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Expanding Sharing Economy Platforms

Translating success to new markets

Author: Ida Sofie Åsle

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Supervisor: Lars Bo Jeppesen

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to construct a theoretical framework for sharing economy platforms planning to expand internationally. The motivation underpinning this purpose is based on the rapidly increasing number of new startups within the sharing economy, and the observation that many of these ventures fail after a few years. Typically, these ventures experience success in their home market, which attracts investors demanding more growth. This growth can often only be achieved by expanding internationally.

However, the expansions are often unsuccessful, leading the companies behind them to fail. In an attempt to explore how the success rate among internationally expanding sharing economy platforms can be improved, this thesis merges Platform Theory, literature on the sharing economy, as well as theories of international expansion and entry timing, to construct an adapted theoretical framework.

This framework is then applied to the study of a case company that experienced all the typical challenges pertaining to expanding sharing economy platforms: GoMore. GoMore is a Danish ridesharing platform that expanded to Norway in the summer of 2014. Unfortunately, a year after launch, the platform was still not fully functional in the new market due to low adoption rates. Analyzing the case company's strategic actions in terms of the adapted framework, several points for improvements emerge. The findings suggest that adhering to the proposed framework may have helped the case company in succeeding with their expansion.

The main implication of this thesis is that there are relevant theories as to expanding sharing economy internationally, and by the purposeful merger of these theories, frameworks for strategic action may be developed. Such a framework may assist sharing economy platforms in identifying markets with success potential, as well as the appropriate strategies for obtaining this success.

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1. Introduction

> "Shaking loose of the former wisdom that, "You are what
> you own" and converting to a new wisdom, "You are what you
> share," indicates that we just may be entering the
> post-ownership economy."

<div align="right">(Belk, 2013:1599)</div>

Since this statement was made only a couple of years ago, the sharing economy has seen a rapid development, and is currently booming. Each hour, every day, $2,5 million is invested into this sector, which is estimated to reach a revenue opportunity of $335billion by 2025 (PwC, 2014b). The central idea of the sharing economy is that of *resource optimization*, which is argued to contribute to minimizing today's overconsumption and a stronger sense of community in society (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010).

The sharing economy allows people to share their skills, homes, cars, boats, among a wealth of other things, for a limited time, and at a predetermined price. While these are age-old human practices, the novel factor is that this sharing can now take place in organized, online-mediated ways, with a reach far beyond one's immediate network. Examples of companies facilitating this include Airbnb, which enables people to rent out spare rooms or apartments to travelers, TaskRabbit, which lets people advertise skills they want to "share" for a small fee, and GetAround, a platform upon which people can rent out their private cars while they are not using them.

The reasons behind the current success of many sharing economy businesses are many. Financial crises and recessions have contributed to increased frugality, while population growth and urbanization have led to an increased need for alternative modes of consumption. At the same time, the ubiquity of internet-connected smartphones have simplified transaction-making between strangers (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010, 2011; Leung & Lesko, 2015; PwC, 2014a; Smolka & Hienerth, 2014).

A seemingly boundless optimism toward the sharing economy, and the resulting exorbitant amounts of capital injected into this sector inevitably lead to new ventures emerging constantly. However, most of these actually fail (Gauthey, 2014; McEwen, 2013; Needleman & Loten, 2014). Explaining the reasons for the many failures within this sector in order to gain strategic knowledge from them is difficult, so long as the sharing economy remains an underdeveloped academic concept. While several theories targeting public decision makers with a focus on consumer behavior in relation to the sharing economy have been developed, theories targeting nascent sharing economy entrepreneurs are hard to identify.

A developing academic field that offers a wealth of theoretical propositions targeting strategic decision makers is *Platform Theory*. Indeed, most businesses popularly considered to lie within the sharing economy spectrum can be defined as platforms. Yet, few if any authors and theorists have focused on this intersection in particular. Hence, in this paper, Platform Theory will be used as the basis for a theory approximation targeting sharing economy entrepreneurs, complemented by relevant literature on the sharing economy.

Platform businesses in general constitute some of today's most highly valuated companies, such as Google, Uber, Amazon, Facebook, eBay and Alibaba. These firms do not push their inventory or services on the market in a pipe-like manner, the way traditional firms do. In fact, many of them barely have any inventory at all. Rather, these companies are using online technologies to facilitate transactions between people who need each other in some way. Value is in this way created by users, for other users, and the platform merely serves as an interface upon which this value creation and consumption can take place.

This provides a *scaling advantage,* which, combined with several related technological developments, contribute to the massive growth of platform businesses in later years. While the initial creation of the platform infrastructure may be costly, scaling it further does not require large additional investments. This is because users are the ones creating value, not the platform itself – there are thus virtually limitless returns to scale (Choudary, 2015a).

Moreover, value-creating users on one side of a platform attract more users on the opposite user side. Indirect network effects, or externalities, between users thus contribute to a self-reinforcing mechanism of platform growth. This characteristic is a major advantage of platform businesses, however it is also a double-edged sword (Anderson, Parker, & Tan, 2014; Evans & Schmalensee, 2010; Katz & Shapiro, 1985; G. G. Parker & Van Alstyne, 2005). Among the most critical challenges caused by network externalities is the "chicken-and-egg problem" (Caillaud & Jullien, 2003). How to attract users to one side of the platform when the attractive factor – users on the other side of the platform – is not yet present? This point is crucial, because with insufficient participation on either side of the platform, users will not find enough transaction possibilities and there will be little or no activity on the platform.

Sharing economy platforms experience all of the same challenges that platform businesses in general do, however the many failures seem to suggest that they encounter an added layer of complexity. The fact that these platforms all have business models and value propositions that are innovative, and thus uncertain to the public, creates a legitimacy problem that can be hard to overcome. Adopting sharing practices require behavior change, which has a higher threshold than simply switching from one established product or service to another (Amey, 2010; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; McEwen, 2013; Sperling & Shaheen, 1999). Moreover, because of the technological novelty of many sharing economy platforms, they are often situated in legal

gray areas (Guttentag, 2013; Leung & Lesko, 2015; Rauch & Schleicher, 2015; Sperling & Shaheen, 1999). This can in turn affect attitudes toward market entrants negatively, in terms of both authorities and potential users. These factors make for a "liability of newness", aggravating the general chicken-and-egg problem, and making it difficult for sharing economy platforms to move on strategically from their early stages.

In order to reach the point where a sharing economy platform becomes attractive – when users are readily able to find a "match" – deliberate strategies to deal with the factors above need to be developed and implemented. Extensive theoretical propositions have to this end been formulated for platform entrepreneurs, of which a prominent example is Evans and Schmalensee's (2007) Catalyst Framework. To my knowledge, no works have targeted sharing economy platforms in the same way. Hence, The Catalyst Framework will in this paper provide the structure for the targeted theory approximation, complemented by additional Platform Theory as well as literature and empirical findings on the sharing economy.

Overcoming the chicken-and-egg problem entails encountering the aforementioned self-reinforcing growth of new users caused by the network externalities between them. However, because sharing economy platforms often mediate transactions taking place in the physical world, they need to overcome ignition problems not only around launch in their home market, but with *every new market entry*. Thus, in order to close in on one of the most critical and interesting aspects of sharing economy platforms, the focus of this paper will be on the significant challenges posed by *expanding* a sharing economy platform into new markets. Additional theories on international expansion and entry timing will therefore be included in the adapted theoretical framework (Ghemawat, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988, 1998; Suarez & Lanzolla, 2005). The objective of this effort is to develop Platform Theory propositions to reflect the context and realities of internationally expanding sharing economy platforms.

This emerging theoretical framework will be applied to empirical findings from a case company situated in the midst of these two paradigms: GoMore. GoMore is a Danish company providing a platform upon which drivers can advertise the empty seats in their cars, and where people without a car can book these seats when they find an appropriate ride. Ultimately, the improved utilization of car seats will purportedly contribute to lower individual transportation costs, lower emissions and less congestion.

After having been present in Denmark since 2005, GoMore's platform was expanded to Norway in the summer of 2014, an event in which I was actively participating as Market Associate, assisting the Norwegian Market Manager. The reason for my choice of case company was based on my experience with and observations of its difficulty in reaching the amount of users on both sides required for sufficient transaction options – a "critical mass" – in the new market, combined with my simultaneous academic discovery of Platform Theory. I became curious as to the factors contributing to GoMore's difficulties, and to how merging

theory on platforms and the sharing economy could possibly assist strategic decision making in this regard. My observations thus highlighted GoMore's fit as a suitable case for studying phenomena related to internationally expanding sharing economy platforms. Hence, in an attempt to generate knowledge from this case study, strategic decisions for tackling challenges particular to this type of platform and context, as well the rationales underlying them will be analyzed and discussed in light of the adapted theoretical framework.

This iterative and exploratory process will contain elements of abductive reasoning, and the research objective can be seen twofold. On the one hand, it is a theoretical study of a certain family of business models: *platforms*, in a specific context: the *sharing economy*. On the other hand, it is an empirical case study, in which the case company's strategic actions related to context-specific challenges are analyzed. Thus, while the individual findings related to the case company may not be generalizable per se, the study may nonetheless develop some generalizable theoretical propositions for companies with similar business models in similar contexts.

2. Research question

Reflecting on the particular challenges pertaining to expanding a platform business internationally and the assumed added difficulty of belonging to the sharing economy, coupled with the specific situation of the chosen case company, I will in this paper attempt to answer the following research question:

How can a platform business in the sharing economy overcome the challenges of international expansion?

In order to answer this question, I will first have to answer the following sub-questions, of which the first two represent the theoretical part, and the latter two represent the empirical part of this paper:

1. *What are the challenges particular to expanding platform businesses?*
2. *What additional challenges does being part of the sharing economy pose for an internationally expanding platform business?*
3. *How do the challenges play out in the case company?*
4. *How can the theoretical propositions based on merged theory inform internationally expanding sharing economy platforms?*

2.1 Project Outline

Part One of this paper will have a theoretical focus, of which the result will produce a Catalyst Framework adapted for expanding sharing economy platforms. The development of this framework will provide answers to the first two sub-questions. Part Two, the empirical part, will start by presenting the case company providing the data for this paper. Next, a chapter on methodology will explain the research design and data

collection methods adopted. The findings will then be analyzed and subsequently discussed. The latter part of the research paper will thus provide answers to the last two sub-questions. Finally, a conclusion will be reached, leading to an answer to the main research question.

2.3 Delimitations

The objective of this thesis is to construct a theoretical framework for sharing economy platforms intending to expand internationally, and to apply this framework to the analysis a relevant case company for validation and illustration purposes. Thus, the process of building a sharing economy platform from scratch, with what that entails in terms of design and architectural decisions, will not be a focus here. In relation to this, a platform's strategy for data gathering and –usage will not be elaborated on, as this constitutes a completely separate field of platform knowledge, not particular to the sharing economy. Neither will the long-term perspective on how to run a platform in terms of governance measures and user retention be discussed here.

Even though the case company operates within ridesharing, this paper will be concerned with sharing economy platforms overall and will thus not be a study of ridesharing platforms in particular. This is because focusing on ridesharing, the *product*, would entail a larger focus on consumer behavior, relative to a firm's strategic decision-making. Companies within the sharing economy seem to largely face the same types of problems, regardless of whether they mediate rides, houses, cars, or otherwise. Thus, since this paper's objective is to provide guidelines for sharing economy platform entrepreneurs and not governmental decision makers, for instance, the perspective will be that of the former. Furthermore, several previous studies focusing on consumer behavior in relation to ridesharing have previously been made, which in adequate ways can inform strategic decision making within sharing economy platforms (e.g. (Amey, 2010; Andersson, Hjalmarsson, & Avital, 2013; Chan & Shaheen, 2012; Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014; Furuhata et al., 2013; Shaheen, Mallery, & Kingsley, 2012; Shaheen, 1999).

PART ONE

The first part of this research paper will present the theoretical foundation upon which a framework for the following analysis will be constructed. The development of this framework will moreover provide answers to the first two sub-questions:

1. *What are the challenges particular to expanding platform businesses?*
2. *What additional challenges does being part of the sharing economy pose for an internationally expanding platform business?*

3. Background, Literature & Key Concepts

This chapter introduces the concepts of Platform Theory and the sharing economy in terms of their current state, background, and characteristics. The purpose is to provide a context to the theoretical framework merging literature and theories on both concepts, which will be presented in the following chapter.

Section 3.1 provides a thorough introduction to Platform Theory, its drivers, and particular related phenomena – network externalities, multihoming, and the winner-takes-all dynamic. Section 3.2 presents the sharing economy, the controversy surrounding it, as well as the drivers behind its recent success.

3.1 Platform Theory

The presence of online platforms has been increasing for more than a century already (Bakos, 1998; Evans, 2003). However, the rate at which *platformed online business models* now are responsible for most of the growth in an ever-expanding amount of industries is heretofore unseen. Airbnb has become the world's largest hospitality platform in just a few years, the traditional record- and movie stores have been replaced with subscription-based platforms such as Spotify and Netflix, and many a local bookshop has been outdone by the giant online "book" store Amazon. These kinds of businesses are moreover becoming the most highly valuated firms of today. Never before has a venture-backed company been valuated higher than the $50 billion mark Uber, an app connecting taxi drivers to passengers, reached in the summer of 2015 (Gandel, 2015). Literature on platform businesses often address both two- and multisided platforms. Just as some traditional firms have the potential to take on two-sided characteristics, many two-sided platforms can evolve into multisided ones, as complementary suppliers emerge. Because the focus of this thesis is ultimately expanding *sharing economy* platforms, the kind of platform businesses presented here are primarily two-sided.

3.1.1 Drivers

The reasons behind the tremendous growth of platform businesses are many. Evans and Schmalensee (2007) argue that several related technological developments have paved the way, namely dramatic reductions in the costs of computer programming, data storage, and communication. These developments give platforms a unique advantage in terms of gathering data about their users. This enables them to tailor solutions to users on a scale that just a few years ago would be unthinkable (Gansky, 2010). On top of that, there is the ubiquity of broadband connections, as well as "the rise of software platform technologies" (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007:5) that allows for the disruption and disorganization of traditional industries (Choudary, 2015a:59).

As aforementioned, another driver is the fact that users are the value creating force, which can significantly lower the barriers to entry for a platform business, relative to traditional companies. Users are attracted to each other, push each other to increase quality and exhibit the right behavior, and even advertise the platform through viral mechanisms, all on their own initiative and for their own benefit. Successful platforms are virtually infinitely scalable, because once the technology and interface are in place; the rest is handled by the users. The challenge is how to reach that point of flow – overcoming the hurdle of *critical mass*. It is possibly the most difficult challenge for platform entrepreneurs, and therefore the focus of this thesis will be on that particular stage in a platform's lifetime.

3.1.2 Network Externalities

Platforms act as interaction mediators between two or more sides of users, for whom they reduce transaction costs. The basis for a platform's survival is that it facilitates interactions that could not otherwise have taken place, or that it at least simplifies the transaction considerably. Otherwise, there is no need for the platform. Moreover, platforms are characterized by their inherent *network externalities*. Network externalities are often exemplified by the telephone. The more people have a telephone, the more valuable having a telephone is to the individual user. The telephone thus exhibits positive *direct*, or same-side, network externalities (Katz & Shapiro, 1985).

Platforms, on the other hand, exhibit positive *indirect*, or cross-side, network externalities as value to the individual user depends on the amount of users on the opposite side of the platform (Caillaud & Jullien, 2003). The size and activity level of each side will thus determine its attractiveness to the other side, and the larger the participating groups, the larger the potential indirect externalities. There is in this sense increasing returns to scale. Potentially strong, *positive* indirect externalities between the different groups targeted as users for a platform is imperative to its success (Evans & Schmalensee, 2010; Hagiu & Hałaburda, 2014; G. G. Parker & Van Alstyne, 2005).

Meanwhile users on the same side of a platform tend to prefer less rivalry within their group. Hence, in terms of *direct* externalities there are *decreasing returns to scale* (Armstrong, 2006; Belleflamme & Toulemonde, 2009; Boudreau & Jeppesen, 2014; Caillaud & Jullien, 2003; Eisenmann, Parker, & Van Alstyne, 2006; Evans & Schmalensee, 2007; Gawer, 2009). Contrary to the network characteristics of the telephone, then, excessive amounts of users on the same side of a two-sided platform cause rivalry, according to platform theorists. Under conditions of resource scarcity, such rivalry can be detrimental to the platform's success (Boudreau & Hagiu, 2008; Lamberton & Rose, 2012).

3.1.3   Multihoming

Multihoming is a central concept in Platform Theory and refers to when users on one or both sides simultaneously use several platforms to serve their needs. The opposite is singlehoming, which entails a platform monopoly (Armstrong, 2006). The latter situation is of course desired by platform entrepreneurs, but it can be difficult to obtain. An example of a platform industry exhibiting both single- and multihoming is the credit card industry. While consumers often hold only one type of card – they are singlehoming, shops usually accept multiple types of cards – they are multihoming (Rysman, 2009). An example of multihoming on both sides is the large extent of both drivers and passengers simultaneously using the two taxi apps Lyft and Uber (Choudary, 2014). According to Caillaud and Jullien (2003), there is an interrelation between the extent of network externalities and multihoming: the stronger the network externalities, the lesser the degree of multihoming, and vice versa. Multihoming is moreover related to switching costs. When the costs of switching are low, users tend to multihome out of convenience. Uber and Lyft are perfect examples of the latter.

3.1.4   Winner-Takes-All Dynamics

Many theorists claim that markets with network externalities tend to feature winner-takes-all dynamics. The argument goes that as soon as one single platform takes the lead, activity on competing platforms will dwindle, starting a negative spiral ultimately leading to their destruction and monopoly status for the winning platform (Eisenmann et al., 2006; G. Parker & Van Alstyne, 2014; Shapiro & Varian, 1999; Sun & Tse, 2009; Weyl, 2014). However, the probability of a winner-takes-all outcome depends on the switching costs between platforms. If switching costs are low on one or both sides of a platform, the chances that users will singlehome is understandably small. Today, most platforms are easily accessible through smartphones and other devices, thus largely; it is easy for users to switch from one platform to the other, in order to get the right product or service at the right time. Thus, with increased connectivity and democratization of access, the extent of multihoming on both sides of a platform is increasing (Choudary, 2015a).

The issue of multihoming is therefore an important consideration for all platform businesses. The cost of multihoming can be an inability to develop long-term competitive advantage, and is argued to be one of two factors critical to a platform business' success (Choudary, 2015a). Confident platform entrepreneurs in a context with high rivalry should therefore take measures to increase switching costs. These measures belong to a range of design considerations, which will be discussed in section 4.3 "Designing the Platform for Success".

3.2 The Sharing Economy

During the past decade, we have seen another strongly growing development, namely the *sharing economy,* also referred to as the *collaborative economy*. This concept have much in common with the platform business development; indeed, most businesses considered to lie within the sharing economy spectrum can be defined as platforms, examples being Airbnb, Lyft, TaskRabbit, GetAround, and GoMore. Despite the rapidly growing extent of literature on the sharing economy, the degree to which it incorporates the many relevant aspects of Platform Theory is negligible. Thus, there is a gap in the research and literature on this specific area of business strategy.

The sharing economy as an academic concept remains at a preparadigmatic stage. There is no formal definition of what constitutes a sharing economy platform (Botsman, 2013), nor are there any formal theories as to its characteristics or occurrence. The few theories on the sharing economy are developed with the purpose of identifying why people engage in it, and how this activity can be increased from a policy-maker perspective (e.g. Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2007, 2013; Benkler, 2004; Heckshcer & Adler, 2006; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; McArthur, 2014; Shaheen et al., 2012; Tussyadiah, 2015)

The naming of the sharing economy is just one of the highly debated issues surrounding it. While most of the "opinion leaders" on the matter prefer the term *collaborative economy* (Owyang, 2015), the term *sharing economy* is the one to gain most traction (Bloomberg, 2015), and will thus be the one used throughout this thesis. Among other popular terms are "on demand economy" (Bloomberg, 2015; L. Weber, 2015), and the "gig economy" (Kessler, 2015; Leung & Lesko, 2015; L. Weber, 2015).

3.2.1   Defining the Sharing Economy

Regardless of the definition debate, it is generally agreed upon that the main contribution of the sharing economy is an *enhanced utilization of resources* (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Botsman, 2013; Fraiberger & Sundararajan, 2015; Gansky, 2010; Smolka & Hienerth, 2014). In today's industrialized world where there is a surplus of nearly everything, much of that surplus remains underutilized – it sits *idle*. According to Botsman and Rogers (2010), idling capacity is crucial for the existence of the sharing economy, which is why this

distinction will inform this paper's definition of a sharing economy platform. This is important because it has implications for the type of literature applied and the generalizability of this paper. When the redistribution of idle capacity is a criterion for belonging to the sharing economy, certain platforms often thought to belong to it are excluded. Below, this will be clarified using two examples.

The first example concerns two ridesharing platforms, of which one, according to the definition adopted in this paper, belongs to the sharing economy and the other one does not. The first case is the ridesharing platform Blablacar. Blablacar, like GoMore, acts as a redistributor of idle passenger seats in private cars going a route from A to B, which is predetermined by the driver's personal itinerary. The other case is Uber, a mobility platform for the most part engaging drivers to provide taxi services with their own private cars. The routes driven by an Uber driver are determined by the passenger, not the driver, thus in this case the empty car seats do not represent idle capacity. Hence, Blablacar belongs to the sharing economy, while Uber does not.

The second example concerns two *car sharing* platforms, of which both have been defined by themselves and others as belonging to the sharing economy. The first case being the giant car rental platform Zipcar, on which users sign up and get access to a wide range of cars owned by the company. This is a "full mesh" company, as Lisa Gansky would put it (2010). The second case is the peer-to-peer car sharing platform GetAround, in which people rent out their private cars to others. This is an "own-to-mesh" company (Gansky, 2010). Even though both companies make use of technological advancements such as GPS functionality, trust- and online payment systems, only one of them truly improves the usage rate of idle capacity. It moreover taps into the aforementioned huge scaling advantage of not having to acquire inventory. Zipcar is thus not part of the sharing economy, but rather the access-economy, which is a related yet distinctly different industry.

What the sharing economy platforms from these two examples have in common, besides redistributing idle capacity, is that they are *peer-to-peer platforms*. Hence, in order for the purposeful merger of literature and theory on platforms and the sharing economy, the focus will be on the peer-to-peer sharing economy platform, from here on referred to as peer-to-peer platform or just sharing economy platform.

3.2.2   Controversy

The controversy surrounding the sharing economy extends beyond the naming debate. Proponents of the sharing economy tend to argue that sharing assets allow for lower barriers to ownership because of income opportunities (Fraiberger & Sundararajan, 2015; Fremstad, 2015), and that the increased usage of shared assets will necessitate higher quality production and the end of planned obsolescence (Botsman &

Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010). Critics claim that without proper regulation, the sharing economy only benefits the owners of assets, creating an even larger divide between the haves and the have-nots (Alden, 2014; Bialski, 2013; Malhotra & Van Alstyne, 2014; Querbes, 2014; Schor, 2014). Another favorable argument is that it opens up for people to make some extra money by leveraging their skills or extra time by providing services on a sharing economy platform (Dillahunt & Malone, 2015; Leung & Lesko, 2015). Others again claim that while this certainly *was* one of the positive contributions of the sharing economy in its early stages, it has developed into a trap for increasingly large groups of under- and unemployed people, being tricked into underpaid "freelance" work with no benefits or security (Arthur, 2014; Bliss, 2015; Lobenstine & Bailey, 2014; Reich, 2015a, 2015b).

3.2.3   Drivers

The drivers of the sharing economy are in many ways the same as for platforms. According to PwC economist Robert Vaughan, what we are seeing is "a result of long-term megatrends colliding together" (PwC, 2014a). The societal drivers are said to be the financial crises the late 2000s and the following economic recession, as well as population growth and urbanization. Among technological drivers are the growth of social networks, the ubiquity of high-speed internet connection and handheld mobile devices, and increasing opportunity for reputation- and trust-building in online transactions. Lastly, some argue that climate change and the efforts to slow it down has led to increased production costs, resulting in higher prices and thus less individual consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010, 2011; Leung & Lesko, 2015; PwC, 2014a; Smolka & Hienerth, 2014).

Some authors argue that the growth of this collaborative mindset is part of a reaction against the hyper-consumption the world has seen since the mid-twentieth century (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2013; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010; Sacks, 2011; Walsh, 2011). In the Western world, and perhaps in the US especially, ownership has long been seen as the ultimate self-realization, while alternatives such as renting, lending, swapping, and sharing have been considered sub-par and even embarrassing to engage in (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Now, however, a shift in these attitudes is impending. As Belk (2013) argues, "You are what you can access".

