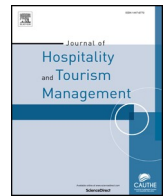




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# Couchsurfing involvement in non-profit peer-to-peer accommodations and its impact on destination image, familiarity, and behavioral intentions

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## ABSTRACT

Accommodation is a fundamental part of tourism, and it plays an important role in the tourist experience. The emerging economy and especially the peer-to-peer accommodations (P2P) have shaken up the conventional accommodations sector. While most P2P accommodation studies have focused on the monetary platform, which includes Airbnb, there is little knowledge about the linkages of involvement and behavioral intentions on the non-profit accommodation users. This empirical study applied a multiple-methods approach to investigate the positive impacts of involvement on couchsurfing, such as P2P accommodations on the destination image, familiarity, and the behavioral intentions. The data was collected from 609 travelers who have used couchsurfing while traveling to Turkey from 2016 to 2017. The results revealed that involvement in couchsurfing improved the destination image, familiarity, the E-WoM, and the revisit intention of couchsurfers. This study also discusses the practical implications.

## 1. Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) developments offer new opportunities for openness through social media (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010; Femenia-Serra et al., 2018). This progress is changing the traditional meaning of ownership from private to shared (Weber, 2015). Traditionally, ICT has been limited to information sharing, whereas further growth enables individuals to actively participate in the production of services (Perren & Grauerholz, 2015) and physical resources sharing, such as cars, baking, and houses. The sharing economy (Martin et al., 2015, p. 189), collaborative consumption (C2C) (Karmann, 2013, p. 4), the alternative economy for capitalism (Richardson, 2015, p. 121), and peer-to-peer consumption (Philip et al., 2015, p. 1310) are the main concepts of this emerging economy. The sharing economy is a socio-economic ecosystem model based on sharing, renting, swapping, lending, exchanging, collective purchasing, co-creation, and borrowing (Piscicelli et al., 2014).

Tourism and hospitality are the main marketplaces for these emerging business trends that are fueled by startups, such as couchsurfing, Airbnb, Uber, Mealsharing, and BlaBlaCar. Today, individuals,

who are supported by technology, are able to offer knowledge about their home's city as tour guides, and they offer their skills about cooking to the tourists as well as rent their homes and cars. As a soaring business, the P2P accommodations should not be ignored even if it is in the preliminary steps and limited to the mid-market and budget travelers. Given the growth and the success of this trend, it can be expected to continue to flourish. The World Economy Forum estimated that by 2025, the sharing economy could represent \$335 billion in revenue (Olalla and Crespo, 2019). In 2018, Airbnb was valued at 38 billion dollars, which is up from \$31 billion from the previous year. Couchsurfing also experienced a remarkable growth with 15 million members and more than 1 million hosts from over 200,000 cities around the world (Couchsurfing, 2018). Based on this situation, it was argued that it has the potential to become a dominant and widespread trend in the hospitality and tourism industry (Mehran & Olya, 2019; Pizam, 2014).

### 1.1. Contribution of the study

Most of the previous studies on the P2P accommodations have been focused on trust (Cherney, 2014; Mao et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2012) and

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**Table 1**  
Typology of sharing economy platforms.

Typology of sharing economy		Organization	
		Peer-to-Peer (P2P)	Business-to-Peer (B2P)
Market Orientation	Non-Profit	P2P Non-Profit Sharing (e.g. Food Swaps, Time Banks, couchSurfing)	B2P Non-Profit Sharing (e.g., Zipcar)
	For-Profit	P2P For-Profit Sharing (e.g. Relay Rides, Airbnb)	B2P For-Profit Sharing (e.g. Zipcar)

Source: Schor and Fitzmaurice (2015).

motivation (Liu, 2012; Tran & Filimonau, 2020). By raising the importance of P2P, research on its impact has just begun. For example, the effects of a sharing economy on the tourism industry employment (Fang, Ye, & Law, 2016), the impact of P2P on sustainability (Martin, 2016), behaviors of disabled travelers toward p2p accommodations (Olya et al., 2018) and the impact of P2P on travel patterns (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2015) were investigated in previous research. While a significant number of the conducted research exploring different dimensions of the P2P accommodations has been mainly focused on profit type P2P accommodations, such as Airbnb there is a paucity of empirical research on nonprofit platform of P2P accommodations, such as couchsurfing.

To highlight paucity of research on couchsurfing, we searched *couchsurfing* as a keyword on the WOS and Scopus databases and a total of 29 records appeared on the web of science, which included 22 WOS articles and 7 book chapters, and 33 on Scopus, which included 22 articles, 9 proceedings, and 2 book chapters. By removing the duplication, a total of 42 pieces of research remained. In order to conduct an in-depth literature review on couchsurfing and identify the research gaps, a meticulous review of the article keywords and topics was performed. The results of the keywords review showed that most of the conducted studies were devoted to study different variables, such as belonging, network hospitality, trust, authenticity, experience, risk, co-creation, moral economy, satisfaction, and homogeneity. The result of the review indicated that topics could be divided into four categories, which included conceptual development (*The co-creation of host-guest relationships via couchsurfing* by Schuckert et al. (2018)), comparative study (*Curiosity or Certainty?: A Qualitative, Comparative Analysis of couchsurfing and Airbnb User Behaviors?* by Jung and Lee (2017)), drivers and barriers (*Social or financial goals?* by Jung and Yoon (2016)), and regulation (*Regulation strictness and supply in the platform economy: the case of Airbnb and Couchsurfing* by Uzunca and Borlenghi (2019a)).

The previous studies developed knowledge about couchsurfing, but there is still a gap about the impacts of the non-profit P2P on the destination, which has not been investigated yet. To fill this gap and shed light on the literature of the influences of the nonprofit P2P accommodations on the destinations, this empirical study investigates the impact of the couchsurfing involvement on the destination the familiarity, the overall destination image, and the behavioral intentions.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Peer-to-peer accommodations

Accommodations are the largest sector in the tourism industry. While it is important and facilitates tourists' stay at a destination, it is the main part of a tourists' total expenditure. Accordingly, accommodations area fundamental part of tourism, which play an important role in the tourist experience (Olya, Bagheri, & Tumer, 2019; Sharpley, 2006). Recently, the sharing economy and especially the peer-to-peer accommodations (P2P) have disturbed the conventional accommodations sector. Accordingly, the P2P is rapidly attracting the attention of researchers.

The P2P accommodations are networks that enable the local people to rent out their spare rooms, unoccupied houses, and apartments as accommodations to the tourists (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2016, p. 1).

Generally, the sharing economy, which is based on accommodations, can be divided into three groups, which are P2P, B2B, and B2C. The B2C model is the same to the incumbent hotel industry. The B2B platforms are very limited. Hotel swaps are one of the most common platforms that allow member hotels worldwide to swap their empty rooms for free stays at other member hotels. It has 292 hotel members that includes 10559 rooms in 55 countries ([hotelswaps.com](http://hotelswaps.com)).

While both the B2B and B2C platforms are very limited, the P2P platforms have become the main player of the sharing economy based on the accommodations. Schor and Fitzmaurice (2015) divided the sharing economy platforms into two groups based on profit generation (Table 1).

