

GoHitchhike - Object-centered Social Networking Site:
To Bridge Online and Physical Interactions

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By

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Thesis Abstract

Social websites can be categorized into two groups: focusing on objects or focusing on people. The general socializing concept of an object-centered website rarely emphasizes actual physical interaction. *GoHitchhike* is an object-centered social networking site that attempts to bridge the online and physical interactions. Any social interactions online and in the real world revolve around the objects acquired and transported. This trend improves on current social networking websites by combining three concepts: emotional objects, social network service, and physical interaction. Additionally, *GoHitchhike* utilizes the concept of emotional objects to tailor the social correspondence and experience of the users. Through such process, users can benefit through shared adventures and learn cultural significance of the requested items, therefore not only crossing location specific boundaries but also cultural boundaries as well.

1. Introduction

The Social Web is currently used to describe how people socialize or interact with each other throughout the World Wide Web. Two kinds of socializing are typified by people-centered and object-centered sites. There are two ways that people socialize with each other in the social web: The first type is a non face-to-face personal interaction. The other type leads real physical interaction (Social Web).

GoHitchhike is an object-centered social website that allows users to acquire hard to find items similar to *eBay*; however *GoHitchhike* has the added function of socialization and cultural exchanges focusing around these items. It connects to existing people-centered social websites such as *Facebook* by social bookmarks. *GoHitchhike*'s central focus revolves around emotional objects that have special personalized meaning to individuals who may associate such hard to find items with cherished memories. The purposes of *GoHitchhike* are to help people find others who can bring them their emotional objects to cure homesickness and to create social networks by sharing the stories of the requested items and the experiences of the trips.

1.1. People-centered vs. Object-Centered Social Web

People-centered social websites such as *Facebook* focus on people's interactions both in the virtual world and real world. This type of social website is based on users' profiles and status to generate topics for connecting with friends. Users check friends' recent photos and share their thoughts or leave messages to strengthen friendships and share ideas amongst their social circles. Users create their social networks by adding new friends whom they most likely already know. The advantage of a people-centered social

web is the physical social activity that ties friends together. For example, such social circles are based on real life hobbies, occupation, or family relations. However, this social web is limited to connecting people whom you already know. If the purpose of it is only to keep in touch with friends, I thought that it could be replaced by other communication tools such as mobile, online message system and email or social media such as blogs. Additionally, it might take longer to expand your social networks and is difficult to find someone “new” who has the same hobby or shared interest through the system alone.

Object-centered social websites such as *eBay* focus on traded objects. Most buyers and sellers interact on the website and rarely meet each other face-to-face. Sellers offer goods or services to profit and increase their credit ratings; users in this network can create possible limited social networks through items of interest but the exchange of communication is reduced to no more than a conversation one would have with a cashier or salesman. Deeper relationships are neither desired nor possible with this system. Buyers leave comments to sellers after they receive items. This type of social web surrounds an object, which can be both a physical object such as a hobby and an abstract object such as a job.

Current standards for people-centered social websites, such as *Facebook*, focus on users’ interactions both in the virtual world and real world. This type of social website is based on users’ profiles and statuses to generate topics to connect with friends. Most of the time, this interaction is limited to messages and photographs, without further exchange of objects or promotion of cultural significance within the base *Facebook* system. On the other hand, object-centered social websites such as *eBay* revolve around

traded objects. This type of social website makes it hard to create deeper relationships between buyers and sellers because of the weak interactions. Most people don't contact each other after finishing their transactions.

GoHitchhike's focus goes beyond both people-centered and object-centered social websites. It utilizes emotional objects and connects to real social networks and the existing social networking sites. Based on the virtual and social network, it protects members' privacy and increases the trust of the interaction. Users post requests and background stories of the wanted items, such as the significance of having their grandmother's homemade cookies to a special type of tea or lace only available from a specific region. Similarly, users serving as carriers may also write about their experiences in bringing their friends' requested items, such as meeting their friend's family or simply being exposed to a new culture that they were not aware of before. These stories help create stronger socialization topics to connect the users on *GoHitchhike.com*. Through such processes, *GoHitchhike* combines emotional objects, social web service and physical interaction to connect people and build stronger relationships.

2. Emotional Object and Object-Centered Social Webs

People are emotionally attached to objects of every day lives. There are businessmen who believe that using a lucky pen to sign contracts can lead to good business or great profitable gain. Even when we go on vacations, many of us purchase souvenirs to remind us of the memories from such journeys. These objects have special meanings for people and remind them of memorable moments. From *Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Thing*, Norman mentions that

Special objects turned out to be those with special memories or associations, those that helped evoke a special feeling in their owners. Special items all evoked stories. Seldom was the focus upon the item itself: what mattered was the story, an occasion recalled. We become attached to things if they have a significant personal association, if they bring to mind pleasant, comforting moments. Perhaps more significant, however, is our attachment to places: favorite corners of our homes, favorite locations, and favorite views. Our attachment is really not to the thing, it is to the relationship, to the meanings and feelings the thing represents (Norman 48).

As Norman notes, these items are often associated with stories. *GoHitchhike.com* hopes to utilize such emotional objects to bridge user socialization through the sharing of stories revolving around these emotional objects.

The theory of object-centered sociality came from a sociologist, Karin Knorr Cetina, in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Using the object-centered sociality theory, we can identify new objects that are potentially suitable for online social networking services (Engeström). The advantage of object-centered social web is that people develop their social networks faster and wider. People don't have to be friends before as long as they are interested in the same object. On the other hand, this type of social web is hard to create deep relationships because of weak interactions such as the seller and buyer at *eBay*. Most of them rarely contact each other after completing transactions.

Engeström thinks the object-centered social network is better than the people-focused social network service because the object is the reason why people affiliate with

specific others. The major part of designing a successful object-centered social network service is to choose a social object that people are willing to interact with (Porter. 32). Based on the theory of emotional objects, to share emotional objects in common with someone creates deeper relationships than normal objects.

The most successful web applications are built around social objects. Here are some examples: (Porter. 32)

Flicker → Photos Del.icio.us → Bookmarks Blogger → Blogs
 Amazon → Products YouTube → Video Netflix → Movies Digg → Stories
 Teitler → Messages MySpace → Music

(Figure 1. Successful web applications focus on social objects.)

GoHitchhike.com concentrates on emotional objects that users request to help cure homesickness and encourage them in their new surroundings despite the physical distance. These objects can be anything: items can range from triggers of people's special memories or sending messages to their family's love in the form of care packages or treats. Users build their experiences around these objects by sharing stories, scheduling trips, and creating social interactions through this network. The combination of physical exchange of these emotional objects and journeys of the couriers create a stronger social experience to be shared on such a social website.

3. Object-centered Social Website with Physical Interaction

After analyzing the two types of social websites, the better solution was to combine both advantages together: an object-centered social website with physical interaction. There are several ways to reach the goal:

- The goal of the object-centered social website is to lead people to physical interaction.
- Connecting object-centered social websites to existing people-centered social websites through social share tools such as social bookmarks and applications such as *Facebook* API. *Facebook* API allows developers to add social context to their application by utilizing profile, friend, group, photo, and event data (API).

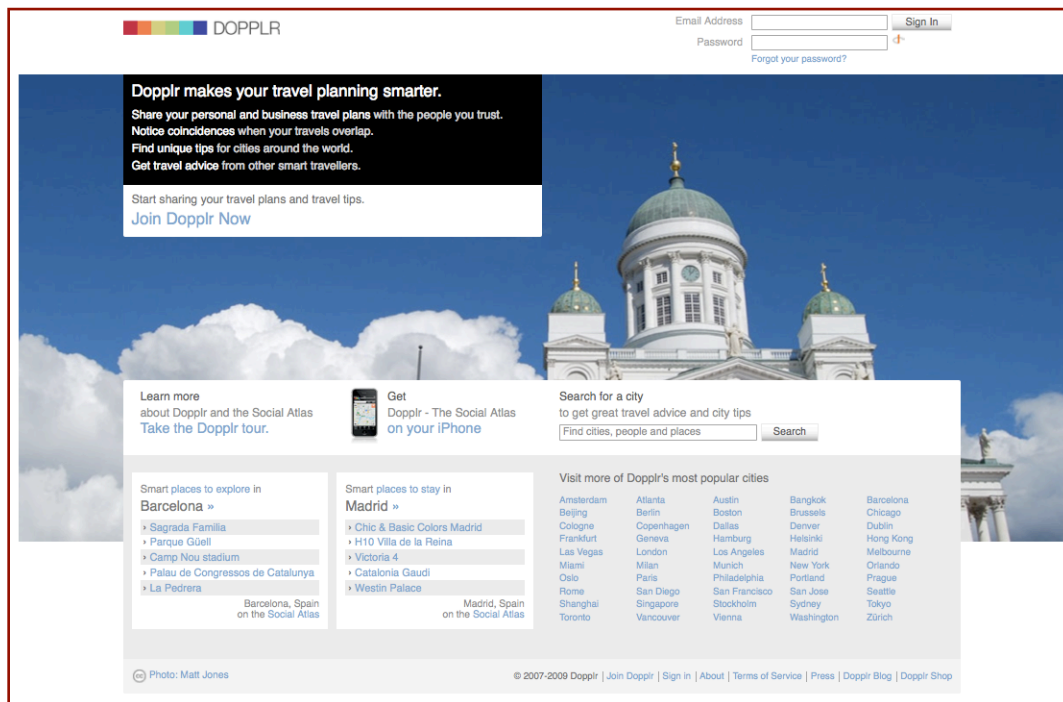
3.1. Case Study

Both *Dopplr.com* and *Zimride.com* do a great job of designing goals to bring people face-to-face contact and connect existing people-centered social website such as *Facebook*.

