FLATSFORFRIENDZ

FROM OPPORTUNITY TO VALUE PROPOSITION OF A NEW

SOCIAL FLAT-RENTAL PLATFORM

CUSTOMER DISCOVERY

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CUSTOMER VALIDATION, PIVOT AND VISION

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Abstract

This work project covers the development of an opportunity to a potentially marketable product as part of the master's thesis at the Nova School of Business and Economics. It introduces a hybrid solution that facilitates how users can find a flat or tenant within their extended network. The work aims to investigate different user-profiles and their needs to achieve problem/solution fit as well as product/market fit. Within a comprehensive field research, the Lean Startup approach and the Customer Development Process framework were applied. Following these, this work shows how adjustments have been made to best respond to the gathered insights.

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1. Introduction

Remembering who exactly offered a flat in Berlin over the summer, that got advertised in an Instagram Story, posted already several days ago is most of the times impossible. Something that the two founders have experienced many times, independently of each other, and always full of head-scratching frustration. Finding a suitable flat is comparable to searching for a needle in a haystack. However, the needle can be found much faster with the friendly support of a helpful network. The two founders themselves have also already used Instagram Stories several times to ask their digital network for help in their flat search in different life situations and in different cities. Furthermore, both have also tried to respectively help their friends - sometimes with more, sometimes with significantly less success. Instagram Stories do not abolish the conventional flat search methods, such as WG-gesucht.de or Immoscout. However, they are supplemented by this increasingly favored method. After all, finding a flat or the next tenant via the personal (extended) network has many advantages. To sum it up in business terms: Less effort with significantly more return. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the previous status quo was not optimal because the probability of a fortunate coincidence that two matching story inquiries (offer-search) would meet in the network at the same day, as Instagram Stories disappear automatically after 24 hours was extremely low. And this was precisely the problem - the impossibility of a longer-term matching combined with the general difficulty to find a flat, which gave rise to the first version of FlatsForFriendz in May 2020 - an Instagram page intended to function as a retrievable database in terms of matching flat-searchers and offerors in the circle of acquaintances. After the brand FlatsForFriendz became more and more known over the course of a year, and the initial solution met with certain approval from the users, the two founders decided to professionalize and further develop the site starting in May 2021 as part of their upcoming master thesis at the Nova School of Business and Economics. Based on user feedback, the initial solution was (and still is) far from optimal. For this reason, qualitative and

quantitative analyses were set up and validated in the form of six experiments with dozens of associated hypotheses. The goal of the following work was, based on the Lean Startup approach and the Customer Development Process framework, to leverage an initial solution that arose from a gut feeling to a bullet-proof value proposition and thus lay the foundation of a sustainable business model. FlatsForFriendz wants to maximize the probability of the fortunate coincidence, by facilitating how friends can exchange their flats through an efficient matching process that is based on the personal network.

2. Research Question and Methodology

This work project answers the question of *How to leverage an opportunity to a value proposition for a new social flat-rental platform*. For that, the research question is divided into two distinct sub-questions:

1) *Who are the customers and what do they value?*

2) *How to turn gained insights into a potentially marketable product*?

In this work, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used. The literature review examines the underlying theories and concepts on which the field research part is based on. Through a market analysis, the most important competitors are named and analyzed. In addition, one of the largest competitors is examined in more detail to derive valuable learnings on how to reach problem/solution fit as well as product/market fit. The field research part, which is based on the Lean Startup approach and the Customer Development Process, highlights different experiments that were conducted to better understand the users' behaviors, needs and problems. A total of six different experiments were conducted. These included extensive surveys, in-depth interviews, and a testing of a first MVP solution. The results were carefully analyzed for all experiments to draw valuable conclusions on how problem/solution and product/market fit can be achieved.

The thesis is structured as follows: First, the underlying concepts of the Lean Startup approach and Customer Development Process are introduced. Then an insight into the ideas of product thinking and the strength of network is presented. This is followed by a market overview for flat-rental platforms in Germany and an in-depth analysis of Airbnb to draw helpful conclusions for the development of a successful startup. In the field research part, six experiments are conducted to validate the respective hypotheses. The results, a pivot and the future vision are then presented before an overall conclusion is drawn. An overview of the basic Instagram Terminology that is used in this work can be found in Appendix 16.

3. Literature Review

In the following section, the Lean Startup approach, and the Customer Development Process (CDP), in which the Customer discovery and Customer validation are highlighted in more depth, are presented, and discussed. These paragraphs are followed by a field-based literature review that focuses first on the philosophy of product thinking, which has helped develop the initial FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution and secondly on the actual strength and increasing importance of the personal network.

3.1 Validation Methodology: Lean Startup and Customer Development Process

The Lean Startup approach assumes that every startup idea must first be regarded as unproven hypotheses. These hypotheses can only be considered confirmed once they have been validated using empirical methods. If hypotheses cannot be validated successfully, they must be replaced by new ones. Only when all success-critical hypotheses have been confirmed it is possible to proceed to the next phase (Ries 2011). Testing and validating different hypotheses should be done as quickly and cost-effectively as possible to avoid unnecessary waste of time and resources. This is often done with the help of quick experiments and so-called minimum viable products (MVPs) (Glatzel & Lieckweg 2017). Thus, the Lean Startup approach was introduced

to minimize the failure risk of a startup (Eckert 2017). The general idea of the Lean Startup builds on the Customer Development Process. The model separates all the customer-related activities in an early stage of a company into four steps: Customer discovery, Customer validation, Customer creation, and Company building (Blank & Dorf 2005). As shown in Figure 1, the four stages are divided into two phases. The search phase, including Customer discovery and Customer validation, as well as the execution phase, including Customer creation and Company building. While the business model is developed, tested, and validated in the search phase, the execution phase enforces the previously tested and validated business model. The entire CDP is characterized above all by the fact that it is an iterative process. This means that each step in the CDP is repeated until there are enough measurable results to successfully take the next step. Measurable results are clearly defined KPI's that make the success or failure
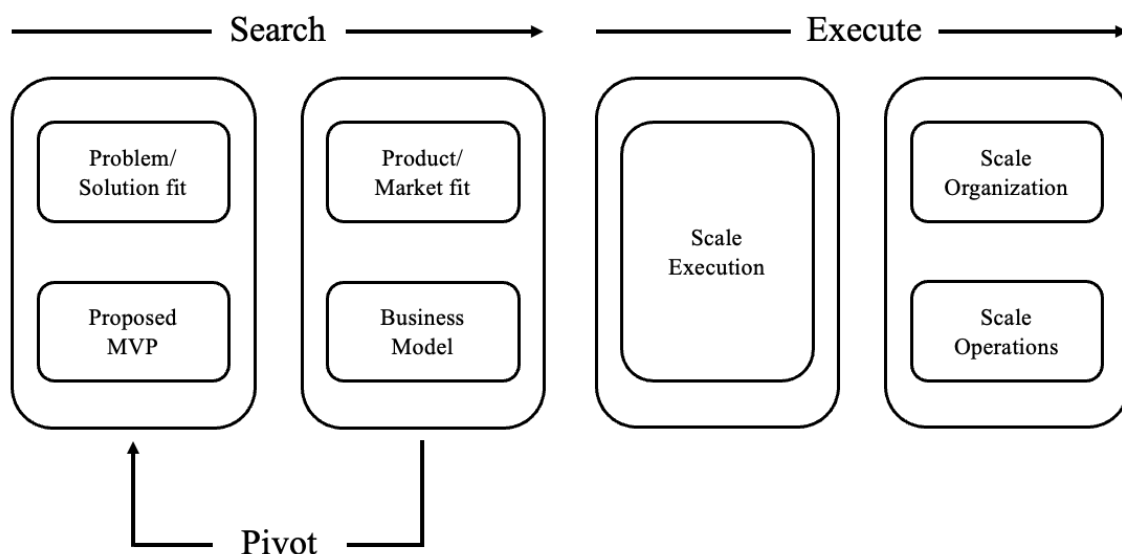

Figure 1: Customer Development Process (Cooper & Vlaskovitz 2013)

of a company or startup visible. By observing new learnings and failures throughout the entire cycle, the CDP enables startups to react to mistakes and incorrect assumptions with pivots. Pivots are "structured course corrections designed to test a new fundamental hypothesis." (Arteaga & Hyland 2013).

3.2 Search Phase of Customer Development Process

In the scope of this work, the focus was mainly on the search phase of the CDP. It was meant to take a closer look at the initially assumed problem/solution fit and critically question it. In doing so, it is evaluated to what extent the original assumption of an existing problem is valid and to what extent adjustments may have to be made. During the Customer discovery phase, startup founders formulate their business model into different hypotheses and then validate or reject them through different tests and experiments. Consequently, they try to convert the hypotheses, through experiments into facts to achieve problem-solution fit. Subsequently, in the Customer validation phase, an attempt is made to build on the previously gained insights to achieve product-market fit in order to prove that a scalable and sustainable business model has been discovered.

3.3 Product Thinking

In addition to the methodology of the Lean Startup approach and the CDP, the associated philosophy of product thinking, which is part of the problem-solution fit in the Customer discovery, needs to be explored in more detail (Saboune 2019). While methodologies are much more tangible, the approach of a product thinker is more holistic and focuses on the qualitative relationship between product and people. The terms' philosophy and methodology are by no means opposites but rather complementary concepts that pursue the goal of developing innovative and value-creating products. In literature, product thinking is defined as the "[...] skill of knowing what makes a product useful - and loved - by people" (Zhuo 2021). And like any skill, it can be nourished and trained in some way by anyone. For example, the initial FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution, with its originally identified problem was created solely on observation, simple reaction tests, and practical peer-group questionings. This act of instinctive action is comparable to the Facebook-led, Lean Startup ideology of "move fast and break things" (Slocum 2015). And precisely because observations and inquiries are the fundamental

pillars of product thinking, it is worthwhile to examine this approach further, not only subconsciously for the conception of a low fidelity MVP, but to understand the concept of product thinking for further elaboration of a potentially marketable product. These two pillars are the two most essential skills in product thinking that can be furthermore trained by trying to actively absorb the environment and being curious to interview and understand peoples' habits (Zhuo 2021). Wrong solution features can be fixed, but a non-existing problem based on previously made misunderstandings of the user isn't adjustable at all (Blaase 2015). These observations can be fed with quantitative and qualitative feedback to understand user reactions, learn from them, and draw necessary conclusions. In this way, a gut feeling, an instinct, a sixth sense for problems to be solved, dissatisfactions, market gaps and fundamental ideas develop over time, which are made tangible and testable in the form of hypotheses in a next step. Peter Thiel presents this topic in his book *Zero to One* in the Chapter "The Future of Progress". He refers on the one hand to the ability of a vertical progress of creating something completely new, in a step that is called *0 to 1*. On the other hand, he also presents the ability of a horizontal progress of copying and improving something, in a step that is called *1 to n* (Thiel 2014). In either of the progress, product thinking plays a central role in terms of innovation. But product thinking alone is not enough. The recipe must also include additional ingredients such as design thinking (often mistakenly regarded as a synonym for product thinking) and in-depth data analysis (Plattner, Meinel and Leifer 2011). Product thinking and the use of data lead to product design, which defines the product vision. In contrast to design thinking and its precise action instructions of iterative testing and prototyping, such as a 5-day design sprint, product thinking is relatively unstructured and unconventional, based on self-made experiences and interviews (Brenner and Uebernickel 2016). Design thinking tries to translate a proven gut feeling into the real world. But first and foremost, it is about understanding the people's problems and developing a particular hunch. Therefore, product thinking is a desired prerequisite for the

Customer discovery and development of product features. Design thinking initiates Customer validation, the next step of the CDP.

3.4 The Strength of Network

The following section addresses the increasing importance of the (digital) personal network in a more practical context. The world is constantly moving a little bit closer together. The changing network dynamics caused by the increasing globalization and digitization are the main drivers for an evolving form of nepotism based on the personal "know-who" (Alhanati 2020). Regardless of the generation, digital and analogue networks are expanding across national borders due to various factors, such as more and more transatlantic relationships or digital social networks. These networks offer flourishing support opportunities in nearly all kinds of life situations, which is why a network is also called the "social capital" in literature (Wolff and Moser 2009) – and, for example, could be especially helpful while searching for a flat.

A personal network is defined by Tom Friel, Former Chairman and CEO of Heidrick & Struggle, in his guest lecture "How to network" at the Graduate School of Business at Stanford, as "anybody who can make a connection to somebody that might be willing to help you […]". He emphasized that many people are not even aware of their network's actual size and efficiency (Friel 2021). At the same time, size cannot be seen as a synonym for either the network's efficiency or quality. Just because somebody knows many people doesn't necessarily mean that these people care about supporting this person. However, the probability of receiving some support is much higher with an extensive network. As already mentioned, two types of networks, the digital and the analogue network, need to be distinguished, especially in terms of quality. Although there are a lot of intersections between these two different networks, in most cases, the digital network is much more extensive and, in a paradoxical sense, more visible. For example, through the degrees of connections on LinkedIn or common friends on Facebook. Nowadays, more and more digital connections don't require previous physical contact and may

also arise even without any prior reference, which is different from the analogue world. Thus, the digital network can, to some extent, be leveraged in a much more scalable way, which subsequently increases the size and, therefore, the potential support of the personal network.

Already in 1967, the U.S. psychologist Stanley Milgram and other researchers investigated in the "small world experiment", the hypothesis that everyone in the world is to some extent connected to every other human being through a surprisingly small degree of connections (Travers 2010). They have found out that, on average, all people are linked by 6.6 touchpoints (Zhang and Tu 2009). This phenomenon is often referred to as the "six degrees of separation", mainly shaped by John Guare in 2007. This number has decreased throughout history. But this reduction has gained momentum, especially in the last 30 years, due to the emergence of digital social networks. In December 1995, Randy Conrads launched a website called *classmates*, which set the starting signal for a race of new digital social networks. *Classmates* was quickly followed by well-known networks such as *Friendster* (2002), *LinkedIn* (2003), *MySpace* (2003) and *Facebook* (2004) (Ngak 2011). The number of touchpoints has significantly decreased through these digital social networks. A Facebook commissioned study from 2016 underlines this, stating that the former 6.6 touchpoints have been reduced to 3.5 in the Facebook-Community (Chew 2016). Of course, this study can only be cited with a certain degree of caution and cannot be fully generalized as not everybody in the world is using Facebook. Still, a certain indication of the effect of social networks can be derived from it. The previously mentioned increased transparency in the digital network, for example, Instagram disclosing shared followers, set a systematic network enlargement automatism in motion. Besides the potential of speedier network growth, the awareness of its importance also continues to grow. An excellent example of the importance of the network can be seen in the so-called "grey job market"— the market where jobs are obtained solely with the help of the network. Looking at various cross-national statistics, the number of job offerings based on nepotism ranges between

25 and 70 percent (Brügger 2017). As a result, the sayings "Your network is your net worth" or "It's not what you know, it's who you know" get a whole new meaning. In summary, the size of the two highly overlapping digital and analogue networks is increasing. However, this rapid growth also reduces the quality of connections as the network starts to anonymize slowly. But as Tom Friel closed his presentation: "You might not always know who they are, but […] you can still make that work for you".

