Couch: an Analysis of Motivation, Presentation and Trust Through Couchsurfing".

- Liu, J. (2012). The intimate stranger on your couch: An analysis of motivation, presentation and trust through Couchsurfing.

- Lovink, G. (2011). *Networks without a cause: A critique of social media*. Polity Press.

- Mattelart, A., & Mattelart, M. (1998). *Theories of communication: A short introduction*. Sage.

- Mauss, M. (1925). The gift, trans. I. Cunnison. London: Cohen and West.

- McLuhan, M. (1962). The gutenberg galaxy.

- McLuhan, M. (1987). Letters of Marshall McLuhan, ed. Matie Molinaro, Corinne McLuhan, and William Toye. *Toronto: Oxford University Press*, *217*, 241.

- Mert, E. (2014). Anket, Çevrimiçi Anket Tekniği ve Çevrimiçi'nde Anket Uygulaması in Mutlu Binark (Eds.), *Yeni Medya Çalışmalarında Araştırma Yöntem ve Teknikleri* (pp. 88-116). İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.

- Mikolajewska-Zajac, K. (2016). Sharing as labour and as gift: Couchsurfing as an'affective enterprise'. *Ephemera*, *16*(4), 209.

- Neuman, W. L. (2012). *Toplumsal araştırma yöntemleri: nitel ve nicelik yaklaşımlar*. Yayınodası Yayınları, İstanbul

- O'Reilly, Tim (2005-09-30). "*What Is Web 2.0*". O'Reilly Network. http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html Reached on 2017-04-28.

- Poynter, R. (2010). *The handbook of online and social media research: Tools and techniques for market researchers*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Putnam, R. D. (1995). "Bowling alone: America's declining social capital". *Journal of democracy* 6(1): 65-78.

- Putnam, R. D. (2001). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.

- Roscoe, J. T. (1975). *Fundamental research statistics for the behavioral sciences [by] John T. Roscoe*.

- Stepaniuk, K. (2014). "An importance of trust in virtual systems of hospitality exchange according to Polish users of couchsurfing.org". *Ekonomia i Prawo. Economics and Law* 13(1): 109-120.

- Sundararajan, A. (2016). *The sharing economy: The end of employment and the rise of crowd-based capitalism*. Mit Press.

- Terranova, T. (2013) 'Free labor', in T. Scholz (ed.) Digital labor: The internet as playground and factory. New York: Routledge.

- Turkle, S. (1995). Life in the Screen: Identity in the Internet. *New York: Simon*.

- Turkle, S. (1997). Seeing through computers. *The American Prospect*, *8*(31), 76-82.

- Walther, J. B., Carr, C. T., Choi, S. S. W., DeAndrea, D. C., Kim, J., Tong, S. T., & Van Der Heide, B. (2010). Interaction of interpersonal, peer, and media influence sources online. *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, *17*, 17-38.

- Webster, F. (2004). *The information society reader*. Psychology Press.

Couchsurfing Kullanıcı Deneyimlerimiz

-Couchsurfing Web Sitesi Kullanıcılarına Yönelik Anket Çalışması-

İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları
Yüksek Lisans Tez Araştırması İçin Hazırlanmış Anket Çalışmasıdır.

Katılımınız için şimdiden çok teşekkür ederiz.

* Gerekli

1. **Yaşınız**
   Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

   ◯ 17 ve altı

   ◯ 18-24

   ◯ 25-30

   ◯ 31-39

   ◯ 40 ve üstü

2. **Cinsiyetiniz**
   Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

   ◯ Kadın

   ◯ Erkek

   ◯ Çift (Couchsurfing hesabını birlikte kullanan çiftler için)

   ◯ Diğer: _____

3. **Eğitim Durumunuz**
   Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

   ◯ İlköğretim

   ◯ Lise

   ◯ Üniversite

   ◯ Yüksek Lisans

   ◯ Doktora

4. **Aylık ortalama geliriniz**
   Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

   ◯ 1500 TL ve altı

   ◯ 1500-2500 TL

   ◯ 2500-3500 TL

   ◯ 3500 TL ve üstü

5. **Bir yıl içinde seyahate yaklaşık ne kadar para harcarsınız?**

Ulaşım, konaklama, tatil giderleri dahil genel seyahat harcamaları için yıllık ortalama bütçeniz.
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ 500 TL ve altı
- ◯ 500-1500 TL
- ◯ 1500-3500 TL
- ◯ 3500 TL ve üstü

