

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in  
Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

**BUILDING GROWTH FOR FLATSFORFRIENDZ THROUGH B2B:  
A TARGETED APPROACH**

TIM LUKAS HINK

Work project carried out under the supervision of

Prof. Miguel Muñoz Duarte

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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the potential of B2B partnerships to drive growth for ‘flatsforfriendz’, a C2C platform leveraging personal networks in the flat rental market. It examines how B2B partnerships can enhance the C2C user experience and which B2B channels ensure growth. The study combines market analysis, customer discovery, and validation experiments. Findings suggest that exclusive academic networks have great B2B potential by addressing challenges for students and leveraging institutional trust for customer acquisition. Furthermore, social brand collaborations have the potential to create emotional retention. This work outlines a pathway for B2B growth, integrating user insights with feasible business practices.

## **Key Words**

B2B, Digital Business, Entrepreneurship, Growth, Housing Market, Lean Startup

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## 1. Introduction

The journey of flatsforfriendz (fff) began in the halls of Nova SBE, where Alexander Weiss first envisioned a solution to the inefficiencies and trust issues plaguing the housing market for students. As a student, Weiss recognized the frustration of sending countless unanswered messages and navigating platforms that felt impersonal and unhelpful. In 2020, he launched fff as an Instagram-based initiative. By leveraging digital networks and standardizing flat-sharing templates, fff quickly built a reputation for personalizing the search process and fostering trust among young people. Within a few years, the platform gained a loyal following, growing to over 55,000 users by 2024 – underlining LinkedIn Co-founder Reid Hoffman’s conviction that network effects lead to rapid growth and value creation (Hoffman and Yeh 2018). While Instagram served as an initial launchpad, technical limitations spurred Weiss to explore a dedicated app – an idea he analyzed in his final work project at Nova SBE in 2021. Three years later, this vision has come to life with the launch of fff’s web app, transforming the initiative into a full-fledged Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) platform.

As an early and frequent user of fff, the author of this work has closely followed the brand's evolution. What began in January 2024 as an initial outreach quickly evolved into bi-weekly brainstorming sessions. Here, the idea grew to (once again) leverage the Nova work project to explore fff’s Business-to-Business (B2B) potential and thereby shape its next chapter of growth. As Sarah Wang, General Partner at the Californian venture capital firm ‘Andreessen Horowitz’, emphasizes: *"Partnerships is the number one hire that we hear our early companies making. Our best-performing companies are relying very heavily on partnerships"* (CrossBeam 2022). While fff has succeeded in building trust, the potential of B2B partnerships remains untapped. Therefore, this work project aims to explore these untapped opportunities, leveraging the foundation cultivated at Nova SBE to help fff scale its impact and sustain its growth.

## 2. Research Question and Methodology

According to the stated objective of this work project, the guiding research question is: *Can B2B partnerships contribute to growth for fff?* For more detailed results, two sub-questions specify the research question, providing practical insights for fff:

*(1) How can B2B partnerships improve the C2C user experience?*

*(2) Which B2B channels ensure growth for fff?*

The research begins with a literature review to establish a theoretical framework, outlining the principles of B2B strategy development and the practical application of ‘Customer Discovery and Validation’. Further, it delves into the dimensions of customer acquisition and retention, providing a foundational understanding of how B2B partnerships might influence these areas. Afterwards, a market analysis investigates current trends, to then shed a light on fff’s positioning and the competitive landscape in the digital flat rental market. The section concludes with an examination of B2B strategies employed across digital industries, ensuring a practical understanding of their range, best practices, and potential sweet spots. Finally, these insights are translated into three segmented hypotheses to get validated.

The core of the project lies in the field research, conducted in two phases. First, the ‘Customer Discovery’, gains insights into user experiences through 15 in-depth interviews. This approach identifies the most critical needs and pain points, which are translated into potential B2B strategies for each moving phase. The second phase, ‘Customer Validation’, consists of three targeted experiments to assess the interest of potential B2B partners. These experiments incorporate a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches, ensuring broad insights. The findings are synthesized into a comprehensive conclusion that highlights prior limitations, necessary pivots, and key results. Furthermore, it provides an outlook that recommends actionable next steps. Finally, the project concludes by revisiting the initial research questions, assessing how the findings can guide fff toward growth and long-term success.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1. B2B Strategy Development**

B2B partnerships are integral to the industrial and commercial landscape, including both revenue-generating and non-revenue-generating relations. They are characterized by complex relationships that often involve multiple stakeholders and longer decision-making processes compared to C2C or Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) markets (Anderson and Narus 1990).

Revenue-generating transactions directly impact a firm's financial performance. They involve the sale of products or services to a client, often through tailored contracts that reflect the specific needs and scale of the customer. Due to the immediate revenue streams, such relationships are perceived as highly crucial (Kalwani and Narayandas 1995).

Besides direct B2B transactions, bundle partnerships between two companies target a common customer and offer significant financial advantages. These partnerships combine complementary products or services from both companies into a single offering. They provide an integrated solution that address a broader range of customer needs. This strategy drives immediate revenue and creates a stronger, unified brand experience for the consumer, enhancing customer loyalty and market reach (Anderson and Narus 1990).

In addition to revenue-generating transactions, B2B markets often involve strategic partnerships that do not directly generate revenue but are crucial for long-term value creation. These non-revenue partnerships are often more flexible and evolve over time based on mutual interests rather than strict contractual obligations. Trust, alignment of values, and shared long-term visions are key elements. Unlike revenue-driven deals, their success is measured more by qualitative outcomes, such as brand equity and customer engagement (Hult et al. 2011). For instance, they can include corporate social responsibility initiatives, knowledge-sharing alliances, or brand collaborations (Bhattacharya, Korschun and Sen 2009; Hult et al. 2007).

### **3.2. Customer Acquisition and Retention**

Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) has emerged as a key metric for managing customer relationships, particularly in the digital economy. It is defined as the “*the present value of all future profits generated from a customer*” (Gupta and Lehmann 2003, 3).

The ‘Customer Lifetime Value to Customer Acquisition Cost’ (CLV-CAC) ratio assesses the overall efficiency of growth strategies. It compares the lifetime value generated by a customer to the cost incurred to acquire that customer. A lower ratio may indicate an inefficient acquisition, while a higher ratio signals sustainable growth (Farris et al. 2010).

In digital markets, optimizing the CLV-CAC ratio is crucial due high customer churn rates. By forming strategic partnerships, platforms can expand their reach and reduce CAC through the partner’s user base. Partnerships also enhance CLV by adding value to the customer experience with bundled services. B2B partnerships in digital platforms can grow network effects, where the platform value increases with every member, increasing the likelihood of customer retention (Van Alstyne, Parker, and Choundary 2016).

In B2B contexts, partnerships characterized by trust and mutual value creation are key to retaining customers (Anderson and Narus 1990). Palmatier et al. (2006) underline this by arguing that relationship marketing in B2B plays a critical role for high-value customers. In summary, the ratio offers a complete view of customer acquisition and retention, where strategic partnerships can improve both.

### **3.3. Customer Discovery and Validation**

The methodology employed in this study follows the principles of the ‘Lean Startup’ by Eric Ries (2011) which emphasizes iterative, hypothesis-driven processes of Customer Discovery and Customer Validation. It prioritizes direct engagement with stakeholders to ensure product-market alignment. Customer Discovery represents the initial phase of the methodology, aiming to uncover the core needs, behaviors, and pain points of potential users. This phase is

exploratory, relying on qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observational studies. By directly engaging with customers, researchers aim to test hypotheses about user needs and validate whether these align with potential solutions. This iterative feedback loop minimizes the risks associated with developing products or services that fail to align with the intended audience. Building on the gathered insights, the following Customer Validation focuses on testing whether the proposed solutions effectively address the identified needs. Presenting prototypes or minimum viable products (MVPs) to a targeted group of customers allows to gather feedback on the feasibility, desirability, and usability of the concepts. The emphasis on iterative refinement ensures that solutions evolve in response to real-world user experiences rather than static assumptions. Techniques such as usability testing, A/B testing, and structured surveys are employed to systematically evaluate the alignment between the solution and customer needs. The Lean Startup methodology underscores the importance of adaptability and responsiveness to user feedback. Sampling strategies in both Customer Discovery and Validation must ensure diversity among participants to capture a wide range of user and customer experiences. Furthermore, the iterative nature of the methodology requires a commitment to revisiting and refining hypotheses as new insights emerge, aligning with the principle of ‘build, measure, learn’ cycles described by Ries (2011).