4. Market Analysis

A competitor analysis is an essential part of the formulation of a business strategy and should therefore be considered in this work (Clark & Montgomery, 1999; Bergen & Peteraf, 2002). In addition to a general analysis of the individual sectors in the flat-rental market, various direct and indirect competitors of FlatsForFriendz are named in the following paragraph and analyzed in more detail.

4.1 Market Overview and Competitor Analysis

The flat-rental market has changed significantly over the last few decades. Particularly with the increasing degree of digitization in society, many new products and platforms entered the market, some of which have revolutionized the brokerage of flats to a very great extent. Platforms such as Airbnb, for example, enable millions of people to search for or offer flats online (Lee & Kim 2018). At the same time, people are far more free-spirited and frivolous these days, with the result that owners of rental flats are experiencing an increasing number of tenant changes. This ensures a steadily increasing demand for rental flats that offer short- to mid-term rental periods (Shokoohyar & Sobhani 2020). Overall, the flat-rental market is very fragmented. The following analysis has been divided into three main segments. Short-term rental flats (<2 months), mid-term rental flats (2-18 months) and long-term rental flats (>18 months). Providers such as Booking.com or Interchalet focus mainly on renting flats for a short

period of time, ranging from a few days to a few weeks. They offer almost exclusively furnished flats. Their focus lies on vacation flats, and they often promote commercial offerings.

Platforms such as Spotahome, Uniplaces or Housing Anywhere mainly focus on flat offerings with a rental period of just a few months. These providers enter into long-term contracts with property owners and then sublet them to their customers. In doing so, they take over the entire management process of the property and broker it independently via their platforms. Here, too, the flats offered are essentially rented furnished. Their customer focus lies mainly on young students or professionals who happened to study or work in a new city for a limited period of time.

Long-term rental platforms such as Immoscout and Idealista mainly offer unfurnished flats and indefinite rental periods. They mediate directly between tenant and landlord. Both, private landlords and commercial companies can advertise their flats independently and offer them for rent or purchase.

Some Platforms such as Airbnb and the German provider WG-Gesucht.de cover several segments at the same time, ranging from short-term vacation homes to flats with indefinite rental periods. Since FlatsForFriendz offerings also vary from short to long term rental periods, those providers, therefore, represent the strongest competitors. In order to examine the development of a successful competitor and to be able to draw valuable implications, the example of Airbnb is examined in more depth in the following paragraph.

4.2 The example of Airbnb

Airbnb was chosen because it reveals many parallels to FlatsForFriendz in terms of industry and customer segments. The idea of Airbnb originated in 2007 when the two founders, Brian Chesky and Nathan Blecharczyk could not pay the rent of their flat and were desperately looking for a new way to finance it. Without further ado, they came up with the idea of renting out sleeping spaces in their own flat to other guests to earn some extra money (Gallagher 2017).

For this purpose, a simple website was created, through which users could book a place to sleep in the flat of the two founders. Shortly after the website went live, a large conference was held in San Francisco, the founders' hometown. As a result, all hotels in the entire city were completely booked. The founders took advantage of this opportunity and managed to host their first three guests during the conference.

However, the initial enthusiasm was followed by disillusionment immediately after the conference. Nobody visited their website, and accordingly, no flats were offered, nor were any customers looking for a flat. This problem is referred to as the Chicken Egg dilemma (Scherrer 2019). The first attempt showed that there might be a market for Airbnb's idea, but it could not be satisfied with the first solution. Following the Lean Startup approach, a new website was developed, and a novel launch was planned the following year. It was hypothesized that the original design and name "airbedandbreakfast.com" were not appealing enough. So, the founders tested a new design and continued to operate under the new name "Airbnb". This rebranding led to 600 guests finding an accommodation via Airbnb during a large conference in Denver immediately after the re-launch (Guttentag 2015). Nevertheless, this success was also only short-lived. After the conference, the revenue per week was only $200. So, the entire idea was questioned again to find out why nobody uses Airbnb repeatedly. For this purpose, numerous interviews were conducted until it finally turned out that people had no confidence in staying with strangers. The question arose why people had no trust and how this could be changed. Through further interviews, different hypothesis tests, and numerous experiments, the founders found out that low-quality and not informative pictures did not give an inviting impression but acted as a deterrent. The founders decided to fly to New York, their biggest market, and talk directly to their customers while also taking professional pictures of the flats on their own. They went out of the building themselves and got the job done. With the newly gained customer insights and the new pictures, the traction on their site could finally be

increased significantly. A key factor of Airbnb's success was the change of their focus from shared spaces to all types of accommodations. As this example shows, a successful startup requires many adjustments and changes along the way. New hypotheses must be established, tested, and repeatedly validated to ultimately be able to offer a successful product. This way of acting quickly and being customer-oriented drastically minimizes the risk of working on a product for months without knowing whether there is real potential in the market or not.

4.3 Implications for FlatsForFriendz

A lot of helpful insights for a successful startup can be derived when analyzing the development of Airbnb over the first few years. One not surprising but concise insight was that the journey from the first idea to the final solution, is in most cases, an iterative process. It is a long way in which new experiences and observations lead to ideas being rethought or wholly overthrown. Everyone who is not prepared to learn quickly from mistakes and keeps trying new approaches will always have a hard time being successful, regardless of the idea. From the example of Airbnb, it can be seen that startups should always try to enter the market quickly with the first version of a product instead of focusing too long on the not existing "perfect" product. In this way, valuable feedback can be gathered within a short period, and the risk of working too long on an idea that does not appeal in the end is significantly reduced. It is crucial to gather as much qualitative and quantitative feedback as possible and talk to customers independently. Over time, the view on specific details is often so biased that it is easy to lose sight of customers and their needs. As a result, a first product does not achieve the desired success and must be completely rethought most of the time. Even though Airbnb's first product was not a success, it could be observed that on the one hand, there was a market for their idea, and on the other hand, only because the first product was tested so quickly, the necessary feedback could be collected to improve the product. It was only through this iterative process of repeatedly creating, testing, and validating or rejecting new hypotheses that Airbnb became as successful as it is today.

5. Field Research

The Field research was based on the Lean Startup approach and the search phase of the CDP. The effort was exclusively focused on Customer discovery and Customer validation to achieve a problem-solution fit and a potential product-market fit. For this purpose, several different hypotheses were formulated, which were then tested, validated, or, if necessary, rejected with the help of various experiments. These individual experiments were explained in more detail and interpreted before an overall conclusion was drawn — this conclusion includes a pivot and the vision for FlatsForFriendz.

5.1 Customer Discovery

This section focuses on the first stage of the CDP - Customer discovery. The goal was to develop a user profile based on their needs and problems and to determine what they value. For this purpose, various hypotheses were formulated, tested and, as a result, validated or rejected with the help of four experiments.

5.1.1 Experiment 1 – FlatsForFriendz Instagram Page

The primarily private Instagram page FlatsForFriendz was initially created on May 4th 2020, to support only a few close friends of the two founders in their flat-search and -offering on Instagram. It is important to note that the use and functionality of the site are limited to the given Instagram infrastructures. It required many pragmatic and creative approaches to tackle all the challenges along the way. In its initial amateurish form, the site was not explicitly created for this master thesis. However, the roughly collected results of the first 12 months (May 2020 – May 2021) were enough to identify a high degree of potential. Therefore, the history of FlatsForFriendz was divided into two different phases:

Phase 1: Based on rudimentary observations and a certain amount of Instagram knowledge, the following problem was identified after brief cross-checks with a small, non-socially representative group, during their everyday browsing of Instagram stories: More and more people start searching for or offering their flat on Instagram in the form of custom-made Instagram stories for different periods. The reasons for this type of Instagram use vary, but factors such as the simplicity to use, speed, and trust in the digital personal network are paramount. However, these self-made stories delete themselves automatically within 24 hours due to the given Instagram infrastructure. Matching of different inquiries is therefore only possible to a limited time horizon. To increase their reach and a potential match in the
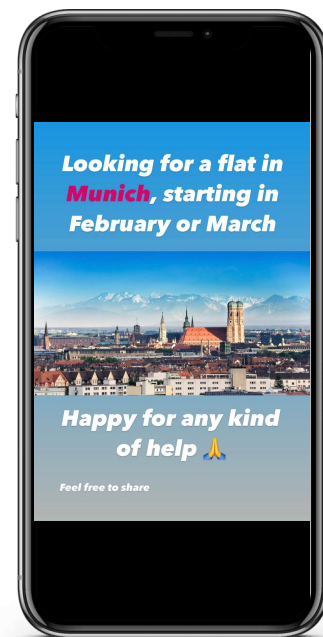

Figure 2: *Increase the reach*

24h of appearance, users often call their network for help (Figure 2). A subsequent matching is an impossibility, especially with a constantly increasing volume of search and offer requests and the non-existence of a request-storing database. As a result, the initial solution of the low fidelity FlatsForFriendz Instagram page was developed. It is crucial to mention that the page only operated in a very amateurish way and only for a selected circle of close friends.

Phase 2: On May 15th, 2021, after celebrating the site's first anniversary, it was more than time to recap the past 12 months and plan the strategic realignment and professionalization of the site from scratch, based on the already achieved success. In retrospect, this day can be seen as a turning point, when two new templates and various new story highlights were created, plus FAQs and guidelines for answering user inquiries were predefined (Appendix 3). All in all, work was done on a more cohesive and professional UX to explore the scaling potential derived

from the speedy usage of the FlatsForFriendz Instagram page in Phase 1. To avoid skewing potential conclusions from future results, FlatsForFriendz focused on the organic growth of the page (versus paid growth). Fostering such organic growth requires diligent preparation and tenacious and long-term perseverance, which continues to this day.

Goal: After using an unconventional, unstructured, and non-academic way to identify a problem in Phase 1, it was clear that by making the page publicly available and professionalizing it - set in motion in Phase 2, a renewed problem identification-validation would be needed. Accordingly, it also became the goal to test the first value proposition approach: FlatsForFriendz is necessary to guarantee a long-term successful flat exchange based on an existing digital personal network. After the renewed problem validation, another goal of this low fidelity MVP was to find out who, besides some close friends from Phase 1, makes up the user base of FlatsForFriendz. Finally, it was also essential to understand whether the user would accept the site in its created form (templates, predefined template variables, division of story highlights, etc.) and if they would perceive the usage as easy and understandable. The goal of the following paragraphs was to use quantitative and qualitative insights to better understand the user and the associated behavior, draw conclusions about the initial solution's degree of attractiveness, and thus lay the foundation for transforming an initial solution into a marketable product.

Understanding the impact of the FlatsForFriendz Instagram Page

Problem Validation	Customer Demographics	Customer Behavior / Needs
H1: People will use FlatsForFriendz to search for flats	*H5*: The users will have an equal gender distribution	*H8*: There will be an equal distribution of searching's and offerings
H2: People will use FlatsForFriendz to offer their flats	*H6*: The users typical age will range from 18-25	*H9*: People will use FlatsForFriendz as their last chance to find a flat
H3: People will use the pre-designed template for their inquiry	*H7*: The users of FlatsForFriendz are typically students or in-between internships	*H10*: People will mainly search for and offer furnished flats
H4: People will screen through city-specific Story highlights to search for tenants and offer flats		*H11*: People will mainly search for and offer flats for a temporary period of time
		H12: People will mainly search and offer flats in large german cities

Table 1: Hypotheses Experiment 1

Description: In phase 1, the first step was creating the private Instagram page FlatsForFriendz. Next, a universal and freely accessible template with predefined variables, namely city, location, time-period, general information and price, was created and saved in a story highlight. This template changed/upgraded once in phase 1 and another time in phase 2 into two color-distinguishable templates. Using the templates was not obligated in the early months of existence until September 2020 (based on user feedback); downloading the template by taking a screenshot and filling it out became a requirement. As a final step, the user needed to actively tag *@flatsforfriendz* on their personalized template before posting it to their personal user story. Through the active tagging, FlatsForFriendz got a notification, and a manual process for

reposting was triggered. In both phases, the users (especially those who have private user accounts) were also asked in addition to the "active tagging" to send a private direct message to FlatsForFriendz. Otherwise, the inquiry would have been ignored due to a lack of awareness (which can be traced to the given Instagram infrastructure).

After manually reposting the inquiry into the FlatsForFriendz story (which was private in phase 1 and became public in phase 2), it was saved in a city-specific story highlight. After that, the "matching" of the searchers and offerors started to occur individually. Each time a new city was spotted in a user Story, a new city-specific story highlight was created accordingly. The process of simply reposting was not only more time-efficient, but it also ensured the direct visibility of the user who initially posted the inquiry. That made it more straightforward that a future exchange of interests and the entire communication process should occur exclusively between two parties, without the intervention of FlatsForFriendz. In phase 1, there were only ten city-specific highlights of major German cities, such as Hamburg, Berlin or Munich, available. This city limitation was removed in phase 2. Saving those inquiries in highlights is essential to ensure the long-term matching.

If a user is successful or wants to withdraw the inquiry, there was either the possibility to notify FlatsForFriendz directly, or the deletion process started automatically after six weeks. The entire "How does it work"- process was also explained to the user in more detail in the image feed of the page. Nevertheless, there were still some problems and follow-up questions to be answered manually.

To conclude the experiment, a combined analysis of two data sources was conducted, consisting of the statistics provided for Instagram business account users and a specially conducted content research of search and offer inquiries. This analysis is supplemented by a qualitative, extensive and 355-response robust survey of the FlatsForFriendz user group to identify any differences in the various data sources early and draw appropriate conclusions.

Learnings: After professionalizing the page in the beginning of May 2021, the number of subscribers has organically increased to 7,554 in the past seven months, with an average compounded monthly growth rate of ~ 30%. In addition, most city-specific story highlights of major German cities have reached the maximum 100-insert-limit that Instagram sets. An analysis of the Instagram Insight Tool over the last 30 days was also able to document a cumulative achieved reach of 9.500 users, 12.700 new profile views and 650.000 content impressions (Updated on the 08th of December 2021 - Appendix 4). Out of these numbers, a reach rate of 125% can be calculated, where nearly 40% of the people, reached by FlatsForFriendz related content, don't follow the page. The high volume of search and offer inquiries (252 Inquiries in the last 30 Days) that has been processed in the previous 1,5 years can additionally be deducted from these numbers, wherefore being sufficient to validate the first two hypotheses.

Using the predefined template became obligatory in September 2020 due to positive user feedback regarding a more consistent UX and was also further developed and split in phase 2. The use itself doesn't justify a validation of the third hypothesis. Still, the survey revealed that almost 75% of the respondents confirmed that different designs (without further specification) are essential. 90% of respondents also did not miss any necessary information on the template and evaluated filling out the template as easy to very easy.

