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A Peer-fect Website Marketing Strategy

A sensemaking analysis of how to steer a peer into participating in the sharing economy through strategic service communication

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Foreword

The writing of this thesis began when the last snowflakes of March fell on the ground, and finalized when the first flowers of May emerged. As Winter has turned into Spring, so is this thesis turned in after two months of intensive work.

Special thanks to our supervisor, Jörgen Eksell, for challenging and helping us during our compelling exploration of how circular consumption can be supported through Strategic Communication.

Lastly, we hereby confirm that both authors contributed equally to the conducting of this research project.

Gratefully,

Märtha Sandin Värn & Ellen Klofsten

Lund, May 22, 2023

Abstract

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This thesis explores factors that influence consumers' willingness to use P2P rental platforms, and how these affect consumers' service and brand impression. This was achieved by conducting a qualitative study through interviews and observations with participants exploring the P2P rental platform Hygglo. By employing Weick's Sensemaking Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) when analyzing the participants' reflections as they experienced Hygglo's platform, we propose how P2P rental platforms can improve their service by strategically communicating it. The results suggest that three key factors play a role in determining whether or not people are willing to use a P2P rental platform: visual elements, technical features, and third-party endorsements and integrations. We also discovered an additional factor that we call "frame" which seems to impact the other key factors. The findings propound that P2P rental platforms ought to communicate from a service marketing approach, where the communication emanates from a point where value is created in the use of the service, rather than the offered products.

Keywords: P2P rental platform, service marketing, sharing economy, sensemaking, Technology Acceptance Model

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Sammanfattning

En peer-fekt strategi för webbmarknadsföring

Den här uppsatsen utforskar faktorer som influerar konsumenters villighet att använda P2P-hyresplattformar, och hur dessa påverkar konsumenters intryck av deras tjänst och varumärke. Detta uppnåddes genom att genomföra en kvalitativ studie med intervjuer och observationer av deltagare som utforskade P2P-hyresplattformen Hygglo. Genom att tillämpa Weicks sensemakingteori och Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) vid analysen av deltagarnas reflektioner och erfarenheter av Hygglos plattform, föreslår vi hur P2P-hyresplattformar kan förbättra sin tjänst genom strategisk kommunikation. Resultaten tyder på att tre nyckelfaktorer spelar roll för människors villighet att använda en P2P-hyresplattform: visuella element, tekniska funktioner och third-party endorsements och -integrationer. Vi upptäckte även en ytterligare faktor som vi benämner "frame", vilken verkar påverka de andra nyckelfaktorerna. Resultaten föreslår att P2P-hyresplattformar bör kommunicera utifrån ett tjänstemarknadsföringsperspektiv, där kommunikationen utgår från att värdet uppstår genom användningen av tjänsten, snarare än de erbjudna produkterna.

Nyckelord: P2P-hyresplattform, tjänstemarknadsföring, delningsekonomi, sensemaking, Technology Acceptance Model

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List of abbreviations and terms

Abbreviation or term	Definition
B2C	business-to-customer
P2P	peer-to-peer
PEOU	perceived ease of use
PU	perceived usefulness
Rentee	a person who rents something from someone
Renter	a person who rents something to someone
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model

1. Introduction

In this section, the topic of this thesis and its relevance for strategic communication will be introduced as well as a brief presentation of the chosen case company. Followingly, the topic will be problematized and concretized into research questions.

1.1 Background

As a result of emerging technology and growing demand for more sustainable business models, a concept known as the *sharing economy* has been growing rapidly within the last decade (Dellaert, 2019; Casidy et al., 2022). Although the concept holds various definitions, companies in the sharing economy are commonly described as mediating platforms which entail customers having temporary access to a product or service in exchange for something such as money or returns of favor (Eckhardt et al., 2019a). This means that customers shift the focus from permanently owning things, to temporarily lending and renting things. With leading examples such as the car-sharing service Uber, revenues within the sharing economy are anticipated to increase exponentially within the forthcoming years (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015; Marchi & Parek, 2015). Although this speaks for the sharing economy being a successful concept, services based on the sharing business model face new communication challenges as opposed to traditional companies since the customers' value creation process differs when the focus shifts from products to services (Casidy et al., 2022).

The concept of sharing, i.e. renting and lending products through services from other people, brings new concerns from a customer's point of view (Philip et al., 2015). Namely, pain points and barriers concerning safety, quality assurance, and trustworthiness tend to be prevalent. Furthermore, the fact that the concept entails temporary product usage, companies in the sharing economy face more unpredictable customer behavior based on hedonistic and functionalistic motivations (Eckhardt, 2019b). In this sense, the sharing platform business models function within new premises for customers' value creation and bring implications for marketers in charge of promoting such services (Casidy et al., 2022). For instance, sharing services face challenges with brand management as users become co-creators of the content on their platforms by writing reviews, as well as building trust through their communication as users tend to share a fear of scams and fraud when renting from peers (Omazić et al., 2023). Simultaneously, the importance of product marketing is replaced with service

marketing, since the service is the product by which sharing platform services monetize through provision (Bhanja & Saxena, 2022). Since business models based on rental principles over individual ownership are increasing, new consumer behaviors are emerging that need to be better understood and defined to adjust communication strategies in a corresponding way (Eckhardt et al., 2019b). As scholars argue that sharing services ought to focus on service marketing over product marketing (Bhanja & Saxena, 2022), and strategic communication is a way for organizations to use communication as a tool to reach their overall goals (Heide et al., 2018), it is arguably important that such companies consider service marketing to be a vital part of their strategic communication in practice.

1.1.1 Hygglo

As the sharing economy expands globally, this is a trend that has been spotted in for instance Sweden. In 2018, Sweden ranked 42 out of 213 countries in terms of offering sharing economy solutions for accommodation (Funcke et al., 2018). Although there is no current index of how Sweden performs within sharing economy solutions other than homestays, companies are paving the way in alternative categories. An example of this is the P2P rental platform Hygglo which is the largest one today in the Nordic market - operating in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland (Hygglo, n.d. -b). Hygglo was founded in 2016 and has since offered a mediating platform that facilitates renting and renting out personal items between peers in exchange for monetary transactions, with no specific item niche. Although Hygglo is already fairly established in the Nordic market, it still offers a relevant example of a P2P rental platform with the potential to further expand given its stable yet slow growth since 2016 (Bizzdo, n.d.). Therefore, Hygglo as a case is interesting to explore as it provides insight into website marketing that has worked for a P2P rental platform, yet can be improved to establish the service company further.

1.2 Problematization

This study addresses an identified research gap regarding how companies in the sharing economy can communicate appropriately in the new marketing landscape that the sharing concept entails (Eckhardt, 2019b; Chen & Wang, 2019). As the survival of sharing economy platforms depends on their customers' use of them, rather than through product sales like traditional companies (Casidy et al., 2022), such platforms are in need of using service marketing in place of product marketing (Bhanja & Saxena, 2022). This also means there is a need to understand how customers create value on such platforms, as users are often

motivated or discouraged to use them based on other factors than the product offering itself (Eckhardt et al., 2019a). However, there is a current lack of research in regard to appropriate marketing strategies for sharing platforms in general (Eckhardt et al., 2019a) and P2P rental platforms in specific (Costello & Reczek, 2020). Further, based on our own observations from searches in academic journals in the field of strategic communication, little to no research has previously been conducted on the role of service marketing in strategic communication. This implies a current lack of knowledge regarding how strategic communication and service marketing can overlap.

As services such as P2P rental platforms exist thanks to the emergence of new technology (Dellaert, 2019), and as there is a need for understanding what leads consumers to participate in such services from a service marketing perspective (Alhashem et al., 2021), we argue that it is necessary to explore how such platforms can leverage their service communication in a way that addresses consumers' concerns and needs in order to increase the utilization of such platforms. This advocates the relevance of exploring the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) through a P2P rental platform case, as this model is used to provide insights into which factors determine consumers' perceptions of platform usability and usefulness, leading them to adopt the platform (Mustafa & Garcia, 2021). By exploring how prospective renters view, interpret, and make use of Hygglo's website communication from a sensemaking perspective, a better understanding can be created concerning how consumers make sense of the communicative material they interact with on P2P rental platforms and how this knowledge can contribute to how such services can strategically communicate accordingly.

1.3 Aim of the study

This thesis employs the Sensemaking Theory in order to investigate which factors influence the willingness of prospective renters to utilize P2P rental platforms. The goal is to adapt the Technology Acceptance Model to the P2P rental service category. In addition, the objectives of this paper are to investigate how such service providers can customize their website communication based on various factors to enhance their service marketing strategy in accordance with a service-dominant logic. To address these issues, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- What determinants influence prospective renters' perceived ease of use and usefulness of Hygglo's P2P rental platform, and in what way and why?

- How do prospective renters make sense of Hygglo's website communication, and in what way does this influence their impression of Hygglo's service and brand?

2. Previous research

In this section, previous research on topics related to the subject of this thesis is presented. First, a brief overview of the sharing economy will be covered. Followingly, a description of previous research on marketing in the sharing economy in general as well as marketing for P2P platforms in specific will be presented.

2.1 Sharing economy characteristics

As previously mentioned, descriptions of companies within the sharing economy have various definitions. However, past researchers have defined five key characteristics of such companies (Eckhardt et al., 2019b) (see Table 1). Although companies do not need to fulfill all five criteria to be considered a part of the sharing economy, it is shown that the more sharing economy characteristics a company posits, the more headwind it will experience when employing traditional marketing strategies. This expresses a need for developing marketing strategies specifically tailored to the sharing economy premises.

Table 1

Key characteristics of the sharing economy

Characteristic number	Definition
1	Temporary access to tangible and intangible resources is offered.
2	Temporary access to resources is obtained through monetary transactions or return of favor exchange.
3	Monetary transactions and return of favor exchange “are enabled by technology platforms that connect providers and users” and allow reciprocal reviews.
4	Prosumption is enabled, meaning that the target group can both consume and produce products.
5	The offered supply is crowdsourced, meaning that resources are accessed through platform users rather than the company itself. Monetary transactions are peer-to-peer rather than customer-to-company by nature.

Note: From Eckhardt, G. M., Houston, M. B., Jiang, B., Lamberton, C., Rindfleisch, A., & Zervas, G. (2019b). Rethinking Marketing in the Sharing Economy. *Marketing News*, 53(9), 26–29.
<https://flipster-ebSCO-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/reader/2254749?pageSet=14&page=0>

2.2 Marketing communication in the sharing economy

On a general level, companies that operate in the sharing economy require new overall customer marketing strategies counter to businesses in the traditional economy, given the difference in business models (Eckhardt et al., 2019b). This results in marketing implications, because while marketers of traditional services manage a linear customer journey from search to disposal based on the norm of individual ownership, marketers of sharing services must manage a circular customer journey from search to reuse based on the ideal of resource access (Eckhardt et al., 2019a, 2019b). On a more specific level, there is a significant distinction to be made even within the premises of the sharing economy itself (Eckhardt et al., 2019b; Costello & Reczek, 2020). Namely, similarly to the majority of today's traditional marketplaces, some sharing services employ a platform-focused B2C business model where the consumer rents from a company (Eckhardt et al., 2019b). During the latest years, however, the sharing economy has expanded through a growing amount of rental platforms based on a provider-focused business model (P2P), where the sharing takes place between two individuals. This means that the platform is solely the mediating service between peers. As a consequence of the latter, customers are now being recognized as producers and consumers, also known as "prosumers".

Since rental-based business models commonly enable temporary product usage, there is a need to replace product marketing with service marketing (Bhanja & Saxena, 2022). This means that the marketing of rental services should not be approached through a traditional goods-dominant logic where communication centers around the product itself. Rather, marketing of such services should be approached through a service-dominant logic where communication emphasizes the value and quality of service, customer reviews, and user experiences (Bhanja & Saxena, 2022; Key, 2017). This is because the customers' long-term experiences of the service are more likely to be centered around the environmental and social benefits of the rental process itself (Eckhardt et al., 2019b). This is not to say that product communication should be disregarded in the sharing economy; alternately, as the service-dominant logic suggests by its name, "services and product marketing can coexist with the concept of service delivery being at the core" (Bhanja & Saxena, 2022, p. 249). Through a service-dominant logic approach in marketing communication, customer engagement can also be leveraged as customers become central to the service, enabling active participation in the consumption process (Casidy et al., 2022). This is important to note as customer engagement is a driver of customer satisfaction and prosumer co-production.