## **4. Market Analysis**

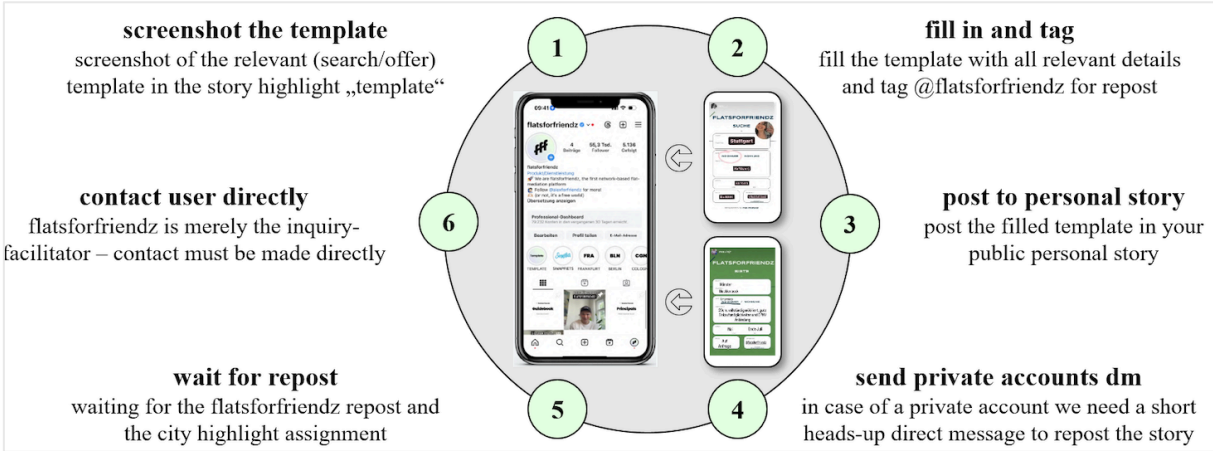
### **4.1. Flat Rental Market: Trends**

Approximately 54% of Germany’s population are renters, with an overall rental market value of €48 billion annually, and a historical preference for renting over homeownership in urban areas (Statista 2024a). Currently, the urbanization rate in Germany is 78% (Statista 2024b) with an expected upward trend (Statista 2018). Consequently, major urban centers report significant shortage of housing. The German Property Federation (ZIA 2024) estimates a current shortage of 600,000 flats – with a projected increase to 830,000 by 2027.

Technologically, the flat rental market has experienced significant disruption with the rise of digital platforms. Such platforms have allowed landlords to bypass traditional renting processes, leading to an ‘informalization’, where the boundaries between formal long-term rentals and flexible short-term arrangements become blurred. Consequently, traditional regulatory frameworks are facing significant challenges, leading to increased risks for both landlords and tenants (Fitzpatrick et al. 2021). Leveraging the desperation of seekers and the anonymity of platforms, property scam has been increasing in Germany. According to the Berlin Police, the number of registered scams doubled between 2020 and 2022 (taz 2023).

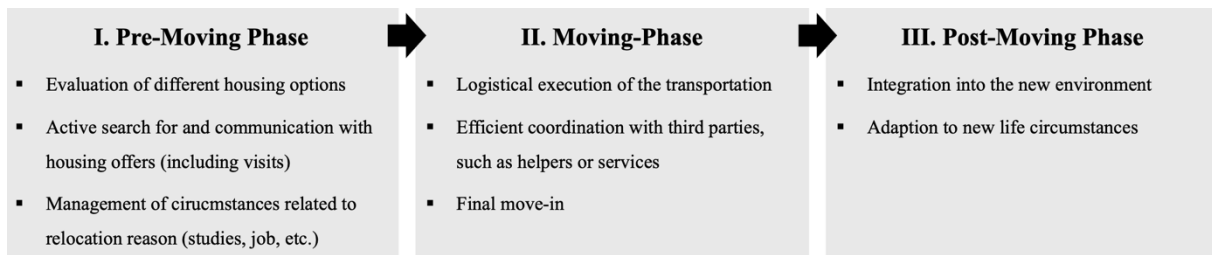
**4.2. Digital Flat Rental Market: Positioning of flatsforfriendz**

Addressing the accessibility challenges and trust issues, fff positions as a community-driven solution for young people. Beyond leveraging their direct networks, users can leverage fff as a facilitator within a trusted community using a standardized Instagram template:



**Figure 1: Process with Instagram Template**

Due to the limitations of Instagram (e.g., stories being deleted after 24 hours), fff has launched a web app designed to leverage network effects and distribute flats to contacts within first or second degrees. More than a housing search tool, fff’s mission is to create a safe space for young people in the market. Targeting this mission, fff separates its support for the users’ relocation process into a 3-phases-framework (see Figure 2). Later in this project work, this framework serves as a structure to translate the user insights into applicable strategies for fff.



**Figure 2:** Phases of Moving according to fff

### 4.3. Digital Flat Rental Market: Competition

The German market is segmented by many digital platforms with different approaches. Focusing primarily on the broad market, ImmoScout24 serves an audience seeking both short-term and long-term rentals across various types of properties. The platform is designed to accommodate a wide range of users, from young professionals to families. Frequently, it emerges as the most popular real estate website (ImmoScout 2024b). As a key competitor to ImmoScout24, Immowelt (2024) targets a similar broad market segment. The platform distinguishes itself by transforming the process into a data-driven experience including detailed property information and neighborhood insights. Specializing in the shared housing segment, WG-Gesucht is tailored to meet the needs of students and others seeking affordable, communal living. The platform has become particularly popular in university towns and urban areas, where shared housing is a prevalent choice due to both economic factors and lifestyle preferences (WG-Gesucht 2024). Originally known globally for its short-term vacation, Airbnb has also made significant strides into the long-term rental market. The platform appeals to digital nomads and expatriates seeking flexible, furnished rental options in urban areas. The platform states that long-term rentals are the largest growing segment of Airbnb bookings (Barnes 2023).

### 4.4. B2B Strategies in Digital Markets

#### 4.4.1. B2B in the Digital Platform Economy

Digital platforms have become a key pillar of modern business ecosystems, leveraging technology to connect different market participants. While some platforms are primarily B2B-focused, others incorporate B2B elements to enhance their overall value proposition. Digital platforms

like Amazon and Alibaba illustrate how B2B can be central to a platform's strategy by providing a marketplace where businesses can buy and sell products at scale. This B2B focus enables them to serve as critical intermediaries in global supply chains (Statista 2023).

Additionally, companies integrate B2B strategies to improve their offerings for consumers. Facing growing pressure from Apple Music (Statista 2024c), Spotify has introduced 'Spotify for Artists', a B2B offer that empowers musicians and record labels by providing detailed insights about streaming statistics. This enhances the artist's ability to engage with their audience, leading to increased streams and higher royalties. From a user experience perspective, it allows for more personalized or even exclusive content. By enhancing the artist's connection with their audience, Spotify improves the overall user engagement (Spotify 2024).

Moreover, companies like Netflix and Apple pursue B2B partnerships to expand their reach. Netflix, for example, has partnered with telecom companies like Sky (2018) and Comcast (Reuters 2018) to include Netflix in their subscription packages, allowing users to access Netflix through their existing services. Thereby, Netflix enhances its user convenience and market presence. Similarly, Apple has employed a comparable strategy with its Apple TV+ service where TV manufacturers like Samsung (Gurman 2019) and LG (2024) integrate the Apple TV+ app. In addition, Apple collaborates with other companies to offer Apple TV+ subscriptions as part of their service bundles. In summary, the role of B2B in the digital platform economy extends far beyond platforms dedicated solely to business transactions.

#### 4.4.2. B2B in the Digital Flat Rental Market

ImmoScout24 distinguishes itself from other platforms by positioning itself as the "*number one partner*" (ImmoScout24 2024b) for real estate professionals. This partner-focused approach involves providing tools and services that go beyond mere property listings. For instance, real estate professionals can choose between membership models with varying levels of marketing support, data access, and exclusive features to enhance efficiency and success (ImmoScout24

2024a). The company also emphasizes the importance of collaboration with real estate professionals through strategic partnerships enhancing property marketing and market reach (ImmoScout24 2022a; 2022b). These partnerships enable ImmoScout24 to integrate more deeply into the workflows of B2B clients. Also, ImmoScout24 organizes weekly appointments with B2B clients to gather feedback on new product ideas and prototypes (ImmoScout24 2021).