Nevertheless, there was also some decided criticism in the form of unnecessary details, such as the "Tag your friendz" section, where the user has some space left to tag roommates or friends. In addition, 21% of respondents said that the template was too impersonal and criticized the lack of space for writing. As a result, the third hypothesis can only be partially validated, as users like to use a template in general but are not satisfied with the current version.

Besides the general use of FlatsForFriendz and the associated template, a long-term, story-highlight-matching can also be validated. This can be deduced from the clicks per inquiry stored in the city-specific highlights, which are still constantly increasing after the 24h story visibility. Furthermore, this is underlined by the Instagram Performance Metric *Impressions-to-reach-ratio*, which compares the actual reach with the times the content got viewed. In the case of FlatsForFriendz the *Impressions-to-reach-ratio* is around 68 and therefore nearly 350 times higher than the benchmark of 0.2, which can be traced back to the FlatsForFriendz underlying reposting and story-highlights-saving methodology (Barker 2021 & Hitz 2021).

With the help of the Instagram Insight Tool, it was possible to get some information about the users' demographics quickly. This Tool can only be used with a particular representative number of users and length on the market. In contrary to the fifth hypothesis of equal gender distribution, female FlatsForFriendz users predominate with a share of 62.2%. The 18-24 age group accounts for 63% of the total number of users and is thus dominant, which in turn partially validates the sixth hypothesis. This age group is, in fact, closely followed (with 33%) by the 25–34-year old's and can therefore not just be disregarded. A generalized tendency was assumed in hypothesis seven regarding the professional orientation due to the validated age assumption. And indeed, unsurprisingly, the majority of FlatsForFriendz users are (prospective) students and (prospective) interns in different life situations.

The assumption made in the eighth hypothesis that a flat-offer always accompanies a flat-search proved to be wrong in the course of the experiment. In the past 18 months, almost 3,000 inquiries were advertised, of which nearly 75% were searching, and only 25% were offering. This imbalance is not a problem that can only be seen with FlatsForFriendz. Moreover, this is the general result of the chronic housing shortage in major german cities (Maaß 2021). Since FlatsForFriendz is a new and niche flat-rental-platform, it was assumed that before a user would decide to use FlatsForFriendz, all the other familiar channels would be tried first. Only if they

failed, the new and unknown FlatsForFriendz Instagram Service would be tried - this was not the case. Furthermore, FlatsForFriendz serves an entirely new trending vertical in the flat-rental market, making it very difficult to compare to the more conservative options. Only 6% of respondents said they used FlatsForFriendz as the last possible option. Instead, 25% of respondents used FlatsForFriendz as their first choice, disproving the ninth hypothesis.

Hypothesis ten and eleven focused on the temporal component and the furnishings of the flats. While the assumption that a large proportion of people are looking for or offering furnished flats has proven to be correct, users on FlatsForFriendz are not only looking for a specific period as assumed. Although a 50% share of the inquiries indicate less than 12 months, an equally large percentage is looking for longer-term accommodation, which can be deduced from the specially prepared content analysis. However, many users also did not provide specific information on either topic. The majority of the user group is currently in a live situation where it is not about settling and designing a home, but much more about an indeed longer-term, but still temporally place to stay. Finally, it was assumed that FlatsForFriendz is geographically limited to large german cities. By opening the site to the public in phase 2, new locations were very quickly added, which is why there are and were literally no limits to the use of FlatsForFriendz. The site's service has now been used for flats in more than 90 cities around the globe, rejecting hypothesis twelve.

Finally, the experiment, the associated analyses and the survey also led to further - not hypotheses related - insights. Regarding the growth of the page, high volatility could be observed depending on the reposted story content. There were days on which the page recorded an increase of up to 80 new potential users (offering of a permanent flat in Berlin on the 16th of August 2021), but this was offset on other days with really high churn rate of up to 40 users (sublet flat search in Uppsala, Sweden on the 04th of September 2021). The fact that, every user is constantly exposed to see all stories is a two-sided medal because users get annoyed by

the sheer amount of, in their point of view, unrelated and unhelpful stories. Furthermore, the experiment once again highlighted the limitations and boundaries of the site due to the given Instagram infrastructure. The entire process is characterized by manual labour on both ends. On the one hand, the user has to "download" the prefabricated template through a screenshot and then fill it out "manually"; on the other hand, Instagram does not allow for any automation in terms of reposting, answering FAQs or the deletion process. All of this happens daily in tedious individual handwork. The process is easy to understand, but not necessarily as convenient or as time-saving as it could be. For example, many users have complained about the lack of several filter options. First, the user cannot search for a highlight, ergo a specific city, via an input bar, which forces the user to swipe through all the highlights for a long time manually. Secondly, even within the story highlights, it is not possible to superficially filter by offer or search, which, consequently, thirdly does not allow for a detailed neighbourhood, price or flat info-based search. Another breeding ground for recurring problems comes with the possibility to privatize accounts. Many private users often forget that no automatic request to repost is sent. The users also have communication problems as they can't reach each other when trying to match their respective inquiries. All in all, FlatsForFriendz gives a lot of control into external hands at the moment, which dramatically reduces the influence on the actual exchange of flats and evaluation of any success experiences between two parties. This mainly makes future monetization extremely difficult.

5.1.2 Experiment 2 – In depth Interviews: Search-Side

Goal: This experiment aimed to find out which components of the current FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution were perceived as particularly positive among flat searchers and to understand where there is still room for improvement. With the help of this experiment, potential weaknesses are to be uncovered, which will then be further concretized with additional experiments to finally develop a marketable product.

Understanding the FlatsForFriendz Search-Side

H1: Searchers use FlatsForFriendz because it increases the reach of their posts

H2: Searchers prefer offers from the (extended) personal network

H3: Searchers perceive Instagram and the FlatsForFriendz presence as particularly easy to understand and to use

H4: Searchers would be pleased about additional services, like an insurance or a trust deposit

H5: Two different template colors make a clear distinguishment possible

Table 2: Hypotheses Experiment 2

Description: In order to achieve the goal, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. With this type of interview, the interviewee is not asked specific questions with partially predetermined answer options, but rather an attempt is made to allow a complimentary conversation to develop between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is a matter of the interviewee addressing specific points of their accord that concern him or her. In this way, the interviewer obtains particularly valuable and unfiltered insights. In the context of this experiment, three qualitative interviews were conducted with three different people, all of whom had already searched for a flat via FlatsForFriendz on Instagram. Based on the analysis of Instagram Analytics, two women and one man were interviewed, as more women are using FlatsForFriendz. Hamburg, Berlin and Munich are the three cities where people search for flats most often, so one person from each city was interviewed. The percentage of people who search for a flat through FlatsForFriendz but do not find one is currently significantly higher than the percentage of those who have successfully found a flat. For this reason, a man and a woman who were both unable to find a flat and a woman who was successful in finding a flat were interviewed. The Instagram evaluation revealed that more than 95% of all current users fall into

the 18-34 years age group, which is why only people from this age group were interviewed. A summary of quote-insights of the interviews can be found in Appendix 7.

Learnings: As already mentioned, the experiment served to determine which factors contribute to the current success of the FlatsForFriendz Instagram presence and where there is still room for improvement, specifically on the search site.

All respondents stated that they use FlatsForFriendz because it significantly increases the reach of their postings. With the help of FlatsForFriendz, users not only reach their own followers but also get access to a much more extensive network. However, this more extensive network is not perceived as entirely unknown but can be seen as an extension of the personal network since it was primarily the case that searchers and offerors had friends and acquaintances in common through only a few connections (first- and second-degree connections). In addition, all interviewees stated that they prefer to receive a flat offer from someone in their extended personal network compared to an offer from a complete stranger. This is mainly because the matchmaking process is usually less complicated and smoother when there are previous common contact points between the offeror and the searcher. Regarding the use and operation of FlatsForFriendz on Instagram, the interviewees stated that they experienced the overall user journey as particularly easy to use, and the structure of the FlatsForFriendz page as easy to understand. Furthermore, it is consistent with the survey conducted in Experiment 1, where over 90% of respondents indicated that using FlatsForFriendz is easy or very easy to use (Appendix 5). This is mainly because Instagram is an already well-known platform with which all FlatsForFriendz users were already familiar before the page existed. Hence, it is a consequence that users already knew and understood the principle of stories, story highlights, and direct messaging. Thus, the first three hypotheses could all be confirmed.

With the Instagram solution, there are no additional features such as an offered insurance for tenants and landlords, an escrow deposit of paid securities, or help with the preparation of a rental contract. The formulation of the fourth hypothesis was intended to validate if there was user interest in receiving such additional offers. The evaluation of the interviews showed that these features and especially the rental contract support are essential factors that should be taken into account in the final FlatsForFriendz solution. All interviewees stated that they wanted the entire process to be as simple and straightforward as possible. And precisely because there are many smaller steps between the first contact and the actual move-in, many users would like to have more supporting functionalities. Accordingly, further support after the actual placement is a feature that should be considered, at least in the long run.

The fifth hypothesis was based on the assumption that the two different template designs lead to a helpful differentiation, making it easier for users to search for relevant offers in the highlights. However, after all three interviews were conducted, it turned out that this assumption could not be fully validated. Although the two different template designs allow a better distinction between searches and offers, it does not entirely solve all the problems the searchers and offerors have. All respondents noted that the current templates have a rather impersonal character and lack different information. They would have wished for a section to describe themselves in more detail without overwriting certain pre-defined, neglectable variables. Moreover, all three respondents lacked a filter function that would make the necessity to click through hundreds of unsorted story highlights redundant. Building on the insights gained, it is apparent to conduct another experiment with a clear focus on the pre-defined template information and design. This will be discussed in more detail in Experiment 4.

5.1.3 Experiment 3 – In depth Interviews: Offer-Side

Goal: This experiment aimed simultaneously with experiment 2 to find out which components of the current FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution were perceived as particularly positive among

flat-offerors and to understand where there is still room for improvement. The insights gained will also be used to ultimately try to develop a marketable product.

Understanding the FlatsForFriendz Offer-Side

H1: Offerors use FlatsForFriendz because it increases the reach of their posts

H2: Offerors prefer to assign their flat to someone in their extended personal network

H3: Offerors perceive Instagram and the FlatsForFriendz presence as particularly easy to understand and to use

H4: Offerors are satisfied with the way the Template is pre-designed

H5: Due to the network effects, no further security steps are necessary on the offer site

H6: Offerors are satisfied with the short period of time in which flat requests are made

Table 3: Hypotheses Experiment 3

Description: Just as in the experiment for flat-searching users, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with flat-offering users. For this purpose, three different people were interviewed, from whom each already used the FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution. In contrast to the flat-searchers, the Instagram user analysis revealed that almost all flat-offering users were able to rent their flat via FlatsForFriendz successfully. Out of five flat listing users who were requested for an interview, all five of them stated that they had successfully rented out their flat via FlatsForFriendz or could have done so if they had not found another tenant through their close private network. Building on this finding, only people who had or could have had success with FlatsForFriendz were interviewed. The majority of the flat offering users consist of female users, so two women and one man were interviewed. Most offerors also fall into the age group between 18 and 34. Conclusively, only interviewees from this age group were chosen. As already mentioned in experiment 2, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich represent the cities where

flats are most frequently not only searched for but also offered. Accordingly, one interview partner was selected from each city. The summarized quote-insights of the interviews can be reviewed in Appendix 7.

Learnings: The previously described experiment was intended to find out which aspects of the current Instagram solution are viewed positively by users offering flats and, at the same time, to uncover constructive points of criticism.

All interviewees stated that they used FlatsForFriendz mainly because the process at FlatsForFriendz is quick, easy to understand, and requires little effort. It has been possible for them to create a post within a few minutes, through which all interviewees have already come in contact with a large number of interested flat searchers within just a few hours. They were surprised by how fast the overall process was and how much reach they could achieve with only one post. Thus, hypotheses one, three, and six could all be confirmed. Hypothesis two was also validated with the help of the interviews conducted. All respondents agreed that they would rather give their flat to a person from their own extended network than rent it to a stranger. One interviewee said, "If a potential tenant has common contacts with me, I can ask them about their experience with that person. If the person I know says that he/she is reliable and trustworthy - I feel much better about it." And it is precisely this trust aspect that plays a central role in the entire FlatsForFriendz usage.

Regarding the given template of FlatsForFriendz, the interviewees stated that they lack the possibility to personalize and customize the template, especially in terms of flat images. Furthermore, the current template version leaves little room for additional information. Thus, hypothesis four could not be validated. From this, it can be deduced that the template needs new impulses and further adjustments. This will be examined in more detail in the following experiment.

The hypothesis that flat offerors no longer have any concerns if they rent their flat to someone recommended to them through their (extended) network could not be validated. The interviews showed that shared contacts could influence the decision, but this does not mean that they would rent their flat to other people without any further concerns. Additional security, such as insurance for the flat and inventory or a deposit held in trust, could potentially lead to an increased feeling of security.

5.1.4 Experiment 4 – Template Simulation

Goal: The following experiment examines the predefined template in more detail, based on the user feedback gathered in the previous Experiments. Both, the flat-offerors and searchers were not satisfied with the current status quo. Besides the predefined variables, the lack of design options was criticized. For this reason, the experiment aims in a first step to identify the most important variables that are weighted differently depending on the aim of the inquiry and in a second step to test several differentiable template designs.

Understanding what Offerers and Searchers find necessary on the template

H1: The price of the flat is the most important information on the template

H2: Images of a flat make the template more appealing and interesting

H3: Template designs with different patterns and images are preferred over plain, pre-designed templates

Table 4: Hypotheses Experiment 4

Description: To test which information on the template is most important and to see what kind of flat-related information the users of FlatsForFriendz are most likely to make their decisions on, ten test persons were selected. All test persons were either looking for or offering a flat via FlatsForFriendz at the time of the experiment. Five searchers and five offerors were

interviewed. Based on the results of the previous experiments and the survey conducted in the first experiment, the following information was available for all three flats: city, district, type of flat, price, length of rent, size, images of the flat, flatmates, searcher information, special facilities, age of the building and the infrastructure in the vicinity. The variables city, type of flat, and length of rent were not included in this experiment, as it was assumed that they must always be considered. For example, someone searching for a flat in Munich will not be interested in a flat offered in Berlin. In the context of this experiment, the test subjects were presented with nine different templates for each flat. Each of these templates contained information on the city searched for, the length of rent, and the flat type. Additionally, each template was filled with one more piece of information. The design for each template was kept relatively simple and identical. An exemplary selection of three of the presented templates can be found in Appendix 8. The subjects were then asked to sort the templates according to the importance of the information they contained. The results were tabulated for each subject. The first template selected received nine points, whereas one point was recorded for the last template selected. For example, if a subject rated the template with information about the flat size as the most meaningful, then nine points would be noted for the "flat-size" information. The template selected last would be scored with only one point. After all test persons had evaluated the templates, the total scores for the individual pieces of information were added together. After a complete evaluation of the results, it was possible to see which information on the template was essential for both flat searchers and flat offerors. After the rankings of the different test persons were evaluated, different templates were designed based on the previously identified most frequently selected information. In addition to the designs used on Instagram at this time, other designs were created. The designs varied between rather plain designs, personalized designs with reference to the respective relevant city, and templates, which were created with different patterns and colors (Appendix 8). These templates were then presented to the test subjects again,

and they had to choose which design appealed to them the most. In this way, it was possible to determine which template design was perceived as particularly appealing and thus draw helpful conclusions about how the templates should be designed in the final marketable product.