2.3 Marketing communication and P2P rental platforms

As the online-sharing market is still emerging, limited research has been done on best practices regarding marketing communication for rental platforms (Eckhardt et al., 2019a). There is an especially great call for expanded knowledge on how communication should be strategized for specifically P2P rental platforms as more distinct operators in the sharing economy, in comparison to platform-focused rental platforms. This is because research on strategic frameworks for online provider-focused rental businesses remains limited today (Au et al., 2020). Additionally, there is an underlying current need for further research on what factors influence consumers to monetarily transact within provider-focused platforms (Costello and Reczek, 2020). Thus, it has been suggested to study the risks and concerns amongst consumers of P2P rental platforms in the future to create a more holistic understanding of appropriate P2P platform development strategies (Au et al., 2020). Although some studies have been carried out focusing on the customers' value creation process in regard to such services on an overall strategic level (Dellaert, 2019), little research has focused on website communication strategies in specific based on our own observations.

Furthermore, most rental companies in the emerging market today are small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) implying that a smaller amount of employees are operating in these businesses (European Commission, 2017). Arguably, this makes the P2P business model highly appropriate from rental businesses' marketing perspective in regards to time investment, since the platforms' users co-produce their daily communication through free labor by writing reviews and product descriptions. At the same time, the co-creation of communication feeds the P2P business models' natural challenge of managing brand communication aside from renting price and product quality (Jiang & Tian, 2016).

3. Theory

This section provides an in-depth review of theories and perspectives relevant to this study. First, sensemaking is presented as a perspective with motivations concerning why it facilitates our data analysis. Secondly, the Technology Acceptance Model will be introduced with motivations regarding why it is a relevant model to modify in regard to the aim of this study.

3.1 Sensemaking Theory

The Sensemaking Theory has been extensively covered by Weick (1995) in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*. It is a theory with no unified definition, yet commonly it is used to describe the processes that people undergo in order to fill cognitive information gaps when exposed to new situations (Turner et al., 2023). These processes involve interpretation, reflection, and asking questions, resulting in the individual making sense of the new situation they are in. This thesis will focus on three of Weick's (1995) concepts that are of most relevance for this study; extracted cues, as well as retro- and prospective sensemaking. Further, as argued by Turner et al. (2023), Sensemaking Theory is considered a catalyst for research on how situations are narrated by subjective interpretations and have been greatly reviewed up until today. Hence, we argue that sensemaking theory is of relevance in this day and age, as well as for this thesis despite its longitude of existence.

Extracted cues are referred to by Weick (1995) as familiar structures that people employ to understand their present situation. It is important to pay attention to how people discover these, as managing which cues are communicated can greatly affect how others perceive their environment. The cues that a person extracts heavily depend on what Weick defines as a person's *frame*. This is the context from which the cue is extracted, and can be further referred to as the person's frame of reference. Therefore, to intentionally manage cues, it is crucial to understand the person's frame of reference as it moderates how a cue is extracted and interpreted. This thesis will analyze how prospective renters respond to Hygglo's website communication to understand what cues they extract to further elaborate knowledge on and how to best manage them in a P2P context.

3.1.1 Retrospective and prospective sensemaking

While sensemaking was originally theorized only as a retrospective practice, Weick (1995) eventually broadened the theory of sensemaking by including future-oriented actions. In other words, sensemaking is no longer only conceptualized as the process of making sense of what has actually occurred, but also as the process of making sense of what is to occur by imagining that future events have already materialized. This is called *future-perfect thinking* (Weick, 1979, 1995) - also known as *prospective sensemaking* (Patvardhan et al., 2018) which is the term that we will use henceforth. This theory development has led to a more inclusive view of sensemaking by acknowledging that enactment through improvisations and experiments, and not only backward reflection, plays a role in meaning creation.

Despite the expanded view of sensemaking, researchers and organizations still appear to treat it as a mostly retrospective process by mainly focusing on people's cognitive interpretation, rather than their cognitive interpretation in relation to their actions (Patvardhan et al., 2018). Consequently, researchers and organizations fail to recognize possible scenarios informed by future-oriented actions that can lead to desired results - something that is especially important in customer-centered technology development to create more intuitive products and services (Gede Yudhi Paramartha et al., 2022). To clarify, an account for foresight through the analysis of prospective sensemaking is needed in order to understand how customer attention directs customers' next actions, which creates their and hence the company's reality (Patvardhan et al., 2018; Kemppainen & Uusitalo, 2022). As Roy et al. (2022) argue, insights on customer experience and its consequences are what can inform organizations on "how to foster the creation of meaningful experiences" (p. 61). Moreover, technology providers must understand how to facilitate their customers in taking desired future-oriented actions through the cues managed and presented on their digital platforms (Kemppainen & Uusitalo, 2022). At the same time, platform providers have to recognize what affects their customers' performed actions have on their customers' perceived meaning of the platform and company post-use. Hence, both prospective and retrospective sensemaking is necessary to analyze to gain a full view of how customers derive meaning, as well as what meaning has been derived and why. Qualitative data on customers' prospective and retrospective sensemaking combined can thus provide platform providers with an in-depth understanding of how to manage and improve their service communication.

3.1.2 Sensemaking and emerging technology

Consumers usually heavily rely on prospective sensemaking when using emerging technology (Gattringer et al., 2021). This is due to a lack of knowledge, in addition to low to no lived experience of using new technology. As a result, consumers of emerging technology frequently encounter difficulties with building on existing frames to create meaning around them. On a mission to comprehend new technology, consumers tend to draw from lived experiences accumulated through the use of subjectively similar technology. However, they “may fail to make sense of it because those experiences are by their nature incomplete and not enough to make sense of a noticed issue with fundamentally new properties” (p. 666). This builds on Weick’s (2001) theory of new *technology as equivocal*, implying that emerging technology is prone to various reasonable interpretations. When a difference in reasoning about a technology occurs, consumer interaction and the following outcome of usage may affect the way the technology functions. Arguably, if providers of new technology wish to guide their prospective consumers’ way of understanding and using their products and services, they need to understand what, when, and how explicit cues should be communicated, that can be extracted in a desired way.

As online P2P rental platforms are still emerging (Eckhardt et al., 2019a), they can be considered a new technology. On a consumer level, information about such platforms might therefore be rather unfamiliar and evoke feelings of uncertainty. According to the presented research above, the use and adoption of P2P rental platforms are thus likely to rely on prospective sensemaking through externally derived cues. However, there exists no previous research on the prospective sensemaking processes of such platforms nor their effect on consumers’ usage and adoption intention. Simultaneously, a recent study has found that high levels of uncertainty about a product or service decrease information search (He & Rucker, 2022). In a website context, this may explain the eventual lack of motivation to begin or to continue using, and hence adopting a service platform. For this reason, this thesis attempts to combine Sensemaking Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model, in order to better understand how prospective consumers currently make sense of P2P rental service platforms through website communication.

3.2 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was initially introduced in 1986 by Fred Davis and is a framework that has been widely used and revisited to explore how and why people

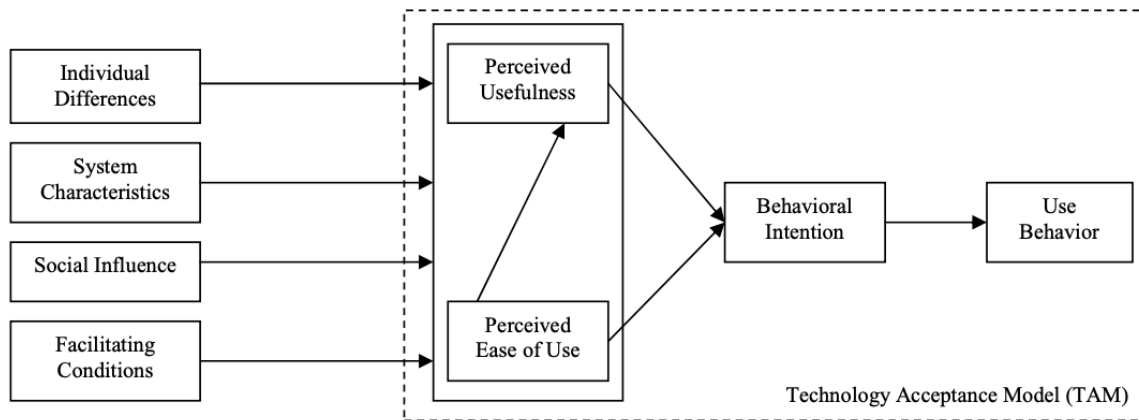
accept and adopt new technologies (Lai, 2017; Ji et al., 2019). Since its initial development, it has continuously been evaluated, modified, and reused to suit various application areas in numerous academic fields. For instance, the general reasons as to how and why a group of people may adopt a social media app may not be for the same reasons regarding how and why the group may adopt a digital P2P rental platform. In this study, it is relevant to modify the TAM for two reasons. Firstly, we argue that it is purposeful since the sharing economy exists and has the potential to grow as a result of technological advancements (Dellaert, 2019; Chen & Wang, 2019). Secondly, we insist that it is meaningful as the TAM is frequently used and modified as an analytical tool to understand what affects people's willingness to accept emerging technology despite the area of application (Mustafa & Garcia, 2021).

3.2.1 Previous application of the TAM

The TAM is applied to understand users' acceptance of new technology and has been employed and developed within similar fields to strategic communication, such as marketing and business communication (e.g. Singh et al., 2020; Sapkota & Vander Putten, 2018). The model focuses on two factors: PEOU and PU (Mustafa & Garcia, 2021) (see Figure 1). PEOU refers to the users' perceived ease of use in terms of technology usage, while PU refers to the perceived usefulness of technology (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Previous research shows that the degree of PEOU and PU shape people's behavioral intention to use technology *directly*. Also, PEOU affects the behavioral intention *indirectly* through PU. In other words, when a user experiences a technology as easy to use, the user will automatically find the technology more useful to them which consequently influences their intention to use it positively. However, when a user experiences technology as useful, there is no proof that this leads them to experience the technology as easier to use (Ji et al., 2019).

Figure 1

The Technology Acceptance Model



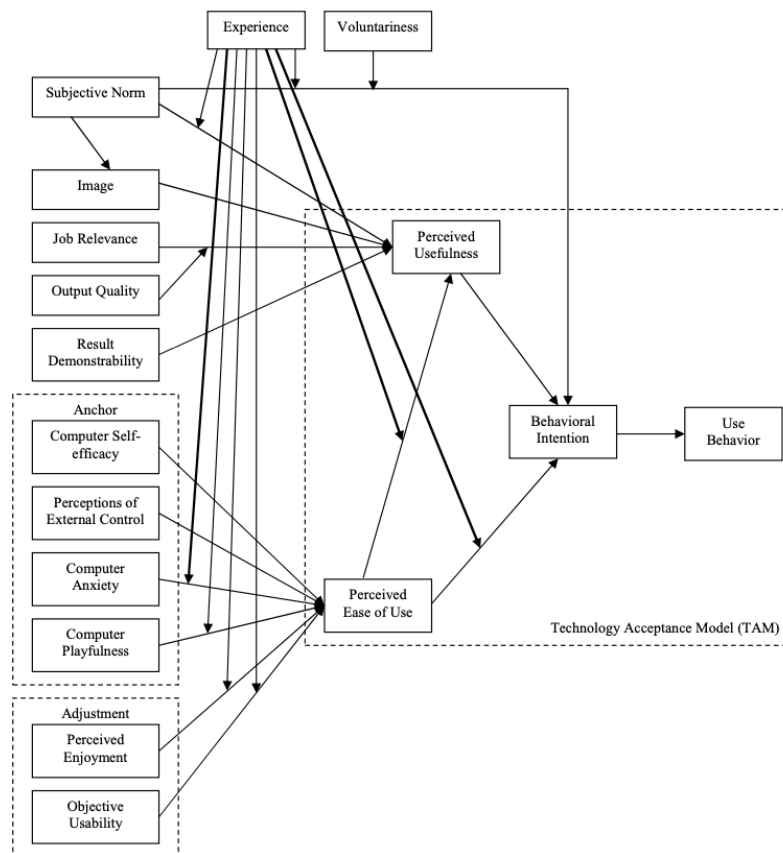
Note: From Venkatesh, V., & Bala, H. (2008). Technology acceptance model 3 and a research agenda on interventions. *Decision Sciences*, 39(2), 273–315.