Meanwhile, Airbnb has also integrated a B2B approach to enhance its C2C offerings. With the launch of ‘Airbnb Experiences’ in 2016, local guides can offer unique activities, such as guided tours or cooking classes. Partnering with local businesses, not only implements a second business segment but also enriches the user experience. Despite operational challenges, CEO Brian Chesky emphasizes its importance for Airbnb’s long-term strategy (Skift 2022). At a larger scale, Airbnb partners with local governments to promote sustainable tourism and local regulations, for instance with the City of Milan (Airbnb 2021a) and Florence (Airbnb 2021b). Additionally, collaborations with telecom giants such as Deutsche Telekom (2015) integrate the platform into other services, making it accessible to a wider audience. To improve trust for hosts, Airbnb partners with Lloyd's of London for a comprehensive insurance coverage against property damage, encouraging more property owners to list their homes (Airbnb 2024).

#### **4.5. Implications for Field Research**

The German flat rental market faces high demand and limited supply with technological disruptions and scam intensifying the conditions. In this context, leveraging trusted personal networks presents a strong Unique Selling Point (USP). During the Pre-Moving Phase, where users scan the market, there is a clear opportunity to differentiate through expanded networks. The actual Moving Phase presents logistical challenges, which have the potential to be mitigated through service partnerships. In the Post-Moving Phase when users settle into a new area and adapt to new life circumstances, fff can play a role by offering services that help users integrate. This leads to the following three hypotheses which are tested in the field research:

#	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Users seek the expansion of their trustworthy networks.	<i>to be validated</i>
H2	Users value B2B partnerships that simplify the logistical aspects of moving.	<i>to be validated</i>
H3	Users require local support that helps them integrate into their new environments.	<i>to be validated</i>

**Table 1:** Hypotheses of User Interviews

## 5. Field Research

For the field research, the methodology of Customer Discovery and Validation serves as a structure while fff's 'Phases of Moving' provide further segmentation. First, the results of 15 user interviews with students and young professionals are presented, outlining their key issues across the phases. Based on this foundation, potential B2B strategies are ideated. Finally, key partnerships are tested through experiments. All interviews follow the principles outlined by Rob Fitzpatrick (2014), generating deep insights into the behaviors and challenges of potential users and customers. Such insights are crucial for entrepreneurs seeking to validate their assumptions. Fitzpatrick emphasizes three key practices for effective interviews: encouraging the interviewee to discuss their experiences and daily life, focusing on specific past situations rather than hypothetical opinions about the future, and avoiding any attempts to promote or pitch a product. Guided by these principles, an interview framework (see Appendix 1) with open-ended questions allows for dynamic adaptations to suit the flow of discussions.

### 5.1. Customer Discovery

#### 5.1.1. Pre-Moving Phase: User Interviews

Across the three phases, the most negative feelings were expressed in the Pre-Moving Phase with stress being the most pronounced feeling: *“Total discomfort, total stress. (...) It's such a permanent occupation for me that I practically use every free minute to be on the usual portals, looking for apartments. And yes, a bit of frustration, because a lot is not answered.”* The fragmentation across used platforms often made their experience more complex. Here, interviewees

wished for more transparency and automated communication. The inefficiency and the difficulty of finding reliable housing led many users to rely on personal networks. For some, this has been the most successful channel: *“With personal networks it really works best from my experience. (...) I have already organized various apartments for friends. (...) The network simply helps to increase the range and to get access to apartments that are not even on the market.”* Nonetheless, many noted limited success in expanding their personal reach, for example through institutional networks from employers or universities. One described his experience accordingly: *“The companies said: ‘Hey, if you need help looking for an apartment, then let us know. We’ll see, we’ll get in touch.’ But there was never anything proactive. Once, I actually asked if they could help me, but then nothing followed.”* Still, a few received a list of corporate apartments after signing the contract. In addition, employee-driven initiatives such as WhatsApp groups or MS Teams channels were actively used but were only accessible after having already joined the company. As the desire to finally find a flat would outweigh potential anonymity concerns for interviewees, most would not hesitate to involve their professional network, stating: *“Anonymity plays a subordinate role for me when I can create opportunities in exchange for anonymity.”* Even when being in the position of subletting a flat, interviewees perceived it as a valuable channel: *“I would want the person to be connected to me in some way that could simply just be working at the same employer or studying at the same university.”*

#	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Users seek the expansion of their trustworthy networks.	<b>Valid.</b> Respondents generally rely on personal networks to increase trust. Also, respondents seek for institutional support from universities or employers.

**Table 2:** H1 of User Interviews

### 5.1.2. Pre-Moving Phase: Derivation of B2B Strategy

The interviews revealed significant frustration around the housing search, with participants expressing a need for more structured, trustworthy networks. Many participants noted their

willingness to activate professional networks. However, they had not yet fully leveraged this potential. The proposed B2B strategy would involve offering institutions like universities and companies access to a secure, trusted flat rental market within the fff platform. Members of these institutions, such as students or employees, could access an exclusive network with their institutional email address. This would ensure that only legitimate listings and trusted people are part of the network. The institutions would pay fff for either each registration, or a fixed price for the network based on the company size. For fff, these partnerships offer clear financial advantages through institutional transactions. Partnering with universities and companies provides access to a large user base, ensuring growth and user retention. It strengthens the fff brand by positioning the platform as a reliable partner for both institutions and users. Assuming that users are more likely to stay engaged with a platform that is even trusted by large institutions, this would boost the CLV for fff. For partnering institutions, offering such a service enhances their value proposition for students and employees as it makes the challenging relocation a smoother process. This could improve student and employee satisfaction and strengthen the institutions' reputations as supportive entities that prioritize the well-being of members. For users, the benefit is clear: access to a trusted network with verified listings reducing the uncertainty associated with traditional housing platforms.

### 5.1.3. Moving Phase: User Interviews

The moving phase generated mixed feelings among interviewees, ranging from excitement to exhaustion. Mentally, the process turned out to be intense for some participants due to the transformative character of the actual moving: *“Of course, you're always happy to move again. But moving is also a bit sad. Because you leave your old place. And with that you close a chapter in your life. So it's an emotional phase.”* Besides that, the coordination seemed to be the key challenge for interviewees: *“I think the planning itself. When do I start packing my things? When can I enter the apartment? When is the handover? Where can I get a car for the move?”*

*Who has the time to do the move with me?*” From a physical perspective, logistical challenges were perceived as minor, as most respondents moved into furnished apartments: *“Everything always fits in one car. I always carry my entire household in two suitcases.”* When participants had to organize moves with more belongings, they preferred asking their personal networks for help rather than formal moving services: *“Services, actually not. Always a circle of friends. When it comes to a car, also often family. Always a mixture of the two.”* Nevertheless, renting a sprinter remained a common solution among some interviewees: *“They are extremely good. Relatively cheap. You can park them anywhere.”* Comprehensive services beyond were not used as the small scale made extensive support less relevant.

#	Hypothesis	Result
H2	Users value B2B partnerships that simplify the logistical aspects of moving.	<b>Not valid.</b> The physical effort of moving is not perceived as a major issue by users.

**Table 3:** H2 of User Interviews

#### 5.1.4. Moving Phase: Derivation of B2B Strategy

Due to the limited transportation extent of most movings in the target group, the strategic value for fff is not significant in this phase. Accordingly, a B2B strategy is not defined.

#### 5.1.5. Post-Moving Phase: User Interviews

In the Post-Moving Phase, interviewees described a variety of feelings, from excitement about exploring new cities to loneliness due to the lack of immediate social networks. Most respondents were successful in making social connections through colleagues at work or their friends’ networks: *“I have to say that my studies and my internships have given me connections in many cities. Maybe old acquaintances that I haven’t talked to for a long time. (...) You get to know their friends and build a network.”* However, loneliness was a recurring theme for those without local connections. Reflecting how age and life stage impact social integration, one interviewee described: *“I think the older you get, the more difficult it is to make new friends.”* Another respondent noted, *“I used Bumble Friends, but it didn’t really work for me”*, indicating mixed

success with social apps. Meanwhile, the majority even felt an initial hurdle using such apps: *“I think for me it's on the one hand probably the acceptance that you need it because you can't get in touch in a normal, natural way. (...) I have a weird feeling when I admit that I don't have any friends.”* Those respondents often preferred a more informal setting for making new friends while pursuing their passions: *“The best context is where you might just be there for a hobby. (...) I'm also new in a potter's studio. I didn't go there to find friends. But then you also get to know new people. I think if it's all connected with some activity, then it's relatively easy.”* For hobbies, the interviews indicated a certain homogeneity among the target group. When settling in a new area, most respondents focused on finding a gym, exploring running routes and finding the best cafés and bars. Despite the inconsistent experiences and varying needs of interviewees, this phase presents a significant opportunity for fff to foster social integration through local partnerships. Even if only applicable to some users, the necessity of settling socially presents a basic human need and is therefore highly relevant for creating emotional connections between users and the brand.