Learnings: This experiment was designed to test which information on the FlatsForFriendz template is considered particularly relevant by both flat searchers and flat offerors. In addition, the extent to which different template designs influence the perception of individual postings was tested.

One of the hypotheses assumed that the price of a flat is considered the essential part of the template. This could be confirmed after evaluating the test results, as the information about the price of a flat achieved the highest score among both flat searchers and flat offering users. Furthermore, information on flat size turned out to be the second most important piece of information for both flat searchers and flat offering users as well. With regard to the second hypothesis, an exciting observation could be made. It was found that flat-searching users appreciate it when a template contains images of the individual flat. In contrary, flat offering users found it critical to receive information about the person who is interested in their flat, instead of flat images.

In conclusion, it makes sense to provide different information on the template for searchers and offerors. Offerors should complement their templates with flat descriptive images, while searchers should be given the opportunity to publish more information about themselves on the template. The price and the size of the flat should be displayed equally on both templates.

In the second part of the experiment, different template designs were tested. The chosen templates varied from very simple designs to more elaborate designs with images and patterns. Here it was found that each participant had different preferences regarding the design of the respective templates. No design could be identified as being particularly appealing.

Accordingly, the third hypothesis had to be rejected. Nevertheless, this result also allows useful conclusions for the final product. It is advisable to give users a great deal of leeway in designing the templates to freely decide which design they find most appealing while also limiting the possible information to be able to keep a certain information unity in the templates.

5.1.5 Summary

In summary, the first MVP solution of an Instagram presence clearly showed that the identified problem in the digital, social network based flat-rental persists. Searching or offering a flat is too tedious and lacks a personal component. With the help of various experiments, it was found that the target group is between 18 and 34 years old and is mainly looking for flats in major german cities. Users are largely students, interns or young professionals who are looking for a flat at short notice, often for a limited period of time. It is therefore important to provide this target group with a product that is simple as well as fun to use and accesses the already existing digital network.

5.2 Customer Validation

The following section focuses on the second part of the CDP - Customer validation, with the help of two experiments. The goal was to transform the gained insights from the Customer discovery into a sustainable business model and marketable product (Appendix 1). First, a landing page and a fake download button are used to test the readiness for a self-sufficient app. Subsequently, a hybrid solution is developed in theory. Due to the high degree of complexity of the technical implementation of Instagram API coding, a consulting- and app development company was conferred. However, it is first of all essential to draw a resume from the previous experiments:

- **There is a problem to be solved, for which the initial solution of the FlatsForFriendz Instagram page was able to achieve an inevitable success**. A

certain problem-solution fit can be derived from the initial experiment of the low fidelity Instagram MVP and its steadily increasing usage. The users of FlatsForFriendz are, on average satisfied with the predefined processes, which have been continuously developed throughout the work. They are very much aware of the limitations of the given Instagram infrastructure but still need additional features that would improve the overall UX.

- **FlatsForFriendz is a two-sided solution with a high intersection**. The probability that a flat-searcher can also become a flat-offeror during the use of FlatsForFriendz is relatively high (even though a flat-exchange-circle couldn't be validated). Therefore, a clear separation or one-sided consideration is not possible. Despite being aware of site-individual preferences, the two sites must be considered in strong interdependence to ensure a consistent UX.

- **The users of FlatsForFriendz are young professionals and live in transition phases.** In most cases, a flat-search or -offer has something to do with changing the current life situation. Be it the start of a study at university, a summer internship or the first job. In combination with the social network component, this situational orientation explicitly targets the 18-34 age group.

- **Searchers like the simplified, extended personal reach. However, they don't like the template, the lack of additional services, and especially the missing filter function.** FlatsForFriendz is an extended microphone for searchers or the hope for a fortunate coincidence from the more distant circle of acquaintances. Nevertheless, the impersonality, the lack of design options on the template and the lack of safeguards, for example, in the form of longer-term rental-insurances, were criticized. However, the lack of general filtering options was criticized the most, but that is unfortunately not possible (yet) due to the given Instagram infrastructure.

- **Offerors praise the speed and increased reach through FlatsForFriendz and criticize the template.** The primary feedback from an offeror can be summarized as follows: "One simple post on an everyday platform and you save yourself from creating new accounts on countless websites. Inquiries are flying in!" Nevertheless, not having the possibility of directly including flat images on the Template was criticized.

- **The information on the template should be specified uniformly. However, the user should have the possibility to create different design templates.** While there should be a certain degree of standardization in the transmission of information, with regard to the differentiation between offers and searches, the user must be presented a variety of template design options.

5.2.1 Experiment 5 - Landing Page and App Download

Goal: The goal of this experiment was to find out if the users of FlatsForFriendz were interested in an app solution that is no longer solely based on Instagram. In addition, the goal was to test whether users would be willing to leave Instagram to go to the FlatsForFriendz website and whether they would be ready to download an actual application.

Testing the willigness to download the FlatsForFriendz App

H1: More than 20% of FlatsForFriendz Instagram users will visit the landing page

H2: More than 50% of Page Visitors will try to download the application

H3: People will perceive the process of faking as annoying

Table 5: Hypotheses Experiment 5

Description: The experiment started with acquiring the flatsforfriendz.com domain from the domain registrar and WebHost GoDaddy. The process of acquiring this domain was generally quite simple, although there were minor nuances to consider, such as the potential long-term

website insurance. Once the domain was acquired, the website had to be designed. Since FlatsForFriendz is an already functioning and relatively significant brand in a particular cosmos, a basic form of professionalism was necessary, rather than just programming a "simple green download button" onto a plain website. Fortunately, it was already evident that GoDaddy is not only exclusively a domain registrar and WebHost but also has an integrated website building system. With the help of this system, three layers were built: A Home-, an About Us- and

Figure 3: FlatsForFriendz Homepage + Fake Download Button

a Contact Us-page. When the layers were built, attention was always paid to a consistent UI, matching the FlatsForFriendz Instagram page. The call to action: "Download the FlatsForFriendz App" was placed very visible and central on the homepage (Figure 3). The user was also provided with a contact form on the Contact-Us page that made it possible to send search or offer inquiries by mail in an even simpler state. Nevertheless, the most significant focus was on downloading the app on the homepage. GoDaddy fortunately also took care of the responsive design on various end products. A task that would have otherwise become very time-consuming for website developers, as it was assumed that most website views would be on either a mobile device or a laptop. After the "externally recognizable" website (frontend) was completed, the next step was to program the analytics, which means the correct data recording and processing (backend). Google Analytics was used as the analytics tool, which required setting up a trigger event – "Download the FlatsForFriendz App". An extensive pixel would theoretically have had to be placed behind the button to measure the trigger event

correctly. But a simpler variant was to create a re-direction event after the button was pressed to a new sub-website (e.g., Thank-you-page) that was initially not directly accessible to the user. The willingness to download could then be derived from the number of sub-website calls/re-directions. The recording of the data was set for a period of 48 hours. After the website and the analytics were set up, it had to be promoted representatively. The website was deliberately only advertised via a single 24 hour Instagram story for a maximum of 500 viewers. This story didn't pitch the exact functionality or the app's vision. It was simply a call to download. Out of experience, too much informational text would have held the user back from clicking on the link, plus this uncertainty of *what to expect* created a certain level of anticipatory expectation. Neither private WhatsApp groups or contacts nor other channels were used, as this would have distorted the result by a "faked family and friends' interest". Thus, it could be ensured that all first-time visitors to the website came from FlatsForFriendz-Instagram. Therefore, at least a certain interest in the website and the "fake" download of a self-sufficient FlatsForFriendz-app could be derived.

Learnings: The results of this experiment clearly showed that there was sufficient interest in an application for FlatsForFriendz. The first two hypotheses were not only validated but exceeded expectations. Of the 500 people shown the link to the landing page on Instagram, 174 people visited the respective page. This interest corresponds to a share of 34.8%. Therefore, it could be observed that the users of the current Instagram solution have a specific interest in using FlatsForFriendz in the form of an independent website that acts detached from Instagram. Furthermore, it was assumed in the second hypothesis that 50% of the users who landed on the landing page would also be interested in downloading the advertised application. After evaluating the Google Analytics results, a conversion rate of just over 78% was observed. Of the 174 users on the landing page, 136 attempted to download the application. This shows that

there is an extremely high interest in a FlatsForFriendz application. Along with the fact that the link to the landing page was only shown to the first 500 users who saw the link on Instagram, it was hypothesized that many users would be disappointed when they realized that the application could not have been actually downloaded. This, in turn, would lead to an expected image loss for FlatsForFriendz. Fortunately, this could not be validated since none of the 136 users who wanted to download the application used the displayed comment field to express their displeasure. Also, no significant daily user churn was identified on that day. Nevertheless, over half of the people shown the link to the landing page did not actually click on it, which suggests that many current users still feel comfortable in the Instagram environment and do not feel any urge or interest to leave the platform. As a result, a solution must be developed that serves both parties - the ones who are willing to download an additional app and the ones who want to remain solely on Instagram.

5.2.2 Experiment 6 - Hybrid Instagram-Application-MVP

The hybrid FlatsForFriendz solution combines the best of two worlds: The strength of an already existing digital network and the freedom of process-design of an autonomous app. An overview of the Design can be seen in Appendix 11. Due to the hybrid solution's previously mentioned coding complexity, it was built exclusively on Figma and passed on to an app development consultancy for further progress. Therefore, the first learnings of the experiment focus primarily on qualitative insights and feedback.

Goal: This experiment is clearly aimed at testing the insights gained in the previous experiments and the willingness to download an app in a combined hybrid form. At first, it is essential to determine whether and how the hybrid solution can be technically implemented since it is not a matter of simply using a no-code application-builder but of using an already existing digital network. The goal is also to determine the attractiveness in terms of simplicity and speed of the

hybrid solution. Therefore, the value proposition defined in Experiment 1 needs to pass a new stress test.

Testing the willigness to develop and use the hybrid FlatsForFriendz solution

H1: It is technically possible to access the Instagram network in an autonomous app, through the Instagram API

H2: It is technically possible to subdivide this Instagram network into further "degrees of connection" (like LinkedIn, for example).

H3: Searchers and offerors will be willing to use the template-design-generator

H4: Searchers and offerors will be willing to continue to post the generated template to their personal Instagram-story

H5: Searchers and offerors will be willing to match, communicate, and complete the inquiry within the app

Table 6: Hypotheses Experiment 6

Description: The technical feasibility of the solution was tested by designing and creating a presentation about the desired hybrid solution (Appendix 12). This package was then sent to an app-development consultancy, as they were the only ones who could give valuable feedback about the degree of coding complexity and clarity about the actual API usage of Instagram, which couldn't be validated solely on self-research.

The hybrid FlatsForFriendz solution was best illustrated using an exemplary user journey (followed) by a Figma click dummy (Appendix 12). For this purpose, *Anna* was used as an example persona. She is currently looking for a flat in Berlin for the summer. In parallel, she also wants to sublet her flat in Lisbon for that specific timeframe. The follwing user journey was presented to a selected target group of 10 people in combination with the Figma click dummy, to obtain qualitative feedback, from which three had never used FlatsForFriendz before. They were then questioned about the journey and the proposed app solution. A summary of quotes can be found in Appendix 13.

User Journey: Anna is 24 years old and in the middle of her master studies at NOVA SBE in Lisbon. Part of her studies is a mandatory internship, which she will complete next semester in a Berlin-based startup. As the start of the internship is getting closer, it's time to find a place to stay in Berlin and sublet her flat in Lisbon. Anna wants to make the process as fast, trustworthy, and straightforward as possible, which is why she uses the FlatsForFriendz app (a recommendation by her friends). As a first step, Anna has to download the app from the app store and sign in with her Instagram credentials. After that, she has to confirm that the app has the right to access her Instagram network. The process only takes a few minutes before directly jumping into creating both her flat-related requests. To do this, she clicks on the so-called template-generator. She must enter the following mandatory information in a first search-step: City, district, type of rent, time, price, size and a short self-introduction. After entering the information, she can choose from several different, automatically generated template designs and "download" them as an image. She does the same in the offering-step with her flat in Lisbon, where, however, she has to attach two pictures of her flat instead of writing a short self-introduction - all other information remains the same. And again, she can download different template designs. In the next step, Anna posts both templates to her personal Instagram Story and tags the page @flatsforfriendz to activate her digital personal network and increase her reach in both requests. Back in the FlatsForFriendz app, the information she entered is already saved, and Anna can now independently decide who can see her inquiries. Either she allows only her first- or second-degree connections to see her inquiries, or she makes them public. Anna decides to make her search inquiry directly public, but only her first-degree connections are allowed to see her sublet offer at first. She can specifically filter by the city or any other of her preferences for her search and view the offers made available to her. She quickly finds a suitable shared-room offer from a second-degree connection, i.e. an offer from a friend of a

friend she used to go to high school with. Ideally, he had already contacted Anna via the App-Messenger at that very moment, as he was also desperately looking for planning security for the room in the summer. The short self-introduction, plus the factor that he and Anna have a shared connection, secured Anna her room in Berlin, Prenzlauer Berg, for the coming three summer months. The entire matching process has occurred within the app through simplified filtering and the directly apparent friendship connections. To save herself the costly double rent, Anna has to find an interim tenant for her room in Lisbon. Unfortunately, no one from her immediate circle of acquaintances has responded to her Instagram story, nor has anyone from her first-degree connections respectively contacted her in the app. She quickly decides to increase the radius of potentially interested parties and makes her offer visible to her second-degree connections within the app. And promptly, the older sister of a childhood friend gets in touch, who would like to do home office from Lisbon during the summer. Especially for the sublet, the increased trust given through mutual friends and family plays a central role. The two quickly agreed. Everything within the app, and Anna could fully concentrate on the upcoming exams. She has a nice place to stay for the summer in Berlin, and a trusted person is taking over her flat in Lisbon for this specific time. The whole process has saved her nerves and a lot of time and money.