Dopplr.com is an online service that helps users make more of their travels by sharing their future trips privately with friends and colleagues. Only people in your group can view your travels. *Dopplr* provides multi-platforms to add a trip through email, mobile text message, Twitter and online calendar. After adding a trip, users can share their trips through email to both members and nonmembers. Meanwhile, users can blog their trips. *Dopplr* creates applications for *Facebook*, *Flickr* and *XING* for members to develop their social networks and share their trips at the same time. In addition to these computer device applications, *Dopplr* also created an application called The Social Atlas for iPhone. The iPhone built-in GPS application can locate users' positions and show users nearby recommended places to eat, stay and explore for 250 popular cities around

the world. Using this iPhone application, *Dopplr* members can easily keep track of their fellow travelers as well as adding a new trip.

Similar to *Dopplr.com*, *GoHitchhike* hopes to utilize the social aspects of traveling and sharing the stories of the journey through the social website. *Dopplr* allows users to find friends who are traveling to the same cities and expanding the social networking services to real life physical interactions such as meeting up in a foreign location. However, *GoHitchhike*'s focus is not based on "travel" alone, but rather on the special emotional objects travelers will obtain for their friends.



(Figure 2. The index of dopplr.com. August 7, 2009)

Zimride.com is a good example of a carpool community that connects to an existing social networking site, *Facebook*. Members can search riders or offer rides to

allow others to carpool with them. The ride map pulls out the shortest distance between the starting location and the ending location from Google map data. It lists the road paths easy for people to carpool. Users can also add riders or passengers as friends on *Facebook*, making sharing a ride safer and creating social networks at the same time. *Zimride.com* is also a great example of how social networking sites can lead to physical exchanges of services beneficial for users. Borrowing from this concept, *GoHitchhike* hopes to bridge social interactions in the virtual world with meaningful exchanges in the real one.



(Figure 3. The index of Zimride.com. August 7, 2009)

Although *Dopplr* and *Zimride* are successful in leading people to physical interaction, one thing which is missing that makes *GoHitchhike* go beyond these sites is the focus around emotional objects (see figure 4). The social object of *Dopplr* is travel.

Before users experience their trips, the trips have no special meanings to them, so future travelers only share their trip schedules without experience. The same is true with *Zimride*, the social object that surrounds the website is a carpool. A carpool doesn't have a special meaning until people experience it. Object social websites without emotional social objects might cause weak connections between users. The social objects surrounding *GoHitchhike* are items and trips. Requesters share stories of their wanted items, and travelers feel requesters' emotions from their stories. Travelers share stories of experiencing culture differences and understanding requesters' backgrounds during trips. In this way, sharing item and trip stories connect users and tie the relationship together.

Trip → *Dopplr* → Share trip (Emotional object)

Carpool → *Zimride* → Share carpool (Emotional object)

Item story (Emotional object) ← *GoHitchhike* → Trip story (Emotional object)

(Figure 4. Compare emotional objects)

3.2. Enhancing GoHitchhike through Social Bookmarks

Besides the *Facebook* application, the social bookmark is an easy way to spread information and connect to the social web. Social bookmarking allows users to save the links of web pages that can be either public or private, or shared inside specific groups and networks.

AddThis.com allows users to add a button that links and promotes their content within other sites or search engines on the Internet. It helps website publishers and

bloggers spread their content across the web by making it easy for visitors to bookmark and share their own content at their favorite social destinations.



(Figure 5. *Addthis.com* offers bookmarks share to different social media. August 7, 2009)

By adopting the social bookmarking design, *GoHitchhike* allows users to share information and access to their requested items and trip information from the existing networks limited only to social networking sites such as *Facebook*. Based on existing social networking sites, it protects members' privacy and increases their trust of the interaction. Meanwhile, it filters the requesters' required items and guarantees the legality of items. For example, *GoHitchhike* member requesters may post an item and then click *AddThis* bookmark button to share their wanted items on their *Facebook*. The item info will be posted on their *Facebook* walls, which only accepted friends can read, and the posts can link back to the item info pages on *GoHitchhike*. Friends from *Facebook* can schedule trips to bring items for their trustworthy requesters.

4. GoHitchhike.com

4.1. The Story behind GoHitchhike

The concept of *GoHitchhike* started from a candy. It was not just any normal candy. It was handmade by my grandmother. She knows that I like to eat candy, especially when I feel upset, and she would give me this candy to encourage me.

At the end of 2006, I went back to Taiwan and visited my grandmother. By that time, I had already studied in the United States for a year, and had been very homesick. She prepared a bag of her handmade candy for me to bring back to the States. Without a word, a full bag of homemade candy that she put in my hand easily expressed her love and made me feel better.

As days passed, I almost ran out of the candies. Then I started to think about how I could get the candy from grandmother again once I went back to the States. She lives in the countryside and doesn't know any English. It is difficult for her to deliver the candy to me, and the shipping is too expensive. "How about creating a website that helps me find people who live close to me and plan to go to Taiwan?" I told myself. They can bring my candy on their way back. I wondered how many people who study and work overseas have the same problem as me. This website will not only make life more convenient, but can also help deliver items from loved ones. Imagine how many people can be cheered up when they receive their special gifts from their hometown or family.

I named this site *GoHitchhike*—“Go” means the action of transportation; “Hitchhike” refers to the item itself: the package “hitchhikes” its way across the country with the help of the travelers who visit the website. *GoHitchhike* can help people get closer to their friends by sharing stories of the requested items, the trips in transporting them, and sending messages from families to their loved ones.

4.2. Emotional Objects Cure Homesickness

Most college students who study at other cities or countries have to face problems of relocation and adjustment to college lives. When these students can't find resources or lose social support, they feel stressed and homesick, especially amongst international students (Yeh&Inose 15-28). International students in the United States who socialized with other international students have better stress adjustments than those who socialized with Americans. On the other hand, these students feel less social support because their social networks concentrate on international students (Poyrazli et al.73-82).

International college students are the main target audiences of *GoHitchhike*. *GoHitchhike* reduces international students' limited social connectedness. It helps students studying in the United States to socialize with Americans through their requested items and trips. Item stories and trip experiences create topics and drive people to meet online and in real life. This process also creates a stronger social network and support system. Meanwhile, international students who receive expected items from families are relieved of their homesickness.

Immigrants tend to share a sense of displacement as the international students living overseas and will feel homesick, especially missing foods from their hometown. From the article *A Hunger for Home: Homesickness and Food in a Global Consumer*

Society in the *Journal of American Culture* (2003), Susan Matt talks about the relationship between food and homesick immigrants. Homesick immigrants seek for simpler daily meals that they once ate in their native lands because these meals carry the memories of home and family. The difficulty of reaching these meals makes immigrants and international students feel homesick and seek the everyday dishes from their hometown like treasure hunting.

As the narrator in a novel about Danish immigrants observed: “Where can a banished Dane be found, who at the sight of a piece of black rye bread doesn’t recall countless memories? Of home and childhood. Happy childhood! When this heavy bread was everyday food. But out here in exile it was a delicacy, food fit for a king” (Skardal 249). While not everyone who sought out food from their native lands was homesick, and many preserved old-world culinary habits for other reasons, the tastes of home were profoundly comforting to those who missed their families and their former lives (Matt).

Emotional objects curing homesickness are not only applicable to people who live overseas. My classmate Ian missed the Skyline Chili at his hometown chain restaurant, Cincinnati, OH. Every time he went back there, he always brought back cans of Skyline Chili to cure homesickness. Compared to international students, his hometown only takes ten hours to drive to from school, but he still feels homesickness and misses the food there. Some specific goods or foods are only sold at specific shops or restaurants. The difficulty of reaching these items usually further strengthens the special meanings in people’s emotional memories and feelings. Receiving these items can temporarily cure homesickness and encourage people to move forward.

Through the articles above reflect the homesickness problems and provide the need of a site like *GoHitchhike*, which focuses on special items from loved ones, creating social networks, finding people to deliver items, and curing homesickness.

4.3. Online and Physical Interactions of GoHitchhike

Online and physical interactions of *GoHitchhike* surround emotional objects: item stories and trip experiences. The item story is about special meanings of required items, which help people cure homesickness. The trip story is about the process of bringing items during the trip and experiencing background and culture differences. These emotional things and the purpose of *GoHitchhike* lead people to interact both online and in the real world.

There are several ways that *GoHitchhike* bridges online socializing to real life interactions. First, travelers visit requesters' hometowns and experience their lifestyles. Second, travelers develop a better understanding of requester's background through their required items that reflect the requester's habits, cultures, and favorites. Third, travelers have chances to meet requesters' families and friends while retrieving the items. It creates a social network in real life and strengthens the network between the traveler and requesters. Fourth, travelers meet requesters face-to-face when turning their items; they share the experiences of the trips and the stories of the items. Through the above interactions, *GoHitchhike* connects the virtual network to the real network and tightens the relationship between people.