Recently Zvolška (2015, p. 21) criticized Schor and Fitzmaurice's typology. He said that "while this typology is useful in addressing the organizing logics of sharing platforms, their level of disruptiveness to the incumbent industry and their ability to expand as well as how they operate on the market, it does not acknowledge the role of the users." Zvolška further states that "B2P platforms, which are represented in this typology, are not part of the accommodation segment of the sharing economy as they represent the incumbent hotel industry." Therefore, based on the interaction between the platforms' users, he developed a new typology, which included the rental group (Airbnb), the free group (couchsurfing and Be Welcome), and the reciprocal group (home exchange) (Voytenko Palgan et al., 2016, p. 3). It seems that this typology can show P2P accommodations better.

Each of these P2P networks with its individual attractive benefits is driving more and more millennial travelers to choose these non-traditional accommodations. Millennials or generation Y are people who were born between 1978 and 1996 (Pascoe and Staughton, 2015). They are the first generation to grow up accessing information and communication technologies (ICTs) developments, such as the Internet and social media. Accordingly, they have become one of the main target markets of the social media and the P2P networks. They count on the ICTs for communication (Rosa and Hastings, 2016), and it can be said that more than other generations, they are derived by peers. It is estimated that by 2020 or sooner, generation Y might become the main player in the travel market. Based on this, it can be estimated that alternative lodgings will become more popular (Qiu, 2015), and it will force more traditional accommodations to reevaluate their policies and business modes.

### 2.2. Motivation of travelers to use couchsurfing

Different motivations for using the sharing economy are identified by the previous research. Botsman and Rogers (2011) suggested that participation in the sharing economy is boosted by economic, practical, social, and idealistic factors. The reputation among peers (Tussyadiah, 2015a), enjoyment, sustainability (Hamari, Ukkonen, & Sjöklint, 2015), and curiousness (Glind, 2013) are among the other drivers of the sharing economy development.

Given the diversity of the sharing economy platforms, Böcker and Meelen (2017) acknowledged that the motivations for involvement in the sharing economy are not *uniform*. "Reciprocity is a form of conditional gain; that is, people expect future benefits from their present actions" (Moghavvemi et al., 2017, p. 4). In reciprocity based P2P accommodations, the members will be motivated to contribute if they

think that their participation is worth the effort. A rental P2P accommodation is for profit. Monetary gain is the main motivation for contributing, but social connections and sustainability can be added as well according to Tussyadiah (2015a). Some scholars also suggested that environmental drivers underlie sharing economy involvement. For instance, Piscicelli, Cooper, and Fisher (2015, p. 1) criticized the “over-consumption and throw-away culture” by recognizing the sharing economy as the “alternative and more sustainable way of consuming.”

Generally, profit, which is economic benefits, is mainly acknowledged as the main motivation for involvement in the monetary based sharing. However, our knowledge of motivations for the non-monetary sharing, which includes couchsurfing, is minimal. Aydin and Duyan (2019) identified several motivations, such as obtaining knowledge about other cultures, socializing, learning and speaking foreigner languages, reciprocity, referencing their profiles, and improving their profiles with their research study about why people share their homes with surfers based on the social change theory. Interestingly, travelers who just look for free accommodations are not welcomed by the members (Karmann, 2013). Accordingly, the surfers are more interested in intercultural exchange and making interactions with the local hosts (Jung et al., 2016). A sense of belonging and actively participating in designing their experience are also suggested as drivers for using couchsurfing (Aruan & Felicia, 2019). Besides, offering a more authentic experience than traditional accommodation (Steylaerts, Vicky; Dubhghaill, 2012), making new friends (Pietilä & Outi, 2011), the desire to know or learn about other cultures, and exploring destinations with the help of the locals (Liu, 2012) are other motivations for travelers to use couchsurfing. Zgolli and Zaiem (2018) identified six motivations for using couchsurfing, which included financial, the cultural experience, social interactions, emotional entertainment, and social responsibility, because of the couchsurfing responsibility toward the environment. Decrop, Del Chiappa, Mallargé, and Zidda (2018) divided motivation to use couchsurfing into three groups that included utilitarian motivations, which includes saving money, symbolic and social motivations, which include making new friends and the feeling of belonging, and hedonic motivations, such as enjoyment.

### 2.3. Non-profit P2P accommodation (couchsurfing)

Couchsurfing as a hospitality network is for travelers who like to meet the locals and explore the destinations with their assistance. Because they stay with other couchsurfers and do not pay taxes, surfers, couchsurfing, and their roles have received less attention comparing profit-based platforms, such as Airbnb, which has become the market leader and has emerged as the most studied and documented case in P2P accommodation research (Dalir et al., 2020; Oskam & Boswijk, 2016). However, couchsurfing users have been risen from 9 million members in more than 120,000 cities on December 14, 2014 (Luo & Zhang, 2016) to 15 million couchsurfers in more than 200,000 cities by April 28, 2017 (Couchsurfing, 2018). Given the rapid growth of couchsurfing, researchers have started to study various topics related to this platform.

A group of researchers were mainly focused on the conceptual development of couchsurfing and its drivers. Molz (2013) suggested the moral economy as the main reason for the emerging of and the development of couchsurfing as a part of the alternative tourism paradigm. According to Molz (2013), couchsurfing began from the issues of mass tourism and the travelers who are tired of *plastic rooms* and McDisneyized experiences. In this relation, more authentic, individualized, deeper connections, and intimate experiences with the locals receive more attention from the travelers. Decrop et al. (2018) considered couchsurfing as *transformative tourism* that is based on its abilities to allow the travelers to establish a deeper and meaningful relationship with the locals, which may act as an instrument for personal development as well. Technological development, growing ecological concerns, and anti-over-consumption movements have also been discussed as

reasons for the remarkable growth of couchsurfing.

On the other hand, some scholars reviewed the couchsurfing barriers and the strategies to tackle them. Trust has been identified as the main barrier, because couchsurfing is the non-institutional form of accommodation. Generally, the users of couchsurfing do not know each other. Therefore, most of the previous studies suggested that trust is a key factor (Schuckert et al., 2018). Couchsurfing uses trust building mechanisms, such as self-disclosure information, verified memberships, and the number of friends. More recently, they added mutual friend(s) and mutual interest(s) to their platform. Liu, Nie, and Li (2016) acknowledged that along with homogeneity and reciprocity, couchsurfing's trust systems were successfully implemented that help build mutual trust. Recently, Decrop, Del Chiappa, Mallargé, and Zidda (2017) suggested that *value homophily* also has been effective in reducing *uncertainty and increasing trust between strangers* on couchsurfing.

Recently, the effects of couchsurfing on the tourism industry, a comparative study between Airbnb and couchsurfing, and the regulations on the P2P accommodations have received more attention from scholars. Chen (2018) identified couchsurfing as an alternative accommodation for budget travelers and acknowledged that couchsurfing has shaped a new and specific travel style that is different from the mass version of tourism through theatrical performances. In mass tourism era tourist experiences, consuming the place/culture, and commodified spaces were important, whereas, for the new travel style that accelerated by platforms such as couchsurfing, local experiences, experiencing daily life, and living space become more bolded.