Learnings: The findings of this experiment can be divided into two parts, starting with the technical feasibility. Contrary to the expectations, the technical implementation of an existing digital social network (Instagram) using the Application Programming Interface (API) is highly complex but not impossible. While it is relatively easy to implement the first step of logging in using Instagram credentials, the second step, the query for the actual core information of this project related to the personal network, namely the follower list is a highly protected information, especially due to private accounts. This information was still easily accessible until

the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018 and was even an officially usable Instagram functionality (Constine 2018). However, the fact that Instagram still allows public access to other core information besides login credentials in theory and practice is shown by the example of Tinder, where it is possible to view pictures of a connected person outside of the Instagram app. However, pictures are not follower lists. As a result of this non-anticipated difficulty of technical implication, an app development consultancy was brought in early December, as leveraging the existing network is a key part of the hybrid solution. Accordingly, to date, the first two hypotheses can neither be fully validated nor refuted, although feedback from the consulting firm on the actual practical feasibility (status quo: 03th of December 21) was somewhat positive. The feedback regarding the template generator was predominantly positive. In particular, those who already had to fill out the template "by hand" laboriously were very happy with the theoretical solution. For them, the template generator simplifies, generalizes and speeds up the process of filling out the template through the optimized UX ("Finally, you don't have to write on a 'picture' anymore") and through the predefined variables. However, giving the user then the possibility to choose between countless different preconfigured designs afterwards (learning from Experiment 4) split opinions in terms of subsequently slowing down the overall process, while at the same time resulting in an inconsistent UI. Accordingly, the third hypothesis can only be validated in a modified form. After the use of the template generator, which also serves as an information storage for the app, all respondents would also download the created template and continue to post it in their personal Instagram story to ask the first-degree social network for help, which in turn leads to the validation of the fourth hypothesis. Feedback on the actual use of the app to better match inquiries through the available filter functions and to complete the entire renting or offering process within the app also led to divided opinions, leading to a partial validation of the fifth hypothesis. Critics of the hybrid solution were particularly bothered by the relocation of the initial FlatsForFriendz idea away

from an everyday platform to "yet another new app." While they also shared the opinion that the default Instagram infrastructure is anything but ideal for searching and offering flats, they would still prioritize the factor of the everyday platform over anything else. However, the vast majority showed strong interest in the hybrid solution. For them, the characteristics of simplicity, speed, structure and especially long-term clarity played a key role. Since the decision to rent or offer a flat is not a weekly decision to be made, the process can be carried out with a little more structured effort in their eyes. The fact that all information is automatically saved inside the app after filling out the template and that every user can finally individually decide within the app who is allowed to see the inquiry is most compelling to them. From their perspective, the time-consuming process of looking through individual, unsorted and limited story highlights is now eliminated. The messaging function within the app also shifts the communicative exchange with the sometimes "only" distant acquaintances and strangers away from the personal Instagram profile.

Nevertheless, both sides agreed that the hybrid solution is ultimately difficult to grasp by simply listening to a user story and presenting a click dummy without having tested it for themselves.

5.2.3 Summary

The two previous experiments underlined the potential of a possible hybrid solution. However, it must be noted that no suitable product has yet been developed in response to users' willingness to try a new App. Nevertheless, the approach is moving in the right direction, but its initial form needs to be redesigned in terms of technology on the one hand and user-friendliness on the other.

5.3 Field Research Conclusion

The conclusion of the field research is divided into two sections that build on each other. First, the three significant limitations of this field research are listed and explained in more detail.

Second, the necessary pivot is identified, and the vision of FlatsForFriendz is presented in more detail.

5.3.1 Limitations

Three main limitations emerged from the experiments conducted. They start with the general barrier of downloading an additional Instagram add-on and the actual associated use of the hybrid solution. While some indication of the willingness to download the FlatsForFriendz app could be derived from the fake download button from Experiment 5, it also could not be validated in enough detail to understand who was downloading the app and with what kind of background intention. The hybrid solution seems to appeal in theory, as determined in Experiment 6, but more tangible testing is further needed. There is no way around testing again in detail to what extent the developed idea of a process-accelerated and (theoretically) simplified hybrid solution contrasts with the charm of using an already existing everyday platform. A hybrid solution always means a particular form of mutual dependency, representing the second identified limitation. The crux here lies in the actual USP of the idea, namely in using an already existing digital network, which quickly turns the implicit mutual dependency into a one-sided dependence. The dependence on any form to an already existing network can take down the entire business model through an algorithm change since one of the main assets lies in the hands of others. This creates a constant external-change-paranoia and transforms the willingness to develop in the necessity to react. However, this problem is secondary to the actual technical feasibility. The initial euphoria of the app development consultancy has turned into a critical, tangible fact on the 10th of December 2021, so right after the implementation of the sixth experiment. Scraping follower lists is possible with the help of browser hacks but is not entirely legal. In the past, the personal data of Facebook users was often used unjustifiably and passed on to third parties without consent. This data theft peaked in the already mentioned Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018, where data of 300,000 survey participants and data of

their friends, i.e. their network, was passed on to the data analysis company. And it was precisely because of this incident that gathering information of follower and friend lists were made inaccessible to all developers around the globe for the time being (ZEIT 2018). However, not all hope seems to be lost. According to statements by Meta-CTO Mike Schroepfer, potential API usage can be (re)established at Instagram's discretion after an extended, detailed evaluation of usage-potential and security, in exceptional cases (Constine 2018) (Appendix 14). Nevertheless, since there is currently neither a granted, technically feasible nor a legal basis for the actual USP of the hybrid app solution, it is now necessary to take a step back in the iterative CDP and find new solutions for these limitations in parallel to a usage request to Instagram by establishing a possible pivot.

5.3.2 Pivot and Vision

The vision of FlatsForFriendz is to increase the probability of a fortunate coincidence. The focus lies on the optimization of the currently still somewhat unstructured, social network-based flat-rental market status quo - even with the help of the current FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution and in consideration of a possible hybrid solution. In addition to increased speed and user-friendliness, the formulated goal is to create a long-term network-based flat-exchange platform, on which in the future, flats will be searched and offered in almost equal parts. The following possible strategic realignment was developed in response to the limitations identified and the insights gained from the previous experiments, which will have to be tested and validated or rejected again in a next step.

This realignment mainly includes the reduction of dependence on Instagram and a definite technically feasible application. The application is a modified form of the developed hybrid solution. The idea of storing information by using a template generator created for Instagram story purposes remains in a further developed condition. However, the focus of the template generator is no longer only to query all the predefined variables for an attention-grabbing

template but also to identify additional decision-influencing variables that must be filled in directly. Afterwards, an appealing, self-designed template for social media purposes will again be made available for download, but which will automatically be assigned a randomly generated number in advance. This number will serve as a possible reference point for the inquiry in the further course of the process. The user can then post the generated template back to the individual story. This process must always occur in the same way, even without a FlatsForFriendz solution. The FlatsForFriendz reposting process should also be maintained for a certain period, but in the best case should change from the current speaker function to a highly efficient and brand-building marketing channel. Where, for example, only specifically attractive flats will be reposted and saved in a story highlight. The company *26Homes*, for instance, is pursuing a pretty similar approach (26Homes 2021). The actual matching process is thus to be gradually shifted away from Instagram and into the hybrid solution while always maintaining the social media connection character.

However, the fundamental difference within the hybrid solution is that it no longer uses an API to access an already existing digital network but instead creates an entirely new network within the app. The creation of a network is tedious and requires a specific size to be functional. But perhaps precisely, this difficult-to-fulfil requirement could be turned into a USP. After all, as the name suggests, it is foremost about flats of friends. As a result, FlatsForFriendz has been able to establish itself as a strong brand in a particular age, origin and occupation segment. The idea of the enhanced hybrid solution is now to create a kind of extended exclusivity network, made up of access to contact data stored on the users' mobile devices. This is technically easy to implement, which is also confirmed by the App Development Consultancy. See, for example, the app *clubhouse*, which was heavily hyped last year.

However, the advantage of this network-creation plot twist is the simple feasibility and the fact that an internal FlatsForFriendz database can be created, and self-programmed contact-

crosscheck algorithms can be designed. This phone number-based database would serve as the foundation of all further actions since the necessary information about the first- and second-degree contacts can be derived from it. Accordingly, unlike the API-based solution, one of the most essential and central assets of the idea would fall under the ownership of FlatsForFriendz, transforming reactive paranoia into proactive process design. The goal is to gradually attract users of the FlatsForFriendz Instagram solution to the hybrid solution. The analysis of various dialogues has shown that further personal information and images are necessary to decide each case. This means that a prospective user always has to enter into an additional, elaborate exchange of information, regardless of being a searcher or offeror. It is essential to understand that the template is merely an attention-grabbing eye-catcher and does not replace an entire information brochure. Since each posted template has been assigned a number, it is pretty convenient to search for that particular number (the inquiry) inside the app and view all other relevant information without further inquiry. At best, this also shifts any further communication to the app, solving the massive problem of contacting private Instagram accounts. Of course, registration on the FlatsForFriendz app is a prerequisite for this. The user can create his/her profile (if necessary, allow access to pictures with the Instagram API) and directly connect to his/her phone contacts or invite them to the app. The network can also be expanded via the profile username search. In the profile, it should be possible to access the Instagram user profile via a direct link, especially in the beginning, where the network is still in development. This means that the chance to get the information on familiar Instagram followers independently from the app would remain available, which is necessary when people directly navigate in the app. But again, the goal is to disable this feature and the constant ability to switch back and forth between apps as it goes along. As an example of a similar process, the dating app *Tinder* can be used once again. Since early 2019 it is not possible anymore to access a matchs' Instagram profile directly from Tinder (Fangmann 2021). This feature was intended to

allow users to get even more pictures and information about each other. However, unwanted parts of the communication quickly shifted away from Tinder - a finding that prompted Tinder to change something. Now, Tinder users can see Instagram pictures, but they can't directly switch between apps, thus not influencing the usage anymore. The entire process of the hybrid solution initially appears relatively complex, so no additional features are to be incorporated into the solution for the time being. However, components can also create various incentives to download, influencing a desired sustainable monetization strategy. In Experiment 1, some users already expressed their desire for more security in the follow-up process, i.e., the actual rental process. Digitization, for example, enables the creation of AI-based legally valid interim rental agreements that can be signed within the app. Another possibility would be to run the actual cash flow through the app. These example security features have yet to be evaluated in detail. However, users may be willing to pay for this increased sense of security. Another incentive would be to tackle the initial mismatch of offer and search inquiries. For this purpose, the offer-side could artificially be increased through institutional providers such as the Mietz app, for example. Since FlatsForFriendz is essentially about the exchange of private individuals, the reaction to such an institutional offer was superficially tested in Experiment 7 on the 13th of December 2021. For this, a standout black template was posted to the FlatsForFriendz story (Appendix 15). The reaction from the institutional side was very positive due to some interested parties and the increased page traffic. On the user side, due to a very low average churn, no measurable aversion to the artificial increase in supply could be derived either, as long as it takes place in moderation. This artificial increase results in three happy winners since FlatsForFriendz is, of course, also remunerated for the institutionally based offer. An improved UX through an automatic matching algorithm is planned as a final incentive. The solution still requires a high degree of small steps that need to be performed manually. To make the overall process even simpler and faster, the automated matching algorithm will directly inform the user

about a potential next tenant or a suitable flat offer utilizing push-up notifications. For this purpose, the following hypotheses, which have yet to be validated, were defined:

Testing the willigness to develop and use the new hybrid FlatsForFriendz solution

H1: Users are willing to enter more than the necessarily needed, pre-defined information into the template generator

H2: Users continue to post the now numbered template into their Instagram Story

H3: 400 of 500 respondents will download the app

H4: Users are willing to allow access to their private phone contacts

H5: Users network within the app

H6: Users invite their friends to the app

H7: Users choose to use the app to get more information about the inquiries

H8: Users start to communicate within the app

H9: 20% of the app users do not follow FlatsForFriendz on Instagram

Table 7: Hypotheses Experiment 7

6. Conclusion

This work aimed to answer the question of how to leverage an opportunity to a value proposition for a new social flat-rental platform. In order to answer this question, the Lean Startup approach with its method of creating and validating hypotheses was used on the one hand and the first two phases of the CDP framework as a structural development process on the other.

The first step was to identify who the customers were and what they valued. This first section referred to the Customer discovery, the first phase of the CDP. In this section, four experiments were conducted. These experiments consisted of a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses. Starting with the professionalization of the FlatsForFriendz Instagram page in May

2021, this Instagram page acted as a representative user baseline in terms of their demographics and user behavior. The data collected was supported through a 355 response-strong survey. The collected findings prompted a specialized investigation through user interviews of the two highly overlapping sites, the searchers and offerors. The importance of the initially rather inconspicuous template became evident from the conducted interviews. Hence another separate experiment of a template simulation was conducted here. After completing the fourth experiment, a dominant customer profile could be derived—a young person in a life-changing situation, mainly with an academic background. The person accepts the current solution as the new normal. However, she is also ambivalent because she highly values the already existing network of an everyday platform, but she is also aware that many helpful and necessary features will not exist due to the given Instagram infrastructure. She is very excited to see how FlatsForFriendz develops because the brand is supranationally known in her eyes.

An initial concept was developed based on the philosophy of product thinking and the underlying ability to build a product that users love. The concept initiated the second phase of the CDP, the Customer validation, consisting of two experiments. Users were invited to download the FlatsForFriendz app via a briefly visible Instagram story. For this purpose, a landing page was designed and equipped with a fake download button on the front page. This app was not promoted in any other way in any form. This experiment aimed to test how high the users' willingness for an additive solution was. The positive result initiated the final step, the actual development of a testable MVP. The MVP included a hybrid Instagram application solution that incorporated the idea of the importance of the already existing digital network. Due to unforeseen technical difficulties with the API usage, an App Development company was consulted. Nevertheless, the hybrid solution was tested and met with high approval from the surveyed user group. However, the positive feeling was heavily clouded by the (almost) technical impossibility of implementation near the end of the thesis and raised questions about

the future of FlatsForFriendz. Thus, it can be summarized that a problem/solution fit was achieved, and a product/market fit was not (yet) achieved.

The next step is to test and validate the hypotheses set out in the previous paragraph. At the same time, FlatsForFriendz will work meticulously with the App Development consultancy on the possible use of the Instagram API. Each of the solutions developed needs to be tested again, wherefore, a step back from the big picture needs to be taken. For this purpose, the surveyed user groups are to be enlarged for the most representative feedback possible. The Instagram page should continue to be maintained and professionalized and should also be converted into the first (minor) revenue stream. It is essential to continue to make the brand FlatsForFriendz better known and in parallel to work on the achievement of product/market fit.