#	Hypothesis	Result
H3	Users require local support that helps them integrate into their new environments.	<b>Partially valid.</b> While some interviewees could leverage their networks in new cities, others perceived settling as a growing challenge.

**Table 4:** H3 of User Interviews

#### 5.1.6. Post-Moving-Phase: Derivation of B2B Strategy

The interviews highlighted that building social connections in a new city is a growing challenge. While users generally avoid settings that are solely focused on meeting new people, many respondents prioritized establishing routines. The proposed B2B partnerships for the Post-Moving Phase would involve collaborations within a comprehensive ‘forfriendz’ event series at the beginning of each month, supporting both social connections and daily routines. For fitness, fff could partner with one gym per city to host a free training day for movers. This event would give participants the opportunity to try out the gym and engage with other newcomers who

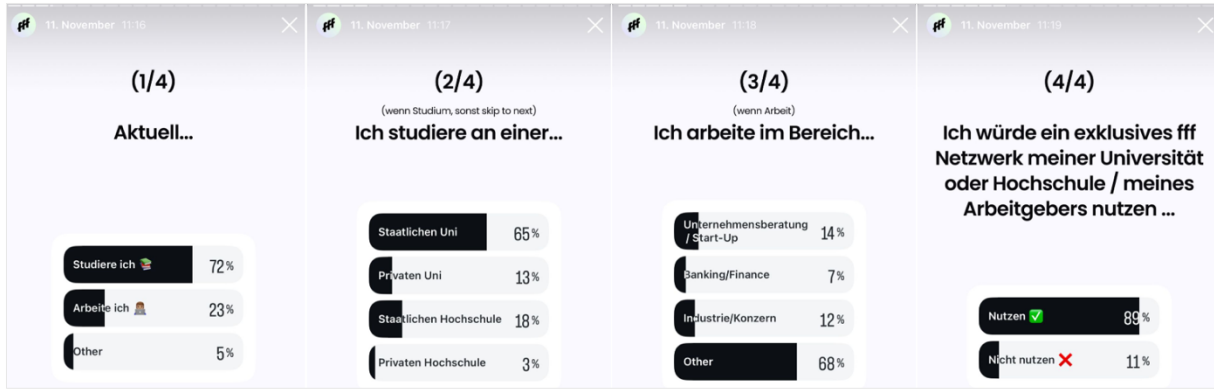
share an interest in fitness. Meanwhile, for running, fff could collaborate with local running clubs to organize ‘Get to Know Your City’ runs. A local running club representative would share tips about the city and its running routes. This approach aligns with the interview insights where users emphasized fitness and community as essential aspects of their routine. Also, a partnership with a bike rental subscription service (such as ‘SwapFiets’) could offer free bike tours for new movers to explore their new city. Movers would receive a bike for the day and would be led by a local representative. For coffee enthusiasts, fff could collaborate with local cafés to offer workshops, where movers would learn the basics of brewing and latte art. These partnerships have the potential to increase brand visibility and user retention beyond the move, since users would associate fff not just with finding housing but with supporting their critical post-moving experience. Ideally, this would increase the CLV. Additionally, co-branded events and promotions present revenue opportunities. For local businesses, partnering with fff ensures a steady stream of potential new customers and members. Accordingly, partners would benefit from increased brand exposure while contributing to their community. Users would not only establish new routines in their new neighborhoods but make it a casual social experience.

## **5.2. Customer Validation**

According to the respondents, the greatest need for support is perceived in the Pre-Moving Phase. Also, the proposed B2B strategy presents a great financial potential with universities and companies providing large user bases and institutional budgets. Accordingly, the Customer Validation focuses on the Pre-Moving Phase due to the limited scope of this work project.

### **5.2.1. Experiment 1: User Poll on Instagram**

As a foundation for the outreach to potential partners, a large-scale user interaction took place via the fff Instagram page (see Figure 3). More than 1500 users were asked to validate the idea of institutional networks and provide information about their current study and work situation, specifying the group of relevant institutional partners.



**Figure 3:** Screenshots from the User Poll on Instagram

Private universities, representing approximately 27% of Germany’s total university landscape, differ from public universities as they are mainly funded through independent revenue streams (HRK 2024; Sanyal and Johnstone 2011). This distinction makes private universities attractive partners for fff. In contrast, the limited financial flexibility of public universities might pose a challenge to partnerships. Therefore, the proportion of private students was tested:

#	Hypothesis	Result
H4	A relevant portion of users (>10%) studies at private universities.	<b>Valid.</b> The proportion of users studying at private universities is significantly greater than 10%

**Table 5:** H4 of Experiment 1

Companies in the consulting or finance sector are typically characterized by a young workforce who have a higher willingness to relocate (BLS 2024). Also, networking has been proven as a great motivation within these high-performing environments (Arshad, Hassan, and Azam 2024). These characteristics make them an ideal partner for fff. Large corporations, in addition, are generally characterized by large employee numbers, and multiple locations both nationally and internationally. This large, yet decentralized structure makes them potential partners for fff:

#	Hypothesis	Result
H5	A relevant portion of employed users work in consulting or finance (in total >20%) and large corporations (>10%).	<b>Partially valid.</b> The statistical test provides no significant evidence for the consulting/finance proportion exceeding 20%. Meanwhile, the proportion of large corporations is significant.

**Table 6:** H5 of Experiment 1

The hypothesis H6 aimed to validate the qualitative insights from user interviews quantitatively, testing if users show significant interest in exclusive institutional networks within the fff app:

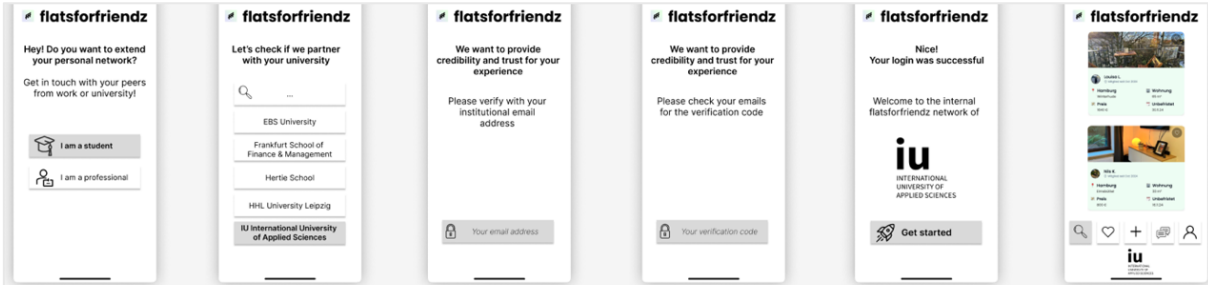
#	Hypothesis	Result
H6	The vast majority (>75%) of users would use exclusive institutional networks.	<b>Valid.</b> The proportion of users who would use exclusive institutional networks is significantly greater than 75%, providing strong statistical evidence.

**Table 7:** H6 of Experiment 1

Concluding, the validation of the three hypotheses provides significant evidence for both fff and potential partners that members of the defined target institutions already use fff and are interested in the implementation of such exclusive networks (see Appendix 3).

5.2.2. Experiment 2: Prototype and Sales E-Mail Campaign

For this experiment, a prototype was designed with ‘Figma Design’ to show the functionality of an exclusive network within fff for both universities and employers (see Figure 4). Users would first state if they are students or professionals. In the next step, they would check if their institution partners with fff. Once they have found and clicked their institution, they would provide their institutional email address. Based on the partnering organization, the system would validate the mail address (e.g. ...@novasbe.pt) and send out a verification code. With this mechanism, only valid members of the organization could access the exclusive network.



**Figure 4:** Verification Process for Exclusive Network (Prototype)

This prototype was translated into a comprehensive sales deck (see Appendix 4 and 5) and personalized for 25 potential partners (see Appendix 6), consisting of a market teaser and problem statement, followed by an introduction of the fff brand and product, and finishing with a call to action to become fff’s pilot partner.