4.4. Other Advantages

Besides item delivery and social network development, *GoHitchhike* helps people save money and makes the earth green.

GoHitchhike helps people save fees on shipping and packaging materials. In winter 2007, I brought two boxes of specialties from my hometown, Taichung City, Taiwan to my coworkers in America. I calculated how much it would cost if I used airmail to keep the specialties within the expired date. The shipping fees cost the same price as the product, thirty US dollars. I asked ten international college students about the costs, and nine of them feel it's not worth getting the pineapple cake because of the shipping fees. I calculated shipping fees from different areas and put the results in Appendix B.

GoHitchhike can conserve natural resources by reducing shipping costs and receiving wastes. Also, it can save fuel and reduce production of carbon dioxide. "Shipping and receiving wastes are wastes that are generated while transporting goods from a manufacturer to a user or from one facility location to another" (Shipping and Receiving Operations 2). The way to reduce shipping and receiving wastes is to eliminate unnecessary packaging materials includes choosing matched packaging materials for products' size, weight, shape, and property (Shipping and Receiving Operations 2). Requesters ask travelers from *GoHitchhike* to bring wanted items, and travelers give items to requesters face-to-face. Travelers carry items through flights directly, so there is no packaging waste from shipping companies. Meanwhile, travelers only have limited space for items. In order to save space, travelers usually remove unnecessary packaging materials or even travel without packaging.

Besides reducing shipping and receiving wastes, travelers bringing requesters'

items saves fuel and decreases production of carbon dioxide. The system of *AMEE.com* is capable of calculating the carbon dioxide impact of transportations. An airplane that flies from Taipei City, Taiwan to New York City, United States produces 3,021 kilograms of carbon dioxide. When a traveler from *GoHitchhike* brings an item for me, it actually decreases 3,021 kilograms of carbon dioxide aiding in preventing global warming.

5. Develop

The first step of developing *GoHitchhike* started from analyzing social websites and listing the basic functions. The trust and rating feedback system, the confirm system and the search system (Appendix D) support online interactions of the site. The social bookmark tool connects the site to social medias.

5.1. Basic Functions Analyze from Social Website

I analyzed social networking sites in two steps in order to come up with the functions for *GoHitchhike*. The first step is to select social networking websites that are English based and with the goal of connecting with friends from *Wikipedia* List of social networking websites, analyzed by age of target users, area, and main functions. Step two is to nail down the list to four social networking sites, which are *Facebook*, *Friendster*, *Hi5*, and *Orkut*, based on the similar target audience as *GoHitchhike*, and compare the friend search function of these four sites and come up with the general functions for *GoHitchhike*: (more details in Appendix C)

- Minimum age to join: average 16

- Profiles functions: photos, max photo sizes: no lower 2MB, post comments, and friend lists.
- Security functions: privacy settings, block users, report spam, and report abuse.
- Block users: You can block individual users from viewing your profile.
- Networking features: groups and forums.
- Search function: different purposes.
- Technical help/support: FAQ
- Report spam: You can report spam messages and comments to the social network administrators.
- Report abuse: You can report a particular person for violating the terms of agreement. This function is particularly helpful for people that feel they are being harassed online by another user.

5.2. Trust and Feedback Rating System

The relationships in web-based social networks are more complex than social network models traditionally studied in the social sciences because users can make a variety of assertions about their relationships with others (Golbeck 2).

Different experiences, psychological background and histories make two people rate different values to each other. Besides, personalization plays into calculating trust recommendations by affecting the accuracy of a recommendation. As most people have a

strong opinion, this middle rating will not mean much. It reflects the opinion of the population, and is not a recommendation to the individual (7).

Here are three ways to vary the relationships of social networking websites: First, “How well they know the person.” *Linkedin* connects people with different degrees. The less degree you connect to people, the more you know them. Second, “The type of relationship with another.” *Facebook* asks users what type of relationships when adding a new friend. Third, “Rate the trustworthiness.” *Orkut* offers a rating system from zero to three to verify trustworthiness (2).

GoHitchhike has a feedback ratings system that allows people to rate from zero to five stars and leave comments on the profile info page. Users can give feedback on others who have been requesters or travelers.

5.3. Confirm System

At first, I designed an extra requests page (figure 6) for each item and trip. The requests page showed two sections: “who matches your requests” and “who is waiting for your confirm”. I asked friends to test each, and they felt that the page was unnecessary and confused them. “Who matches your requests” was the same function as the match list located on the item or trip info page. The match list can bring users to the matched people who may help users bring items or request help. Then users can click the confirmed button to send requested mails to travelers or the requesters’ e-mail box. Another way is to use browse trip and browse item tools to find matched travelers and requesters, bookmarking them and sending them requested mails. “Who is waiting for your confirm” listed people who sent the requested mails to you. The requested mails were sent to users’

e-mail accounts that users sign in, so instead of creating a new section for the mails, users can use their mailbox for management.

The screenshot shows the 'GO Hitchhike' website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Browse', 'Profile', and 'Forum', along with a search bar and 'Help | Settings | Logout' links. The main content area is titled 'Yuwei's Item' and includes tabs for 'Info', 'Story', 'Requests', and 'Add Item'. The 'Add Item' tab is active, showing details for a 'Pineapple Cake' item. The item is categorized as 'Food & Household', has a status of 'Pending', and is available from Feb/2/2009 to May/4/2009. Below the item details, there are two sections: 'Travelers match your requests' and 'Travelers wait for your confirm'. Each section lists travelers with their names, profile photos, time ranges, and travel destinations. The 'Travelers match your requests' section includes 'Andy Wang' and 'Mary Cheng', both with 'Send request' buttons. The 'Travelers wait for your confirm' section includes 'Henry Chen' with a 'Confirm' button. A comment below the second traveler in the first section states: 'After you send a request mail, there is no button anymore'.

(Figure 6. Add a requests page)

In the end, I skipped the requests page and simply used a light-box for confirmation. Users can click the confirmed button on matched item info or trip info pages. The light-box will pop up and list all the available trips or items (figure 7). For example, I found David's trip matched my requested item, Pineapple Cake. I clicked the confirmed button, and my items matched David's trip listed on the light-box. I selected Pineapple Cake and sent David a requested mail. The light-box confirm system was

proved by testers who think it is user friendly and allows for multi-selection. At the same time, it requests users browse others' pages instead of staying on their own profile pages.



(Figure 7. Light box confirm system)

At the beginning of the prototype, I tried to include both object-centered social websites and people focused social networking websites, but the project became too big and complicated for me to achieve. If I built a social networking site, *Facebook* and *Orkut* will become my competitors. The website will change the directions to people focus and blur the main purpose, object focus, and objects drive people face to face interaction. Then Twitter, a social networking and micro-blogging service, inspired me. Users share their thoughts and status with 140 character limited text-based posts. It seems like that Twitter picks the *Facebook* user's status function and make it powerful. The great success of Twitter made me think about taking out the functions related to the social networking website and concentrating on object focus. Meanwhile, *GoHitchhike* connects

to exciting social networking sites through social bookmarking system. It turns *GoHitchhike* to cooperate with *Facebook*, *Orkut* and other social networking sites.

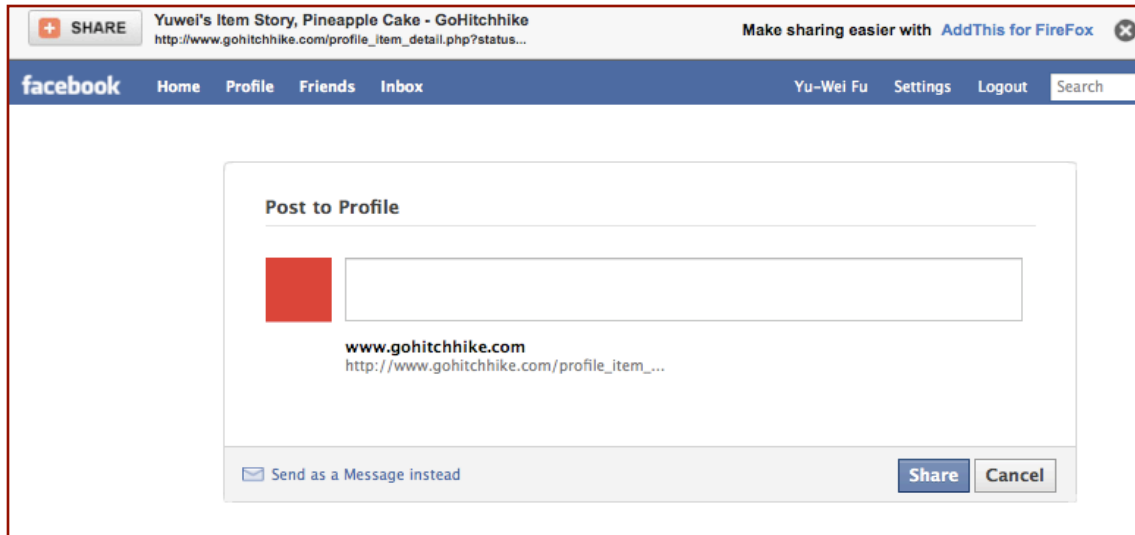
5.4. Connect to Exciting Social Networking Sites

To add a social bookmarking on the web page is simple to copy; ust add a line of code from *AddThis.com* website and pase on the html between the <body> and the </body> tags. After posting the code, a share button will display on the web page. Users can share the content of the web page with to a social website.