Through the lens of trading activity, Aruan and Felicia (2019) conducted a comparative study on the behavioral intentions to use Airbnb and couchsurfing. According to this study, couchsurfing users are dependent on electronic word of mouth (EWoM). Before making decisions about choosing a host, they tend to read more reviews and surf through the host's profiles. Jung and Lee (2017) found different behavioral intention between the couchsurfing hosts with Airbnb. The couchsurfing hosts use platform mechanisms, which include self-disclosure and room description, messaging, and verifying, as helpful tools for curiosity and to catch friends with the same interest. On the other hand, Airbnb hosts use the mechanisms for certainty and tackle the possible risks. The couchsurfers are interested in expressing their personal information, while Airbnb users mainly describe their accommodations and write less about themselves. The couchsurfers prefer to discuss their experiences as hosts or guests, but Airbnb users tend to share more about the accommodations characteristics, such as accessibility (Jung et al., 2016).

Recently, the concerns regarding the disruptive power of both for-profit and non-profit P2P accommodations for hotels and governments highlight a need for setting and reinforcing new regulations and standards (Dalir et al., 2020). Uzunca and Borlenghi (2019b) stressed about the necessity of regulations and the strictness on the supply side for Airbnb and couchsurfing and concluded that regulating strictness can positively raise the demand for the P2P accommodations by reducing the uncertainty. Even when the strictness has a negative impact on the demand, free P2P accommodations are less affected by legislation because of their nature, which is based on sharing and reciprocity.

### 2.4. Research model and hypotheses

This study sought to analyze a structural model that included couchsurfing involvement, destination familiarity, the overall destination image, and the behavioral intentions. Involvement is defined as “a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Henry, 2006, p. 182). Regarding familiarity, the destination familiarity is identified as the affective evaluation of a traveler from a specific destination (Han & Yamana, 2016). By accepting familiarity as a multidimensional construct, Prentice (2004) suggested seven types of familiarity (Lee and Tussyadiah, 2012), which include (1) experiential familiarity, (2) informational familiarity, (3)



educational familiarity, (4) self-assured familiarity, (5) expected familiarity, (6) proximate familiarity, and (7) self-described familiarity.

The destination image has been one of the most explored and popular topics in the tourism literature over the five last decades (Lai, 2016; Xu and Ye, 2016). “Destination image is a mental representation of knowledge, feelings and overall perception of a destination” (Mak, 2017, p. 282). The cognitive dimension and the affective dimension were the most studied dimensions of destination image, but more recent studies have offered a new dimension for the destination image called the overall image (OI). As a combination of the cognitive image and the affective image, the OI is defined as “the total perceptions of a product (or a firm) shaped by processing information from diverse sources” (Han et al., 2009, p. 520).

The outcome construct used in the study is the behavioral intention. Among various behavioral intentions, scholars have suggested that loyalty, repurchase (revisiting) intentions, positive e-word-of-mouth, and willingness to recommend are the most frequently used items used to measure the behavioral intentions (Chang, 2016).

Creating memorable experiences (ME) is the essence and survival factor in the hospitality industry (Gannon, Taheri, & Olya, 2019; Liu & Jo, 2020; Pizam, 2010). In earlier studies related to memorable experience, scholars have suggested that seven experiential elements, which include hedonism, novelty, knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement, local culture, and refreshment, lead to strong memorability (Kim, 2014, p. 35). Mathis et al. (2016) suggested that in order to create memorable experiences for the traveler, co-creation is the key. They have shown that increasing the involvement of travelers in the co-creation of their experience not only delivers ME to the traveler but also enhances the overall satisfaction. In addition, the literature has indicated that tourist involvement in the experience has a positive effect on the revisit intention (Tan & Wu, 2016). Lee et al. (2008) proved the relationship between the involvement and the loyalty-behavioral intentions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested.

**H1. Couchsurfing involvement has a positive influence on the behavioral intentions.**

Involvement can increase the travelers' information about the different dimensions of a certain destination, and it results in familiarity with the destination. It is accepted that increased information ultimately accelerates the destination familiarity (Lee, Scott, and Kim, 2008). Indeed, the relationship between participating in various activities, familiarity with the destination (Lee et al., 2008), conversation with the local people, the destination familiarity (Jeong, 2009), the importance of the length of stay, and the destination familiarity were also investigated. Recently, a study by Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015) showed that Airbnb has a positive effect on the length of stay at the destination, the number of activities participated in at the destination, and the contact with the local people. These results can be also applied in the couchsurfing case. According to the couchsurfing website, by making connections between the travelers and the local people, it aims to help travelers travel like a local. The outcome of these first-hand experiences would be awareness, knowledge development, and destination familiarity. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H2. Involvement in a collaborative couchsurfing experience has a positive influence on the destination familiarity.**

Regarding the influence of the involvement on image, Sun et al. (2013) have shown positive relations between the involvement and a positive image by reviewing the literature. Travelers who have a high level of involvement with a destination have a more positive image. In other words, involvement in tourism experiences has a meaningful impact on the destination image (Lu et al., 2015). Srivastava and Kamdar (2009, p. 84) indicated that image formation is closely related to the level of involvement. Other scholars, such as Prayag and Ryan (2012) have also confirmed the positive relationship between involvement and the destination image. The following hypothesis is proposed based on these assumptions.

**H3. Involvement in a collaborative couchsurfing experience has a positive influence on the overall destination image.**

Familiarity with a brand/product has been suggested to play an important role in the consumer decision-making. For instance, in the field of online shopping, there are various studies that found that decreasing the perceived risk and familiarity drives the behavioral intentions (Nepomuceno et al., 2014; Pauwels et al., 2016). In fact, by increasing trust with the product/brand and familiarity, it acts as a powerful heuristic cue that positively affects the future purchasing intention (Benedicktus, Brady, Darke, & Voorhees, 2010). In the field of tourism and destination, the previous literature showed that a high level of familiarity with a destination positively affects the intention to visit the destination (Carneiro & Crompton, 2010). By enhancing the knowledge of travelers about a destination, familiarity positively contributes to “providing them a feeling of security and comfort, which leads to increased confidence in their destination choice” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 816). Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that intention to revisit a certain destination can increase if the perceived risks have been decreased by familiarity. As a result, the following hypothesis is suggested.