<https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1111/j.1540-5915.2008.00192.x>, seen on page 276.

Moreover, Venkatesh & Bala (2008) explain that there are external factors, so-called determinants, that affect users' PEOU and PU which vary depending on which version of the TAM one refers to. For instance, in the TAM3 (see Figure 2), a determinant that may affect the users' PU is subjective norms, and a determinant that may affect the users' PEOU is computer self-efficacy. The former refers to whether the user thinks their surrounding peers care if they use the technology or not, and the latter concerns the users' confidence in their ability to use it. Furthermore, some determinants are seen to moderate other determinants, such as previous experience (see Figure 2). This means that someone who has previous experience using a certain technology might be affected differently by other determinants (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). It's not uncommon to modify the TAM to suit different areas of application, which is the explanation as to why there is a prevalent variation of determinants in different versions of the TAM (Ji et al., 2019).

Figure 2

The Technology Acceptance Model 3



Note: From Venkatesh, V., & Bala, H. (2008). Technology acceptance model 3 and a research agenda on interventions. *Decision Sciences*, 39(2), 273–315.

<https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1111/j.1540-5915.2008.00192.x>, seen on page 280.

Lastly, Jarvie-Eggart et al. (2021) argue there is a need to further explore how determinants influence users' acceptance of new technology, and Costello and Reczek (2020) urge the need to understand consumer attitudes and experiences in a P2P rental context. Thus, we argue that it could be beneficial to explore how the TAM can be specified to P2P rental platforms. By interviewing and observing prospective rentees while they visit such a platform, patterns regarding what communication material affects their PEOU and PU can be unveiled. This way, determinants relevant to P2P rental platforms can be understood which enables us to develop the TAM for such services to help them strategically leverage their website communication in a way that incentivizes platform visitors to use it.

4. Method

This chapter first presents the scientific approach of the thesis as well as the choice of case for the study. Secondly, our data collection method and sampling process are presented. Lastly, the thematic analysis of the data will be explained, followed by methodological reflections and ethical considerations.

4.1 Scientific approach

This study aims to provide an understanding of prospective rentees' perceptions, interpretations, and use of website communication on a P2P rental platform. Hence, qualitative methods are used as they are appropriate for describing processes, qualities, and other underlying factors that play a part in interactive situations (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). This allows for nuances and complexities such as emotions to be discovered and analyzed (Flick, 2018) which is suitable for this study as we wish to explore if, when, how, and why people experience usefulness and ease of use on a platform. Contrastingly, quantitative methods would be inappropriate for this study as they are used to produce objective numerical data to measure the extent, frequency, and magnitude of phenomena in a broadly generalizable way (Bryman et al., 2022). Hence, potential cases of deviant findings that contradict patterns or explanations in the data analysis are not in focus in quantitative research. However, this is of interest to us as it permits us to acknowledge varying interview responses that might be important to discuss or recommend future researchers to explore further - something that qualitative methods enable. Also, large sample sizes are used in quantitative methods (Flick, 2018) which poses a challenge in conducting in-depth data analysis which would contradict the purpose of this study.

Furthermore, an abductive approach is employed for this qualitative study which can be seen as a combination of an inductive and deductive approach (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). This means that our theory and collected data are systematically alternated as a way of discovering new findings that pre-existing knowledge cannot explain (Flick, 2018). Given the choice of abductive reasoning in our research, we have been able to modify the TAM to P2P rental platforms through empirical data that is analyzed from a sensemaking perspective and then explored in relation to previous research and theories whose explanatory value is discussed in the analysis and discussion section of this paper.

This paper follows a social constructivist perspective in alignment with the chosen qualitative methods (Bryman et al., 2022). In our study, this is shown as we interpret data collected from interviews and observations of screen-sharing sessions that reflect participants' subjective views and experiences. This allows for the detection of non-verbal reactions and website navigation patterns that inform us of relevant questions to ask during the interview to help us interpret the participants' PEOU and PU of the platform in a more credible way. Given the social constructivist perspective, our research also has a hermeneutic approach as it emphasizes interpretation in constructing meaning and knowledge (Zimmerman, 2015). Hence, the data analysis will naturally mirror our own subjective views to an extent. Methodological reflections in relation to this are presented in the last subsection of the Method.

4.2 Data collection methods

To gain an in-depth understanding of how website marketing strategies for P2P rental platforms can be improved, the P2P-rental platform Hygglo is chosen as a case to exemplify the phenomena. As Hygglo's platform is rather established in the Nordic market (Hygglo, n.d. -b) with several web pages as material for participants to explore and be interviewed about, we consider it an adequate case company for exploring website marketing for P2P rental platforms. As referred to in Appendix C, the specific web pages on Hygglo's platform that the interviewees were prompted to browse as part of our study were: the landing page, the page "How Hygglo works", the membership page, an item category page, a specific item page, and a peer profile page. The pages were visited in the mentioned order as a test interviewer confirmed that it emulated the most likely customer journey for them. This was reasserted by some of the actual participants during the final interviews, hence the choice and order of website material to interview them about.

4.2.1 Interviews

Interviews offer researchers insight into people's subjective experiences of the world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). They are a tool to gather nuanced and descriptive statements that help us understand why people act the way that they do. In this study, the aim is to understand prospective renters' subjective perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of Hygglo's website communication and how these affect their usage intentions, hence interviews were a suitable research method. To gain this understanding, we chose to conduct semi-structured interviews according to our interview guide (see Appendix A). As clarified by Bryman et al. (2022),

such interviews entail a structure of open questions that offers flexibility in exploring topics further as they appear throughout the data collection. This specific interview method allowed the participants to relatively freely express their perceptions throughout the interview which helped us gain credible and rich data. This was also enabled as each interview strategically occurred for one hour since a long-lasting engagement with participants facilitates both the researchers and the interviewees in becoming familiar with the context from which the empirical material is interacted with and observed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This allowed for additional thoughtful follow-up questions to be asked and thoughtful statements to be expressed.

4.2.2 Observations

In this study, observational research is conducted as a complement to interviews which is beneficial when a study is descriptive or interpretive and when data collection occurs through social interaction (6 & Bellamy, 2013). We enabled both data collection methods simultaneously by performing them over the video conferencing platform Zoom, where we let participants explore Hygglo's platform while being interviewed. Remote observations and interviews were chosen as previous research strongly suggests that research on how users interact with a platform should be conducted in the intended users' natural environments such as their home or office where they normally would have used a digital platform (Danış, 2023). This way, the environment that likely would affect their platform experiences in reality is emulated which makes the collected data more credible for analysis. In our case, both researchers observed each interviewee's website navigation live. At the same time, one of us conducted observation notes and asked follow-up questions if needed, whilst the other conducted the interview according to the interview guide. This was alternated between each interview, to avoid an unbalanced workload and one-sided interpretations. Through observation, we were able to acknowledge the participants' non-verbal expressions and actions in the interpretation of their thought processes whilst using the platforms, such as frustration, relief, or moving the cursor back and forth across the screen in a confused manner.

4.2.3 Sampling

The participants were chosen based on non-randomized purposive sampling, which is described by Bryman et al. (2022) as a sample that is chosen based on how well it fits the research questions. The choice of sampling method was based on specific criteria we

considered necessary for the participants to fulfill to achieve the most fruitful result for the study. The main criterion sought in our case was that the participant had not previously used Hygglo's service. This is because previous use of the platform could interfere with the participants' perception of it. Furthermore, another acquired criterion was that the participant was currently studying. To ensure a more diverse sample, students of various genders and faculty representations were requested. Students were sampled based on two reasons: current students are likely to be a relevant target group for rental platforms today as students tend to have a limited economy with an interest in consuming mindfully, and current students are likely to be a relevant target group after graduation as their purchasing power will strengthen once they start working. We argue that choosing participants based on their likelihood of constituting a long-term target group for P2P rental platforms would generate more suitable results for a study that aims to help such services tailor their website communication to relevant market segments.

The final participants of the study consisted of five males and five females, dispersed across five different faculties. They are anonymized, thus the names displayed in the analysis are pseudonyms. The participants were recruited by contacting acquaintances belonging to different faculties, requesting them to ask people they know if they would consider participating. This was done as we wanted to avoid interviewing people we currently have relations with as this could interfere with our collection and interpretation of data.

4.3 Thematic data analysis

Thematic data analysis is a frequently used method within qualitative research as it allows researchers to identify and interpret themes within data such as interview transcriptions (Flick, 2018). The collected interview data for this research was firstly thematized and analyzed through a four-step process. This was done through what is known as codebook development, where researchers define descriptive codes, which then guide a systematic analysis of the data, making it possible to identify themes (Guest et al., 2012). Our first round focused on detecting expressed experiences and attitudes toward P2P platforms in general (see Appendix B). The second round focused on coding if the participants expressed ease of use or usefulness in regards to Hygglo's platform (see Appendix C). The third round focused on identifying the participants' expressed cues and reactions in regard to PEOU and PU. Finally, the former steps were revised to detect key themes in the data; which were identified

determinants and their effect on the participants' service and brand impression. This was finalized by being translated into our modified TAM for P2P rental platforms.

4.4 Methodological reflections and ethical considerations

Traditional criteria of reliability and validity are argued to presuppose a positivistic ontology and epistemology, given that they intend to measure the accuracy of measurements (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Eksell & Thelander, 2014). As our scientific approach is qualitative, our understanding of the phenomenon in question is subject to our interpretation, we argue that it is more suitable to reflect on our method based on reflexivity. This involves critical self-reflection of us as researchers by addressing our own biases, preferences, and preconceptions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This is important, as we employ a hermeneutic approach which implies that our subjective preconceptions, values, and biases may affect how data is interpreted (Zimmerman, 2015). We practiced reflexivity by constructing, testing, and revising our interview guide in several rounds. By doing this we identified how we occasionally presented leading questions and actions that reflected our preunderstandings and preconceptions. Based on this critical reflection, we adjusted our research accordingly. However, it is important to note that we do not state that this study has been conducted objectively, as this is not possible through a hermeneutic approach.

In terms of ethical considerations, we informed the interviewees about the purpose of the study and what their participation would imply via email before as well as during the interview before the recording started. We explained that the interview would be conducted and recorded over Zoom in English, take approximately one hour, and that their personal details will remain anonymous and solely be utilized for the research purposes of our study. Following the consent criterion discussed by Bryman et al. (2022), we also informed the interviewees that they had to confirm whether they accepted their faces and screen to be recorded before the recording of the interview began.

5. Analysis

This analysis consists of four sections. In the first section, an analysis of a moderating determinant is presented and analyzed. The following three sections present an analysis of each identified determinant and what these imply in regard to service and brand impressions.

5.1 Frame as a moderating determinant

As previously mentioned, different versions of the TAM consider certain determinants, such as previous experience, to moderate other determinants (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). When conducting the interviews and analyzing the responses in this study, we drew a parallel between what Venkatesh & Bala (2008) refer to as moderating determinants and what Weick (1995) refers to as a *frame of reference*. It seems the two concepts overlap in the sense that they both explain how context plays a part in an individual's subjective interpretation of something. For this reason, frame as a moderating determinant is considered and referred to as the participants' existing reference points. These reference points seem moderate the other presented determinants in this study, meaning that for instance, a participant's previous experience of a P2P rental platform will presumably affect in what way the determinant technical features play a part in their willingness to adopt the platform. From a sensemaking perspective, we argue that it is important to consider the participants' pre-existing reference points in relation to P2P rental platforms before visiting Hygglo's website. This way, our understanding of the interviewees' sensemaking processes and extracted cues in regard to such a platform can be facilitated. The following reference points are split into previous knowledge and use of P2P rental platforms and attitudes.

5.1.1 Previous knowledge and use of P2P rental platforms

All participants mentioned at least one platform top mind that they considered to be a P2P rental platform. Among these mentions were Uber, AirBnB, Circle Center, Fritidsbanken, GoMore, Blocket, and Tradera. Although not all of these services are considered a P2P rental platform, the participants had somewhat of an awareness of the P2P platform concept. The participants continuously mentioned previous experiences of using similar platforms to Hygglo as a point of reference. By comparing Hygglo to another platform or service that they already had been exposed to, they tried to make sense of how Hygglo works and what their opinion of the platform is. This links to Weick's (1995) reasoning regarding the frame of

reference, as it seems that their previous experiences become the context from which they extract cues from Hygglo's website. An example can be found in the interview with Henric:

It reminds me a lot about Blocket, which is also a trusted website, so you get kind of the credibility through, I guess, and closeness in design... I'm much more comfortable using it because it reminds me of something that I have used before or am familiar with. It [the web page] makes a lot more sense because it's familiar. You know where to click and you kind of get the feel for how this works as well, so it feels familiar and not like it's an entirely new page.