4. Developing a Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to construct a framework of merged theory and literature that will serve as a foundation for the following analysis. Answers to the two first sub-questions of this thesis will moreover be provided in the following.

Among the most significant works on platform businesses is Evans and Schmalensee's 2007 book *Catalyst Code*, in which the authors claim to present "the strategies behind the world's most dynamic companies" (p.1). Here, an economic catalyst is defined as:

"An entity that has

a) two or more groups of customers;

b) who need each other in some way; but

c) who can't capture the value from their mutual attraction on their own; and

d) rely on the catalyst to facilitate value-creating reactions between them."

(p.3)

A catalyst, then, corresponds to a platform, as it serves the same purpose and exhibits the same characteristics. The *catalytic reaction* occurs when value is created through the facilitation of interaction between two or more groups of customers. The book outlines the structure of the *Catalyst Framework*, which explains the fundamental elements essential for a catalyst to succeed; the main tasks associated with each of these elements, and suggested strategies to overcome challenges:
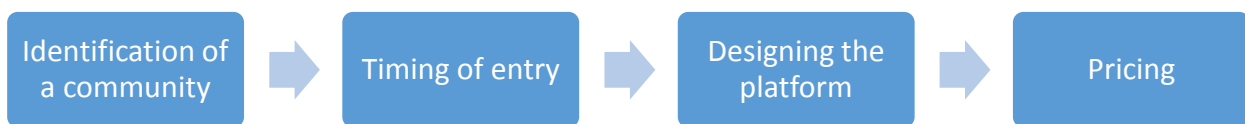
Identify the platform community	Establish a pricing structure	Design for successs	Focus on profitability	Compete strategically with others	Experiment and evolve
• Identify distinct groups that need each other	• Set separate prices for access and usage	• Attract multiple customer groups that need each other	• Study industry history	• Understand the dynamics of catalyst competition	• Know when to be first - and when to follow
• Determine why and how much they need each other	• Set prices to balance demand from two sides	• Promote interactions	• Use forecasts to enhance profitability	• Look for competition from different business models	• Control growth
• Evaluate who else is serving the community	• Price to grow - slowly at first	• Minimize transaction costs	• Anticipate competitor actions	• Leverage to attack	• Protect your back
• Compare a multisided business model with a single-sided one	• Pay customers to belong - sometimes	• Design for evolution	• Align interests internally and externally	• Consider cooperation	• Plan for what's next
	• Price for long-term profits				• Look out for the cops
				• Challenge existing catalysts and react to new catalyst threats	
• Find out who needs whom - and why	• Shape participation and maximize profits	• Draw customers and facilitate interactions	• Visualize path towards long-term profit		• Pursue evolutionary strategy for growth

(Evans & Schmalensee, 2007:40)

The Framework can thus be used by aspiring platform entrepreneurs as well as platforms with ambitions to expand. Hence, an adaptation of *relevant parts* of the Catalyst Framework will be used as a backbone for this thesis, providing a structure for the issues to be managed by expanding sharing economy platforms.

These selected parts consist of the three first stages of the Framework; the foundational task of *identifying communities* for targeting; the *design* of the platform, in terms of both attracting and engaging users; as well as *pricing decisions* affecting the users. Because of its significance to a platform's launch and expansion strategies, the issue of *entry timing* will be presented separately in section 2 of the adapted framework. Relevant elements from the Framework's three latter stages (ensuring profitability, competing strategically, experimenting and evolving) will be partly integrated into the mentioned four sections. Each stage of the platform framework below will be complemented by related challenges pertaining particularly to sharing economy platforms, to illustrate the added layer of complexity.

In addition to the inherent elements of the Catalyst Framework and the particular aspects of the sharing economy, supplementary theories will complement the adapted framework, where appropriate. These include theories on first-mover advantage and international expansion. The chapter will end with a preliminary conclusion to the two first sub-questions, and the final adapted Catalyst Framework for expanding sharing economy platforms.

| Identification of a community | → | Timing of entry | → | Designing the platform | → | Pricing |

Structure of Elements to be Covered (Author's own)

4.1 Identifying the Platform Community

The first stage of the Catalyst Framework involves identifying which groups a platform should serve – the platform community. These should be groups in need of both each other *and* a platform in order to capture the value of their mutual attraction (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007). This initial task should involve careful mapping of the platform's potential market in terms of its value offering. Moreover, platforms mediating transactions in the physical world may need to identify potential user groups not just at the launch of a brand new platform, but with every single expansion to a new market.

In order to determine the potential for a catalytic reaction to take place between the identified groups, one has to determine the level and scope of these groups' need for each other (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007). The strength of the attraction between user groups, be that direct or indirect, as well as their relative size, is of importance here. If these aspects are unbalanced, the platform needs pricing mechanisms to balance participation. These will be discussed in section 4.4 on "Pricing and Profitability". Choudary (2015a) argues that in order to succeed, platforms should launch in "a hotbed of activity" (p.220), which indicates strong preexisting attraction between user groups. This is in line with the point mentioned above, that the stronger the network externalities exhibited by a market, the lesser the extent of multihoming is likely to be (Caillaud

& Jullien, 2003). Another characteristic to look out for is *overlapping user groups* – when users can easily switch between the role of producer and consumer (Choudary, 2015a). According to Evans (2009), this trait "clearly facilitates platform ignition [because the entrepreneur then] can focus on securing the participation of one well-identified group of agents" (p.102).

Evans and Schmalensee (2007) moreover argue for evaluating whether the community is being served already, and if so by whom (p.40). A platform with a novel value proposition looking to enter a new market faces numerous competitive forces, of which direct competition may pose the smallest challenge. The presence of direct competitors is inversely correlated to the level of innovativeness of the concept. Thus, for an innovative platform, the *indirect competition* is usually the hardest to overcome. When usage of the platform requires a behavior change among consumers, the community's entrenched behavior constitute the main competitive force, and the biggest hurdle to overcome. In order to generate behavior change, the platform has to present a solution significantly better than the one the targeted consumers are already using. Because of switching costs, solutions that are just slightly better will not get anyone but the enthusiasts on board (McEwen, 2013). If the perceived cost of adopting a platform's technology is disproportionate to the perceived gains, its diffusion in the community will be "painfully slow" (Shapiro & Varian, 1999). When the presence of direct competitors is uncertain, the platform needs to identify their potential rivals, or which other actors have the means to "bring the prospective community together" (Shapiro & Varian, 1999:65). These actors' business models and technology should be investigated, to ensure the superiority of the expanding platforms' prospects.

Lastly, Evans and Schmalensee (2007) strongly suggest studying industry history, in order to understand past successes and failures, using these stories to forecast the future, as well as anticipating future competitors and their potential entry strategies (p.122).

4.1.1   Identifying the *Sharing* Community

Just like a generic platform business, an expanding sharing economy platform also needs to conduct a careful mapping of the intended market. An existing platform should have a good grasp of what motivates users in its *current* market(s) to participate; however, it is important to assess these motivations in light of demographics of and knowledge about the market in question because they determine the strength of network externalities between the potential user groups. Moreover, *motivations to share* do not necessarily translate into actual sharing, as found in a study by Hamari and Ukkonen (2015). Hence, it is important for a sharing economy platform to ensure all prerequisites to user adoption are present prior to launch. These will be presented in section 4.3 "Designing the Platform for Success".

Prior to deciding upon a market for international expansion, it is therefore important to gain an understanding of what local aspects can have an impact on the platform's potential in a particular market, and in what way. Its distance from a platform's native market plays an important role, but not only in the geographic sense. According to Ghemawat (2001), three additional dimensions of distance need to be considered, namely cultural, political, and economic distance. This framework is equally, if not more, important to sharing economy platforms than for other expanding companies, as the success of these platforms' usually require change in both consumer behavior and regulation. Companies' ignorance toward or misconceptions of these dimensions often lead to expensive mistakes in international expansion (Ghemawat, 2001).

Cultural Distance

The degree of cultural distance between two markets depends on differences in language, social norms, and consumer preferences. A market's cultural attributes determine the way people interact with each other and with companies (Ghemawat, 2001:140). Thus, in order for an expanding platform to be able to communicate their value proposition in a credible way, it needs to understand and act upon these oftentimes-implicit cues. One way of overcoming the challenge of cultural distance is thus to hire employees native to the market targeted for expansion (Ghemawat, 2001).

Other cultural aspects of the potential market, such as degree of individualism as opposed to collectivism, as well as its degree of uncertainty avoidance, are important to an innovative entrant as they inform the population's propensity to accept and approve of new services (Hofstede et al., 2010). According to Huff and Kelley (2003), societies exhibiting more individualism relative to collectivism are associated with higher degrees of trust toward strangers. Cultures with a more collective mindset tend to trust so called in-groups more, that is, people who belong to familiar groups. A society's degree of uncertainty avoidance indicates its propensity to allow for risk. Since risk is a prerequisite for trust to take place, cultures more open to risk are also more open to trust strangers (Doney, Cannon & Mullen, 1998:603), which is essential for engaging in the sharing economy (T. A. Weber, 2014).

Political Distance

For expanding sharing economy platforms, who often start their operations in gray legal areas, the degree of similarity between political conditions of its home market and those of the potential new market is important to identify. When they are similar, they will know what to expect, whereas when they are very different, the platform's reception will be uncertain. Countries that have historical ties in terms of trade agreements or other political associations have a shorter political distance between them, Ghemawat (2001) argues. A country's strong institutional infrastructure effectively contributes to minimizing perceived political

distance. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that "foreign ownership [...] is always politically loaded" (Ghemawat, 2001:144).

Economic Distance

Economic distance is created by the differences in counties' wealth and related demographic parameters (Ghemawat, 2001). Hence, it is vital to obtain an overview of the demographics of likely users of sharing economy platforms. When the distance between the current market and a new market is perceived to be small on other parameters, a platform should look at the demographics of their current user base and analyze the prevalence of these characteristics in the new market to which they intend to expand. The best way of reaching this audience in the new market in order to obtain early supporters should be carefully considered (Gansky, 2011). Moreover, when the platform provides interactions involving physical assets, the way ridesharing requires cars; it should consider the prevalence and availability of this asset in the potential market.

Geographic Distance

Lastly, in determining the *geographic distance* of a potential market for expansion, not only the physical distance from the home market needs to be considered, according to Ghemawat (2001). That market's physical size, topography, and transportation and communication infrastructure also need to be taken into account.

4.1.2   Summary

Thus, before making the decision to expand to a certain market, a sharing economy platform should study industry history in order to determine whether there are any "free" lessons to be learned from others' mistakes. Depending on what the platform intends to mediate, its *core value offering*, it should determine the distance between its home market and the new market in terms of politics, geography, culture, and economy. This will help in determining its potential and in forecasting the critical mass of users. Groups that appear to need a platform to carry out transactions between them should then be identified, and an estimation of the strength

1. Identify...

- industry history
- cultural, political, demographical & geographical distance
- critical mass
- what groups need a platform to interact
- strength of network externalities between these groups
- competing alternatives

of the indirect network externalities between these groups should be made. Lastly, both indirectly and directly competing alternatives should be evaluated in order to develop entry strategies that reflect the challenges they pose. Ideally, all these tasks should be performed prior to platform launch in the new market to ensure a head start, of which importance will be demonstrated below.

4.2 Entry Timing

Experts on network externalities have often argued that being the first platform to enter a market helps in securing a dominant position. In this way, potential rivals' barrier to entry would be heightened, improving the chances of a winner-takes-all outcome in favor of the first entrant (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007; Suarez & Lanzolla, 2005). However, several additional factors have an influence on a business' durable first mover advantage (FMA). These include the market context, the nature of the product, as well as the relative size and resources of the entering platform as opposed to potential competitors (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007; Kerin, Kalyanaram, & Howard, 1996; Markides & Geroski, 2004; Suarez & Lanzolla, 2005). Indeed, upon a critical review of previous theory on first mover advantages (FMAs), Golder and Tellis (1993) found that overall, "market pioneers" had a failure rate of 47%, while their average market share was a mere 10%.

Moreover, obtaining and maintaining FMAs is a different process for an online platform business than for a traditional manufacturing firm, for instance. While the latter can potentially enjoy FMAs from sources of *technological leadership* such as learning effects and "success in patent or R&D races" (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988), these do not apply in the same way to sharing economy platforms where users produce, and there is no inventory. With the rising pervasiveness of open innovation and open-source software, IPR as a source of FMAs is also diminishing (H. W. Chesbrough & Appleyard, 2007; H. W. Chesbrough, 2010, 2011).

According to Lieberman and Montgomery (1988), there are three more sources of FMAs, namely increasing returns to scale, preemption and switching costs. The first one is, as aforementioned, a strength of platform businesses because users are creating the value, which in turn attracts more users. In order for a first-mover platform to act *preemptively*, it has to generate network externalities so strong that replication is next to impossible. However, network externalities are hard to estimate for a novel service in a new and uncertain market. Until a first mover succeeds in the attempt to build strong network externalities between its user sides, the market is still up for grabs for fast followers. Thus, if a platforms' strategy is flawed in any way, being first to market will not necessarily help it succeed.

A first mover attempting to secure FMAs by raising switching costs for their users can do so through design measures such as reputation systems, which will be discussed in section 4.3 "Designing the Platform for Success". However, as stated, switching costs between online platforms appear to decrease with technological development (Choudary, 2015a). Moreover, the degree to which switching costs cause preemption depends on how fast users are learning how to use the platform relative to the volume of rival entrants (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997:523)

A dominant position in terms of market share does not automatically translate into high profits for a first-mover platform. This depends on their price setting, and because early competition sometimes necessitates penetration pricing, other factors may be decisive (Shapiro & Varian, 1999). If an entering competitor then has a more profitable business model, the incumbent's inertia can make it vulnerable (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988:46). For this reason, Lieberman and Montgomery (1998) argue that FMAs should be evaluated not only in terms of market share, but by profit performance. Moreover, Kerin et al. (1996) found that when both the product form and the firm in itself is new, its order of entry relative to direct competitors has little to no impact on its performance.

Prior to making a decision about entry timing, Evans and Schmalensee (2007) recommend determining whether the anticipated network externalities are strong enough to justify attempting to secure FMAs. Entry in an uncertain market is risky and expensive (Golder & Tellis, 1993), and large firms have an advantage, as they are the best equipped to influence and shape the market while waiting for its resolution (Wernerfelt & Karnani, 1987). Internet-based consumer services is an area signified by fast paced evolution and thus high uncertainty (Liang, Czaplewski, Klein, & Jiang, 2009). Rushing into a market can moreover be dangerous because speed makes it harder to identify and solve pricing problems, and because it may be harder than expected to attract users on one or both sides of the platform (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007). When the latter occurs, efforts made to generate publicity around launch will fail to spark sustainable action on a platform because users simply cannot find attractive interactions on it (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007).

Choosing a fast follower approach enables actors to learn from the mistakes of the first entrant, and free riding on their market-building investments (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). In fact, it is remarkable how many successful catalysts have been "the fast followers of others who failed to get their business right" (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007:174) or the "first survivors" rather than first movers (Vidal & Mitchell, 2013). Should a platform nevertheless choose a first mover strategy, Liang et al. (2009) suggest that it early on makes sure to build strong emotional bonds with early adopters (p.147).

4.2.1 Timing of Entry and the Novelty of the Sharing Economy

The immense success of certain sharing economy platforms have led to a surge of new businesses, often described by themselves and others as "like Airbnb but for ....", however succeeding with such a venture is not easy. The fact that these platforms all have business models and value propositions that are innovative, and thus uncertain to the public, creates a legitimacy problem that can be hard to overcome. While there may be great market potential for some of them – probably a niche opportunity for many, the high expectations as to their success are often not fulfilled. Indeed, most of the attempts fail (Gauthey, 2014; McEwen, 2013; Needleman & Loten, 2014). The difficulty associated with carving out a market that does not

yet exist poses quite the perseverance test for a sharing economy platform entrepreneur, in terms of time, money and effort.

According to Aldrich and Fiol (1999), entrepreneurs entering an industry in its formative years lack legitimacy, and are thus pressured by a severe *liability of newness*, which can manifest itself on a continuum from complete ignorance to hostile opposition in the target population. The degree to which the sharing economy has advanced varies between contexts; however, it can still be seen as being in its formative years in many parts of the world, as demonstrated by the lack of definition and common understanding. Many sharing economy platforms moreover find themselves being first entrants into a market, facing no direct competition. While seen by many as an ideal situation, that is not necessarily so. In fact,

"When the number of organizations in a new industry is small, new organizations are thought to have a lower chance of survival because they must learn new roles without having role models, and they must establish ties with an environment that does not understand or acknowledge their existence"

(Aldrich & Fiol, 1994:648)

With growing industries and participants, however, come knowledge about its value offering and activity norms, and thus increasing legitimacy. It is therefore important that sharing economy platforms recognize this challenge and consider it when planning for expansion. Strategies suggested to this end largely focus on cooperation with competitors in order to generate knowledge and potentially agreements on industry standards; however, some can be applied by a single actor as well. These include streamlining communication using "symbolic language and behaviors" (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994:649), developing trust by telling consistent stories, improving reliability in terms of service availability, as well as negotiating and compromising with other industries and authorities.

The lack of competition is closely connected to the timing of entry. With regards to FMA sources, Gansky (2010) argues that when a niche has been discovered, one should preempt that space before anyone else does. These niches, she argues, occur when consumers are "restless about current choices" (p.113), or where there are "pain points" for consumers that a platform can resolve (p.117). Moreover, she argues in line with Liang et al. (2009) that early entry can be particularly advantageous to platforms as opposed to traditional firms, as they are in a unique position to learn from early users. Wernerfelt and Karnani (1987) argue that firms should enter early when they believe they have a chance to influence the resolution of an industry's uncertainty. Large firms, as aforementioned, have an advantage in this process, which can be both lengthy and costly.

4.2.2 Summary

Evidently, there are conflicting advice as to what constitutes the right time to enter a market for a sharing economy platform. While their typical small size and limited resources would suggest caution as to an early entry strategy, their just as prevalent niche nature suggests preempting that space. Hence, the evaluation of potential first mover advantages should be careful and cautious. The opportunities for preemption in the form of unique business model tweaks or raised switching costs should be thoroughly explored. Moreover, it is important to evaluate these opportunities not only in terms of potential market share gains, but also in terms of sustainable profit potential. Should one choose an early entry strategy, there is a pronounced need for efforts to increase the platform's legitimacy, which can be done mainly through its communication and cooperation with third parties such as legal authorities, large organizations or companies, or even direct competitors. The latter suggestion, as well as empirical evidence, suggest that competition is good for sharing economy platforms. This fact raises the viability of choosing a fast follower approach rather than pioneering, especially when resources are limited.

4.3 Designing the Platform for Success

The next step of the Catalyst Framework, Designing for Success, entails attracting the identified user groups, promoting interaction between them, and minimizing transaction costs (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007:40). Fundamental for attracting anyone, however, are the characteristics of what is actually being supplied – the *core value unit* (Choudary, 2015a). This is where every platform design decision starts. All other considerations should depart from this core, and work to facilitate its transfer.

Laying out the architecture of a platform business is a fundamental step, carried out in large part before the initial launch, and then continuously altered and improved throughout its lifetime. Because the focus of this thesis is the expansion of platforms, this section will largely deal with what should be considered in regards to design as a platform expands. One great difference between traditional businesses and platform businesses is the platforms' inherently viral qualities. They are native to the internet, a characteristic that should be exploited to its fullest potential. Facilitating virality is a way of leaving growth to users themselves – it is "growth by design" (Choudary, 2015a:264).

Since users also obtain benefits from growing the opposite side, it is in their self-interest to promote the platform virally. Well-designed virality is thus an important complement to short-term PR and marketing efforts for a successful market entry, and a suggested method is to make use of an established network such as Facebook, on which people are already connected. Integrating Facebook's social graph for instance, by

2. Entry Timing
- Options for preemption?
- Other potential first mover advantages?
- Long-term profit potential?
- Increase legitimacy through strategic partnerships
- Identify likely competitors and possibly cooperate with them
- Assess costs and benefits of early entry vs. fast follower strategy

allowing users to sign up with their Facebook profile and recycle profile information from there to their profile on the new platform lower the threshold for signing up. Moreover, it may increase the degree of trust users put in each other, and make it easier to share what they are offering on the social network as well (Choudary, 2015a). The most viral platforms, according to Choudary (2015a), exhibit low barriers to entry for, and a relatively high percentage of producers, as these are the ones who stand to make the most from spreading the message.

4.3.1   The Chicken-and-Egg Problem

While it may sound simple, one of the most difficult tasks for a platform business is to attract customer groups in the right proportions at the right time. The issue has been discussed extensively by different authors, and no one universal strategy exists (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Caillaud & Jullien, 2003; Choudary, 2015b; Eisenmann, Parker and Van Alstyne 2010; Evans, 2003, 2009). The problem is caused by the same characteristic that makes the multisided platform business model so compelling: the indirect network externalities. As more users on the opposite side attract users to one side, the opposite must also be true – no users on the opposite side means no transaction possibilities, and thus no activity. Caillaud and Jullien (2003) referred to this as the "chicken-and-egg" problem; however, Evans and Schmalensee (2007) illustrate the problem more accurately when they argue that platform entrepreneurs need to

"…figure out how to get both sides on board their platforms about the same time. Instead of pondering which came first, the chicken or the egg, they [need to figure out] out, so to speak, how to get the hens and roosters together and encourage them to make a lot of baby chicks"

(p.71)

Evans and Schmalensee (2010) proposed a model showing how the hurdle of reaching critical mass moreover "depends on the dynamics of customer behavior and the distribution of customer tastes" (p.2). They claim that when switching costs between platforms, or other competing alternatives, are low to nonexistent, myopic behavior prevails among customers. The distribution of its customers' tastes, which are decisive for network externalities, is for a platform mostly unknown. In sum, these three factors point to the importance for platforms to have both sides on board at or shortly after launch, or "network effects will drive a downward spiral toward a stable equilibrium with zero participation." (Evans & Schmalensee, 2010:4). As Allred (2015) accurately points out: without critical mass, "it doesn't matter how good of an idea it is or how well the technology works or how beautiful the design is; the product is dead in the water." As aforementioned, it is therefore paramount to find solutions to this problem prior to launching or expanding a platform to a new market.

Several strategies have been proposed as to how to overcome the chicken-and-egg problem, of which the most relevant for the following analysis will be presented below, starting with a long-term strategy: incremental entry, followed by a few short-term launch and growth strategies. Additionally, pricing decisions can serve as strategic tools for overcoming ignition problems. These will be discussed in 4.4 "Pricing and Profitability".

Incremental Entry

The *incremental launch* strategy has proven successful in enabling platforms to overcome the chicken-and-egg problem without too much trouble. It relates to a platform's governance, and an example of its successful implementation was at Facebook, for which access to its social network was initially restricted to Harvard and subsequently other U.S. university campuses (Boudreau & Hagiu, 2008; Parker & Van Alstyne, 2014). While such a strategy necessarily entails lower numbers of participants at early stages, it has the benefits of increased control of and communication possibilities with early users. Moreover, it may lead to a heightened sense of "exclusivity" and brand affinity among early users and would-be users (Hagiu, 2009; Wallace, 2015).

Most importantly, however, is the fact that this gradual opening facilitates more meaningful interactions to take place between a platform's users, as well as between the platform and its users (Choudary, 2015a). Gansky (2010) argues in favor of recruiting early users that are low on expectations but high in enthusiasm in order to "start small and win big" (p.93). Evans and Schmalensee (2007) argue that when others in the community notice the value created by the platform for the early users, they too will slowly adopt the platform, further enhancing value creation. Thus, this is argued to be the most scalable strategy, as it relies on network externalities only, and because its effect is greatly enhanced by viral mechanisms on the internet (Choudary, 2015a). According to Wallace (2015), "being cool" before "affording to be big" effectively reduces the costs of carving out an all-new market space.

Growth Hacking

While the first entry strategy is related to a platform's architecture and overarching, long-term strategy, some are more short-term in nature, intended only for implementation until critical mass is reached. They are sometimes characterized as *growth hacking* strategies. Some of them are costly, but many of them are not. Nevertheless, they tend to be demanding in terms of time and effort. The effect of growth hacking strategies are furthermore difficult to estimate beforehand.

