Building Crowdsourcing Platforms:
Lessons from travel2change

MASTER THESIS

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Abstract

The purpose of this Master thesis is to examine basic design principles of crowdsourcing platforms. Over the last couple of years, crowdsourcing and platform-businesses have become popular topics in the field of strategic management, yet research on how to effectively design crowdsourcing platforms is still scarce. The goal for this study is to extend current research on platform design and crowdsourcing by having a close look at a specific case, travel2change, a Hawaiian-based platform, that crowdsources social innovation to create positive impact at tourism destinations. The platform has already undergone transformation in its’ design and business model and therefore might deliver a useful example on how design principles and strategies can be applied. This thesis will contribute to an ongoing research-project about travel2change by carrying out a qualitative investigation of the platforms stakeholders.
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<td>AR</td>
<td>Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Interview Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OI</td>
<td>Open Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCBO's</td>
<td>Social and community based organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Social Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t2c</td>
<td>travel2change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Defining the problem and theoretical background

Over the last two decades an astonishing number of platform-based companies have had huge success. At the core of giants like Facebook, Uber and Airbnb there is a platform-based business model which offers value to users, producers and the company altogether. Inspired by the rapid growth and success of these companies many others are currently trying to transform their original business model into a platform-based one. Established companies as well as new start-ups are trying to become a part of what Parker et al. (2016) have called the Platform-Revolution. Libert et al. (2014) call the business model of these companies “network-orchestrators” and found out that these companies perform better in terms of higher valuations relative to their revenues, higher growth rates and larger profit margins. One of the many advantages these firms have is that most of them don’t have to invest in a huge inventory and that their business-model is easily transferable into new markets without too much effort (Parker et al. 2016). Another advantage is that they cleverly use resources that are already there but are not used as much as possible. Uber does this with cars and Airbnb with apartments. Platform firms heavily rely on their communities to produce, co-produce, consume and communicate via the features the platform offers. Since in most cases more users attract even more users, because the platforms product-offer and variety grows, so-called network effects are very important for all platform providers. Social Media platforms are only fun if you can interact with a certain number of other users. Wikipedia could only conquer the encyclopedia-market because so many of its’ users are steadily working on it and expanding its’ knowledge base. YouTube is a threat for classical TV nowadays, because the vast amounts of users create so much content. There are many different examples of how platforms have disrupted markets and there are more and more companies trying to become part of this huge success story. One field that is closely linked to the topic of platforms is crowdsourcing. Companies like Threadless, InnoCentive, GoodMaker or Amazon’s Mechanical Turk have shown that platforms offer huge potential in many different fields, to outsource a task to a crowd via the internet. So, the main question here is, what does a good crowdsourcing platform need to provide to become successful? How can you attract enough users to your platform and how do you manage your community so that you can benefit from positive network effects? What principles should guide platform design so that the crowdsourcing process is of high value to all participants? All these questions will be part of
this study. To complement the theoretical part on the topics of platform design, crowdsourcing, open- and social innovation this study will also contribute to an action-research project about the platform travel2change. Travel2change is a Hawaiian-based nonprofit organization which was founded in 2011 “…with the mission to facilitate collaboration between travelers and local communities for creating positive impacts on the tourism destination.” (Kohler 2016). By crowdsourcing social innovation, the platform aims to find novel solutions that can help to reduce the negative impacts of tourism. Appealing to both the travelers and locals’ intrinsic motives to do something meaningful and to give back, the platform strives to tap into unused resources to spur on systemic change in the field of tourism.

Because travel2change is still waiting on its break-through moment and user numbers, participation as well as the quality and impact of the crowdsourced activities are still below expectations, the platform has recently undergone a transformation from an integrator platform towards a two-sided platform. This offers a good possibility to examine design principles for platform success. Previous studies about the case of travel2change have already laid a foundation for further research and will be the starting point for a new cycle in the action-research project. By exploring the platforms development over the past years and comparing its design principles with the ones found in literature, the goal of the research project is to specify learning about travel2change and platforms in general, as well as providing insights that can help travel2change to improve its platform and allow further growth in the future.

1.2 Research Question and Contribution

This thesis will contribute to research by giving an outline on the latest literature about crowdsourcing, open- and social innovation as well as platform design. As a contribution to literature on crowdsourcing platforms the research project of this thesis will provide a comprehensive analysis of a practical example, the platform travel2change, that aims to crowdsource social innovation to tackle problems in tourism. The theoretical part will explain the special characteristics of open and social innovation, crowdsourcing and platforms, it will provide an overview of challenges that are often faced by platform businesses and explain some strategies that are recommended in literature to overcome these challenges. These challenges and strategies are then compared to the case of travel2change. This will be done by analyzing sixty-three interviews, conducted in previous studies, that have looked at travel2change from different perspectives. Since the platforms’ transformation into a two-sided competitive market in 2015, there has been no examination of the travelers’ perspective. To close this gap, semi-structured interviews with current and potential customers are held. This should help to broaden the
understanding about the platform and its different stakeholders. The research questions guiding this thesis are:

*How can organizations effectively design crowdsourcing platforms?*

*How can travel2change tackle the problems of engaging a critical mass of users, ensure output quality and scale to increase impact?*

*What are the motivations and problems for travelers on the platform travel2change?*

1.3 Structure

This thesis is divided into three parts, a theoretical foundation, the research project and lastly a discussion part. Chapter two and its sub-chapters will explain the concepts of crowdsourcing, open innovation, social innovation, platform design and the lean-start up method. The chapter about crowdsourcing will provide a definition of the term, list several types of crowdsourcing and includes a framework about how to design crowdsourcing processes. The following chapters about open and social innovation will help differentiate open innovation from closed innovation and social innovation from business innovation. Chapter 2.4 represents the biggest topic of the theoretical part, platform design. It introduces the concept of platform businesses, provides a definition, explains what actors, platform types, business models, challenges and strategies there are. It will also highlight the particularities of scaling platform businesses and illustrate how to design a platforms core interaction. By describing the method of the Lean-Startup the theoretical part will be completed. The research project is topic of chapter three. The first sub-chapter will explain the research context of the platform travel2change, following that the methodologies used in the research project are explained. Chapter 3.3 contains a summary of previous action-research cycles on the topic. Its objective is to summarize and complement the findings of these studies by doing a reanalysis of the collected data. These findings will be enhanced in Chapter 3.4 through interviews that were held with travel2changer customers. Chapter 4 will then conclude this thesis by providing a discussion of the research projects findings. It will summarize this thesis’ contribution to the topic of platform design, offer managerial implications for the platform and list the research projects limitations. At last some recommendations about future research areas are given.
2 Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Crowdsourcing

Introduced by Wired-Magazine author Jeff Howe in 2006, the term crowdsourcing describes the outsourcing of a task to a crowd through the new possibilities of information technology (Howe 2008).

Since the term crowdsourcing is still relatively new and has been used in many ways, there has been some confusion in terms of finding a clear definition. To address this problem Estelles-Arolas and Gonzalez-Ladron-de-Guevara have focused their work on finding a universal definition. After summarizing and comparing 40 definitions of crowdsourcing used in literature they came up with the following definition, which will also be used in this thesis:

“Crowdsourcing is a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a non-profit organization, or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task. The undertaking of the task, of variable complexity and modularity, and in which the crowd should participate bringing their work, money, knowledge and/or experience, always entails mutual benefit. The user will receive the satisfaction of a given type of need, be it economic, social recognition, self-esteem, or the development of individual skills, while the crowdsourcer will obtain and utilize to their advantage what the user has brought to the venture, whose form will depend on the type of activity undertaken.” (Estelles-Arolas und Gonzalez-Ladron-de-Guevara 2012)

The following eight characteristics should be kept in mind.

1. There is a clearly defined crowd
2. There exists a task with a clear goal
3. The recompense received by the crowd is clear
4. The crowdsourcer is clearly identified
5. The compensation to be received by the crowdsourcer is clearly defined
6. It is an online assigned process of participative type
7. It uses an open call of variable extent
8. It uses the Internet

(Estelles-Arolas und Gonzalez-Ladron-de-Guevara 2012)

The idea behind crowdsourcing is nothing new, outsourcing a problem to a crowd via an open call has been done for centuries. The difference nowadays is that through the advancements in
information technology, the size of the crowd that can be reached with very little effort, has dramatically increased. To quote Neumann “since the boundaries fell with the internet’s reach, the whole world has now become one large brainstorming group” (Neumann 2012).

For Brabham Crowdsourcing is a model that allows to aggregate talent, leverage ingenuity while reducing time and costs to solve problems (Brabham 2008). For Brabham one of the reasons why crowdsourcing has such huge potential is the so-called “Wisdom of the crowds”. This term was coined by James Surowiecki. The term describes the phenomenon that “under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them” (Surowiecki 2005). Through the emergence and rapid diffusion of the Internet in the last decade, this collective intelligence can now be used as another resource for solving problems.

Crowdsourcing can take many different forms; the following table provides an overview of some crowdsourcing models and how they work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crowdsourcing Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crowd Voting</td>
<td>Applications use the aggregated knowledge of the crowd for reviews, polls, voting or recommendation systems. (e.g. Threadless, Amazon Recommendations, Apple App-Store)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowd Creation</td>
<td>Production processes are designed in a way that the crowd can act as a producer. (e.g. Amazon Mechanical Turk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowdfunding</td>
<td>The crowd takes over the role of an investor. Financing of projects through many small investments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Crowdsourcing Types following Leimeister (2012)

For an organization, there are multiple reasons to use crowdsourcing. First, the crowd that can be reached via the Internet has an enormous size. Integrating this crowd into the problem-solving process can be an advantage towards competitors that only rely on internal resources. This will also be explained further in the next chapter on open and closed innovation. Second, the organization can benefit from cost advantages, since crowdsourcing is usually cheaper than hiring professionals. The third advantage is the inclusion of potential customers into the creation process, which can lead to higher product innovation (Michelis und Schildhauer 2012). This is also called Co-Creation and it builds on a recent change in consumer behavior. More and more consumers abandon their mainly passive role and become more engaged in the production
process of things they are consuming. The so-called Prosumer describes a person who is partly producer and partly consumer (Ritzer et al. 2012). Many crowdsourcing platforms like Wikipedia are built on the assumption that some of the consumers actively engage in the production process and help to shape the product and create value (Ritzer et al. 2012). Ritzer even states that “most, if not all, Web 2.0 sites could not function, or at least could not function in the same way, without prosumers. Crowdsourcing is essential to the success of many Web 2.0 sites.”

So, alongside the rapid technological advancements, which allow an easier aggregation of crowd wisdom, this shift in consumer behavior towards a more active role, probably needs to be acknowledged as one of the foundations for the recent success of crowdsourcing. This thesis will thus also have a look at how crowdsourcing platforms can be designed so that passive consumers can become active contributors.

As stated by Malone et al. there are four questions that need to be answered in terms of designing a crowdsourcing process that effectively uses the potential of the crowd.

![Design questions according to Malone et al. (Malone 2010)](image)

The first questions an organization that wants to crowdsourcing a task must ask itself is the “What” questions. As a first step a clear goal or task must be defined. Malone et al. further distinguish between “Create” and “Decide”. Is the crowd supposed to create new content or rather act as a decision maker? In the next step the “Who” needs to be answered. Even though most crowdsourcing platforms use an open call, it is important to first decide if it is reasonable to outsource the task to a crowd and if yes, what kind of crowd you want to target. In some cases, the task is better assigned to what Malone calls “Hierarchy”, which essentially means
that the crowd does not meet the requirements for the task and that it is better assigned to a specific person or group (e.g. management). The “Why” question refers to the motivation why people take part in the task. Malone differentiates between Money, Love and Glory as the three main motives (Malone 2010). Studies on motivation have also shown that motivation can be divided into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable whereas extrinsic refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome (Ryan und Deci 2000). Keeping that in mind is important to find the right incentives for the crowd to respond to the open call and participate in the crowdsourcing project. In his framework Malone delivers two rules of thumb.

- **Appealing to Love and Glory, rather than Money, can often (but not always) reduce costs**

- **Providing Money and Glory can often (but not always) influence a group’s direction and speed**

(Malone 2010)

The last question an organization should ask itself refers to “How” to structure the process to achieve its goal. If the main task of the crowd is to Create then the process can either be structured as a:

- Collection
- Contest
- Collaboration

In a collection, the task can be split into many small pieces which then can independently be solved. YouTube and Flickr are some examples of crowdsourcing platforms that use a collection. A contest should be used if only one or few solutions are required and a prize can be handed out to the winner. The platforms Threadless and InnoCentive are some good examples for contest-design. A collaboration works best if the task cannot be split into independent pieces easily and “there are satisfactory ways of managing the dependencies between the individual pieces contributed by the crowd” (Malone 2010). Open-Source software and Wikis can be named as typical collaboration platforms, since they build on the many single, dependent pieces which are contributed by the crowd (Malone 2010).

If on the other hand the main task of the crowd is to decide rather than create, the crowdsourcer needs to consider if it makes more sense to use group decisions or individual decisions. In group decisions “members of the crowd are assembled to generate a decision that holds for the group as a whole” (Malone et al. 2010). Individual decisions are better when “members of a crowd
make decisions that, though informed by crowd input, do not need to be identical for all” (Malone et al. 2010).

The following table shows how the framework can be applied to the case of Wikipedia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Why</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edit existing Wikipedia articles</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Crowd</td>
<td>Love, Glory</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide</td>
<td>Whether to keep current version</td>
<td>Crowd</td>
<td>Love, Glory</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide what Wikipedia articles to include</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Crowd</td>
<td>Love, Glory</td>
<td>Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide</td>
<td>Whether to delete (preliminary)</td>
<td>Crowd</td>
<td>Love, Glory</td>
<td>Voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide</td>
<td>Whether to delete (final)</td>
<td>Wikipedia administrator</td>
<td>Love, Glory</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Mapping the collective intelligence genome for Wikipedia, Source Malone, Laubacher et al. 2010; page 12

2.2 Open Innovation

Like the rise of crowdsourcing, accelerated through technological advancements, the understanding of innovation has also changed during the last decade. In his 2003 book Henry Chesbrough coined the term Open Innovation, which since has attracted great attention in both the academic world as well as in the business world (Chesbrough 2012). Looking back at his work a decade later, the author affirms that in his opinion, open innovation is “the antithesis of the traditional vertical integration model in which internal innovation activities lead to internally developed products and services that are then distributed by the firm.” (Chesbrough 2012)

Open Innovation is the evolution of the closed innovation model, also developed by Chesbrough. Defining open innovation in one sentence:

“open innovation is the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation and expand the markets for external use of innovation” (Chesbrough 2012)

For a better understanding and easier comparison, the following illustrations show the open and closed-innovation models.
According to academic literature Innovation can also be seen as either an outcome or a process (Phills 2008). This outcome and process is the focus of R&D departments of organizations. In the Closed-Innovation model the whole process is a one-way in, one-way out process. The inputs are based in the organization; the development process takes place inside the organization and the output goes straight to the market. The Open-Innovation model however allows much more freedom. The boundaries between the organization and its surroundings are permeable (Chesbrough 2003). Inputs can come from internal as well as external sources. The funnel in the model, which symbolizes the development process is also accessible for further inputs from external sources at later stages and allows the utilization of outcomes that are not aimed at the current market. Thus, offering the possibility to use these outcomes in new markets or out-licensing to other firms.

Figure 2 Closed Innovation model by Chesbrough (2012) Page 3

Figure 3 Open Innovation model by Chesbrough (2012) Page 4
The transformation from a closed to open-innovation model is also based on the assumption that diffusion and distribution of knowledge has increased over the last decades and putting boundaries to it has become much harder (Chesbrough 2003). Also the increase of knowledge workers combined with increasing mobility of workers has made it harder for organizations to control knowledge (Chesbrough 2003).

Even though Open Innovation has been a success story over the last years Chesbrough also reminds his readers that there is still a lot of work to be done on the boundaries of Open Innovation. Academics and Businesses are focusing on the success stories and failures are ignored. To contribute to the topic research needs to be done on what boundaries there are and what critical success factors influence open innovation (Chesbrough 2012).

2.3 Social Innovation

Social Innovation is an inter-disciplinary topic with roots in the disciplines of politics, sociology, social work and economics (Rueede und Lurtz 2012). It is concerned with finding solutions to some of humanities most urgent challenges and its significance in academic research as well as in the private and public sector has risen over the last three decades. Improving health-care, fighting poverty and avoiding further environmental exploitation of our planet are just some of the topics that come to mind when talking about social innovations (Murray et al. 2010). So, what exactly is Social Innovation and how does it differ from what can be called Business Innovation? In their work on finding a common definition Rueede and Lurtz have found seven different conceptualizations of social innovation (Rueede und Lurtz 2012). The three most prominent categories in literature were categorized as:

- To do something good in/for society
- To change social practices and/or structure
- To contribute to urban and community development.

For this thesis, the most widespread definition by Phills will be used. He defined social Innovation as:

“A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals.” (Phills 2008)

But since the empirical part of this thesis is also concerned with tourism and its negative impacts on local communities and their environment, the definition of Moulaert will also be mentioned here.
“Social innovation is about the satisfaction of basic needs and changes in social relations within empowering social processes; it is about people and organizations who are affected by deprivation or lack of quality in daily life and services, who are disempowered by lack of rights or authoritative decision-making, and who are involved in agencies and movements favoring social innovation” (Moulaert 2010)

To better understand how these social innovations can look like in practice, Phillips (2008) named some of the most important ones of the recent years. They include some topics, which have now, almost ten years after his publication, become very popular and are part of everyday life. For instance: Fair-Trade Products, Microfinance and Micro-Credits, Emissions Trading, International Labor Standards or Socially Responsible Investing.

To better understand how some of these innovations became successful and widespread it might be helpful to look at Murrays’ Modell of how to take “ideas from inception to impact”. (Murray et al. 2010).

![Figure 4 Six Steps of Social Innovation Source: Murray et al. Page 11](image)

He divides the process into six steps, with the final goal of systemic change. In the first step, called Prompts, the focus lies on analyzing the problem and framing the right question to find a fitting solution. The second steps, Proposals, is concerned with generating ideas with the help of formal methods like workshops, User Co-Design, Idea Contests etc. The third step called Prototypes & Pilots is all about testing if the ideas generated in the first step can help to solve
the problem framed in the first step. Step four *Sustaining* deals with refining and implementing the idea into everyday life. For long-term success, a viable business strategy and business plan need to be developed. Financial questions like funding and possible revenue streams need to be answered as well as the question of ownership and legal form of the organization. It is also a good time to think about if establishing a collaboration with the public sector is useful to further sustain the idea. Once the idea has been proven to work, the next big step is *Scaling* it. The focus lies on finding growth strategies for the organization and the idea. Marketing and Networking play an important part at this stage. Licensing and Franchising are possible steps to spread the innovation. Nevertheless, in contrast to scaling businesses and production it should be considered that social innovation is not about keeping the idea to yourself and maximize profit but rather to diffuse it. Inspiration plays a crucial role in spreading social innovations. At this stage, it is important to get the word out and inform as many people as possible about the advantages of the innovation and how it works. Demand and Supply need to be stimulated to scale the innovation. This is where the main topic of this thesis comes in. Platforms are an efficient, new tool to match the supply and demand side. The last step of Murrays Framework is “*Systemic Change*” and what he calls “the ultimate goal of social innovation” (Murray et al. 2010). Systemic change usually consists of many smaller innovations. At this step the resistance of the “old order” (Murray et al. 2010) needs to be overcome and new rules need to be established. For a system to change, people need to start thinking in new ways (Murray et al. 2010). One example for systemic change which is omnipresent these days, is the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies. Made up of many small innovations, both technological as well as social, this systemic transformation was carried by the green movement and is a good example how innovations can grow and transform whole systems (Murray et al. 2010).