(Figure 8. *AddThis.com* social bookmark tool helps share item story to different social media. http://www.gohitchhike.com/profile_item_detail.php?status=read&pid=2#story

August 7, 2009)



(Figure 9. Share content on the Facebook.)

5.5. Testers' Feedbacks

After I completed the functions of *GoHitchhike.com*, I started to ask people to test it, and here is the feedback from the testers. (The layouts of *GoHitchhike.com* are in Appendix A.)

Strength

- Most functions of the site work well.
- The search function and browse tool are powerful and easy to find matched travelers and requesters.
- Layout is clean and contents are easy to read.

Weakness

- The website shall have a homepage after users login.
- The tags shall be explained more clearly.

- If the website focuses on emotional design and curing homesickness, the layout might look too commercial.
- The website shall have user guidelines to teach users how to interact.

5.6. Successful Case Study

In the summer of 2009, one of Tiffany Chou's best friends, Amy Zeng, handmade Tiffany's birthday gift and planned to send it to her. Tiffany was too excited to wait for the gift, so she decided to find someone who was in Taipei, Taiwan and scheduled to come back to Savannah, GA. She used the browse trip tool and found Jessica Yang matched her request. Then she posted the information of her birthday gift with Amy's contact information, and asked Jessica to confirm the request. After Jessica activated the confirmed link from the request mail, Tiffany provided more details about how to meet with her friend Amy who was in Taiwan. Finally, Jessica met Amy near Amy's office and got Tiffany's birthday gift and also brought it back to Tiffany. Tiffany rated five stars on feedback ratings system as appreciation for Jessica's help, and uploaded the pictures of her birthday gift to share with others as well as Jessica's trip experience.

Here is Jessica's trip story: "My flight was on 9/2 morning. We should meet up on 8/31, but I went to Tai-Ping Mont., and I was not able to come back to Taipei on time; therefore, we rescheduled for next day (9/1) and met up at the place where I would be when she got off duty. All of our connection was definite and clear. Finally, I got Tiffany's gift and brought it back to Savannah. And~~, I am the first one who use this system successfully. Oh YA!"

(http://www.gohitchhike.com/profile_trip_detail.php?status=read&pid=24)

During the *GoHithhike* process, Tiffany and Jessica shared their item and trip stories on the website. It created online interactions and built social networks on the website. Jessica met Amy to pick up the gift and gave the gift to Tiffany face-to-face. It created physical interactions and social networks in the real world. Although Jessica and Tiffany both came from Taipei, Jessica still had the chance to know Amy's working area and her job. This successful case study proves that *GoHitchhike.com* surrounds emotional objects, creates social networks and leads to real world physical interactions.

The successful case study provided that *GoHitchhike.com* followed the theory and reached the goal. However, the relationships of social websites are complex, and the interactions surrounding the site won't always be expected. The next step is to promote *GoHitchhike* and ask more people to participate in the site. More testing feedback and future implementations will improve *GoHitchhike*, and I can image that friends getting closer, homesick people being cheered up, travelers experiencing different cultures, and even the earth becoming greener all because of *GoHitchhike*.

5.7. Future Implementations

The future implementations of *GoHitchhike* will focus on layout design surrounding emotional objects, and the development of the application for *Facebook* and possible mobile versions.

The layout of *GoHitchhike* is still based on function, which is finding the travelers to bring the items, but doesn't reflect the special stories and meanings behind the items very well. The stories of items and trips are too separated from the items and the trips.

The layout structure makes users lose attention on stories and decreases users' willingness to fill in their stories.

The future layout shall be designed as a blog format for users to easily read, write stories and import pictures. The item information such as required date and item location are placed on the right side of the page as an individual panel.

Based on the research of social websites, most of the sites have pages on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Some of them designed applications for *Facebook* such as *Dopplr* and *Zimride*. These websites are perfect examples that combine with an existing people social networking sites. The future step of *GoHitchhike* shall have an application, which has the same function as the website, for *Facebook*. Users can search travelers and requesters on *Facebook* with the application. Besides, to design an application for mobiles such as iPhone and Google phone is also a trend. Travelers can update their status anytime and communicate with requesters easily during trips.

Besides the main implementations, I would like to design a system to combine carbon dioxide calculation system with virtual gifts to encourage people to help others bring items and save the earth. To reach the goal, *GoHitchhike* will cooperate with the AMEE system to calculate how much carbon dioxide travelers save while helping requesters carry items. The saved carbon dioxide will be exchanged to points and be put into users' accounts. The points are used for encouragement purposes, and users can buy virtual gifts with the points. The virtual gift is designed based on popular requesters' items and drives users to understand more about the items. Users can send gifts to their friends, travelers, those who help bring items, or who collect them.

6. Conclusion

GoHitchhike.com is a social networking site centered on emotional objects. This site has been able to strengthen social networking through focusing on object-centered social networks. While traditional social sites such as *Facebook* have limitations of expanding the network beyond already known friends or instigating physical interactions, *GoHitchhike.com* accomplishes these tasks by providing transportation of hard to find items and creating stories around these emotional objects. Of particular, *GoHitchhike* hopes to provide a solution to emotional difficulties and support for homesickness. The design of this site has helped bring forth design issues for object-centered sites and how the layout of these sites can influence the socialization of the users. *GoHitchhike* in its initial tests has been quite successful in promoting socialization by providing an emotional focus. Emersion of personalized stories and stronger bonds between users were results expected from such designs. *GoHitchhike* continues exploring the concept of object-centered social networks by creating stronger bonds amongst the user, the object, and the virtual site environment.

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Appendix A.

Website layout



(Figure 1. Why Use Us page)


Sign up Login
Why Use Us How To Use Blog About

Item + Trip + Share

Add items that you want delivered and matching travelers with your hometown. Add your trip schedules and help requesters deliver your items. Share item stories and trip experiences.

[Check how people use GoHitchhike](#)

Most Popular Items Most Helpful People Most Popular Story



Jiunn Meei Pineapple Cake

Who received this item: [Mary Chen](#),

Who transported this item: [Peter Huang](#),

Who is waiting for this item:

Who is transporting this item: [Peters Huang](#),

Shop Address: [No. 301, Ta Chin St. Taichung, Taiwan](#)

Shop Website: <http://www.food168.com.tw>


[About](#) | [Blog](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#) | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.

(Figure 2. How To Use)

[Sign up](#) [Login](#)

[Why Use Us](#) [How To Use](#) [Blog](#) [About](#)

The Story Behinds GoHitchhike



The concept of GoHitchhike started from the idea of candy. Not just any candy, but my grandmother's homemade candy. She knows that I like to eat candy, especially when I feel upset, and she would give me some candy to encourage me.

At the end of 2006, I went back to Taiwan and visited my grandmother. At the time, I had already studied in the United States for a year, and was terribly homesick. She prepared a bag of her handmade candy and asked me to bring it back with me. Without a word, a full bag of homemade candy that she put in my hand clearly demonstrated her love for me.

(Figure 3. About page)

GO Hitchhike [Sign up](#) [Login](#)

[Why Use Us](#) [How To Use](#) [Blog](#) [About](#)

Login

Email:

Password:

Remember Me:

[Forget your password](#)

Login

Sign Up

Full Name:

Email:

Password:

Birthday:

Security Check:

Text in the box:

You have read and agreed to the [Statement of Rights](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

Sign Up

[About](#) | [Blog](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#) | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.

(Figure 4. Login/ Sign Up page)


The screenshot shows the GoHitchhike website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the GoHitchhike logo, a search bar, and links for Help, Settings, and logout. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with tabs for Browse, Profile, and Forum. The main content area is titled "David's" and includes sub-tabs for Info, Items, and Trips, along with buttons for Bookmarks, Add Item, and Add Trip. The profile for "David Fu" is displayed, featuring a profile picture, a ratings section with five stars and zero comments, and an "Edit" link. The profile information is organized into sections: Personal Info (Gender: male, Birthday: Jan / 10 / 1972, Email: fuwax@hotmail.com, Cellphone: 444-111-222222, Address: , , , Afghanistan,), Hometown (Country: Afghanistan, State/Province: Taichung), Schools (College: 111college), and Feedback Ratings (Ratings: five stars, 0 comments). A footer at the bottom contains links for About, Blog, Terms of Service, Privacy Policy, and Help, along with a copyright notice for 2009 GoHitchhike.

Help | Settings | logout

GO Hitchhike

Browse Profile Forum

David's Info Items Trips Bookmarks Add Item Add Trip

 **David Fu** [Edit](#)

Ratings: ★★★★★
0 comments

Personal Info:

Gender: male
Birthday: Jan / 10 / 1972
Email: fuwax@hotmail.com
Cellphone: 444-111-222222
Address: , , , Afghanistan,

Hometown:

Country: Afghanistan
State/Province: Taichung

Schools:


College: 111college

Feedback Ratings:

Ratings: ★★★★★ 0 comments

[About](#) | [Blog](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#) | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.