A way to solve the issue of little initial supply is for the platform itself to ensure sufficient production – *seeding* supply – either by acting as producer itself, showcasing "fake" activity, or by inorganically

incentivizing external producers until the platform reaches critical mass (Choudary, 2015a, 2015b; Parker & Van Alstyne, 2014). This may serve as the bait needed to break the "vicious cycle of no activity" (Choudary, 2015a:217), and can have the added bonus of nudging users toward desired behaviors by simply demonstrating activity on the platform (Choudary, 2015a).

However, seeding supply is both demanding and risky. For platforms mediating physical transactions, self-supply is naturally resource intensive. "Faking" supply is risky, as an exposure would lead to damaged credibility for the platform. A seeding approach involving providing local producers with inorganic incentives (Parker & Van Alstyne, 2014), such as a monetary bonus or a temporary removal of administration fees, can cause opportunistic behavior and may not contribute to sustained use when the incentives are discontinued.

A strategy for increasing a platform's attractiveness to one of its user sides is to recruit so-called *marquee users*, users who are valued highly by the other side for some reason. These users are able to bring a large number of followers on to the platform (Choudary, 2015a; Eisenmann et al., 2006; Parker & Van Alstyne, 2014). Ideally, the platform should be able to arrange exclusive arrangements with such users, however that can be a costly affair (Eisenmann et al., 2006).

The Caveats of Growth Hacking

Despite some widely cited success stories of growth hacking, it is important for platforms to keep in mind that these strategies can be risky and usually have a short-term perspective. Some of them may be considered unethical, and some may be illegal. Some of them, such as the marquee strategy, can be incredibly costly, and platform entrepreneurs may find that "too much success, purchased too dearly, can be a very bad thing indeed" (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007:140). Moreover, growth hacking is often induced by *haste*, which as aforementioned impacts negatively on a platform's ability to identify problems underway. According to Oliva, Sterman, and Giese (2003), a "get big fast" mindset can in fact lead to diminished quality of both product offering and customer service, generating negative externalities. The biggest caveat of adhering to these strategies, however, is the belief that growth solves all problems. Far more important than acquiring users is their sustained activity on the platform. To this end, ensuring real value to users from the start is essential.

4.3.2 Designing for the Sharing Economy

When designing a sharing economy platform, it is essential to carefully consider what exactly your platform contributes, and the motivations people might have to use it, or alternatively not to use it. Particularly challenging in relation to launch and expansion is the chicken-and-egg problem, which could be argued is even harder to overcome for sharing economy platforms because of an observed gap between users' intentions and actions (Hamari & Ukkonen, 2015). More specifically, strategies to overcome this hurdle

must help convert potential users' positive attitudes into actual usage. This involves ensuring the perceived costs of using the platform do not undermine the benefits by satisfying users' demand for safety and reliability.

Motivations to Share

Several studies have been conducted as to identify consumers' willingness to participate in the sharing economy, and the results have been largely consistent. Among the factors influencing participation in a positive way are cost consciousness and a desire for convenience and flexibility (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Bellotti et al., 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Furuhata et al., 2013; Hamari & Ukkonen, 2015; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010; Möhlmann, 2015). Some have found that trend affinity and social enjoyment from sharing also affect user motivations positively (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Bellotti et al., 2015; Hamari & Ukkonen, 2015; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010). A factor often argued to be a strength of sharing economy platforms is their unique ability to create a *community* between its users. This claim has found both support (Hamari & Ukkonen, 2015; Schor, 2014; Tussyadiah, 2015) and disapproval (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014; Möhlmann, 2015), hence its effect is ambiguous.

Surveys and studies furthermore suggest that prior knowledge of sharing options has a positive effect on willingness to participate in a new sharing economy platform (Lamberton & Rose, 2012). This relates to the aforementioned task of gaining legitimacy, as well as one of Botsman and Rogers' (2010) critical factors for sharing economy potential, namely *social proof*. Social proof "enables people, not just early adopters, to cross the psychological barrier that often exists around new behaviours" (p.81). Communicating that "everybody else is doing it" sometimes works better than "trying to appeal to people's sense of social responsibility" (p.82), and that for sharing economy platforms this is crucial because they often require people to change their habits and behavior (p.82).

Ethical behaviors such as sustainable consumption and altruism are often emphasized as strongly contributing to user motivations by many sharing economy platforms and their supporters (Bellotti et al., 2015). However, while it may be advantageous to promote these aspects for PR and legitimacy purposes, sustainability as motivation for actual user participation does not seem to hold (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Bellotti et al., 2015; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010; Nielsen, Hovmøller, Blyth, & Sovacool, 2015), with some exceptions (Chan & Shaheen, 2012; Furuhata et al., 2013). Considering Hamari and Ukkonen's (2015) discovery of the intention-action gap, Bellotti et al.'s (2015) claim below seems accurate:

[Actual usage will] *"…hinge upon [a platform's] ability to satisfy basic needs—what Maslow called physiological and safety needs —more effectively than the competition. Any peer service that is attempting to displace a conventional service must strive to do so more conveniently and at a lower cost to users"*

(p.1090)

Thus, in order to really win users over, sharing economy platforms need to figure out how best to satisfy the users' basic needs, as well as what constitutes costs and benefits to the user. According to Maslow (1943), *safety* is the second most basic human need. As sharing economy platforms often facilitate interactions between strangers in the real world, fulfilling users' safety requirement is fundamental to their usage (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Indeed, many have found that a lack of trust, either in the platform itself or in other users, is a key deterrent to usage of sharing economy platforms (Chan & Shaheen, 2012; Tussyadiah, 2015)

Trust Mechanisms

Evidently, trust is on its way to becoming the most valuable currency in the digital age (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Botsman, 2012). Even more so for sharing economy platforms, because the provision of their services generally entail meetings between strangers, which increases risk (Schor, 2014). A platform therefore needs access restrictions and trust mechanisms adjusted to the mediated transactions' risk profile. The most common trust-enabling mechanisms require users to rate each other post transaction. The accumulated ratings add up to a user's reputation on a platform, and his/her credibility and probability of obtaining future transactions (Choudary, 2015a; Querbes, 2014). As a user profile with a context-specific reputation score is tied closely to the platform on which it was obtained, it effectively increases users' switching costs and thus the cost of multihoming (Botsman, 2012; Evans & Schmalensee, 2007). Hence, encouraging users to rate each other is of utmost importance. This model is moreover scale-friendly as it is largely administered by the users themselves, not the platform.

Keymolen (2013) elaborated, explaining that this trust is not of the traditional, *interpersonal* kind. What is required in the sharing economy is *interpersonal system trust*, in which the platform through its design contributes to individuals' propensity to put trust in it. In her opinion, it is mandatory for users on both sides of a platform to understand and approve of the technical workings behind the platform, including its trust-building mechanisms, in order for it to thrive. This argument is also supported by several empirical studies and surveys (Dillahunt & Malone, 2015; Hovde & Toppe, 2015; Querbes, 2014). The degree of trust users put in the platform is important for their willingness to give up personal data by joining (Gansky, 2010). Increasing this trust at an early stage requires controlled growth, something the *incremental entry* strategy can provide,

as it allows for close interaction with early users and opportunities for establishing a strong community feeling (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

4.3.3 Summary

Accordingly, an expanding sharing economy platform should choose an entry strategy that reflects the platform's core value unit and context and provides a rapid solution to the chicken-and-egg problem. In order to ensure credibility and transparency, the entry strategy needs to be consistent with and informed by the platform's long-term strategy, which in turn should address users' demand for security and convenience. Every design aspect surrounding the core value unit should work to deliver what users want; ease, comfort, safety, cost savings, convenience – real advantages relative to alternatives.

> **3. Design**
> - Entry strategy that ensures value to users from the start
> - Meaningful early interactions
> - Control growth
> - Fulfill users' demand for safety, convenience and cost savings
> - Carefully evaluate short-term growth strategies in relation to long-term goals
> - Increase switching costs

4.4 Pricing and Profitability

Among the few things generally agreed upon regarding two-sided platforms is that one user side is usually harder to attract than the other. This side contributes the most value. Hence, many authors and theorists argue that this side should be subsidized or offered incentives, organic or otherwise, to be enticed onto the platform. Discriminatory pricing is seen as a viable strategy for attracting users on both sides, in the right proportions, at the right time (Armstrong, 2006; Belleflamme & Toulemonde, 2009; Caillaud & Jullien, 2003; Eisenmann et al., 2006; Rochet & Tirole, 2003). According to Evans and Schmalensee (2007), pricing can be an important additional tool for overcoming the chicken-and-egg challenge. It allows for differentiating a platform's attractiveness to different user groups, and can in that way aid in balancing supply and demand.

Parker and Van Alstyne (2000, 2005) furthermore argue that giving away products for free to one user side may make sense both with competition, as it can "soften an incumbent's first mover advantage" (p.1502); as well as absent competition, whereas a loss on one side can be covered by a surplus on the other. Eisenmann et al. (2006), Hagiu (2014), and Armstrong (2006) furthermore outline what to consider in order to find the best pricing strategy, namely the degree of multihoming, the users' sensitivities toward price and quality, the costs incurred, network externalities, and user brand value.

Hagiu (2009, 2014) argues that because firms cannot control network externalities – they are determined by consumer tastes – consumers should be subsidized when their taste for variety is high. Under these conditions, the substitutability between producers is low and they are thus able to extract higher rents for

which they should be charged. However, this rule is only valid in settings with little to no competition and threat of multihoming. In contexts marked by stronger rivalry, different rules apply, as multihoming often leads to competitive price-slashing (Hagiu, 2009) or literally giving products away for free, as seen above.

According to Evans and Schmalensee (2007), the ultimate aim of a platform's pricing structure is to "shape participation and maximize profits" (p.74), and a suggested strategy involves setting separate prices for access and usage in order to balance the demand from both sides. Charging for access may be a way to secure the "right" customers; however, it is dissuaded when there is uncertainty as to the value a user group will receive from joining (p.84). According to Armstrong (2006), charging users on a per-usage basis leads to weaker indirect externalities because there is less risk involved on both sides. There is a "no cure no pay" situation. The upside, however, lies in the fact that critical mass becomes less pertinent with this charging scheme, since there is no risk of loss for any of the parties if a match is not made. Thus, the strategy of usage-based pricing could be seen as a way of buying time until the platform is operational on both sides. Nevertheless, Armstrong (2006) argues that profit is likely to be higher with an access- or subscription-based payment scheme.

4.4.1   Pricing Profitably in the Sharing Economy

As demonstrated above, there is no clear consensus in platform theory as to what side should be subsidized in order to create the best conditions for a catalytic reaction and balance supply and demand, nor whether access- or usage-based charging is better. Thus, specific contextual aspects need to be taken into account before deciding on a pricing structure. So also for a sharing economy platform. As we have seen, the sharing economy faces uncertainty in terms of people's attitudes. Its value proposition is innovative and unknown to many – a discouraging factor when attempting to convince someone to pay for a service. Moreover, sharing economy services, especially those that involve physical meetings between strangers, entail high risk, another discouraging factor. In general, usage fees are preferred over access fees among peer-to-peer platforms (Andersson et al., 2013).

Given sharing economy platforms' peer-to-peer nature, individual payments are understandably low. When usage fees constitute a percentage of these payments, which is usually the case, a huge transaction volume is required to generate profit. Apart from the chicken-and-egg problem, this poses one of the greatest challenges for a sharing economy platform's profitability (Gauthey, 2014; Needleman & Loten, 2014). Thus, while the negligibly low usage fees could suggest little scope for price discrimination and other measures suggested by Platform Theory, it is of extreme importance that peer-to-peer platforms, preferably prior to the initial launch, estimate the levels of fees on both sides and the volume necessary to generate return on

investment. This estimate should be based on the findings from stage one of the Catalyst Framework, "Identifying the Platform Community".

The type of platform and its value proposition moreover should have a strong impact on pricing decisions. While most platform literature refers to pricing from the platform to its users, much literature on subsets of the sharing economy describe pricing mechanisms between users as a form of governance measure. For ridesharing platforms, it is debated whether user-to-user price setting should be based on, i.e. market conditions, costs, or otherwise (Benkler, 2004; Furuhata et al., 2013). Governance measures on peer-to-peer price setting should attempt to strike a balance between the equilibrium price in relation to supply and demand, and complying with local regulation. The former consideration is important in order to secure the platform's attractiveness to both sides, while the latter is vital in avoiding legal breach for both the platform and its users. Staying on the right side of the law is essential for gaining legitimacy.

4.4.2   Summary

For an expanding sharing economy platform there are many considerations to make concerning pricing decisions. Most importantly, the price level has to be profitable in the long run with realistic participation numbers. This is part of the reason why careful market research is of such high importance prior to entry, and it has to include data on demography and user characteristics with regards to the particular core value unit. Moreover, the competitive environment as well as consumer tastes should inform the

> ## 4. Pricing
> - Ensure profitability
> - Carefully evaluate what side to subsidize, if any
> - Consider core value unit when deciding between usage or access fees
> - Ensure legal compliance to enhance legitimacy

choice of which side to subsidize, if any. The level of innovativeness of the value proposition should inform the choice between charging users for access, usage, or both. Lastly, in order to secure the platform's legitimacy, the pricing scheme should comply with local regulations.

4.5 A Framework for Expanding Sharing Economy Platforms

Throughout this chapter, the most important challenges facing expanding sharing economy platforms have been presented. Elaborate answers to the following two sub-questions have thus been provided:

1. *What are the challenges particular to expanding platform businesses?*
2. *What additional challenges does being part of the sharing economy pose for an internationally expanding platform business?*

The answer to the first question is largely provided by Evans and Schmalensee's (2007) Catalyst Framework. Challenges pertaining to expanding platform businesses congregate in the early parts of the framework and include studying industry history for learning opportunities, identifying groups that need each

other and why, and identifying possible competition. Moreover, choosing the right time to enter, using design measures to attract customers and shape their behavior, as well as employing pricing mechanisms to balance participation and ensure profitability are crucial decisions for a platform business.

Regarding the second question, it has been demonstrated that belonging to the sharing economy family of platforms poses an additional layer of challenges. These are largely caused by two characteristics particular to the sharing economy, of which the first one is the novelty of and controversy surrounding the sharing economy concept. Cultural, economic, and political characteristics of a market may affect its populations' level of openness toward such disruptive ventures. Some may see engaging in sharing practices as risky or simply unappealing, and some governments may even deem it illegal. Generally, sharing economy platforms suffer from a "liability of newness" that needs to be overcome by gaining legitimacy through measures such as cooperating with governments or competitors, or otherwise obtaining social proof.

The second characteristic is the fact that transactions mediated through sharing economy platforms are often carried out between peers in the physical world. This means that a market's geography and demography have a direct effect on the entry conditions for a sharing economy platform. Moreover, it aggravates the risk aspect, as transactions often take place between strangers. Thus, there is a greater need for trust building mechanisms in sharing economy platforms than other platforms. The peer-to-peer nature requires careful price setting decisions, considering expected usage volumes.

These findings result in a catalyst framework adapted for expanding sharing economy platforms, of which most of the strategic elements should be considered prior to launch in a new market:

1. Identify...

- industry history
- cultural, political, demographical & geographical distance
- critical mass
- what groups need a platform to interact
- strength of network externalities between these groups
- competing alternatives

2. Entry Timing

- Options for preemption?
- Other potential first mover advantages?
- Long-term profit potential?
- Increase legitimacy through strategic partnerships
- Identify likely competitors and possibly cooperate with them
- Assess costs and benefits of early entry vs. fast follower strategy

3. Design

- Entry strategy that ensures value to users from the start
- Meaningful early interactions
- Control growth
- Fulfill users' demand for safety, convenience and cost savings
- Carefully evaluate short-term growth strategies in relation to long-term goals
- Increase switching costs

4. Pricing

- Ensure profitability
- Carefully evaluate what side to subsidize, if any
- Consider core value unit when deciding between usage or access fees
- Ensure legal compliance to enhance legitimacy

The Sharing Economy Catalyst Framework (Author's own)

PART TWO

The first part of this thesis was concerned with the theoretical background and the construction of a framework for expanding sharing economy platforms. Answers to the first two sub-questions were provided, thus the main objective of this latter part remains answering the research question:

How can a platform business in the sharing economy overcome the challenges of international expansion?

In order to answer this question, however, the two latter sub-questions need to be answered first, which will be done in the following chapters, comprising the empirical part of this thesis. First, the case company providing the basis for research will presented. Second, a methodology chapter will explain the research design and data collection methods adopted for this research. Third, the findings will be analyzed, which will lead to an answer to the third sub-question:

3. *How do the challenges play out in the case company?*

Finally, there will be a discussion and conclusion leading to an answer to the fourth sub-question:

4. *How can the theoretical propositions based on merged theory inform internationally expanding sharing economy platforms?*

Combining the answers to all four sub-questions will thus generate a conclusion, and an answer to the main research question.

5. Introducing the Case Company

GoMore ApS was founded in 2005 by Matias Dalsgaard and Søren Riis. The two met while studying philosophy in Germany, where they observed ridesharing among students and faculty to be a popular, cost-saving activity. While most of the ridesharing there was mediated over simple bulletin boards, Dalsgaard and Riis saw the potential for an internet-mediated platform (Riis, 2014). Upon returning to Denmark, they set up a simple website where passengers could post rides they planned to drive, with the number of seats available and a phone number that passengers in need of a ride could call. Due to this concept's novelty in Denmark at the time, the founders received attention from local as well as national news media, which resulted in some traction to the page. It moreover led to an investment from Den Blå Avis (DBA), the Danish eBay, and the resultant inauguration of a professional CEO. However, DBA withdrew in 2007 because of lacking financial results (Dalsgaard, 2014; Riis, 2014). GoMore then continued its existence as a side project

for many years, financed solely by the founders' personal funds and spare time, while they both pursued careers outside of the company.

In 2011, the web designers and developers Lasse Gejl and Jacob Tjørnholm contacted Dalsgaard, who at that point had taken on the role as CEO, with a proposition to improve the page significantly while simultaneously entering as partners. Gejl and Tjørnholm's persuasiveness, coupled with Dalsgaard's personal decision to leave the corporate world (Grünbaum, 2014), led the team to take on the challenge of re-launching GoMore on new technology. In 2013, they received funding from the angel investor Jesper Buch and were able to work on the project full time. In addition to ambitions to expand the service offering to also include peer-to-peer car rentals, plans for international expansion started to take form (Sand, 2013).

GoMore's ridesharing platform works in the following way. A driver planning to drive a certain route at a certain time with free seats in his/her car can create an ad for these seats, determining a price per seat, and providing information on luggage space and driver preferences such as "I like to talk" or "No pets, please". A person without car access, a potential passenger, can then book a ride upon route match. Passengers can also create "ride agents", advertising their need for a ride, upon which drivers can take action and offer a ride. Payment can be made either online or in cash, and drivers are charged a 10% fee on their earnings. Thus, if a driver advertises a ride for DKK 100, the passenger pays DKK 100, of which DKK 90 accrues to the driver, and DKK 10 accrues to GoMore. When the option of cash payment is chosen, the fee will nonetheless be subtracted from the drivers' GoMore account, which can then be covered either by an online payment or by income from subsequent rides paid online. If this account goes into negative balance, the driver is prohibited from creating more ride ads. When the ride is completed, drivers and passengers are encouraged to rate each other and the experience. These ratings are subsequently published and added to a user's average rating. This constitutes a major component of the trust building mechanisms of the GoMore platform.

In May 2014, just over a year after the investment, GoMore's localized Norwegian and Swedish platform were launched. The platforms were replicas of the Danish platform, excluding the car rental part of it, which was supposed to be launched when GoMore had become more established and insurance agreements were in place. As a native Norwegian speaker, I joined GoMore shortly before the launch, and provided the final language and functionality check of the page. In July 2014, Nicolay Schweigaard was hired as Market Manager, whom I as part-time Market Associate, was to assist in establishing GoMore's market presence in Norway. Our tasks included developing marketing strategies, generating PR, attracting the target groups through communication on social media and other digital channels, communicating with regulatory

authorities, as well as handling customer service. We were both residing in Copenhagen at the time, and thus worked remotely with the Norwegian launch from GoMore's offices in Copenhagen.

5.1 The Choice of Case Company and Relevance

My reasons for joining the case company were partly based on its relevance to my field of study and academic interest. I recognized this as a great opportunity to discover the inner strategic workings of a company within the hyped sharing economy. Throughout the following academic semester, I was introduced to several theories that could inform the strategies I was responsible for implementing, among them Platform Theory. Planning for the upcoming thesis, a research objective was gradually developed, building on the identified gap between Platform Theory and sharing economy literature. It was moreover informed by my own and the rest of my team's frustrations in response to challenges that none of us had learned how to handle in business school. It became clear that theories on platforms, network externalities, and their inherent strategies were inconsistent with many strategy and management theories aimed at traditional manufacturing- and service-providing companies. Thus, I decided to attempt to merge relevant theory and literature and contrast this to various efforts employed by the case company before and during my time of employment. While the outcome of this analysis will be based on context-specific experiences, the intention is for the resultant framework to provide some guiding principles for other sharing economy platforms intending to expand internationally.

6. Methodology & Data Collection

This research paper is an exploratory case study of the challenges associated with expanding a platform within the sharing economy. As revealed in the previous chapters, there is a research gap on the intersection between Platform Theory and sharing economy literature, even though the two phenomena are closely related. Exploring this gap, separate theories and literature from these fields have been merged into a theoretical framework with a focus on phases of expansion and launch into a new market. This framework will in turn be used as a basis for a participant observation study and analysis of a case company situated in the midst of the research paradigms: GoMore. This will contribute to a comprehensive and clear trajectory toward the resultant conclusions.

6.1 Research Philosophy: Pragmatism

As this study attempts to bridge a theoretical gap by drawing on theories and literature from various disciplines, I will adopt a pragmatic philosophy in answering my research question. A pragmatic approach allows for comprehensive research since it does not impose any restrictive frames on its process or scope. Thus, it suits the immersive nature of my research on the case company. It assumes a constructivist view of

knowledge and consequently adheres to the principle of studying phenomena in its entirety, including the contextual setting (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Furthermore, pragmatism is well suited for research involving participant observation, as it recognizes that the object of research cannot be studied independently of its agent. This unavoidable subjectivity of knowledge comes from recognizing that truth is a social construct, resulting from the dynamic interaction between agents in society (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). Hence, pragmatism allows for a freedom of choice between the types, sources, and methods of interpretation that provide the most comprehensive and reliable answers (Saunders et al., 2009).

6.2 Research Approach: Abduction

The research logic of this thesis is that of *abduction* or *systematic combining* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) – it attempts to put existing theory on trial "within a real empirical context for contextual re-specification, refinement or elimination." (Perry & Jensen, 2001:4). This approach shares many characteristics with induction, however it relies more strongly on theory (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). It is similar to grounded theory in that it is concerned with "the generation of new concepts and development of theoretical models, rather than confirmation of existing theory." (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

An important distinction, however, is the significant role of the *framework* of previous theory*,* which, together with empirical fieldwork and case analysis evolves throughout the study. According to Dubois and Gadde (2002), this allows for "fruitful cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality" (p.559). Moreover, Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that the ability of relating the research to existing theories increases its findings' theoretical significance beyond the single case serving as the research foundation. In this paper, the Catalyst Framework adapted for the sharing economy context will serve as this theoretical framework. Through analysis of the case company's strategic responses to expansion challenges, points for iterations and further adaptations of the framework may be reached.

6.3 Research Design: Case Study

The research basis for this thesis is a comprehensive *case study*, for which the majority of the data was gathered through *participant observation*. The choice of this method of data collection will be justified below.

Case study research is suitable when the purpose of research is to gain a rich understanding of a "particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context" (Saunders et al., 2009:145). Depending on the degree of immersion, case study research allows for the sourcing of multiple data types and thus valuable opportunities for triangulation. Indeed, triangulation is a defining feature of a case study, according

to Ghauri (2004). My unique position within the case company equipped me with extensive possibilities for adopting multiple data collection methods for the purpose of this study, which has provided a "complete, holistic and contextual portrait of the object of study" (Ghauri, 2004:115).

As aforementioned, the objective of this research paper is to create knowledge through the application of the theoretical framework on to a real life case company. The case study approach has been criticized by some as being too contingent on aspects exclusive to the case company and its specific context to produce any generalizable knowledge. However, according to Flyvbjerg (2004) "one can often generalize on the basis of a single case" (p.77) upon the condition that the case is carefully, and not randomly, chosen. As previously explained, GoMore was here chosen as the case company because of its situation in a critical phase of expansion. Thus, the objective is that by analyzing how the particular challenges played out in the case company and how this aligns with the framework's propositions, some suggestions as to how sharing economy platforms better can overcome particular strategic challenges pertaining to them may be developed.