As mentioned before, even though overlaps exist, there are some differences between social and business innovation (Pol und Ville 2009). The biggest difference being that the aim of social innovation is to create value primarily to society and not to an individual person or organization (Phills 2008). Neither is it the goal to just make money (Pol und Ville 2009). This departure from profit maximization is also one of the barriers for social innovation, since it does not offer the same appeal for investors and therefore often lacks financing (Pol und Ville 2009). Other barriers that need to be overcome are the absence of institutions responsible for social innovations and the difficulties in measuring success of social innovations (Murray et al. 2010).
2.4 Platforms

2.4.1 Introduction

The main topic of this thesis is platform design. But what exactly is a platform, how do they work and why exactly are they becoming so popular right now? The following chapters will introduce the topic platforms to the reader and serve as a foundation for the action-research project on the crowdsourcing platform travel2change. I will start by summarizing some of the most important features of platforms and give some examples for successful platforms. We will then look at some of the definitions for platforms used in literature. Followed by a chapter about Platform Scale, one of the most remarkable aspects of platform, since the rules of scale are so different than they are for other organizations. To build a link between the topics of crowdsourcing and platforms, the next chapter will explain what kind of platform types are used for crowdsourcing. Subsequently the three main actors of a platform are introduced. The next chapter explains why it is so important to understand the Core Interaction when looking at platform design. To conclude the theoretical background on platforms some popular platform business models are explained and compared. In the last chapter, the challenges and problems faced by platforms will be addressed.

2.4.2 Platforms in general

Even though platforms come in many ways, most Platforms can best be described as market-making mechanisms. They transform old, established markets and / or create new ones.

“Today, social platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter allow users to create content and interact with each other. Marketplaces like eBay and Etsy facilitate remote interactions. Platforms like Uber, Tinder, and Airbnb facilitate in-person interactions. Transportation and logistics platforms like Uber and Munchery manage the coordination and movement of real-world resources in real time” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 30)

These network-businesses which act as an intermediator between supply and demand are nothing new per se. Real estate brokers for example have taken over similar functions, but in a pre-digital age their reach was much smaller. It’s the digitalization that has allowed them to cause “market-shaking effects” (Libert et al. 2016) Online these platforms allow a “rapid exchange of value between network participants at near-zero marginal costs” (Libert et al. 2016).
Airbnb success for example is not based in the fact that it offers yet another website or app to book an accommodation for a trip. But rather in the fact that it created a new market that connects private hosts and people looking for accommodation in an efficient way (Choudary et al. 2015). Another reason for what Parker et al. call the “Platform Revolution” is that these match-making abilities are supported by advanced filter mechanism. These filter mechanism are fed by huge amounts of data that generate way better results of matching the supply and demand side, than ever before (Parker et al. 2016).

When looking at platform design, it is essential to understand how value is created for users, producers and the platform provider. Prominent platform examples like Twitter, Instagram or WhatsApp exemplify that the value does not necessarily lie in the technology but rather in what is built on top of the platform.

“Across these examples, the base has no value without the value built on top of it. The platform becomes more valuable as more units of value are added on top of it. These units become the source of supply or inventory for the platform.” (Choudary et al. 2015, Page 93)

Co-Creation plays a crucial part on every platform. To be successful platforms need to be designed in a way that facilitates steady interaction by both, the user and the producer side.

“Platforms work (...) by providing an underlying infrastructure on which others build and add value” (Choudary et al. 2015, Page 92)

To understand platforms it might also be helpful to know how they differentiate from classical pipe-shaped business models, which have played a dominant role in the past and have been used in almost every sector like Consumer Goods, Service Delivery, Media or Education (Choudary et al. 2015). The pipe-business model is marked by a linear flow of value creation from the producer to the consumer, as it is known from the classical value-chain model (van Alstyne et al. 2016). Platforms on the other hand “do not solely create and push value out to consumers. They allow users of the platform to co-create and exchange value with other users. External user-developers can extend platform functionality using APIs and contribute back to the very infrastructure of the business.” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 28) Here we can also see the connection to what Ritzer et al. described in their paper about the Prosumer– the integration and melding of the consumption and production (Ritzer et al. 2012).

After comparing platforms and traditional pipe-shaped companies Van Alstyne assumes that traditional business and industries, which will not adapt to the new environment, will get into
trouble (van Alstyne et al. 2016). For managing a platform, he suggests to treat the community as your most critical asset. Apart from this, three rules for a shift in strategic focus are advised.

- *From controlling to orchestrating resources*
- *From optimizing internal processes to external interactions*
- *From increasing customer value to maximizing ecosystem value* 

(van Alstyne et al. 2016)

Van Alstyne also states that companies can be both pipes and platforms at the same time. Using the example of Apple, he explains how the traditional pipe business model of selling electronic devices immensely benefitted by adding a platform, the App Store, to deliver additional value to the users and let them contribute to the original product.

2.4.3 Towards a definition

Even though platform businesses have caused a stir over the last two decades it is complicated to find a clear definition in management literature of what exactly a platform business is and what its characteristics are. According to Annabelle Gawer there are two theoretical perspectives on platforms. The economical one sees them as two-sided or multi-sided markets, in which the platform is the facilitator between different actors that are connected via the platform (Gawer 2014). The engineering perspective has examined platform design more in terms of technological architecture (Gawer 2014). Following this perspective platforms are “*technological designs that help firms generate modular product innovation*” (Gawer 2014; p.2). The engineerical perspective also focuses on the creation and utilization of economies of scope in terms of innovation and product development. Meaning that there are cost-advantages if innovation and development processes are done in a conjoined way (Gawer 2014). On the other hand the economical definitions of a platform business focuses mainly on demand-side economies of scale and scope which are caused by direct and indirect network effects (Gawer 2014).

For this thesis, I will use a definition that shifts more towards the economical perspective. Coined by Parker et al. in their book Platform Revolution (2016), platforms are:

“A business based on enabling value-creating interactions between external producers and consumers. The platform provides an open, participative infrastructure for these interactions and sets governance conditions for them. The platform’s overarching purpose: to consummate matches among users and facilitate the exchange of goods, services, or social currency, thereby enabling value creation for all participants.”
According to Parker and van Alstyne platforms have existed for years. They name malls and newspapers as example of businesses that have partly build their business on the idea of a platform. The thing that has changed and pushed platforms in the center of attention is the development in information technology.

“IT makes building and scaling up platforms vastly simpler and cheaper, allows nearly frictionless participation that strengthens network effects, and enhances the ability to capture, analyze, and exchange huge amounts of data that increase the platform’s value to all. “

(Parker und van Alstyne 2016)

Thus, the importance and usage of information technology should be included in a definition of modern platform businesses. Another definition of platforms can be found in Choudary’s work. He describes the essence of a platform business as:

“At their core, platforms enable a plug-and-play business model. Other businesses can easily connect their business with the platform, build products and services on top of it, and co-create value. Platforms primarily benefit not from internal production but from a wider source of open co-creation. This ability to “plug and play” is a defining characteristic of platform scale.”

(Choudary et al. 2015, p. 39f)

One last thing that might be added to formulate a clear definition for platforms is that pursuant to Choudary et al. (2015) all platforms consist of three layers. In his framework to explain platforms he introduces the term Platform Stack. The visible part on top of every platform is the Network-Marketplace-Community part. This is where the interactions between the platform actors take place. The Infrastructure Layer is where the tools, services and plug-and-play features of the platform are implemented. The deepest layer of all platforms is the Data layer. Invisible to the user it is the foundation of the platform. It contains all the information for matching participants and may also be the source of revenue if the data can be monetized.

![Platform Stack](https://example.com/platform-stack.png)

*Figure 5 Platform Stack Choudary et al. 2015 p. 67*
This thesis will concentrate on the first and second layer of Choudary's Platform Stack, since the data layer falls more within the range of the engineering perspective on platform design.

2.4.4 Platform Scale

When talking about the success story of platforms during the last decade, one thing that needs to be understood is platform scale. If the rules for business scale would be the same for platforms than they are for traditional companies, it probably would not have been possible for platforms like Uber, Airbnb etc. to become so successful in such a short time. As stated by Choudary many transformations in the business world today are caused by the new rules of scale which are applicable for platforms. He also believes that these new business models will be dominant ones in the networked world of the future. (Choudary et al. 2015). In his book Choudary et al. (2015, p.18) use the following definition for platform scale:

“Platform Scale (n): Business scale powered by the ability to leverage and orchestrate a global connected ecosystem of producers and consumers towards efficient value creation and exchange.”

One of the main differences for platforms when it comes to scaling is that they don’t need to own as many resources as traditional companies. Choudary (2015) calls this the Ecosystem as a replacement for the warehouse. Platforms like Airbnb, YouTube or Uber can only scale that quickly because they don’t need to own all the production factors and labor needed for growing. Airbnb doesn’t own the beds that are booked on its’ homepage. Uber does not own the cars that are used to carry people from A to B.

“The ecosystem stores the inventory, while the platform manages the matching of this distributed inventory with demand.” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 42)

This again emphasizes the point that the platforms main objective is to effectively match the supply and demand side. The next big driver for scale are so called Network Effects. Network effects describe the influence the number of users in a system has on the value for other users (Parker et al. 2016). Positive network effects mean that a growing number of users in a system has a positive influence on the systems value for other users. For example, in a well-managed marketplace like eBay or on a platform like Uber, the value for each user usually grows because a growing number of other users in the system, increase the potential demand and supply. Negative network effects describe the opposite phenomenon. A decreasing value for the user with increasing user numbers. This can be the case if the platform is poorly managed or if filters are not working properly and the growing demand and/or supply causes chaos and complexity
Network effects can work as a virtuous cycle and thus rapidly increase scale for the platform. Understanding and achieving positive network effects while avoiding negative network effects is crucial in platform design to acquire a satisfying user base and keep the platform alive.

![Diagram of Uber's virtuous cycle]

If like in the case of Uber these network effect affect both sides, users and producers, Parker et al. (2016) call them Two-Sided Network Effects. More producers attract more consumers and more consumers attract more producers. The same thing applies to Seller/Buyer at eBay or Amazon, Hosts and Guests at Airbnb or travel2change or Users/Developers in an app-store.

Choudary also identified five drivers for platform scale, which are partly overlapping with what already has been written in this chapter. Nevertheless, for completeness I will shortly mention them.

- Minimal marginal costs of production and distribution
- Network effects powered by positive feedback
- Behavior design and community culture
- Learning Filters
- Virality

(Choudary et al. 2015, p.79ff)
2.4.5 Platform Types for Crowdsourcing

When it comes to the design of a platform especially for Crowdsourcing Boudreau and Lakhani have laid out some theoretical groundworks in their papers from 2009 and 2013 (Boudreau und Lakhani 2009, 2013). According to them the crowdsourcing process can be conceptualized in four different ways.

1. Competitive Market / Crowd-Contest
2. Collaborative Community
3. Complementors
4. Labor Markets

For choosing a proper design they offer three questions that should help with the decision (Boudreau und Lakhani 2009).

1. What type of Innovation is the aim of the crowdsourcing process?
2. What motivates the participants?
3. What does the business model look like?

To answer the first question, it helps to ask if the problem can rather be solved with cumulative knowledge or rather by broad experimentation. Collaborative communities are a better fit for collecting cumulative knowledge, whereas a competition offers better results if broad experimentation is needed. To answer the question about motivation it helps to understand the difference between external and internal motivation.

“Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence.” (Ryan und Deci 2000, p. 56)

“Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value.” (Ryan und Deci 2000, p.60)
Extrinsic motivation seems to be a bigger factor in competitive markets than in open communities, whereas intrinsic motivation is more important in collaborative communities (Boudreau und Lakhani 2009). To answer the third questions an understanding of different platform business models is needed. These models are explained in another chapter of this thesis. However Boudreau and Lakhani state that both design types, competitive and collaborative, can work with all of the three business models (Boudreau und Lakhani 2009).

Enhancing their work from 2009 Boudreau and Lakhani introduced two additional types of platform design in 2013. Complementors and Labor Markets. In the case of a Complementor the crowdsourcing organization must open up its main product to the crowd and thus turning the product into a platform where the crowd can help to innovate and upgrade the organizations core product (Boudreau und Lakhani 2013). App-Stores are a good example for such a platform type. “Unlike contests or communities, complementors provide solutions to many different problems rather than just one. The opportunity lies in the sheer volume of solutions.” (Boudreau und Lakhani 2013, p. 9)

The fourth platform type the Labor Market acts, like its name suggests, as a match-maker between organizations that are looking for someone to do a specific task and people offering their work online. Instead of long-term contracts, short-term contracts are made to tackle a specific problem. This platform type comes closest to classical outsourcing. They are great for repetitive tasks where the problem that be clearly framed and evaluated. Tasks that “a person
can perform better than a computer can, such as identifying people in a photograph” (Boudreau und Lakhani 2013, p. 10).

Summarized it can be said that when a company is looking to build a crowdsourcing platform or when it wants to crowdsource a problem on an external platform, the organization should be aware of the different kinds of crowdsourcing platform design types and to what kind of crowdsourcing problem they best fit.

2.4.6 Platform Actors

Usually three different actors or participants are involved in the processes on a crowdsourcing platform. The Company or Organization, the Creators and the Consumers. (Kohler 2015)

The main purpose of the Company is to enable interactions between all three parties (Kohler 2015). The company or organization that owns the platform must decide how it wants to attract the other two players. Parker describes the three key functions of the platform company as Pull, Facilitate and Match.

“The platform must pull the producers and consumers to the platform, which enables interactions between them. It must facilitate their interactions by providing them with tools and rules that make it easy for them to connect and that encourage valuable exchanges. And it must match producers and consumers effectively by using information about each to connect them in ways they will find mutually rewarding.” (Parker et al. 2016, p. 44)

The second group of platform actors are the Creators. “Creators are the group of users who create and contribute to value creation.” (Kohler 2015, p.70) What they create and how they contribute can take many different forms and depends on the platform.

The third group in the mix are the Consumers. “Consumers use the value created. They can be clients who sponsor contests on integrator platforms or end users transacting with creators on two-sided platforms.” (Kohler 2015, p. 71). Another thing to consider on platforms is that the consumption can take different forms. For example, just by looking at a platform and interacting on the platform, for example by voting or commenting, Consumers create stimuli for Creators to further contribute to the platform.

As mentioned in the previous chapter about platform scale network effects are essential for successful platforms. This means that the number of Creators and Consumers have a great impact on each other. Creators will only be motivated to create value if there are enough Consumers on the platform and on the other hand Consumers will only join a platform if a
certain amount of qualitative content is offered (Kohler 2015; Parker et al. 2016; Choudary et al. 2015). This is also the source of the chicken-egg problem, which will be further explained in the chapter about challenges in platform design.

2.4.7 The Core Interaction

The core interaction describes the “Why” of platform design. It is “the most important form of activity that takes place on a platform – the exchange of value that attracts most users to the platform in the first place” (Parker et al. 2016, p.38). It is the link between user actions and the platforms overall purpose (Choudary et al. 2015). Thus, it is crucial when looking at platform design to be sure about what the core interaction of the given platform is. Even though many platforms evolve over time and offer further interactions in later stages of development, the core interaction is its foundation.

“The type of platform shapes the core interaction, which is the key activity the company and creators perform repeatedly to create and deliver value.” (Kohler 2015)

In line with Parker et al. (2016) the core interaction consists of the following three parts.

![Figure 8 The Core Interaction following Parker et al. (2016)](image)

The first part are the Participants, which have been described as Creators and Consumers in the previous chapter. In Platform design, it must be reminded that a user can take both roles at different times. For example, a host and a guest at Airbnb or a consumer of videos and a producer of content on YouTube. The Value Unit is what is created and consumed by the participants. In some cases, the value unit is hard to grasp because platforms like eBay, Airbnb, the iOS App Store or Facebook, which can all be described as a platform, offer very different things. For better understanding Choudary (2015) proposes to think of the value unit as an information unit. The goal of the platform is to deliver this information unit from the producer to the consumer. This is where the last part of the Core Interaction comes into play. The Filter allows producers and consumers to match. It is an “algorithmic, software-based tool used by the platform to enable the exchange of appropriate value units between users” (Parker et al. 2016, p. 40). Without a filter a platform would offer too much content at some point during its growth phase. A platform like eBay or LinkedIn would be useless to its users without proper search filters. The offer would be too big and users would be overwhelmed and withdraw.
because they can’t find what they are looking for. On the other side, producers would not find any consumers and stop producing.

Choudary (2015) divides the Core Interaction into four parts. Creation, Curation, Customization and Consumption. The model is similar to the one Parker uses. Creation is about participants creating the value unit which is in the end consumed by other participants on the platform. Customization is about using filter to allow better matches. The difference in Choudary’s description of the Core Interaction is the Curation phase. Curation is basically the platforms way of controlling quality.

“Curation scales the quality of the supply on the platform. It encourages desirable behaviors and discourages undesirable behaviors. Rating and reviews help with curation. Upvoting and downvoting of content enable curation. Curation also has a more persistent impact throughout the system. A producer who regularly creates high-quality content may gain greater power to create in the future. A producer flagged for poor quality may find her task cut out on the platform.” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 127)

With a look at popular platforms like eBay, Amazon, the iOS Store or Airbnb it is obvious that curation plays a crucial role. Rating and Voting systems help to separate good products from bad products. They help to increase trust for the consumer and allow the producer to get a feedback.