**H4. Destination familiarity has a positive influence on the behavioral intentions.**

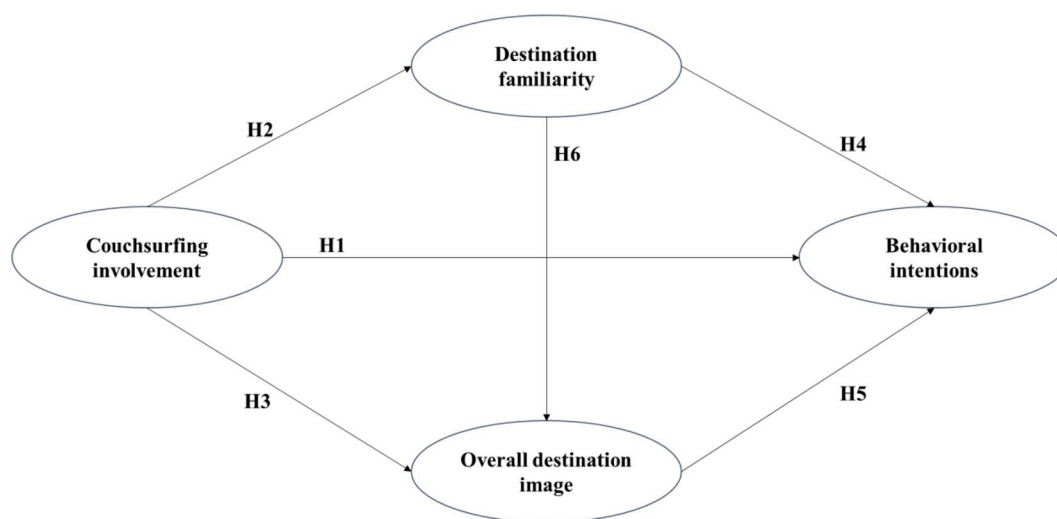
The positive and the critical role of the destination image on the travelers decision making has been widely approved in the previous destination image studies (Alipour, Olya, Maleki, & Dalir, 2020; Deng & Li, 2014; Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007; Kani et al., 2017; Mehran & Olya, 2020; Zhang et al., 2016). There is an agreement about the positive impact of the destination image on the different behavioral attentions. For instance, in a study by Chiu, Zeng, and Cheng (2016), the positive relationship between the destination image and loyalty was confirmed. In addition, Chi and Qu (2008) confirmed that the overall destination image has a positive influence on the travelers' intention to repeat their visit and recommend a destination to others. In another study, which was based on neuro-marketing and the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), Al-Kwif (2015) confirmed the positive effect of the overall destination image on the intention to select a destination for a future vacation. According to the above theoretical reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H5. The overall destination image has a positive influence on the behavioral intentions.**

Generally, it is suggested that “increased familiarity provides a more favorable destination image” (Tan and Wu, 2016, p. 217). In studies related to the relationship between familiarity and the destination image, some scholars defined familiarity based on the previous experience, which showed that familiarity has a positive impact on the destination image (Milman and Pizam, 1995). Additionally, some other studies suggested that a previous experience is not the only source of destination familiarity. They believe that travelers “may become familiar with a destination by receiving information about a destination and by communicating with other people who are familiar with the destination” (Yang et al., 2009). Despite this disagreement about familiarity, the higher the familiarity, the more positive the destination image is. This is the accepted principal from all the related studies. The peer-to-peer accommodations, such as the free one couchsurfing enables travelers to visit more destinations around a country, which can increase awareness and familiarity with a destination and also build a more positive image towards a country as a tourism destination by offering first hand experiences and information from the local people. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H6. Destination familiarity has a positive influence on the overall destination image.**

As proposed in the second hypothesis, there may be a direct and positive relationship between the involvement and the behavioral intentions. Indeed, it can be reasonable to assume that the relationship



**H7:** *Couchsurfing involvement* → *Destination familiarity* → *Behavioral intentions*  
**H8:** *Couchsurfing involvement* → *Overall destination image* → *Behavioral intentions*

Fig. 1. Research model and hypotheses.

between the involvement and the behavioral intentions might be mediated by the destination familiarity. Because there is a lack of research regarding the mediation role of familiarity on the association of involvement with behavioral intentions, this study proposed this type of hypothesis. At first glance, the familiarity results in the perception of more personal relevance and emotional connections to a destination. It will motivate travelers to be highly involved in experiences and drive the behavioral intentions. Secondly, familiarity can change the travelers' risk perception. By decreasing the perceived risk, the travelers' behavior intentions will be accelerated to visit more destinations in a country. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H7.** *Destination familiarity mediated the relationship between the involvement and the behavioral intentions.*

As proposed in the second hypothesis, there may be a direct and positive relationship between the involvement and the behavioral intentions. Additionally, due to the likely positive relationship between the overall destination image with involvement (Sun et al., 2013) and the behavioral intentions (Chi & Qu, 2008; Olya & Han, 2020), it can be reasonable to assume that the relationship between the involvement and the behavioral intentions is mediated by the overall destination image. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H8.** *The overall destination image mediates the relationship between the involvement and the behavioral intentions.*

Given above arguments and hypotheses, the research model was developed, which is presented in Fig. 1.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research design

To design a data collection instrument for this study, the researchers adopted a multi-sited ethnography (MSE) (Hine, 2007), which is an approach to understand the topics or social following the phenomena on different sites that are important (Lauring & Klitmøller, 2015). Accordingly, before designing the survey instrument, as a member of couchsurfing, the initial data was collected by surfing, hosting, and conducting in-depth interviews with other members, online observations, and couchsurfers (Figure A1, appendix A). This process helped us to obtain a better understanding of couchsurfing and the couchsurfers' involvement.

By collecting the initial insights, trying to find scientific support for the results of a multi-sited ethnography was conducted. By reviewing the existing literature, a draft questionnaire was developed. Next, the questionnaire was evaluated by five scholars in two rounds and their comments on the scale items were integrated. To assess the understandability of the scale items by the respondents and also the potential challenges regarding the operation of the main survey, a pilot study was conducted. After that, the questionnaires were sent to 100 couchsurfers. A total of 54 questionnaires were gathered. The clarity and the understandability of the items were confirmed. From the 54 participants, 20 participants acknowledged that the questions were quite clear, and 30 participants reported that they understood all the questions. The results of the pilot study showed that there weren't any significant issues statistically. Additionally, the final findings of the pilot study showed that 16 items with factor loading more than 0.5 were loaded into the four one-dimensional independent factors, which accounted for 86.27% of the total variance explained. Accordingly, because no significant issues were reported by the respondents during the pilot study, we distributed the main survey. We found that unverified members can only send 10 messages per day and sending messages directly does not comply with the terms of use, which is considered as harassment. To overcome this challenge, we verified the profile and sent an official request to get permission to send messages directly to the users.

The first part of the questionnaire was dedicated to the tripographics<sup>1</sup> of the respondents. In this section, the respondents were asked to provide some information about their socio-demographic and travel related characteristics, such as age, gender, education level, couchsurfing experiences, and the number of times they used traditional accommodations. The age categories were organized based on the following generations, which included Gen Z: Born 1996 and later (18–22 age group), Millennials or Gen Y: Born 1978 to 1995 (23–36 age group), Generation X: Born 1965 to 1979 (37–52 age group), and Baby Boomers: Born 1946 to 1964 (53–71 age group) (Pascoe & Staughton, 2015).

Generation type is identified based on individual's birth date (Maxwell et al., 2010; Paxson, 2009; S.; Richardson & Thomas, 2012; Solnet & Hood, 2008), however, Goh and Lee (2018) criticized this

<sup>1</sup> Tripographics relates to travel-related behavioral characteristics, such as travel party, the duration of the stay, means of transport and types of accommodation and etc. (<https://www.igi-global.com>; 08.06.2018).

approach due to overlap among generations. They argued that grouping of individuals on a specific generation based on birth date could not show totally distinctive characteristics for different generations. For example, a person who was born in 1980 (Generation Y) may not have distinct variations from a person who was born in 1979 (Generation X).