On the other hand, Flyvbjerg (2004) moreover argues that even though case study research findings *can be* generalizable, that is not what should define their value. He argues that valuable knowledge is never independent of its context, and that insisting on such independence inhibits learning. The primary objective, thus, is to provide *learning* opportunities, not theories, as "there does not and probably cannot exist predictive theories in social science" (p.72).

In any case, the richness of a single case study contributes to the strength of the knowledge generation, according to Eisenhardt (1989), as the constant "juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence" (p.546) of different kinds of data and literature leads to creative and often novel insights. The analysis and subsequent discussion contrasted with the theoretical framework here provide the "juxtaposition" of theory and findings, and hopefully some novel insights to add to the framework. The richness of the case study method is further enhanced by this study's primary data collection method, participant observation.

6.1 Primary Data

6.1.1 Participant Observation

Being the researcher and employed by the case company during the time period relevant to this thesis, the majority of the primary data collected comes from "participant observation", which categorizes under the umbrella term of "ethnographic methods" (Kawulich, 2005). This method is advantageous when conducting *exploratory* research – when the purpose is to "investigate poorly understood phenomena" (p.41). Moreover, Brannick and Coghlan (2007) argue that participant observers are able to

"…articulate tacit knowledge that has become deeply segmented because of socialization in an organizational system and reframe it as theoretical knowledge and that [exactly] because we are close to something or know it well, that we can research it."

Brannick and Coghlan (2007:60)

Bernard (1994:142-3) lists five explicit reasons for conducting participant observation studies, arguing that all of these increase the study's validity and thus its value:

1. It allows for multiple data collection methods and provides the researcher with access to sensitive activities she might otherwise not have obtained

2. It reduces the chance of people adjusting their behavior because they are aware of being observed

3. It helps the researcher to learn internal jargon and thus to develop relevant questions.

4. It provides the researcher with superior insight in terms of culture, which improves the credibility of her interpretation.

5. Sometimes it is the only appropriate way to collect the data required

Validity, Reliability & Biases

Participant observation is argued to have a high *ecological validity* because "it involves studying social phenomena in their natural contexts" (Saunders et al., 2009:297). The longevity of such studies moreover helps in overcoming many general threats to validity, such as history or instrumentation (Saunders et al., 2009). A major threat to the reliability of participant observation studies, however, is *observer bias:* "Participant observation is conducted by a biased human who serves as the instrument for data collection" (Kawulich, 2005:5). The potential shortcoming of observer bias is suggested overcome by reflecting over ones' own role and the potential resulting biases, and by using a variety of methods for data collection.

For the purpose of this paper, observation has been triangulated with interviews, questionnaires, and both primary and secondary document analyses. Moreover, upon critically assessing my own perceptions and identifying potential bias, e.g. caused by my junior position and limited (part-time) work hours in the case company, I have requested information on the topic from another perspective. An example is the clarifying e-mail correspondence with my former colleague in GoMore, Nicolay Schweigaard, who possesses the same level of knowledge about events as I do (Schweigaard, 2015b), and thus fulfills Kawulich's (2005) requirement of selecting "participants who are culturally competent in the topic being studied" (p.5). More generally, clarifying questions have been asked throughout the research period in relation to statements or

comments being made in relation to strategic decisions. These are all gathered in Appendix F: Field Notes[1].
Because of the abundance of material in terms of field notes, interview transcriptions and questionnaires
forming the basis for my research, I have, in accordance with the supervisor of this project, decided only to
provide these as digital appendices. They do thus not form part of the written copy.

Ethical Considerations

The necessary ethical considerations vary depending on the role of the participant observer. According
to Gold (1958), there are four kinds of participant observer roles, two of which the researcher's scientific
intention is covert: *the complete participant* and *the participant as observer*, and two roles where the
scientific intentions are communicated to the rest of the organization: *the observer as participant* and *the
complete* observer. Because my research agenda emerged during my time of employment, my role has also
evolved over time.

Initially, my role was akin to that of *complete participant*, as I actively participated as an organizational
member. My research agenda was not yet formed, however, my experiences from this time would come to
inform my research in a retrospective manner, and thus one can characterize it as having been covert. As my
research agenda emerged and data collection was initiated, my role transformed to that of *observer as
participant*, where I actively participated with an openly scientific agenda. According to Kawulich (2005), the
latter role is the most ethically correct, "as the researcher's observation activities are known to the group
being studied" (p.7), whereas the former role is the most ethically questionable.

In order to remove any questionable ethics, I could have chosen to exclude any data obtained during my
period of "covert" research. However, as the strength of being a participant observer lies in the ability to
obtain firsthand knowledge over a longer period, and in avoiding the sole reliance on others' subjective
recollections of events, I decided to include knowledge and information obtained throughout my
employment. In order to overcome ethical issues, I have rather chosen to make the certain parts of the data
gathered for the purpose of this study confidential. Moreover, I have anonymized all informants who were
not involved with the case company on a professional level.

6.1.2 Interviews & Questionnaires

The first round of formal data sampling in terms of interviews and questionnaires was conducted
together with a group of four other master students in the fall of 2014. Questionnaires were sent out to three

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[1] The reference system adopted for field notes: Events that warrant a separate record in the reference list are referred
to as normal: (Last Name, Year), while the reference list entry points to the field notes. Events that do not warrant a
separate record (e.g. recurring meetings/interactions) are referred to like this: (Last Name(s) [if applicable], Field
Notes, Month Year). These are in the reference list gathered under "Field Notes".

so-called "super users" of GoMore in Denmark. These users were identified by GoMore's Digital Marketing Manager Søren Ipland, who also provided their contact details. The purpose of contacting these users was to identify their reasons for using GoMore, and their opinions about the platform (Larsen, Momsen, & Holmskov, 2014, Appendix B). Questionnaires were moreover sent out to ten potential GoMore users in our personal networks to identify their impressions of and attitudes towards GoMore and its concept (Boissezon et al., 2014, Appendix A). Even though nearly all of these respondents reside in Denmark, only one of them is Danish. In total, they represent nine different nationalities. Thus, their compiled responses are here assumed universal and applicable to the Norwegian population.

Moreover, both founders of GoMore, Søren Riis and Matias Dalsgaard, who is also the CEO, were interviewed, in addition to the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Mikkel Winther, Digital Marketing Manager Søren Ipland, and Customer Care Representative Thomas Holm. The purpose of these interviews was to identify initial challenges of launching the platform, strategic considerations prior to expansion, internal perceptions of the GoMore brand, as well as strategies for communication and brand building. While the interviews with users took the form of questionnaires, mediated either in person, over Skype, or e-mail, the interviews with GoMore employees were, with one exception, of a semi-structured, face-to-face nature. The exception was the interview with Søren Ipland, which was conducted as a questionnaire over e-mail because he was unable to meet in person.

Two more interviews and four more questionnaires were conducted in the spring of 2015. The interview subjects were CEO Matias Dalsgaard and Chief Product Officer (CPO) Lasse Gejl. They were chosen because of their influence over significant strategic decisions, and they were interviewed separately. The main purpose of these interviews was to clarify these actors' reasoning behind the strategic decisions made regarding the research issue: scaling and international expansion of the platform. Moreover, I intended to contrast what had previously been communicated about the expansion plans with what was communicated at the time of these interviews, nearly a year after expansion was initiated. Finally, I wished to explore the avenues for further expansion and/or development of the platform and its services. All interview transcripts and sound files are gathered in Appendix C.

The questionnaires were directed to the most active users of GoMore.no during its first year of existence in Norway (Helgesen, 2015; Laberg, 2015; Nerland, 2015; Wasrud, 2015, Appendix E). The activity level of these users was nowhere near that of the Danish "super users", yet I believed they could contribute with valuable insights into the early user experiences of and perceived potential for GoMore.

Nearly all the interviews with GoMore employees used and conducted for the purpose of this research were semi-structured in nature. The reasoning behind this methodological decision was to be open for

contextual factors and to allow for spontaneous and follow-up questions based on initial answers. This is also one of the interview formats best suited for exploratory research and qualitative analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). The reason why questionnaires were used in contact with potential and active GoMore users was primarily the logistical challenge of their locations being dispersed across Denmark and Norway. Secondly, using questionnaires in the first round of data sampling allowed for easy comparisons between and compilations of responses.

In effect of being responsible for GoMore's customer care in Norway, automated e-mails were sent from my e-mail account to users who had for some reason subsided their activity on the site, in the period January 2015 to May 2015. The intention of these e-mails was to obtain feedback from users on why they were not using the site anymore, and whether they had any suggestions for improvement. Few recipients answered this e-mail, however those who did provided valuable insights for both GoMore and this study (GoMore Users, 2015). These are gathered in Appendix D, and all names have been anonymized.

Lastly, internal documents such as overviews of KPIs, strategy and planning documents, as well as e-mails have been used for the purpose of analysis, and have thus been gathered in the confidential Appendices F and G.

6.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data used in this research comprises local and international news articles, video presentations available online (i.e. from TED.com), official reports on the sharing economy, social media updates (Twitter and Facebook) and blog posts by business- and opinion leaders, as well as relevant companies' own webpages (i.e. Airbnb.com). Additionally, cooperation with master students from Norwegian universities allowed me access to two different master theses on GoMore. The first was written by two students from NHH (the Norwegian Business School), Inga Øystese Hovde and Jørn Erik Toppe, and is a study based on formal survey results on Norwegians' willingness to participate in the sharing economy and peer-to-peer car sharing. The second one was written by a student from UiO (University of Oslo), Stian Wasrud, and is a qualitative study focused on GoMore's diffusion among Norwegian consumers. Some of its results on consumer behavior and motivations among potential GoMore users were valuable to this study as well.

6.3 Validity, Reliability & Generalizability

As in all qualitative research, the research basis of this paper evidently contains several potential sources for biases and errors. Therefore, measures have been taken to limit the effect of these sources:

- The *validity* of this research paper is strengthened by the logic of abduction, because this research approach requires a close adherence to a theoretical framework (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The participant observation nature of the study furthermore increases validity by allowing for multiple data collection methods, providing access to sensitive/confidential activities, reducing the chances of behavior adjustment, and providing the researcher with superior insight in culture and jargon (Bernard, 1994). Finally, the lengthy period of participant observation inside the case company means that many traditional threats to validity were overcome (Saunders et al., 2009).

- In terms of *reliability,* which is among the most complex challenges of immersive case studies involving participant observation, measures taken to increase it include reflexivity, multimethod data collection and the practice of asking clarifying questions.

- Lastly, concerning *generalizability*, there are debates as to whether this is possible to obtain with a single case study. The careful selection of a case company for this research may increase its generalizability. Nevertheless, the richness of a single case study, particularly combined with participant observation, produces independently valuable knowledge and novel insights.

7. Analysis

As illustrated in the background and literature chapter, there is a considerable research gap on the intersection between Platform Theory and the sharing economy. Important and relevant aspects from these two fields of knowledge have been merged to serve as a theoretical framework for the analysis of an expanding sharing economy platform. Applying this framework to the empirical findings, the following analysis will provide an answer to the third sub-question:

1. ***How do the challenges play out in the case company?***

This chapter will hence follow the structure of the Sharing Economy Catalyst Framework, hereafter also referred to simply as "the framework". The relevant strategic decisions pertaining to each part of the framework, and the logics behind them will be presented, as well as their effect on current and potential performance. This chapter will thus start with an analysis of GoMore's strategic reasoning behind their choice of markets for expansion. Next, the considerations made concerning entry timing will be analyzed. This is important because GoMore can be considered an early entrant among Norwegian ridesharing platforms. Third, design decisions made to attract and engage users will be analyzed in terms of entry strategies, growth hacking and user satisfaction. Fourth and final, GoMore's pricing strategy on their new market will be discussed.

7.1 Identifying the Community

For GoMore, the process of identifying the user community started before their initial launch on their native market, Denmark in 2005. Based on observations of other ridesharing services in Germany; it was assumed that the community of potential drivers and passengers existed also in Denmark. It was furthermore assumed that these were in need of a transactions facilitator just like in Germany – even if the consumers themselves were not yet aware of this at the time (Riis, 2014). Judging by the success of GoMore on the Danish market, it seems their assumptions were right, and as GoMore was first to market, they faced no competition.

1. Identify...
- industry history
- cultural, political, demographical & geographical distance
- critical mass
- what groups need a platform to interact
- strength of network externalities between these groups
- competing alternatives

According to GoMore's founders, no thorough market research as to the "level and scope" of their two customer groups' need for each other was conducted prior to the initial launch. Rather, a "wait and see" attitude was adopted, which corresponded well to the small amount of time and resources put into the project in its early years (Dalsgaard, 2014, 2015; Riis, 2014). Thus, the success of GoMore in its native market cannot be said to have hinged on careful mapping of the market, like Evans and Schmalensee (2007) prescribe for successful platforms.

Much later on, when GoMore in 2013 obtained their first significant external funding, market research was taken on in a slightly more methodical manner, serving the purpose of market expansion. Two markets were targeted: Sweden and Norway. Motivating this decision was mainly the perceived prospective value of being a leader within ridesharing and the sharing economy in Scandinavia, more or less regardless of the market or profit potential (Dalsgaard, 2015). Moreover, both countries had low to nonexistent competition in terms of functioning ridesharing platforms. Scandinavia as a region was considered close in both a geographical, economic, and cultural sense, thus no major obstacles to GoMore's success in the region were anticipated. There was an assumption that the platform would face approximately the same conditions in the new markets as they previously had in Denmark. Estimations for the new markets were therefore based mainly on previous experience coupled with local population numbers and statistics regarding car ownership and -usage (Dalsgaard, 2015; Riis, 2014).

7.1.1 Industry History

Beyond these loose estimations, GoMore did not conduct extensive market research prior to their expansion to Norway. The two new Norwegian employees, hereafter referred to as the local team, hired at and shortly after launch were meant to provide the local knowledge required for success in the new market. Among the first tasks of the local team was thus to map the market in terms of previous entrants and their

current performance (Åsle & Schweigaard, 2014). Some useful lessons were to be had from the histories of earlier similar ventures. Among the ones that managed to generate significant public attention was the simple digital bulletin board "Haikesentralen" ("the Hitchhikers' Central"). Probable reasons for the amount of attention paid to it include the fact that it was created and run by the largest newspaper in Norway, VG (Verdens Gang), and that it was launched in response to the volcano crisis on Iceland in 2010, paralyzing air traffic all over northern Europe (Flågen, Engebretsen, & Byermoen, 2010). On the site, drivers could post their rides, or those in need of transportation could advertise this need in the form of simple bulletin entries with contact information. As the volcano crisis subsided, so did activity on the site ("Haikesentralen," 2010).

Both before and after 2010, several "hitchhiking" or ridesharing platforms have been launched in Norway, only to seemingly have been discontinued, although many of their websites are still up and running ("Ants," 2012, "Bravocar," 2014, "Ecomy," 2013, "FriendlyDrive," 2014, "KjørSammen.no," 2007, "Samkjøring.no," 2011). The only similar platform that can be said to have had any commercial success in Norway is the Irish company Carma Carpooling. A doorway opened for them through a government-led trial project attempting to establish shared commute rides in the city of Bergen and its suburbs. When that project was gradually phased out, Carma saw its chance to "adopt" its existing ridesharing community (Fladset, 2014). It now has approximately 2500 members (Michelsen, 2015), however exclusively in the Bergen area. The Carma app is still very basic, and does not offer any integrated payment system or other data gathering mechanisms.

7.1.2   A Matter of Distance

For GoMore, Denmark was the only market known prior to the expansion, and one in which they had been successful to boot. Therefore, it made sense to assess the new market in terms of knowledge of the old market. As aforementioned, GoMore management initially assumed the distance between the two countries relatively small on all four parameters (Dalsgaard, 2015; Riis, 2014), hence no in-depth analysis in terms of the four parameters suggested by Ghemawat (2001) was conducted. A brief presentation of what such an analysis might have revealed will follow, with the purpose of illustrating subsequent arguments.

Geographic Distance

While geographic distance may immediately seem obvious, assessing geographical distance should, as demonstrated in the literature review, extend beyond physical distance from the home market to encompass the geographic size of a given market, as well as its topography and infrastructure, in terms of both communication and transportation. Both kinds of infrastructure is of importance for a ridesharing platform. The former because the service is mediated through internet-enabled smartphones and computers. In this sense, both Norway and Denmark is highly developed (ITU, 2012). The latter is important for a ridesharing

platform, because in order to reach a critical mass of both drivers and passengers, it needs to recruit enough users dispersed across the entire market to provide a sufficient number of rides on popular routes, at various times.

Undoubtedly, the exact critical mass required is difficult to forecast, however tangible data on geography and infrastructure may give some pointers. While Norway has a population size similar to Denmark, its geographic size is huge in comparison. An effect of this is a lower population density in Norway. Hence, the critical mass needed to satisfy demand from both sides of the platform should be larger here than in Denmark. Moreover, the standard of road networks has an impact on people's willingness to choose a car as their transportation mode instead of air- or rail travel. It has been established that the roads in Norway are of extremely poor quality (Bergsaker & Sørenes, 2014), and in addition, domestic air travel is heavily subsidized as a consequence of regional policies encouraging settlements outside of urban areas (Glesnes, 2011; Sætre, 2014). These factors discourage long-distance car travel in Norway.

Economic Distance

In terms of economic distance, the home market and the new market may be closer than they are in a geographic sense. Relative to the rest of the world, both Denmark and Norway are wealthy nations with a highly educated population (United Nations Development Program, 2013). The demographics of the two markets are in this sense similar, however compared to each other, Norway is wealthier, and its inhabitants have a higher disposable income (OECD, 2015). This may have a negative impact on Norwegians' rate of adoption of new behaviors based on cost saving motivations, as opposed to experience from Denmark (e.g. Hovde & Toppe, 2015; Wasrud, 2015a).

For GoMore, additional demographic aspects such as car ownership and –usage affect its performance in a market. Denmark and Norway have similar numbers of cars per capita (World Bank, 2014), and in Norway, 19 out of 20 cars on the road are occupied by its driver only (Pettersen, 2014). Thus, the assumption of the universality of the idling capacity of car seats seems accurate, which bodes positively for GoMore's potential in Norway.

Political Distance

Also in terms of politics, the two countries share many characteristics. They are tightly connected in a historical sense, and both countries' welfare state models are firmly rooted in the social democratic tradition (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This should have a positive impact on GoMore's ease of doing business in the new market, and that was the expectation prior to launch (Dalsgaard, 2015). Nevertheless, the political conditions facing GoMore in the new market were surprising in several ways. First of all, there was a new level of

skepticism toward its value offering and its legality. Legislation regarding taxis and individual transportation is in fact quite similar in Norway and Denmark, and upon strict interpretation, ridesharing between civilians cannot be considered undividedly legal in either country (Lovdata, 2002; Løkken, 2014; Marfeldt, 2012)[2]. However, the amount of attention paid to the purported illegality of ridesharing with GoMore in Norway as opposed to in its home country is striking (e.g. Gustavsen, 2014; Martinsen & Lia, 2014; Oftebro, 2014; Pedersen, 2015; Strøm, 2014). This could be caused by several factors.

As aforementioned, the sharing economy as a novel concept has received a mixed welcome by governments around the world. Generally slow to adapt, few countries have considered the legality of internet-mediated sharing yet, thus it tends to operate in a legal gray area. However, in democracies where the population has an impact on the legislative power, public discourse matters. A brief look at the public discourse surrounding the sharing economy in Denmark and Norway reveals significant differences, both in terms of its extent and tone. In Danish, the most commonly used name for the sharing economy is "deleøkonomi", upon which a Google search reveals 73.200 hits (as of Oct.11, 2015). Its Norwegian equivalent "delingsøkonomi" gives only 7.530 results. Thus, knowledge of the sharing economy seems to be higher in Denmark than in Norway. As demonstrated in the literature review, prior knowledge tends to increase people's willingness to partake in the sharing economy. The tone with which GoMore specifically has been portrayed in the two countries also differ. In Denmark, GoMore has received nearly unanimously positive attention from the press. This is probably caused both by GoMore being a startup native to Denmark and the popularity of the sharing economy. In Norway, the case is quite different, as demonstrated by the negative media attention.

Cultural Distance

Regarding cultural aspects, there are additional differences. According to some Norwegian users, ridesharing in the form offered by GoMore is not a good cultural fit – that because Norwegians "have become used to only having the best" (Wasrud, 2015a), ridesharing will remain a niche activity only (Nerland, 2015). Suspicions of cultural differences were mentioned and discussed several times at the GoMore office; however, it did not affect its entry strategy or estimations of critical mass (Schweigaard, 2015b). Indeed, while Norway and Denmark have similar languages, and, in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, both are characterized as being more *individualistic* than they are *collectivistic* and thus are more prone to trusting strangers, there is a significant divide between the two countries on the parameter of *uncertainty avoidance*. Denmark scores quite low on this scale, which indicates that they are more willing to take risks, whereas

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[2] In Denmark, the Ministry of Justice and the Tax Authorities have acquitted ridesharing that involves a payment reflecting actual *cost sharing* between drivers and passengers (Kraft & Østergaard, 2015; "Retsinformation.dk," 2015)

Norway scores higher, indicating that Norwegians are more risk-averse (Hofstede et al., 2010). Seen in relation to innovations, such as ridesharing platforms, this may imply that Norwegians are inherently less inclined to take the risk of using such a novel service. Thus, for GoMore, this factor may work in their disfavor on the Norwegian market, relative to the other two markets.

7.1.3   Estimating Critical Mass

Because of the external funding GoMore had obtained for the expansion, there was pressure to reach a critical mass of users earlier than what had been the case in Denmark (Schweigaard, 2015b). Thus, the time allotted for overcoming the chicken-and-egg problem was significantly shorter. When estimating the critical mass and the time needed to get there, however, the conditions discussed above such as geographic and political distance, were not taken into account. Rather, it was assumed that the size of the critical mass would be largely the same as it had been in Denmark, and that the road there should be significantly shorter because of the newfound resources for marketing and PR (Dalsgaard, 2014, 2015; Schweigaard, 2015b). Thus, critical mass was loosely estimated to be 5.000 users, equally distributed on both sides of the platform, and this number should be reached at the very latest in six months, by Christmas 2014 (Schweigaard, 2015b).

As time went by however, both the time goal and the critical mass estimate needed adjusting. By January 2015, GoMore reached 10.000 Norwegian users, yet it was clear that this number did not compose critical mass. In terms of booked seats, there was close to zero activity on the platform (GoMore, 2015b). Though drivers posted rides and passengers posted ride agents, volumes were not great enough even in concentrated areas for matches to be made between them. Thus it became clear that critical mass constituted a completely different number in Norway than in Denmark, however what exact number remained unknown (Dalsgaard, 2015).

7.1.4   Identifying Groups and Estimating Network Externalities

As previously indicated, there were no established groups in Norway with an obvious need for a ride matchmaker prior to GoMore's entry. The sharing economy as a whole and ridesharing in particular remained niche interests among the general Norwegian population. Rather than spending time trying to identify the most likely user groups in Norway prior to entry, GoMore entered with the expectation that the user groups would be similar to the current users in Denmark, which largely consisted of students and commuters (Dalsgaard, 2014, 2015; Riis, 2014). The local team was encouraged to reach out to these groups and possibly other potential groups they deemed attractive (Schweigaard, 2015b).

Pursuing large employers was an early, independent initiative of the local team, as these often grapple with limited parking space, and have employees often experiencing a congested and stressful commute.

Several attempts at reaching out to these were made during the first year of GoMore's presence in Norway, with some positive feedback (Schweigaard, 2014a). However, large corporations are often slow to move, and even though most of them recognized the potential in terms of saved parking space, saved commuter time, possibly happier employees and of course the environmental advantage, many also questioned the legality of such a venture (Schweigaard, 2015a). That, despite the fact that ridesharing *among colleagues* is legally specified as being allowed in Norway (Lovdata, 2002). Thus, the companies themselves were a hard sell; however, GoMore management seemed the least optimistic toward this plan. Despite having clear and interested responses and potential agreements at hand, GoMore management were reluctant to enter into any special agreements with employers because they did not have particularly good experiences with that in Denmark (Gejl, Field Notes, Feb. 2015). One "administratively light" cooperation agreement with a large company was nonetheless initiated, however the results were not satisfactory in terms of activity (Field Notes, Sep-Oct, 2014).