6. **Bildiğiniz yabancı diller hangileridir?**

Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ İngilizce
- ☐ Almanca
- ☐ İspanyolca
- ☐ Fransızca
- ☐ Rusça
- ☐ Diğer: _____

7. **Kullandığınız sosyal ağlar hangileridir?**

Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz
Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ LinkenIn
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Google+
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ Diğer: _____

8. **Ne kadar zamandır Couchsurfing üyesisiniz?**

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ 1 yıldan daha az süredir
- ◯ 1-2 yıldır
- ◯ 3-4 yıldır
- ◯ 4 yıldan daha uzun süredir

9. **Couchsurfing'i hangi şekilde kullandınız?** *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ Yalnızca Misafir Olarak Kullandım
- ◯ Yalnızca Ev Sahibi Olarak Kullandım
- ◯ Hem Misafir Hem de Ev Sahibi Olarak Kullandım

10. **Son 2 yıl içinde Couchsurfing kullandınız mı?**

Misafir veya Ev Sahibi Olarak
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ Evet
- ◯ Hayır

11. **Şimdiye kadar kaç kez Couchsurfing kullandınız?**

Konaklamak veya kendi evinizde misafir ağırlamak için.
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ 1-2 kez kullandım
- ◯ 3-5 kez kullandım
- ◯ 6-10 kez kullandım
- ◯ 10 kereden fazla kullandım

12. **Konaklamak için Couchsurfing kullandıysanız nerelerde kullandınız?**

Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz
Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ Türkiye içinde
- ☐ Avrupa ülkelerinde
- ☐ Asya ülkelerinde
- ☐ Afrika ülkelerinde
- ☐ Kuzey Amerika ülkelerinde
- ☐ Güney Amerika ülkelerinde
- ☐ Diğer: _____

13. **Couchsurfing kullanmanızın en önemli 3 unsuru nedir?**

Sizin için en önemli üç seçeneği sırasıyla işaretleyiniz.
Her satırda yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	Ekonomik / Bedava Konaklamak	Yeni İnsanlarla Tanışmak / Sosyalleşmek	Gittiğim Yöreye Ait Püf Noktalar Hakkında Bilgilenmek	Farklı Kültürleri Tanımak	Flört Etmek	Önceliğim, Bu Seçenekler Arasında Mevcut Değil
1. Önceliğim	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Önceliğim	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Önceliğim	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. **Couchsurfing Misafirlerinizle veya Ev Sahiplerinizle nasıl vakit geçirdiniz?**

Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz. Listede olmayan aktiviteleri diğer seçeneğine ekleyebilirsiniz.
Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ Evde sohbet ettik
- ☐ Birlikte yemek yaptık
- ☐ Evde birlikte yemek yedik
- ☐ Dışarda birlikte yemek yedik
- ☐ Birlikte şehri gezdik
- ☐ Başka arkadaşlarla tanıştırdım/tanıştırıldım
- ☐ Oyun oynadık
- ☐ Birlikte pek vakit geçirmedim
- ☐ Diğer: _____

15. **Couchsurfing Misafirleriniz veya Ev Sahipleriniz hakkında daha sonra yorum yazdınız mı?**

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ Hepsi hakkında yazdım
- ◯ Çoğu hakkında yazdım
- ◯ Pek azı hakkında yazdım
- ◯ Hiçbiri hakkında yazmadım

16. **Bir Couchsurfing Misafiri veya Ev Sahibi ile hiç sorun yaşadınız mı?** *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ Evet   *17. soruya geçin.*
- ◯ Hayır   *20. soruya geçin.*

Sorun Yaşadıysanız

17. **Misafir veya ev sahibi olarak iletişim kurduğunuz bir Couchsurfer ile yaşadığınız sorunun sebebi neydi?**

Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz. Listede olmayan sebepleri diğer seçeneğine ekleyebilirsiniz.
Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ Yaptığımız plana uymadı
- ☐ Benden para istedi
- ☐ Bana hakaret etti
- ☐ Bir başkasına hakaret etti
- ☐ Politik meselelerde fikir ayrılığı yaşadık
- ☐ Evinde bana kendimi rahatsız hissettirdi
- ☐ Beni taciz etti
- ☐ Diğer: _____