What Henric is reasoning here is that his previous experience with another trusted P2P platform, called Blocket, helped him make sense of Hygglo's service as something familiar and comfortable to use. The vast majority of participants drew similar parallels throughout the interviews, hence previous experience is important to highlight in this case.

5.1.2 Explicit and implicit attitudes

Before presenting Hygglo as a P2P rental platform, the participants were asked what their attitudes were in regard to the P2P concept. The responses represented a mix from positive to neutral, where the positive attitudes were supported by arguments such as the concept being sustainable, economically viable, and a good way of making use of things. Those who did not have an opinion on the concept explained that it was something they had not thought about to any considerable extent. What is interesting is that no participants explicitly expressed that they had negative attitudes towards the concept prior to being exposed to Hygglo's P2P rental platform. However, once exposed to the platform, all participants expressed feelings of apprehensiveness to some degree toward the P2P concept at several stages of the interview. This became clear as they expressed fears of being scammed by renters and concerns regarding the quality of the rental items. Furthermore, they pointed out different elements on the website as increasing or decreasing the website's legitimacy, security, and trustworthiness, which are characteristics they considered of high value for them when reflecting on using the service. This is fascinating as, if seen from the perspective of Weick's (1995) frame of reference, the participants' frame seems to be constituted by *subconscious* preconceived ideas that the P2P rental concept is equivalent to taking a risk. One can also argue that, although their initial attitude wasn't based on apprehensiveness, the *context* of Hygglo's website triggered cues related to apprehensiveness once exposed to it. In this sense, although the participants did not explicitly express negative attitudes towards P2P rental platforms, they implicitly expressed perceived barriers in regard to the legitimacy, security, and trustworthiness of the P2P concept.

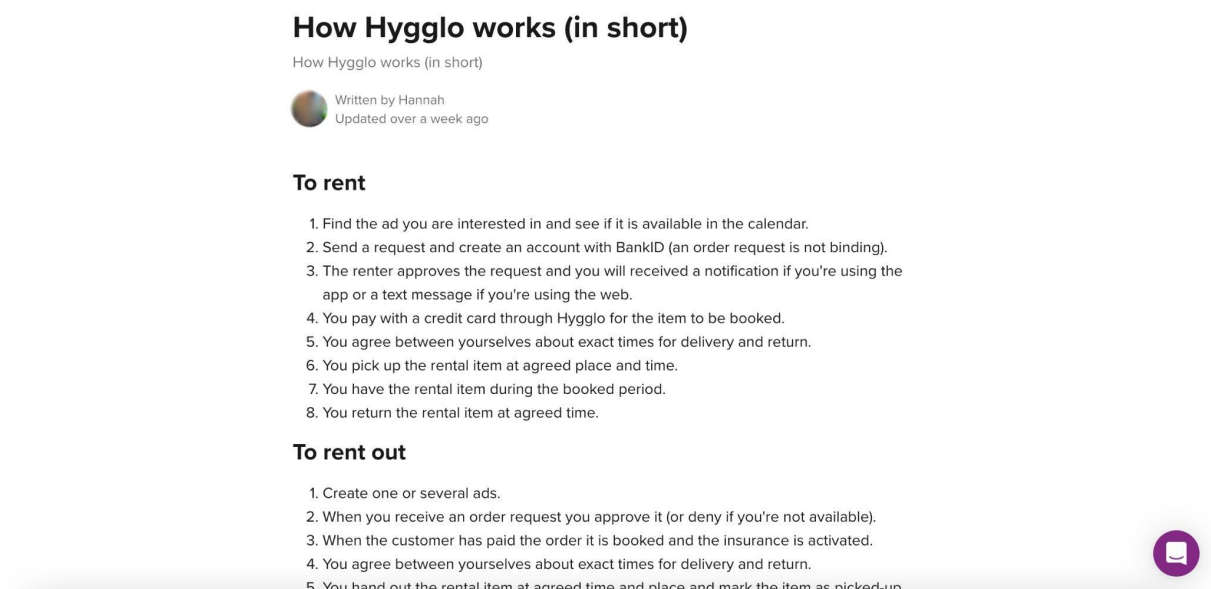
5.2 Determinants

5.2.1 Visual elements

Firstly, visual elements constitute a determinant in our modified TAM for P2P rental platforms. It seems that the use of visuals plays a big part in the participants' prospective sensemaking processes, as the presence or absence of them seems to trigger cues that in several ways affect the participants' PEOU and PU of the platform. In this study, visual elements are constituted by images posted by Hygglo, website icons, as well as images posted by Hygglo's current users such as peer item advertisements and peer profile pictures.

5.2.1.1 Visual elements and PEOU

In general, visual elements, or the absence of such, seemed to have different effects on the participants' sensemaking processes in regard to PEOU. When exploring Hygglo's different web pages, the participants expressed extracted cues from visuals that seemed to influence how easy or difficult they thought the service was to use. For instance, the presence of visuals, on their own and in conjunction with descriptive text, seemed to be of high pedagogical value to some participants when used appropriately. As commonly described by the participants, visuals can help make the communication of the service more understandable.



How Hygglo works (in short)
How Hygglo works (in short)
Written by Hannah
Updated over a week ago

To rent

1. Find the ad you are interested in and see if it is available in the calendar.
2. Send a request and create an account with BankID (an order request is not binding).
3. The renter approves the request and you will receive a notification if you're using the app or a text message if you're using the web.
4. You pay with a credit card through Hygglo for the item to be booked.
5. You agree between yourselves about exact times for delivery and return.
6. You pick up the rental item at agreed place and time.
7. You have the rental item during the booked period.
8. You return the rental item at agreed time.

To rent out

1. Create one or several ads.
2. When you receive an order request you approve it (or deny if you're not available).
3. When the customer has paid the order it is booked and the insurance is activated.
4. You agree between yourselves about exact times for delivery and return.
5. You hand out the rental item at agreed time and place and mark the item as picked-up

Image 1: How Hygglo Works. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

However, when being exposed to a listed step-by-step guide on how Hygglo works (see Image 1) there seemed to be a relatively low consensus among the participants in regard to

how the absence of visuals affected their PEOU. Several participants expressed the absence of visual elements in that specific guide to be appropriate for communicating strictly important information about how the service works. This is because it seemed to make the information feel accessible and clear, and in turn, this seemed to be an extracted cue in favor of Hygglo's legitimacy. Naomi is one of the participants to express this:

[How Hygglo works] (see Image 1)...it's very accessible information because they've just put everything up with numbers. So it's just very easy to read. Yeah, I think it builds on the website's legitimacy also.

In the case of Naomi, one can interpret that an extracted cue for legitimacy is prioritizing to convey important information in the simplest of ways. However, several participants on the other hand argued differently. They considered the absence of visuals to be unfavorable as it made it more difficult to grasp the information and would prefer additional attention-grabbing visuals as this would make the page more intuitive. Hunter reasons in regards to this in his interview:

[How Hygglo works] (see Image 1)...it seems pretty clear what you're supposed to do if you want to either rent something or lease something. They could have opted for something different than just having a numbered list of the steps. I feel like something more... something that just draws your attention a little more is just a little quicker, easier to understand, maybe like a little animation with the same text or something like that, you know? ... I think they could keep the list, but have an animation to complement it. ...pictures that sort of help convey the same message, and with a shorter piece of text or a prompt to sort of help with the understanding of the step-by-step process.

It seems that Hunter does not consider the step-by-step list to be a problem, but the absence of visuals seems to cloud the communication of how the service works. When participants who shared this understanding were asked to elaborate, some participants expressed that visual learners might consider visual elements to increase the platform's ease of use for them. This is explicitly expressed by Anders:

[How Hygglo works] (see Image 1) ...it's just like a straight-up text. Maybe it would be nice for them to have a video showing the process or illustrate it with eight pictures. But it's not a lot of text so it isn't that big of a problem really. But some people are more visual learners and for them, I'd say it's probably better with illustrations or pictures of some kind to show the process.

Similarly to Hunter, he expresses that from the standpoint of a visual learner, the inclusion of visual elements could improve the overall understanding of how Hygglo's service works. Hence, by communicating the rental process in a way that is more inclusive for people with different learning styles, service information could be considered more accessible and easier to make sense of if combined with visuals. If such implications are not considered, P2P rental platforms may fail with lead generation as high levels of uncertainty decrease

information search (He & Rucker, 2022) and thus time spent on the website. As it was thereto found that the understanding and general impression of Hygglo’s service and brand was more positive after having visited their how-to page¹, this strengthens the importance of communicating rental process information in a more inclusive way through visual elements.

Furthermore, building on the expressed opinions above on combining visual elements with textual ones, it seems important on a general note to be attentive towards the order in which the visual elements are placed as this seems to affect the participants' overall PEOU and therefore PU.

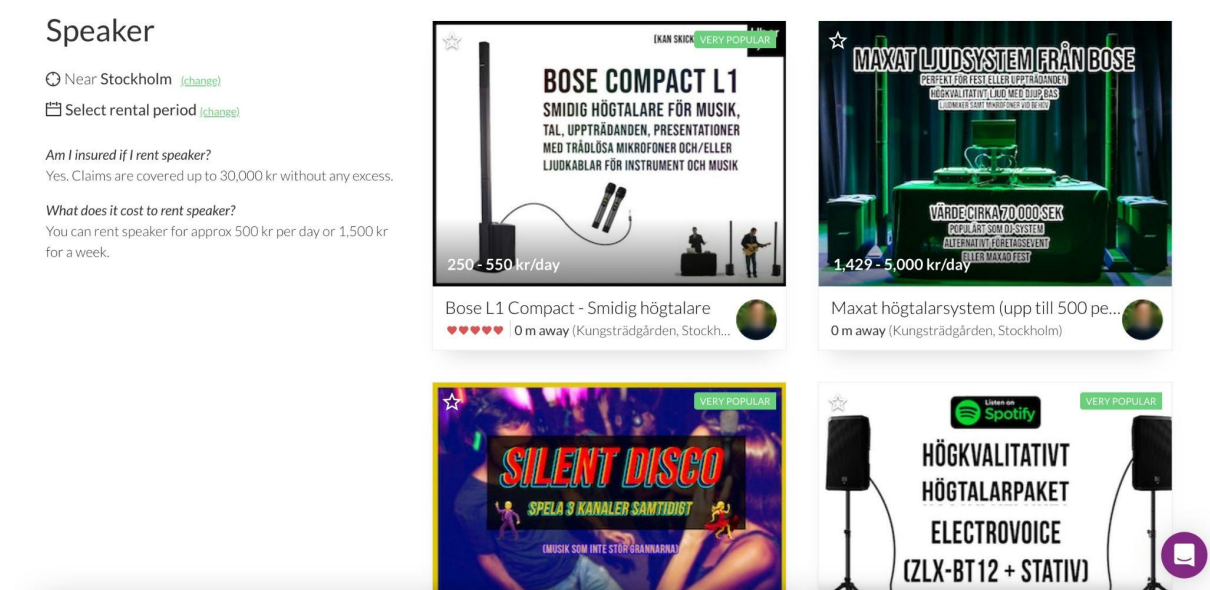


Image 2: Item category page. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

For instance, on the item category page (see Image 2) where the item advertisements as visual elements were placed off-center, or expressed as “cluttering the page”, seemed to act as an extracted cue that influenced the participants’ overall impression of the website negatively. This is exemplified by Henric:

I’m here to rent these things. Then they [item images] should be not off-center but more centered so that you’re immediately drawn more to the center of the screen, because it feels weird to look slightly off-center.

What Henric seems to be implying is that the off-centered placement of the item advertisements acts as a cue for the items not being the main attraction on the page. This he expresses as odd since his purpose of visiting the item category page is to find an item to rent. Thus, it is possibly of value for P2P rental platforms to not only see visual elements as a

¹ The web page “How Hygglo works”.

separate tool that can be used in favor to support the users' PEOU and PU but also to pay attention to the way that the overall layout is designed too.