Based on the guaranteed legality and obvious advantages, commuters in general were moreover targeted as comprising viable groups in need of a platform to interact. The roads leading into and out of the largest Norwegian cities are almost deadlocked during rush hour, and 19 out of 20 car seats are empty (Pettersen, 2014). GoMore thus figured they could turn this pain point into their advantage by promoting ridesharing as an effective way of minimizing the number of cars on the road. However , while the attempt generally received positive feedback and some interest (e.g. Boissezon et al., 2014), the local team soon learned that commuters are a very heterogeneous group and not easily reached, nor engaged (Schweigaard, 2015b).

An obvious pairing with the commuters is students. Students rarely own a car, and they tend to live on a tight budget, thus the network externalities between them and commuters are potentially strong. Based on member statistics from Denmark, GoMore expected students to constitute a large proportion of their user base from the start (Dalsgaard, 2015; Riis, 2014). The targeting of students started immediately, and escalated throughout GoMore's first year in Norway (Field Notes, 2014-2015) . Reaching students was easier than reaching commuters, as they often belong to their respective university's group or page on Facebook, and thus ads and communication could be targeted directly to their news feeds. Paired with "exclusive ridesharing groups" for single universities, this strategy generated large amounts of new users, and will be discussed more in depth under 7.3.2 "Growth Hacking".

Unfortunately, commuters and students as user groups have little to no overlap between them. Therefore, GoMore had to work on securing participation of *two* groups instead of just one, which is more demanding. Estimating network externalities between user groups prior to a novel platform's launch is never

easy. The natural expectation of strong externalities between employees of the same organization was not fulfilled, possibly because of employees' valuing time alone in their cars, and/or inadequate commitment by the companies in terms of internally advertising ridesharing via GoMore. Another reason may be that colleagues who start to rideshare with each other find no reason to continue using the platform for scheduling. This was attempted overcome by bonus arrangements from the employers' side.

The potentially strong network externalities between commuters and students did not kick in either, possibly because of the difficulty of reaching the former group. In fact, the success in reaching students and the failure in reaching drivers at one point led to an imbalance in the size of the user groups, when there were significantly more ride agents than actual rides offered (GoMore, 2015b). This did not indicate rivalry, however, since no bookings were actually made.

7.1.5   Identifying the Competition

Because of other actors' previously limited success in launching ridesharing platforms in Norway, and the resultant low level of competition, the current competing models of consumption would be using private cars in a single-occupancy manner and public transportation. In order to overcome this competition, GoMore would have to ensure that their service offering was perceived as significantly better on the parameters most highly valued by its potential users, as well as ensuring low initial switching costs between entrenched behavior and ridesharing. Doing that requires a thorough understanding of users' motivations to rideshare, and the perceived costs and benefits associated with doing so. This will be further elaborated in 7.3 "Design Considerations".

Even though direct competition was not significant at GoMore's point of entry, some entrants with different business models serving the same need could already be identified. Often perceived by the public as being similar to GoMore is Haxi, a Norwegian/Danish company established in 2014 as a "buddy driving" ("kompiskjøring") platform ("Haxi," 2014a). While this platform often market themselves as providing ridesharing (Haxi, 2014b; Moe, 2014), the actual business model resembles more of an illegal taxi service where private drivers advertise time windows of availability for taking passengers to their desired destination (Aldridge, 2014; Fjærvik, 2014; "Haxi," 2014a).

Because of its controversial business model and aggressive communication style, Haxi received much more media attention than GoMore during 2014 and early 2015. Indeed, several of its drivers were reported to the police for "advertising illegal taxi services in public". None of them were, however, found guilty on any charges (Moe, 2015). Evidently, Haxi does not fall under the definition of sharing economy used here, its business model resembles that of the aforementioned transportation giant Uber.

In fact, Uber might be the next competing alternative to look out for, since they loudly entered Norway in the fall of 2014 (Lygre, 2014). Although GoMore and Uber does not have identical business models, they serve the same need to some extent. Uber has, despite its exclusion from this thesis' definition of the sharing economy, in many people's eyes come to represent the disruptive force of precisely the sharing economy. As briefly aforementioned, Uber is one of the most highly valuated venture-backed companies the world has ever seen, and obviously has nearly limitless resources for marketing, PR and other attraction-generating maneuvers.

Upon advice from a communications agency, GoMore attempted to face these indirect rivals with a careful, law-abiding image where legal and authoritative approval was seen as a way of positive differentiation (Field Notes. August, 2015). While this strategy may have paid off in terms of legitimacy building, it did not provide any tangible advantages for GoMore.

7.2 Timing of Entry

The previous entrants on the Norwegian ridesharing market did not have much success, hence while GoMore was not a pioneering platform per say, it could be considered an early mover, with what that entails of advantages and disadvantages. Judging by the responses from the media and the public, the sharing economy and ridesharing were not established concepts at the time (Boissezon et al., 2014; Fagerbakk, 2015; GoMore Users, 2015; Gustavsen, 2014; Hovde & Toppe, 2015; Martinsen & Lia, 2014; Oftebro, 2014; Åsle, 2014), and so the challenge of "carving out" a national market space was still up for grabs. As demonstrated in the literature review, this is a heavy undertaking, and should involve careful consideration of the potential early mover advantages.

2. Entry Timing

- Options for preemption?
- Other potential first mover advantages?
- Long-term profit potential?
- Increase legitimacy through strategic partnerships
- Identify likely competitors and possibly cooperate with them
- Assess costs and benefits of early entry vs. fast follower strategy

7.2.1 Preempting the Market

As aforementioned, GoMore's main motivation to enter when they did was the aim of creating a strong presence across Scandinavia – to "at a minimum become *the* Scandinavian solution for ridesharing" (Dalsgaard, 2015, 22:24). Underlying was the notion that in order to achieve that, GoMore would have to be early. Ridesharing, including pseudo ridesharing such as Uber, received a lot of attention in international news media in the summer of 2014. The French ridesharing platform Blablacar raised more than USD $100 million (Dillet, 2014), and was seen as a potential direct threat should they decide to enter Scandinavia (Field Notes, Oct. 2014).

An underlying reason for GoMore's rush to enter the Norwegian market was the plan to launch peer-to-peer (P2P) car sharing later on. P2P car sharing platforms are able to extract higher rents because of the integrated insurance and higher service level than those providing ridesharing only (GoMore, 2015b), and the success of other platforms, especially in the US had been immense (Lawler, 2014a, 2014b). If GoMore could establish a well-known brand and community in Norway, there was a belief that the launch of its rental segment would face fewer hindrances in terms of brand awareness and legitimacy (Dalsgaard, 2015; Schweigaard, 2015b)

7.2.2 Assessing the Long-Term Profit Potential

GoMore's relatively low service fee for ridesharing, and the average price for a ride on the Danish version of GoMore being DKK 130 (GoMore, 2015b), means that huge volumes of rides are required to secure profits. In fact, GoMore has not yet proven profitable, even in Denmark where hundreds of rides are booked every week (GoMore, 2015b; Jensen, 2015). The same is true for the giant ridesharing platform Blablacar, however (Ahmed, 2015; Carnegy, 2013; Dillet, 2014), as well as the hyped pseudo-taxi services Lyft (Kosoff, 2015a) and Uber (Kosoff, 2015b). According to GoMore's CEO, however, ridesharing is profitable at "sufficient volumes" (Dalsgaard, Field Notes, Oct. 2015). The majority of GoMore's overall revenue is nevertheless provided by the P2P car sharing segment (Dalsgaard, 2015; GoMore, 2015b), and it is clearly the ambition that it will provide most of the future profits. Thus, entering the Norwegian ridesharing market could be seen as a way of preempting some of the network externalities for P2P car sharing (Schweigaard, 2015b).

7.2.3 Attempts to Increase Legitimacy

Besides preemption, a potential reason for entering the Norwegian market early was a belief that it would allow GoMore to affect the resolution of the uncertainty facing the ridesharing industry. The uncertainty is largely caused by the legal gray area in which ridesharing is situated. Attempting to find a way out of this gray zone, GoMore attempted to establish interaction with Norwegian authorities by contacting relevant ministries several times for clarification of the legislation on ridesharing. Finally, in January 2015, the Ministry of Transport and Communications agreed to meet with GoMore's CEO and the Norwegian Market Manager to discuss their value proposition and the issues surrounding its definition and legality. At the meeting, the Ministry expressed a positive attitude toward ridesharing as defined by GoMore, however no concrete action regarding legislation or public statements were taken (Schweigaard, Dalsgaard, Junge Jensen, Weltzien, & Øen, 2015).

The confusion as to the definition of ridesharing as well as regarding the service's legality moreover led to negative attention from the media (Gustavsen, 2014; Martinsen & Lia, 2014) and from the public on social

media, particularly Facebook. The general argument being that GoMore was a provider of illegal taxi services, in the same vein as Uber and Haxi. Legitimacy was attempted achieved through several measures.

First, as media coverage was assumed more conducive to building legitimacy than traditional marketing, the time and resources devoted to PR efforts were amplified. This led, among other things, to the publication of opinion pieces, on- and offline news media coverage, and an appearance on national TV (God Morgen Norge, 2014; Gustavsen, 2014; Schweigaard, 2014b; Åsle, 2014). Second, accusations from licensed taxi drivers in regional news articles and on social media were responded to in an explanative way, referring to parts of the legislation that could possibly be interpreted as favorable for ridesharing (Lise Fagerbakk, 2015; Oftebro, 2014). Third, GoMore worked to streamline its communication in all channels; customer service, social media, newsletters, and the site itself in order to increase credibility and believability (Dalsgaard, 2014).

Fourth, strategic partnerships with reputable and relevant actors were pursued in order to raise legitimacy. Many of the organizations approached, however, required large investments from GoMore, were not familiar with the concept and/or did not want to engage with such a small actor in an industry so distinguished by legal insecurity (Fossum, Schweigaard, & Åsle, 2014; Horseby & Åsle, 2014; Nermoen, Horsberg, Myklebust, Schweigaard, & Åsle, 2014). Among the fair successes was a partnership with the Norwegian branch of Hostelling International, "Norske Vanderhjem" (NV), initiated in August 2015 (Schweigaard, Åsle, & Tevanovic, 2014). NV's motivation to enter this partnership was to support a green and affordable way of travelling, which corresponded well with a new image they were pursuing (Schweigaard et al., 2014).

Other partnerships included one with the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) of Bergen which entitled exchange students in possession of an ESN member card to a 20% discount when using GoMore (Østlie, Schweigaard, & Åsle, 2014). While the intangible effects of increased legitimacy are hard to measure, its ultimate goal, as all other marketing and communication measures, is to increase sales. There was no observable change in activity levels directly traceable to any of these partnerships, even the ones where tracking was easy because of discount codes. In fact, no discount codes distributed to Norwegian users were ever submitted as payment during GoMore's first year of existence in Norway.

7.3 Design Considerations

Like all other platforms mediating physical transactions, GoMore had to initiate a catalytic reaction in the new market.

7.3.1 Entry Strategies

As aforementioned, there was an understanding internal to GoMore that critical mass needed to be achieved fast; however, no definite deadline or number of users constituting critical mass was determined. Neither was any official strategy adopted – there was more of a "try everything [within budget] and see what works" approach (Dalsgaard, May 19, 2014. Job Interview). Because GoMore had been a success in Denmark without any overall plan, there was an implicit assumption that this was the best way forward also in other markets. The incremental entry strategy, for instance, was not seen as applicable. At the time, GoMore management were hoping that the novelty of the ridesharing "movement" or "transportation revolution" would evoke such huge public interest that actively limiting efforts to smaller geographic areas was seen as insufficient and not taking full advantage of the potential for national media coverage (Jørstad et al., 2014; Schweigaard, 2015b)

7.3.2 Growth Hacking

While there might not have been an overall long-term type of strategy guiding GoMore's entry to Norway, there were plenty of short-term strategies thus categorizing under the umbrella of growth hacking. At the time, "growth hacking" as a concept was very trendy and, judging by the coverage by niche media on the tech industry, was almost seen as the raison d'être for many startup companies (Brown, 2014; GrowMaster, 2014; Oppong, 2014). This sentiment coupled with GoMore's need to reach an undefined number of users constituting critical mass led to a "race for signups", i.e. pure member acquisition efforts.

To assist these efforts, a so-called "Gaussian blur" was added to the platform's webpage in June 2014, entailing that users could not see the actual rides offered on the platform without signing up. The convenient option of signing up via Facebook's social graph enabled interested people to become a GoMore member in just one click. Immediately after installing the blur function, GoMore could identify a surge in signups in all three markets (Gejl et al., 2014; GoMore, 2015b, 2015b, 2015b).

Thus, most of the growth hacking was pursued with the objective of new member signups, as this was thought to constitute desired platform growth (Dalsgaard & SimpleSite, 2015; Dalsgaard, 2015). The most successful strategy was one that involved the creation of pseudo sub-groups of GoMore's main page,

3. Design

- Entry strategy that ensures value to users from the start
- Meaningful early interactions
- Control growth
- Fulfill users' demand for safety, convenience and cost savings
- Carefully evaluate short-term growth strategies in relation to long-term goals
- Increase switching costs

targeting cities, towns, and universities all over the country (Dalsgaard & SimpleSite, 2015). These landing pages were then advertised to defined target groups via Facebook, both organically and via paid ads. Hundreds of these groups were made during the fall and winter of 2014, and even though their advertising was time consuming, it did "pay off" in terms of signup numbers. However, most of the new members did not enter the site a second time, let alone become active users (GoMore, 2015b). A reason for these false entries may have been that these "groups" did not constitute actual defined groups in any real way; they only gathered local rides on one single landing page. Alas, they did not facilitate "meaningful interactions" any more than the original platform did.
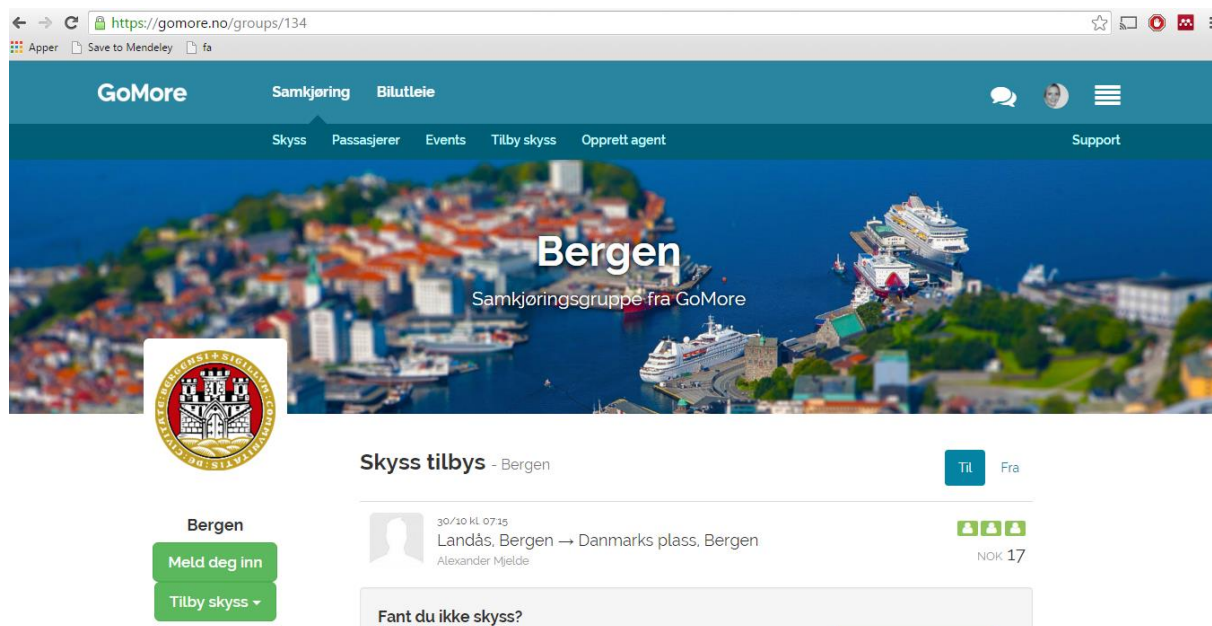
Seeding Supply

As aforementioned, the level of effort, cost, and risk related to following a strategy of seeding varies between platform types. For GoMore, the creation of fake rides was deemed too risky. An alternative strategy discussed early on entailed self-supply of actual rides on attractive routes around the country, however it ended up being too costly. Seeding supply by incentivizing producers is risky because of opportunistic behavior, which GoMore experienced. Shortly after expansion, spurred by the lack of rides offered on the pages, GoMore Norway launched a brief campaign offering to double the pay received by drivers for any completed ride during the period. Unfortunately, this campaign only led to one single booked trip, of which driver and passenger knew each other prior to the exchange, and later admitted to having faked the trip so as to "earn" free money. The trip never actually took place (Schweigaard, Field Notes, Aug. 2014).

Seeding Demand

On October 10th 2014, GoMore celebrated the International Ridesharing Day by offering coupons of NOK 250 value to all passengers booking rides that day. This was an effort to increase bookings, as there was a fair amount of rides offered at this point. The discount was advertised on social media, GoMore's own newsletter and to external media and discount-sites (i.e. Gjerrigknarken.no). No rides were booked, however, and the discount code remained unused by the end of the day (Field Notes. Oct. 10, 2014)

Recruiting Marquee Users

The recruitment of marquee users was something often discussed at the GoMore headquarters. The local team approached several relevant opinion leaders and celebrities – with little success. These individuals were chosen because of their assumed national influence, and many of them are in fact affiliated with management agencies with steep prices for any engagements (Schweigaard, 2015b).

7.3.3 Fulfilling User Needs

In order for GoMore to become a sustainable success in terms of usage in Norway, they will have to fulfill user needs to such an extent that they overcome the intention-action gap and start booking rides. This is necessary to secure early mover advantage not only in terms of market share, but also in terms of financial performance. To this end, communicating with and understanding the current Danish user base is essential. As aforementioned, at the point of expansion, GoMore had concrete knowledge of data on its user demographics (Dalsgaard, 2015; Ipland, 2014), however in terms of motivations, the knowledge seemed based more on subjective impressions. To improve upon this, GoMore attempted to engage with their early users through social media and "personalized" automated e-mails sent out to users fulfilling particular (non) activity requirements (Gejl, Field Notes. Jan. 2015), and individual "user testimonials" were collected occasionally, of which the positive ones were published on the webpage (Ipland. Field Notes, Jan 2015 ; GoMore, 2015a). While some knowledge of users' concerns was gained by these measures, a more thorough survey or similar of both existing and potential users may have been conducive. This was not prioritized, however (Dalsgaard, 2014).

Among the potential users questioned for this study, the motivating factors for participating in ridesharing mentioned most often were environmental concerns, cost savings, the social aspect – meeting new people, and the optimization of resources (Boissezon et al., 2014). When questioning the so-called "super users" in Denmark, saving costs and the environment were the most frequently mentioned motivators (Larsen et al., 2014). The Norwegian "super users" also reported cost savings and the environmental aspect, but also the social aspect as contributing factors (Helgesen, 2015; Laberg, 2015). Thus, the motivators are uniform to some extent. These statements moreover resonate well with the beliefs held and expressed by

GoMore employees, who moreover conveyed that the beneficial factors communicated, varied depending on the audience. For PR and legitimacy purposes, the environmental and social aspects were emphasized. In advertising and social media, on the other hand, the potential savings were emphasized more (Dalsgaard, 2014; Ipland, 2014; Riis, 2014). The same was done by the local team in relation to the launch in Norway.

Among the potential users, the most commonly mentioned factor dissuading the adoption of ridesharing was that it involves sharing a car with strangers, which was perceived risky by some. Other negative factors mentioned were inflexibility and that it was not perceived as environmentally friendly compared to public transportation (Boissezon et al., 2014). Some of these findings are supported by Wasrud's (2015b) master thesis, which suggests that the main dissuading factors to potential users' participation in ridesharing are a reported lower comfort level relative to trains and buses, awkwardness, risk, inflexibility and inconvenience. According to feedback provided by Norwegian GoMore Users (2015) who had stopped using GoMore, the primary reason (42%) for subsiding activity on the platform was the lack of matches between drivers and passengers, i.e. lack of critical mass.

Lastly, the importance of former knowledge of the concept was illuminated by some of the answers given to the questionnaire by potential users. While the ones who were familiar with GoMore were positive to ridesharing, some of the ones who were unfamiliar with the concept remained very skeptical, even after the details of profiles and the rating system had been explained to them. Because of this skepticism, a cost-benefit analysis of tradeoffs was not even initiated among these individuals (Boissezon et al., 2014).

Trust Mechanisms

Most of the potential users were of the impression that ridesharing with GoMore is safe. For the skeptics, however, GoMore's popular option of signing up using Facebook's social graph, and the user profiles with profile pictures and options for rich provision of information did heighten some users' confidence the platform (Boissezon et al., 2014; Helgesen, 2015; Nerland, 2015). By doing this, and confirming one's phone number, a user would obtain a "verified" stamp on their profile (GoMore, 2015c). This was also communicated by the local team as enhancing security when critique was raised on social media regarding the safety of ridesharing (Schweigaard & Åsle, 2014). However, a Facebook profile is quick and easy to set up. Having a Facebook profile and a phone number, is no guarantee that you are trustworthy (Nerland, 2015). Thus, the local team moreover encouraged users themselves to consider what transactions to engage in based on the information provided by the other users.

Other factors were also emphasized by GoMore as decreasing the risk of ridesharing, among them the fact that GoMore had an overview of all booked rides in terms of routes, times, drivers, and passengers. The

online payment mechanism was also argued to contribute to safety, as a driver has to register his/her account information in order to receive the final payment, and a passenger has to register his/her credit card in order to pay for the ride. While it is up to the driver to decide whether to allow cash or online payments, or both, the latter is strongly encouraged through several nudges integrated in the platform design (Gejl. Field Notes, Jun. 2014). Lastly, the fact that no real negative or dangerous experiences had ever been reported in relation to ridesharing in Denmark, was often communicated by the local team to both journalists and skeptics on social media (Åsle, 2015).

GoMore's strongest trust-building mechanism, however, is the rating system that allows users to build strong reputations on the platform. This works excellent in Denmark, where several hundred rides are booked daily and ratings are generally very high (GoMore, 2015e;GoMore, 2015b). The low activity level in Norway, however, means that the rating system is not functional yet. Few users have any ratings, and thus judging the reliability of a driver/passenger on this basis not possible.

7.4 Pricing Decisions

For a ridesharing platform like GoMore, pricing decisions should reflect its core value unit, current context, and barriers to entry for users on both sides. It should also with time generate a profit, while simultaneously, because of its aforementioned questionable legal situation, aim to keep prices set by users on a level so as not to raise suspicion about their status, i.e. to avoid falling into the category of illegal taxi services. The latter would be the case if the drivers themselves were able to make a profit on

4. Pricing

- Ensure profitability
- Carefully evaluate what side to subsidize, if any
- Consider core value unit when deciding between usage or access fees
- Ensure legal compliance to enhance legitimacy

ridesharing, at least according to Danish legislation, which is relatively clear on this issue (Kraft & Østergaard, 2015). While legislation is not as clear in Norway, the signals received in the meeting with the Ministry of Transport and Communications pointed toward the same sentiment (Schweigaard et al., 2015).

7.4.1 Pricing Strategies

Making the decision between charging for access or usage (i.e. one-time vs. subscription fees), is a crucial early decision for a platform. While subscription-based services generally have a higher profit potential, peer-to-peer platforms in the sharing economy tend to operate on a per-usage payment practice (e.g. Airbnb, 2015; BlaBlaCar, 2015; GetAround, 2015). According to GoMore co-founder Søren Riis (2014), there were discussions prior to the initial launch about whether GoMore should be a subscription-based service; however, because users' likelihood of finding ridesharing matches was low at the time, just as it is in Norway now, the "no cure no pay" option seemed most viable for achieving widespread platform adoption. The

novelty of ridesharing as a concept added to the case for lowering the participation threshold as much as possible.

GoMore operates with the same pricing dynamics in all its markets; subsidizing passengers, while charging drivers. According to Matias Dalsgaard, this model was chosen simply because of its "competitiveness" (Field Notes, Oct. 2015). However, it resembles the pricing practice of the former German ridesharing platform Mitgefahrgelegenheit[3], which may have been based on the notion that the driver would be the one most motivated to pay a fee, since he/she would be the one "making money" on the transaction (Riis, 2014).