(Figure 5. User Info page)




[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)

Browse
Profile
Forum

David's

Info
Items
Trips

Bookmarks
Add Item
Add Trip



Pineapple Cake

Post Date: Nov / 14 / 2009

Item Status: Pending


Date Range: Aug / 01 / 2009 - Jan / 02 / 2010

Item Location: 380 Wen Sin Road, Taichung , Taiwan

Confirmed Traveler: No Confirmed Traveler

.....[More](#)

[Check Detail](#)
[Read Story](#)
[Edit](#)
[Delete](#)



super suop

Post Date: Sep / 06 / 2009

Item Status: Pending


Date Range: Sep / 05 / 2009 - Dec / 05 / 2009

Item Location: Taichung, Taiwan

Confirmed Traveler: No Confirmed Traveler

.....[More](#)

[Check Detail](#)
[Read Story](#)
[Edit](#)
[Delete](#)



Grandmom Spring Roll

Post Date: Aug / 22 / 2009

Item Status: Pending

Date Range: Sep / 01 / 2009 - Sep / 30 / 2009

Item Location: 3000 Florida Avenue, Miami, FL, United States

Confirmed Traveler: yuwei fu

.....[More](#)

[Check Detail](#)
[Read Story](#)
[Edit](#)
[Delete](#)

(Figure 6. Items List)


Help | Settings | logout

GO Hitchhike Browse Profile Forum

David's Item Info Story Bookmarks Add Item Add Trip

Pineapple Cake

[Edit](#)
[SHARE](#)



Category: [Food & Household](#)
Item Status: [Pending](#)
Date Range: [Aug / 01 / 2009 - Jan / 02 / 2010](#)
Confirmed Traveler: [No Confirmed Traveler](#)
Item Album: [http://](#)

Item Location



[Jiunn Meei](#)
Address: [380 Wen Sin Road, Taichung , Taiwan](#)
Website: [http://www.food168.com.tw/](#)

Leave Messages (0) [Add Comment](#)

Match List

People may help you.

People want similar Items



[Yuwei Fu](#) [Mary Chen](#)

[About](#) | [Blog](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#) | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.

(Figure 7. Item Info page)

The screenshot displays the GoHitchhike website interface. At the top left is the logo "GO Hitchhike" with a stylized orange hand icon. To the right of the logo are navigation buttons: "Browse", "Profile", and "Forum". Further right are links for "Help", "Settings", and "logout", followed by a search input field and a "GO" button. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with "David's Item" and buttons for "Info", "Story", "Bookmarks", "Add Item", and "Add Trip".

The main content area features the title "Pineapple Cake" and an "Edit" link. Below the title is a question: "Dose the item have any special meaning to you?". To the right of this question is a "SHARE" button. Below the question is a paragraph of text: "I am studying in United States. Everytime when I fly back, I always buy Jiunn Meei Pineapple Cake for my American friends. Once I brought to my intern company. My coworkers love it and would like to have more, but I won't be able to go back this year. I am graduating and leaving the company soon. I would like to thank my coworkers, who took care of me for two years, and send them the pineapple cake as my appreciation and wish. If you plan to visit Taichung, please help me. I will ask my brother to be tour guild and show you the city." To the right of the text is a "Vote" button with a red hand icon and a "0" in a red circle.

At the bottom of the page is a footer with links for "About", "Blog", "Terms of Service", "Privacy Policy", and "Help", followed by the copyright notice: "© 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved."

(Figure 8. Item Story page)

The screenshot shows the GO Hitchhike website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and links for Help, Settings, and logout. Below this is a user profile bar for 'David's' with tabs for Info, Items, Trips, Bookmarks, Add Item, and Add Trip. The main content area displays two trip listings. Each listing includes a title, travel details (Post Date, Trip status, Departure Date, Return Date, Other cities may visit), and the number of confirmed requesters. Action links for each trip include Check Detail, Read Story, Edit, and Delete.

Post Date	Trip status	Departure Date	Return Date	Other cities may visit	Confirmed Requesters	Action
Nov / 14 / 2009	Pending	Nov / 27 / 2009	Dec / 29 / 2009	Taipei, Taiwan	NO Requesters	Check Detail Read Story Edit Delete
Sep / 07 / 2009	Pending	Sep / 19 / 2009	Sep / 30 / 2009		NO Requesters	Check Detail Read Story Edit Delete

(Figure 9. Trips List page)

[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)


[Browse](#) [Profile](#) [Forum](#)

[David's Trip](#) [Info](#) [Story](#) [Bookmarks](#) [Add Item](#) [Add Trip](#)

Savannah, GA, United States - Taichung, Taiwan [Edit](#)

[SHARE](#)

Trip Info

Post Date: **Nov / 14 / 2009**
 Trip Status: **Pending**
 Confirmed Requesters:
 Trip Type: **Round Trip**
 Departure Date: **Nov / 27 / 2009**
 Return Date: **Dec / 29 / 2009**
 Trip Album: [http://](#)


Other cities May Visit

City: **Taipei, Taiwan**
 Comment:

Leave Messages (0) [Add Comment](#)

Match List

People may need your help.

		
David Fu	David Fu	David Fu
		
Yuwei Fu	Tiffany Chou	Yuwei Fu

People have similar trips


Yuwei Fu

[About](#) | [Blog](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#) | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.

(Figure 10. Trips Info page)

The screenshot displays the GoHitchhike website interface. At the top left is the GoHitchhike logo. To its right are navigation buttons for "Browse", "Profile", and "Forum". In the top right corner, there are links for "Help", "Settings", and "logout", along with a search input field and a "GO" button. Below this is a header for "David's Trip" with sub-tabs for "Info" and "Story". Further right are buttons for "Bookmarks", "Add Item", and "Add Trip". The main content area features the title "Savannah, GA, United States - Taichung, Taiwan" and an "Edit" link. Below the title is a text input area with the prompt "Did anything interest you during the trip?" and a "SHARE" button. The text entered in the input area reads: "I went to a night market in Taichung. It was impressed me that food over there is so good and crowded. I also tried the pineapple cake. Just like Yuwei mentioned that it is delicious and famous in Taichung. So many people wait on line to get it. I also bought some for my friends." At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links for "About", "Blog", "Terms of Service", "Privacy Policy", and "Help", followed by the copyright notice "© 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved."

(Figure 11. Trips Story page)



[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)

GO Hitchhike [Browse](#) [Profile](#) [Forum](#)

David's [Info](#) [Items](#) [Trips](#) [Bookmarks](#) [Add Item](#) [Add Trip](#)

Step 3. Sent a request mail:

Find people that you want to contact? Click Go button to send them request mails.

New York, NY, USA - Savannah, GA, USA by Traveler: yuwei fu Post Date: Aug / 30 / 2009 Delete			
	Date Range: Leave: Aug / 01 / 2009 Return: Aug / 29 / 2009	Travel City, Country: New York, NY, USA - Savannah, GA, USA	Confirmed Requester: David Fu, Yuwei Fu, David Fu, David Fu, GO Ask yuwei fu to bring my item
TPE, TW - SAVANNAH, GA, USA by Traveler: Jessica Yang Post Date: Aug / 27 / 2009 Delete			
	Date Range: Leave: Sep / 02 / 2009 Return: Sep / 02 / 2009	Travel City, Country: TPE, TW - SAVANNAH, GA, USA	Confirmed Requester: Yuwei Fu, Yuwei Fu, , Yuwei Fu, Yuwei Fu, , Tiffany Chou, Tiffany Chou, GO Ask Jessica Yang to bring my item
Taipei, Taiwan - Savannah, GA, US by Traveler: Vinok Wu Post Date: Aug / 28 / 2009 Delete			
	Date Range: Leave: Sep / 07 / 2009 Return: Sep / 07 / 2009	Travel City, Country: Taipei, Taiwan - Savannah, GA, US	Confirmed Requester: No Requesters GO Ask Vinok Wu to bring my item


(Figure 12. Bookmark page)

The screenshot shows the 'Add Item' page on the GoHitchhike website. At the top, the GoHitchhike logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Help', 'Settings', and 'logout' are on the right. Below the logo are tabs for 'Browse', 'Profile', and 'Forum'. A search bar with a 'GO' button is also present. The user's name 'David's' is displayed, followed by tabs for 'Info', 'Items', and 'Trips'. On the right side of this section are 'Bookmarks', 'Add Item', and 'Add Trip' buttons. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: 'Item Info' with a right arrow, 'Item From Friend & Family' (underlined), 'Item From Shop' (underlined), and 'Comment' with a right arrow. Below this is a dashed line and a section titled 'Item's Info'. The form includes: 'Item Photo:' with a text input and a '浏览...' button; 'Item Name:' with a text input; 'Category:' with a dropdown menu showing 'Select Category'; 'From Date:' and 'To Date:' with date pickers; and 'Album Link:' with a text input. At the bottom of the form are two underlined links: '[Item From Friend & Family](#)' and '[Item From Shop](#)'. The footer contains a copyright notice: 'About | Blog | Terms of Service | Privacy Policy | Help | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.'