The analysis suggests a need for carefully choosing the placement of visuals and the context in which they should be used. It seems that different users have different strategies for absorbing information and the presence or absence of visuals can aid or impede the user in understanding the service. This can relate to what Key (2017) argues; that companies in the sharing economy need to pay great attention to user experience to leverage their digital marketing. However, it was relatively unclear if the specific step-by-step guide's absence of visuals (see Image 1) had a positive or negative effect on the participants' PEOU as the opinions were split between the absence being a cue for simplicity or unclarity.

5.2.1.2 Visual elements and PU

Among visual elements such as peer item advertisement images, there appeared to be two kinds of images used: stock photos² (see Image 3) as well as images personally taken by the renters themselves. Depending on which type of images our participants were exposed to, their sensemaking processes seemed to differ in regard to their PU of the service.

Canvastält 28kvm 12 personer (3)

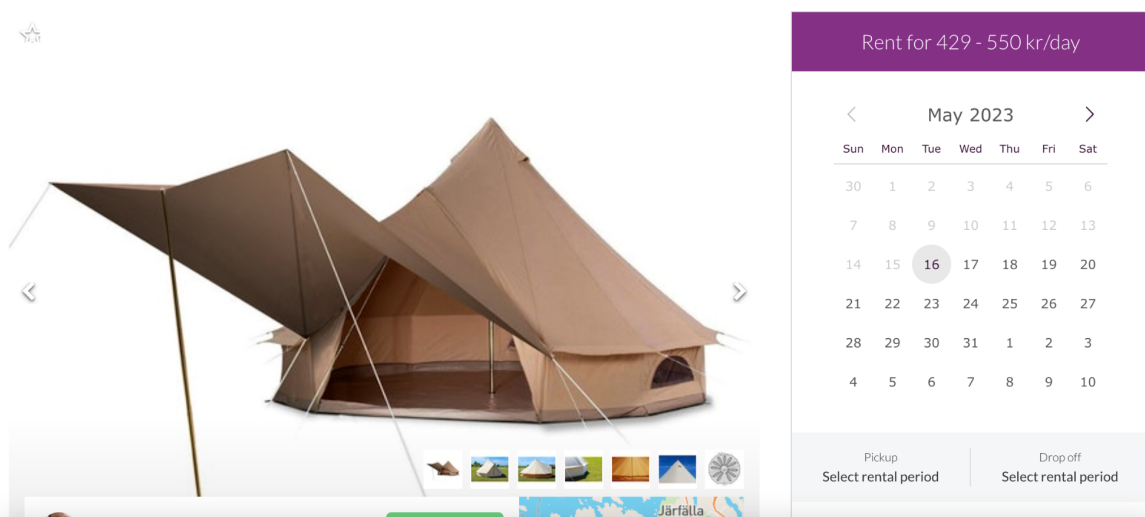


Image 3: Stock photo. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

Stock photos used as item images continuously seemed to have the same effect on all participants; they triggered extracted cues seemingly leading to feelings of distrust, confusion, and apprehensiveness in regard to renting due to fear of being scammed. Certain real images

² Photos taken from the internet instead of the renter.

also seemed to act as similar cues; those described as badly photographed in terms of being unclear and not properly depicting the item. The main prospective sensemaking processes triggered by stock photo cues or bad images seem to be that stock photos do not indicate the quality of the item nor confirm that the renter is actually in possession of it. Hence, the participants expressed apprehensiveness towards the renter and reluctance in regards to using the service in the future which negatively affected the participants' PU. This is elaborated by Moa:

...I don't really appreciate when people who are renters post these kinds of images that are not their own, I suppose. And these edited pictures that don't really show what they're renting out. ... I'm not sure what requirements they [Hygglo] have on the images that people post, but I mean they can't really control if people are bad at advertising their own products, I suppose. ... as a potential customer, it makes it seem a bit less attractive. Like I probably wouldn't rent this party tent, for example, because I don't know what it looks like. ... I would say that the images, in general, are quite bad and not really showing the product in themselves.

Moa is expressing that she would not rent an item based on the fact that the image is not depicting the real item. Although she seems to defend Hygglo as she reasons that the company probably does not control which images are posted, the image seemed to decrease her PU of the service as she would not consider renting the item.

Furthermore, renter profile pictures seemed to play a large part in the participants' prospective sensemaking processes too. When exposed to renter profiles with a profile picture depicting a person, the participants expressed that profile pictures evoked feelings of trust and legitimacy. Knowing who they are to be in contact with seemed to be an important cue in their prospective sensemaking process, as it was expressed to be important in terms of knowing what to expect from the renter, thus affecting their PU of the service.

How Hygglo works (in short)

How Hygglo works (in short)



Written by Hannah

Updated over a week ago

Image 4: How Hygglo works. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

Lastly, related to the topic of profile pictures; on Hygglo's how-to page (see Image 4), a Hygglo employee's profile picture and name are displayed in conjunction with the step-by-step guide on how the service works. This was picked up by Kate:

I think this [How Hygglo works] (see Image 1 & 4) looks kind of boring. It looks like a flashback forum or something. It doesn't feel very serious. Just text on a white page. I feel like it's less legit. Also, it's written like a post from this person, that doesn't feel very official. It feels like she's just a nice individual, who's like, 'I'm going to help you in my free time'.

Kate's statement clarifies that some users might extract posts visibly being written by a specific person as a cue for unprofessionalism on a company level, as it makes the service look voluntarily co-created by private people rather than strategically created by a serious company. However, some interviewees such as Moa uncovered that other users might extract this as a cue for being a transparent company which directly positively affects their PU:

...I do like that it gives you a lot of information on who wrote this article when it was updated, and also that I can go to their social media and everything is quite available ... I like knowing who wrote something. Knowing who that person is also gives you kind of an insight into the organization itself. You actually have a face and name on the people who work there, rather than it just being like, I'm not sure, like a website. It's a company with people who are employed. ... I find that positive for sure. -Moa

These two contrasting impressions of unprofessionalism and legitimacy caused by the Hygglo employee profile picture are interesting. It seems that the participants' different frames are what caused them to extract the different cues, as Kate's feeling of unprofessionalism was related to a previous experience of a flashback forum which, in turn, caused her to extract the cue of Hygglo not "feeling very official".

5.2.1.3 Visual elements and service and brand impression

The mentioned findings above connect to previous studies on prospective sensemaking in emerging technologies, where scholars such as Gattringer et al. (2021) and Weick (2001) argue for the importance of guiding consumers in unfamiliar contexts by generating cues in the right moments to decrease uncertainty. Visual elements can thus be seen as a tool for guiding P2P rental platform users, in order to decrease their experienced uncertainty towards the platform in terms of trust and legitimacy. Furthermore, there is also a connection to the previously discussed service marketing, where Bhanja & Saxena (2022) urge that the marketing of rental companies should emanate from service-dominant logic. We argue that the use of visual elements in a sharing platform context is a way of communicating from a service-dominant approach, as they seem to act as a pedagogical tool for users' understanding of P2P rental platforms as a service and consequently their perception of the platform's legitimacy. By understanding how visual elements as a determinant can be considered in

order to address consumers' concerns in regard to the P2P concept, P2P rental platforms can improve their service marketing and convert website visitors into participating consumers.

Moreover, an interesting take to further elaborate the analysis of visual elements in terms of brand and service perception concerns the topic of who is responsible for ensuring the quality of the images and how the images reflect on Hygglo as a brand. When asked if the stock photos that evoked feelings of distrust and apprehensiveness reflected on Hygglo as a brand, the participants uniformly responded “No”. Instead, most participants considered stock photos to reflect the renter who posted them, which would determine the participants’ view of the renter and their willingness to rent from that specific person. What is interesting is that although the participants did not consider the stock photos to reflect Hygglo’s brand, this type of visual element in fact determined whether they would consider using the service or not. This poses an interesting dilemma as the renters clearly become co-creators of Hygglo’s service marketing, which relates to Jiang & Tian’s (2016) argument that users’ co-creation of communication on such platforms creates a challenge for managing brand communication on a company level. In the case of Hygglo, it is apparent that the peer renter images indirectly reflect on Hygglo as a brand - but since the renters are the ones responsible for what type of images they use to advertise their items, Hygglo loses agency of the service communication in this aspect. Hence, a reflection on how P2P rental platforms can address such a dilemma is arguably important. As suggested by the participants in the case of Hygglo, P2P rental platforms could benefit from providing clear guidelines for peer images, as this would help renters market their products better as well as increase presumptive consumers’ willingness to rent.

To summarize, visual elements should be considered by P2P rental platform marketers as a tool for strengthening the platform's legitimacy. Leveraging the use of visuals to aid users in their understanding of the service, as well as providing guidelines for renter item images and profile pictures, can potentially strengthen the brand indirectly and address users' concerns regarding legitimacy and safety toward the P2P concept.

5.2.2 Technical features

The existence and non-existence of technical features seemed to either help or hinder the participants in solving intended tasks. In this paper, technical features include *buttons*, *a search bar*, *category suggestions*, *filtering options*, and *social functions*. Hygglo’s website has both integrated technical features completely controlled within their own system, as well as

third-party integrations in the form of Bank-id which functionality Hygglo does not manage. As the cues affecting the PEOU and PU vastly differ between Hygglo’s built-in technical features and those integrated through third parties, the technical features in the form of third-party (endorsements and) integrations are argued to be a separate determinant discussed in a later section.

5.2.2.1 Technical features and PEOU

The data indicate that the choice of text may play a big part in users' sensemaking of technical features and the determinant’s direct impact on PEOU. To exemplify, interviewees considered the membership creation button on the landing page as unclear since it said “log in” rather than “register” (see Image 5, top right corner). In actuality, the button is multifunctional serving both purposes. Naomi instantly reflected on this and voiced that “Maybe some people will be confused that the login icon is also for creating an account. Maybe some older generations.”

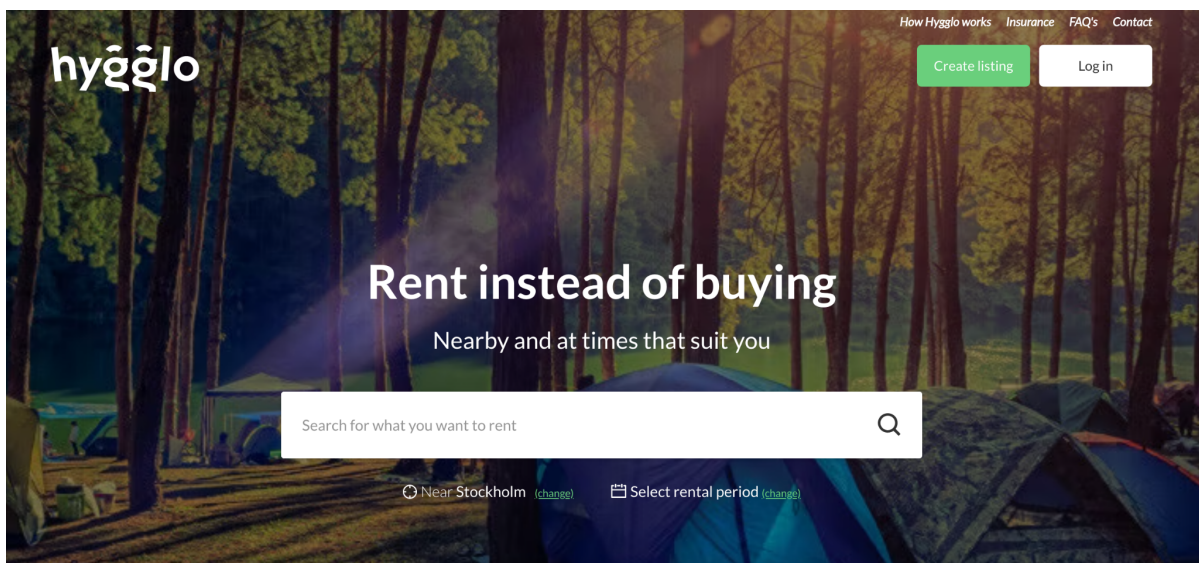


Image 5: Hygglo’s landing page. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

The purpose of the membership creation button was understood prospectively by the participants by experimentally clicking on the explicitly titled “login” button, instantly enabling member registration. Only to a few, this experimental decision was argued to be informed by intuition as they reportedly have experienced similar technical processes previously. To the majority, the experimental act was justified as an exclusion method. As Naomi reasoned, people who generally have less website experience might have a considerably harder time making sense of certain technical features caused by the choice of

text. Nevertheless, the purpose of the technical feature in question could arguably be communicated more clearly.