2.4.8 Platform Business Models

“We are not in the business of building software, we are in the business of enabling interactions” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 130)

If the purpose of a platform is mainly to enable interactions and act as a matchmaker, it must be kept in mind that the monetization of interactions is harder than selling services or products (Choudary et al. 2015). Hence finding the right business model for a platform is one of the key design questions. Many platforms use a “free” model to acquire as many users as possible. But a “free” model should only be applied if

a) It is a strategic decision to increase interactions
b) It is a strategic decision to capture monetizable data

(Choudary et al. 2015, p. 62)

The function of a business model is to explain the value creation and value capture of an organization (Zott et al. 2011). As mentioned before, the value creation of a platform often lies
in the matchmaking of consumers and creators and in facilitating interactions. By asking the question “Who sells to whom” Boudreau and Lakhani differentiate between three different platform business models. The Integrator, or as Hagiu calls it Reseller Platform (Hagiu 2014). The Product Platform and the Two-Sided or Multi-sided Platform (Boudreau und Lakhani 2009). Not only differentiating by who-sells-to-whom, Boudreau and Lakhani also look at how much control is handed to each side of the actors.

In the case of an Integrator platform, the platform acts as a reseller. Taking the input from external innovators, or as termed in chapter 2.4.3. Creators, and selling them to the final customers or Consumer. In this case the platform maintains a lot of control.

A Product Platform offers a foundation on which Creators can then build and sell their own product or service, directly to the Consumer. This business model allows greater autonomy for the Creators.

In the third business model, the so-called two-sided or multi-sided platform, the platform fully concentrates on facilitating transactions and interactions between Consumers and Creators. Since these two sides are in direct contact, they have high autonomy. If the platforms wants to exercise control, it needs to set up ground-rules and regulations for platform usage (Boudreau und Lakhani 2009).

Figure 9 Platform Business Models - Source Boudreau, Lakani (2008, Page 73)
In his work on crowdsourcing based-business models Kohler names three additional elements that need to be adapted by companies that want to build a crowdsourcing platform. These three elements are:

- An open business model, which means that processes and resources are made available to external innovators.
- Leveraging technology to reach a high degree of participation
- Transfer value creating activities to a crowd to stimulate co-creation by the crowd.

(Kohler 2015)

2.4.9 Challenges for Platform Design

The design and building of a platform entails many difficult decisions and hurdles. Considering the Winner-takes-it-all characteristic of many platform-dominated markets and the remarkable entry barriers which are caused by strong network effects and high switching costs (Eisenmann et al. 2011), making a wrong move in the early stages of platform design can be costly. This chapter lists some of the challenges that are connected to platform design and tries to explain why so many companies are struggling to design a successful platform and why so many platforms are stillborn. One general reason why platform design is more complicated than the design of pipeline businesses is that they are “complex, multi-sided systems that must support large networks of users who play different roles and interact in a wide variety of ways” (Parker et al. 2016; p.35). As mentioned in the previous chapters the actors on a platform can take different roles, they are often embedded in co-creation processes and platforms are usually more open systems than traditional businesses. Furthermore, they often have a plug-and-play business model which allows other companies to build on their platform. This raises many questions, for example how to attract and retain a crowd, how to capture value and monetize it, how to set boundaries in terms of openness of the platform, how to measure success, how to set rules for governance, how platforms should face competition and lastly what policies need to be established in a market that is disrupted by platform businesses (Parker et al. 2016).

Since answering all these questions in detail would exceed the limits of this thesis, the focus will lie on challenges that can be influenced by the organization behind the platform and that are key in the growth stages of a platform. Even though most of the following challenges are universal in terms of platform design, there are some additional challenges attached when it comes to building platforms that use crowdsourcing for open innovation. The protection of intellectual property rights is one of the questions that companies, which were used to internal
innovation, need to answer if they start to open-up their innovation by using crowdsourcing. Additionally the question is raised what kinds of problems are more likely to be solved by a crowd and which ones are better suited for internal innovation (Boudreau und Lakhani 2013). Another challenge is finding a suitable business model that creates and captures value. Referring to Kohler (2015) there are four main challenges in creating a business model for a crowdsourcing platform, these challenges are mainly rooted in the shift of roles for both customers and the company as well as in the fact that managing a crowdsourcing platform is about managing an ecosystem of partners. The four challenges are:

- **Role of the Customers: From Passive Consumers to Empowered Co-Creators**
- **Role of the Company: From Selling Products to Enabling Interactions**
- **Value Creation: From Linear to Networked**
- **Value Capture: From Centralized to Distributed**
  (Kohler 2015; p. 67)

All four challenges emphasize the openness of a crowdsourcing network, which makes it hard for the company to establish a quality control of the core interaction and the value unit (Kohler 2017). To not face the problem of an unmotivated and unskilled crowd, it is also mandatory for a platform to understand the users motivation for participation (Brabham 2010) as well as attracting the right crowd with the right skills.

Another challenge organizations face when constructing a platform is to determine the right metrics to track the platforms growth and success. In contrast to pipeline companies the main goal of a platform is creating and managing a vibrant ecosystem around the platform. Traditional success measures like operating income, cash flow or inventory turns are not capable adequately of measuring the development of this ecosystem (Parker et al. 2016). Metrics that measure network effects and the effectiveness of the core interaction are more suitable for organizations that want to keep track of their platform. Referring to Parker et al. (2016) there are three metrics in the start-up phase of a platform that should be considered. (1) Liquidity, (2) Matching Quality, (3) Trust. In this case liquidity is not a financial measure. Liquidity on a platform is “a state in which there are a minimum number of producers and consumers and the percentage of successful interactions is high.” (Parker et al. 2016, p.190) Van Alstyne et al. (2016) recommend platform managers to track the following metrics to evaluate if the platforms core interaction is working as intended: (1) Interaction Failure, (2) User Engagement, (3) Match Quality. Depending on the platform’s purpose and offering there are many ways to measure these aspects. Going into detail would go too far now. Anyhow it is an important design principle for new platforms, to not rely on traditional measures and rather
look for or to develop metrics that show how the platforms ecosystem develops and if the platforms’ core interaction fulfills its purpose. This adoption of alternative measures goes in hand with Choudary’s statement about platform design: “All design decisions should ensure the repeatability and sustainability of the core interaction that the platform enables.” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 89) To conclude this chapter some of the most prominent challenges are shortly described.

**Chicken Egg Problem**

The chicken-and-egg problem refers to the well-known dilemma of who came first, the chicken or the egg. Applied to platform design this means that organizations face the challenge that neither consumer nor producer will join their platform if the other side is missing. A market without an attractive offer will fail to attract consumers, but on the other hand producers will not engage in a market that does not have a base of consumers (Nobel 2017; Parker et al. 2016; Choudary et al. 2015; Teixeira, Thales S., and Morgan Brown 2016). The problem has also been called the mutual-baiting problem, because both producers and consumers have to be attracted to the platform around the same time (Choudary 2017).

One way to attract producers and consumers to the platform is to use educate and inform them about the possibilities. When platforms enter a market they often have a strong disruptive effect. They change the way things have been done for many years and often offer easier solutions that many people have not heard of. This means that there is still a huge number of possible clients out there that just don’t know about the possibilities they have, by either offering their services on a platform, or by consuming the platforms services (Nobel 2017). Referring to Parker et al. (2016) strategies to face the chicken-egg problem usually entail three techniques. One of them is to stage value creation. This means the platform owners need to actively seek out ways to create value units, either by producing these themselves or by acquiring some producers that wouldn’t have come to the platform on their own. If the strategy works and the value units offer value to consumers, this initial offering should attract the other side of the market. Another technique is to offer tools or services on the platform for one side of the market, that it automatically attracts this side. To subsidize one side of the market in the hope of generating a pull-effect for the other side is one of the main techniques for many platform challenges. The third technique is to create conditions in which the value units can attract consumers and producers even if the overall market-size is relatively small (Parker et al. 2016). Another strategy that should mentioned because it fits the research-subject of this thesis is the micro-market strategy. This strategy heavily builds on the assumption of technique three, to generate
conditions under which value is created even if the overall size of the market is small. One of the mistakes platforms can make is to grow without strategic focus and to follow a strategy that neither focuses on a niche-market nor is it mature enough to conquer the mass-market (Cennamo und Santaló 2015). The micro-market strategy focuses on targeting a market where the two sides are already in contact but the interaction quality is low. By offering superior match-making between the two-sides the platform can then offer great value to both and thus attract a loyal customer base. By succeeding in a micro-market the platform can show that its core-interaction works (Parker et al. 2016). This practical example of success can be a great help for further growth and scaling of the platform.

**Cold Start Dilemma or Ghost-Town Problem**

The cold start problem also emphasizes the importance of an active community for a platform and the problems that relate to the chicken-and-egg dilemma. Referring to Salminen (2014) users will not join and create on a platform if there is no content. Choudary (2017) uses the metaphor of a Ghost-Town to describe this challenge. If consumers won’t join because of a lack of content, then producers lack the incentive to start producing. Breaking this vicious-cycle is one of the biggest challenges for young platforms if they want to avoid remaining a “ghost-town”. Again, one of the strategies that has worked for platforms like Reddit or LikeALittle is to stage value creation by creating fake user accounts and content that conveys an image of activity on the platform. This “Fake it till you make it”-Strategy can be a viable option for some platforms that face the cold-start dilemma (Krishnan 2012). Applying this strategy should be carefully considered, because if not done right, fake production and consumption on the platform can easily diminish users’ trust in the platform operator (Choudary et al. 2015). Offering tools or services that are valuable for the producer-side and act as a kind of bait, is another strategy that can help to overcome this starting problem. For this strategy to work, the motivations of the creators side need to be well understood (Choudary 2017). A third strategy to tackle the problem of lacking content is to convert users into producers. This can be achieved by implementing tools on the platform that incentivize users to create content if they can’t find it (Choudary 2017).

**Critical Mass Problem**

The critical mass problem is about reaching a certain number of users on both sides of the market, so that the platforms role of an intermediator and match-maker can constantly be fulfilled in a value-creating way. Choudary et al. (2015) define the critical mass:
“the minimum network size at which there are enough producers and consumers of value on the platform to ensure that interactions spark off reliably.” (Choudary et al. 2015, p. 217)

Focusing on a micro-market in which activity between the two sides already exists is one way to reach this critical mass faster. This strategy has been applied by successful platforms like Quora, Tinder or Facebook (Choudary et al. 2015). Another way to reach a critical mass of users is to use a piggybacking-strategy. This strategy aims to connect the user base of an existing network to your platform and has also been applied by many platform industry leaders of the years. Facebook piggybacked on top of Harvard’s email-network to reach a critical mass of users, WhatsApp used the network of contacts on its users’ phone to connect with other users and PayPal was built on top of the eBay (Choudary 2017; Parker et al. 2016).

**Monetization**

An additional aspect in which platforms differ from traditional companies is monetization. Since a platforms value often builds on its community and the network-effects it has created, charging users without much thought can have a direct effect on the platforms value. Due to the complexity of monetization for platforms, the decisions in platform design should be well aligned with the pricing strategies (Parker et al. 2016). In general, platforms can generate revenue by monetizing some of the excess value they offer to their users. This excess value, is created by either allowing users the access to value creation, by giving them access to a market or to tools or by curation (Parker et al. 2016). In case the platform can offer one of these benefits to its users, it can then either charge for (1) a transaction fee; (2) charge for enhanced access; (3) charge third-party producers for access to a community or (4) charge a subscription fee for enhanced curation (Parker et al. 2016, p. 128).

Looking back at the different business models, a platform can either operate as a product platform, a reseller or a multi-sided platform. For multi-sided platforms finding the right pricing structure is especially hard (Hagiu 2014, 2009; Eisenmann et al. 2006). The reason for this is that the platform is in direct contact with multiple sides of a market and that it needs to choose a pricing strategy for each of these sides. Because of the network-effects that exists between different user-sides, making a pricing decision for one side can have indirectly effect other user sides as well (Eisenmann et al. 2006; Parker et al. 2016). A strategy that is often found in practice is that platforms strongly subsidize one side of the market by offering their service for free or for a smaller price, while skimming profits from the other side (Hagiu 2014; Eisenmann et al. 2006). Eisenmann et al. (2006) differ between the *Money* side and the *Subsidy* side of a market. The *Subsidy* side should be supported because it has a strong pull effect on the *Money*
side, which can lead to positive network effects. Losses made from subsidizing one side can be balanced by charging a higher price from the other side. Prominent examples for this strategy are advertising-supported media platforms like Google and Facebook, Online-markets like eBay and Alibaba, or video-game platforms like Xbox and PlayStation (Hagiu 2014). Anyhow choosing which side of the market to subsidize is not always as obvious as it sounds and should be well considered (Eisenmann et al. 2006). Some aspects to consider when choosing which side to subsidize are (1) Users Price Sensitivity (2) Users Sensitivity to Quality (3) ability to create positive same-side and cross-side network effects (4) Users Brand Value for the platform (Eisenmann et al. 2006). Instead of subsidizing one side, the platform can of course also charge all users, this strategy, while potentially harmful for platforms that rely on high user numbers and activity, can be applied if the platform wants to maintain some form of exclusivity (Parker et al. 2016). Finding the balance between charging users while maintaining positive network effects is a difficult challenge for many platforms, especially in the age of the internet in which many users have become accustomed to a “free-price” mentality, thus it should be considered in all major design choices (Parker et al. 2016).

**Governance & Openness**

As many platforms heavily rely on user-generated content and a healthy community, setting rules, that prevent abuse and serve as a kind of quality-control, is a key challenge in platform design. These governance rules should be concerned with **Access** to the platform, determining who can join the platform, as well as **Interactions** on the platform, specifying what the users are allowed to do on the platform (Hagiu 2014). Setting rules does not only help the platform to avoid market failure, which can be the outcome of a lack of transparency, it also allows the platform to compete with other platforms by varying levels of openness (Parker et al. 2016; Hagiu 2014). A prominent example is the smartphone market in which Apples iOS and Googles Android platform are competing by offering different levels of openness and strictness to their users and developers. Hagiu (2014, p. 77) argues that “tighter governance rules reflect a trade-off of quantity in favor of quality”. In addition, he states that network effects are not only a result of the quantity in user interactions but also of their quality. Implementing governance rules that bolster quality can be costly, due to technological or operational costs. One cost-effective strategy here is to involve the community. Rating systems for users can help to increase trust between users and can deter users to violate the rules that were set by the platform (Hagiu 2014).
Disintermediation

Most Platforms connect two sides of a market. This often led to disruption in established markets because the platform did a better job of facilitating matches between producers and consumers. But what happens when these two sides have found each other and start to skip the platform as an intermediary? This is called Disintermediation and can be a problem for platforms if their business model and revenue streams are based on a transaction fee. (Nobel 2017; Parker et al. 2016) Another term for this is platform-leakage (Moazed 2015). Platforms can avoid this by offering additional value to their users, that goes beyond match-making, for example by providing insurances or loyalty and reputation programs that allow users to earn social currency and increase their trustworthiness (Nobel 2017; Moazed 2015). Another way to avoid this problem is to withhold information necessary for completing the match, unless the two sides complete the whole matching-process via the platforms tools. Airbnb does this to make sure that the booking process takes place on their homepage and is not taken off-platform (Parker et al. 2016).

Negative Network Effects

Most challenges and strategies discussed so far have been about growing the platform by attracting increasing numbers of producers and consumers. However, quantity does not always lead to success. Negative network effects describe a situation in which the platform is no longer able to produce good matches between producers and consumers. Users are deterred because they can’t find what they are looking for. In this case the platform fails its duty to curate the platforms content in a satisfying way (Parker et al. 2016). If user numbers and the content on the platform grow to quickly they can lead to lower quality and noise on the platform (Choudary et al. 2015). If one side of the market grows to quickly, for example the number of men on a dating platform, the number of job-seekers on a job-market or the number of vendors for a certain product on a marketplace like eBay, the increasing competition can discourage users and pull them of the platform. Another problem is when certain users abuse the platform and scare of other users. Choudary (2015) calls this a failure in access control. To avoid this, platforms need a clear policy and set of rules for platform usage. In terms of platform design this implies that growth of quantity should go in hand with the development of quality control. Good filters to create relevant matches for both user sides and a strategic focus when it comes to growth of user numbers can help to maintain quality. The same way that positive feedback loops can lead to rapid success of a platform, negative or reverse network effects can lead to a vicious cycle in which users and producers quickly abandon the platform (Choudary et al. 2015; Parker et al. 2016).
2.5 The Lean-Startup

Business Model design has been a popular topic in both the entrepreneurial field as well as in literature over the past years (Trimi und Berbegal-Mirabent 2012).

“According to the decades old formula, you write a business plan, pitch it to investors, assemble a team, introduce a product, and start selling as hard as you can. And somewhere in this sequence of events, you’ll probably suffer a fatal setback.” (Blank 2013, p. 66)

This is how Blank summarizes the typical entrepreneurial approach to starting a business. According to research three out of four start-ups fail (Blank 2013). To address this problem some new frameworks for start-ups have emerged in the past years. The Lean Start-Up, a term introduced by Ries (Ries 2011), is one of them, and it has already found its’ way into the schedule of business schools.

What differentiates the Lean Start-Up from the classical approach explained above is that it:

- favors experimentation over elaborate planning
- customer feedback over intuition
- iterative design over “big design up front” (Blank 2013, p. 66)

The Lean Start-Up approach is also characterized by Build-Measure-Learn Feedback Loops and by validated learning (Ries 2011). This cycle focuses on transforming ideas into early versions of the final product, testing these products with customers and then deciding if development should continue or be stopped. For examining if there is a market for the product, hypothesis about the business and the product are created and then tested in experiments, often featuring two versions of the product prototype which can be used in A/B-Testing (Ries 2011). Another term introduced by connected with the Lean Start-Up Methodology is the Minimum Viable Product (MVP). A version of the product that “enables a full turn of the Build-Measure-Learn loop with a minimum amount of effort and the least amount of development time” (Ries 2011, p. 77). By creating and testing a MVP the entrepreneur can gather important information on who their customers are and what they want (Trimi und Berbegal-Mirabent 2012). In comparison to the classical approach of working in “stealth mode” until a final version of the product is developed and introduced to the market, the lean approach has the benefit of requiring less resources and thus needs less funding in the starting phase (Trimi und Berbegal-Mirabent 2012; Blank 2013). The lean start-up methodology also draws aspects from customer development approach (Trimi und Berbegal-Mirabent 2012).
Figure 10 Build-Measure-Learn Loop Model based on Ries 2011

3 Empirical Research

The research part of this thesis is embedded in a multi-year Action Research Project about the crowdsourcing platform travel2change. The goal of this research project was to summarize the findings of the previous studies, look at the status-quo of the platform and what has changed since the previous Action-Research cycles have been completed and finally enhance the project by interviewing customers and potential customers of travel2change.

3.1 Research Context – travel2change

The Hawaiian-based crowdsourcing platform travel2change is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2011. They operate in the volunteer-travel sector and one of the leading ideas was that “a crowdsourcing platform can act as the intermediary between volunteer travelers and local communities—without a commercial tour operator in between.” (Kohler et al. 2016) The organizations homepage offers the following mission statement.

“Connecting travelers with the local community to create a positive impact.”