(Figure 13. Add Item page)

The screenshot shows the 'Add Trip' page on the GoHitchhike website. At the top, the GoHitchhike logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Help', 'Settings', and 'logout' are on the right. Below the logo are buttons for 'Browse', 'Profile', and 'Forum'. A search bar with a 'GO' button is also present. The user's name 'David's' is displayed, followed by tabs for 'Info', 'Items', and 'Trips'. On the right side of this bar are 'Bookmarks', 'Add Item', and 'Add Trip' buttons. Below the navigation bar, there are three main sections: 'Trip Info', 'Other Cities May Visit', and 'Comment', each with a right-pointing arrow. The 'Trip Info' section is active and contains a form with the following fields: 'Trip Type' (a dropdown menu currently set to 'Single Trip'), 'Departure Date' and 'Return Date' (date pickers), 'From City' and 'To City' (text input fields), 'State' and 'Country' (text input fields for both origin and destination), and 'Album Link' (a text input field). A 'Next' button is located to the right of the 'Album Link' field. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links for 'About', 'Blog', 'Terms of Service', 'Privacy Policy', and 'Help', along with the copyright notice '© 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.'

(Figure 14. Add Trip page)



[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)

Browse
Profile
Forum

David's
Browse Trips
Browse Items

Step 1. Search People Scheduled Trips:

Looking for people help you bring items? Please fill the form and start to search.

1. Search where people will travel to:

City:

State:

Country:

2. Search when are people's trips:

Form:

To:

Search

Step1 Fill out the search form and start to search.

↓


Step2 Add people's scheduled trips to your Bookmarks page.

↓


Step3 Click Go button to ask people for help.

Order by [Date](#) / [Status](#)
Page 1 2

Savannah, GA, United States - Taichung, Taiwan by Traveler: **Yuwei Fu** Post Date: May / 23 / 2009

	<p>Time Range:</p> <p>Leave: May / 06 / 2009</p> <p>Return: May / 29 / 2009</p>	<p>Travel City, Country:</p> <p>Savannah, GA, United States - Taichung, Taiwan</p>	<p>Confirm Requesters:</p> <p>Mary Chen, ,</p>	Bookmark
--	--	---	---	--------------------------

(Figure 15. Browse Trips page)



[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)
 [GO](#)

Browse
Profile
Forum

David's
Browse Trips
Browse Items

Step 1. Search People Wanted Items:

Willing to help people bring items? Please fill the form and start to search.

1. Search what are people's requested items:

Food & Household

2. Search when will people like to get their items:

Form:

To:

3. Search where are those items located:

City:

State:

Country:

Taiwan

Search

Step1 Fill out the search form and start to search.

↓


Step2 Add people wanted items to your Bookmarks page.

↓

Step3 Click Go button to confirm people's requires.

Order by [Date](#)/[Status](#)
Page 1

Pineapple Cake by Requester: **Yuwei Fu**



Post Date: May / 23 / 2009

<p>Time Range:</p> <p>Leave: Mar / 09 / 2009</p> <p>Return: Oct / 31 / 2009</p>	<p>Item Location:</p> <p>lcity, lState, Taiwan</p>	<p>Confirm Traveler:</p> <p>Peters Huang</p>	<p>Bookmark</p>
--	---	---	---

(Figure 16. Browse Item page)


[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)

GO Hitchhike [Browse](#) [Profile](#) [Forum](#) [GO](#)


Forum Categories: [All](#) [Add Topic](#)

Page 1 [2](#) [Next](#)

Fans of Jiunn Meei Pineapple Cake

	<p>Description: Jiunn Meei is a 50th historical bakery located in Taichung city, Taiwan. Their pineapple cake is the best.</p>	<p>Messages: 0</p>	<p>Moderator: David Fu</p>
<p>Last message by: Nov / 14 / 2009</p>			

dd

	<p>Description: dd</p>	<p>Messages: 0</p>	<p>Moderator: David Fu</p>
<p>Last message by: Nov / 14 / 2009</p>			

(Figure 17. Forums List page)

GO Hitchhike [Browse](#) [Profile](#) [Forum](#) [Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#) [GO](#)

Forum Categories: [All](#) [Add Topic](#)

Fans of Jiunn Meei Pineapple Cake [Edit](#)



Forum Info:

Moderator(s): [David Fu](#)

Forum Categories: [Food & Household](#)


Description: Jiunn Meei is a 50th historical bakery located in Taichung city, Taiwan. Their pineapple cake is the best.

[Leave Message \(0\)](#)

[Add Comment](#)

[About](#) | [Blog](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#) | © 2009 GoHitchhike All right reserved.

(Figure 18. Forum Topic page)



Help

Q: What is Browse function for?

A: The "Browse Items" function allows you to search for requesters' items by date range, category and location.
The "Browse Trips" function allows you to search for travelers' trips by traveling date and city.

Q: What is Bookmarks function for?

A: The "Bookmark" function allows you to store your search result on your Bookmarks page.

Q; What is Match list for?

A: The "Match Lists" panel on Trip and Item detailed pages.
On Trip info detailed page, "Match List" panel displays "People May Need Your Help" and "People Have Similar Trips". On the "People May Need Your Help" panel, the panel lists requesters whose items match your trip info. On the "People Have Similar Trips", the panel lists other travelers that match your trip info.
On Item info detailed page, "Match List" panel displays "People May Help You" and "People Want Similar Item". The panel lists travelers that may help you, who matches your item location and date. "People Want Similar Items" panel lists requester wanting similar item.

Q: What is Confirm system for?

A: Confirm system displays on Bookmarks page, Item detailed page and Trip detailed page. It helps you send a confirmation mail to travelers or requesters stating that you would like to help. After they confirm your request, your name is on the confirmed field.

(Figure 19. Help page)



Statement of Rights and Responsibilities

This Statement of Rights and Responsibilities derives from the GoHitchhike Policy, and governs our relationship with users and others who interact with GoHitchhike. By using or accessing GoHitchhike, you agree to this Statement.

1. Privacy

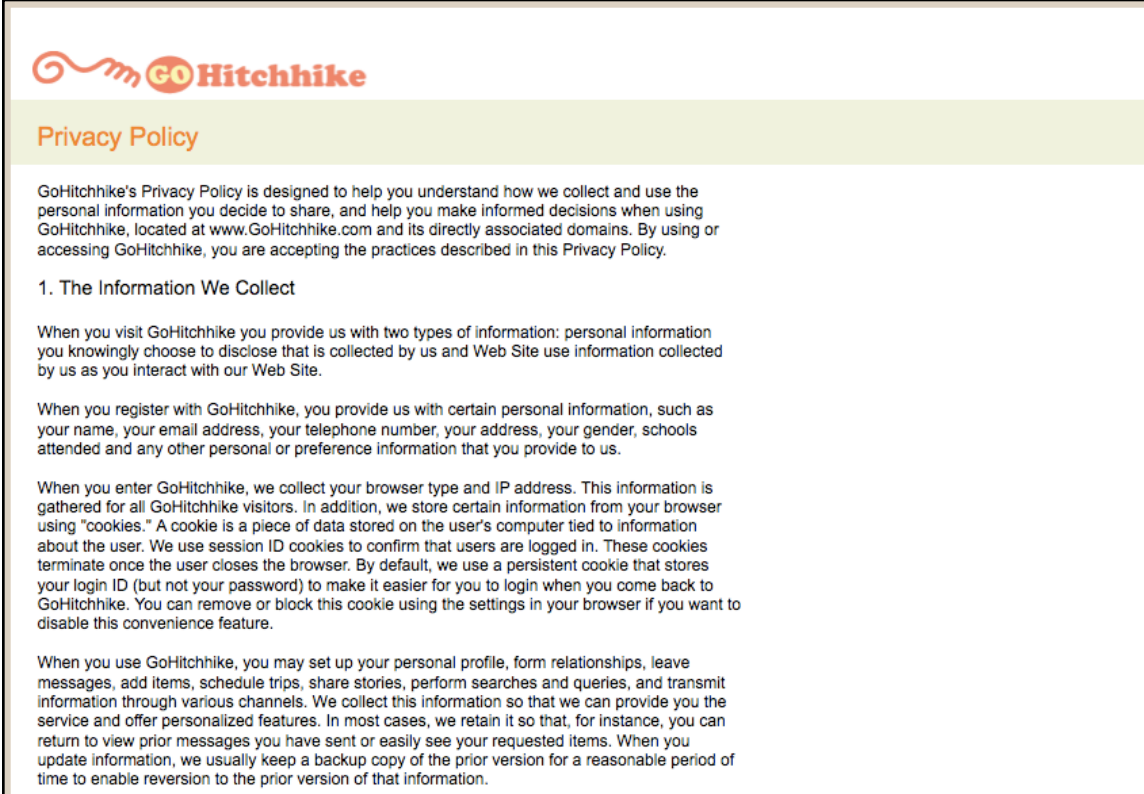
Your privacy is very important to us. We designed our Privacy Policy to make important disclosures about how you can use GoHitchhike to share with others and how we collect and can use your content and information. We encourage you to read the Privacy Policy, and to use it to help make informed decisions.


2. Sharing Your Content and Information

You own all of the content and information you post on GoHitchhike, and you can control how it is shared through your privacy. In addition:

- For content that is covered by intellectual property rights, like photos ("IP content"), you specifically give us the following permission, subject to your privacy: you grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with GoHitchhike ("IP License"). This IP License ends when you delete your IP content or your account unless your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it.
- When you delete IP content, it is deleted in a manner similar to emptying the recycle bin on a computer. However, you understand that removed content may persist in backup copies for a reasonable period of time (but will not be available to others).
- We always appreciate your feedback or other suggestions about GoHitchhike, but you understand that we may use them without any obligation to compensate you for them (just as you have no obligation to offer them).