7.4.2 Staying on the Right Side of the Law

For GoMore to gain sorely needed legitimacy in Norway, its differentiation from the aforementioned providers of illegal taxi services needs clarification. In Denmark, the driver's motivation determines whether ridesharing is considered legal or not. When the motivation is *cost sharing*, it is legal, but when the motivation is *profit*, it is illegal. Because of the short political distance between Norway and Denmark combined with the attitudes expressed by the Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications, the same can be assumed true in Norway. Thus, for GoMore to gain legitimacy in Norway, they need to make sure that its drivers' price setting lies within what can be considered cost sharing and not profit making amounts. Hence, during its first year of existence in Norway, the local team engaged in redirecting users whose price setting was off. Some users set their prices too high, which could suggest a profit making agenda. However, the probability of any seat being booked on the platform remained small throughout the period; thus, the probability of an overpriced seat being booked can be assumed nonexistent. Nevertheless, these prices, visible to all users on the page, did not exhibit desired behavior and were requested changed (e.g. Field Notes. Feb. 2015).

7.4.3 Ensuring Profitability

Another aspect of user behavior has a more direct effect on the platform's profitability, namely drivers bypassing the fee by advertising free rides and subsequently demanding cash payment from passengers. In Denmark, GoMore tracks the on-platform communication of such drivers, and upon proof of repeated platform rule breach, they are expelled. The same was the plan in Norway, however the users here were allowed more slack initially "so that they'll learn how it works" (Gejl, Field Notes. Jul. 2015). Of course, having users offer rides for free, although not directly prohibited, would not provide any income for the platform, and would thus be detrimental to profitability.

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[3] Mitgefahrgelegenheit (carpooling.com) was purchased by Blablacar in 2015 (Woods, 2015).

Ensuring profitability moreover entails considering the usage fees in relation to the likely long-term usage volume, to ensure the profit potential translates into actual profits. However, as aforementioned, profitability currently seems to be down-prioritized in favor of growth in GoMore and other ridesharing platforms. While GoMore in early 2015 stated that the aim for the year was to reach break-even in all Nordic countries, the revenue contributing to this was expected to be provided by peer-to-peer car sharing, not ridesharing (e.g. Field Notes, Jan. 2015). After numerous delays, the car sharing segment was launched to Norway in September 2015. Unfortunately for GoMore, the Norwegian direct rival Nabobil launched on the same day, and was the one to receive the majority of the media coverage (e.g. Arnkværn, 2015; Espeland, 2015; Korsvold, 2015; Sjøberg, 2015). By October 2015, the GoMore CEO stated that the prospects for P2P car sharing were not up to speed, and that ridesharing itself would probably not prove profitable in Norway (Dalsgaard, Field Notes, Oct. 2015).

7.5 Summary

Throughout this chapter, the challenges facing the case company in relation to their international expansion have been presented. The strategic decisions made have been analyzed, as well as the thinking underpinning them. This has provided a comprehensive answer to the third sub-question, namely:

3. How do the challenges play out in the case company?

8. Discussion

In this chapter, findings from the analysis will be discussed in light of the theoretical framework, in order to reach an answer to the fourth sub-question:

4. How can the theoretical propositions based on merged theory inform internationally expanding sharing economy platforms?

As demonstrated by the analysis, GoMore's strategic maneuvering in relation to its international expansion was in line with the framework on certain points. The expectations in terms of potential user groups seemed well founded. Even though the local team was not as successful in reaching out to commuters at they were in reaching students, this might partly have been caused by budgetary constraints. Larger budgets may have allowed for more mass marketing, and thus a larger knowledge diffusion. The large employers' hesitation to participate may also have been eased by this. These groups' motivations to partake in the sharing economy also seemed well understood among GoMore employees, and moreover correspond both with the responses obtained from potential and current users, and with what Lamberton and Rose (2012) found to be the main benefits of participating in the sharing economy. Thus, GoMore seems to have

a realistic grasp of their users' motivations, which is conducive to both expansion and long-term success in terms of platform usage. Employing this for PR purposes is also in line with the framework.

Moreover, GoMore made extensive efforts to increase legitimacy, by proposing partnerships with numerous organizations and companies, approaching relevant authorities as well as generally adopting a transparent and consistent style of communication. However, legitimacy building is a long and sometimes seemingly unyielding process. Quick, tangible results are rare and unlikely. In terms of securing users' safety when using the platform, the trust system including ratings and validations via Facebook and phone was well developed and satisfactory according to current users and some potential users. However, the low activity levels in Norway in terms of actual bookings meant that the rating system did not become functional during GoMore's first year of presence there. Keymolen's (2013) emphasis on "interpersonal system trust" comes to mind here, and it is clear that at this stage, GoMore has not obtained this in Norway. Indeed, Hovde & Toppe's (2015) survey revealed that a "lack of system trust" (p.68) was found to be one of two reasons Norwegians did not adopt practices belonging to the sharing economy, even though they stated positive attitudes towards the concept. Thus, obtaining users' confidence in the platform could help overcome the intention-action gap highlighted by Hamari and Ukkonen (2015).

In terms of pricing, GoMore moreover seemed to have struck a chord in Denmark, and there is no obvious reason why this model would not work in Norway. The decision to charge for usage over access is in accordance with Evans and Schmalensee's (2007) advice for platforms facing uncertain markets as well as Andersson et. al's (2013) findings on relatively successful ridesharing platforms. As critical mass was not achieved during GoMore's first year of market presence in Norway, this pricing decision may have bought them some time and attracted users to their platform even if it was not yet fully functional. Thus, it may have contributed to the success of some of the short-term growth strategies.

GoMore's practice of subsidizing passengers and charging drivers is in line with Hagiu's (2014) advice, as there is a low level of competition in all its markets, and thus a low degree of multihoming combined with an inherently high degree of "consumer taste for variety" in ridesharing. Furthermore, GoMore employed mechanisms to monitor users' pricing behavior in order to ensure both legality and profitability.

Yet, GoMore experienced great problems related expansion into the new market. These can largely be traced back to two mutually reinforcing and challenging factors. On the one hand, GoMore's platform nature requires a speedy solution to the chicken-and-egg problem. On the other hand, the low level of knowledge in the population entails an uncertain status and a lack of legitimacy and social proof for sharing economy actors:
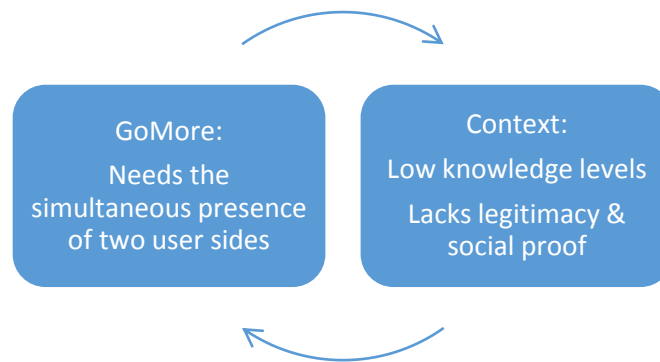
These are the kind of challenges that the framework developed throughout this paper may help an expanding sharing economy platform to overcome. For GoMore, handling some of the most essential elements of the framework prior to expanding, namely conducting thorough industry and market analyses, may have provided a sound foundation for developing "the right" entry strategy and may have alleviated some of the encountered challenges, alternatively helped them in circumventing them altogether. Thus, the parts of the framework in which GoMore could have acted differently are highlighted below:

The Sharing Economy Catalyst Framework, with GoMore's challenges highlighted (author's own)

8.1 The Importance of Preparation

Studying the history of ridesharing platforms in Norway revealed that the two most successful platforms in terms of usage and media coverage (Haikesentralen & Carma) reached that status with the help of *external factors*. Apart from this obvious advantage, it is difficult to determine exactly why nearly all of the other platforms failed to generate sustainable high levels of activity. A common characteristic is that none of these platforms offer a

1. Identify...	2. Entry Timing
• industry history • cultural, political, demographical & geographical distance • critical mass • what groups need a platform to interact • strength of network externalities between these groups • competing alternatives	• Options for preemption? • Other potential first mover advantages? • Long-term profit potential? • Increase legitimacy through strategic partnerships • Identify likely competitors and possibly cooperate with them • Assess costs and benefits of early entry vs. fast follower strategy

fully integrated solution in terms of booking, communication, payments, and ratings. In addition, it can be assumed that many of them had limited resources to market their ventures, leading to little attention and thus low activity levels on their pages. As demonstrated in previous chapters, little activity in introductory phases means difficulty in reaching critical mass. It is not unlikely that most of these platforms have encountered "the downward spiral toward a stable equilibrium with zero participation" (Evans & Schmalensee, 2010:4).

For GoMore, these insights could be interpreted in two ways. First, the fact that GoMore offers a fully integrated ridesharing service and possibly enjoyed a larger marketing budget than their predecessors could be interpreted as *favorable* to their expansion to Norway. On the other hand, the fact that so many have attempted and failed to build a ridesharing community in Norway before, and that those who "succeeded" did so largely because of external factors, could be interpreted as Norway being an *unfavorable* market for these kinds of ventures. That assumption was partly reflected in questionnaires by active users in Norway (Nerland, 2015; Wasrud, 2015a). While GoMore did analyze industry history in Norway, this happened only after the expansion was a fact. Thus, any learning from others' previous mistakes in this market was not integrated into the initial expansion plans and strategizing.

According to the framework, an expanding platform should moreover assess a new market's distance from markets in which it is familiar. Evidently, significant matters of distance should have informed the overall expansion strategy prior to GoMore's launch in Norway. The most crucial elements include the poor performance of previous market entrants, the significantly lower population density, the difference in incentives for choosing cars as a long-distance transportation mode, the differences in motivations to engage in cost-saving efforts, the general low knowledge of the sharing economy, and the more risk-averse

population. Yet, most of these characteristics were never explored thoroughly nor discussed openly until after the launch was a fact.

Conducting the two basic tasks of studying industry history and thoroughly determining the distance prior to making the final selection of markets for expansion, could have contributed to GoMore's strategy in the following ways. First, it may have led to a more accurate estimation of critical mass. Here, it is clear that accounting for the real geographical distance, for instance, would have led to a different forecast. This may in turn have necessitated different expectations in terms of time frame, and possibly adjustments as to the estimated profit potential. Second, a deeper knowledge of the target market would enable a more informed entry timing decision. Here, the debated topic of entry timing comes to mind. Gansky (2010) argues in favor of entering early upon the discovery of "consumer restlessness". This kind of knowledge about consumers requires thorough groundwork. While GoMore, after entering, did register congestion to be a possible "pain point" for commuters, this was not a reason for entering the Norwegian market; neither would it have been sufficient, based on the results of the efforts to reach them.

Thus, the propositions that entry timing is unimportant when both the product and the company is new, and that fast followers "remarkably often" surpass first/early movers seem more valid in this case (Evans & Schmalensee, 2007; Kerin et al., 1996). These statements are based on the general (un-)attainability of early entry advantages, be they in terms of profit or preemption possibilities. Had GoMore, based on the above reasoning and knowledge of industry history, reached the conclusion that early entry advantages were not great enough to warrant early entry as opposed to a fast follower approach, they may have chosen to delay entry until prompted by external circumstances or the entry of a competitor. Alternatively, they could have chosen not to enter the Norwegian market at all.

8.2 The Case for Choosing a Long-Term Entry Strategy

The reality is, however, that GoMore chose to enter Norway. In order to secure the best possible market entry and ensuring user value from the start, the framework suggests the careful construction of a long-term entry strategy, avoiding the rush for quick growth, as this can lead to expensive mistakes. Potentially caused by GoMore's previous success in Denmark without one, and the perceived short distance between the two markets, such a clear strategy was not developed in relation to the expansion to Norway.

The incremental entry strategy would have been particularly useful for a geographically tied platform like GoMore, because every new geographical

3. Design

- Entry strategy that ensures value to users from the start
- Meaningful early interactions
- Control growth
- Fulfill users' demand for safety, convenience and cost savings
- Carefully evaluate short-term growth strategies in relation to long-term goals
- Increase switching costs

segment they enter can be seen as a micro-market in itself. In order for there to be a match between a driver and a passenger, they need to be at approximately the same place at the rides' departure *and* they need to be going in the same direction. Thus, the area within which a given user can find a match is geographically limited. Targeting a limited geographical area could have provided GoMore with the opportunity of ensuring valuable interactions between a smaller group of people before "affording to go big". Moreover, it could have enabled the recruitment of local influencers as marquee users. These may have been easier to obtain contact with, and compensation demanded may have been a lot lower than that of the national influencers.

The incremental entry strategy could moreover have been useful considering the negative attitudes expressed by some of the potential users not previously familiar with GoMore. The need to "educate the market" in order to overcome the liability of newness, coupled with the fact that GoMore's user groups have little overlap between them means that knowledge diffusion can be insurmountably demanding. Focusing on a limited area may be a way of limiting required efforts in this sense. Entering a market in a slow and controlled way can also justify early entry, according to Liang et al. (2009:147), as it allows for constructing strong, emotional bonds with early users". This is moreover the strategy followed by the only other "successful" ridesharing platform in Norway, Carma Carpooling.

GoMore's entry strategy to Norway had little in common with incremental entry. Rather, it was analogous to the "get big fast" strategy discussed and discredited by Oliva, Sterman, and Giese (2003). The fact that one year after market entry, GoMore still had not reached critical mass, suggests that Evans and Schmalensee (2007) were right when arguing that haste can be detrimental because of the difficulty of attracting both user sides in time.

The "get big fast" strategy is closely linked to growth hacking because of its short-term nature, and was something GoMore devoted great efforts to. However, the seeding of both production and consumption failed in terms of sustained user activity. Naturally, it is challenging to avoid exploitation of monetary incentives when the actual transaction takes place in an unmonitored space. Whether a temporary removal of the fee would lead to different results remains unknown, but by the impression given by both current and potential users in Denmark and Norway was that the fee did not seem a major "pain point" for drivers (Boissezon et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2014), and thus one can assume the effect minimal. Even though GoMore fulfills some of the requirements of virality by integrating with Facebook's social graph and having low entry barriers, effects of this were not tangible. That may have been caused by the imbalance between user sides, with a majority of passengers – a result of failed efforts to reach one of the potential user groups. As Choudary (2015) argues, platforms with a higher percentage of producers are the ones most likely to "go viral".

Generally, the unilateral focus of most of the growth hacking efforts being on member acquisition meant that the quality of those users – how likely they would be to actually use the platform after signing up – was not considered until a year after, when it became clear that there was still zero activity on the platform in Norway (Gejl, 2015). Considering the mismatch between the early expectations of critical mass, the time required to get there, and actual performance, it may be suggested that the growth hacking contributed to this confusion. Only a small percentage of GoMore's users ever attempted to use the platform twice, even fewer actually made a booking. Had a more long-term strategy been adopted, with a closer interaction with early users, GoMore's number of users would have been smaller, but it may have provided a more accurate picture, which in turn could assist in future estimations of critical mass. Thus, GoMore might not only have chosen the wrong strategy, they might also have missed an important learning opportunity.

Certain growth hacking strategies may moreover have been detrimental considering the need for legitimacy. The aforementioned Gaussian Blur combined with the 1-click signup via Facebook's social graph led many interested people to become members seemingly "without their knowledge". Among the ones who contacted GoMore to have their profiles deleted, the general sentiment was very negative. These people felt that they had been "fooled" into joining something they did not know enough about, and which they ultimately found irrelevant (e.g. Silje W., Jan. 2015; Ragnhild M., Feb. 2015. Field Notes).

Lacking legitimacy is but one factor that can aggravate the observed gap between potential users' intentions and actual usage of a service. Even though people may express a positive attitude toward ridesharing because of a purported environmental effect, other factors, such as practical considerations, may weigh heavier when it comes to actual decision making. Thus, providing *tangible* benefits relative to the alternatives is important even for a sharing economy platform with idealistic tendencies. Indeed, this recognition was expressed by the GoMore employees interviewed (Dalsgaard, 2014; Ipland, 2014; Winther, 2014). However, conducive to understanding what constitutes tangible benefits is a thorough understanding of the perceived relative strengths of the alternatives, and how these can dissuade the adoption of ridesharing. There is a need to know what people's reasons for *not* adopting the practice are. This knowledge was never sought in Denmark, as there was a belief that reaching new target groups through mass media was sufficient for growth, and because GoMore was already considered a success here (Dalsgaard, 2014; Schweigaard, 2015b).

The general sentiment among both current and potential users was that ridesharing with GoMore is considered safe, thus the gap between potential users' intentions and actions in Norway must at least partly be caused by a lack of perceived *tangible benefits* to users. In order to understand what this represents, deeply engaging with the identified community is crucial. The most effortless way to achieve this seems to

be by adhering to the incremental entry strategy. The importance of trust and safety should not be underestimated in terms of converting inactive users to active ones, however. Although ridesharing is a relatively high risk transaction, all the mechanisms presently lowering risk in Norway can only really be exercised *post* transaction. Thus, GoMore encourages some level of caution when using the platform, and by that effectlively transfers responsibility to its users. The lack of negative incidents could help in building initial platform trust, however, most importantly, GoMore needs actual user ratings so that users have a sound base for making decisions that can affect their own safety.

The lack of a functioning trust system is thus a hurdle GoMore needs to overcome. To this end, establishing social proof can be useful. Social proof is, according to Botsman and Rogers (2010), essential to the attractiveness of a sharing economy platform. Obtaining it requires usage by some individuals, who, upon a positive experience, spread knowledge about this platform to others. In this sense, it is probable that a more incremental entry strategy could have mitigated the problem of the not-yet functioning rating system. Closer focus on a limited area would undoubtedly necessitate a close dialogue with the community in this area, which may have increased some individuals' "trust in the system", and thus helped them overcome the gap between intention and usage. Consequently, ratings would have been made, which in turn would generate social proof for GoMore's ridesharing platform. Social proof has the potential to alleviate some of the skepticism caused by the perceived riskiness of ridesharing and GoMore's limited options for controlling access to its platform.

At this point, the possibility that GoMore's short-term, growth-oriented entry strategy may in fact be detrimental to overcoming the intention-action gap starts to emerge. Growth hacking leads to signups, not necessarily usage. Long-term strategies focus on usage more than growth. This leads to the third and last part of this discussion – GoMore's ultimate rationale for expanding to Norway.

8.3 The Ultimate Aim of Expansion

The CEO of GoMore Matias Dalsgaard stated that the expansion to Norway was based on the objective of becoming "the number one platform for ridesharing across Scandinavia" (Dalsgaard, 2015). However, a closer look at GoMore's financial reports and other ridesharing platforms in the press reveals that no company has to this day managed to make a profit on ridesharing. Dalsgaard nevertheless claims that ridesharing is profitable at

4. Pricing

- Ensure profitability
- Carefully evaluate what side to subsidize, if any
- Consider core value unit when deciding between usage or access fees
- Ensure legal compliance to enhance legitimacy

sufficient volumes, however that another function of the ridesharing platform is to recruit users to the car rental segment (Dalsgaard, Field Notes. October 2015). Thus, an inference can be made that a main objective

of the expansion to Norway, if not growth for growth's sake, was in fact to preempt this market, in terms of both the ridesharing and the subsequently launched peer-to-peer car rental segment.

Regardless of whether the ultimate aim of GoMore's expansion to Norway was profitability or preemption, however, the effort can in hindsight be deemed unsuccessful. This was reflected in the last interview conducted with GoMore's CEO in May 2015 and in later e-mail correspondence, in which he stated that "I must say I'm becoming more and more skeptical towards Norway […] we do see some rides there, and there are people using it […] but I wonder, can it ever become big in Norway?" (Dalsgaard, 2015,22:24), and that "I am not sure whether Norway will be profitable unless the car sharing segment is successful" (Dalsgaard, 2015; Dalsgaard, Field Notes. October 2015). Note that the last statement was made approximately one month after car sharing was launched in Norway.

8.4 Summary

Through discussing GoMore's strategic decisions in light of the theoretical propositions provided by the framework, an answer to the fourth and final sub-question has been developed:

4. *How can the theoretical propositions based on merged theory inform internationally expanding sharing economy platforms?*

For GoMore, the strategic application of the framework might have led to better informed decision making on two aspects in particular, namely on the timing of entry to the Norwegian market, if the conclusion would have been to enter at all, and on the formulation of an entry strategy better reflecting the long-term goals of the platform. An additional point emerging in the discussion is the importance of having a clear strategic goal with the expansion. GoMore's goals were apparently floating between growth for growth's sake and preemption, with no fact-based conception of whether the former had any real profit potential in Norway. Yet, this was the basis for GoMore's entry strategy. Clearly defining the objective of international expansion seems paramount to planning and executing successful strategies.

Some additions and refinements to the adapted framework have been reached throughout this discussion. First, the importance of defining a goal prior to targeting a marker for its fulfillment. Moreover, the impact of the sharing economy's prevalence in the targeted market, and whether this and other market conditions allow for the realistic fulfillment of the expansion's goals, should be considered. Thus, a further adapted framework is presented below, with changes highlighted:

0. Purpose	1. Identify...	2. Entry Timing	3. Design	4. Pricing
• What is the ultimate aim of expanding? • This should inform all following decisions	• industry history • cultural, political, demographical & geographical distance • the maturity of the sharing economy • critical mass • platform community • strength of network externalities • competing alternatives • whether these conditions allow for the realistic fulfillment of the ultimate goal	• Options for preemption? • Other potential first mover advantages? • Long-term profit potential? • Increase legitimacy through strategic partnerships • Identify likely competitors and possibly cooperate with them • Assess costs and benefits of early entry vs. fast follower strategy	• Entry strategy that ensures value to users from the start • Meaningful early interactions • Control growth • Fulfill users' demand for safety, convenience and cost savings • Carefully evaluate short-term growth strategies in relation to long-term goals • Increase switching costs	• Ensure that reaching the ultimate aim is realistic, be that profitability or otherwise • Carefully evaluate what side to subsidize, if any • Consider core value unit when deciding between usage or access fees • Ensure legal compliance to enhance legitimacy

Further adapted Catalyst Framework for sharing economy platforms (Author's own)

For expanding sharing economy platforms in general then, the framework's theoretical propositions may assist in clarifying the steps necessary to take prior to an international expansion. First, the purpose of the expansion needs to be clear. When a suitable market for fulfilling this purpose is identified, the framework lists important characteristics to analyze in the targeted market. Using this analysis as a basis may help in choosing the right entry timing and developing strategies for long-term, sustainable growth. It may moreover help in identifying how market and user characteristics should inform design aspects of the platform, and how pricing can be used as a tool to balance and encourage participation.

9. Conclusion

The research underpinning this paper was undertaken with the purpose of identifying theoretical propositions with the relevance and power to inform sharing economy platforms planning for international expansion. By employing Platform Theory to identify challenges pertaining to platform business at early stages of launch and expansion, and combining that with the added challenges of sharing economy platforms and internationally expanding companies, a theoretical framework for internationally expanding sharing economy platforms was developed. A particularly selected case company was then analyzed in terms of the adapted framework. This allowed for the identification of ways in which the case company's strategies were in line with the framework, and areas in which strategies were in opposition with the framework. Ultimately, the case company's poor performance in the new market may have been caused by strategic decisions of the latter kind.

The strategic framework suggested by this paper thus provides the key for answering the research question:

How can a platform business in the sharing economy overcome the challenges of international expansion?

Before expanding to a foreign market, a sharing economy platform should have a clear vision of what the goal of the expansion is. This goal should inform the subsequent careful consideration of the early elements of the framework, prior to making the final choice of a target market for expansion. Thorough analyses of a market's characteristics and history should inform the decision of whether this is a promising market to enter at this time. Moreover, this will engender a realistic understanding of the time and resource investments required to succeed in the new market. Based on these insights, a sharing economy platform may develop well-founded, long-term strategies that help in overcoming the challenges of international expansion.

9.1 Avenues for Further Research

In order to strengthen the validity of the adapted framework, it would be relevant to conduct one or more in-depth case studies of sharing economy platforms that have been more successful in their international expansions. Contrasting the resultant findings with this paper's conclusions could in turn further refine or change the adapted framework for increased validity and thus applicability.

Another interesting area of further research would be to study public discourse in various markets in relation to entering sharing economy platforms and their long-term success. As public discourse is usually a reflection of a market's cultural, economic, and political characteristics, the identification of patterns here may provide valuable information for potential new market entrants.