The journey of FlatsForFriendz has been filled with ups and downs. It has been exciting and grounding at the same time. It has been an eye-opener and a confirmation of the obvious. But, and most of all, it has been a lot of fun - and it is far from over.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Business Model Canvas

Appendix 2: Value Proposition Canvas

Appendix 3: Evolution of FlatsForFriendz' Instagram Appearance

FlatsForFriendz - Development from May 2020 to December 2021
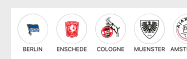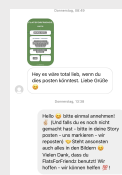
Appendix 4: Instagram Insights Analytic Tool

Instagram Insights Analytic Tool

Appendix 5: User Survey Evaluation (Experiment 1)
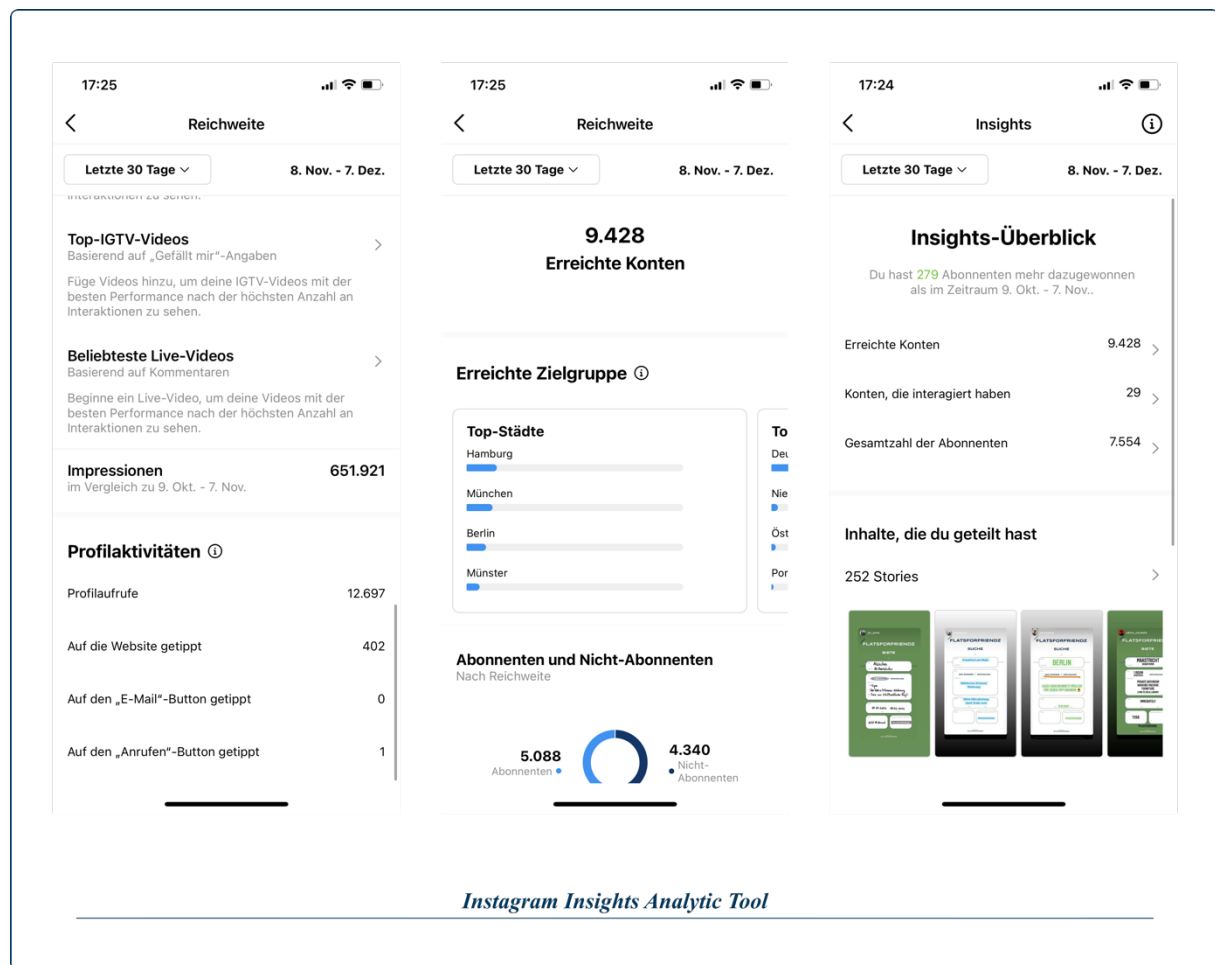
These screenshots are just an extract of the 355 answers strong survey. It can be made available at any times for any further demands

Abschnitt 1 von 13

FlatsForFriendz

Liebe Friendz Community,
um unser Angebot optimieren zu können und um noch besser zu verstehen, was DU an unserem Produkt schätzt und wo Du Verbesserungspotential siehst, würden wir Dich bitten kurz an dieser Umfrage teilzunehmen. Gleichzeitig hilfst Du uns damit unsere Masterarbeit noch besser gestalten zu können. Die Umfrage dauert nicht länger als 5 Minuten.
Vielen Dank für Deine Unterstützung!

Wann hast du das erste mal von FlatsForFriendz gehört?
- > 3 Monate
- 3 - 12 Monate
- > 12 Monate

Wie hast du das erste Mal von FlatsForFriendz gehört?
- Bekannte
- Freunde
- Familie
- Marketing Center Münster (MCM)
- Zufällig auf Instagram gesehen

In welcher Stadt hast du eine Wohnung/WG-Zimmer gesucht oder angeboten?
- Berlin
- Hamburg
- München
- Münster
- Köln
- Düsseldorf
- Stuttgart

- Stuttgart
- Dresden
- Leipzig
- Frankfurt
- Wiesbaden
- Andere

Nach Abschnitt 1   Weiter zum nächsten Abschnitt

Abschnitt 2 von 13

Stadt?
Beschreibung (optional)

In welcher Stadt hast nach einer Wohnung/WG-Zimmer gesucht oder sie angeboten?
Kurzantwort-Text

Nach Abschnitt 2   Weiter zum nächsten Abschnitt

Abschnitt 3 von 13

Biete oder Suche?
Beschreibung (optional)

Wofür hast du FlatsForFriendz genutzt?
- Wohnung/WG-Zimmer gesucht
- Wohnung/WG-Zimmer angeboten
- Beides

Suche
Beschreibung (optional)

Nach was für einer Art an Unterkunft hast du bei FlatsForFriendz gesucht?
- WG Zimmer
- Ein-Zimmer Wohnung
- Mehrzimmerwohnung
- Ich war offen für alles

Bitte wähle die Zahl 3 aus (dies ist lediglich ein Test)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Für welchen Zeitraum hast du nach einer Wohnung gesucht?
- 1-3 Monate
- 3-9 Monate
- 9-18 Monate
- >18 Monate

Biete
Beschreibung (optional)

Welche Art von Unterkunft hast du angeboten?
- WG Zimmer
- Ein-Zimmer Wohnung
- Mehrzimmerwohnung

Für welchen Zeitraum hast du deine Wohnung angeboten?
- 1-3 Monate
- 3-9 Monate
- 9-18 Monate
- >18 Monate

General Usage
Beschreibung (optional)

Fandest du, dass es einfach war zu verstehen wie FlatsForFriendz funktioniert?
- 1. Ja, super einfach
- 2. Grundsätzlich einfach
- 3. Ich fand es weder besonders einfach noch besonders schwer
- 4. Ich habe nicht so richtig verstanden wie FlatsForFriendz funktioniert
- 5. Ich habe überhaupt nicht verstanden wie FlatsForFriendz funktioniert

---

Template
Beschreibung (optional)

Um ein Gebot oder ein Gesuch auf FlatsForFriendz zu inserieren muss ein vordefiniertes Template genutzt werden. Auf einer Skala von 1-5, wie schwer war es das Template auf der FlatsForFriendz-Page zu finden?
1 2 3 4 5
sehr schwierig — super leicht

Auf einer Skala von 1-5, wie einfach ist es dir gefallen das Template auszufüllen?
1 2 3 4 5
überhaupt nicht leicht — sehr leicht

Auf einer Skala von 1-5, wie einfach ist es dir gefallen die Biete und Suche Templates zu unterscheiden?
1 2 3 4 5
überhaupt nicht leicht — sehr leicht

Sind dir unterschiedliche Template Designs wichtig?
1 2 3 4 5 6
überhaupt nicht wichtig — sehr wichtig

Würdest du dir eine Auswahlmöglichkeit von unterschiedlichen Designs pro Gesuch / Gebot wünschen?
- Ja
- Nein
- Keine Meinung

Findest du, es müssen zu viele Informationen auf dem Template preis gegeben werden?
- Ja
- Nein

Hast du ein Problem damit, dass alle Leute deine Zahlungsbereitschaft über das Template sehen können?
1 2 3 4 5
gar kein Problem — großes Problem

Fehlen dir Informationen auf dem Template?
- Ja
- Nein

Template Informationen
Beschreibung (optional)

Welche Informationen fehlen dir auf dem Template?
Kurzantwort-Text

Welche Informationen findest du unnötig?
- Stadtteil
- Mehr Info
- Zeitraum
- Preis
- Tag your Friendz
- Alle Informationen sind wichtig

Gab es irgendwelche Probleme mit dem Template?
- Ich habe zu wenig Platz zum schreiben
- Mir hat eine weitere Kategorie/Sparte auf dem Template gefehlt
- Das Template ist mir zu unpersönlich
- Keine Probleme
- Sonstige

Story-Highlights
Beschreibung (optional)

Hast du das Template in deiner eigenen Story gepostet und FlatsForFriendz markiert?
- Ja
- Nein
- Ich habe es in meine Story gepostet aber FlatsForFriendz nicht markiert

Wie viele "hilfreiche" Reaktionen hast du auf den Post in deiner eigenen Story erhalten?
- 0
- 1-3
- 3-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-50
- >50

Wie viele Leute (keine Follower von dir) haben sich nach dem Post in der FlatsForFriendz-Story und in den Highlights bei dir gemeldet?
- 0
- 1-3
- 3-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-50
- >50

Innerhalb der ersten Woche nachdem dein Template bei FlatsForFriendz geteilt wurde, wie viele Leute haben sich bei dir gemeldet?
- 0
- 1-3
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-50
- >50

Hast du das Template zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt erneut in deine Story gepostet?
- Ja
- Nein

Wie oft hast du das Template erneut in deine Story gepostet?
- 0 mal
- 1 mal
- 2 mal
- 3 mal

Auf einer Skala von 1-10 wie zufrieden warst du mit der Schnelligkeit von FlatsForFriendz, in welcher dein Template in der Story und in den Highlights gepostet wurde?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
sehr unzufrieden — sehr zufrieden

Erfolg
Beschreibung (optional)

Wie schnell und kompetent wurden deine Fragen beantwortet? Bitte auf einer Skala von 1-10 bewerten.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
sehr langsam und inkompetent — sehr schnell und kompetent

Kennst Du jemanden der über FlatsForFriendz eine Wohnung gefunden und erfolgreich vermietet hat?
- Ja
- Nein

Hast du am Ende tatsächlich eine Wohnung über FlatsForFriendz gefunden oder erfolgreich vermieten können?
- Ja
- Nein

Würdest du deine Wohnung lieber einer Person anbieten mit der du gemeinsame Follower auf Instagram hast, als jemandem mit dem du keine gemeinsamen Touchpoints hast?
- Ja
- Nein
- Keine Meinung

Feedback +/-
Beschreibung (optional)

Was gefällt dir an FlatsForFriendz?
- Instagram ist eine bereits bekannte Plattform
- Usage von vorgefertigten Templates
- Zusätzlich generierte Reichweite
- Speichern der Angebote und Gesuche in unterschiedlichen Story-Highlights
- Direkte Möglichkeit die Profile von Nutzern anzusehen
- Gemeinsame Kontakte werden sichtbar (ich suche im eigenen Netzwerk)
- Andere

Was gefällt dir an FlatsForFriendz nicht?
- Keine eigene Plattform sondern nur ein Account auf Instagram
- FlatsForFriendz hat nichts mit den Wohnungen zu tun, sondern vermittelt nur
- Zu wenig Angebote
- Es gibt keine Filteroption
- Die Templates lassen mir zu wenig Spielraum
- Profile von Anbietenden teilweise privat
- Zu wenig Reichweite
- Andere

Auf einer Skala von 1-10, wie einfach fandest du den gesamten Prozess mit FlatsForFriendz?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
sehr schlecht — sehr gut

Wettbewerb
Beschreibung (optional)

Was sind andere Plattformen oder Kanäle, auf denen du nach Wohnungen gesucht oder deine eigene Wohnung angeboten hast?
- Immoscout
- Airbnb
- WG-gesucht
- Housinganywhere
- Spotahome
- Kleinanzeigen
- Zeitungsinserate
- Maklerbüros
- Andere

Stell dir vor FlatsForFriendz würde sein Angebot nicht mehr ausschließlich auf Instagram präsentieren, welche Faktoren sind dir dabei besonders wichtig?
- Das Netzwerk von Instagram soll beibehalten werden
- Eine eigene App für FlatsForFriendz fände ich besser
- Die Möglichkeit über eine App einfach und automatisiert Templates erstellen zu können
- Eine Browser Version für FlatsForFriendz
- Sonstige

An welcher Stelle in deinem Such- bzw. Angebotsprozess hast du FlatsForFriendz genutzt?
- Als erste Option
- Mitten drin
- Nachdem ich viele unterschiedliche Kanäle ausprobiert habe war FlatsForFriendz meine letzte Option

Hast du ausschließlich bei FlatsForFriendz nach einer Wohnung gesucht oder deine eigene Wohnung angeboten?
- Ja nur bei FlatsForFriendz
- Nein ich habe auf 1-3 weiteren Plattformen gesucht
- Nein ich habe auf vielen (>3) Plattformen gesucht

Welches Zusatzangebot sollte FlatsForFriendz als erstes anbieten?
- Versicherung für Mieter und Vermieter
- Unterstützung bei der Vertragserstellung
- Treuhänder für gezahlte Kaution und Mieten
- Support bei Wohnungsreparaturen oder -reinigungen
- Für mich passt alles. Ich brauche kein Zusatzangebot

Hast du allgemein Feedback für uns? (Verbesserungsvorschläge? Was gefällt dir besonders gut?)
Langantwort-Text

English - Translation

1. When did you first hear about FlatsForFriendz?
2. How did you first hear about FlatsForFriendz?
3. In which city were you looking for or offering an apartment/shared room?
4. In which city did you search for or offer an apartment/shared room?
5. What did you use FlatsForFriendz for?
6. What kind of accommodation were you looking for at FlatsForFriendz?
7. Please select the number 3 (this is only a test)
8. For what period of time were you looking for an apartment?
9. What kind of accommodation did you offer?
10. For what period did you offer your apartment?
11. Did you find that it was easy to understand how FlatsForFriendz works?