(Figure 20. Statement of Right and Responsibilities page)



 **GoHitchhike**

Privacy Policy

GoHitchhike's Privacy Policy is designed to help you understand how we collect and use the personal information you decide to share, and help you make informed decisions when using GoHitchhike, located at www.GoHitchhike.com and its directly associated domains. By using or accessing GoHitchhike, you are accepting the practices described in this Privacy Policy.

1. The Information We Collect


When you visit GoHitchhike you provide us with two types of information: personal information you knowingly choose to disclose that is collected by us and Web Site use information collected by us as you interact with our Web Site.

When you register with GoHitchhike, you provide us with certain personal information, such as your name, your email address, your telephone number, your address, your gender, schools attended and any other personal or preference information that you provide to us.

When you enter GoHitchhike, we collect your browser type and IP address. This information is gathered for all GoHitchhike visitors. In addition, we store certain information from your browser using "cookies." A cookie is a piece of data stored on the user's computer tied to information about the user. We use session ID cookies to confirm that users are logged in. These cookies terminate once the user closes the browser. By default, we use a persistent cookie that stores your login ID (but not your password) to make it easier for you to login when you come back to GoHitchhike. You can remove or block this cookie using the settings in your browser if you want to disable this convenience feature.

When you use GoHitchhike, you may set up your personal profile, form relationships, leave messages, add items, schedule trips, share stories, perform searches and queries, and transmit information through various channels. We collect this information so that we can provide you the service and offer personalized features. In most cases, we retain it so that, for instance, you can return to view prior messages you have sent or easily see your requested items. When you update information, we usually keep a backup copy of the prior version for a reasonable period of time to enable reversion to the prior version of that information.

(Figure 21. Privacy Policy page)



[Help](#) | [Settings](#) | [logout](#)

Browse
Profile
Forum

Search: GO

Yuwei's item: Pineapple Cake

Story: I am studying in United States. Everytime when I fly back, I always buy Jiunn Meei **Pineapple Cake** for my American friends. Once I brought to my intern company. My coworkers love it and would like to have more, but I won't be able to go back this year. I am graduating and leaving the company soon. I would like to thank my coworkers, who took care of me for two years, and send them the pineapple cake as my appreciation and wish. If you plan to visit Taichung, please help me. I will ask my brother to be tour guild and show you the city.

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Mary's item: Pineapple cake

Forum: Pineapple Cake Fans
asdjflksjflkxcvbxv

David's item: Pineapple Cake

Story: I am studying in United States. Everytime when I fly back, I always buy Jiunn Meei **Pineapple Cake** for my American friends. Once I brought to my intern company. My coworkers love it and would like to have more, but I won't be able to go back this year. I am graduating and leaving the company soon. I would like to thank my coworkers, who took care of me for two years, and send them the pineapple cake as my appreciation and wish. If you plan to visit Taichung, please help me. I will ask my brother to be tour guild and show you the city.

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David Fu's Trip: Savannah, GA, United States - Taichung, Taiwan

Story: I went to a night market in Taichung. It was impressed me that food over there is so good and crowded. I also tried the **pineapple** cake. Just like Yuwei mentioned that it is delicious and famous in Taichung. So many people wait on line to get it. I also bought some for my friends.

Story: I went to a night market in Taichung. It was impressed me that food over there is so good and crowded. I also tried the **pineapple cake**. Just like Yuwei mentioned that it is delicious and famous in Taichung. So many people wait on line to get it. I also bought some for my friends.

Story:

Forum: Fans of Jiunn Meei Pineapple Cake

Jiunn Meei is a 50th historical bakery located in Taichung city, Taiwan. Their pineapple cake is the best.

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(Figure 21. Search Results page)

Appendix B.**Save money analysis, shipping fee form**

Here is my calculation of the fees:

2 boxes cost \$ 1020 NT dollars equal to \$30.34 US dollars.

(1 USD = 33.62 NTD, Feb 5, 2009)

The pineapple cakes can keep for 90 days, but the almond cookies only stay fresh for 15 days. Airmail takes 12-14 days and costs \$ 21 US dollars; Express mail takes 4-5 days and costs \$ 29.15 US dollars both without insurance. I chose express just in case the deliver delays. (The size of one box is 29.4cm x 23cm x 5.5cm, and weight is 950 g).

Country/ City	Beijing	Hong Kong	India	Japan	Korea	Malaysia
Air mail (USD)	\$65 (FedEx)	\$24.63	\$25.21	\$ 30.26	\$ 20.17	\$ 30.73
Express mail (USD)	\$68.57	\$32.64		\$ 44	\$ 34.8	
1 USD=	6.8388 CNY	7.75452283 HKD	48.59 INR	91.2075885 JPY	1373.62637 KRW	3.5895 MYR

(Form 1. Shipping fee costs from city and country in Asia.)

Country/ City	United Kingdom	Germany	Italian	Australia	New Zealand

Air mail (USD)	\$ 31.6	\$ 27	20.6	\$ 23	\$ 30
Express mail (USD)	\$ 40.7	\$19.8		\$ 47	\$ 68
1 USD=	0.7014EUR	0.7014EUR	0.7014EUR	1.2027 AUD	1.4789 NZD

(Form 2. Shipping fee costs from city and country in other areas.)

Appendix C.

Social website analysis

Name	Target users	Area	Main function	Other
Bebo (http://www.Bebo.com)	16 and up	Ireland, Canada, US, UK, New Zealand, Australia	open profile, video, music, apps, skins, authors, group	
Cyworld (http://www.Cyworld.com)	14 and up	Korea, US, China, Japan, Taiwan	open profile (includes photo, video, Miniroom, blog guestbook) talk, club, shop	Users can buy items from shop to decorate their Miniroom
Freindster (http://www.Freindster.com)	16 and up	Spanish	open profile, photo, blog, video, forum, search	
Friends Reunited (http://www.FriendsReunited.co.uk)	16 and up	UK	Friends reunited, genes reunited, dating, games, shopping, jobs	Register to view member's profile

Hi5 (http://www.Hi5.com)	16 and up	Global	Profile, friend list, photo, message, group, application	Register to view member's profile
Tagged (http://www.Tagged.com)	16 and up	Global	open profile, video, fun stuff, browse, search	
Nexopia (http://www.Nexopia.com)	14 and up	Canada	open profile, forums, articles, music, store (currently closed)	
Orkut (http://www.Orkut.com)	16 and up	Brazil(Alexa no.33), India(Alexa no.53), US	close profile, scrapbook, friend, community	Run by Google
Skyrock (http://www.Skyrock.com)	16 and up	Europe	open profile, blog, search, poker	

(Form 3. Social networking sites analysis I)

	User name	e-mail account	Keyword	Networks	City/Zip Code	Interests
Facebook	√	√	√	√		

Friendster	√	√	√	√	√	√
Hi5	√	√	√			
Orkut		√				

(Form 4. Social networking sites analysis II)

Appendix D.

User's search expectations and search system design

“Not all users are looking for the same thing. When developing a search system for a website, developers shall anticipate the most common types of needs that their site's users will have and ensure that these needs are met. Besides, developers shall also provide variable search systems that are flexible in responding to them.” (Morville).

On *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*, user's search expects into know-item search, existence searching, existence searching and exploratory searching.

Know-item searching: Users' information needs are clearly defined and have a single, correct answer. For example, the user is looking for a traveler who is traveling from Taipei city, Taiwan to New York City, United States this summer vacation.

Existence searching: Users know what they want but don't know how to describe it or whether the answer exists at all. For example, the user knows he or she needs a traveler for helping bring an item, but doesn't know how to find a traveler.

Exploratory searching: Users know how to phrase their question, but don't know exactly what they're hoping to find, and are really just exploring and trying to learn more. For example, the user heard of the service of *GoHitchhike*, and would like to request an item.

Comprehensive searching: Users want everything available on a given topic. They usually are scientific researchers, patent lawyers, doctoral students. The user is a patent lawyer who is charged to patent *GoHitchhike*.

GoHitchhike provides browse function and keyword search system to support users' different search expectations. The browse function focuses on know-item searching users and existence searching users. The browse function is divided into Browse Item and Browse Trip. The Browse Item is for travelers to find any item they can bring during their scheduled trips by filling item location, date range and item category; The Browse Trip is for requesters to find if any traveler plans to go required item locations by filling in the trip starting location and ending location, and date range. The browse results show matched items or trips.

The keyword search system is designed for exploratory searching users and comprehensive searching users. The keywords include user name, user email, item name, city, state, country, and forum name. The results are different in browse function that focuses on basic item and trip information. Instead, the result of keyword search highlights the keyword and displays detail content. For example, type "pineapple cake" into the keyword search field, the result comes out who required pineapple cake, and what is the special meaning of pineapple cake for the requester. Besides, any topic of the forum that relates to pineapple cake will also display. On the other hand, if typing "Taichung", the result comes out who travels from or to Taichung city and the trip experience. Meanwhile, members' hometowns in Taichung will also display.

Appendix E.