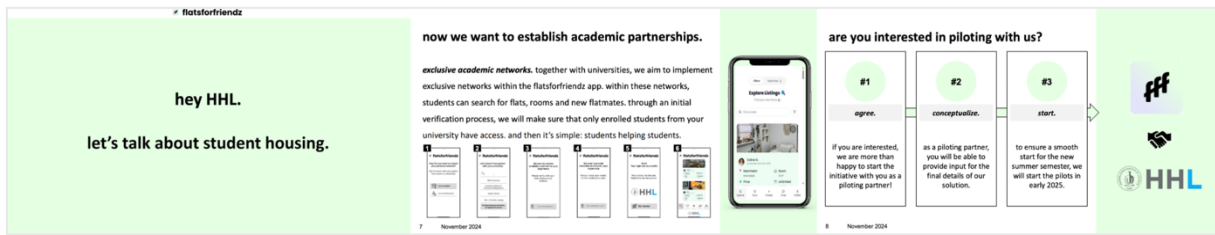


Figure 5: Excerpt from Sales Deck

The personalized sales decks were sent via e-mail to official contact mails to test the interest of different institutions. Generally, a 5% response rate is expected for cold B2B emails (Belkins 2024). However, due to the small test group of five institutions per category and the effort to personalize the outreach with individualized sales decks, a more ambitious benchmark of 20% success rate was applied for the validation of each customer segment.

#	Hypothesis	Result
H7	At least one private university reacts positively and shows interest in the product.	<b>Valid.</b> One private university showed interest, and a first meeting took place to understand each other's interests (see Appendix 10).
H8	At least one public university reacts positively and shows interest in the product.	<b>Not valid.</b> None of the contacted public universities responded to the sales e-mail campaign.
H9	At least one consulting company reacts positively and shows interest in the product.	<b>Partially valid.</b> Two of the contacted consulting companies responded. While one company stated to be not interested, the other showed interest in the final product once its implemented.
H10	At least one finance institution reacts positively and shows interest in the product.	<b>Not valid.</b> None of the contacted finance institutions responded to the sales e-mail campaign.
H11	At least one large corporation reacts positively and shows interest in the product.	<b>Not valid.</b> None of the contacted large corporations responded to the sales e-mail campaign.

Table 8: Hypotheses of Experiment 2

In total, the e-mail campaign could not significantly validate the customer segments – despite an overall success with two generated leads across segments (>5%). Due to the nature of cold-acquisition-experiments, a precise understanding about the feedback was not possible.

Nonetheless, a follow-up with the interested university HHL Leipzig (see Appendix 7) provided first-hand insights, highlighting the significant housing challenges faced by the student

population. Especially their international students struggle with unfamiliar housing practices and lack local registrations or visas, making them less attractive to landlords. These issues are compounded by HHL’s atypical start dates, falling outside the traditional semester cycle. For housing, HHL collaborates with the local ‘Studierendenwerk’ which offers increasing support for international students, while students themselves share housing leads informally through WhatsApp groups. However, housing issues remain a significant workload for the Student Affairs Manager, who spends around 10 hours per week assisting students on it. Therefore, HHL is interested in solutions like fff to expand housing options and streamline processes but remains cautious about partnerships due to funding and staffing uncertainties.

5.2.3. Experiment 3: Expert Interviews

In Experiment 3, the outreach was changed from cold-acquisition-style to requesting expert interviews for a scientific study on the housing market for students and young professionals. Here, the objective was to gain deeper insights about the customers’ needs. Via LinkedIn, 25 potential experts working in Employer Branding or Student Recruitment at relevant institutions were asked for a short interview to discuss institutional perspectives (see Appendix 9). However, only one of them replied. Therefore, the focus was shifted once again and, instead, ‘Studierendenwerke’ were contacted. These are public service organizations, collaborating with German universities, dedicated to supporting the social, financial, and cultural needs of students (DSW 2024). Five representatives provided insights on their perspectives, current solutions and the interest in future projects – without knowing of the interview’s real intention (see Appendix 10 and 11). This gathered honest insights of potential partners and created potential leads:

#	Hypothesis	Result
H12	Experts perceive student housing as a major issue.	<b>Valid.</b> All representatives confirmed the students’ challenge of finding well-located and affordable accommodation.
H13	Experts observe a current undersupply for student housing with need for future improvement.	<b>Valid.</b> All experts confirmed an undersupply. Especially, housing for temporary study periods remains underdeveloped.

H14	Experts consider external partnerships as a potential channel for future solutions.	<b>Valid.</b> All experts consider external partnerships to help the students. Current efforts are usually ad-hoc and not systematically.
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**Table 9:** Hypotheses of Experiment 3

More specifically, the interviews revealed that the demand for student housing far exceeds the current offer, leading to long waiting lists. As noted in one interview, *"the peak was at 3,100 before the start of the semester."* Moreover, *"it is the case that you wait around five and a half months, six months, but for individual apartments, a year."* International students are particularly struggling with housing, facing additional barriers: *"At the moment we are seeing a very increasing demand, especially from international students. They certainly have fewer chances on the free housing market because of language barriers and prejudices."* In regards of these challenges, the Studierendenwerke are open to external partnerships. For instance, trusted private landlords are recommended to waiting students: *"We pass it on by sending email addresses from local renters or private renters, where we know they have a reasonably decent offer."* Also, market screening is underway to introduce app-based solutions connecting students with external options. One Studierendenwerk has already implemented an app that allows landlords to advertise directly to students. However, it admitted the challenge of avoiding scams: *"The problem is, we can't check every offer. I admit that happens."* In summary, the respondents revealed the urgent need to increase their offerings. Initial efforts regarding app implementations show their general willingness to invest in valuable ideas.

### **5.3. Field Research Conclusion**

#### **5.3.1. Limitations and Pivots**

The field research revealed limitations that necessitated strategic adjustments to the initial approach, aligning the project with both practical constraints and emerging insights. These limitations and pivots are essential for framing the findings and charting a feasible path forward.

First, the field research prioritized the Pre-Moving Phase for research and strategic development. This decision was made to address the phase with the highest intensity of user pain points. While this narrowed scope allowed for deeper exploration of actionable insights, it excluded an examination of the Post-Moving Phase. Nevertheless, that phase still holds potential for growth through emotional retention. Accordingly, the ideas were translated into sales decks and handed over to fff for a potential market approach (see Appendix 12 and 13).

Secondly, the initial strategy of cold outreach proved inefficient, yielding limited engagement and insights. To overcome this challenge, the approach pivoted to conducting expert interviews. This method provided valuable qualitative insights, while also fostering relationships that could lead to future partnerships. Despite tackling the limitations of cold selling, it also introduced constraints in scaling the number of stakeholders due to the time-intensive nature of interviews.

Thirdly, initial outreach efforts targeted both universities and corporations, with the expectation that certain corporate sectors would show strong interest in housing solutions for employees. However, corporations demonstrated limited responsiveness, and re-engaging corporate audiences may first require demonstrated success with academic partnerships. Consequently, the focus shifted to universities. This pivot led to targeting Studierendenwerke, where housing is directly linked to institutional goals and first initiatives have proven a certain willingness to cooperate and invest externally.

Lastly, the research proved budgetary concerns among universities, such as the HHL, operating under stringent financial frameworks. These constraints present a challenge to the original idea relying on institutional payments to fund partnerships. Therefore, a potential pivot to a user-based payment model might be necessary, where institutions implement and promote exclusive networks, but only premium users would be able to enter those. This model would shift the financial responsibility to users, allowing institutions to partner with fff avoiding direct costs. While it offers a scalable alternative, its feasibility hinges on the users' willingness to pay.

### 5.3.2. Outlook

The imitations shaped a series of strategic pivots laying the groundwork for further exploration and iteration. First, the research highlighted financial constraints as a limitation for universities. As discussed previously, this may necessitate a shift in the payment model from institutional funding to user-based payment through a premium membership system. To implement this model effectively, a strategic and financial assessment of the market potential for both models must be conducted. Most importantly, this would include the validation of the users' willingness to not only use the network but pay for such a premium benefit.