18. **Yaşanan bu sorun hakkında o kişinin Couchsurfing profiline puan verip yorum yazdınız mı?**

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ⟨ ⟩ Evet, olumsuz yorum yazdım/Negatif puan verdim
- ⟨ ⟩ Hayır, hiç yorum yazmadım
- ⟨ ⟩ Nötr bir yorum yazdım/Nötr puan verdim
- ⟨ ⟩ Diğer: _____

19. **Sorun yaşadığınız kişi hakkında olumsuz yorum yazmadıysanız, bunun sebebiniz neydi?**

Bir önceki soruda "Hayır" işaretlediyseniz lütfen cevaplayınız. Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz.
Uygun olanların tümünü işaretleyin.

- ☐ Karşılık olarak onun da bana olumsuz yorum yazmasından çekindim.
- ☐ Küçük, önemsiz bir sorundu. Yazmaya gerek görmedim.
- ☐ O anlık bir problemdi, genelleme yapıp diğer kullanıcıları etkilemek istemedim.
- ☐ Problem yaşadığımız konu hakkında profilinde zaten bilgi varmış, ben dikkat etmemişim
- ☐ Diğer: _____

Puan Verme ve Yorum Yazma

20. **Misafir veya Ev Sahibi olarak biriyle iletişim kurmadan önce profilindeki yorumlar tercihimi etkiler**

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Kesinlikle Hayır	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	Kesinlikle Evet

21. **Ev sahibi ararken veya misafir kabul ederken öncelikle "Verified" olmuş birini tercih ederim**

Not: "Verified" olan üyeler 25 dolar ücret öder. Adresleri ve telefon numaraları Couchsurfing sitesince onaylanır.
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hayır / Farketmez	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	Evet / Çok Önemlidir

22. **Ev sahibi ararken veya misafir kabul ederken karşıdaki kullanıcının cinsiyeti önemlidir**

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hayır / Farketmez	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	⟨ ⟩	Evet / Çok Önemlidir

23. **Evetse, sebebini lütfen kısaca belirtiniz**

"Kendi cinsiyetimden olan birinin evinde daha rahat ederim..." gibi.

_____

24. **Her Couchsurfing kullanıcısı, Misafiri veya Ev Sahibi hakkında mutlaka puan vermeli, mutlaka yorum yazmalıdır** *

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum

25. **Couchsurfing kullanıcıları, genellikle dürüst yorum yaparlar**

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum / Dürüst Yorum Yapmayabilirler	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum / Dürüst Yorum Yaparlar

26. **Couchsurfing kullanıcıları, kendileri hakkında profillerine olumsuz yorum yazılmasından çekinerek yaşadıkları sorunları yorumlarında dile getirmezler**

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum - Çekinmeden Yazarlar	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum - Çekinirler ve Yazmazlar

27. **Couchsurfing kullananların genellikle güvenilir insanlar olduğunu düşünüyorum**

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hayır, hep dikkatli olunmalı	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Evet, çoğu güvenilirdir

28. **Couchsurfing internet sitesinin yeterince güvenli olduğuna inanıyorum**

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hayır, yeterince güvenli değil	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Evet, çok güvenli

29. **Couchsurfing internet sitesini başkalarına öneririm**

Size en yakın seçeneğe puan veriniz
Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Kesinlikle Hayır	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Kesinlikle Evet

30. **Couchsurfing tecrübesi hakkındaki genel düşüncelerinizi paylaşır mısınız?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

31. **Doldurduğunuz anket hakkında eklemek istediklerinizi veya sizin için önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz noktaları buraya yazabilirsiniz:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Ankete katıldığınız için çok teşekkür ederim.

İbrahim Sertaç KASAPLAR
İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü
Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı

İletişim: sertac.kasaplar@std.izmirekonomi.edu.tr

APPENDIX B. Open Ended Answers

It was asked to participants: "*Could you share your general opinions about your Couchsurfing experiences?*". 53 of the participants filled that open-ended part with their own sentences:

1. 2-3 yıl evveline kadar kendi halinde, gezginlerin kullandığı bir siteyken, şu aralar "beleşe kalma" ve "flörtleşme" mecrası haline geldi.