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11. Appendices

Appendix A : Questionnaires for Potential GoMore Users

These interviews were conducted in the fall of 2014 with the purpose of identifying potential consumers' attitudes towards and motivations to use GoMore's services of ride- and car sharing. The interviewees are largely international students residing in Denmark. One respondent resides in Norway and is a commuter to work. Thus, the respondents all fall into the categories that GoMore define as their target group; well educated, students or commuters, transporting themselves between the big cities. Some of the interviewees were aware of GoMore and their services prior to interview, however most were not. Therefore, we explained the concept briefly before asking the questions. The interviews were conducted by members of my study group in the elective Social Entrepreneurship, Brieux Michoud, Danijela Premovic, Joanna Mocek, Lisa Olin, and myself.

Summary of responses, in order of frequency: No: 4

Motivating factors for participating in ride sharing:

1. Environmentally friendly (7)
2. Cost saving (7)
3. The social aspect (6)
4. Resource optimization (5)
5. Flexibility & convenience (2)
6. Comfortable (1)
7. Less congestion (1)

Dissuading factors for ride sharing:

1. Riding with strangers (5)
2. Not environmentally friendly (2)
3. Inflexible & inconvenient (2)

Is the fee of importance?

Yes: 2

No: 9

Is ride sharing safe?

Yes: 9

Content

Interview 1

Interviewee: Niels de Boissezon (Danish, 29 years old. Residing in Denmark)

Interviewer: Brieux Michoud

Date: Oct. 5, 2014. 19:40 P.M.

Have you ever heard about GoMore? Do you know what it is?

GoMore? Yeah I heard about it. You can rent your car 2 weeks or so, right?

Have you ever used it?

Never used. Just heard about it

What service would be more appealing to you? Why?

Well, generally I don't use cars… So I would rather use the Peer to Peer car sharing thing I think.

About the carpooling… In fact I've never checked. I didn't think about it. I like the concept. I used something

similar back in the US (but was more like a taxi than a carpooling). But I love the concept of sharing economy.

I really like the fact that you can optimize empty cars. Like a car is not running for 90% of the time! At least,

these kind of services allow people to move freely without buying a new car.

I also like the ecological aspect of it. But it wouldn't be the first criteria for me to use it.

I've been thinking to buy a car, I finally didn't. But if I ever buy a car, I would definitely use the Peer To Peer

service!

If it was for free, would it change your perception?

Well, not really. I wouldn't use this service for money… More for this concept of sharing things…

Do you find it safe?

Yeah. Definitely. Then the carpooling, you never really know with who you're gonna be…

But still, I usually trust people.

How did you hear about GoMore?

I don't really know… I've seen it in the news I think… Or wait… Maybe someone told me about it… I'm not sure…

Interview 2

Interviewee: João Godhino (Portuguese, 21 years old. Residing in Denmark)

Interviewer: Brieux Michoud

Date: Oct. 4, 2014. 19:00 P.M.

Have you ever heard about GoMore? Do you know what it is?

GoMore? I have absolutely no idea! What is it?

[Explanation of the services]

Wow! This is so cool! Do we have this kind of things in Portugal?

What service would be more appealing to you? Why?

I really like the concept of the carpooling thing. I think that it is really good, financially speaking, and you can meet a lot of new people. It is ecological. I usually take the train, because it is cheap and fast. But carpooling could be another option to consider.

Well, you save time, money, and you spend your trip talking to someone… It is more sociable than the train, right?

For the peer to peer car sharing, well, I don't have a driver's license yet so… I wouldn't use it that much! But maybe later, yeah. I like the concept though…

If it was for free, would it change your perception?

If it was for free, I would never hesitate and take it for every single trip.

Travelling for free… a dream!

But then, it would be like a very closed community, right? I don't know if I would trust it if it was for free… Well, depends… If I know someone who did it for free, then, maybe…

Do you find it safe?

Well, usually I trust these kind of services. I've been doing couchsurfing and this kind of things, I never had troubles with it so… Yeah. And I think that if you have a website with a lot of users behind, then it gets safer…

Interview 3

Interviewee: Aleksandar and Vojo (both Serbian, 27 and 31 years old, residing in Denmark)

Interviewer: Danijela Premovic

Date: Oct. 5, 2014. 17:30 P.M.

[I have described to both of my interviewees what GoMore does, and the two diverse options that they offer. I would like to mention the interviewees had never heard about GoMore, and didn`t even know that such a thing exists here in Denmark]

Why or why not is this service appealing to you to you?

Aleksandar: I would be interested in what they have to offer. I drive my car every day to work alone, and could see myself picking someone up and giving him or her a ride. Because I have a car, I would be interested in the first offer and not the leasing.

Vojo: I would not be interested, as I would see it as a waist of my time. I don't have a smartphone, and am not so good in using computers, don`t even use one that often, and could not see myself booking pickups. And another thing is my wife drives with me, so I don't see the purpose of having some stranger with us in the car.

What would be your motivation to use it?

Aleksandar: First of all, it would be a nice possibility to lover my monthly costs for gas, and it would do well for the environment, do to that it wouldn't be needn't for two people to drive two different cars and pollute the environment. I drive everyday alone, and it would be interesting to have someone with me to talk to.

Vojo: I don't see any, I don't think that I could save so much many, and for that little, I am not prepared to have a stranger with me every day.

No I don't see the environmental use out of that.

If it was offered for free, would it change your perception?

Aleksandar: No it wouldn`t, I have been doing this from time to time with a few of my colleagues, for free. And it felt good, and I am very interested in trying this with GoMore, and see what and how it would function. My experience with my colleagues was great.

Vojo: No, I still would not be interested.

Is one option more suitable for your needs? Why?

Aleksandar: Yes, I am interested in the first option, getting someone to ride with me. I have a car, and would not be interested in changing that for now.

Vojo: No, none of the two.

Do you /would you find it safe? Why? Why not?

Aleksandar: Yes, I think it is safe, and that there is no need for worries.

<u>Vojo:</u> I think that it is safe.

Interviewee: Fredrik Åsle (Norwegian, 59 years old, resides in Norway)

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Date: Oct. 5, 2014. 19:00 P.M.

[Conducted over Skype]

Background information: This user has attempted to use GoMore several times. He is commuting for 2 hours approximately three times per week, and has put up this route on the Norwegian GoMore page, which was launched just before the summer of 2014. No passengers have booked a seat so far. The questions revolve mostly around ridesharing, as P2P car rentals have not yet been launched in Norway. Where I have asked about the latter, this will be specified.

Q. Why or why not is this service appealing to you?

A. I think ridesharing in general is a very good idea. If people would gather and fill up their cars, there would be less traffic and everyone would get faster to their destination. On the stretch that I drive [Fredrikstad – Oslo and back], I see that nearly everyone drives alone in a big car, like myself. This is poor use of resources. However, as GoMore just entered Norway, I see why this is the case for so many people. The train and bus lines are not serving the population well enough; there are daily delays, cancellations and overcrowding. Additionally, standing outside in the rain, snow, storm etc. waiting for public transportation is not a comfortable option. Ridesharing would obviously help lessening some of these pains.

I also like the idea of having company in the car. It can potentially make the trip seem shorter, and new acquaintances and possibly friendships can be made.

I have, as you know, put up some rides on GoMore.no myself, without any luck as of yet. I believe this to be because of the novelty of such a concept in Norway, and will continue to put up rides and share the "good mission" to people around me. I believe most people, upon consideration, will find the idea of ridesharing to be a good one, not only for the society and environment, but for themselves personally as well.

P2P car rentals is not so suitable for me because I live outside of the city. I don't see how pickups etc. could work in a practical way, also most people here own a car of their own, or several. I would moreover read the insurance terms thoroughly before using such a service. Had they been satisfactory though, and I lived in the city, this would perhaps be more appealing than the ridesharing service.

Q. What was your motivation behind trying GoMore?

A. Besides being pushed into it [in a friendly way!] by my daughter, I believe it to be a concept that brings benefits to myself as well as the society at large.

Cars that are filled up more leads to less congested roads, which means we could all spend less time in it altogether. In fact, I heard that during the Fall holiday which was this week in Norway, the number of cars was reduced by 5%, which led to a virtual elimination of congestion. This means that we don't need to see a major change in people's transportation pattern, only a small one. For instance that just people working in the same location would ride the same car to work. That is a great way to get to know your colleagues in a different setting.

Moreover, there is the whole feeling of "being good to the environment". Alone, it would not make me change my habits, but if it can be put as a bonus on top of something that brings benefits in any case, there's all the more reason the way I see it. It's about framing yourself, and I don't think I'm alone in saying that.

On the social aspect, I believe the confines of a car can also lead to some great social experiences. The fact that you can talk, or be silent for that matter, with another person, familiar or not, without having to necessarily look each other in the eye, make for great conversations. A great addition to GoMore would actually be if you could tick off some more boxes, such as interests, hobbies, professional life, etc. [today, GoMore only offers tick-off boxes for whether you accept talking, music, kids or babies in the car]. This is not very important though, the most important is that the other people are nice and friendly, and I believe they are, most of the time.

Q. Have you considered the social and/or environmental impact of GoMore?

A. Somewhat, I mean it lets people transport themselves for a price that is half of what public transportation costs. This means more people can move around for less, which is a clear social benefit. Moreover, and as we've touched upon already, less cars leads to less CO_2-emissions and so on. But I don't think that's the most important aspect.

So I believe the main group that will benefit from such a service is young people with less funds. However, there are other groups whose benefits are perhaps less clear-cut. I am an example of this, as more ridesharing and less cars would lead to a reduced commute time for me, every day. This is ultimately a huge social benefit that shouldn't be underestimated.

Regarding the p2p car rentals, I believe this is part of a larger movement in which private ownership becomes less of a requirement for taking part in consumption [the sharing economy]. This has huge benefits for both society and the environment, because it leads to increased access to resources, regardless of financial means, as well as reduced and more conscious consumption.

Q. If GoMore's services were offered for free, would that change the perceptions described above?

A. No. I do believe though, that if I were to establish a recurring deal with someone, we'd probably continue outside of the portal and in that way not pay the 9% fee.

I would be skeptical if GoMore's p2p car rental service was free, as the insurance is absolutely required for anyone to want to rent out their expensive cars.

Q. Do you find GoMore safe?

A. Yes, I do. First of all, it seems like a solid company, with easy access to the people in it. I also think the rating system leads to an increased feeling of safety, even though it is not of much use in Norway as of yet [few people have actually been rated at this point].

I like that you're able to choose whom to accept into your car, and who you would like to be driven by. Everything's up to you really, and you make the decision of whether you want to trust the other people yourself. I generally consider others to be well-behaved and trustworthy, so I see everything else as an exception.

Q. Would you recommend GoMore to a friend?

A. Yes. Both services.

Interview 5

Interviewee: Adrian Eberhard (German, 25 years old, resides in Denmark)

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Date: Oct. 5, 2014. 17:30 P.M.

Q. Why or why not is this service appealing to you?

Ridesharing: It's appealing because you can do something for the CO2-emissions. All those empty seats will be filled up if you share a ride, and also you can be very flexible in terms of going door-to-door. That's not possible with public transport for instance. So my personal motivation is that it's more flexible, but also that it's cheaper. My use of GoMore would be as a passenger, since I don't have a car. If I did have a car, my motivation would be to save money on my driving expenses.

The downside is that you have to plan ahead, if I need a ride quickly, GoMore doesn't help me do that. Moreover it's the danger of no-shows, which could potentially ruin a whole planned trip. Also if the people you drive with are assholes, but I guess that doesn't happen too often.

P2P: This also seems appealing, because you can just get a car when you need one. That's nice. If I had a car I didn't use that much, I could earn money on it.

Q. What would be your motivation to try GoMore?

Ridesharing: the price. I'd see if it's cheaper than alternative transportation modes.

P2P: -

Q. Have you considered the social and/or environmental impact of GoMore?

Ridesharing: it allows people to save money. Makes people able to afford travelling when they perhaps wouldn't have otherwise. I don't know if it makes a huge difference though, as they'd still have to be able to

afford the expenses of travelling, which usually constitutes more than the transport anyway, at least when you're staying within the countries in which GoMore is present [Scandinavia]. For people who have a car, ridesharing may lessen the economic burden on them.

Environmentally, ridesharing decreases the amount of cars on the streets, when it's working properly. This is good for obvious reasons.

P2P: Considering the social aspect, more people will be able to own cars. Also, more people will have access to cars without owning them, which would lead to a lowered demand for cars, which is ultimately good for the environment. Moreover, it lets people get access to cars in a cheaper and less bureaucratic way.

Q. If GoMore's services were offered for free, would that change your perception of either ridesharing or P2P car rental?

Ridesharing: Not really. It would be the same.

P2P: Yes, I'd want the insurance, so I want to pay a fee.

Q. Do you find GoMore safe?

Yes, I guess so because it seems like an established and sound platform. It gives a reliable impression, which gives a sense of security to users. It's like a contract, when you get a receipt and so on.

Q. Would you recommend GoMore to a friend?

Yes, because I'm a student, I'd recommend it to other students. To my friends who are not students, I'd recommend it to both those with and without a car.

Interview 6
Interviewee: Martina F. (Czech, 24 years old, residing in Denmark)

Interviewer: Joanna Mocek

[No drivers' license. Had never heard about car-sharing concept and GoMore]

Have you ever heard about ride-sharing or peer-to-peer car rental?

No, I haven't.

So, after my explanation of the concept and the GoMore company, could you tell me why or why not this service could be appealing to you?

Yes, so... I think the concept is brilliant, because people have the possibility to "network to other people" while traveling. From a social and economic point of view, I think that it helps to utilize the transportation device as much as possible: like you need to pay a lot for petrol and you are traveling alone in a 5 persons car - it is a waste of money and pollute the air. And it is great it is "international" as well, so you have the possibility to go abroad as well not just in DK.

So besides economic factors you find also some social?

Mostly I see the factors driving this concept as factors based on economy, but as I mentioned it can be a good

way for networking, meeting interesting people or expanding networks.

What do you think about safety issues? Do you find it safe?

Since they have ratings, it can reduce risks, so I would find it pretty safe.

What about your personal motivation to use it?

I guess that mostly it would be to reduce costs and get to the destination maybe faster than with a train for instance.

What do you think; if this offer was for free would it change your perception?

No... I don't think it would change my perception.

So paying a bit or not paying at all make it anyway interesting for you?

Yeah, I mean of course it would be better if it would be for free, but then who would pay for gas etc. and bridges fee if needed. That kind of stuff, it would be totally impossible to travel for free. And that is not the idea of this concept.

Which option do you find more suitable for your needs?

Since I don't have the driving license I guess that ride-sharing seems to be the option for me. As the passenger of course.

Interview 7

Interviewee: Tihomir I. (Russian, 31 years old, resides in Copenhagen)

Interviewer: Joanna Mocek

[No drivers' license. Had heard about car-sharing but never used it. Haven't heard about GoMore]

"Car-sharing should be complement to the public transport, should not be a competition with public transport. Because we need to build efficient cities and efficient cities need good public infrastructures.

Do you find this kind of service appealing to you or not? Do you think it is a good idea to have such service in Denmark?

I think it is a good service. I would use it probably, if it didn't cost very much, because I wouldn't wanna pay for it. I don't think that they are actually doing much as a company so that's why I wouldn't want... if I want a normal taxi I would pay for a normal taxi. If I wanna share a car with somebody else of the fun of sharing the car with somebody or of the practicality of sharing the petrol money, I can see that but if it becomes monetized to the point where you like actually just paying somebody to drive you somewhere then I think it is stupid because then it is not really improving on anything that you have already got existing at the moment. But if it is a way of like, that I have friends who used to come back from Aarhus and waiting at the ferry terminal 'cause you know there is always gonna be a businessman driving back to Copenhagen and they always have 3 empty seats in their car and if you wait by the slip road it is likely that one of those will stop and pick you up because it is wasted space. And these companies all they do is effectively allow you to do

that exact the same thing but don't have to go and stand on the road, you can connect to the driver and find the ride. And that's good. Whether they can build the sustainable community because it is like couch surfing really.

So your motivation would be the price then?

Well, I would prefer to use the system where the payment is a very low nominal part of it. Otherwise, I would prefer to use public transport because I think that it makes sense to do it for environmental reasons and to do it for social reasons and to get less cars on the road. I would share a car with a stranger if I was doing it for a practical sense but if the price point is maybe like even 50% of what it would cost me to use the alternative methods I would prefer to use the alternative methods because I don't want to pay to somebody who gives me a ride and then have to be in their car when I could essentially take my own...

Essentially it should be a system, I would like to use the system that connects together people who want to share the cost of the travel, I would pay for petrol money and possibly a little bit more, I wouldn't be really interested in using a system that simply a glorified taxi service.

So the most important for you would be these environmental and social reasons?

Yeah. Cars are extremely inefficient method of transport because most of the time they are empty. You've got a city full of cars and most of them have one person or two people and there are five seats in a car.

I would prefer the system where they build the community and encourage the people to share this with each other and they monetize it by taking a kind of subscription fee or by taking a small payment from each one but I wouldn't like it if they're tried to monetize it in a way where they have to charge by the hour.

I think also that the car rent idea is good. Because you might not use your car for two weeks in the city of Copenhagen and someone else might need it and if you can rent that car out then it is good for you, you can make some money and good for environment because someone else doesn't need to buy a new car, we just use the resources we have more efficiently.

If you had a car would you like to rent it out?

Yeah, definitely because it is expensive to own a car in Copenhagen. The only problem, I think people's trust is the issue because do you trust the insurance. You have to give a car to a stranger and trust GoMore to actually not argue about any damage because it is one of your most expensive purchases especially in Denmark.

I would be a little bit skeptical about trusting. Because you can use Airbnb, you can trust strangers to come into your house but they can't drive your house away and not come back with it. You don't really want to be the first people to test it or you don't want to find yourself in a position when you argue with them.

What about safety issues?

I would be afraid of the people 'cause I am always afraid of the people. I am afraid of the people on a train

at night that they might stab me on the face or steal my money. But I would guess that is actually safer nowadays like most things are and especially when you got the registered profile you know who the person is, you are doing it through the company, you have got the rating system, you've told the Internet what trip you are taking. It is not like serial killers would be using GoMore because it would be totally insane.

If you sit a train or in a bus why wouldn't you sit in a car with someone else. It is just a little bit tighter. Car-sharing should be complement to the public transport, should not be a competition with public transport. Because we need to build efficient cities and efficient cities need good public infrastructures. But GoMore is a potential way of complementing that but I would not like to see the monetization of it.

Like in London and New York where there have been huge arguments with the taxi companies which already existing like Airbnb allows you to rent your flat for fantastic amount of money without paying any tax on it and making fortunes of the back of the system. It is ok if people use it in a proper way. Cost sharing rather than profit driven.

Interview 8

Interviewee: Laura U. (Lithuanian, 26 years old, resides in Denmark)

Interviewer: Joanna Mocek

Date: Oct. 6, 2014, 13:00 P.M.

[Has a drivers' license. Had heard about car-sharing concept and GoMore]

"It is a nice way to save money, but it can be weird to travel with people I don't know. Saving money would be the biggest motivation, then meeting new people and doing something out of the daily routine would be the next one. I guess the second one means that I have considered the social impact. I think if it was for free it might reduce the quality regarding the rating of drivers (just guessing here). Well my first thought is OMG I would not dare travel with someone I don't know, but then again I am from Eastern Europe, and this is Denmark, where it is supposedly safer, but you never know! I heard about it from two Lithuanians who used the service (they needed a ride from CPH to Horsens) and were very pleased with it."

Interview 9

Interviewee: Karin L. (Swedish, 26 years old, resides in Denmark)

Interviewer: Lisa Olin

Date: Oct. 5, 2014. 19:00 P.M.

Why or why not is this service appealing to you?

It would be a cheaper and maybe environmental way of travel. However, it is traveling by car so I would not call it environmental friendly. If I would consider the environment, I would take the train. Using car-pooling

feels tiresome, why would I want to sit in a car with four unknown people, does not feel secure and it's un-flexible.

If I had a drivers' license, it would be more appealing to use private car rental and use my neighbors car for going to IKEA, recycle station, go grocery shopping and so on. It becomes more flexible, and it is appealing to me to not have to go with un-known people.

What would be your motivation to use it?

The price! If it was a lot cheaper than the train I would consider it more, but still in the environmental perspective, I would go by train.

Have you considered the social and/or environmental impact?

No. For me this is not environmentally friendly. It is more environmental friendly than if we would all go by ourselves, but still not environmental friendly – I would have chosen the train then instead.

If it were offered for free, would it change your perception?

I do not trust things that are for free. It loses the trustworthiness for me. By setting a price on the service, the trustworthiness increases.

Is one option more suitable for you needs? Why?

If I had a driver's license, I would choose private car leasing, but since I can't do that I would go for car-pooling in my current situation. However, the service do not appeal to me I would rather catch the train.

Do you/would you find it safe? Why? Why not?

The link to FB, definitely makes it more save. However, it is still four unknown people and that can be very awkward and feel unsafe when travelling for hours.

Interview 10

Interviewee: Fredrika L. (Swedish, 26 years old, resides in Denmark)

Interviewer: Lisa Olin

Date: Oct. 5, 2014. 19:30 P.M.

Why or why not is this service appealing to you?

Why: I believe it is good with car-pooling for the environment and it is a good cheaper alternative compared to going by train. When you are four people in a car it becomes cheaper than travelling with train in Sweden, and probably also in Denmark. And as I also said, it becomes better in an environmental perspective along with the price.

Why not: I'm not comfortable travelling with unknown people. When I travel, I want to work or read and not be social. And by using car-pooling it becomes more social and when travelling I do not want that. I want to be by myself and rest.

What would be your motivation to use it?

The environmental perspective, not the price. I would rather use this kind of service for a shorter trip than a longer one. When taking a longer trip I want to have time to look at a movie and so on, but I would consider it more for shorter trips let's say around 100 km.

Have you considered the social and/or environmental impact?

Mostly the environmental perspective cannot really see the social perspective more than you meet other people. I would say it's more social with the private car rental in the sense that a community is built by having something you share together. Hence, we help each other.

If it were offered for free, would it change your perception?

No, don't think so. I would maybe consider it more, but still not choose it.

Is one option more suitable for you needs? Why?

Private car rental is more relevant for me today. I don't use a car that much, so by being able to only use it when I need it for whatever reason that might be, that would feel more safe, flexible and easy.

Do you/would you find it safe? Why? Why not?

Yes and No. The rating, link to FB and so on makes it safer. Still, I do not feel comfortable with going for a longer trip with un-known people. If I had used the service, I think I would have chosen to go with young girls or older ladies to feel safer, otherwise I think it's a bit uncomfortable.

Appendix B: Questionnaires for GoMore "Super Users"

These brief questionnaires were sent out in the fall of 2014 by my teammates from the elective Social Entrepreneurship at CBS, Lisa Olin and Brieux Michoud. They were targeted and sent to so-called "super users" of GoMore – people who use GoMore's services more than average. The names and e-mail addresses were provided by GoMore's CPO, Lasse Gejl. The purpose was to identify active users' motivations, and gain insight to the user experience.

Content

Interview 1

Interviewee: Sandra Larsen (car renter and driver)

Interviewer: Lisa Olin

Date: Oct. 5, 2014

Why or why not is GoMores service appealing to you?

I use GoMore because they are a cheaper option than public transport. Apart from that, you meet new and exiting people whilst thinking a bit of the environment.

What is your motivation to use GoMore?

Main motivation is without a doubt that it is cheaper than public transport, and that going by car is more attractive than train or bus.

Have you considered the social and/or environmental impact GoMore's offer?

Yes! And I'm still in contact with several of the people I have been going with.

If GoMore was more like a community where rides were offered for free, would it change your perception of what GoMore is trying to achieve?

No

Which one of GoMore's offers (car-pooling/private car rental) are more suitable for you needs? Why?

I use both services. Both taking people with me, and going with other people, all depending on the trip.

Do you find it safe to use GoMore's services? Why? Why not?

I feel very safe, since you can register through Facebook and get evaluations after each trip, which everyone can read. I have not experienced driving with anyone that I thought was "scary".

How did you hear about GoMore?

Not sure, think it was a friend that wrote something on Facebook…

Would you recommend the service? Is Yes - Why?

Yes, I promote it to everyone, and I use it a lot in the sense that I'm having my coworkers going to places and telling them to use it too.

Interview 2

Interviewee: Thomas Bjørn Momsen (driver)

Interviewer: Lisa Olin

Date: Oct. 1, 2014

Why or why not is GoMores service appealing to you?

Saves me an insane amount of money. Also I believe it is important to respect our world and utilize our resources the best way possible.

What is your motivation to use GoMore?

Money and preserving the world.