The questionnaire included four scales. The involvement scale was adopted from Ferns and Walls (2012). The scale is comprised of five items. The items for the familiarity scale were taken from Marinao Artigas et al. (2015). Regarding the overall destination image, a single item was the common measuring scale, and the three items adopted scale in this study were taken from Kim and Park (2015). Finally, among the various items related to the behavioral intentions, the scholars suggested that loyalty, repurchase (revisiting) intentions, positive (e)word-of-mouth, and willingness to recommend are the most frequently used items to measure the behavioral intentions (Chang, 2016; Yen et al., 2015). The behavioral intentions were measured with three items extracted from Martín-Santana et al.'s (2017). The respond categories of all the items were measured using a five-point Likert's scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 3.2. Sampling and data analysis

The sample included couchsurfers who were active users of the platform during their visit to Turkey. To estimate the sample size, the search algorithm of couchsurfing was applied. Firstly, on April 2017, the main cities in Turkey visited by couchsurfers were identified. These cities were Istanbul with 111.399 hosts, Ankara with 25.613 hosts, Izmir with 20.687 hosts, and Antalya with 9.974 hosts. In addition to these main pilot cities, the travelers who used couchsurfing in other cities in Turkey, such as Eskişehir, Trabzon, Konya, Mersin, Adana, Rize, Mardin, Diyarbakir, Urfa, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Nevşehir, Muğla, and Çanakkale were included as well.

In the next step, 1148 couchsurfers who used the couchsurfing platform during their trip to Turkey and posted a review about their couchsurfing experiences were identified. As a sampling technique, purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is described as the selection of sampling units within the segment of the population with the most information about the characteristics of interest according to Guarte and Barrios (2006). In this study, because of using the following judgments to select the samples, a purposive sampling was adopted.

- couchsurfers who wrote review(s) about their host(s) in Turkey.
- couchsurfers who had logged in within the last month.
- couchsurfers who have references.

A web questionnaire was sent to 1148 couchsurfers using direct messages. It is known by the researchers that a low response rate is one of the frequently cited problems for the online surveys. Therefore, using some tips, such as sending personalized direct messages with the name of the receivers, offering hosting for the respondents, and becoming a friend on couchsurfing to motivate the respondents to participate, the response rate remarkably increased to around 53%, which was 609 out of 1148. A low response rate is one of the main issues for conducting research in the tourism field. Generally, it is about 20%, and it even has decreased in recent years (Hallak, Brown, & Lindsay, 2012). Therefore, achieving a 53% response rate can be satisfactory. The data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics and an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. As Hair, William C, Barry J, and Rolph E (2010) suggested, factor loadings equal to or more than 0.50 and Cronbach's alphas equal or more than 0.70 are selected as the accepted threshold for evaluation of scale composition and reliability, respectively. The validity of the study measures was checked, and the proposed hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM).

## 4. Findings

Of a total of 609 participants, 363 (59.6%) were male and 246 (40.4%) were female. More than 72% of the participants (440) were 23–36 years of age, which was followed by group 18–22 (91), 37–52 (67), and 53–71 (11). Regarding the level of education, the results of the study indicated that more than 78% of the participants (477) had undergraduate and post graduate degrees. There were also 79 participants with some college, 49 participants with high school degrees only, and 4 participants with only primary school. The findings showed that the majority of the participants (83%) had used couchsurfing more than two times up to June 2017. In this relationship, 46% (281) of the participants reported that they had used couchsurfing more than 10 times. In addition, the results of the couchsurfing experiences during the visit Turkey indicated that 75.4% of the participants (459) had used couchsurfing more than once. In addition to couchsurfing experiences, the participants were requested to state the number of experiences with other types of accommodations, such as hotels and hostels. The majority of the participants reported that they had stayed in the traditional types of accommodations. More than 88% (541) of participants stated that in addition to couchsurfing during a visit to a destination, they had used different types of accommodations. Most of the participants (386) with the Turkey survey also reported that they had stayed in other types of accommodations, such as hotels and hostels.

### 4.1. Exploratory factor analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed for all the constructs. For the applicability of the factor analysis, it was decided to evaluate the KMO sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity results after reviewing the available literature. The KMO should be greater than 0.70 (Sreejesh & Mohapatra, 2013), and the Bartlett test result should be statistically significant (Ferguson & Cox, 1993). Based on Hair et al. (2010), a principal component analysis with a varimax rotation was preferred. Additionally, it was decided that the items should at least have a minimum of 0.5 factor loadings and over communality coefficients. The results of the EFA led to four one-dimensional independent factors. In total, two items, which included one item from involvement and one item from the familiarity scale, were deleted, because they had loadings lower than 0.5. The two items that were deleted included *couchsurfing is of great concern for me* from involvement and *my friends and family told me that I know Turkey very well, and I think couchsurfing was effective in shaping this idea about me* from destination familiarity.

All the statistical tests, which included Bartlett's test of sphericity, were conducted. The approximate chi-square = 5689.17, the destination familiarity = 91 and  $p = 0.000$ , and the KMO = 0.90. Based on these results, it was concluded that the data was suitable for a factor analysis. The final results showed that 14 items out of the 16 with factor loading more than 0.5 were loaded into their entitled 4 factors, which accounted for 76.59% of the total variance explained, which is shown in Table 2. Descriptive statistics, which include means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis for all the scale items were computed (Table 2). According to results, the data normally distributed as skewness, and the kurtosis values fell in the range of  $\pm 3$  (Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, & Kim, 2019).

### 4.2. The confirmatory factor analysis

In order to test the construct validity and validate the results of the exploratory factor analysis, a CFA was also applied. In order to conduct the CFA, the proposed model was designed, which was based on the covariance (correlations) between the constructs first. In the next step, the generalized least squares (GLS) estimation program was run. By scanning the initial results and involving the overall destination image fit indices and the standard regression weights, there were no issues

**Table 2**  
Results of descriptive statistics, factor analyses, reliability and convergent validity.

Constructs and items	$\lambda$	Loading	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Couchsurfing Involvement (AVE: 0.65, CR: 0.95, explained variance: 22.15%)</i>						
Couchsurfing is very significant for me.	0.85	0.85	4.11	0.76	-0.72	1.00
Couchsurfing means a lot to me.	0.84	0.84	3.61	1.03	-0.69	0.20
Couchsurfing matters a lot to me.	0.83	0.81	4.10	0.74	-0.58	0.51
Couchsurfing is very important to me.	0.76	0.73	3.99	0.76	-0.37	-0.06
<i>Destination Familiarity (AVE: 0.62, CR: 0.93, explained variance: 18.72%)</i>						
Couchsurfing helped me to be more aware of the visited destination.	0.79	0.89	3.97	0.83	-0.86	1.18
Couchsurfing improved my information about tourism attractions in Turkey.	0.78	0.84	3.82	0.88	-0.56	0.28
Couchsurfing allowed me to get to know local people better in Turkey.	0.70	0.74	4.35	0.80	-1.49	2.97
Couchsurfing experience allowed me to be more familiar with Turkey.	0.67	0.67	4.27	0.80	-1.30	2.46
<i>Overall destination image (AVE: 0.79, CR: 0.95, explained variance: 17.95%)</i>						
Couchsurfing builds a more preferable image of Turkey	0.83	0.91	4.05	0.85	-0.76	0.69
Couchsurfing builds a more favorable image of Turkey	0.82	0.88	4.09	0.86	-0.86	0.70
Couchsurfing builds a more positive image of Turkey	0.82	0.87	3.93	0.87	-0.55	0.08
<i>Behavioral intentions (AVE: 0.72, CR: 0.93, explained variance: 17.76%)</i>						
I will encourage my friends and/or family to visit Turkey in the future.	0.82	0.91	4.23	0.82	-1.22	2.08
I will share positive things about the visited destinations in Turkey.	0.79	0.86	4.25	0.79	-1.16	1.92
I will choose to come to Turkey again by couchsurfing.	0.75	0.76	4.17	0.84	-0.98	1.00

Note:  $\lambda$ : Factor loading.

related to construct validity that were identified. In order to confirm the initial results, the two main criteria for measuring the validity of the instrument, which were the convergent validity and the discriminant validity (Dmitrienko, Chuang-Stein, & D'Agostino, 2007), were applied. The convergent validity shows how strong a correlation exists between the items and their related constructs. Normally, there are two ways to measure convergent validity, which are the average variance extracted (AVE) and the composite reliability (CR) (Olya, Alipur, & Gavilyan, 2018). 0.80 and 0.50 are recommended as threshold for composite reliability average variance extracted (AVE), respectively (Olya et al., 2019). As Table 2 shows, all the composite reliability values are more than 0.80, and all values related to AVE are more than the suggested level. Based on these results, the convergent validity was confirmed.