Website case study

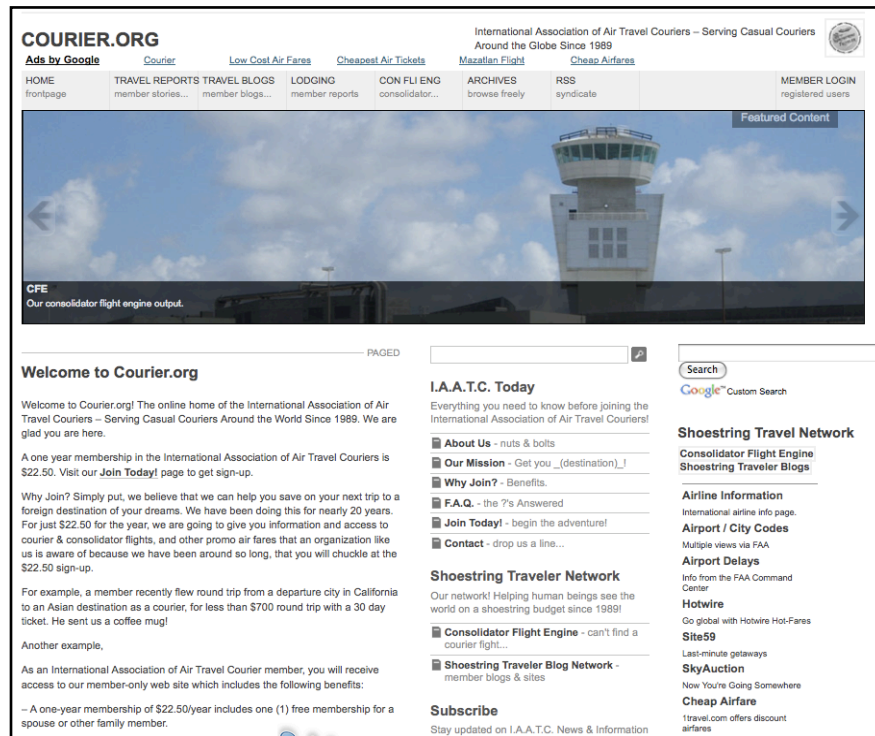
E.1. Casual Couriers Sites: The Casual Courier, Courier.org

Casual Courier (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casual_courier) is an everyday traveler that informally delivers packages for shippers. The term describes an alternative delivery practice of sending items from one place to another via independent traveler. Air Courier works for traditional courier companies as an employee and may receive discounted airline tickets. Air couriers may not have existing travel plans or depend on discounted tickets to schedule their trips.

The differences between casual couriers and air couriers are that casual couriers usually have existing travel plans before agreeing to deliver a package for a sender. Air couriers are more limited than casual couriers when it comes to dates of travel, destination, trip duration and baggage.

The Casual Courier and *Courier.org* are two examples of casual courier websites. *The Casual Courier* (<http://www.casualcourier.com>) brings the world together by connecting senders of packages with independent traveling couriers. *Courier.org* is an International Association of Air Travel Couriers and services casual couriers around the world since 1989. The website started in 1996 with the Travel Reports and Travel Blogs sections for members sharing their travel experience. In 2004, the site added the consolidator flight engine to search globally for the cheapest flight ticket.

The difference between *Gohitchhike* and casual courier is that *Gohitchhike* is through friends to help each other; casual courier is through courier companies to schedule the trip. Normally, couriers and receivers don't know each other.



(Figure 1. The index of Courier.org. August 7, 2009)

E.2. Transport Service Sites: MaxDelivery.com, Yourmaininindia.com

MaxDelivery.com is a website that helps you deliver the things you need everyday within an hour by bicycle or scooter. The everyday things include what you can buy in a grocery store, drugstore, gourmet foods store, and a video store. Currently, the delivery area covers lower Manhattan, below 34th Street on the West Side and 26th Street on the east. Besides the website, *MaxDelivery* also publishes on *Facebook* (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-York-NY/MaxDeliverycom/49973446396>) that allows people to become a fan, share their using experience and build the social

networking. *MaxDelivery* believes that life is getting more hectic and our free time is getting more precious. *MaxDelivery* helps you save your free time and brings you things you need instead of spending time walking to and from the stores, standing in line, and carrying heavy packages.

The screenshot shows the MaxDelivery.com website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for home, help, register, and login. The main navigation bar lists categories: DVDs, Supermarket, Drug Store, Best of NY, and Specials. A prominent banner at the top right offers "Free One-Hour Delivery on all orders over \$75" and "10% off your 1st order & Free 1-Hour Delivery" with coupon code MAXD. Below this, the main content area is divided into several product category tiles: SUPERMARKET (listing fresh produce, meat, and bakery), DRUG STORE (listing OTC products, health & beauty, and children's goods), BEST OF NY (listing local New York brands like Sugar Sweet Sunshine and Murray's Cheese), and Fresh Fish From Wild Edibles. A sidebar on the right contains promotional banners for "10% off", "On Sale!", "Are You Signed Up?", and "Office Supplies". At the bottom, a "Save 10% Plus FREE Delivery" section highlights a 10% discount on popular items and free delivery on every order. The footer includes a navigation menu with links for FAQ, Privacy Policy, Terms and Conditions, and contact information.

(Figure 2. The index of Maxdelivery.com. August 7, 2009)



(Figure 3. Maxdelivery.com on Facebook. August 7, 2009

<<http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-York-NY/MaxDeliverycom/49973446396>>)

YourManInIndia.com is a service window for the world to get anything done in India. The website lists the common requests and gives users the general idea what the company can do. Users can fill out the task form if they couldn't find their request lists on the website. Here are categories of service on the site: Official documents, Immigrant/non-immigrate services, Family and friends, Investment and Legal, Travel, Other service, and Property assistance. Every task lists a service fee.

(Figure 4. The index of Yourmaninindia.com. August 7, 2009)

I found some related services, which are “keep in touch” and “find a friend” under the family and friends category. Keep in touch service lists tasks: Buy a Computer, Internet Connection and Telephone Connection. Find a friend service helps find an old school or college friend. With the details you furnish to us, we will use our network to find the latest whereabouts of the person you want to get in touch with.

During my researches, these two websites are more close to *GoHitchhike* than courier companies. People use *GoHitchhike* can require travelers to do more than the basic transport. Requesters can ask travelers to multitask such as bringing electrical appliances to fix at original shops, and sending them to requesters’ friends after fixing. Like *YourManInIndia*, there is no limit property of task between requesters and travelers.

E.3. Share Traveling Experience: Couch Surfing

CouchSurfing.org is a worldwide network for making connections between travelers and the local communities they visit. The goal of *CouchSurfing* is to build meaningful connections across cultures enabling us to respond to diversity with curiosity, appreciation and respect. *CouchSurfing* is a non-profit organization that members volunteer to maintain the community. The website provides powerful search with verification level, vouched and ambassadors to make *CouchSurfing* community healthy and trustworthy.

Verification makes surfers believe that your identity and house locations by checking your name and address. When users get verified, they own more benefits of profile options and search rankings.

Vouching requires three other members who know you in the real world and vouch for you. Once you have been vouched for three times, you are qualified for vouching others.

Ambassadors are defined to five levels, nomadic, city, family, country, and global. To apply different ambassadors requires different participations in *CouchSurfer* community. Ambassadors represent the reliabilities and responsibility of the members.

The screenshot shows the CouchSurfing.org website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Login', 'Surf / Host', 'Community', 'Messages', 'Share', and 'About'. Below the navigation bar is a main banner with the CouchSurfing logo and a tagline: 'CouchSurfing is a worldwide network for making connections between travelers and the local communities they visit.' To the right of the banner is a search section titled 'SEARCH FOR A COUCH NOW!' with a search box and buttons for 'Find Out More', 'Is This Safe?', and 'Sign Up Now!'. Below the search section is a 'CouchSurfing Statistics' section featuring a world map and a list of statistics: CouchSurfers (1,417,970), Successful Surf or Host Experiences (1,478,550), Friendships Created (1,640,074), Positive Experiences (2,632,076), Countries Represented (231), and Cities Represented (65,297). To the right of the statistics is a 'Testimonial' section with a photo of Jim Stone and a quote: 'CouchSurfing is the best thing to happen to travel since the airplane. I've stayed in well over 100 homes of complete strangers through this site and have had the time of my life. CouchSurfers are t... read more'. On the far right is a 'Users Online' sidebar showing a list of countries with user avatars: Canada, Germany, Germany, Canada, United States, United States, Singapore, United States, Taiwan, and China. Below the statistics and testimonial is a 'Some Random CouchSurfers' section with four user profiles: a male from Vancouver, Canada; a female from New York, United States; a male from Vienna, Austria; and a male from Auroville, Tamil Nadu, India. On the left side, there are 'Quick Links' (FAQ's, Sign Up Now!, About CouchSurfing, What Members Say, Interesting Statistics, New CouchSurfers, CouchSurfing Tips, Latest News, Surf Shop, CS Collectives) and 'Latest News' (General News, Worldwide Events, CouchStories - Tales from the Sofasphere).

(Figure 5. The index of Couchsurfing.org. August 7, 2009)

CouchSurfing drives surfers and hosts face to face interaction just like *GoHitchhike*. The ways that *CouchSurfing* provides trustworthy are good reference for *GoHitchhike* to filter travelers and requesters.