It also states that they “reimagine travel as a catalyst for creating positive impact” and that they want to “provide travelers with unique opportunities that benefit and empower local communities” (travel2change 2017). To tackle the negative social and environmental impacts
that travelling can cause, the organization offers a platform where travelers and locals can match-up and start activities that have a positive impact on the local community and environment.

Guided by the ideas of the “Lean Start-Up” concept, which allows drastic changes when the question of “pivot or persevere” is raised, the platform has gone through some major transformations throughout the years. The way it wants to contribute to social innovation and its design, both in terms of how it looks, but even more in how it works, have changed. In the first three years, 2011 until 2014, the platform was designed as a Collaborative Community. After struggling to engage a critical mass of users and ensuring output quality as well as combining both the fun and social impact aspects of the activities (Kohler et al. 2016), the platform was redesigned as a competitive market. Nowadays the platform works like this:

“travel2change builds relationships with local organizations that are doing wonderful things in Hawaii. Together, we provide travelers with hands-on, community-based activities. The majority of our activities are free or donation based. However, some activities include a small fee.” (travel2change 2017)

The platform offers activities like a beach clean-up combined with a yoga sessions or hiking trips which are combined environmental restoration measures. Local organizations can offer these activities on the platform of travel2change and Travelers can book these activities. The platforms business model evolved from an Integrator or Reseller of whole trips, towards a two-sided market that connects local organizations with travelers and tries to facilitate interaction between the two parties. The role of travel2change can nowadays also be seen as a strategic bridging organization with the tasks of both a mediator between locals and tourists as well as a broker of the offered activities (Park und Kohler 2017).

For a better overview of the organizations structure, its goals and its environment of stakeholders the following chart shows the business model canvas of travel2change, as it was used by the organizations founder, Thomas Kohler, in his paper on using crowdsourcing for achieving innovation in volunteer travel in 2016. The business model canvas should also help to understand of how the organization tries to “create, communicate, deliver and capture value” (Kohler et al. 2016, p. 440)
The core service provided by the platform is the matching of travelers and locals around “meaningful travel experiences”. Its value proposition for the two other actors on the platform are described by its founder as:

“travel2change helps travelers to (1) Find meaningful travel experiences that fit their itineraries and interests, (2) select a meaningful travel experience based on reviews and communication with the local host, (3) join a meaningful travel experience and (4) share reviews. Local hosts, such as non-profit organizations, can (1) raise awareness regarding the need they want to meet and draw attention to their mission, (2) develop their experience with the help of the travel2change community, (3) gain support and find travelers to support them.” (Kohler et al. 2016; p. 440)
The customers, or *Consumers* and *Creators*, targeted by travel2change can be split into two groups. The first being travelers, usually in their 20s and 30s, with an above average education, low to medium but increasing income, which are also intensive internet users and can be described as socially-responsible, open minded, adventurous and seek for personal fulfillment. The other group targeted are local hosts for the activities that can be found on the platform. These local hosts should have a deep understanding of the local problems and needs and should be driven to improve the social and environmental conditions of the destination (Kohler et al. 2016). They should also be open to the idea of hosting events for travelers and be confident that the activities can have a positive effect on the area. Other stakeholders that need to be considered for the future development of the platform are accommodation, transportation and travel companies at the destination. As potential multipliers for marketing activities the organization has kept an eye on Universities, Clubs and Societies (Kohler et al. 2016).

The Key Challenges for the organization are described in the paper as the following:

1. Engaging a critical mass of users
2. Ensuring Output Quality
3. Going to Scale to increase impact

The first challenge is very important to avoid that the platform is slowly dying out. An active crowd is important to “sustain the business model” (Kohler et al. 2016). A critical mass of users must be reached so that positive network effects can kick in and stimulate the virtuous cycle of a growing number of sellers and buyers that attract each other and pull each other on the platform. According to the organization this challenge is a “time intensive marketing challenge that requires resources and dedication” (Kohler et al. 2016; p. 443). To tackle this problem travel2change wants to deliver a compelling process that offers the right incentives to its users while enabling collaboration between the users (Kohler et al. 2016).

The second key challenge is to ensure output quality. Previous cycles of the Action Research Project on travel2change have shown that there is a quality problem when travelers, which are not familiar with the destinations problems, are the ones who create the activities offered on travel2change. Consequently, the platform focused more on local NPO’s as the creators of the activities, since they are more familiar with local problems. To ensure better quality control of user-generated content, the platform wants to improve its curation tools. The goal, which has partly been realized, is to create voting and review mechanism to ensure better curation by the crowd (Kohler et al. 2016).
The third challenge of travel2change is to scale to increase a significant positive impact on the social and environmental conditions. For the time being, the organization has fully concentrated its efforts on the Islands of Hawaii, to find out what works and what doesn’t work. In the long run, though the idea of travel2change needs to be carried towards other places that suffer from negative impacts of tourism. Achieving this, must be the ultimate objective of the organization if it wants to reach the last stage of social innovation – systemic change. Until then improving the platforms core interaction and scaling it into new markets will remain the key challenge for the organization.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Action Research

The methodology chosen for this research project is Action Research. The term was first introduced in 1946 by Kurt Lewin and describes the “generation of theory with changing the social system through the researcher acting on or in the social system” (Susman und Evered 1978; p. 586). It is an established method in the fields of social sciences. From a philosophic view the method is based on “post-positivist assumptions such as idiographic and interpretive research ideals” (Baskerville 1999; p.2). Following these assumptions, action research also relies on qualitative data since the “soft” data gathered in the process does not legitimate a mere quantitative analysis (Baskerville 1999). Qualitative research usually has the following characteristics: (1) it seeks answers to a question. (2) it systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question. (3) it collects evidence. (4) it produces findings that were not determined in advance. (5) it produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study. (Mack und Woodsong op. 2005; p.1). Amongst Action-Research some popular qualitative research methods are Participant Observation, In-depth interviews and Focus groups. The data gathered usually comes in forms of field notes, audio data and transcripts rather than in numerical form, as it is typical for quantitative research. (Mack und Woodsong op. 2005; p. 2). As a further contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research is more flexible, uses semi-structured methods rather than highly-structured methods and seeks to explore phenomena rather than testing and confirming hypothesis (Mack und Woodsong op. 2005).

Action research has become more popular in the examination of information systems in recent years, its popularity is founded on the principle of integrating theory and practice and “learning
from the results of interventions that are planned after a thorough diagnosis of the problem context.” (Davison et al. 2004; p.81).

This thesis is part of an ongoing research project on the platform travel2change and its goal is to add to the findings of prior research steps. Generating critical knowledge about a topic is part of the objectives of action research (Susman und Evered 1978).

To meet some of the deficiencies of positivist science action research tries to cover the following six characteristics described by Susman and Evered (1978). (1) It is future oriented and aims to create a more desirable future for the practical concerns of people. (2) It is collaborative, meaning that there are interdependencies between the researcher and the examined system. (3) It implies system development. It aims to help with the problem at hand as well as generating new knowledge about the problem. (4) It generates theory grounded in action. (5) It is agnostic. (6) It is situational. (Susman und Evered 1978)

Action research is an iterative process and often takes place in a cyclical process which consists of the following five steps.

Figure 12 The Five Phases of Action Research - Source Susman & Evered (1978, p.588)

The first step is diagnosing the problem the examined subject is facing. The goal is to establish a “working hypothesis” or theoretical assumption about the problem, which will then provide the base for the following steps. Action planning is the next step. In a collaborative approach the researcher and the object of the study try to find actions, based on theoretical frameworks, to relieve the problem. These actions are then implemented in the third step, Action Taking.
The fourth step then seeks to evaluate the actions that were taken. Positive and negative consequences of the actions must be reviewed to adjust the working hypothesis. It also needs to be checked if the actions taken were the reason for success, or if the changes have been influenced by any other factors. The result of this is then an adjustment of the working hypothesis or a refinement of the assumptions of the underlying problem. In a last step, the learnings are specified. This should provide the researcher with findings that can then be used to improve the theoretical frameworks used in step one and two. The research subject can use these findings to adjust to the problem. In both cases of success and failure, another research cycle can be started to gain further knowledge and tackle additional problems (Baskerville 1999). The number of cycles of this five step process can differ between research projects and depends on the time span of the research project as well as the client and researcher (Susman und Evered 1978).

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Most of the data used for this research project was acquired by conducting semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are the most common type of research interviews (Rowley 2012) and they are “generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s” (Dicicco-Bloom und Crabtree 2006, p.315). Before the interview, the interviewer develops an interview guideline with a list of topics and questions that should be covered during the interview. This list usually consist of six to twelve questions and allows space for further sub-questions to further explore the main questions (Rowley 2012). Interviews are a good method if the task is to understand “experiences, opinions, attitudes, values and processes” (Rowley 2012, p. 262). A well-structured interview allows the interviewer to get a deep understanding of “social and personal matters” (Dicicco-Bloom und Crabtree 2006, p.315). Interviews are usually recorded and then transcribed. The obtained data can then be further analyzed with qualitative analytical tools like dedoose. One of the disadvantages of conducting interviews compared to gathering quantitative data via questionnaires is to get enough responses from a larger number of people and thus the generalizability of the results (Rowley 2012).
3.2.3 Grounded Theory and Open-Coding

Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that was introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. It is “a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection.” (Strauss und Corbin 1999, p.273) With grounded theory, existing theory can either be generated or elaborated and modified (Strauss und Corbin 1999). This research project uses an open-coding approach to either generate theory or to elaborate and compare the theories that were introduced in the second part of this thesis, with the examined organization. Open coding is an analytical process to identify phenomena and concepts in the data sources. To identify them, the data source is thoroughly read through and questions are raised in terms of what the content is about. The researcher then names categories and sub-categories that describe and summarize reappearing concepts. For further analysis, the properties and dimensions of these categories can then be examined. The goal is to reach a higher level of abstraction (Strauss und Corbin 1998). The codes applied to the data can reach from very abstract and specific codes to very general codes. To allow transparency a codebook is created in which the codes are explained. For this research project, the codebook as well as the application of the codes were done with the software dedoose.

3.3 Findings from previous Action Research Cycles

In the next chapter a timeline of the development of travel2change as well as the Action-Research Cycles will function as an overview on what has been done so far. The following chapter will then summarize the findings of previous studies on the topic. In addition, the qualitative data of these studies has again been reviewed. Using the qualitative analytics tools Dedoose an open-coding scheme has been applied to check for similarities in the data and to reveal new insights.
3.3.1 Timeline of previous studies and t2c

“Inspired by the power of collaboration, travel2change was launched as an online crowdsourcing platform in 2011” (Kohler et al. 2016)

Since then, the platform has gone through some substantial changes. These changes were partly influenced by the outcomes of the ongoing action-research project. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview on the history of travel2change and what has been done in prior action research projects. Figure 13 explains what has been done by the research team in the first two action-research cycles on travel2change. At that time, the platform was still designed as a collaborative community. In April 2015, the organization decided to relaunch the platform as a competitive market. Figure 14, which was provided by the organizations founder Thomas Kohler, divides the Action-Research project into two different parts. The first cycle contains all the steps on t2c as a collaborative community, while the second cycle starts after the relaunch of the platform. The figures show that the organization has already been the subject of research for a couple of years now and that both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied to increase knowledge about the platform, its design and its stakeholders. The findings of these studies were then partly integrated into the platforms design.
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1 - Diagnosing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 1 - Diagnosing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To diagnose the current problem and underlying causes of the platform t2c a workshop was conducted. The workshop participants concluded that the too narrow organization outreach resulted in a one-sided platform with a traveler’s surplus and a lack of organizational hosts. Therefore, a working hypothesis was formulated: The problem of lack of participation and insufficient interaction can be resolved through an organization outreach which complements the two-sided platform business model (Boudreau &amp; Lakhani 2009).</td>
<td>A second workshop of the t2c team was conducted to intensively work with the findings of the previous cycle. Although the participation and interaction remained low in the first cycle, the organizations proved to be a valuable source of sophisticated travel ideas. Therefore, the working hypothesis was slightly adapted: The problem of lack of participation and insufficient interaction can be resolved through an organization outreach and a clear communication which complements the two-sided platform business model (Boudreau &amp; Lakhani 2009).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data sources:</td>
<td>Data sources:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workshop with experts (n=13)</td>
<td>• Workshop with experts (n=8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Observation existing online platform</td>
<td>• Observation/Evaluation cycle 1</td>
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<td><strong>Phase 2 – Action Planning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 2 – Action Planning</strong></td>
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<td>In collaboration with the t2c team and further researchers a collaborative community within a two-sided platform (Boudreau &amp; Lakhani 2009) was designed.</td>
<td>In collaboration with the t2c team and further researchers three challenges (Sports, Hawaii, and Rainforest) within a two-sided platform (Boudreau &amp; Lakhani 2009) were designed.</td>
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<td><strong>Phase 3 – Action Taking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 3 – Action Taking</strong></td>
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<td>The two-sided collaboration platform was launched as an ongoing challenge. After sending out the E-Mail campaign a concierge MVP was applied to foster the interaction of organizations.</td>
<td>The three challenges were launched at the end of February and beginning of March. The key learnings from cycle 1 were applied (Communication and technical improvements).</td>
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<td><strong>Phase 4 - Evaluation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 4 - Evaluation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To evaluate the first cycle, the platform tracking data (Google Analytics/Database) and feedback of organizations was analyzed.</td>
<td>To evaluate the first cycle, the platform tracking data (Google Analytics/Database) and feedback of organizations was analyzed.</td>
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<td>Data Sources:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Quantitative: Funnel Diagram/Cohort Metrics</td>
<td>• Quantitative: Funnel Diagram/Cohort Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Qualitative: Feedback E-Mail history (n=10)</td>
<td>• Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews (n=19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Analysis:</td>
<td>Data Analysis:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data was analyzed according to Ries’ (2011b) startup theory and actionable metrics. Working Hypothesis: Can neither be confirmed nor disproven. Technical issues and unclear communication prohibit a clear statement.</td>
<td>The Quantitative data was analyzed according to Ries (2011b) and the qualitative data was analyzed with open coding techniques (Grounded Theory) Working Hypothesis: Disproven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 5 – Specify Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phase 5 – Specify Learning</strong></td>
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<td>The first cycle could not provide deep insights (due to technical limitations) into the appropriateness of collaborative communities (Boudreau &amp; Lakhani 2009). Yet the cycle revealed the three key learnings for the second cycle: 1. SCBOs submit higher quality travel ideas than individuals. 2. Unclear communication represents a barrier for participation. 3. Technical issues are a barrier for further participation and interaction.</td>
<td>The second cycle provided deep insights into the problems and needs of SCBOs and formed the following main learning: 1. SCBOs have the need for a collaborative product platform that connects organizations with a social mission and as a result enables them to join forces and address social issues more effectively.</td>
</tr>
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Both figures highlight the organizations struggle to build and sustainably grow a community. The mutual development of both market-sides, that travel2change aims to match as a two-sided platform, is still the main challenge for the organization.
## Action Research Cycle 2017

### Phase 1: Diagnosing

To get an understanding of travel2change’s history and transformation information about the organization is collected. This information comes from public sources like the homepage, previous studies that have been carried out on the topic as well as from the organization itself. Focus of the diagnosis is to find challenges, strategies and design principles which can then be compared to literature on the topic of crowdsourcing platform design.

**Working Hypothesis:** The re-analysis of data from previous studies on t2c can help to create a more holistic picture of the organizations challenges. The linkage of several perspectives may help to discover new insights. Enhancing this picture with current user experiences can provide helpful implications for the platforms future.

**Data Sources:**
- 7 Master theses that studied travel2change regarding crowdsourcing, platform design and social and open innovation
- Findings from prior Action-Research cycles
- Interviews from prior studies (n=74)
- Interviews with hosts (n=13, Source Park)

### Phase 2: Action Planning

The qualitative data is imported into the analytics tool dedoose. An open-coding scheme is created to re-analyze the data. A research gap is identified.

### Phase 3: Action Taking

Creation of a semi-structured interview guideline that is supposed to cover the missing perspective of platform users that have experience t2c activities and potential users. T2c customers are contacted via the FareHarbor booking system. Potential users are identified and contacted as well. Interviews are then conducted, transcribed and a coding scheme is applied. Data from prior research-cycles is also coded with dedoose.

### Phase 4: Evaluation

The open coding-scheme is checked for applicability. Codes are re-organized for clarity. The data is examined with dedoose for reappearing statements and patterns. The new version of the platform is examined in terms of design principles found in literature.

**Data Sources:**
- Interviews from previous studies (n= 63)
- Interviews conducted by the author (n= 6)

### Phase 5: Specify Learning

See Discussion and Managerial Implications section
3.3.2 Summary and findings from previous studies

One of the suggestions for future research from a previous study about travel2change was to apply another step in the action research cycle with just one researcher, instead of a team of multiple researchers. Due to a technical breakdown of the analytics tool Dedoose, the next recommendation was to reanalyze the qualitative data collected in the interviews (Sommer 2014b). Following these recommendations, the previous studies on the topic have been read through and summarized. Their key findings will be presented in this chapter. Additionally, the findings from applying a coding scheme to the data and reanalyzing it, will be discussed. The aim of this approach was:

1) To give the author of this thesis a better understanding of what has been done in previous action-research cycles
2) To build a holistic picture of the situation by combining the different perspectives of previous studies on the travel2change
3) To discover new insights and implications that have so far been overlooked

While summarizing the studies’ findings and implications the following topics and challenges stuck out. The first topic was summarized as “design flaws”. These flaws include things such as a limited level of usability on the homepage and the implication to improve the platforms usability (Sommer 2014b), a lack of clear communication about t2c’s idea and value proposition and a high level of uncertainty among travelers and local organizations. To solve these it was recommended to provide more transparency to increase trust, to provide the crowdsourcing task with a framing question and goal and to work on the communication of the organizations mission, its value proposition and its core interaction (Kaden 2013; Sommer 2014b; Mussner 2014; Hillger 2014). To engage a critical mass of users and increase activity on the platform the topic of community building was mentioned several times. To solve the problem of the missing community most implications pointed towards building offline touchpoints. One recommendation was that startups should not overestimate the power of the internet and neglect their offline activities. Regular offline events would provide a chance for community building due to the higher emotional involvement of users in offline interaction compared to online interaction. It was also recommended to provide more enhanced communications tools on the platform to strengthen connections between online community members (Kaden 2013; Mussner 2014; Sommer 2014a). Related to the topic of community building, the motivations and expectations of users were also studied. The result was that intrinsic motives seem to be predominant in the setting of volunteer travel and social activities. Nonetheless it was suggested
to also cater to extrinsic motives like financial motives. Offering free or low-cost activities can be one strategy to attract the rather price-sensitive target group of the platform and to reach a higher number of users. To cater to the intrinsic motivations of users it was advised to spread awareness about social topics and to adjust marketing towards the travelers willingness to do something good and meaningful on their journey (Wachter 2014; Mussner 2014; Kaden 2013). To grow the platform, it was also recommended to strengthen the brand of t2c. Implications pointed towards empowering platform users to co-create the brand, to highlight the non-profit background of t2c and to involve experts and celebrities in some of the activities and events (Kaden 2013; Mussner 2014). In terms of improving the business model it was recommended to transform the platform into a marketplace for bookable trips and activities, as well putting a focus on the linkage of local SCBO’s (Sommer 2014b). This was one of the recommendations that was later implemented by the travel2change. To create a unique-selling point it was also recommended to differentiate the platform from competitors by becoming the “go-to-platform” for a specific social problems that can be tackled by crowdsourcing (Kaden 2013). Another challenge seen by the previous action-research team was that to create positive impact, the platform needs to move into the later stages of the social-innovation cycle (Hillger 2014; Sommer 2014b). While the early versions of the platform have focused on the first two stages of the social innovation process (see chapter 2.3.), Prompts and Proposals, it was recommended to move on towards the steps of creating Prototypes, Sustaining the idea and Scaling. In terms of overcoming financial constraints it was suggested to use a crowdfunding approach to provide financial liquidity for the organization while at the same time remaining independence (Kaden 2013). One of the studies had a closer look at the impacts of a collaborative and competitive setting for a crowdsourcing platform. The result was not statistically significant though and the recommendation was to combine both aspects in a future design (Wachter 2014).