12. To place a bid or a request on FlatsForFriendz you have to use a predefined template. On a scale from 1-5, how hard was it to find the template on the FlatsForFriendz page?
13. On a scale of 1-5, how easy did you find it to complete the template?
14. On a scale of 1-5, how easy did you find it to distinguish the bid and search templates?
15. Are different template designs important to you?
16. Would you like a choice of different designs per request/bid?
17. Do you think there is too much information to reveal on the template?
18. Do you have a problem with all people seeing your willingness to pay through the template?
19. Are you missing information on the template?
20. What information are you missing on the template?
21. What information do you find unnecessary?
22. What information do you find unnecessary?
23. Did you post the template in your own story and tag FlatsForFriendz?
24. How many "helpful" responses did you get to the post in your own story?
25. How many people (not followers of yours) contacted you after the post in the FlatsForFriendz story and highlights?
26. Within the first week after your template was shared on FlatsForFriendz, how many people contacted you?
27. Did you re-post the template to your story at a later time?
28. How many times did you re-post the template to your story?
29. On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied were you with the speed at which FlatsForFriendz reposted your template in the story and highlights?

30. How quickly and competently were your questions answered? Please rate on a scale of 1-10.
31. Do you know someone who has found or successfully rented an apartment through FlatsForFriendz?
32. Did you actually end up finding or successfully renting an apartment through FlatsForFriendz?
33. Would you rather offer your apartment to someone with whom you have common followers on Instagram than someone with whom you have no common touchpoints?
34. What do you like about Flatsforfriendz?
35. What don't you like about FlatsForFriendz?
36. On a scale of 1-10, how easy did you find the whole process with Flatforfriendz?
37. Often Flatsforfriendz users experience having mutual acquaintances with sellers or seekers on our site. How important is this feature to you on a scale of 1-10?
38. What are other platforms or channels where you have searched for apartments or offered your own apartment?
39. Imagine FlatsForFriendz would no longer present its offer exclusively on Instagram, what factors are particularly important to you?
40. At what point in your search or quote process did you use FlatsForFriendz?
41. Did you search for an apartment exclusively at FlatsForFriendz or did you offer your own apartment?
42. Which additional offer should Flatsforfriendz offer first?
43. Do you have any general feedback for us? (Suggestions for improvement? What do you particularly like?)

Appendix 6: Excel Analysis - Instagram Metrics (Experiment 1)

This screenshot is just an extract of the 250 participants strong FlatsForFriendz-Instagram-Usage-Analyses. It can be made available at any times for further demands

Active Cities

Aachen	Amsterdam	Ansbach	Augsburg	Bamberg	Barcelona	Bayreuth	Berlin	Bielefeld	Bingen
Bonn	Bozen	Braunschweig	Bremen	Brüssel	Den Haag	Dortmund	Dresden	Dublin	Düsseldorf
Edinburgh	Eichstätt	Erfurt	Erlangen	Essen	Frankfurt	Freiburg	Giessen	Götheburg	Göttingen
Graz	Greifswald	Groningen	Haarlem	Hamburg	Hannover	Heidelberg	Innsbruck	Jena	Karlsruhe
Kassel	Kaunas	Kiel	Klagenfurt	Köln	Konstanz	Kopenhagen	Leeuwarden	Leiden	Leipzig
Lissabon	London	Lübeck	Lüneburg	Luxemburg	Luzern	Lyon	Maastricht	Madrid	Magdeburg
Mailand	Mainz	Mannheim	Marburg	München	Münster	New York	Nürnberg	Oestrich-Winkel	Oldenburg
Osnabrück	Paderborn	Paris	Pforzheim	Potsdam	Regensburg	Rom	Rotterdam	Rostock	Sevilla
St.Gallen	Stockholm	Stuttgart	Tel Aviv	Tilburg	Trier	Ulm	Uppsala	Utrecht	Weimar
Wien	Wiesbaden	Würzburg	Zürich						

Inquiry - Analysis of Database

	Total	Search	Offer
Analysed Sample Size	237	191	46
		81%	19%
Average WTP	677 €	699 €	583 €
Both	581 €	581 €	/
Room	529 €	554 €	469 €
Flat	980 €	1.026 €	813 €
Search-Type			
Both	67	67	0
Room	104	75	29
Flat	66	49	17
Length of Stay (Months)			
- 6	35	27	8
6 - 12 months	20	17	3
12 +	57	39	18
/	125	108	17
Average Size m^2			
- 15	15	8	7
15 - 30	37	19	18
30 +	51	37	14
/	134	127	7
Average Size m^2			
Both			
- 15	3	3	0
15 - 30	8	8	0
30 +	1	1	0
/	55	55	0
Room			
- 15	12	5	7
15 - 30	24	8	16
30 +	2	0	2
/	66	62	4
Flat			
- 15	0	0	0
15 - 30	5	3	2
30 +	48	36	12
/	13	10	3

Furnished			
yes	38	23	15
no	12	4	8
no info	187	164	23
Time to start			
Late (<0)	2	1	1
Direct (0)	92	84	8
Prior (>0)	143	106	37
Average Prior	29	27	30
Problems			
Asked "How does it work"	5	5	0
Didn't find the Template	4	0	4
No Problem	191	154	37
Private account (can't contact)	12	10	2
Technical Difficulties	21	18	3
Used the wrong Template	4	4	0

User Age Group · User Gender · Cities users search for flats
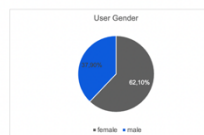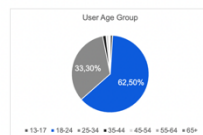
Appendix 7: Qualitative Quote-Summary (Experiment 2/3)

Name & Age	City	Search or Offer	Insights
Jannik (24 years)	Munich	Searcher (not successful)	• „FlatsForFriendz increases the reach of my postings significantly." • „Easy way to communicate interest " • „Very easy to use, as I know Instagram for many years already" • „Most of the time I observe that people offering as well as searching for flats on FlatsForFriendz have common followers with me" • „I prefer to find an apartment from someone I have common contacts with, as it simplifies the process afterwards" • „It would help, if I was able to somehow filter the different offer postings" • „Right know, I must click throw every highlight story, always paying attention to whether I'm seeing an offering or search post. The current templates are not so easy to differentiate." • „Finding a flat is very difficult and I know that FlatsForFriendz helps a lot here, but once I'm connected with an offeror, the process doesn't stop there. There's still a lot to do before I can eventually move in."
Theresa (23 years)	Berlin	Searcher (successful)	• „There are so many people that have seen my post. It's crazy." • „After tagging FlatsForFriendz I received much more answers compared to when I only posted it in my own story." • „You should have two different highlights for each city. One for Searching and one for Offerings!" • „I always have a better feeling, when I know the person, I'm working with or in this case trying to find an arrangement for an apartment with." • "In the end, I got my apartment from the ex-boyfriend of a good friend of mine from highschool. Funny

			connection, but it made the process a lot more trustworthy." • „After I found an apartment and the offeror was willing to rent it to me, there was so much to do and consider. For example, the contract and the deposit. It would have been great to get some help here."
Anna (25 years)	Hamburg	Searcher (not successful)	• „I have seen FlatsForFriendz so many times in peoples instastories, that I had to try it myself." • „I was impressed by how many mutual followers I had with FlatsForFriendz but also with many people that were offering and searching flats on there." • „It took me 5 minutes, to screenshot the template and fill it out. Super fast and easy." • „I got a lot of messages after tagging FlatsForFriendz, but I must say, there were also a lot of messages from people offering flats, that didn't really match my searching. It would be nice to somehow filter these out." • „I would have wished for the possibility to give some more information about myself on the template. This way, many of the people writing we, would have figured that its not a good match. For example, some people texted me and once the figured that I was a student, they told me they ere looking for someone, that is working already." • „Clicking through all the Highlight Stories was quite painful and confusing."
Leon (22 years)	Berlin	Offeror (successful)	• „For me, it has never been easier to find someone for my apartment." • „I took me 10 minutes to create the template for Instagram and within 2 hours I received more than 40 messages. Crazy!" • „With most of the people that contacted me, I had common connections. With quite a few of

			them, the connection was really strong."
			• „In my case I wanted to rent out my flat for 4 months, leaving all my stuff in the apartment. Therefore I was hoping to find someone, I might know or friends of mine know, to have a better feeling when someone is living in my apartment with all my stuff."
			• "In the end, I decided to rent my flat to a friend of my cousin, why approached me via FlatsForFriendz. Like my cousin told me in advance. I didn't have any problems and everything went super smooth."
			• "Setting up a contract and everything was a bit annoying. It would have been nice to receive some support here."
			• „I was also checking through the search postings and I figured, that it would be interesting to see a bit more information on the person that is searching for a flat. This way some potential mismatches can be avoided from the beginning on."
Sophie (25 years)	Munich	Offeror (successful)	• „With FlatsForFriendz it took me 2 days to find someone for my apartment."
			• "Setting up the template was super easy."
			• „Of course I was hoping to find someone, I knew personally or at least through someone else. With FlatsForFriendz I was able to 'check' whether I know someone that knows the person, that is interested in my flat."
			• „I asked my friend, what he thinks of him (searcher). He told me that he used to be his girlfriends roommate and that he's super chill. With this in mind, I had no worries letting him stay in my flat."
			• „What I really liked, was that I didn't have to sign up on a new platform giving them a lot of information. Basically, everyone has Instagram on

			• "their phones and knows how to use it." • „I was checking through the Munich story highlights and figured, that its very annoying to always have to check whether someone on there is searching or offering a flat." • „I would have liked to see a bit more information on the people that are searching for a flat." • „12 mutual followers only with FlatsForFriendz itself. Quite a lot."
Lina (23 years)	Hamburg	Offeror (successful)	• „I can't tell how many times I've seen someone posting the FlatsForfriendz template in their story, but it was a lot!" • „It was so easy to screenshot the template and fill it out. No registration. 5 minutes and I was done." • „I mean, who doesn't know how to use Instagram?" • „I was hoping to find someone for my apartment that comes from my own network, so that I don't have to worry to much about some stranger living in my apartment." • „What was really stressful was all the preparation of the contract, insurance policies, deposit payment and so on. Why can't you guys (FlatsForFriendz) help me with this?" • „I got 20 messages within one hour. I could have found someone, that would have moved in the day after. And there were many of them." • „No registration, no download, just an existing app, that everyone has on their phones. That's so convenient!"

Appendix 8: Extract of Information & Design Templates (Experiment 4)

Information Templates

Design Templates

Appendix 9: Card Game – Results (Experiment 4)

	Offeror 1	Offeror 2	Offeror 3	Offeror 4	Offeror 5	**Total Offeror**	Searcher 1	Searcher 2	Searcher 3	Searcher 4	Searcher 5	**Total Searcher**
District	6	6	5	4	3	**24**	6	7	4	6	2	**25**
Flat-size	8	7	4	8	9	**36**	9	8	8	7	8	**40**
Flat-images	5	5	6	3	4	**23**	7	6	9	8	7	**37**
price	9	8	9	9	8	**43**	8	9	7	9	9	**42**
Searcher Information	7	9	8	7	7	**38**	2	1	5	4	3	**15**
Flat-mates	2	1	7	6	6	**22**	5	4	6	5	5	**25**
Special facilities	3	4	1	2	2	**12**	3	3	1	1	4	**12**
Age of building	1	2	2	1	1	**7**	1	2	2	3	1	**9**
Infrastructure	4	3	3	5	5	**20**	4	5	3	2	6	**20**

Appendix 10: Summary and Results of all Hypothesis

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 1 - SUMMARY

H1: People will use FlatsForFriendz to search for flats	**validated**
H2: People will use FlatsForFriendz to offer their flats	**validated**
H3: People will use the pre-designed template for their inquiry	**partially validated**
H4: People will screen through city-specific Story highlights to search for tenants and offer flats	**validated**
H5: The users will have an equal gender distribution	**not validated**
H6: The users typical age will range from 18-25	**validated**
H7: The users of FlatsForFriendz are typically students or in-between internships	**validated**
H8: There will be an equal distribution of searching's and offerings	**not validated**
H9: People will use FlatsForFriendz as their last chance to find a flat	**not validated**
H10: People will mainly search for and offer furnished flats	**validated**
H11: People will mainly search for and offer flats for a temporary period of time	**not validated**
H12: People will mainly search and offer flats in large german cities	**not validated**

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 2 - SUMMARY

H1: Searchers use FlatsForFriendz because it increases the reach of their posts	**validated**
H2: Searchers prefer offers from the (extended) personal network	**validated**
H3: Searchers perceive Instagram and the FlatsForFriendz presence as particularly easy to understand and to use	**validated**
H4: Searchers would be pleased about additional services, like an insurance or a trust deposit	**validated**
H5: Two different template colors make a clear distinguishment possible	**validated**

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 3 - SUMMARY

H1: Offerors use FlatsForFriendz because it increases the reach of their posts	**validated**
H2: Offerors prefer to assign their flat to someone in their extended personal network	**validated**
H3: Offerors perceive Instagram and the FlatsForFriendz presence as particularly easy to understand and to use	**validated**
H4: Offerors are satisfied with the way the Template is pre-designed	**not validated**
H5: Due to the network effects, no further security steps are necessary on the offer site	**not validated**
H6: Offerors are satisfied with the short period of time in which flat requests are made	**validated**

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 4 - SUMMARY

H1: The price of the flat is the most important information on the template	**validated**
H2: Images of a flat make the template more appealing and interesting	**partially validated**
H3: Template designs with different patterns and images are preferred over plain, pre-designed templates	**not validated**

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 5 - SUMMARY

H1: More than 20% of FlatsForFriendz Instagram users will visit the landing page	**validated**
H2: More than 50% of Page Visitors will try to download the application	**validated**
H3: People will perceive the process of faking as annoying	**not validated**

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 6 - SUMMARY

H1: It is technically possible to access the Instagram network in an autonomous app, through the Instagram API	/
H2: It is technically possible to subdivide this Instagram network into further "degrees of connection" (like LinkedIn, for example)	/
H3: Searchers and offerors will be willing to use the template-design-generator	**partially validated**
H4: Searchers and offerors will be willing to continue to post the generated template to their personal Instagram-story	**validated**
H5: Searchers and offerors will be willing to match, communicate, and complete the inquiry within the app	**partially validated**

HYPOTHESIS EXPERIMENT 7 - SUMMARY

H1: Users are willing to enter more than the necessarily needed, pre-defined information into the template generator	**need to be validated**
H2: Users continue to post the now numbered template into their Instagram Story	**need to be validated**
H3: 400 of 500 respondents will download the app	**need to be validated**
H4: Users are willing to allow access to their private phone contacts	**need to be validated**
H5: Users network within the app	**need to be validated**
H6: Users invite their friends to the app	**need to be validated**
H7: Users choose to use the app to get more information about the inquiries	**need to be validated**
H8: Users start to communicate within the app	**need to be validated**
H9: 20% of the app users do not follow FlatsForFriendz on Instagram	**need to be validated**

