

DETERMINANTS OF COUCHSURFING.COM REFERENCES

The "Leap of Faith" from Online to Offline Hospitality

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The objective of this research was verified the variables which influence on references number received by a couchsurfer from people that he hosted. The study uses qualitative and quantitative methodology. Profile data of Couchsurfing.com participant from the city of Pelotas, Brazil, are extracted by Netnography techniques. Subsequently, the data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics techniques in order to validate the model and hypotheses proposed. The theoretical background on "suspension" thesis as the process to building the confidence was used. It represents the "leap of faith", the migration from online to offline hospitality, that is, effectively hosts a stranger at home. The study results provide the couchsurfer profile of Pelotas city based on a sample of 161 participants on this reciprocal hospitality network. The multiple regression analysis shows that the significant variables on the number of references received are much more related to the level of online social interaction in the network than the experience as an international traveler or demographic profile.

KEY WORDS: *CouchSurfing, online and offline hospitality, reciprocal hospitality, leap of faith.*