After reading and summarizing the studies about travel2change the next step of the research project was to reanalyze the qualitative data that was collected in the previous action research cycles. The data, which was available in the form of written interview transcriptions, was uploaded to dedoose. Based on the topics covered in the literature part of this thesis and partly based on the emphasis of the examined study, the following coding scheme was created. The scheme consisted of three layers. The six main categories covered the topics of travel2change, platform actors, platform design principles, challenges, strategies and the interviewee. These main codes all consisted of several sub codes to allow a more precise allocation of relevant interview statements. Some of these subcategories, for example 3.7. Website Design, contained further sub-codes to provide another layer of differentiation for analysis. The following figure
shows the coding scheme. Due to lack of space not all sub codes are portrayed. The categories 4. Challenges and 5. Strategies also contained several more sub codes. The complete coding scheme with some examples can be found in the appendix.
Figure 16 Coding Scheme
To enhance the overall picture with the perspective of activity-hosts, a study by Park and Kohler (2017) has also been investigated. The interviews from that study (n=13) have helped to get a better understanding of the hosts motivations, needs and future expectations. During the process of coding, eighty-three codes have been developed, these codes were applied to more than one-thousand excerpts in the text. Overall dedoose lists 1932 code applications for the project. For a more transparent allocation of the excerpts, four descriptors have been applied to the data files. These descriptors show (1) t2c’s platform type at the time of the interview, either being competitive or collaborative. (2) the year in which the interview took place. (3) t2c’s state as either an integrator platform or a multi-sided platform. (4) The type of interviewee. Which has been categorized as Host, Traveler, Platform or Other. The following table contains information about all the sixty-three interviews that have been examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Interview Setting (Traveler, Host, Other)</th>
<th>Interviewee Name</th>
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3.3.3 Coding results

This chapter contains statements from the interviews about themes that have resurfaced several times during the analysis. Some of the quotes have been translated from German into English to provide better comprehensibility. To not distort the meaning of these quotes the translations have been held as closely as possible to the original. Statements about travel2change, its potential and general business model as well as positive remarks will be the focus of the first part of this chapter. Afterwards follow some statements about user participation and motivation concerning online communities and crowdsourcing platforms. The chapter will finish with statements about challenges for t2c, critique and suggested improvements.

General understanding of t2c and its potential

One of the common topics of the previous action-research cycles was how the general idea of travel2change is received by the interviewees and if the idea possesses potential to be implemented in broader context. The analysis revealed a mostly positive feedback towards t2c’s vision and its potential. The following statements underline the interviewees general understanding of t2c.

“I: When you think about T2C, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? IP: Personally, I feel really excited that there are people here who have a high ethic about travel and care about the places go to. It’s something I always believed in, and it’s great to see a whole community get involved in that topic” (#32 Stolz)

“I: When you first got to the website, what went through your mind? How did you feel when you read about travel2change? IP: I thought it was really cool! I signed up immediately because it was exactly what I was looking for.” (#6 Hillger)

“The name really made me curious about what I can find there.” (#9 Hillger)

„I think the name travel2change is really meaningful, even if I hadn’t known about it before.“ (#16. Mussner)

It seems like the target group of t2c exists and that there is demand towards travelling that combines both the fun aspect as well as doing activities with a social impact. Especially the matching of travelers and locals seems to be one service that is asked for and that many travelers miss.
“You know the premise of the network and of the site about allowing more responsible and more meaningful or fulfilling travel is really good. And I have been a traveler on myself. And someone who is sort of in that place. I really get the need for responsible and fulfilling travel that works for traveler and the community they go to. So, I think that’s really good idea. I haven’t had a chance to explore it too much, but I understand the philosophy behind it and support it.” (#61 Sommer, Kai)

„I: Did the workshop help to give a better understanding of t2c? IP: Yes, I want to look closer at it because it is interesting and I really like to travel. It is a good opportunity to really experience a country and I am not someone who goes somewhere and just wants to lie on the beach. It is also a good opportunity to get in contact with the locals, which isn’t that easy." (#13, Mussner)

“In general I find the name catchy and the design was nice. I mean, I am a couchsurfer, so I have a natural interest in travel and more authentic ways to do it.” (#9 Hillger)

“For people who really want to change something, there are often no possibilities to find a platform to work together and develop synergy effect for their ideas. So therefore, the platform is great.” (#3 Hillger)

When asked about spreading the word about t2c and recommending it the feedback was also mostly positive. There just seems to be some hesitation to do it via social networks because of the accumulation of spam messages.

„I: And if the organization would help you? IP: Sure, I think there are a lot more people interested in the matter, I would recommend it to my friends.” (#14 Mussner)

“I: Can you imagine taking a more active role and to share the idea of t2c in your personal network? IP: Definitely, especially with friends that will receive the idea well. You just know how some people are and some pay more attention towards this topic and some less. (...) I’ve already talked about it with some, but I would rather do it in a personal conversation. I would also share an event but in general I’d rather do it in a conversation with friends who like to travel, they are more interested in that.” (#18 Mussner)

“I: Can you imagine taking a more active role and to share the idea of t2c in your personal network? IP: Yes. But I mean on Facebook and social media it’s difficult sometimes, you already get bombarded there” (#19 Mussner)

Another thing that stood out is that the idea of using crowdsourcing and exploring different backgrounds to find novel solutions for social problems is well received.

“I: How do you feel about collaboration? Is there collaboration? IP: Using open innovation principles, the problems are used faster, you can get solutions from many different perspectives. You can also get solutions more cost effective. When many people are looking at the problem, they look from different perspectives. People come from different backgrounds, and have different education. Medical problems don’t have to be solved by Doctors, these problems can be solved by people from different industries. So, this crowdsourcing is excellent.” (#27 Stolz)
After the early versions of the platform failed to create enough traction to acquire a growing base of consumers and creators, the new business model of t2c to serve a market-place that offers bookable activities and establishes connections between local SCBO’s and travelers seems to be a viable business model for the new version of the platform. One of the reoccurring topics was the lack of collaboration between SCBO’s and the need for an organization/platform that serves as a strategic bridge between the multiple sides that are involved in socially-responsible travel. This niche could be filled by the new version of t2c’s platform.

“I strongly believe some of the large charities should merge and join forces and became more efficient. There are way too many charitable organizations all doing the same thing and spending multiple amounts doing that same thing. 50 different organizations with 250 different offices all trying to help ‘a...b...c...’ is ridiculous when it could be done with 10 offices and internet networking. There are also too many large organizations that have no real idea about community needs.” (#60 Sommer, Kai)

“For example the volunteer army responds to the Christchurch earthquake, which happened in New Zealand three years ago or so. And that was an online platform that essentially allowed people to volunteer. It was more a disaster, but it was an online platform and it was very successful doing it perfect. And it is ongoing since – there is not so much – there are too few – in my experience there are not enough effective, really effective online platforms for engaging people and work, but allowing them to express that online. (...) that’s bridging the gap between real world action and online action is the most important point. Maybe it’s not too few organizations it’s just not enough organizations that are doing it well.” (#61 Sommer, Kai)

“Yes, I mean, I can see that. I think collaboration is always a challenge. Especially with non-profits who are volunteer based. They don’t necessarily always have the resources to connect with each other. So, online collaboration would be, I think it is the way of the future.” (#63 Sommer, Kai)

“I: there are too few organizations that create totally new social projects online.
IP: I disagree with that. I mean I think that there are tons of organizations are creating new social innovations online. I think finding them is a little bit more challenging. (...) So you know those non-profits in Africa. There are hundreds, probably thousands of them. So, I think there is a lot of organizations like that but there are not a lot of organizations like travel2change where you can connect you with all the small organizations.” (#56 Sommer, Kai)

“I think that’s actually a great Idea. I definitely think that there should be far more collaboration. There are so many organizations including ourselves doing similar things and if there could be more collaboration or even a Platform that you could go to say, hey I’m trying to build – I mean that’s a perfect example for us. We are trying to build this new field and I would love to know who is out there who has already done this in Africa. Because I’m trying to – you know – I don’t want to reinvent the wheel. I would rather go to another Organization (...) I definitely think that that would be a Great Resource for a lot organizations.” (#62 Sommer, Kai)
In terms of monetization and possible adjustments to the business model it was hard to find statements that provided new insights on how travel2change could generate revenue. One of the interview partners that worked in an SCBO stated the following.

“If I were an organization I wouldn’t pay to list my event because there are so many opportunities to list for free. If I were a traveler and there were amazing opportunities on there, let’s say you give - a lot of websites give short descriptions and show all the pinpoints on the maps and have a title, so gives you a taste of what it is, but doesn’t give you the full information. I would pay up to 25 dollars a year to be a member of that to get the full information. That’s if I thought there are amazing opportunities. And I really want to access the information.” (#56 Sommer, Kai)

Thus, indicating that there is a subsidy and a money side to the market, just like the literature on platform monetization suggests. Another SCBO member expressed a similar opinion.

“I: For what service, if any, on travel2change would you be willing to pay? And how much would you be willing to pay? IP: None. [name of organization] does not and has not ever charged fees or paid for services. We are purely voluntary and have no funding or need for paid services.”

Even though this is not necessarily new information, it stresses how the host/creator side, which mainly consists of non-profits and small organizations, is under constant financial pressure and charging them would really need a service that offers them a lot of value and helps them to generate revenue.

Motivation

When looking at what drives people to participate in crowdsourcing platforms and volunteer tourism the importance of intrinsic and altruistic factors was apparent. Even though the new version of the t2c platform does not include challenges anymore, the intrinsic motivational factors that drive people to participate in volunteer activities should be kept in mind for further design decisions.

„I: In which ways, do you participate on the website? IP: I try to bring in my own ideas and comment on other ideas. I do not only bring them in because I want to win, but also because of the discussion, this mutual activation is very important. It contains some altruism; I help others with my comments.“ (#29 Stolz)

“I: How would you describe yourself as a user? IP: Personally, I am working for our organization here in Kenya. Anything that I can do for the people in need, makes me feel good. When you do good for someone, you are doing good for yourself. That’s what gives me satisfaction in my life” (#30 Stolz)
“I: What makes you want to participate in this particular project? 
IP: In this regard, I follow a two-sided approach. On one side, I like to help people and enjoy sharing my knowledge. On the other side, I love the possibility of learning other people’s views and ideas and through that opening up my own horizon.” (#34 Stolz)

Financial incentives for crowdsourcing-platform participants seem to play a subordinate role as can be seen in the following quotes.

“IP: For you, yourself, monetary rewards are the most important? IP: No, they are not the most important. It’s also prestige and recognition. When you can help, because it’s something that you have done a few years ago, you just do it. But when it’s something completely new, then you have to invest your time, then it’s different. I think monetary rewards gives some oxygen to the challenge.” (#27 Stolz)

“Because I thought what I wanted to do fell exactly into what you are doing. When I went to the site, I just felt that I fitted in, so it’s not the reward money that motivated me” (#32 Stolz)

Other factors that led people to participate in the platform were a sense of community and belonging, getting feedback on their own ideas as well as social discourse.

“To be honest, I wasn’t expecting to get good feedback, but when people have read my experience, they congratulated me and wished me luck in my future endeavors and it was just so inspiring for me to know that people out there still care.” (#6 Hillger)

“...and from my personal side, it was interesting to hear what other people said about my ideas. I was just waiting for the comments. That was my motivation.” (#31 Stolz)

“What makes you want to participate in the project? 2: I want to participate because I don’t feel so alone, you feel that you got support there.” (#32 Stolz)

Gaining social prestige and popularity plus making new connections were also stated as motivational drivers.

Are there any other factors that motivate you to participate?

“2: Yes, also the possibility to make connections. There are many people on Sparked working in a similar field as I do, so there’s definitely a chance to meet the right persons” (#33 Stolz)

Missing Community

With the earlier versions of the platform travel2change failed the objective to build a lively community around the topic of social innovation and volunteer tourism even though the organization was aware of the importance of the topic. In an interview on how the platform tried to interact with its users and how to build a community the organizations founded stated the following.
“I: How do you interact with users? IP: We try to play hosts to them, greet them when they arrive at the platform, point them towards what they can do, support them once they have questions, guide them through the process of submitting ideas, and also taking actions. We work really closely with the travelers who realize the projects and trying to align with them in terms of the shared vision for the project that needs to be realized. So it is about building the relationship with your community members through different mechanisms.” (#21 Kaden)

This leads us to the next part of the analysis, the challenges t2c faced in the past and the critique some users mentioned. Even though most users seemed to identify with t2c and the topic there were some barriers that could not be overcome in the past.

„I: Can you identify with the participants and the organization? P: Definitely with the idea. Unfortunately, the community is not really interconnected, it would need more frequent meeting to really feel as a community.” (#48 Sommer, Carmen)

Not feeling part of the community was one of the issues that came up the most. The reasons for that were that people did not feel a strong connection to other community members during online interactions. This had a negative impact on their motivation and seemed to prevent some users to take more active roles. Also, the involvement of users seemed to be higher during offline events like the t2c workshops.

„I: Do you feel as a part of the community? IP: Well I don’t know anybody except you. The whole online community building is very superficial, when I go to a workshop I feel a lot more involved.” (#54, Sommer Carmen)

„I: What value do idea platforms have for you? IP: Well basically I think platforms have the big disadvantage because you’re not sitting together in a room, it’s just not the same kind of interaction. In reality it is different. A discussion group would appeal a lot more to me. On a platform, you’re just sitting there on your own, the motivation is not the same “ (#54, Sommer Carmen)

„I: Did the platform have a personal benefit for you? IP: No, because on the platform I get the feeling as if there already a committed group. I wouldn’t have done anything just through the platform I would have been very passive. I definitely wouldn’t have shown any initiative.” (#52, Sommer Carmen)

„I: Do you have the feeling that you have helped other participants and/or the organization to reach their personal benefits? IP: At the workshop yes, the community on the platform, no.” (#51, Sommer Carmen)

I: Can you identify with the participants or the organization? IP: With the idea in any case. Unfortunately, the community is not really connected, it would need more frequent meetings to feel as a community. (#48 Sommer, Carmen)
In general, there was a lot of positive feedback concerning the offline events that t2c organized. The positive atmosphere and a good culture of discussion which stimulated creativity where mentioned many times.

„I: If you were responsible for the planning of future events, what would you do to motivate more people to generate more ideas? IP: Actually, it was perfect for a first event, I wouldn’t do it differently.” (#20, Mussner)

“I: What did you like most about the workshop? IP: That there were many creative ideas, most people were really committed and that we really discussed the ideas. Also, that there were some disagreements and we really started a discussion round. It was not just writing down ideas. I liked the interactive aspect of it most.” (#19 Mussner)

„It was good to get some input to get a better understanding. It definitely contributed to my knowledge about the Atlantic rainforest and about the organization.” (#18 Mussner)

“The atmosphere was easy and relaxed, very good to generate ideas.” (#40 Sommer, Carmen)

One the other hand, participation and interaction on the online platform clearly did not match the expectations and needs of users. Some of the interviewees also showed general reluctance to participating in an online community.

„The participation and interaction at the workshop was positive. The only negative thing was the platform.” (#47 Sommer, Carmen)

„I: How have you perceived the interaction between participants and between participants and the organization? IP: Nothing on the platform. There was a moderator, who opened a chat, which I found nice in the beginning, but then it started to bother me. I prefer to talk in person with someone. I’m stressed by this kind of spam. The chat also wasn’t used by anybody. I wish that there was more exchange happening” (#51 Sommer, Carmen)

I: How would you describe the interaction on the platform? IP: Interaction yeah, it was there, but it was not a lot. I’ve looked into it from time to time to see if anything has changed, if anyone has added something to my idea. (#49 Sommer, Carmen)

I: How would you describe the interaction on the platform? IP: When I looked into it there were only four. Then I’ve looked at the ideas but there was no interaction. (#53 Sommer, Carmen)

As a result, some users felt disappointed and turned their back towards the platform.

„I: Do you feel part of the community? IP: No, actually no. My ideas have not been discussed and because of that I haven’t looked into it anymore.” (#49 Sommer, Carmen)
Website criticism

In addition to the problem of a missing community the two main challenges that struck out during the analysis were criticism about the website and a lack of transparency and information about the processes on the platform. Just by visiting the homepage many of the interviewees did not fully understand the idea of travel2change and how the platform works. Some technical complications as well as a low level of user friendliness seemed to be another barrier for the participants.

„I: Was the workshop helpful to give an understanding of t2c? IP: Yes of course, by looking at the website I wasn’t a hundred percent sure what’s it all about“ (#18 Mussner)

„They could have provided more information on the platform, how the process of the challenge works and how I can upload things.“ (#55, Sommer Carmen)

„I: How would you describe the interaction on the platform? IP: I haven’t perceived a lot of interaction, but I also haven’t interacted a lot because I found it all a bit cluttered. I haven’t really found my way because it was not so clear. The platform did not really appeal to me. “ (#54 Sommer, Carmen)

„I had some problems with registration, I was not sure if it had worked properly. I had to register two times to become a contributor, which I didn’t find very nice.“ (#46 Sommer, Carmen)

“I: What would increase your creativity? IP: Exchange and discourse. And inspiring stories or best practice examples from others. I couldn’t find a section where you share past examples. But I guess there must be some nice stories.“ (#8 Hillger)

“When I first got to the website, I noticed it was hard to find a search bar to see what challenges are already on there” (#10 Hillger)

“May be trivial but the search function? So also, you need a good filter for the countries, maybe even cities. Maybe it would be good if I could type in some tags what I am looking for, you know?” (#9 Hillger)

Confusion and lack of clear communication

The following statements underline the reoccurring wish for a better guidance on the platform.