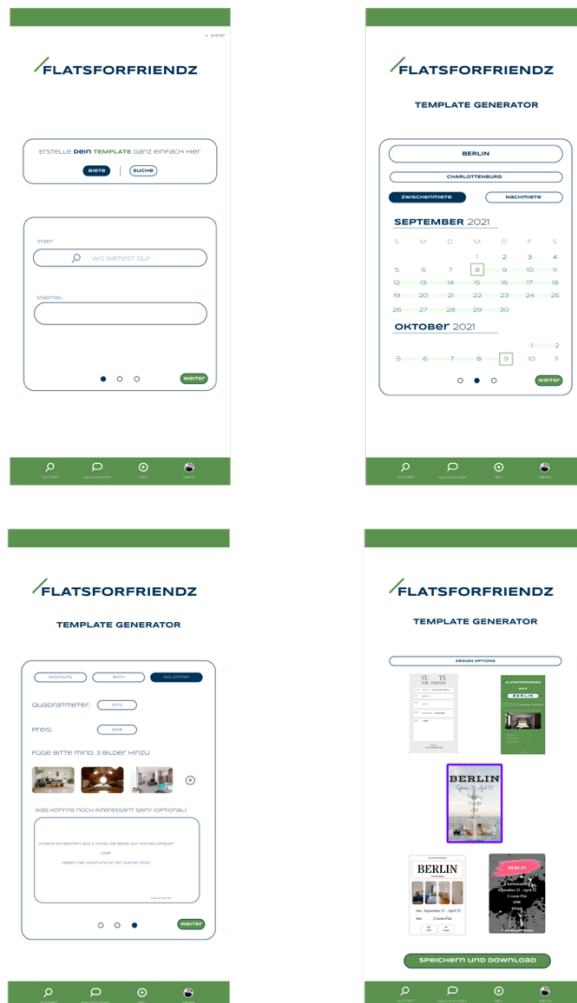**Appendix 11: Overview – FlatsForFriendz Hybrid Solution (Experiment 6)**
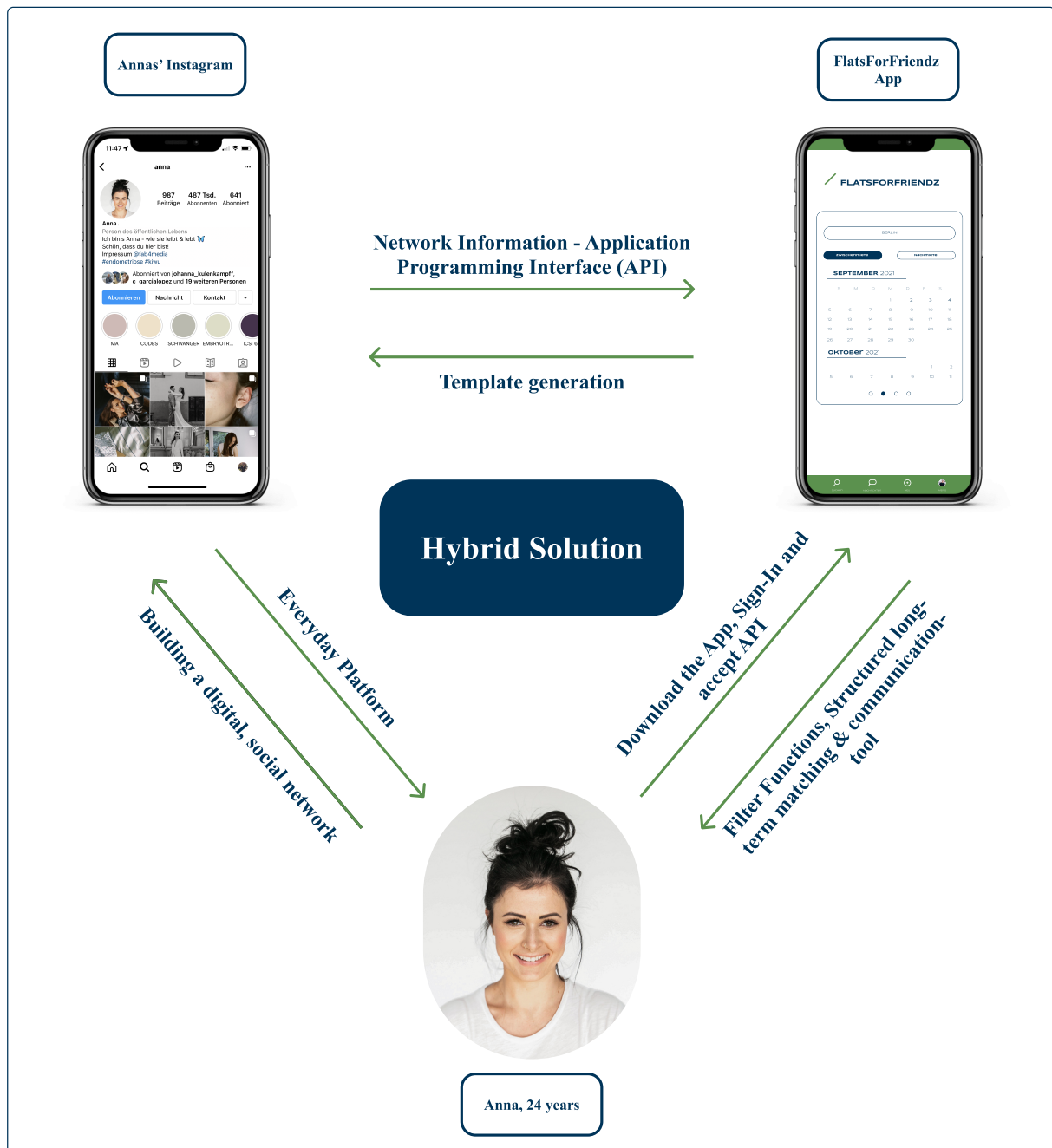
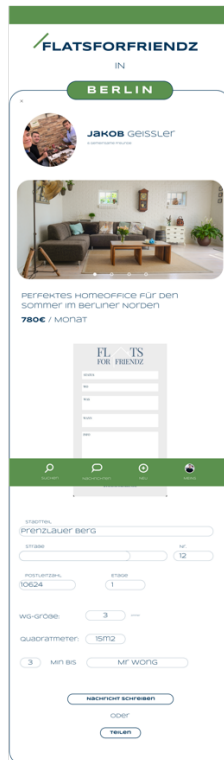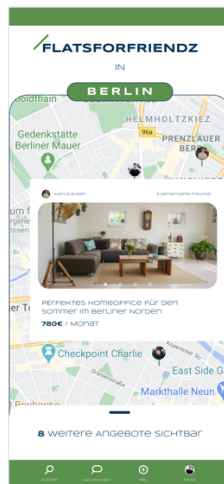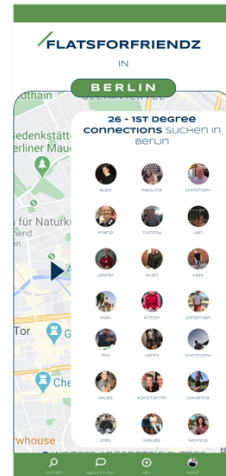**Appendix 12: Hybrid Solution – Figma Design (Experiment 6)**
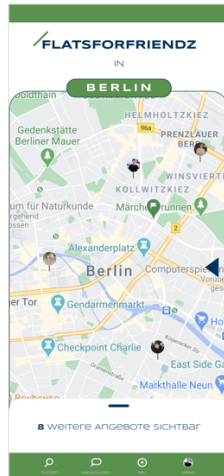

Log-In
/
Home-Screen
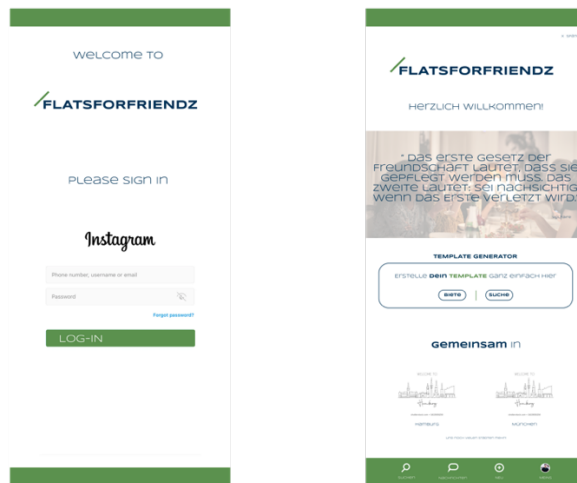
Template - Generator

Matching

Profile & Messaging
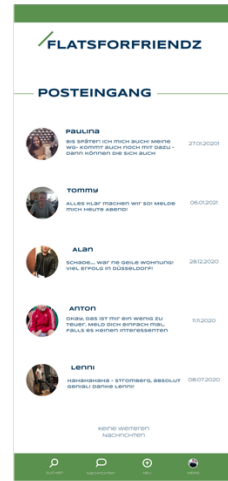
Appendix 13: Qualitative Quote-Feedback (Experiment 6)

| Pros	Cons
• „It's way more convenient to just type in the information in the app and a template is created, compared to a screenshot, which I have to edit manually."	• „There are so many different templates to choose from. I found it hard to decide. "
• „Creating an Instagram template was quite easy already, but with the template generator, it feels like no effort at all."	• „Since everyone can choose a different template design, it's hard to keep an overview of the different offers and searches."
• "Finally, you don't have to write on a 'picture' anymore"	• „Using Instagram is super convenient. I'm using that app everyday anyways. Why should I switch to yet another new app?"
• „If I'm being presented with a automatically designed template, i would surely be more likely to post it in my own Instagram story."	• "I feel very comfortable using instagram. It's nice to not have to worry about new registration processes."
• "I like the idea of having an app and Instagram at the same time."	• "I use Instagram every day, so why not use it for my flat search."
• "Instagram is easy to use, but I see quite a lot of limitations for our kind of usage. It makes sense to introduce an own app, to make things even easier."	• "If I'm using the app, as well as Instagram it needs to be super simple!"
• „I like the idea of being able to choose who can see my search or offer. I can start with my close network and open it up in case I can't find anything there."	
• "With the app I can finally filter and cluster my search."	
• „Sometimes my messages and up in the 'spam folder' if the person I'm trying to contact has a private profile. With the app I can be sure, that my message is actually read."	

Appendix 14: API Use-Request to Instagram

Dear Instagram Team,

For over a year and a half now, we've been running an Instagram page (@flatsforfriendz) that has made its mission to connect flat searchers and flat offerors, who use Instagram as one of their primarily resources with each other. One of the biggest success factors is the possibility for users to see how many followers they have in common with a person looking for or offering a flat. Accordingly, the concept of our site is since flats can be mediated in the extended personal network. A person offering a flat can thus see whether they have common contacts with a person interested in their flat. That provides for a large confidence relationship and facilitates both parties thus the flat search. Now that the site has a significant number of followers (>7500), we are currently in the process of developing our own app to make the matchmaking process even easier. Ideally, we would like to run the process completely via Instagram. Unfortunately, however, there are too many limitations that make it impossible for us to operate exclusively on Instagram. Currently, we use our story highlights to store the different flat offers and requests. However, these are limited to 100 pieces and additionally there is no way to filter. This is just one example of why we can't offer our product exclusively through Instagram. In the future, we want to offer a hybrid solution, which should exist both in our own app and on Instagram, resulting in a win-win for both of us. For this, it would be enormously helpful if we could integrate an interface to Instagram through an API within our app to continue to provide our users with access to their personal social network (an API functionality that has been turned off, after the Cambridge Analytica Scandal 2018). For this reason, we are approaching you with the question of whether there is a possibility to integrate the existing Instagram network into our external app, through the API. We would be very happy if you could provide feedback in this regard. About an exchange on the possible options, we would be very grateful.

Best regards
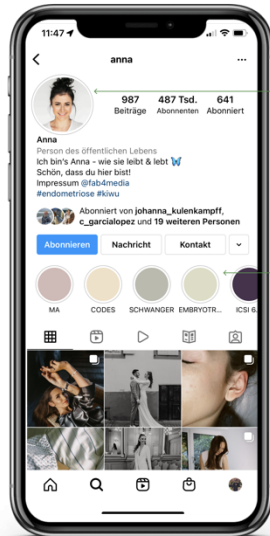Alex and Jakob
FlatsForFriendz
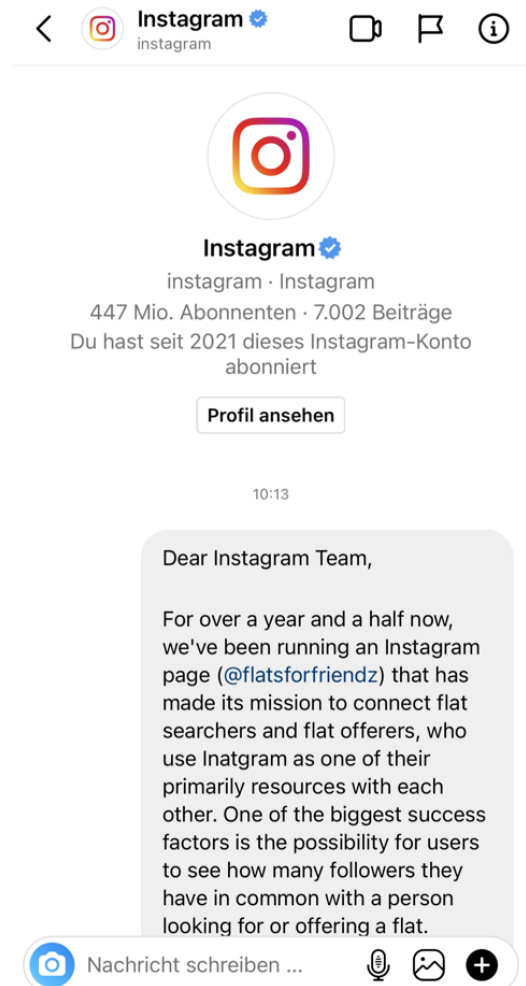
Appendix 15: Institutional Mietz-App | Black Card Instagram Offer

Black Card

Appendix 16: Basic Instagram Terminology and Functionality

Basic Instagram Terminology

Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories can contain personal pictures or videos. They are only visible for 24 hours and cannot be liked or commented. However, a response is possible through a direct message or an Instgarm reaction.

Story Highlights

The story highlights act as a kind of storage of the stories actually posted over the full length of 24 hours. These can be stored long-term in differently named Story Highlights.

Image Feed

The personal image feed can contain images, videos and reels. These in turn can be liked and commented. The feed can be viewed on the respective user profile permanently.

Basic Instagram Functionality

@flatsforfriendz

Tagging

It is possible to actively tag individuals or institutional pages in personal stories or posts. In turn, they will receive a notification (if the profile is public).

Dies in deiner Story posten >

Repositng

After receiving a notification - a simple repost button appears in the case of Instagram Stories, which allows to repost another person's posted Story to the personal Story.

Direct Messaging

On Instagram, in addition to the like and comment function, there is also the option to send messages directly to each. Thus also communicating via this social network and sending content back and forth.

This account is private
Follow this account to see their photos and videos.

Private Accounts

Many, especially private person accounts are not publicly accessible. That means it is not possible see the image feed or the stories of that person until the follower request is accepted.