Secondly, a focus on Studierendenwerke is recommended. The next steps should prioritize Studierendenwerke with significant housing challenges – especially those with high international student populations in large cities. To capitalize on the created leads, follow-ups should identify how fff can integrate into their existing infrastructure. Success stories from early implementations will serve as proof of concept for future partnerships and scaling within the Studierendenwerk network. For leads that are not ready to commit yet, maintained engagement through periodic updates on the solution or study findings is key to remain a potential partner.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research aims to answer essential questions guiding fff's strategic growth with B2B:

*(1) How can B2B partnerships improve the C2C user experience?*

The study demonstrates that B2B partnerships with universities, particularly through their Studierendenwerke, hold considerable potential for enhancing the fff user experience. Students, especially international ones, face significant barriers in securing housing, from unfamiliarity with local systems to the inefficiencies of existing platforms. By collaborating with institutions already trusted by students, fff can integrate its platform into existing housing frameworks. These partnerships are not only about access; they improve trust, a fundamental component of any C2C marketplace. Verified institutional networks allow students to connect within a closed,

trusted ecosystem, addressing the pain points of uncertainty and fraud. While promising, the approach is not without its challenges. Institutional buy-in, particularly in resource-constrained public settings, remains an obstacle. These partnerships will require ongoing refinement and a commitment to aligning the platform's offerings with institutional priorities. Beyond the process, user insights have revealed social challenges in the Post-Moving Phase. Here, fff can support its users by introducing casual social events through brand collaborations.

*(2) Which B2B channels ensure growth for fff?*

The research explored B2B channels that have the potential to optimize key metrics such as CLV and the CLV-CAC ratio. Prioritizing academic networks emerged as the most viable initial strategy. By leveraging the established trust and reach of universities and Studierendengeräte, fff can reduce acquisition costs and boost user retention. For example, co-branded communication campaigns and institutional endorsements can lower CAC, while the integration of fff into institutional systems enhances long-term engagement, increasing CLV. The potential pivot to a premium membership model would substitute the preferred B2B transactions, if those are not feasible, but could also enable growth by increasing the number of premium subscriptions. Here, user willingness to adopt and pay would require further validation. Moreover, despite being not tested in the field research due to the limited scope of this work, the Post-Moving Phase provides a promising potential for fff to retain and attract users emotionally. Community building through social events can improve the user experience beyond the primary moving process, and consequently enhance the CLV. This is highly relevant for fff's growth as passive users create value in the network through building connections.

In summary, reflecting on the guiding research question, "*Can B2B partnerships contribute to growth for fff?*", fff has an opportunity to grow through B2B partnerships, leveraging trust to enhance the user experience and optimize growth metrics. While the findings provide a strong foundation, future efforts must focus on further validating and scaling these insights.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: User Interviews - Structure

**a. Introduction and Rapport Building** (*Purpose: To make the participant feel comfortable and set the stage for the interview*)

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and share where you are in your current life?
2. Can you provide an overview on your moves during the past years?

**b. Pre-Moving Phase** (*Purpose: Explore how participants research housing options, connect with others, and manage uncertainties in the pre-moving phase.*)

Hypothesis: Users seek the expansion of trustworthy networks for their search.

3. Which general feeling do you connect with the pre-moving phase?
4. When you were looking for a new place to live, how did you go about it?
5. What were your key challenges related to this phase?
6. How important is it for you to be able to rely on personal networks? Which are the networks you use?"
7. How would your preferred level of trust and anonymity in the process look like?
8. Have you made any significant negative experiences in this phase?

**c. Moving Phase** (*Purpose: Understand the logistical challenges during the move and the potential role of partnerships*)

Hypothesis: Users value partnerships that simplify logistical aspects of the process.

9. Which general feeling do you connect with the actual moving process?
10. What were your key challenges related to this phase?
11. Can you describe the usual extent of your movings?
12. Did you use any services or helpers? How did you find these?
13. What were the most difficult parts of organizing the move?

**d. Post-Moving Phase** (*Purpose: Examine the participants' integration into their new environment and how additional services could support this*)

Hypothesis: Users require local support to integrate into their new environments.

14. Which general feeling do you connect with the post-moving phase?
15. What are your key challenges related to this phase?
16. Once you moved in, what were your priorities when settling into your new area?
17. How did you go about making new social connections?
18. How did you go about finding out about local amenities (e.g., cafes, gyms)?
19. Have you made any significant negative experiences in this phase?

**e. Closing**

20. Is there anything else you would like to add about the moving process or suggestions for improving the experience?

Appendix 2: User Interviews - Transcripts

*Click for Dropbox Access*

Appendix 3: Experiment 1 - Instagram Poll Statistical Analysis

#	<i>Observed Proportion</i>	<i>Benchmark Proportion</i>	<i>Z-Statistic</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
H1	16.2 %	10%	6.4698	<0.0001	[15.4%, 16.9%]
H2 (1)	20.2%	20%	0.1846	0.4267	[18.97%, 21.35%]
H2 (2)	11.6%	10%	2.0790	0.0188	[10.78%, 12.46%]
H3	88.9%	75%	18.9355	> 0.0001	[87.78%, 89.92%]

# flatsforfriendz

**hey Roland Berger.**  
**let's talk about employee housing.**

**many employees experience stress searching for an apartment.**

“

**DRESDNER**  
NEUESTE NACHRICHTEN

“When finding an apartment becomes a second job” (2024)

**Frankfurter Allgemeine**  
ZEITUNG FÜR DEUTSCHLAND

“New job, but no apartment” (2024)

**FOCUS**  
online

“Man gets job in Germany, housing market forces him to give up.” (2024)

**BR**<sup>24</sup>

“Permanent job, but still no apartment” (2022)

**DER SPIEGEL**

“Those who want new employees are also responsible for housing” (2024)

**ZEITUNG ONLINE**

“Housing shortage in big cities: New job, but no apartment” (2024)

”

## ... that's why companies are actively addressing this issue.

“

**Handelsblatt** “Companies entice with company apartments at an all-inclusive price” (2024)

**Frankfurter Allgemeine** “The company apartment is making a comeback” (2024)  
ZEITUNG FÜR DEUTSCHLAND

**iwd** “Renaissance of employee housing: In view of the shortage of skilled workers and housing shortages, companies are becoming more creative in their search for staff.” (2024)  
Das Informationsdienst des Institutes für deutsche Wirtschaft

**STUTTGARTER** “How employee housing helps fight the shortage of skilled workers in Stuttgart” (2024)  
**ZEITUNG**

**WESTFALENPOST** “Employers lure applicants with housing support” (2024)

**BERLINER** “Recruiting skilled workers: Employers increasingly also housing providers” (2024)  
**MIETERVEREIN**

“

3 November 2024

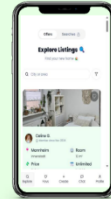
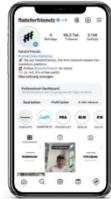
## and also we at flatsforfriendz want to help.



**our mission?** with our flatsforfriendz platform, we want to create a safe space for young people in the housing market. away from ghosting and scamming – towards trust, transparency and efficiency. a place where one can leverage its personal network.

4 November 2024

## what flatsforfriendz is.



**instagram page.** in 2020, we started flatsforfriendz to connect friends during their flat search process on Instagram – today the page counts 57k users. we have mediated thousands of shared rooms and flats over the last 4 years in more than 240 cities and 900 areas. our "easy-to-use" concept of an everyday platform with a predefined template has made the page so successful.

**(web) app.** in october 2024, we have translated our gathered market insights and user expertise into a web app. without any marketing expenses, 5k users have already registered. it is meant to replace current solutions by creating trustful and personal connections – through the integration of personal networks and an attractive user experience. the final app is about to launch soon.