2. Iyi insanları tanirsiniz

3. Sosyalleşmek ve farklı kültürleri tanımak için mükemmel

4. 2010yilindan beri kullaniyorum.hurriyetin seyahat ekinde bir koseyazisinda okumustum.hem gittigim yore ile ilgili first hand experience aktarimini onemsiyorum hem de ekonomik butcelerle seyahat planlarimi surdurmek istiyorum.

5. Çok memnun kaldım. Hayatımın en zengin tecrübelerinden bazılarını CS aracılığıyla yaşadım, en kıymetli arkadaşlıklarımdan bazılarını CS aracılığıyla kurdum.

6. Benzer hayat görüşlerine sahip insanların biraraya gelmesini sağlayan faydalı bir uygulama.

7. Yaşamı ve deneyimleri paylaşmak için çok güzel olanaklar sunan bir platform. Ancak temel amaç dışında amaçlarla katılımların olması da zaman zaman sıkıntı yaratabiliyor. Her şeye rağmen, dikkatli kullanıldığı sürece, değerli katkıları olduğunu düşünüyorum.

8. İnsanların bir araya gelip kendi kültürlerini tanımaları için güzel bir fırsat. Hem ekonomik hem de samimi.

9. Herkese 'insan' olduğunu hatırlatan ve başkalarına güvenmenin, onu hiç görmeden, sesini duymadan sırf insan olduğu için güvenebilmenin ne kadar önemli olduğuna vurgu yapabilen harika bir platform.

10. Farkli kulturler ve insanlar arasında köprü olan süper bir oluşum.

11. Bir ulkeye veya sehre gidildiginde, yerel halkin yasantisini en iyi ogrendigim yerdir. Turistik olmayan ancak gorulmeye deger yerleri de bu site sayesindde gordum.

12. Genel güvenlik kurallarına dikkat edilirse sorunsuz. Tek erkek veya çiftlerin konaklamak için ev sahibi bulmaları tek kadınlara oranla çok daha zor. Sadece ekonomik konaklama amacıyla kullanılmasının bir faydası olmuyor.

13. Beklediğim gibi eğlenceli ve yararlıydı

14. İnsanlığın ve samimiyetin son kalemlerinden biri adeta

15. Uzun sureli seyahat ediyorum. Gidecegim sehirde oncelikle host var mi diye bakiyorum, onun disinda lokallerle tanismak icin hangouts'u cok kullaniyorum.

16. Simdiye kadar olumsuz bir deneyim yasamadim. Yalnizson guncelleme ile ucretli uyelik sistemi basladi, hos olmadi. 10 mesajdan sonrasi ucretli, orayi da ticarilestirdiler. :/

17. Seyahat etmek için insanları cesaretlendirdiğini düşünüyorum

18. genel manada olumlu ama karşılıklı yorum olayı ile ilgili endişelerim var

19. Genel olarak iyi bir maceradır.

20. Başka bir ülkede sosyalleşmek ve kültürü tanımak için en iyi yöntem.

21. gerçek kişilere ve yorumlara dayandığı için, insanlar daha dikkatli ve saygılı davranır izlenimi vererek, insanda güven oluşturduğunu düşünüyorum. bedava olmasından ziyade, güven temelinde, daha samimi iletişimler kurmama imkan verdiği için tercih ediyorum.

22. Guzel bir platform. Bazen olumsuz seyler duysakta, yasasakta c'est la vie

23. Bazı insanların nefes alabilmesinin yolu. Çünkü bazı insanlar gezgin ve meraklı doğar.

24. Misafir kabul etmek misafir olmaktan daha keyifli

25. Amacina uygun kullanilmasi halinde herkesin faydalabilecegi, farkli deneyimler yasayabilecegi, yeni kisi ve kulturlerle tanisabilecegi sahane bir platform.

26. farkli kultur,dil ve insan anlamak icin couchsurfing iyi bir site.

27. tanıştığım insanlar harika insanlardı. Farklı kültürler tanımak ve yaşamak çok güzeldi

28. güzel bir uygulama ancak bazen insanlar cevap vermeye dahi tenezzül etmiyorlar

29. Yabancı dilimi geliştirmek ilk önceliğimdir. Bu ve benzer konularda basit ama çok da etkili bir uygulama.

30. farklı kültürleri tanımanın en güzel yolu

31. Büyük bir arkadaşlık network'ü sağlıyor ve kesinlikle yabancı dilin geliştirilmesinde ve başka kültürleri tanımakta etkili oluyor.