In order to measure the discriminant validity, which implies to an extent that “a construct measure is empirically unique” (Moghavvemi et al., 2017), the two main suggested techniques were applied, which included I. the average (AVE) of each construct should be greater than its maximum shared variance (MSV), and II. the square root of the average (AVE) of a particular construct should be greater than the squared factor correlation between that construct and the other constructs (Zahoor et al., 2017, p. 13). As shown in Table 3, there is no concern related to the discriminant validity. All the averages (AVE) are greater than MSV. The square roots of the averages (AVE) are more than the squared factor correlation. Based on these results, the discriminant validity of the proposed measurement model was confirmed.

Based on the model fit indices, the chi-square (CMIN) value was 206.19, and the degrees of freedom (df) = 71. According to the default formula (CMIN/df) in Amos for measuring the chi-square, the CMIN had a value of 2.90, which is at the suggested threshold (CMIN < 3). Even though the chi-square is the one of the most frequently used indices to measure the model fit, the scholars have suggested other types of model fit indices. The normed fit index (NFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the goodness of fit index (GFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) are the other recommended statistics to test the model fit (Velicer et al.,

**Table 3**  
Results of discriminant validity.

Constructs	AVE	$\sqrt{AVE}$	MSV
Overall Image	0.79	0.88	0.507
Involvement	0.65	0.80	0.280
Familiarity	0.62	0.78	0.475
Intentions	0.72	0.84	0.507

1976). Accordingly, the alternative indices were also checked. The results, which were NFI = 0.794, AGFI = 0.928, GFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.809, CFI = 0.851, RMS = 0.032, and RMSEA = 0.050, showed that the model fits the data.

### 4.3. Hypotheses testing

The results of the hypotheses testing are presented in Table 4. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) between the involvement in the experience and the behavioral intentions was 0.098 ( $p = 0.017$ ), and the t value or critical ratio was 2.39 ( $t > 1.96$ ), which indicated that involvement in couchsurfing improves the behavioral intentions. Thus, the first hypothesis was supported.

The standardized path value between involvement in couchsurfing experiences and the destination familiarity was 0.529 ( $p < 0.001$ ), which showed that involvement increases the destination familiarity. The higher the involvement in couchsurfing, the greater the familiarity with the visited destinations. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported. The results of the path analysis on the positive influence of involvement in couchsurfing on the overall destination image was also supported ( $\beta = 0.223$  and  $t = 4.81$ ). This means that involvement in P2P experiences not only can be effective in destination familiarity, but it can also lead to a more positive and favorable overall image from the visited destination.

Furthermore, the results also supported that the destination familiarity ( $\beta = 0.367$  and  $t = .71$ ) and the overall destination image ( $\beta = 0.436$  and  $t = 9.32$ ) had a positive influence on the behavioral intentions. Based on these results, Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5 were also supported. These results showed that a traveler with a high level of familiarity with a destination is more likely to revisit, share more positive E-WoM, and encourage others to travel to his/her visited destination. Additionally, an overall positive image toward destinations can

**Table 4**  
Results of hypotheses resting.

Hypothesis	$\beta$	S.E	t-value	Supported
H1. Involvement → Intentions	0.098**	0.48	2.39	Yes
H2. Involvement → Familiarity	0.529***	0.60	11.19	Yes
H3. Involvement → Overall Image	0.223***	0.68	4.82	Yes
H4. Familiarity → Intentions	0.367***	0.43	7.71	Yes
H5. Overall Image → Intentions	0.436***	0.37	9.32	Yes
H6. Familiarity → Overall Image	0.504***	0.54	10.67	Yes

Note: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .



raise the probability of revisit intentions, positive E-WoM, and encourage others to travel to the visited destination.

The final direct relationship ( $H_6$ ) was related to the positive effect of the destination familiarity on the overall destination image. The standardized path value between the familiarity and the overall destination image was 0.504. In addition, the  $t$ -value = 10.67 and  $p < 0.001$ , which indicated that the familiarity had a positive direct effect on the overall destination image (Table 4).

In addition to the six direct relationships between the understudying constructs, it was proposed that the relationship between couchsurfing involvement and the behavioral intentions was mediated by the destination familiarity and the overall destination image (Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8). To test Hypothesis 7, the direct method of couchsurfing involvement to the behavioral intentions was tested first. It was found that the model was significant ( $F_{(1,607)}:112.355$  and  $p < 0.001$ ), which is a certain condition for a mediation test, and a one unit increase in couchsurfing involvement resulted in an increase of 0.395 units in the behavioral intentions. How couchsurfing involvement led to the destination familiarity was also significant ( $F_{(1,607)}:135.617$  and  $p < 0.001$ ; for the Sobel test a: 0.462 and  $S_a:0.04$ ). The regression coefficient from the mediator (destination familiarity) to the dependent variable (behavioral intentions) was also found to be significant ( $F_{(1,607)}:346.061$  and  $p < 0.001$ ; for Sobel test b: 0.628 and  $S_b:0.034$ ). When the independent (couchsurfing involvement) and the mediator variable (destination familiarity) were entered into the model, it was seen that the model was still significant ( $F_{(2,606)}:190.728$  and  $p < 0.001$ ). However, we found that the standardized  $\beta$  coefficient of couchsurfing involvement decreased from 0.395 to 0.168, but it remaining significant ( $t_1: 10.600 \rightarrow t_3: 4.786$ ). To understand if mediation is meaningful, the Sobel test<sup>2</sup> was used. The  $Z$  value was found to be 9.7929 greater than 1.96. Therefore, a significant partial moderation effect of the destination familiarity was found on the impacts of couchsurfing involvement to BI, and  $H_7$  was supported (Table 5).