“There are some things that I’m not sure about – how people go about – I guess it’s not completely Intuitive to me how people go about and participating in the projects. So, I see there is these Challenges and people put their Idea online. but I’m not sure exactly – I don’t understand how the building works yet. But maybe I have to read into it. But maybe it’s not obvious enough on the main pages of how people really get involved other than just creating an event then how the people actually move to be a part of the event.” (#63 Sommer, Kai)
“IP2: No, I think we have criticized enough [laughing]. I mean, don’t get me wrong, I really like the idea in general, it is just not really ausgereift. 
IP1: Yeah, let’s skip here. Maybe next time when you have changed we can give another round of feedback.” (#9 Hillger)

Me personally, I am overwhelmed and do not feel personally addressed. I wouldn’t be sure if my particular example fits your requirements. Because also I couldn’t find any requirements or any guideline. Or a good briefing. (#1 Hillger)

“I am not sure what I can expect. Not for myself and most certainly not for (the sports club) and that is the biggest problem that I see for you at the moment. What is it all about? Who do you talk to? Who do you offer something? There is no transparency. And from my experience, that is very important in the social sector.” (#1 Hillger)

“Obviously there is a Call to action to participate in the challenge. but it doesn’t seem to clear to me what that involves. Maybe that’s because I haven’t much spent much time, but sort of immediately that doesn’t let me know whether I need to be in a certain country or event or certain place or if I can do that online. So maybe that’s not as explicit as it could be.” (#61 Sommer, Kai)

‘I: How did you perceive the platform? IP: I liked the structure but at the beginning it was rather confusing because of the lack of information. At the workshop, it was represented a lot better.’ (#49 Sommer, Carmen)

“I am unsure I got the concept right. Like what exactly the challenge is. Cause for me, the challenge is to make travel more fun and more social worthwhile. And you give like stimuli or like sports to get more offers into your database. But again, I didn’t know where I can book it. Cause that’s what I would have expected. That travel2change is like a tourism service provider. But it seems I got that wrong.” (#9 Hillger)

One of the SCBO’s also did not fully understand what kind of value t2c offers and how to integrate that value into a collaborative relationship.

“So we have the value that travelers have for our organization. That are people that obviously want to come to New Zealand as well as do good and that’s a similar concept what travel2change stands for obviously. So, I can definitely see the value of it but I’m not sure right now specifically what value. But we are at the moment into it how we reevaluate and get more people on board from international sources to help out with the work we do. And I think as we work on that we realize where travel2change fits in with that.” (#61 Sommer, Kai)

Solving the chicken-egg problem

To solve the problem of a missing community and reach a critical mass of users the data has also been looked at in terms of finding a solution to the chicken and egg problem. The following statements show how t2c got the attention of users.

“How did you get to know T2C? 2: I am connected to a website about women traveling. And somebody wrote about T2C on that website. Then I had a look, and the challenge closed in a week, so I just put my idea up.” (#32 Stolz )
“I: How do you attract participants for your community? IP: First of all, we create a grant and we identify relevant communities, bloggers in whatever forms where people meet in order to exchange. (...) We do a lot of research, first of all on the internet in order to identify the communities, the bloggers, and we write them some short messages. Sometimes we get in closer email contact or we ask partners.” (#24 Kaden)

“Your good marketing awoke my interest. Through the dialog with you at the booth we came to the event and I liked the creative idea. Developing ideas is a passion of mine" (#41 Sommer, Carmen)

„I think the idea with the smoothies and sudden rush was perfect, because if you reach out to someone and throw your information at them, this can't go well. People have to come on their own, maybe just arouse their interest so they want to have more information.” (#43 Sommer, Carmen)

“I: Did the stand have any value for you, if yes what kind of value? IP: Yes, sure! The stand awoke my interest and if I hadn’t come to you I wouldn’t have never heard about the challenge“ (#37 Sommer, Carmen)

„I: How did you find out about the platform? IP: Through Facebook, the first access to the platform happened via Facebook. I found it very interesting and wanted to become active myself. The Facebook event then brought me to the workshop.” (#48 Sommer, Carmen)

One of the strategies found in literature on scaling platforms is the usage of existing communities to raise awareness for your own platform. The first statement came from the operator of another platform and explains the strategy they use to acquire new users.

“Of course there are some other communities, like somehow in the topic of sustainability, but we actively address them because they are bloggers and communities and they give information and they do not have to search for us as we are searching for them.” (#24, Kaden)

Ghost Town Problem

The ghost-town problem which goes hand in hand with a lack of content on a platform was also mentioned several times and seemed to be one of the reasons why a steady growth of the community could not be achieved.

„I: Did your perception about the challenge change after you visited the platform? IP: Yes, well, at first it looked very professional, (…), everything was displayed nicely. Then I went on the platform and I just thought that there isn’t happening much here. There was just no interaction on the platform. I was positively surprised by the workshop. There was a lot of talking and a lot of ideas materialized.” (#47 Sommer, Carmen)

„On the platform, like I said, I didn't see much. Which is a pity because I would have liked to get feedback on my idea.” (#52 Sommer, Carmen)

“But I think there is way too few to find there at the moment.” (#9 Hillger)
“I screened the database, didn’t find anything really suitable, so that’s it. Don’t know if I’d come back. But from my feeling, I think I would now look for other similar but better websites and I am afraid I would stick to them in future then, if they were satisfying.” (#9 Hillger)

To tackle the problem of a missing user base and the lack of content, the most common suggestion was to work on a more elaborate version of the platform and then increase marketing activities.

“IP2: For a start, I think asking friends and people you know personally works best to get some attention. And they must spread the word for you. Typical snowball effect. But if you asked me now to do that, I would find it difficult cause I wouldn’t be sure what to say. So maybe, first get your offer a little better and a full database and then you can start searching for travelers.” (#9, Hillger)

“How we can have more travelers use travel2change platform? I recommend more advertisement and marketing both online and offline. This will help many more travelers to learn and know about travel 2 change platform. The more travelers that use the platform, the more project managers and organizations would want to use the website to recruit travelers and volunteers to help in their project activities” (#5 Hillger)

Further Challenges

The following quotes refer to other challenges, criticism and suggested improvements that seem to be of interest but don’t fall into any of the other categories.

One of the interviewees mentioned that the concept of travel2change is too narrowly focused on students, he mentions time constraints for people that have a job and refers to the issue of combining holiday with work, which in his opinion excludes most people from the start.

„Basically I think it is a good idea. I just think it’s very focused on students because at a certain age, let’s say after starting your career and you only have four to six weeks of holidays, then I don’t think I want to bother with that. There are people, but not everyone wants to work then. If there is an easy way to have a positive impact, then that’s great but I think that is very hard. I think for students it is easier to do such projects because they have more spare time and when they travel they also like to use their time to work.”(#18, Mussner)

Another issue was a lack of trust and transparency in terms of who is responsible for the platform. Highlighting the non-profit character of t2c could be one way to decrease skepticism in the future. Some interviewees mentioned that it does not matter if the platform operator is a non-profit or sponsored by a for-profit, but that it should be clear who stands behind the platform.
“At first I thought there’s got to be someone or something behind the project who/that aims to retrieve earnings by providing that platform. For example, some travel agencies or businesses that want to create positive PR in times when sustainable concepts become more and more important for marketing issues. Therefore, I was kind of skeptical at first, but soon it turned out to be a non-profit platform by people who mean it well.” (#3 Hillger)

“But that was the part of it that nearly made me not continue it. I thought “ok they just want to collect a lot of people here, and they might use information for something” (#32 Stolz)

„Without the workshop there wouldn’t have been enough information on the platform. There is a lack of information about who is behind all of it. It would be good to know that the whole thing is serious.” (#52 Sommer, Carmen)

“So it’s important that you can identify in some way with the organization behind the challenge? 2: Yeah, you find something that you identify with, and then you become a part of it. It’s also an ethical thing. It just connects to you.” (#32 Stolz)

“I: Do you think it makes a difference to users if a platform is operated by a for-profit company like GE or a non-profit? IP: I wouldn’t think so, a lot of organizations are very careful about those things, that they are not incorporating any for-profits in their sponsorships etc., but I think as long as the company is not enforcing anything on the users or trying to make profit through them it doesn’t make a difference” (#26 Stolz)

To conclude this chapter about the findings, one last statement highlights the fact that travel2change seems to have the potential to be successful but that many of the interviewees had no chance to participate because of the geographical distance and the remoteness of Hawaii.

“My site works alongside T2C, although they have recently only been offering solutions to Hawaii due, I guess, to funding issues so I cannot offer much assistance as I have no reach there. Should T2C offer themed competitions linked to our work again I would pass on the site, as I used to, to volunteers to submit ideas for projects, or submit myself, in the hopes of winning funds to implement them.” (#60 Sommer, Kai)

3.4 Interviews with t2c users

In consultation with the founder of travel2change and following one of the suggestions for further research on the topic by Park (2017) it was agreed to complement the research project on t2c as a competitive market by doing interviews with participants of travel2change activities. The goal was to find out if the new concept of travel2change is clearly communicated, how the user experienced the t2c activity and what strategies can be applied to further grow the user base.
3.4.1 Sample

The sample of interviewees consists of two groups. The first group that was approached are users that have taken part in an activity on travel2change, since the platform has been relaunched as a competitive market. To acquire these contacts, the users have been contacted via email and via FareHarbor, the online booking service currently used by travel2change. Since the pool of users in the data base has been relatively small and the response rate has been low another group of interviewees was approached. A condition for the interview partners that were approach was that they should resemble the users that are targeted by travel2change. Meaning that they should fulfill the following criteria:

- Age: 20s to mid-30s
- Above average education (students and recent graduates)
- Low-to-medium income
- Extensive internet users that connect through social media
- Socially responsible, open-minded, enjoy travelling
- Preferably with experience in volunteer travel

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3.4.2 Interview Guideline

In line with the theory on how to do semi-structured interviews an interview guideline was developed to give the interviews a framework. While developing the questions for the t2c customers and potential customers, the frameworks of the lean-start up and customer-development theory served as a guiding principle for framing the right questions (Ries 2011; Trimi und Berbegal-Mirabent 2012). The iterative four step process of the customer development theory allows the exploration of market- and product developments and is a compliment to the traditional product development model (Trimi und Berbegal-Mirabent 2012).
The questions asked were mainly part of the first two steps of the model. Customer discovery and customer validation. The first step, which can also be called problem discovery, tries to discover the customer’s problems and needs. Questions should aim at validating a hypothesis about a problem or to learn about new problems. The second step customer validation or problem validation is about validating a problem you think the customer might have. After getting the interviewees permission to record the interview, a short introduction follows to give some information about the interviews topic. After a few questions about the interviewees background and demographics the following topics are covered in the guideline: User Experience with t2c activity or website, t2c’s value proposition, t2c’s key activities, general thoughts about the website/platform, platform challenges (chicken-egg, critical mass, monetization, ghost-town problem). Due to the flexibility and dynamic progression of the interviews, the order and formulation of some of the questions was changed, depending on the interviewees reaction some questions were skipped or further developed. The full guideline can be found in the appendix. To obviate confusion when reading through the next chapter, the I always stands for Interviewer, while IP stands for the Interview Partner.

3.4.3 Findings

Getting User Attention

To find out more about how to grow the user base, one of the topics examined was how t2c got the users attention. The three users that already participated in an activity on Hawaii got to know about the platform in different ways. Word-to-mouth, online- as well as offline advertising.

“A friend had Melissa from T2C tell her class about it and then she my friend told me” (#1)
“I heard about Travel2Change via social media. The yoga activity was advertising Travel2Change as the registration site for their event.” (#2)

“We saw an advert on the first bus we took once we landed and felt that the travel2change organization really made sense to us.” (#3)

Out of the potential users only one has heard of travel2change before.

I: Did you know about travel2change (...)? IP: I’m not sure, the name sounded familiar. Was it that thing in Brazil a year or two ago? I: Maybe you’re talking about the rainforest challenge, they had a project in Brazil in 2014. IP: Yeah I think that was it. A friend of mine she participated in it and told me about it back then. (#6)

Nevertheless, after being introduced to the concept of travel2change the feedback was mostly positive.

I: Do you sometimes think that it’s hard to do something good and meaningful while travelling (...) ? IP: Well, I wouldn’t say it’s hard, but sometimes it takes a lot of time to find the right people and it takes time to get started, so I think a platform like that would help for sure! (#5)

“So I guess doing a project with something like travel2change it can help to widen your understanding on how certain areas are affected and just getting a different viewpoint than just being a tourist in a hotel.” (#4)

Travel2change’s value proposition & key activities

The concept of t2c’s value proposition and its activities seems to be well received by the target group. Offering activities that combine volunteer work with fun activities seems to be of value for the interviewees because it enhances their journeys and appeals to their intrinsic motives such as doing something good and giving back as well as experiencing and learning new things.

“I: Do you think a platform that brings together travelers and local organizations has the potential to be implemented at other tourist hotspots? IP: That was our hope when we saw the ad for T2C. We think there is a lot of potential for this.” (#3)

“I also hardly get any information about sustainable problems. But if I had the time and money and the country is attractive then I’d be interested in doing something meaningful. I think the idea of combining it is very good and valuable” (#6)

“A few years after graduating college my boyfriend and I started travelling on a budget to broaden our horizons and see the world. After 5 months of backpacking we felt as if we had no purpose which is when we discovered volunteer opportunities, including travel2change. We then decided to focus on our volunteer efforts because it was better use of our time, we would meet like-minded people, make a difference, and it would be more rewarding.” (#3)

“We plan on shifting our travel to strictly volunteer experiences in our next trip” (#3)
Though I find it beneficial and joyous to give back. (#2)

“I: What kind of incentives would convince you to try out activities offered on a platform like t2c? IP: Typical Hawaiian activities and activities that I can learn something from.” (#1)

One interview partner also saw a lot of potential for t2c because they are offering activities that help young people to get away from a more and more digitalized world. Speaking from her own experience she first mentioned that volunteering literally help her to change her life.

“IP: I’ve done it since 2011, and I’ve been to several places in the world with it. I don’t know if you want to mention it in your interview, but for me volunteering has changed my life.” (#4)

And, that it helped her to fulfill some needs that have been unsatisfied in her previous, academic life. In her opinion this is a problem that many people of her generation have.

“I think so because especially for students if they have a long time of and they have time on their hands then it’s a great way for them to travel somewhere for a long time without spending too much money. And it’s a great way for establishing relationships with locals and other travelers. And then also the way I experience it, there is a quite a big surge of young people not knowing what to do with their live, and they’ve been through an academic system all their life and then they go to university and they start to long to do something practical. Which I think back in the day was a lot more implemented in everyday but it's not anymore. So, I think people really have a longing to get away from technology for a bit and just do something like planting a tree or I don’t know…Even if it’s just walking along the beach and picking up litter, it just gives you the feeling of having done something in the face of all the problems in the world. I think that’s why it can be good.” (#4)

When asked about the barriers that are in the way of making travel more meaningful and sustainable, one of the recurring answers was the difficulty of getting in touch with locals and finding activities that have a positive impact. In terms of this barrier t2c seems to hit the nail on the head with its value proposition.

“I: What’s the hardest part about making travel meaningful? IP: The most difficult is getting in touch with locals. The best experiences I’ve had are during volunteer experiences, homestays, and local holidays/festivals. I find that it is hard to bridge that gap unless you are immersed. Finding activities is easy but knowing which ones are truly helping is difficult. Time constraints can be difficult if you are on a schedule like we were in Hawaii, but even in a week we were able to join 2 activities. Although, there needs to be a time frame sorting option so that travelers can sort activities by their trip dates!” (#3)

In addition to bridging the gap between locals and travelers, which was mentioned several times, another challenge to acquire a higher number of participants might be that many travelers lack the awareness of tourism's negative impacts.
"I see the negative consequences of travel and do my best to counteract them. I often see an immense backpacking culture separate from local culture with little to no overlap. I might not partake in this backpacking culture but don’t think that will help by itself. I think the biggest problem is that most travelers don’t see the negative consequences unless it’s spelled out. For example, in Hawaii we saw the travel2change advert and decided to partake in the activities and learn more but, it would help if what needs to change could be more explicit.” (#3)

“I think it’d be good to make people aware of the impact they have. Just when it comes for example litter on the beach. To show them that like everyone morning the beach needs to get cleaned up.” (#4)

As well as raising awareness on the tourist’s side, two interviewees also expressed the opinion that a lack of awareness on the local side can carry over to tourists and worsen the problem. Again, this highlights the importance of an organization or platform that bridges the gap between tourists, local SCBO’s and the local population.

“In some cases foreigners are only half the problem: Many volunteer organizations target foreigners. But sometimes the problem is within the local culture itself and carries over to tourism.” (#3)

And I also think, like I said before, that sometimes the locals lack the awareness for the social and ecological problems and that’s like the point where you have to start fixing the problems. (#6)

Another barrier for participation is that volunteer work offers active involvement by the traveler and that relaxation often has a higher priority than doing something meaningful.

“The main reason I am prevented from doing it is that my job takes a lot out of me. Though I find it beneficial and joyous to give back, I also recognize the importance of self-care. So, sometimes, my vacations are just for me, without any volunteer obligations”

“It depends on how much time I have on my hands. If I’m only away on holidays for 6-7 days then I want to relax. But If I have time to travel for 2-3 months, then I don’t mind working a bit. I prefer working then.”

User experience with Activities

When asked about their experiences with the t2c activity most feedback was positive.

“I liked it a lot, this is a perfect opportunity for me to get to know Hawaii in a different way.” (#1)

“I enjoyed the yoga activities, it was Full Moon Yoga in the Park.” (#2)

“I really enjoyed the yoga food drive. It was very well described on the website and the group was extremely welcoming to newcomers.” (#3)

One of the interviewees mentioned that she already had taken part in t2c-activities before and that she will come back.

“Yes, I have attended several activities and I will attend more.” (#1)
One of the few negative comments is based on a gap between the participants’ expectations and the actual experience. Even though the overall experience seemed to be positive, a clearer description of the activity could prevent this in the future.

“The outrigger class was a little different for me because I didn’t quite grasp what it’s purpose was. I thought the activity was great and it did support a local club but, I think it needs more clarity. The description led me to believe we were going to learn about and then and try this sport as a cultural experience. However, it was an outrigging club, which was very intimidating and the veterans were overly intense. Walking into a competitive club sport was a bit jarring. It was an amazing workout, we met many great people, but it wasn’t the cultural experience we expected.” (#3)

User Experience with Website

One of the interviews objectives was to find out how the interviewees experienced the t2c-platform. During analysis two main problems of the platform emerged. One is that there seems to be a lack of clarity in terms of how the whole process takes place. The other one is that there is a lack of information about pricing. These first statements stress that the interviewees did not fully understand the platforms purpose and its function immediately.