32. Yurt içi/yurt dışı seyahatlerimde mutlaka şansımı deniyorum.

33. Doğru şekilde kullananlarla çok keyifli

34. Abimle birlikte ilk yurdisi deneyimimdi bana internetten tanistii insanlarda misafir olacagmzı soyldgnde ucaktaydik. Ucaga binmeden soylese kesin geri donerdim ama gayet guzel ve ekonomik bi tatil gecirdk sonrasında abimin misafirlerinden bikacylada tanıstım guzel bi sistem ben memnun kaldm ve tavsiye ediyorum mesela bosnadayken evinde kaldgmz insanlardan bosna savasini dinledik sehrin tarihini dinldk otelde bulamcgnz anilar ve hikayeler.

35. Nefis

36. tam gençlik işi, tam maceracı işi, mükemmel bişi

37. Faydalı, ekonomik, eğlenceli bir tecrübe

38. Ben sadece host ve hang out seçenekleri ile kullanıyorum. Safranbolu'da öğrenciyim. Burada hostluk yapıyorum. Kendi seyahatlerimde sadece dışarıda buluşup birlikte biraz vakit geçirmeyi tercih ediyorum. İngilizce seviyeme katkı yaptığına ve farklı kültürden farklı insanlarla tanışmanın bana olumlu şeyler kattığına inanıyorum.

39. Dünya vatandaşı kavramına ve yardımlaşmaya önem veren, özellikle gençlerin tanıması, kullanması, diğer kültürleri tanıması ve kaynaşması için çok güzel bir ortam.

40. Güzel bir organizasyon.

41. Keyifliydi

42. farklı kültürlerden farklı tecrübelere ve bakış açılarına sahip insanlarla sosyalleşmek beni bir dünya vatandaşı gibi hissettiriyor

43. Bence son derece önemli bir tecrübe. Özellikle Akdeniz ve Balkan kültüründe tam bir misafirperverlik şovuna dönüşüyor.

44. Oldukça yararlı ve eğlenceli ekonomik olması daha avantaji

45. 20li yaslarımda cok aktif olarak kullandım. Özellikle kısıtlı bütçeyle gezenler için güzel bir alternatif. Ancak yas ile beraber gelen konfor arayışı ve birine bağlı olmadan konaklama ihtiyaci öne ciktigi icin artik sadece gittigim yerde belki kahve icmek icin biriyle tanisma araci olarak kullaniyorum. O da nadiren.

46. herkese tavsiye ederim

47. Türkiye'de de yaygınlaşmasına seviniyorum. Şehir dışından ya da ülke dışından gelen yabancı birinin kendi evinde gibi misafir edilme fikri oldukça sıcak. Tabi aynı şekilde misafir edilen de bunu uygun, saygılı olmasını temenni ediyorum. Yorumlar genellikle güvenilir. Çoğunluğu yurtdışında da yaşamış ya da couchsorfingi yurtdışında da kullanmış insanlar. O yüzden openminded insanlar.

48. Bi şehri yerlisiyle her zaman çok büyük bir artı

49. Özellikle yabancı dilimi geliştirmek için kullandım. Çok keyifli. Farklı kültürler tanımak harika.

50. Hiç tanımadığınız şehirde bi coucha ulastıysanız orda artık birden fazla tanıdığınız var demektir. Endişenin memnuniyetle sonuçlandığı en güzel tecrübe ☺

51. Couchsurfing dahilinde gerçekten yardım etme potansiyeli olan insanların olduğunu düşünüyor ve seyahat ederken büyük ölçüde yardımcı olduğuna inanıyorum.

52. Uzun zaman önce arkadaşım önerdi ve birçok kişi evimde konuk ettim ve misafir oldum.İnsanlığın ölmediğini gerçek bir hostun evine misafir olduğunuzda anlıyorsunuz

53. Kesinlikle edinilmesi gereken bir tecrübe. Hostelde yada otelde konaklamak yerine couchsurfing kullanmak o ülkenin kültürünü, günlük yaşam tarzını tanımada önemli bir etken.