The search bar and category functions were the sole technical features that had a generally positive impact on PEOU. For instance, participants argued that it was easy to use the search bar since “recommended item” searches appeared (see Image 6) as soon as they started typing which saved them search time. Indirectly, this led to enhanced PU because of perceived helpfulness. In regards to the category suggestions, many argued that rental items were easy to access thanks to the popular categories in focus on the landing page along with the search bar which appeared twice on the landing page. In addition, the sub-categories appurtenant to a main item category were also seen as easy to use thanks to contextual relevance and visible access to related items one might need concerning the solely intended one. This indirectly strengthened their PU. For instance, Moa entered the “party” category with a hypothetical intention to rent a party tent. When she saw “party decorations” as a sub-category, a positive reaction was expressed as it reminded her of other items she might need for the same event without expecting such items to be rentable in the first place.

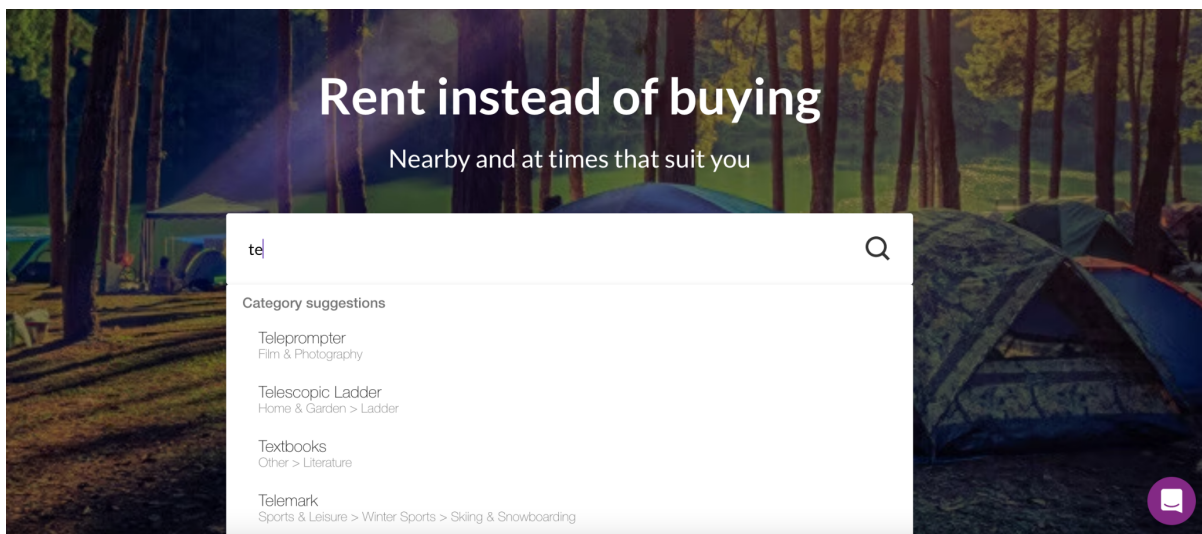


Image 6: Search bar function. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

Furthermore, filtering options on the item category page were a technical feature the vast majority strongly wished to access, to help rank items in terms of maximum distance for item pick-up, price, and popularity. Some participants also *expected* filtering options to exist as many other service and e-commerce platforms they have encountered feature it, indicating that their frame influenced their perception of this technical feature. The absence of this was

considered to make it hard to compare rental items to find the best one for their situation. As this did not exist, their PEOU was negatively affected which led to negative PU.

However, the rental date calendar and its built-in automatic price generator on each rental item page were perceived as easy to use since it was intuitive to use thanks to the structure and visuals. Some such as Amanda prospectively made sense of how to use the calendar as it was presented in a similar way to the rental calendar on Airbnb, once again indicating the influence of frame. Indirectly, the calendar had a strong indirect impact on PU since the calendar was seen as helpful given that it provided a quick overview of available rental dates and facilitated budgeting. Contextually, the latter was especially important for the participants as they are students with a limited economy connected to a need to consume mindfully. Naomi specifically conveyed that the calendar and its functions exceeded her expectations of Hygglo as other, more established service platforms that she has previously used, require users to either click through several steps on a website before accessing available dates or send a message to a renter before agreeing on a rental date such as on Blocket.

5.2.2.2 Technical features and PU

In regards to technical features and PU, specifically buttons seemed to directly affect PU negatively because of the sizing and non-existence of certain buttons. For instance, once successfully entering the how-to page from the landing page, some participants mentioned that they perceived the how-to button³ as low in visibility and accessibility on the latter page. As the information about how the service works was not indicated clearly on the landing page, this caused the participants to express feelings of uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of the company, as they considered the transparent message of how the service works to be one of the most vital pieces of information. Thus, if the how-to button and overall communication on the rental operations were to have been more clear and more transparent on the landing page, the perceived risk of getting scammed would likely have been reduced when first entering the platform's home page.

³ The button for the web page "How Hygglo works".

This is how Hygglo works

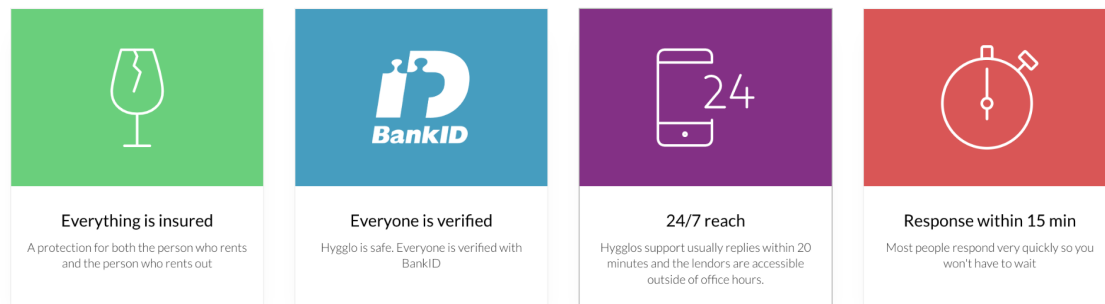


Image 7: Hygglo's landing page. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

The how-to page did not include certain information that was displayed on the landing page (see Image 7) which participants often questioned why, as many viewed them as relevant to include on the how-to page as well. This implies that the landing page itself created cues that the users expected to be able to extract on the how-to page because of an association between the landing page's text "This is how Hygglo works" and the service information seen on Image 1, and the how-to button's text "How Hygglo works". In retrospect, the how-to button thus affected PU negatively as it created false expectations on what information they could find on the hyperlinked web page. Also, text or buttons linked to other defined pieces of information were identified as missing:

...by looking at these instructions, if you're the one who rents, they're not really that descriptive. Or like if you want to post ads, it doesn't really explain how. It makes me wonder if there are more specific instructions elsewhere. -Moa

With regards to Moa whose opinion many interviewees shared, P2P rental platforms should thus include buttons leading to the information on Image 7, and more detailed instructions on the rental process on the how-to page.

As mentioned regarding the PEOU, many participants liked the search bar as it facilitated the search process by suggesting rental items (see Image 6). In regards to PU, this technical feature was also directly influenced in a positive way as it was perceived to be in focus on for instance the landing page as it appeared multiple times on it. The category functions were reflected upon in the same way from a usefulness perspective. Since the consumers' purpose is finding a rental item, the search bar and categories were not only thought of as useful:

[Since the search bar and categories are in focus] Hygglo doesn't try to sell the service in other ways in the meantime, so it adds credibility to the company. You get the info that you need in a simple way, like everything is just there, exactly what you need and you can click around more and get more info otherwise. So it helps the company in building trust. -Henric

The categories and the search bar were seemingly perceived as attention-grabbing as they were presented clearly on the landing page, without being distracted by advertisements, which some mentioned they had experienced on other service platforms. As a result of the above, these technical functions seemed to contextually bolster the PU. Additionally, this contributed to a more positive impression of Hygglo as they extracted it as a cue for the company to be more interested in the consumer's interests rather than their own commercial interests, as seen in the quote above. In this sense, Hygglo communicated on their website from a service-dominant logic approach appropriate for P2P rental platforms as operators in the sharing economy since customer engagement is a driver for consumer and prosumer satisfaction in the emerging economy in question (Casidy et al., 2022).

Or browse our most popular categories...



Here's what some of our users think

"Toppen! Rekommenderar!"

"fantastiskt bra!!"

"Bra!!"

"Trevlig och hjälpsam 🙌"



Image 8: Popular item categories. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

In specific, the interviewees expressed appreciation for being exposed to the “popular categories” on the landing page (see Image 8) as they seemed to extract it as a cue of the service frequently being used by others. Often, the participants clicked on a popular category before searching for the specific item they firstly were interested in. Hence, the popular categories formed a source of social influence, inspiration, and legitimacy which directly affected their PU. Interviewees like Naomi also pointed out that the diversity of the categories and sub-categories on the landing page and specific item category pages was positive, as it

made them realize that they could rent and rent out items they had not previously thought about.

As the vast majority pointed out that filtering options were something that they valued, yet were missing on the item category page, the PU was directly negatively affected. Although some participants overlooked the lack of filtering options as they had the impression that Hygglo was a new company, their PU of the overall service was still affected notably because of the non-existence of filtering options:

I get the impression that Hygglo might be quite new. I feel like their website has some faults in it that they could improve and that they will probably improve because it feels like those things come with more people using their service. Like more filters. I guess if you're a new brand and not a lot of people use your service, then there might not be a need for a lot of filters because there's not too much to choose from. But as more people start to use the service, then there will be a need for more filters. ... I feel like they're a little bit of a startup vibe and I wouldn't be too happy to be their test person. So if they updated the website a little bit I would feel like they probably knew what they were doing. -Kate

The lack of filtering options was therefore seemingly extracted as a cue for not being a frequently used service which was perceived as negative from a usefulness perspective. It is, therefore, possible that the existence of “popular categories” compensated for the apprehension of Hygglo being an unpopular choice of consumption platform by serving as a form of social proof. Some participants also extracted the lack of filtering options as a cue for the company being careless.

Furthermore, social buttons such as reviews and social media sharing functions generally had a direct negative effect on the PU. Some who previously had used other participatory platforms with reviews, as well as P2P rental platforms in specific such as Airbnb, expected to be able to click on the reviewer's name and profile picture to enter their profile page. This speaks of the concept of frame being especially prevalent, as their previous experiences seem to shape their current expectations of Hygglo. However, this technical feature did not exist, but if it were to it is possibly likely that the customer's perceived trust and legitimacy could be strengthened:

It would make it seem even more legit if you could verify the person [the reviewer] who has verified him [the renter]. I was assuming that I could click my way onto the reviewers' pages to read more about them, but I can't. I just realized there's no [hyper]link to the reviewer's name and profile picture. So I would like that. Just to see that they have their own account because, in turn, they might have ratings themselves. I would like to make sure that the reviewers are real people. -Amanda

The review function (see Image 9) with its rating system had a particularly strong positive impact on PU. All participants voiced that it was helpful to get a transparent overview of other people's renting experiences on a specific item and renter, as it helped them elaborate on whether the item is worth renting. Namely, all interviewees noted that they would look at whether renters had done successful rentals in the past where high reviews led to an impression of the renter being legitimate and easy to rent from.



Image 9: Review function. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

Once again, the review section formed social proof which influenced the participants' hypothetical rental scenario. The data suggests that although Hygglo does not include the sentence "Verified with BankID" in relation to the renters' reviews, people generally trust other people's opinions. This goes with both the interviewees that explicitly understood that all renters are verified with Bank-id, and those who explicitly and implicitly stated a need to check whether the renters are verified or not. In other words, some expressed a consciousness regarding that all renters are verified, some did not, and some implicitly expressed that they did not understand nor were conscious of that fact. Nevertheless, some even said that the reviews were more important than the renter's Bank-id verification and response frequency:

I would probably base my whole renting on other people's opinions. ... It's even more important than the Bank-id and response frequency. -Kate

Sandra adds nuance to Kate's statement:

I do like reviews because I feel like they're mainly honest. So it feels like they're honest. ... If I'm not certain I usually check the reviews and if they're good I kind of go with that, and if they are bad I just don't. ... I think the reviews kind of put it [the website] up a notch I'd say. ... It makes Hygglo feel like a bit more honest.