I: Okay and did you get the concept and idea of travel2change when looking at the website? IP: Yeah I’m not so sure. Maybe because I expected something different because I thought about the rainforest challenge. Well they describe it to you but somehow I still didn’t fully understand how it works. (#6)

“I think it would be good if when you open the homepage the first thing you see is telling you what travel2change is. Because the first thing that I saw was projects straight away and if I hadn’t known about what travel2change is, I wouldn’t have known what all these projects are about.” (#4)

“I think it’s important to say what it is and what you as a user, like what they offer and what you as a user have to do to be part of it. For example, say it’s free to use, or you have to pay like 20 dollars to access the contact details. I: So, like a clearer communication and transparency? IP: I think there is another website called NuMundo. And they have a really good setup. You get a really clear vision of what it is, what they expect you to do and what the projects are looking for.” (#4)

“I think what would be important is to continue to make the difference between going with T2C and a tour group clear in both the activity title and description.”(#3)

The second issue of the platform apparently seems to be the transparency in terms of pricing. Given that t2c offers many free activities and that the target group has rather tight financial constraints this seems like a waste of potential in terms of increasing the number of participants and increasing the positive impact of t2c.
“As a mentioned earlier free conservation work or volunteering is already pretty difficult to come by or to find all in one place so I was already pretty excited about T2C. That alone is its number one feature in my opinion.” (#3)

“But my experience is that with a lot of volunteer work, especially in the states, that you have to pay a lot of money to do something interesting. Like if you want to work with animals, or something like that, there’s a big market right now, charging young travelers and people that have just come out of school. They charge them sometimes thousands of dollars to do volunteer work, and I think that’s just wrong. Because people already work for free.” (#4)

“The cost part of T2C drew us in immediately. We often want to volunteer our time but don’t know how to go about it. While at home or on vacation we have more money than time but while backpacking we have more time than money.” (#3)

These statements above highlight that offering free activities can be a strong argument for t2c. Unfortunately, it seems that this information is totally lost on the website, as the following statements show.

Did you realize that most of the activities offered on the homepage are for free and that it only takes a little effort and time to book them and participate? Reply: I realized eventually but this is not apparent on the homepage. It wasn’t until I found the tag or clicked through a couple activities. (#3)

“the only question is the price, but I guess I will come up with the booking?” (#5)

IP: No not really but I also didn’t expect to pay for cleaning up beaches and stuff like that. I: So, you didn’t realize there were a lot of free activities? IP: No, I think it would be good to have a symbol or filter for the free activities. I didn’t see it. The one I tried to book was 40$ or something like that. (#6)

“IP: One of my questions might be, what is the cost for any/all activities? I: Did you realize that most of the activities offered on the homepage are for free and that it only takes a little effort and time to book them and participate? IP: And this question answers my cost question. I was not aware of this.” (#2)

Coincidentally one of the interviewees also had a background in web-design and was happy to give some detailed feedback.

“I used to be a web designer so I’m reliving my glory days and thought it would be helpful!” (#3)

Like the other interviewees she praised the overall look of the platform. In terms of improving the homepage she mostly mentioned adjustments that provide an easier understanding of the website.

“love the look, the imagery, the Hawaiian words!” (#3)
“What does the 5.0 mean? Some of these activity cards have a location pinpoint icon and some have a 5.0. I assume it’s a rating but, then I don’t see it on the following page when I click the activity.” (#3)

“What do the icons mean? The icons are great but I don’t know what they mean right off the bat. A hover tooltip would be helpful so that we know what they mean.” (#3)

“I would like to browse the activity more seamlessly. Possibly by clicking a next or back button on the activity and booking page.” (#3)

Further suggestions were the integration of additional payment methods and the implementation of a calendar that simplifies the process of finding activities at the right date.

“I: Anything you didn’t like or that is missing? IP: Well when I went through the booking process I realized that you can only pay with credit card and that there is no option for PayPal. I think that should be included.” (#6)

“there needs to be a time frame sorting option so that travelers can sort activities by their trip dates” (#3)

“I know I mentioned it already (…) but, a date sorting feature. People may be limited by time and it is hard to see when the events are.” (#3)

Another recommendation was to increase connectivity of travelers. Something that would add additional value to the t2c offering, because it would help like-minded travelers to meet each other.

Maybe if it linked up different travelers that were scheduled for the same activity, or gave you a choice to show your email/info. Then you could make friends before/after the actual activity. Traveling alone is great but it’s nice to meet other people with similar interests. (#2)

Concerning the range of activities offered on travel2changes one interviewee proposed to include some strictly volunteer-work based activities.

I think there could be more options including some strictly volunteer opportunities for those travelers that do want to give just their time with nothing in return. For example, animal shelters that just need more hands for a day. Depends who the target market is I suppose. (#3)

Platform Challenges

One of the challenges looked at during analysis was how to solve the chicken-egg problem and how to set incentives that attract travelers as well as hosts to the platform. One of the most interesting statement was that the incentives are already there, because an organization takes over a lot of the planning for the traveler and connects them to the host. Something that usually
must be done independently by the traveler. #5 stated that the main incentive to participate are intrinsic motivational factors like curiosity and the will to learn.

“What kind of incentives would convince you to try out activities offered on a platform like T2C? IP: Curiosity and the will to learn more about different things in a relaxed way, because somebody else takes over a lot of the planning part. (#5)

This raises the question for t2c how to appeal to these factors to pull more travelers to the platform in the future. At one point during the interview, the interviewees were asked how they would respond to the scenario of seeing a t2c-ad that would offer them a small discount at the hotel/hostel they are staying at, in exchange for their help with a social project featured by t2c. The feedback to that scenario was positive from all interviewees, the question remains how t2c could establish a collaboration with hotels and hostels to achieve such a deal.

“I: Imagine you stayed at a hostel or hotel and saw an Ad that gives you the opportunity to do some social work combined activities? In exchange for your work you’d get to a few dollars’ discount at the hostel? Would this raise your interest in the platform? IP: Yes, I think that would make me curious” (#2)

“Sure a good flyer or ad would raise my interest. Doing something meaningful while travelling would also be a nice change amongst all the partying and relaxing I usually do on my trips. A discount at a hostel would be a good incentive.” (#6)

“Yes! We are budget travelers after all.” (#3)

When looking at the aspect of generating revenue for t2c it was difficult to find innovative ways on how to charge travelers. Most of the interviewees see volunteer work as a way to pay with their time instead of their money.

“Sounds like travel2change does not take money from you anyway, but a lot of volunteer websites do ask you to pay money before you can see the reviews. And they ask you to pay money before you can actually contact the host of the project. So, it is their way of making money, so you need to get in touch with the host to be part of it. It’s kind of a risk, because if you haven’t seen the full description of the project… But that’s not travel2change…” (#4)

“But yeah it would prevent me to pay a lot of money for doing volunteer work. Because the reason for doing volunteer work for me is to give my time instead of my money.” (#4)

“I also didn’t expect to pay for cleaning up beaches and stuff like that” (#6)

One of the problems of the previous platform versions was the so-called ghost-town problem. A lack of content and interactivity on the platform discouraged new users to get involved with t2c. When looking at the statements about the new platform it does not seem like a lack of content or a lack of user reviews and ratings bothers the interviewees.
“I: Does the lack of reviews & comments from other users on the homepage prevent you from booking an activity? IP: not at all, because the homepage offers all the information I need” (#5)

“I: Does the lack of reviews & comments from other users on the homepage prevent you from booking an activity? IP: No, not really. It's always better to have it but it did not prevent me.” (#1)

One participant mentioned that having just a few reviews can create the impression that these reviews were faked. This statement contrasts with some strategies found in literature which suggest to fake some content in the beginning to convey the feeling of activity.

“I: Okay and does the lack of reviews & comments from other users on the homepage prevent you from booking an activity? IP: Well it would be alright without comments, but of course it’s not bad. I also didn’t realize that there was a feature for ratings? I: But reading comments from other users could help to increase trustworthiness? IP: Sure, but if it’s just a few then I’d be skeptical, then it looks like on these google reviews. I always think that if there are just two or three comments that they were written by friends.” (#6)

To face the problem of missing reviews and ratings, one interviewee suggested to ask participants for their review.

“I: Does the lack of reviews & comments from other users on the homepage prevent you from booking an activity? IP: Not necessarily, but it never hurts to have reviews to show interest. Perhaps T2C could ask users via emails for a review after their activity” (#3)

One design problem many platforms have faced is that users start to skip the platform if there is no need for it anymore. Even though this might not be a problem for t2c in the current state, it might become a problem in future if the platform wants to grow to bigger scale or the size and range of activities as well as the numbers of participants increase. Some hints for that problem have already been found during the analysis.

“The second yoga event was also hosted by Travel2Change but I felt no need to register for it as I could just check “I am going” through social media.” (#2)

Of course, it raises the question if registration through the platform should be required or not. On the one hand, mandatory registration via the platform may help to gather user-data which is a valuable resource for platforms and it might increase the number of visitors to the platform. On the other hand, it decreases usability for participants compared to registration through Facebook.

Scaling t2c

After being introduced to the concept and platform of t2c, respectively experiencing the activities on Hawaii, the interviewees were also asked if they could imagine the concept of t2c
being implemented on a bigger scale at other destination. They were also asked to provide specific suggestions if they could think of any. All the interviewees reacted positively to the idea of implementing a platform like t2c at other destinations and most of them had concrete ideas for places that would benefit from it.

*IP:* well, I think it would be good in Cornwall for example. Just generally. I think it'd be good to make people aware of the impact they have. *I:* So, you think that cooperation between locals and tourists could work? *IP:* yeah and I think the locals would be happy to offer it, because they care for the place they live at. Or at least some of them I know really do. (#4)

*I:* Do you think a platform that brings together travelers and local organizations has the potential to be implemented at other tourist hotspots? *IP:* Definitely. I think places like Thailand could benefit from this enormously. (#2)

“I: Maybe you know any places from your journeys, that would really benefit from a better communication between local organizations and travelers. *IP:* I recently was on a layover in Shanghai for over 72 hours. This was poor planning on my part so I got out to see the city before my next flight. Something like this would’ve been good in China so I didn’t have to stay in the airport/wander around without an idea of what to do.” (#2)

“The free conservation/volunteer work concept could be implemented anywhere and everywhere. It’s hard to think of specific places because I think everywhere could benefit. Southeast Asia is rapidly having a tourism problem.” (#3)

“The country I noticed it most was Nicaragua. There is almost no communication between locals and travelers and the local culture versus the expat culture are so different.” (#3)

“All around Africa and I guess around south east Asia as well” (#5)

“I: Okay and do you have any ideas where the concept of travel2change could be implemented as well? *IP:* Well I think in all the developing countries and at all those backpacker destinations.” (#6)

The statements emphasize that especially developing areas like South-East Asia would be a good place for scaling. Travel2change would face some different challenges in these countries though since the conditions are probably not comparable to Hawaii.

“There are a couple other issues in poorer countries that Hawaii doesn’t face and would affect how travel2change would be implemented there” (#3)
4 Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Discussion

The research question guiding this thesis was “How can organizations effectively design crowdsourcing platforms?” State-of-the-art literature and the practical example of t2c have been reviewed to shine some light on the question, which design principles should be considered to build a successful crowdsourcing platform. The most common challenges young platforms face, have been listed and some strategies have been laid out that can help to face these challenges. To answer the second and third research questions “How can travel2change tackle the problems of engaging a critical mass of users, ensure output quality and scale to increase impact?” and “What are the motivations and problems for travelers on the platform travel2change?” a third cycle in an action-research project was started. The working hypothesis of the current action-research cycle, that a comprehensive re-analysis of the data collected in previous studies on t2c can help to create a more holistic picture of the platforms situation can only be partly confirmed. Enhancing the knowledge about the platform by interviewing current and potential users has given some interesting insights about what they think about the current state of the platform and what can be improved in the future. Combining the previous studies’ different angles on platform design and the results of the previous action-research cycle has helped to create a deep understanding of the platforms development and its challenges. At the current time, it looks like that the re-launch of the platform was a good decision, because the old platform faced some challenges that the organization could not overcome without reinventing the platform. One of them was the problem of engaging a critical number of users and the failed attempts to create a more active and engaged community. From the author’s understanding this problem was mainly based in the geographical distance between the places at which the organization tried to build a community with offline events and the places at which the platforms main activities happened. Due to flaws in the platforms design there was no real connection between online community members. All this led to low user involvement, low quality of the crowdsourcing outcomes and hindered further community growth. The platform then encountered many of the challenges most new platforms face if they can’t reach a critical mass of users in the beginning. After restructuring the platform as a competitive market and focusing on Hawaii travel2change started another attempt. Fortunately, it seems that simplifying the platforms value unit from volunteering trips to short activities has been a good design decision by travel2change. The travelers feedback concerning the activities was positive and the concept of the new business model, to connect local organizations with travelers to
create positive impact was also very well received. Also, focusing on a limited geographical space, the island of Hawaii, seems to be the better choice than trying to implement the idea at many different places at the same time. This helps the organization to focus its limited resources on growing a network of hosts and partners in Hawaii before scaling the idea in a broader context. The idea of connecting different SCBO’s at a tourist destination and channeling their efforts towards a share goal also looks like a promising market niche for travel2change. The idea was well received from all sides that were interviewed. By seeding initial supply and offering incentives to the hosts to join the platform, it looks like that travel2change has overcome the initial chicken-egg challenges. When asked for feedback about the platform there were hardly any statements that mentioned a lack of content or referred to the ghost-town problem. The third research question focused on the motivations and problems for current platform users. The analysis showed that the travelers using t2c are mostly driven by intrinsic motives like doing something good, giving something back or learning and experiencing new activities on their journey. The main problem seems to be that there still is a lot of confusion about how exactly the platform works, especially in terms of pricing and. Nonetheless, most of the feedback gathered was positive and leads to the assumption that with its newest version of the platform, travel2change has found a niche in the tourism market, that can benefit from the services they offer.

Yet there are still many questions in terms of platform design that his study cannot answer. For example, how the platform can create revenue streams that allow future independence. From the interviews with the current and potential users it looks like that the target group is very price-sensitive and that charging a fee for volunteer work is not accepted. Since many of the activities on the platform are for free at the moment, the question of how to finance further growth remains. Neither the interviews with hosts nor the travelers nor the strategies found in literature provided a satisfying answer to the question whom the platform should charge a fee and for what part of its service it should charge a fee. Also, the question of what metrics should be applied to track success cannot be answered. Finding sophisticated success-measures can be one step to attract future partners and could be very valuable for the platforms future. If travel2change wants to reach the final steps of social innovation, scaling its concept and achieving systemic change in the field of tourism, it needs to answer the questions of how to track success and how to finance its growth.
4.2 Contribution to Theory

The aim of the theoretical part of this thesis was to summarize the latest literature on the topic of crowdsourcing, open and social innovation as well as platform design. Combining these topics helps to understand how crowdsourcing platforms can be used to create innovation processes by tapping into the mind of large crowds. The knowledge from this theoretical part is then applied to a real-life case by carrying out another cycle in an ongoing action research project. Thus, this thesis also contributes to the topic of action research. The current cycle of the project focused on analyzing and summarizing the studies that have been carried out on the platform travel2change in previous years and enhancing it by adding the perspective of current and potential platform users. All these studies examined the platform from different perspectives. The focus areas of these theses included brand co-creation with users, community building via online and offline interactions, collaborative vs. competitive design principles, the influence of design principles on user motivation and participation as well as social innovation.

By combining the results and the collected qualitative data of these studies a comprehensive picture of the platform travel2change is drawn. This holistic picture of a young start-up platform can hopefully contribute to knowledge in terms of how to build future platforms, help to understand and apply platform design principles and show how crowdsourcing platforms can be used for creating social innovation. The study also demonstrates the development of a young organization that decided to follow the principles of the lean-start up concept.

4.3 Managerial Implications

The value proposition of t2c seems to be good. It offers value to travelers and local communities by combining travel with meaningful activities and it offers benefits to local SCBO’s as well because it helps their cause. One of the problems for both t2c and SCBO’s was the relatively low number of participants so far. The picture drawn from the analysis of the traveler interviews seems to be that core product of t2c is good, but that it needs a clearer communication so people understand it right away. This seems to be the first step in terms of attracting more traveler to the platform. This communication or marketing strategy should also emphasize two points which were mentioned several times during the interviews. First it should emphasize the price aspect of t2c. One of the main complaints was that pricing is unclear and that most interviewees did not understand that t2c offers a wide range of free activities. Considering the small budgets of the target group, the product of t2c seems to be a perfect fit: free activities, that also offer a
deeper purpose to the traveler and are helpful for the local destination was mentioned as a great enhancement to the users travel plans. The second emphasis of the communication strategy should be to appeal to the intrinsic motives of travelers. In contrast to earlier versions of the platform, the motives for participation have moved away from winning a crowdsourcing challenge for prestige or price money. The new version of the platform appeals even more to the intrinsic motives of users: the curiosity to experience new activities, the will to learn something or to give something back and the idea to give their journeys a deeper purpose by doing something good.

A promising strategy found in literature on growing a platforms user base is the so-called piggyback strategy. By “connecting with an existing user base from a different platform” a platform can “recruit those users to participate in your platform” (Parker et al. 2016, p. 91). Even though no specific examples can be named by the author due to the limited knowledge about the networks of Hawaiian tourism, one of the recommendations is to look for local networks that can be tapped as a source to grow the user base. These networks may be found offline, for example at backpacker hotspots like hostel chains or online on existing platforms like TripAdvisor.

To address the problem of lacking information and transparency, the author suggests to implement a comprehensive FAQ on the platforms website. The analysis of both, the old interviews as well as the newly conducted ones, showed that there still seems to be a lot of confusion about what travel2change offers, how the platform works and what travelers can expect. The feedback from one interviewee, who has worked as a web-designer, offered some valuable insights and showed that there is still room to improve the platform in terms of usability. The implementation of a calendar would make it easier for travelers to find activities that fit their travel schedule and thus could increase the number of bookings. There are also some other parts of the platform that seem unfinished. Due to t2c’s struggle to generate revenue, the implementation of a call for donations via “Support our Cause” is a viable option. Unfortunately, website users are then left without information on how to donate. So, improving the homepage in these aspects is maybe the implication that can be implemented most easily by travel2change, since it’s in their own hands.

To increase the platforms trustworthiness the author also suggests that the platform should encourage travelers during or after the activity, to leave feedback and a rating on the platform. This could increase the number of website visitors as well as serve as a signal of quality for future travelers that the offered activities on the platform keep what they promise. Having
comments and ratings from other users was not seen as mandatory by the interviewees, but they stated that it is beneficial.