The same method explained in the previous paragraph was used to test Hypothesis 8, which proposed that the relationship between couchsurfing involvement and the behavioral intentions is affected by the indirect effect of the overall destination image. A simple regression was utilized to test the method of couchsurfing involvement to the overall destination image, and it was detected that the model was significant ( $F_{(1,607)}:127.427$  and  $p < 0.001$ ; for Sobel test a: 0.514;  $S_a:0.046$ ). The mediator variable, which was the overall destination image, was the predictor of behavioral intentions ( $F_{(1,607)}:437.170$  and  $p < 0.001$ ; for Sobel test b: 0.592;  $S_b:0.028$ ). Taking couchsurfing involvement in conjunction with the overall destination image into the model, it was discovered that the second mediation model ( $H_8$ ) was also significant ( $F_{(2,606)}:235.944$  and  $p < 0.001$ ). The standardized  $\beta$  coefficient of couchsurfing involvement decreased from 0.395 to 0.152, but it still remaining significant ( $t_1:10.600 \rightarrow t_3:4.539$ ). The Sobel test was used to understand if mediation is meaningful. The  $Z$  value was found to be 9.8791 greater than 1.96. Therefore, a significant partial moderation effect of the overall destination image was found to impact couchsurfing involvement to behavioral intentions, and  $H_8$  was supported (Table 6). Accordingly, the partial mediating effect of destination familiarity and the overall destination image were approved.

### 5. Discussions

The literature review illustrated the lack of empirical study on the tested model in this study, so the researchers have to compare the results of study with familiar research but in different fields. All eight

<sup>2</sup> Sobel test formula:  $Z = ab/\sqrt{(b^2S_a^2) + (a^2S_b^2)}$   $a$  = Raw (unstandardized) regression coefficient for the association between independent and mediator.  $S_a$  = Standard error of  $a$ .  $b$  = Raw coefficient for the association between the mediator and the dependent variables.  $S_b$  = Standard error of  $b$ .

**Table 5**  
Results of mediation role of destination familiarity.

Model	Independent variables	Standardized coefficients of dependent variables	
		Behavioral intentions	Destination familiarity
1	Couchsurfing involvement	0.395***	0.427***
2	Destination Familiarity	0.603***	–
3	Couchsurfing involvement	0.168***	–
	Destination Familiarity	0.531***	–
Sobel test: $Z = ab/\sqrt{(b^2S_a^2) + (a^2S_b^2)}$		$Z = 9.7929$ ; $p < 0.001$	
Mediation type		Partial	

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , F values of all models and t-values of all predictors are significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 6**  
Mediating test of overall destination image.

Model	Independent variables	Standardized coefficients of dependent variables	
		Behavioral intentions	Overall destination image
1	Couchsurfing involvement	0.395***	0.417***
2	Overall destination image	0.647***	–
3	Couchsurfing involvement	0.152***	–
	Overall destination image	0.584***	–
Sobel test: $Z = ab/\sqrt{(b^2S_a^2) + (a^2S_b^2)}$		$Z = 9.8791$ ; $p < 0.001$	
Mediation type		Partial	

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , F values of all models and t-values of all predictors are significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

hypotheses proposed in this study were supported. Couchsurfing involvement enhanced revisiting, positive e-word-of-mouth, and invitations of friends to visit Turkey. These results are also reported by Hu (2003) who found the positive impact of involvement in behavioural intentions. This study revealed that involvement in couchsurfing increased the familiarity with the visited destinations. This result can be discussed through the nature of the P2P accommodation platforms, which enable travelers to stay with locals and receive deep first-hand insights about the destinations. Lee et al. (2008) noted that the increased information ultimately accelerated the destination familiarity. The outcome of this type of socialization boosts participation in more activities, encourages more traveling, and promotes staying longer in the visited destinations (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2015). Based on these findings, it can be said that the outcome of involvement in the collaborative experience of couchsurfing causes travelers to stay longer, make conversation with the locals, and also enjoy like a local would with awareness, knowledge development, and destination familiarity.

This study found that involvement in couchsurfing was related to the overall destination image. This is similar to Sun et al.'s (2013) study, which indicated that travelers who have high level of involvement with a destination have a comparably positive image to those who do not. In the field of P2P accommodations, this finding can be discussed through the high involvement destinations that travelers visited, which is facilitated by the peer-to-peer accommodation platforms, such as couchsurfing. Travelers, who use couchsurfing, tend to visit multi cities in a country, participate in more activities, and stay longer in the visited destinations. Couchsurfing offers an environment where the travelers can create their own experiences. Specifically, travelers' involvement in the experience assists them in co-creating a close relationship with the local people, which makes their experiences more enjoyable and gets them emotionally attached to the destinations. Previous studies demonstrated that there are direct links between experience co-creation and destination attachment (Suntikul & Jachna, 2016). The travelers' feeling of destination attachment "reinforce the emotional connections

with places, making them attractive” (Silva, Kastenholz & Abrantes, 2013, p. 18), and it builds a positive image toward the destination (Li & Bihu, 2013).

This study revealed that couchsurfer with a high level of familiarity of a destination is more likely to lead to revisiting, sharing of more positive E-WoM, and encouraging others to travel to the destinations. Previous studies acknowledged that familiarity by decreasing the perceived risk (Ha, 2002) and trust building (Kim et al., 2008) toward a product/service plays an important role in the future purchasing intention (Benedicktus et al., 2010). Similarly, in the field of tourism and destination familiarity by enhancing the knowledge of the travelers about a destination positively contributes in “providing them a feeling of security and comfort, which leads to increased confidence in their destination choice” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 816). Additionally, it can be said that destination familiarity boosts the E-WoM. As the main users of the P2P accommodations are millennials and/or digital natives, they generally tend to share the E-WoM about their experiences of a destination. It has been supported by a previous study that E-WoM has a positive influence on travel intention (Abubakar, 2016, p. 598).

The positive influence of the overall destination image on behavioral intentions was also proven. Based on this result, it can be said that the destinations overall image can raise the probability of the revisit intention, provide positive E-WoM, and encourage others to travel to the visited destinations. The prior research showed that the overall image of a destination positively influenced the intention to revisit a destination (Hallmann, Zehrer, & Müller, 2015). For travelers who have positive and favorable images toward the visited destinations, experience quality is important. This situation “in turn would lead to a higher satisfaction level and stronger behavioral intentions” (Chen & Funk, 2010, pp. 245–246). Similarly, Kim (2017, p. 1) stated the memorable experience as “the most influential determinant of behavioral intentions,” which stimulate revisit intention and the WOM. In line with the literature, this study argued that a positive influence of the overall destination image on the intention can be supported through the power of peer-to-peer accommodation that might create a memorable experience by active participation in designing their journey and interaction with the local communities.

## 6. Conclusion

Research on the sharing economy and the P2P accommodations is increasing along with the growth of the market size. Nonetheless, the non-profit type of this business, such as couchsurfing has received less attention. Most of the conducted research is limited to the nature and the effects of the profit types, such as Airbnb. As the first empirical study that investigated the effects of the involvement in couchsurfing on the destination, the results of this study indicated that the nonprofit form of P2P accommodations have a positive influence on the destination related issues, such as familiarity, the overall destination image, and the behavioral intentions, which include intention to share positive E-WoM, invitations to visit, and revisiting.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings of this study provided some empirical evidence for the involvement in the collaborative experience, the destination familiarity and the overall image, and the behavioral intentions, such as the revisit intention, the E-WoM, and inviting others to visit. While these constructs are the widely accepted strategy for destination marketing, the current researchers did not come across any research that empirically tested the impacts of involvement in the peer-to-peer accommodation on the destination, such as the destination familiarity, the overall destination image, and the behavioral intentions. During the last decade, a sharing economy and especially P2P accommodations have attracted considerable attention in different settings. Most of them have mainly concentrated on the motivation/drivers and trust. Accordingly, by testing the relationships

between the latent variable, such as involvement in P2P experiences and the observed variables, such as the destination the familiarity, the overall destination image, and the behavioral intentions, this study can establish empirical evidence, shed more light on the literature, and contribute to knowledge development about the impacts of a sharing economy especially with a non-profit type of P2P accommodation on destination.