Except for the reviews being extracted as a cue for security and PEOU, they were also extracted as a cue for legitimacy. In consequence, this lowered the fear of interacting with strangers which both Sandra and Kate shared. Hence, as the renter's name, the first date of renting out, biography, location, and the "Share on Facebook" button is the focal point of the renter web page when first entering it, it is suggested that Hygglo and P2P rental platforms in general places their review sections in the center on relevant web pages in an attention-grabbing way.

5.2.2.3 Technical features and service and brand impression

When the interviewees were asked about their impression of Hygglo after having visited the website, responses were mostly positive from a technical features point of view, as these provided cues of inspiration and legitimacy. This is interesting as the determinant affected their PEOU in a slightly more negative way and their PU in a mostly positive way while using the website, which should imply that their overall attitude towards and hence behavioral intention to use the service and brand is moderate. *How come this is not the case?*

When technical features looked familiar to the participants, cues were extracted as indicators that Hygglo functions like previously experienced P2P rental platforms. This perceived familiarity, moderated by their frame, formed expectations of the functionality of certain technical features on Hygglo's website. When these expectations were not met, this lowered the participants' PEOU and consequently, their service impression was negatively influenced. The reasoning for this was that the absence of specific technical features acted as a cue defying the potential such technical features have as acting as a trust-building mechanism, something that was considered crucial to include in a P2P rental context where the fear of scams is high. In turn, the attitude towards and behavioral intention to use the platform while browsing it weakened.

According to Weick (2001), Hygglo could be considered an equivoque technology considering the misinterpretation of certain technical features. Based on Weick's theory of technology as equivoque, consumers may interact with a certain technology in ways that the technology providers do not expect as a result of consumers misinterpreting how it works.

Hence, Weick's theory can explain the consequences of ambiguous features that are present on a platform. His theory, however, is unable to explain the consequences of absent features on a platform. Although we do not disconfirm Weick's theory of technology as equivoque, we propose an extension of it. For instance, the theory of technology as equivoque should imply that technology may be misused if consumers misinterpret how it works, and that consumers may become unmotivated to interact with the technology if there exists ambiguous communication, as misinterpretation may cause expectations of functionality that cannot be met. This not only implies that technology and consumer interaction influence one another reciprocally, but it also adds a service-dominant logic to the theory of technology as equivoque. In this sense, we suggest that the technology itself should not be the primary focus for companies that provide them. Rather, companies should concentrate on the two-way impact between consumers and technology as the total reciprocal influence affects their potential customers' behavioral intention to use a company's technology at all. In other words, the value of the technology is jointly created.

Although the consumers experienced unmet expectations at times while browsing the website, they also expressed that unanticipated yet relevant technical features exceeded their expectations of Hygglo's service. For instance, the date-and-price calendar was a positive surprise for many which enhanced their perceived quality of service greatly, meaning they would be more likely to use the service. Possibly, this is because the most commonly used P2P rental platform in the past - Blocket - does not include that feature as retrieved from the participants' memory. Hence, their previous experience - their frame - subconsciously did not form expectations of Hygglo offering such a feature. Nevertheless, the date-and-price calendar was intuitive to use for the participants which suggests that they indeed had used familiar features in the past, and/or that Hygglo communicated sufficient and clear explicit cues for how to use the feature which reduced uncertainty of how to use it. Overall, when asked retrospectively, this feature seems to have been a big reason for their overall positive brand impression. Similarly, the popular categories and overall function of the review sections were reasoned to be great contributors to their general positive service and brand impression when asked retrospectively as the date-and-price calendar and review sections holistically speaking increased the feeling of legitimacy in hindsight. Therefore, it seems as if technical features that provide an overview of item accessibility and budgeting in addition to social proof are the most vital for a positive P2P rental service and brand impression. It also suggests that when such valued features are offered, prospective consumers may overlook

missing yet wanted features when evaluating the service and brand retrospectively. This could explain why the attitude towards Hygglo was positive despite the slightly more negative PEOU and mostly positive PU.

5.2.3 Third-party endorsements & integrations

Another prevalent determinant found in this study is summarized as third-party endorsements and integrations. This determinant concerns the platform's associations- and involvements with, and mentions of- other companies on the platform, and how this affects prospective consumers' cues. On Hygglo's platform, third-party integrations appear in terms of built-in account functions by Bank-id - Sweden's largest official online verification system (Bank-id, n.d.). Moreover, third-party endorsements appear as logos on various pages that represent established Swedish journals, such as *Dagens Industri*, *Dagens Nyheter*, and *Expressen* (see Image 10).



Image 10: Third-party endorsements. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

5.2.3.1 Third-party endorsements & integrations and PEOU

Overall, third-party integrations affected the participants' PEOU in terms of the account-creating process, as well as the management of personal details and passwords. These functions were described as being familiar to previously experienced account-creating processes, which speaks for the participants' current frame forming certain expectations on how the process was to unfold, thus having an influence on their prospective sensemaking process. However, the familiarity seemed to trigger cues that implied convenience, influencing the participants' PEOU and overall attitude in a positive way. In this sense, it seemed that Hygglo lived up to expectations caused by the participants' frame, by offering such third-party integrations.

For instance, to create an account on the platform, the user is required to verify themselves with Bank-id (see Image 11). The participants reacted positively to this

information, as it seemed to be an extracted cue for something familiar and uncomplicated, as stated above.

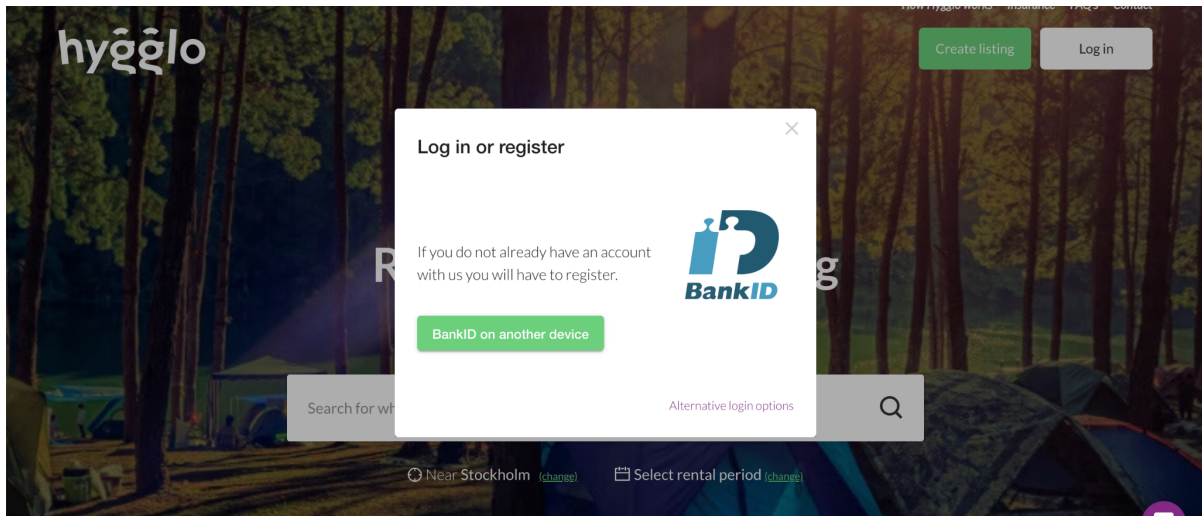


Image 11: Third-party integrations. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://www.hygglo.se/>

Bank-id seemed to have a further positive effect on PEOU since they were not required to create a password, as signing in through Bank-id is the only requirement. This was another cue seemingly causing the participants to further associate Hygglo's service with convenience and usability, thus from a prospective sensemaking point of view influencing their future intentions to use the service. Moreover, once they created an account through Bank-id, their personal information was automatically generated and not required to be filled in. These factors were motivated by making the account-creation process convenient and easy which seemingly had a positive influence on their PEOU of the platform. This is exemplified by Hunter:

Well, I noticed that I didn't have to create a password, which is, I guess that's nice because I have about a million of those already. And I'm assuming that in the future when I want to log on to the website I'll just use my Bank-id again.

It seems that within Hunter's frame are previous experiences of needing to create excessive amounts of passwords, thus explaining why the absence of password creation requirements in the case of Hygglo acts as a cue for Hunter as something positive. Furthermore, it seems that this also aids him in making sense of the service prospectively, as he reasons that he now expects that using the service in the future also will be as convenient as his current experience. This statement is further agreed upon by Moa, who further lifts the aspect of not needing a password as something convenient:

...I noticed that I didn't need to put in a password, I suppose it's because you log in with your Bank-id anyways. ... I really prefer not having a password. I think it makes the whole sign-up thing much easier and much more smooth. So I would say it was a positive experience since it was so easy.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the participants' personal details were automatically generated when signing in to Bank-id, which also seemed to trigger cues that influenced PEOU in a positive sense. This is exemplified by Amanda:

It's very smooth when you just need to use your Bank-id. Also, they had most of my information already and I just needed to put in my email and my phone number so I think the process was very simple. But it usually is, I think nowadays.

Here Amanda seems to associate the automatically generated information with convenience and further elaborates that she considers this a common property for similar processes these days, presumably based on her previous experiences. In this sense, her frame in a similar way to the previously mentioned participants, seems to be what forms her expectations of Hygglo. Since Hygglo's process, in this case, seemed to live up to her expectations, this has a positive influence on her PEOU.

Based on the analysis above, third-party integrations in the case of Hygglo had a positive influence- and increased the degree of PEOU among the participants, as the built-in functions these entailed created a more seamless user experience, which in turn improved the users' perception of usefulness and intention to use the service. However, it is worthy of note that no expressions of third-party endorsements in terms of established Swedish journals as improving factors of PEOU were identified.

5.2.3.2 Third-party endorsements & integrations and PU

In terms of the participants' PU of the platform based on third-party endorsements and integrations, both the Bank-id and external companies' logos seemed to be meaningful for the participants. Firstly, Bank-id was continuously expressed among the participants as an extracted cue for security and legitimacy. All the participants were familiar with Bank-id previously and had positive associations with it. As it also is an official service, they considered it legitimate. In this sense, their previous knowledge of Bank-id once again showed to constitute what Weick (1995) refers to as their frame. This arguably affected their sensemaking processes as their perceptions of Bank-id's legitimacy seemed to transfer to Hygglo. At several stages of the interviews, this became prominent in different ways, as it was expressed that the presence of Bank-id gave Hygglo a serious impression, as Bank-id is similar to an official document. This was articulated by Anders:

...[Bank-id] (see Image 11) gives it a more serious feeling around it, because Bank-id is like the official identification, or it's unofficial, but official identification for online purposes in Sweden and it gives all companies a bit of a serious feeling...

Although Anders seemed uncertain if Bank-id was a form of official identification or not, he associated it with the feeling of something official, thus this seemed to constitute his frame of reference, which became the context from which he seemed to extract the cue that Hygglo, as well as other services that use Bank-id, are serious companies.

Furthermore, since all users on the platform are required to use Bank-id as identification when creating an account, this seemingly caused the participants to extract cues indicating that everyone on the platform is verified, thus reducing the risk of being scammed. This was mentioned by the participants several times after the account-creating process, for example when being asked what information is most important to them before hypothetically renting. For instance, Max expressed:

I think it's a positive requirement [Bank-id] (see Image 11) ... Because then you're more sure that the people on the other side are who they say they are. Which is important if you want to do a peer-to-peer transfer-like process.

Max is stating that the Bank-id verification function equals feelings of trust, which he considers something important for specifically P2P rental platforms. In this sense one can interpret that Max has the preconceived idea that it is not a given that the person you are renting from is who they say they are, hence Bank-id being a solution to that experienced barrier of distrust. To further elaborate, it also seems that Max's frame is constituted by the preconceived idea that the P2P concept in general is something one should be apprehensive towards, thus it being of potential importance to him that such solutions are offered.

An overall detected theme among the respondents links to Max's reasoning, the indication of the peer renter being verified by Bank-id was one of the most important things to them, as it implied that they could trust whom they were renting from, hence affecting their intentions to use the platform. This is further supported by Sandra's statement:

...it's kind of harder to scam someone with the Bank-id and I feel like when you do these kinds of things [renting], the fear of getting scammed is quite high. So I feel like just the Bank-id thing just generates a feeling of safety more.