5 November 2024

## among young academics, flatsforfriendz has become a known brand.



**activity**  
343.5K

**growth**  
+12%

**active cities**  
> 240

**inquiries**  
6.1K

### personas



students



interns

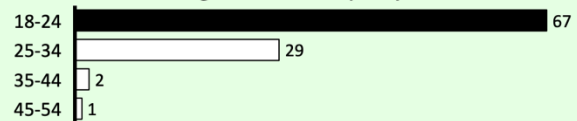


young professionals

### gender distribution



### age distribution (in %)



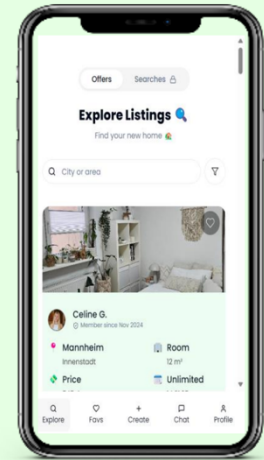
6 November 2024

## now we want to establish corporate partnerships.

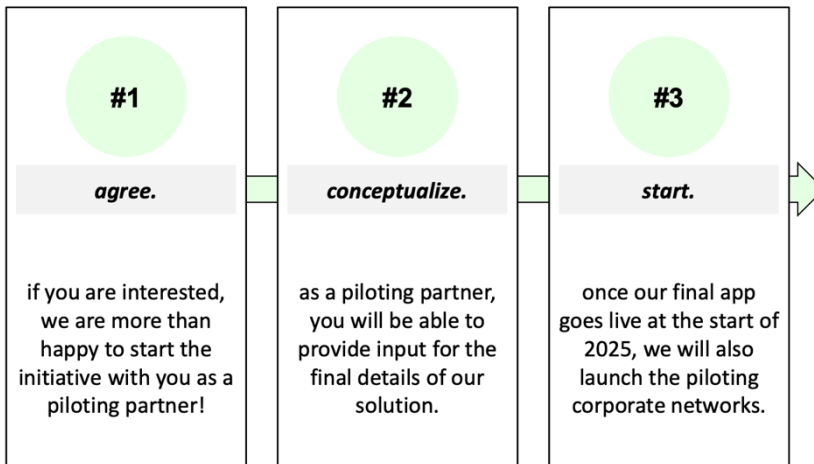
**exclusive corporate networks.** together with universities, we aim to implement exclusive networks within the flatsforfriendz app. within these networks, employees can search for flats, rooms and even flatmates. through an initial verification process, we will make sure that only verified employees from your company have access. and from then on, it's simple: Berger helps Berger.



7 November 2024



## are you interested in piloting with us?



Roland Berger **B**

8 November 2024

**thank you, dear friend.  
i am looking forward to hear from you.**

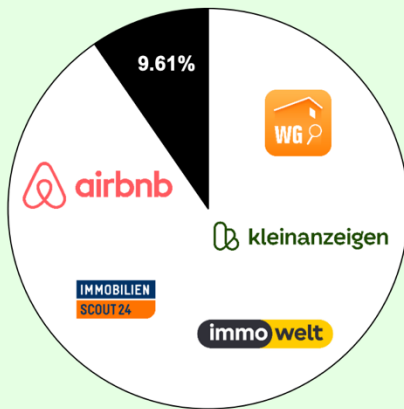


**Alexander Weiss**  
**Founder**  
alex@forfriendz.com  
+49 151 61353415

Appendix 5: Experiment 2 - Sales Deck Universities

**hey HHL.**  
**let's talk about student housing.**

## most students are forced to search on the private housing market.



Germany has a total of 237,215 student residence places, with a **student housing provision rate of only 9.61%.**

Source: Deutsches Studierendenwerk (2023)

2 November 2024

## ... but the private housing market reveals threats for students.

“

**DER SPIEGEL**

“Immoscout 24: Fraudsters scam loans with data from apartment seekers” (2024)

**SWR**»

“Warning for students looking for a flat share: Fraudsters falsify apartment advertisements” (2024)

**SZ**

“Sexual harassment experienced by young women looking for accommodation” (2022)

**STUTTGARTER  
ZEITUNG**

“Hundreds of cases in Baden-Württemberg: Housing scammers target students” (2024)

**mdr**

“Students report sexual harassment when looking for a room in a shared flat” (2023)

**Frankfurter  
Rundschau**

“Students are desperate: the situation in German cities is getting worse” (2023)

”

3 November 2024

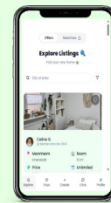
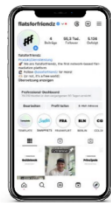
that's why flatsforfriendz wants to help.



**our mission?** with our flatsforfriendz platform, we want to create a safe space for students in the housing market. away from negative vibes – towards trust, transparency and efficiency. a place where it is relevant who you are as a person.

4 November 2024

what flatsforfriendz is.

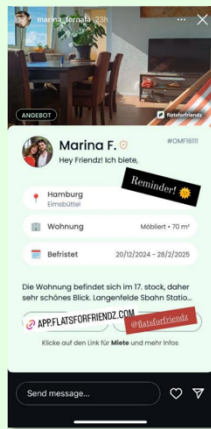


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5 November 2024

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> 240

inquiries  
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students

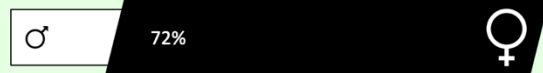


interns

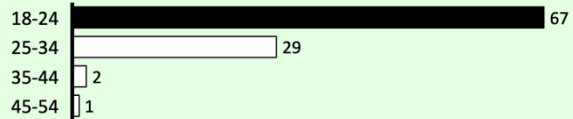


young professionals

### gender distribution (in %)



### age distribution (in %)



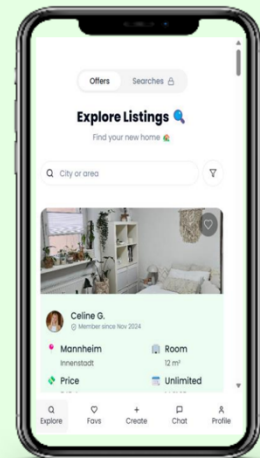
6 November 2024

## now we want to establish academic partnerships.

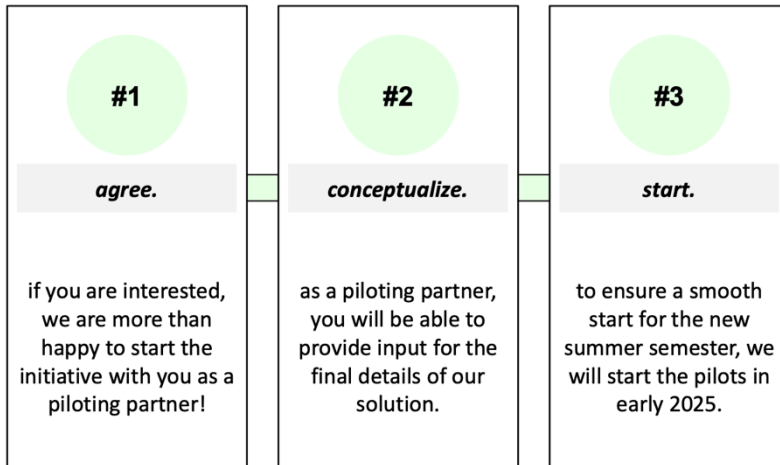
**exclusive academic networks.** together with universities, we aim to implement exclusive networks within the flatsforfriendz app. within these networks, students can search for flats, rooms and new flatmates. through an initial verification process, we will make sure that only enrolled students from your university have access. and then it's simple: students helping students.



7 November 2024



## are you interested in piloting with us?



**HHL**

8

November 2024

 flatsforfriendz

**thank you, dear friend.  
i am looking forward to hear from you.**



**Alexander Weiss**  
**Founder**  
alex@forfriendz.com  
+49 151 61353415

Appendix 6: Experiment 2 - List of Contacted Partners

<b>Category of Institution</b>	<b>Name of Institution</b>	<b>No Feedback</b>	<b>Negative Feedback</b>	<b>Positive Feedback</b>
Private University	<i>Hertie School Berlin</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Bucerius Law School Hamburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>HHL University Leipzig</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>KLU Hamburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Jacobs University Bremen</i>	<b>X</b>		
Public University	<i>TU Hamburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Freie Universität Berlin</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Universität Münster</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Universität Stuttgart</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Universität Duisburg-Essen</i>	<b>X</b>		
Management Consulting Company	<i>Bain &amp; Company</i>		<b>X</b>	
	<i>Roland Berger</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>PwC</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Deloitte</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Simon Kucher &amp; Partners</i>	<b>X</b>		
Financial Industry Company	<i>Deutsche Bank</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Commerzbank</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>ING-DiBA</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>KfW</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Deutsche Börse</i>	<b>X</b>		
Large Corporations	<i>Beiersdorf AG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Aurubis AG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Siemens AG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Check24</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Metro AG</i>	<b>X</b>		

Appendix 7: Experiment 2 - Meeting Transcript (HHL Leipzig)