Another recommendation for t2c from the authors side is to think about the registration process for activities. As already highlighted in the interview findings part, there are indications that users don’t see it necessary to register for events on the platform and just use Facebook. Users skipping the platform after the platform has initially served as a matchmaker, has been a problem for other platforms as well. Mandatory registration processes may have a negative impact on usability but may also be a way to collect information about users and increase platform visitors. As information is such a valuable resource for platforms, the decision to miss out on this information by letting users skip the platform, should be well considered.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

In this last chapter, the limitations of this thesis and the applied research methods are listed. In addition, the author will give some suggestions in terms of future research on the topic of platform design and how the action-research project can go on.

Limitations

In terms of representativeness and generalizability of the results this study is subject to the following limitations. First of all, the research method that was applied underlies some restrictions. Davison states three main critic points of action-research. It is criticized for a lack of methodological rigor, its close relation to consulting and that in some cases there is no action following the research. (Davison et al. 2004, p 65) Another problem of action research mentioned by Baskerville (1999) is that the creation of general theoretical knowledge can suffer if the researcher becomes too involved in the specific problem setting. According to Kagan, Burton et al. (2008) Action Research is not a research method in itself, but rather a process that can contain several research methods. One of these methods that was used, the semi-structured interview and its analysis, is subject to the limitations that most qualitative research methods have. It depends highly on the interviewers and researchers skill, it’s scientific rigor is hard to assess, the researcher can influence the results and the interpretation is time consuming (Anderson 2010). Respondent and Researcher bias can also affect the data and its analysis. In terms of generalizability the small sample size is one limitation as well as the fact that the interpretation of qualitative data always underlies the subjectivity of the researcher, even if he or she strives for objectivity. Even though a large number of t2c customers were approached, only a few replied to the interview invitation. This led to the decision to create a second sample,
the one of potential customers. This sample also contains some limitations. Even though the participants were shortly introduced to the topic and asked to visit and examine the platform, their knowledge about travel2change was limited. Concerning validity there is always the possibility that the interview partner is not completely honest or has an imperfect recall of the situation that is talked about. Literature on how to develop interview guidelines recommends to avoid so-called lead questions to avoid influencing the interviewee’s reply. Due to the complexity of the research topic and the limited knowledge of the interview participants about platform design, it was not possible to completely avoid lead questions. Additionally, the researcher and the interviewees were not able to meet in person, so the interviews had to be carried out via skype or in written form. Face-to-face interviews would have allowed the interviewer to take note of social cues, information that is lost when the interview takes place at an asynchronous moment of time or place, as it does in the case of online-communication (Opdenakker 2006).

Regarding the analyzed data, one of the drawbacks is that it was partly conducted at a time when the platform design of travel2change was very different from what it is today. So, the validity of some of the statements had to be carefully reviewed by the author, to ensure that the statement is still valid for the current platform state. Nonetheless there is room for error in sorting out what is still relevant for the new platform as well as interpreting the meaning of the statements.

Future research

The design of online platforms is a new and relevant topic in the field of business and strategic management. This thesis compares some of the newest findings in literature on platform design with a real-life case. Building on the work of previous studies it draws a picture of travel2changes development in terms of platform design. Since the design of a platform business encompasses many different topics, this thesis only scratches the surface of some of these design aspects. To extend the research on the case of travel2change the author suggests to complement it by doing a quantitative analysis of both the traveler and the host side. Due to a low response rate, only a small number of travelers could be interviewed. A survey could be a next step to find out more about what travelers and hosts want and might achieve a higher rate of responses. For the future of the platform travel2change it would be beneficial if studies on the topics of financing and metrics could be carried out, since there are many unanswered question on how to make the platform financially independent and how to measure its success. To scale the concept of travel2change at further tourism destination these questions must be answered. The author also suggests to keep the action-research project on travel2change going, since there is already solid foundation of knowledge acquired about the platforms development.
and the implementation of design principles. The results of this project can then act as an example for future platforms.
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Appendix A: Interview Guideline

Interview Guideline
Building Crowdsourcing Platforms
Florian Röttgen

Topics:
- T2C Website/Platform-Design
- User Experiences with T2C
- Platform Challenges: Chicken-Egg / Ghost Town / Mutual Balancing / Critical Mass
- T2C’s Value Proposition / Unit (Make Travel Meaningful + Use Travelers’ Passion to create Impact)
- T2C’s Key Activities (Inspire and support taking action + Provide platform for people to connect and create experiences)

Sample:
Travelers that already have booked and undertaken an activity with Travel2Change & potential travelers that fit in the target group of Travel2Change.

Introduction

Hey, how are you? My name is Florian and I'm currently writing my master thesis about Crowdsourcing platforms and the Hawaiian-based company Travel2Change.
Before we start I want you to know that I will record this interview because I need to transcribe it afterwards. The data will of course be treated anonymously and there will be no judgment from my side. I must ask you if it’s okay for you if I record this interview?

Wait for answer
(Short explanation which topics the interview will cover)

Demographics / Customer Segmentation
- Could you please shortly introduce yourself and tell me what you do professionally?
- Could you tell me how much you usually travel and about the way you usually travel? (e.g. backpacking, volunteer travel, package holiday)
- Have you ever done any volunteer work on your travels?

User Experience with T2C
- How did you hear about T2C? (Friends, Ads, Internet etc...)
- Can you shortly describe your experience with the T2C activity and what you liked / disliked about it?
- Would you consider booking an activity with T2C again? If not, why?

T2C Value Proposition
(Examples aim at finding out if the Value Proposition of T2C is important to the traveler and how it could be improved)
• When you travel do you sometimes think about the negative consequences of it?
• Is it important to you that your journeys are meaningful and have a positive impact on the local environment?
• In your opinion, what would be the optimal solution to combining travel with social work?
• What’s the hardest part about making travel meaningful? (e.g. getting in touch with locals, finding activities, time constraints?)
• If social or volunteer work during your journeys is important to you, what prevents you from doing it?
• Do you sometimes think that it’s hard to do something good and meaningful while travelling, even though you want to do it, and that a service like the T2C platform could help you to overcome barriers like getting in touch with locals and finding inspiring activities?
• Could a platform like Travel2Change help you to solve that problem and take action as well as inspire other travelers?

Website/Platform
(Questions to find out what travelers think about the new website/platform, what prevents them from using it and if there is anything important missing)

• At first sight, what do you like/dislike about the Website? Are there any questions that come to your mind?
• Did you realize that most of the activities are for free and that it only takes a little effort and time of yours to participate?
• Does the lack of reviews & comments from other users on the homepage prevent you from booking an activity?
• Do you think a platform that brings together travelers and local organizations has the potential to be implemented at other tourist hotspots?
• Are there any features you miss on the platform?

Platform Challenges
(Questions to find out how to address typical platform problems like critical mass, chicken-egg, balancing, scalability)

• How important is it for you that a platform like T2C offers a wide range of activities?
• Imagine you stayed at a hostel or hotel and saw an Ad that gives you the opportunity to do some social work combined activities? In exchange for your work you’d get a few dollars’ discount at the hostel? Would this raise your interest in the platform?
• What kind of incentives would convince you to try out / join a platform like T2C?
• Do you have any ideas where the concept of travel2change could be implemented as well? Maybe you know any places from your journeys, that would benefit from a better communication between local organizations and travelers.

Ending
• So, based on the conversation, it sounds like (...). How accurate is that?
• Is there anything else you think I should know about that I didn’t ask?
• Can I follow up with you if I have more questions?

Figure 19 Interview Guideline part 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Category</th>
<th>Sub Category</th>
<th>2nd Sub Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 t2c potential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We saw an advert on the first bus we took once we landed and felt that the travel2change organization really made sense to us.&quot; #3 Röttgen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 General Understanding of t2c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Das man beim Reisen auch ein bisschen mitdenkt und nicht typischen Massentourismus macht was eigentlich für die Leute dort schädlich ist sondern mit bewussten und offenen Augen reist&quot; #15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Improvement s</td>
<td>1.3.1 Advice from platform operators</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I think i suppose i would just reiterate, that making the Communication as clear as possible to the user, would be the core focus.&quot; #51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.2 Suggested Improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I think there could be more options including some strictly volunteer opportunities for those travelers that do want to give just their time with nothing in return.&quot; #3 Röttgen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Critique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;But I think there is WAY too few to find there at the moment.&quot; #9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 t2c Events</td>
<td>1.5.1 Booth Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Der war da ganz auffällig und das wobei habe ich mal vorbeigeschaut.&quot; #39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.5.2 Workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Ich hab etwas mehr verstanden um was es bei t2c geht vorher waren mir ein paar Sachen unklar die sind mir jetzt jedoch klarer geworden durch den workshop&quot; #11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5.3 t2c Challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;When I went to website, I saw it as an opportunity to recruit more volunteers to help in our field work and community project activities&quot; #5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Online vs. Offline Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;You can have online experience and web forms where you share information, but those kinds of tangible experiences bring you further and are catalyzing action and progress.&quot; #25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Positive Remarks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I was excited to see the turtle activity because animal conservation is hard to become a part of and especially for free&quot; #3 Röttgen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Platform Actros</td>
<td>2.1 Creators</td>
<td>2.1.1 Experience with Crowdsourcing</td>
<td>&quot;yes, we have done a number of online fundraising, we have used Crowdrise&quot; #62</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.1.2 Funding</td>
<td>&quot;Finding funding is always the problem to put ideas into practice though.&quot; #60</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.1.3 Host Offering</td>
<td>&quot;we actually looking within the next two month to launch a similar platform for Fresh Water Conservation&quot; #61</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.1.4 Needs</td>
<td>&quot;I think the biggest challenge that we are 100% volunteer organization&quot; #63</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.5 Problems</td>
<td>&quot;New ideas and innovation are everywhere, finding a fast way to implement the ideas is the difficult part&quot; #60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Consumers</td>
<td>2.2.1 Getting User Attention</td>
<td>&quot;I heard about Travel2Change via social media. The yoga activity was advertising Travel2Change as the registration site for their event.&quot; #2 Rötten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.2 Identification</td>
<td>&quot;Our experiences in Hawaii changed how we traveled from there on out. I think it has a great vision of what travel could become.&quot; #3 Rötten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.3 Travel Habits</td>
<td>&quot;But on long holidays I want to connect my travel with working, so I can get to know the place and the people.&quot; #4 Rötten</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2.4 User Retention</td>
<td>&quot;Yes, I have attended several activities and I will attend more&quot; #1 Rötten</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2.5 User Support</td>
<td>&quot;We interact with them in a variety different ways. So, we interact with them through social media (...)&quot; #22</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2.6 Word-of-Mouth</td>
<td>&quot;die grundidee von travel2change finde ich gut und ich kann mir auch vorstellen darüber in meinem persönlichen Netzwerk zu sprechen&quot; #12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Motivation</td>
<td>2.3.1 Expectations</td>
<td>&quot;Sich zu verwirklichen, Ideen zu teilen, neuen Input zu bekommen, Feedback zu bekommen, Diskutieren, neue Ideen und Informationen sammeln&quot; #46</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3.2 Financial Rewards</td>
<td>&quot;Of course it would be nice to receive some money, but it's about helping people or organizations who can't afford to pay, so I don't think it's essential here&quot; #33</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3.3 Intrinsic Motivation / Altruism</td>
<td>&quot;After 5 months of backpacking we felt as if we had no purpose (...). We then decided to focus on our volunteer efforts because it was better use of our time.&quot; #3 Rötten</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3.4 Participation Motivation</td>
<td>&quot;curiosity and the will to learn more about different things in a relaxed way, because somebody else takes over a lot of the planning part.&quot; #5 Rötten</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3.5 Popularity / Prestige</td>
<td>&quot;I think people are motivated by money and prestige and by the ability to promote themselves and their work.&quot; #22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.6 Rewards / Personal Benefit</td>
<td>&quot;The biggest reward is obviously getting to do your part in giving back to the places that give so much to you&quot; #10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Platform Design Principles</td>
<td>3.1 Network Effects</td>
<td>&quot;Ich glaube schon, aber der Nutzen wäre größer gewesen wenn die Leute aktiver gewesen wären.&quot; #48</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.2 General thoughts on CS, OL, SI</td>
<td>&quot;I hope that there will be much more crowdsourcing projects to target social innovation&quot; #24</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Community Design</td>
<td>3.3.1 Competition</td>
<td>&quot;I think the competition is a great idea, to collect some ideas and then the best one wins cash.&quot; #28</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.3.2 Communication</td>
<td>&quot;We want to have open discussions and open communication and everyone who is registered can see these posts or comments and you have some transparency&quot; #24</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.3.3 Collaboration</td>
<td>&quot;I love talking about and discussing and brainstorming about these things. I like having my ideas reviewed and review others&quot; #35</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.3.4 Contest Design</td>
<td>&quot;The way we have it right now is that for most challenges the top voted wins and that is how it is selected&quot; #22</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.4 Monetization / Business Model</td>
<td>&quot;Part of the community are also suppliers and sponsors, and the sponsors provide the money&quot; #24</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.5 Metrics</td>
<td>&quot;We do it through outreach. We influence the success of each individual challenge through outreach&quot; #22</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.6 Platform Operator</td>
<td>&quot;I think the difference is that if it is for non-profit the people are more willing to contribute something.&quot; #24</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.7 Website Design</td>
<td>3.7.1 Negative Remarks</td>
<td>&quot;When I went through the booking process I realized that you can only pay with credit card and that there is no option for PayPal&quot; #6 Röttgen</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.7.2 Positive Remarks</td>
<td>&quot;What I really like is the clear design. There are some nice pictures on the front page and I really like the layout&quot; #6 Röttgen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.8 Scaling</td>
<td>&quot;so my mechanism is that people tell their friends and as soon as people realize that you get more participants on the platform&quot; #23</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.9 Openness &amp; Governance</td>
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<td>4. List of Challenges</td>
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<td>4.1 Chicken Egg Problem</td>
<td>&quot;I think travel is highly based on trying new things so offering a range of activities will be important to people.&quot; #3 Röttgen</td>
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<td>4.2 Critical Mass Problem</td>
<td>&quot;The problem is that if every place has its own website/platform then it will be small and relatively unknown and you wouldn't know it.&quot; #6 Röttgen</td>
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<td>4.3 Cold Start Problem</td>
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<td>4.4 Financing</td>
<td>&quot;It would prevent me to pay a lot of money for doing volunteer work. Because the reason for doing volunteer work for me is to give my time instead of my money&quot; #4 Röttgen</td>
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<td>4.5 Ghost-Town Problem</td>
<td>&quot;Does the lack of reviews &amp; comments from other users on the homepage prevent you from booking an activity? Reply: not at all, because the homepage offers all the information I need&quot; #5 Röttgen</td>
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<td>4.6 Geographical Reach</td>
<td>&quot;My site works alongside T2C, although they have recently only been offering solutions to Hawaii due, I guess, to funding issues so I cannot offer much assistance as I have no reach there&quot; #60</td>
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<td>4.7 Intellectual Property</td>
<td>&quot;Actually we are a bit concerned about IP, sometimes people take your idea and portray it as theirs&quot; #26</td>
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<td>4.8 Lack of Collaboration between SCBO's</td>
<td>&quot;I think the problem is that it’s different for every place and it needs a lot of collaboration to tackle these problems. But yeah the platform could create a worldwide network for such activities in several destinations&quot; #6 Röttgen</td>
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<td>4.9 Trust</td>
<td>&quot;...or it makes it more credible that it’s a real project and not just a scam&quot; #4 Röttgen</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.10 Unmotivated Crowd</td>
<td>&quot;I am one of those people that don’t write review either so someone could have had an excellent time and just didn’t think to write anything&quot; #2 Röttgen</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.11 Unskilled Crowd</td>
<td>&quot;Additionally, I am not polylingual, and the language barrier makes communication with the locals difficult.&quot; #2 Röttgen</td>
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<td>4.12 User skipping platform process</td>
<td>&quot;The second yoga event was also hosted by Travel2Change but I felt no need to register for it as I could just check “I am going” through social media.&quot; #2 Röttgen</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.13 Confusion / Lack of clear communication</td>
<td>&quot;I realized eventually but this is not apparent on the homepage. It wasn’t until I found the tag or clicked through a couple activities&quot; #3 Röttgen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.14. General Challenges for T2C</td>
<td>&quot;Another typical behavior might be, that they come to the site and are excited about it and the purpose, but then we have a hard time continually engaging them.&quot; #21</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.15. Innovation Barriers</td>
<td>&quot;I really find it tough to FORCE people to be creative and I think that’s why all the ideas YOU have on the platform are pretty similar&quot; #1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.16. Participation Barriers</td>
<td>&quot;For me personally it’s just that I don’t have the time I think. Holidays are about relaxation and having fun for me&quot; #6 Röttgen</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. List of Strategies</td>
<td>6. Interviewee - Understanding of his/her role</td>
<td>6.2. Interviewee Profile</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Match</td>
<td>&quot;And it's a great way for establishing relationships with locals and other travelers.&quot; #4 Röttgen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Scaling</td>
<td>&quot;Well I think in all the developing countries and at all those backpacker destinations&quot; #6 Röttgen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3 The Core Value Uniter</td>
<td>&quot;This is something I prefer because I get to know so much about the culture that it's hard to experience if you are just do the typical &quot;tourist&quot; stuff.&quot; #1 Röttgen</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4 Strategic Bridging</td>
<td>&quot;50 different organisations with 250 different offices all trying to help 'a...b...c... is ridiculous when it could be done with 10 offices and internet networking.&quot; #60</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5 Pull</td>
<td>&quot;(...) people staying in hotels are typically traveling with more money so a few dollars of their hotel stay or a future stay might not be as great of an incentive&quot; #3 Röttgen</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.6 Facilitate Interaction</td>
<td>&quot;The more interactive the better. Everything that enhances the interactivity of a site is great (…)&quot; #21</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.7 Community Building</td>
<td>&quot;So you think that cooperation between locals and tourists could work? IP: yeah and I think the locals would be happy to offer it, because they care for the place they live at.&quot; #4 Röttgen</td>
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<td>5.8 Integrate External Resources</td>
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<td>5.9 Underlying Infrastructure for platforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.1 Interviewee - Understanding of his/her role</td>
<td>&quot;My role on the platform was rather passive. I honestly found the website from Facebook, clicked and read through everything, thought it was cool so I gave my idea, then forgot about it. I haven't been back on the website since then&quot; #10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2. Interviewee Profile</td>
<td>&quot;I'm a community manager at GOOD, connecting global Changemakers and there I say about myself, that I am good at building community, researching, editing, and storytelling with people who give a damn.&quot; #8</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Coding word cloud

Figure 20 Coding Word Cloud: Sorted by number of appearances
Affidavit

I hereby declare that this Master’s thesis has been written only by the undersigned and without any assistance from third parties. I confirm that no sources have been used in the preparation of this thesis other than those indicated in the thesis itself.

This Master’s thesis has heretofore not been submitted or published elsewhere, neither in its present form, nor in a similar version.

__________________________________________

Place, Date Signature