Secondly, although far from mentioned as frequently as with Bank-id, the endorsement of established Swedish journals was picked up by some participants. The journal logos that were listed on the website were familiar to these participants, and in the same sense as

Bank-id presence seemed to trigger cues for legitimacy, so did the journals. An example can be found in an interview with Max:

...there are some logos from other companies that I know. That's good as well, that also gives me some security. ... [“Which logos, in particular, makes you trust Hygglo more?”] The first three, I think. Dagens Nyheter, Göteborgs-Posten, and Dagens Industri. Yeah. They are the more serious ones to me.

In this example, it is clear that Max's somewhat prevalent apprehensiveness towards the service is comforted by the extracted cues of security that these journals entail. This can potentially be explained by the fact that Max's preconceived knowledge of the journals constitutes his frame, thus acting as a reference point from which he can extract cues positively influencing his perception of Hygglo. Through this process, it seems he is able to make sense of the service as something safe to use, and therefore useful.

5.2.2.3 Third-party endorsements & integrations and service and brand impression

Third-party endorsements and integrations were expressed solely as positive cues by the participants, helping them establish feelings that counter their initial apprehensiveness towards the P2P concept, where fears of being scammed and not trusting the platform initially have been prevalent. In other words, the positive cues that third-party brands in this case trigger, address the prospective consumers' values and fears. This proves to be successful in triggering the participants' thought processes leading them on their way to overcome experienced barriers related to trust and legitimacy concerning the P2P concept. This links to Weick's (1995) reasoning that cues can be used as a way of decreasing uncertainty and a tool for guiding someone through an uncertain situation. In the case of Hygglo, third-party endorsements prove to be a good example of using cues in this way, improving the platforms' PU. Furthermore, Kemppainen & Uusitalo (2022) argue for the importance of platform providers to understand how they can facilitate customers' processes of extracting cues to generate desirable actions, such as using the service. In this sense, third-party endorsements and integrations as cues do not only prove to reduce uncertainty in regards to the platform, but they also seem to act in favor of it, increasing its overall legitimacy. Meaning, when leveraged appropriately, the endorsements can even be used to improve the impression of the service overall, not only counter preconceived uncertainties towards it, thus leading to an increased willingness to adopt the service.

Furthermore, although the participants in this study did not explicitly express that the endorsements changed how they make sense of Hygglo as a brand, it is clear that when Hygglo leverages other brands and their reputation in their website communication, they are successful in communicating the security and legitimacy of their service. This implies that Hygglo as a brand itself is indirectly affected by the third-party brands it is associated with. This can once again potentially be explained through Weick's (1995) frame, where the participants' pre-existing knowledge of- and attitudes towards third-party brands become the reference point from which they extract cues of Hygglo's website. In this sense, implementing third-party endorsements and integrations can be seen as an important strategy for stabilizing the image of P2P rental platforms as legitimate. One can further argue that considering presumptive renters' apprehensiveness towards P2P rental platforms in terms of security and legitimacy, these kinds of platforms are especially vulnerable in terms of reputation. Hence, especially P2P rental platforms likely need to be extra attentive in regard to which associations they try to create when leveraging third-party endorsements and integrations. Considering the weight and importance of legitimate endorsements expressed by the participants in this study, arguably the "wrong" endorsements could have a great equally negative effect on the brand itself.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This section first discusses and concludes the key findings from our analysis. Next, we present our modified TAM for P2P rental platforms and our contribution to the field of strategic communication. Lastly, suggestions for further research are presented.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore and understand which and how determinants affect prospective renters' perception of and intention to adopt P2P rental platforms, and how such platforms can tailor their website communication to these. The purpose was fulfilled by conducting a qualitative study of the P2P rental platform Hygglo through interviews and observations. Based on the determinants, we analyzed how these affect users' P2P rental service and brand impression from a sensemaking perspective.

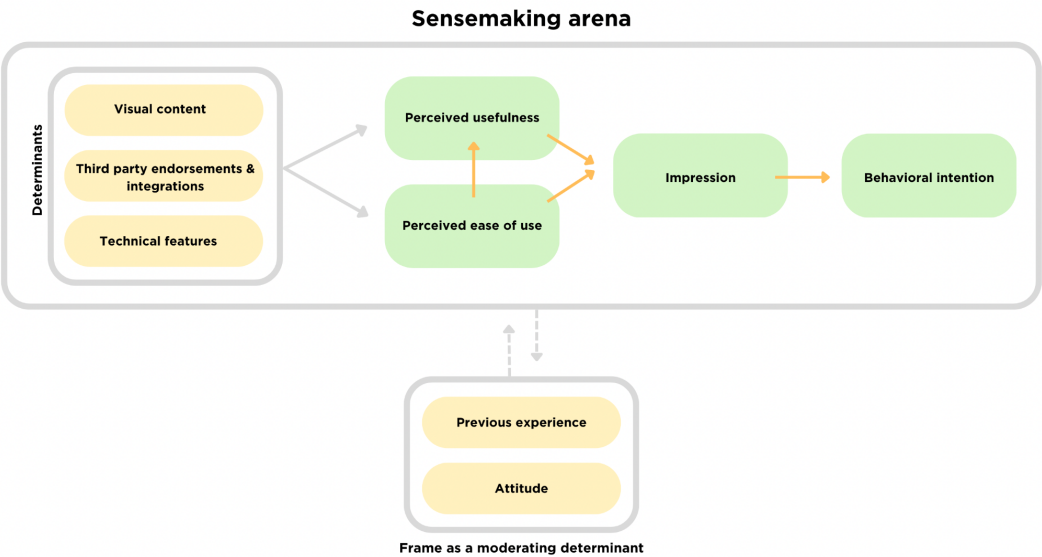
From our research, we have found that three key factors play a role in determining whether or not people are willing to use Hygglo's platform: visual elements, technical features, and third-party endorsements and integrations. We also discovered an additional factor that we call "frame" which seems to impact the other determinants. To reach these conclusions, we applied Weick's Sensemaking Theory (1995) which explains how people can extract meaning from a situation like visiting a website. Our analysis showed that the presence or absence of these factors influenced how participants felt about the P2P rental concept, how well they understood the service, and how legitimate they perceived Hygglo as a company. These impressions ultimately shaped their opinion of the service and brand.

In this study, it was prevalent that the participants based their understanding and impression of Hygglo's service on their lived experiences such as previous encounters with similar technology, services, or previously visited pages on the Hygglo website. This links to Weick's (1995) concept of frame as well as retrospective and prospective sensemaking. For P2P rental platforms in general, this suggests the importance of managing the cues that customers extract in the sense of attempting to create positive associations and providing the customers with a seamless user experience through clear communication. As these non-product-related factors seemed to be the most prevalent in our research, this suggests that employing service marketing should be of priority for such platforms rather than product marketing, as supported by Bhanja & Saxena (2022). However, as the authors also argue, service marketing does not necessarily need to replace product marketing, which also was

clear in our study as the participants also expressed curiosity in regard to product quality and price. Furthermore, as Eckhardt et al. (2019b) argue that companies with more sharing economy characteristics face difficulties when using traditional marketing strategies, we believe that P2P rental platforms should prioritize service marketing as a crucial aspect of their communication efforts.

Building on the findings, we present our modified TAM for P2P rental platforms (see Figure 3). Our model demonstrates the identified determinants tailored specifically to the P2P rental context. It was shown that when these determinants are leveraged in a way that meets its intended users’ expectations, this improves the users’ service and brand impression and therefore their behavioral intention to use a P2P rental platform. Our modified model differs from previous TAMs as it suggests that previous experience influences all other determinants to some extent, whilst the TAM3 (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008) only considers previous experience to influence some. Furthermore, by adding a sensemaking element to the TAM, our model highlights that previous experience and attitude are continuously influenced *during* the usage of a certain technology, unlike other TAMs. This can explain why prospective sensemaking may be facilitated the more a technology is used, as the frame expands throughout the usage.

Figure 3
The TAM for P2P rental platforms



Note: The modified TAM for P2P rental platforms by Ellen Klofsten & Märtha Sandin Värn, 2023.

This study contributes to the field of strategic communication, as the summed-up findings suggest a strategic framework for website communication on P2P rental platforms, that can help such services achieve their overall organizational goals. In a P2P rental platform context, it expands a theoretical foundation from which researchers and platform managers can analyze how their service communication is interpreted and what consequences may follow from a service-dominant logic perspective. Such insights, as problematized, are important since companies within the sharing economy should market themselves through a service-dominant logic approach as it helps leverage customer engagement and drive customer satisfaction (Casidy et al., 2022).

6.1 Further research

Due to the scope of this paper, the research was limited in terms of how many determinants could be included. Thus, we argue that there may exist more determinants of relevance to P2P rental platforms, hence arguing that further research with a broadened scope through abductive research could be appropriate to detect additional ones. In this sense, a more solid contribution as to how such platforms can better strategically communicate their service can be made. Furthermore, our study was conducted in-depth on one P2P rental service for general item-sharing. Hence, it would be important to conduct similar research on other P2P rental services that also do not have an item niche, as well as comparing P2P rental platforms with different niches. This way, the generalizability of the modified TAM for P2P rental platforms could be strengthened. Lastly, we suggest that future researchers explore and measure the actual marketing efficiency that P2P rental platforms may experience if they employ our modified TAM.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

1. Grand tour questions

- What is your attitude toward P2P rental platforms?
- Do you know of any P2P rental platforms previously? If so, which?

2. Landing page

Prompt: Enter and scroll through the website landing page.

- Are you familiar with this brand?
- When you look at this page, what are your immediate thoughts and feelings? How come?
- What is your interpretation of the company and what they do? How come?
- How do you experience this page in general? Why?

3. “How Hygglo works” page

Prompt: Find the section that explains how the service works.

- Based on what you observe, what is your interpretation of how the rental service works?
- What makes you interpret it in that way?
- How do you experience this page in general, why?
- Do you feel like any information is missing? If so, what and why?
- How did you experience the *process* of finding information about how the rental service works? Why?
- Has your impression of the service changed after visiting this page? In what way, why?

4. Membership page

Prompt: Create an account.

- How did you experience the *process* of creating an account? Why?
- Has your impression of the service changed after visiting this page? In what way, why?

5. Item category page

Scenario + Prompt: Imagine that you want to get a quick overview of which items can be rented in a specific category. Then, browse a rental item category.

- How do you experience the *process* of browsing a rental item? Why?
- How do you experience this page in general? Why?
- Do you feel like any information is missing when you’re browsing an item? What and why?
- Is it possible to access that information if you wish?
- When you look at the different items, what draws your attention/what stands out to you?
- Has your impression of the service changed after visiting this page? In what way, why?

6. Item page

Scenario + Prompt: Imagine that you want to rent a specific item in the selected item category. Then, select an item.

- How do you experience this page in general? Why?
- Would you like to know anything more before hypothetically choosing to rent this item? If so, what and why?
- Has your impression of the service changed after visiting this page? In what way, why?

7. Peer profile page

Prompt: Visit a renter profile.

- How do you experience this page in general? Why?
- Do you feel like any information is missing? If so, what and why?
- Is there any information that *if* provided or missing, could affect your intention to rent or *not*?

8. End of website questions

Message: You have now visited both platforms' basic functions.

- In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about the website?
- In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about the service?
- In general, what did you think about the website in terms of how easy it was to use?
- In particular, do you feel like you were able to easily find the information you were looking for?
- In general, did you find the service of value to you, in what way?
- In honest words, would you use a peer-to-peer rental service based on what you have observed today? What are your main reasons as to why/why not?

9. Questions about consumption

- When you consume things, what is important to you? Why?
- What do you believe is most important for others when they consume? Why?
- What is your attitude towards permanently owning things in comparison with temporarily renting things? Why?
- Do you believe that people in your surroundings have opinions about you based on the way you consume? In what way? Do you care?
- Would you say that you have opinions about others based on the way they consume?
- Would you consider your consumption behavior to be easily affected by trends? Why?

Appendix B: Coding sheet - Previous experience and attitude

Participant	Previous P2P rental service experience and knowledge	Attitude towards P2P rental services before using Hygglo

Appendix C: Coding sheet - PEOU & PU

Web page	PEOU	PU
Landing page		
How Hygglo Works		
Creating an account		
Browsing rental items		
Selected rental item		
Renter profile		
Website in general		