*Click Link for Dropbox Access*

Appendix 8: Experiment 3 – List of Contacted Partners

<b>Category of Institution</b>	<b>Name of Institution</b>	<b>No Feedback</b>	<b>Negative Feedback</b>	<b>Interview Conducted</b>
Private University	<i>Constructor University Bremen</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Frankfurt Business School of Finance &amp; Management</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>EBS Universität für Wirtschaft und Recht</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Zeppelin Universität Friedrichshafen</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>ESCP Business School</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>SRH Hochschule Heidelberg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>SRH Berlin University of Appl. Sciences</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>IU International University</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Lancaster University Leipzig</i>	<b>X</b>		
Public University	<i>Leuphana University</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Universität zu Köln</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Universität Erfurt</i>		<b>X</b>	
‘Studierendenwerk’	<i>Studierendenwerk Chemnitz-Zwickau</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>Studierendenwerk Düsseldorf</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>Studierendenwerk Darmstadt</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>Studierendenwerk Köln</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>Studierendenwerk Vorderpfalz</i>			<b>X</b>
	<i>Studierendenwerk Münster</i>		<i>General interest but no short-term interview possible due to time constraints at the end of year</i>	
	<i>Studierendenwerk Oldenburg</i>			
	<i>Studierendenwerk Ostniedersachsen</i>			
	<i>Studentenwerk Hannover</i>			
	<i>Studentenwerk Leipzig</i>			
<i>Studierendenwerk Göttingen</i>				

<i>Studierendenwerk Augsburg</i>			
<i>Studierendenwerk Niederbayern/Oberpfalz</i>			
<i>Studierendenwerk Osnabrück</i>			
<i>Studierendenwerk München Oberbayern</i>			
<i>Studierendenwerk Kaiserslautern</i>			
<i>Studierendenwerk Essen-Duisburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Erlangen-Nürnberg</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Ost: Brandenburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Freiburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Gießen</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Mainz</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studentenwerk Magdeburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Koblenz</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Kassel</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Karlsruhe</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>MainSWerk Studierendenwerk FFM</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Thüringen</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Heidelberg</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Greifswald</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Seezeit-Studierendenwerk Bodensee</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studentenwerk Dresden</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Dortmund</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Bremen</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Bonn</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Bielefeld</i>	<b>X</b>		
<i>Studierendenwerk Berlin</i>	<b>X</b>		

	<i>Studierendenwerk Mannheim</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Aachen</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Saarland</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Rostock-Wismar</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk West-Brandenburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Paderborn</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Freiberg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Halle</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Oberfranken</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Hamburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studentenwerk Schleswig-Holstein</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Siegen</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Stuttgart</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Wuppertal</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Würzburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Ulm</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Tübingen-Hohenheim</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Trier</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Studierendenwerk Marburg</i>	<b>X</b>		
Management Consulting Company	<i>McKinsey &amp; Company</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>BCG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>KPMG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Ernst &amp; Young</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Bearing Point</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Accenture</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>INVERTO</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Capgemini</i>	<b>X</b>		

Financial Industry Company	<i>Unicredit Bank AG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>DZ Bank AG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>NORD Holding</i>	<b>X</b>		
Large Corporations	<i>Otto Group</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>BMW Group</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Zalando SE</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>Henkel</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>REWE Group</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>AXA Konzern AG</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>München Re</i>	<b>X</b>		
	<i>PENNY</i>	<b>X</b>		

### Appendix 9: Experiment 3 - Introduction Letter (Example)

**Yuki Pratima Kongthon** · 3rd  
Student Recruitment and Admission

NOV 22



**Tim Hink** · 2:45 PM

#### **Expert Interview: Student Housing**

Dear Ms. Kongthon,

As part of my Master's thesis, I am researching the challenges that students face when looking for accommodation and how universities address these. Given your expertise in student recruitment, I would be very interested to hear your perspective on this.

Would you have time for a quick chat next week to share your perspective? Your input would be of great value! Of course, I will be happy to share the results of my study with you afterwards.

I am looking forward to hear from you :)

Thank you & best regards,  
Tim

## Appendix 10: Experiment 3 - Interview Guideline

### **a. Current Housing Challenges**

1. What challenges do you see in the housing search for students?
2. How do these challenges impact student satisfaction or academic success?

### **b. Current Solutions and Capacity**

3. What solutions do you currently offer to provide housing for students?
4. How many students can you currently accommodate?
5. Is there a waiting list for housing? If so, how long is the waiting list, and how many students are typically on it?
6. What is the average time on the waiting list before receiving accommodation?

### **c. Trends and Future Developments**

7. Have you observed any changes in the housing situation over the past few years? Do you see a positive or negative trend?
8. What future solutions or projects are planned to improve the housing situation for students?

### **d. Role of External Cooperation**

9. Do external collaborations with platforms or other organizations play a role in expanding your housing offerings?
10. If so, what types of collaborations would be particularly interesting for your Studierendenwerk?
11. Are there specific areas where you believe external partners could provide valuable support in the future?

## Appendix 11: Experiment 3 - Interview Transcripts

*Click for Dropbox Access*

Appendix 12: Post-Moving Phase - Running Club ('Salty')



“Warning for students looking for a flat share: Fraudsters falsify apartment advertisements” (SWR, 2024)

“Immoscout 24: Fraudsters scam loans with data from apartment seekers” (Spiegel, 2024)

“Sexual harassment experienced by young women looking for accommodation” (SZ.de, 2022)

“Hundreds of cases in Baden-Württemberg: Housing scammers target students” (Stuttgarter Zeitung, 2024)

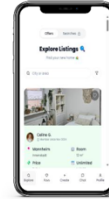
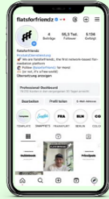
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2 November 2024

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**instagram page.** in 2020, we started the flatsforfriendz to connect friends during their flat search process – today the page counts 57k users. we have mediated thousands of shared rooms and flats over the last 4 years in more than 240 cities and 900 areas. Our "easy-to-use" concept of an everyday platform with a predefined flat-related-template has made the page so successful.

**(web) app.** in october 2024, we have translated our gathered market insights and user expertise into a web app. without any marketing expenses, XXX users have signed up yet. the app is meant to replace other competitors by creating trustful and personal connections – through the integration of personal networks and an attractive UX.

3 November 2024

## how the page works.



our core is the instagram page that 57k users (steadily growing) use accordingly



4 November 2024

## what we bring to the table.

Total  
**40.7M**  
Impressions

### growth

+12%

### inquiries

6.1K

### activity

343.5K

### active cities

> 240

### age distribution (in %)



### active cities (in %)



### persona insights



students



interns



young professionals

**ff** flatsforfriendz

X



## why we are the perfect match.



founded by students for students – we share the **same identity**.



having an identical persona – we want to improve the life of **the same target group**.



addressing today's challenges of moving and mobility – we care about the **same topic**.

7 November 2024

## what we envision.

**'the post-moving phase'**. settling into a new home. getting to know new people. making friends. re-establishing former routines. that's a lot. and sometimes it can be very lonely. so why should we at flatsforfriendz stop helping our community once the flat has been found? we want to be there for our friendz – continuously. we want to improve their experience of being new in a new city. and that's where you come into play, dear partner.



8 November 2024

## what we plan with you.

**'get to know your city' runs.** settling in a new city can be a lonely experience. together with salty, we want to offer 'get to know your city' runs at the beginning of each month. this way, new movers can explore their city, meet people in the same situation and probably fall in love with your community. *you* organize the route and host the run. *we* advertise it on our instagram page and get you a lot of visibility and potential members.



9 November 2024

## what we want to achieve with you.



 flatsforfriendz



*we want to implement a partnership across cities and advertise you as the **only running club in our app.***

*once arrived in a new city, **everyone who finds a flat via fff should pay your runs a visit.***

10 November 2024

**so what do you think, friendz?**

**let's have a talk.**



**Alexander Weiss**  
**Founder**  
alex@forfriendz.com  
+49 151 61353415

Appendix 13: Post-Moving Phase - Bike Rental Service ('SwapFiets')

**hey swapfiets.**

**it's us. flatsforfriendz.**

**we have an idea.**

*(Pages 2-5 like previous sales deck)*

Swapfiets



flatsforfriendz

6 November 2024

## why we are the perfect match.



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having an identical persona – we want to improve the life of **the same target group**.



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8 November 2024

## what we plan with you.

**'get to know your city' bike tours**. settling in a new city can be a lonely experience. together with SwapFiets, we want to offer 'get to know your city' bike tours at the beginning of each month. this way, new movers can explore their city, meet people in the same situation and probably fall in love with your bikes. *you* offer the bikes for free and guide the tour. *we* advertise it on our instagram page and get you a lot of potential customers.



9 November 2024

## what we want to achieve with you.



we want to implement you in our app as our **only partner** for biking mobility.

once arrived in a new city, **everyone who finds a flat via fff** should try a Swapfiets bike.

## so what do you think, friendz?

### let's have a talk.



**Alexander Weiss**  
Founder  
alex@forfriendz.com  
+49 151 61353415