In addition to the theoretical significance, the results of this study can be useful for destination marketers and managers of traditional accommodations. The findings highlighted the importance of the peer-to-peer services for new age tourism. New tourists care more about the environment and the local culture, and they are “looking to experience and learn rather than merely stand back and gaze” (Cecilia, Elisabeta, & Magdalena, 2011, p. 245). In order to effectively respond to these shifts in the tourism market, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey needs to divert its concentration and marketing activities from focusing on basic attractions, such as, historical sites and natural attractions to experiential tourism. They need to provide an environment where travelers can co-create their own experiences.

For defense against disruptive P2P platforms, it is vital for traditional accommodations to embrace change and understand their innovative ideas (González-Blanco et al., 2018). The first reaction of the hotel industry towards P2P accommodations was to see it as a temporary phenomenon and see the remarkable demand for the peer-to-peer accommodations. They found that the P2P accommodation platforms were a popular competitor. The hotel industry has begun to fight back through lobbying and politicians. However, it seems that lobbying as a conventional marketing technique will not slow the remarkable effects on the demand for the P2P accommodations. Moreover, distributing messages about the negative experiences with the P2P accommodations and offering some concerns, such as trust issues are another strategy adopted by the hotel industry to compete with the P2P accommodations. We showed that the P2P platforms with the support of technology and trust building mechanisms, such as reference and review tried to address the above issue. Only offering rooms would not give competitive advantages, which is opposite to the past. The findings of the study showed that the travelers demanded greater involvement and interaction with the locals. Accordingly, the traditional accommodations need to divert their focus from rooms to the creation of an environment that facilitates the interaction between the locals and the travelers. Investment by the hotel industry in the sharing of economy disrupters’ platforms could be an effective reaction.

The core focus of this study was to develop and test a model in a non-profit type peer-to-peer accommodation. It is recommended to test the results of the proposed hypotheses with the data obtained from the monetary based P2P accommodation platforms, such as Airbnb. Another limitation of this study is that it is used only the perspectives of the users, which were couchsurfers. Future studies should involve the views of the hosts of the p2p platforms. Conducting a comparative study between the monetary based P2P accommodations, such as Airbnb and the non-monetary accommodations, such as couchsurfing for different destinations also would enhance our understanding of the behavior users of both types of P2P accommodations. Furthermore, making comparisons between the effects of the stay in the traditional accommodations and the P2P accommodations on destination also can provide a deeper insight of the travelers’ behaviors in the age of the emerging economy. Moreover, the current study only included the overall destination image, whereas future studies should include other types of destination images, such as cognitive, affective, conative, the past behaviors of users, three elements of TPB, which include attitude, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioral control, and social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe 1960) into the proposed conceptual model. The results of this study are based on the analysis of the cross-sectional data obtained from the survey. We recommend developing a



contingency plan and resilience of such sharing economy platforms during the current pandemic disease of Covid-19. Non-profit platform, such as couchsurfing may have better functionality over Airbnb, because the platform provides opportunities to improve social bonding

and solidarity among the community during a crisis. Future studies can apply innovative mixed methods, such as triangulation and experimental research to improve criteria quality, which includes generalizability, of this research.

## Appendix A

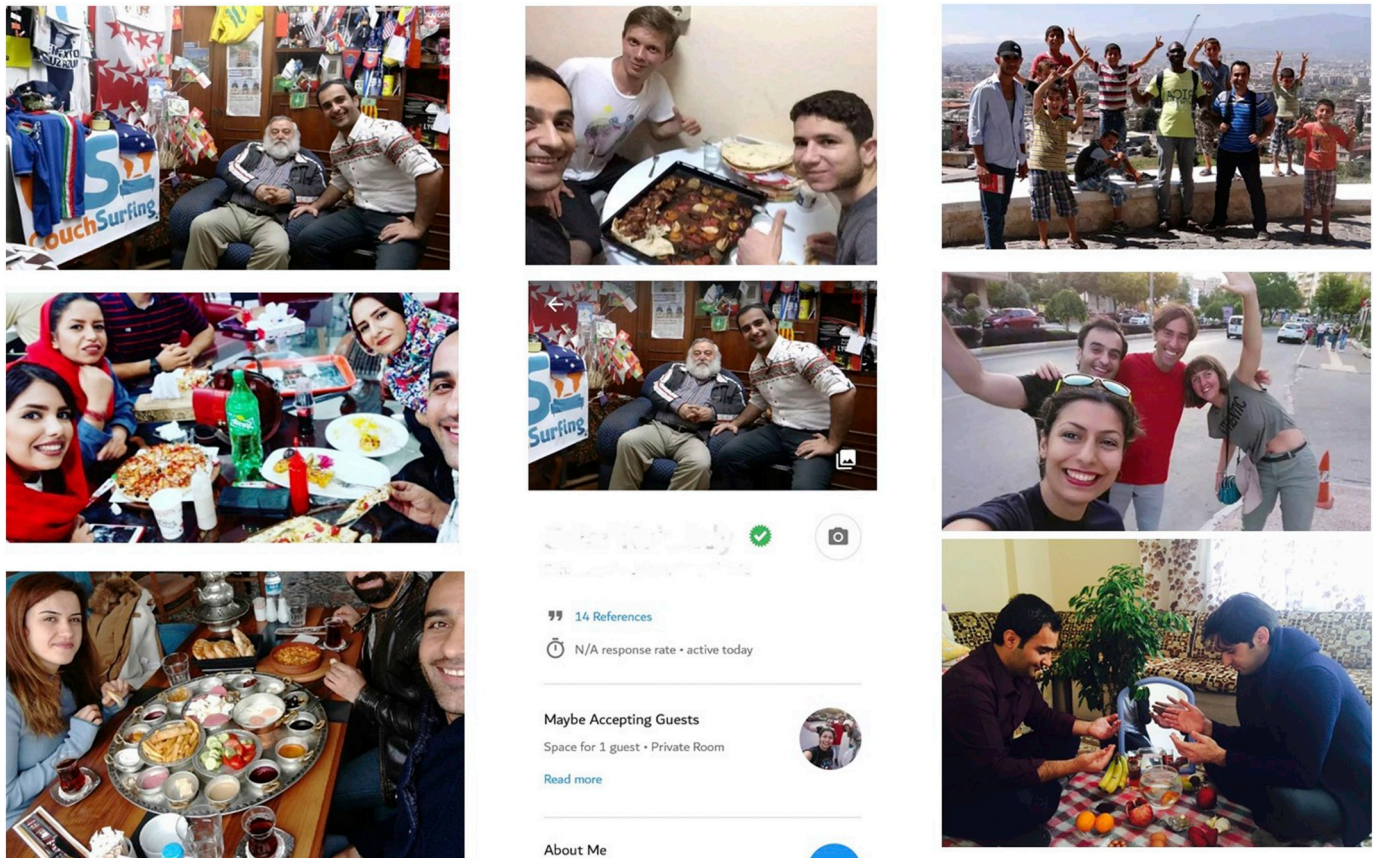


Fig. A1. Multi-sited ethnography of couchsurfing.

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