Have you considered the social and/or environmental impact GoMore's offer

Yes there is a social element, I think in Denmark we are very reserved and closed people so stuff like Gomore also helps us to open up and be more social and more of a community. more warm.

If GoMore was more like a community where rides were offered for free, would it change   your perception of what GoMore is trying to achieve?

No, theres nothing wrong with money, money is good and fair. If gomore was free I would not use it, because I am a capitalist and when I provide people a seat in my car it is very fair that they pay the value it provides them.

Which one of GoMore's offers (car-pooling/privat car rental) are more suitable for you needs? Why?

Car pooling, because I drive to Aarhus every weekend - in the weekdays I need my car for business.

Do you find it safe to use GoMore's services? Why? Why not?

100% safe. We live in a safe fairytale country, nothing bad happens.

How did you hear about GoMore?

My friend told me about it - and when I started driving myself I immediately started using it. In fact, I have never driven long-distance without passengers.

Would you recommend the service? Is Yes - Why?

Of course, its a win win. Driver makes money and passagers save money. And we utilize resources better. I love it.

Interview 3

Interviewee: Thomas Holmskov (driver and passenger)

Interviewer: Brieux Michoud

Date: Oct. 3, 2014

Could you explain us a little bit about your use of this service ? Do you use only the carpooling? or also the P2P car rental ? Why ?

I only use the carpooling service

Why is this service appealing to you? What would be your biggest motivation to use it?

The main reason why I use Gomore is saving money. I do find it appealing to help other people and the environment, but at the end of the day it is to save money.

Do you/would you find it safe? Why? Why not?

I have never felt unsafe using gomore, but I have often discussed the topic with other passengers. As I see it there are three areas to think about regarding safety:

1. driving safely
2. money transfer (does the driver get his money - only a problem with cash-payment) and I have heard about instances where the driver wanted more money under or after til lift.

3. "Female - safety"! Suprisingly many female passengers tells that they do ressearch on the driver, before booking the lift.

Obviously they are afraid of very unpleasent thing (wrape or violence in worst cases). I do see their point, but it kind of makes me uncomfortable that people do ressearch on me, when I mean to do no harm.

How did you hear about GoMore?

I read an article on politiken.dk

Would you recommend the service? Why ?

Yes - because I saves me a lot of money, it is easy and 95 % of all passengers are nice and interssenting to meet

Is there something that you would like to improve? Or something on which GoMore could focus on more intensively according to you?

There is built a "GoMore-meetingpoint" at ferry in Aarhus, which makes it easy to meet and pick people up. This could be done more places in Copenhagen to, because that is one of the biggest challenges of using GoMore. Many times it is difficult to arrange wherer to meet, if for example both driver and passenger do not have local knowledge of Copenhagen. Allso it can be a problem to arrange a place where it is convinient or even possible/legal to make the stop.

Appendix C: Interviews with GoMore Employees

Content

Interview #1 with Matias Dalsgaard, Founder and CEO of GoMore ApS

Oct. 9, 2014, 11:00 A.M   Kompagnistræde 20C, Copenhagen

Conducted by: Ida Sofie Åsle and Danijela Premovic

Q1. Why did you start GoMore?

I thought it was a good idea that people could share cars. Why did I think that? I thought I could make a business out of it because it was obvious that if you use the space in the car better, then it's advantageous to both passengers and drivers, and there's real value in this because transportation is expensive for everybody. That' why I thought "there is a business here". And I saw it working in Germany, so it wasn't just an idea, it was something we saw working and thought "let's do this for Denmark". So I think I liked the idea of people travelling together, but the whole social dimension offered is something that has - my understanding of it - has developed over time and I've been surprised by how many good and surprising dimensions there are to people travelling together. So there's more that I thought "hmm this is a good idea, it's cheaper than buses and trains, everybody makes money - then I can also make a business".

Q2. So the motivation was economic?

Yes, but of course I liked the idea and therefore... I don't just like any idea... so I think my reasons for liking it were also somehow dependent on the social and environmental dimensions of it. But I was more focused on "hey, people can travel cheaply - we can beat DSB [the trains] and the buses in Denmark, and we can make a business out of it".

Q3. This was back in 2005, and you didn't charge the users anything until 2011

In 2013 actually...[paused interview – call from lawyer]

Q4. What was your knowledge back then of other companies doing the same thing, and what impression did you have of their motivations?

There was only one company, a company in Germany that we looked at. There are several very big websites in Germany for this, and I don't think they had any sort of idealistic motivation because ridesharing is an old phenomenon there. I think it dates back to the 70s or even further back. You had real offices in the big cities facilitating ridesharing. So my understanding of the very big German websites was rather that when people started using the internet around 2000, lots of people made good business on consolidating things online that had previously taken place offline. So I think it was just a matter of the right time - who would make the right website for all these people already travelling together in Germany. And I think they were just smart internet business-people more than they were sort of idealists or anything else really. But in other countries, in which ridesharing wasn't that popular already, idealism might have played a stronger role. For instance in France, Spain, Denmark. In Denmark there was something called Pendlernet which was mostly about ridesharing from home to work than long-distance travelling. I think this is still a business, it was not a non-profit. In general it was for-profit businesses, or at least intentionally so, that we could see around. I think that when people start something online, they usually want to make a business. However, they may also consider it a very good idea from an environmental and social perspective.

Q5. When were you planning to start charging for your services?

It was a standard approach when launching something on the internet that it's for free, and then you start charging when it's popular. It just never got that popular in the beginning. It all got postponed somehow, and we had an investor, Den Blå Avis (Ebay in Denmark, now also owned by Ebay),

TIME: 7:32

They were investing for a while and then they left it, because it didn´t grow fast enough, and then for some years we didn´t do anything about it…and it wouldn´t make sense to charge for a service that was so little used….so simply just because it didn´t grow fast, had it grown faster ,then we would of also introduced the payment and the business model on some of it.

Q6. What year did they enter?

Den Blå Avis came in as an investor in 2005 and went out in 2007.

Q7. Talking about Den Blå Avis, we can kind of connect it with values, and have these values developed or changed with time, what were you trying to do?

Yeah, I think I have become more fascinated by the social aspects, also by becoming an active user myself. I was teaching at university two years ago in Aarhus, and I would often drive and have passengers with me, actually that was the first time I was an active user of GoMore. I tried before as a passenger but not as an active, not a lot. And then it actually struck me how nice it was to travel with people, how much more pleasant it made your trip, that you did it with someone… so I think from seeing it as a good business idea, because everyone can save money, I now went to see it as something likable in itself, and therefore also has a greater potential than I thought in front, because when it is something that appeals to people on a social level and they actually like it, you are much stronger product then if you just compete with price, somehow…so I think. My own experience and knowledge has developed and we take the social dimension very seriously in the way that we make use of profiles, use of ratings , the whey we perceive the rides…the social dimensions is more important now to me than it was at the beginning…

Q8. So we can say that you have learned a lot of using it yourself?

Yes a lot, I use it a lot all the time. I think it would be a disaster, if I didn´t use it I would stop learning, so I use it both for car-pooling and car rental.

Do you use it Ida ?

I haven´t used it that much yet, but I am trying to do it whenever I am going somewhere.

It is very important; it is the only way you learn.

Q9. You were talking about the advantages it brings to the users and it social aspect, can you put more words on what other benefits there are in terms of the social impact? Other social, maybe it makes you get new friends, or save money, and stuff like that, is there anything else you can think of?

It is fun in itself, as a mode of transportation and it is also very flexible. Now there are so many cars that you can usually find one that drives from you own neighborhood, let's say Aarhus for instance rather than having to go to the train station and taking a train. This is very flexible and we have so many departures between to big cities in Denmark, much more that trains, like there would be 80 cars driving on a Friday departing from Aarhus to Copenhagen. There are so many cars to choose between, it is flexible. It is only flexible because we have so many cars to choose from…so now you know in Norway is a completely different situation, because we have only started there, we don't have any cars yet. But when you have traffic you have also these advantages for users.

Q10. What were your initials ambitious in terms of size?

I really don't know, though this could be a big business, but I had no clue about where to... I remember I was being interviewed on the radio and then he asked, how many percent of Danes will use it, and I said 10%, seriously that is half a million people, oh... no… it is 1% that would be fifty thousand, because half a million seemed a lot. But it is going to be half a million in 1 or 2 years from now, and I think it is going to be much more, and that is only in Denmark, but if we could do the same in other countries, it is going to be much more. So now I can see the potential in the way we travel all together, I see GoMore as the app you cheek first, always before you take and check anything else, and also if you want to transport yourself, a package, rent a car or buy a ride, there are multiple options. In that sense, really we are becoming the platform for transportation in country is a very big thing, even if it is very big only in Denmark, even by having 5 million people. And this is so much more ambitious than I had seen in the beginning when I thought, hmmm, this is a website where people can go together by car. Ideas have developed, I think, over time. I didn't have these ambitions and ideas when I started.

Q11. Has external pressure in any way contributed to this change of mind-set?

Well, I think that external developments like social media and mobile platforms and also that we see huge investments in infrastructure technology in many markets. Now it is, ok, not only us that are crazy and have a funny idea, it is something that has been invested heavily in, it is actually a big thing and can become big, it is not only our idea, so in that sense…

There are lots of inputs to it, and there is a kind of pressure in that sense that competition is tough in other markets, but in Denmark not yet, but we know that if we don't become big quit fast, then I would say of course the risk of becoming run over by someone else is quite higher.

TIME: 15:07

Regarding expansion strategies, why was Scandinavia chosen as the first area?

Because we think they are similar to Denmark and nearby, we run it from Copenhagen, they were not yet occupied by competitors. That's a good thing, the bad thing is that they are small countries and very hard and takes time to get thing started when the market does not even exist.

So you are creating a market?

Yes. if you go to France or Germany you would rather be competing, but here you have to develop the idea from scratch, it's a slow thing and you just have to work very hard, try many things and hopefully things will catch on.

What about further expansion? You were saying something.

Yes, we are looking at several countries, that is confidential, but the [country] maybe, [country] definitely, [country]? Big markets where there is still not great competition. There is lots of competition in western European markets but not so much on the outside of Europe.

So you would consider your strategies to go to countries were ride sharing is not established yet?

Yes, or were its established and we can merge and buy companies that would give us a head start in the country.

What of the things you just said is confidential?

Just the names of the countries.

Our next question is similar to what we just talked about. Where do you see GoMore in 5 years? Do you see it expanding quite a lot or...

I think we have a very good and growing business in 5 to 10 markets and rather than one that wants to be global and have a core business in 100 markets. So we are not, we don't have money for it, but even if we had we would not expand to... we would rather try to win some markets. But let's say we have in 5 to 10 years 1-2 million users in Denmark, if we can do something close to that in other and bigger markets, even with more users it would be good business.

On which parameters do you base your chose of countries?

It depends on competitive situation, opportunities for making partnerships or acquisitions, and that's it, you can't choose. I would not say markets where there is no competition is necessarily bad for us than a market where there is competition, it simply depends on the alliances and partnerships we can make in the individual countries. So in that sense there is no simple answer to the question.

Thinking about investors, and your investors currently are Seed capital and...

Jesper Buch, who founded JustEat, Kasper Knokgaard who's a small venture capital fund called East Coast Capital. Owned by Kasper and Simon.

East Coast capital is their company?

Yes. It's Casper and Simon's company.

And also another fund called Polar Light Capital, its small, its Frank the guy who does insurance for us, he is one of the partners in this fund.

None of these investors have a social focus on their investments, they just invest in the business idea?

Yeah, they invest in a range of things, they do not have a social profile.

Did you ever think of approaching investment funds with a social focus?

No. Who would that be?

Not sure, in Norway there is one called Ferd, that only invest, or part of their portfolio is social innovation.

Okay. Well, I would like to talk to them but i don't know of any such in Denmark.

And maybe you wouldn't really be eligible?

I don't know, we got some funds from the Danish government, green and transformation fund, because there is a green dimension to what we do, we got some money from there, but that is not an investor. That is just public money you get, which is very nice but nothing you can rely or depend on. It's like winning the lottery, it's nice if it happens but it is not something you can really build on.

Who is your target customer?

It's people like you. It's people in the big cities. That's where we start. We want to be mainstream and for everybody but our users they are, or our standard users are between 20 - 40, well-educated or under education and living in the big towns.

Why do you think it's important to be well educated?

I just think they travel more. I don't care. But I can just see that they are, I think they travel more and also they might be more social and green oriented and more savvy with new technology than, I don't know what to call the others, those who just... I mean also students they are poor. They are not really poor, they just don't have a lot of money, like, really poor people, they don't go anywhere. Think about that.

So people who want to save money and are active, going places, having things to do, they are good users, people with lots, lots of money not so good users, and people without no money no plans, nowhere to go, nothing to do. So middle class, we really have a good middle class concept but we are trying to be for everybody, but we just start with this profile

TIME: 22.30

I think that the sharing economy is developing in Denmark. people living in the same house etc. i is going to develop even more in Denmark. It is funny that you see this think as a field market becoming popular, and even fancy. it brings a lot of attention. There are more talks, and it keeps going. It makes sense.

We have talked about the social impact. What about the environmental impact?

Well, i think it is hard to measure. Of course it is good that there are more people in the car. We would not even use trains and buses if people used their cars properly. And there is also the congestion thing… that damages the environment. If you look at the car rental model, when a car is shared instead of owned by one person (proven by studies outside of Denmark), you actually take 5 to 8 cars out of the system, people get more sensitive to other kinds of transportation, so they'll also take the bus or the train. Because they just become more flexible users of transportation in general. Anyway, I'm pretty confident that the impact is positive, even though it is hard to measure.

Do these two factors (social and environmental impact) play a role in the way you communicate about GoMore?

Environmental not so much… well it is very useful in PR. Good for public debate. People are interested in waste, etc. It is a valuable thing for us, and also a very good thing in general to look at the environment. But looking at it at a consumer level, environment is a very abstract thing. You cannot communicate environment. It is nice for people to think about it. But it is not something that is directly related to the experience of using GoMore.

But the social dimension, I mean, what you experience in the car, that's the social side of GoMore. And the way we try to use that on Facebook, and our communication in general, that's very important for us the social dimension of it.

We are a consumer product, by that I mean: we'll only have success if people like the concept and if they like using it. And therefore we have to use and share their experience to improve on it. But in environment there's just statistics and abstract numbers. You don't experience how much CO_2 did I save today. But we use it in PR, and that's of course something positive.

How do you approach consumers? What kind of methods to you use? To find new users

We communicate a lot with the existent ones through newsletters and Facebook, Twitter, Instagram… but we do. We also try to design the app and the website a way that communicates with the user. like personal communication. We talk about things that you experienced rather than numbers etc. and we talk in a personal direct style. With that we develop right now a good style in DK, and in new markets we are working on finding our 'voices'. It is something that grows over time, and you learn by doing it. So I hope people have the impression that we talk directly to them. Really professional companies always try to have the coolest app and website you can find, to be seen as nice, not lying company. No blabla bullshit. Just direct communication and fun. But you got to be careful with being fun: if people don't laugh at your jokes it is worse. So that's something we do consciously.

TIME: 29:55

So, that's how you talk to your customers and we also talked about how you talk to your PR or through PR. Is there any other way that your communication is varying depending on who you are talking to? What about investors for example.

Yeah, they get a lot of PowerPoint and numbers and other signs. Yeah, very boring, very boring.

Are there any others you can think about? What about researchers?

Well, I think, this is kind of personal direct but like real solution oriented and professional communication that we e-mail with the users like GoMore we fix things for you, we are good, good to be used and we respect the users. Like when they talk to us we talk to them. I think that this mode of communication also should become the way you talk internally in the company like for instance I am not so I don't want people just to sit and say GoMore is great all the time often I hear employees applauding a company and you are not allowed to say anything negative about the brand of the company. As long as you are trying to solve problems and really focus on fixing things then I am happy to hear what does not work because I mean there are so many things that really don't work and we are trying to fix it. So this is a kind of direct but professional resolve oriented communication I hope we can also develop internally. So, yeah, there are investors and partners, employees, coworkers and the customers. But I still, even though of course it's different things that investors are interested in, then we still try to have a style even when I make a PowerPoint that is somehow like GoMore style, not too corporate or how you call it, yeah.

What for example is it that doesn't go at the moment that you are having struggle with so we can have an example of some sort of a problem that can be...

On the technical side I just would like that we already had very cool apps for everything.

You don't have an app?

We have an iPhone app but it is not a cool one, we are coming with a very cool iPhone app this month. And then adding features to it so it also becomes for rental and we also come with Android. So, I think we are, I mean it is not that something isn't working it is just like there are so many products we would like to have out there already. We don't, in new markets we are really struggling to get new users that's quite painful I think to all of us who work with these markets, that's not good but we do our best alright I hope we do. I think actually we are not that good on marketing.

I was just going to say to you maybe something is wrong with the marketing part, maybe you are not marketing it.

Yeah, but I think with the new countries it is a hard discussion, misunderstood, trying to do lots of things and see what works but in Denmark where we are already quite popular and known I think we could get so much

more attention if we just worked better on the marketing, so, so, yeah, there is a lot of things that we could better, yeah.

We have a car in my family and I never heard of GoMore but when I talked to my husband he was quite interested and trying to drive and take someone with him for the social benefit also for the economic, both, so I think that awareness should be a little bit higher because maybe especially to be ... maybe there are not informed or haven't heard about GoMore.

TIME: 34:07

Yeah, exactly. we have to market much more. But yeah, we do what we can and this is also a matter of budget of course. Like TV commercials they are very efficient but they are also very expensive so yeah.

Didn't you also say something about cultural differences? That you might not think that GoMore or such a service could be popular in your home country?

Where do you come from?

I am from Serbia.

Serbia, I think this would be popular everywhere.

If you had the right approach.

It will come and someone will find the right approach. It might be a GoMore in Serbia or it might be another company. But what I am seeing is that, it is actually happening in all countries so it is just a matter of time and the matter who is best and who wins. In the beginning I thought this is not for all countries, but now I see and actually that's also why we talked about [country] I wouldn't think [country] is safe enough. It is going to happen somehow and you gonna do well and well we gonna see who does it.

I think also, for example Belgrade it would be a great potential for something like GoMore because there is a lot of people, the transportation is not that good, not functioning good, it is just the way you would approach the people with a mindset it would be a kind of challenging to educate them to do that, that would be the biggest problem I think, for that kind of market that's similar I think to [country] and those kind of countries. Danish people and Norwegian they are a bit more open to that kind of business that's developing slowly in other countries but it needs more time to come there.

But also remember that it was very hard for us to get started in Denmark. And now it is different with social media and mobile platforms, etc. But it probably also have been hard today just not as hard as in 2005, so.

My biggest worry for example in the other places would be the Internet and how well and how often it is used in other… for example countries that are not so developed like Denmark, not many people have smartphones and that needs a different approach.

Yeah, exactly and no, maybe just wait until everybody has smartphones. I am just saying I think it will come because technology will be there it is just a matter of time and of course it might take many years, it might be sooner. It's hard to tell.

I think that was basically all of our questions.

Interview with GoMore CMO, Mikkel Winther

Oct. 13, 2015, 13:30 P.M.   Kompagnistræde 20C, Copenhagen

Conducted by: Lisa Olin, Danijela Premovic and Ida Åsle

0:00

Q. What was your reasoning behind joining GoMore?

A. For me personally? That's a pretty long story... I wanted to join GoMore because I wanted to work in a startup. That was pretty important to me. Being able to sort of directly influence what was going on around me in a bigger way than at the place where I was before, which was a big multinational corporation. So I wanted to go to somewhere smaller.

And then there are all sorts of other things, I talked to a lot of different people and I think GoMore was the one company that I talked to where I really really believed in the potential of the company; I really believed in the team. And the role [I was offered] seemed really interesting.

Q. How do you consider the potential, why did you think that was bigger here than in another startup?

A. First of all, GoMore had already shown that it was able to grow from 0 users to, at that point, 120 000 or something like that. That was over a period of quite a few years, I think since 2005. But having a proven concept was really important to me.

When I met Matias, our CEO, he was able to convince me that this is really something that has the potential to become much much bigger.

Q. Because of other solutions inherent in strategy of the firm or...?

A. Because of a lot of different things: the quality of the product compared with competitors...there are lots of other companies doing ridesharing and P2P car rental, but GoMore simply does it better. So that's really important. Also the fact that there's a really big interest in this *space* right now. There's a lot of money pouring into...also into our competitors actually. But I think that speaks well for the future of this space in general.

Q. Why do you think this space is taking off now, more than others?

A. I think there's a certain level of trust needed to make things like this work. And I think we are at a point where people have gotten so used to interacting with other people through social media and online...that I simply think that that people are ready for this now.

I think it was really interesting to see Airbnb grow from nothing to really something in only a few years, and I think they're in a really great situation because their product is actually much better than what came before it. I mean living in an Airbnb apartment is just so much more interesting…its much cheaper much nicer compared with staying in a hotel. I don't think our product is as much nicer compared to what it came before, but i do think that it is at least on par, when it comes to sort of the experience of using it and it is cheaper. So I think people, try one of these kinds of services and then once they have done it, they are ready to go all the way, and do all sorts of things.

Q: What is your perception of GoMore's vision and mission?

So I will say that, our vision for the long term is to revolutionize personal transportation. I think that we are going to change the way people get from one place to another and I think we are going to make it more efficient, and going to make it more environmentally responsible, and I think we are going to make it more social and fun. So that is sort of on the long term, and on the shorter term, we are going to get somewhere close to that.

Q: In the long term it is revolutionary change, and in the short its…?

It's just incremental steps towards that, it is not like there is a little half way goal where we say ok so we want a certain amount of users on something, we are just slowly moving towards changing the way people get from one place to another.

Q: How big do you think you have to be before you can count yourselves as having revolutionized transportation?

I think in Denmark we will probably need, I mean we are almost 200,000 users in Denmark now, I think that when we have 500,000. At that point we will have 10% of the total population, and I think at that point, first of all I mean the growth is going to speed up and at that point you can start talking about us, being really a force in this space.

Q: What do you see as being GoMore's social impact, you touched upon it before, and if you could elaborate it a bit more?

First of all we see an impact on the environment, getting more people into cars that just has a positive effect, also on the rental side what we see is people that are able to rent a car might not buy one. And that has a positive impact as well.

7:59

On the environment or socially?

On the environment

Then, I think, our services and sort of these services you would put under the umbrella of the sharing economy, I think they do something interesting to society actually. I think that they give a certain agency

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back to consumers that we are giving up… as a society, we are moving from… I think what happened under industrialization was that people went from being sort of people to being consumers.

And I think we are actually giving some power back, I think we are… to put it in Marxist terms we are sort of giving people their own... we are putting the means of production back into the hands of the people in some ways. We are giving people, a little bit of power.

What do you usually highlight when marketing GoMore?

We have a number of USPs [Unique Sales Points] we usually talk about one is, sort of that it is a cheap way of getting from point A to B, or rent a car. In economical or financial terms, it is cheap. Second one is that it is socially interesting and it's a pleasant way of traveling, of interacting with people. Third one is that it is environmentally beneficial and it's is beneficial to society as a whole. those are sort of our main points.

Now, you are present in 3 countries, do you observe any differences? I mean in relation to these points, or how people perceive GoMore?

That's a really interesting question, I don't have any sort of quantified data that sort of shows how we are perceived in each country, we simply don't have that. My gut feeling tells me that this sort of environmentally, that angle, the whole sort of green angle, is highlighted more in Sweden, compared to Denmark or Norway. What I can see is that when other people talk about us, when bloggers write about us, journalists, they highlight us as a green company, more in Sweden compared to what they do in Denmark and Norway. Apart from that, there is a big difference in the fact that we have been present in Denmark for so much longer, and we have a lot more users in Denmark so I think people in Denmark tend to take us a little bit more seriously. As a real player in this space, its more easy to get someone to write about us when saying we have 180 000 users compared to saying we have 2 or 3000 users.

12:17

But do you think that the sharing economy is more present in Denmark than in Norway ?

Yes, well, to be honest I'm not sure. What I see is that people in Denmark talk about sharing economy, and they mention us as part of it. If you ask someone in Denmark what is sharing economy, they'll say "oh it's Airbnb and GoMore". Whereas we're not as well known in Sweden or Norway. Actually i don't know if sharing economy as a concept is bigger in Denmark than it is in Sweden or Norway. What I can say is that, when people talk about sharing economy in Denmark, we're part of that conversation.

What are you going to do for GoMore, for the people to be more aware of the system. Do you have any plans on how you could do that ?

Yes. In Denmark, we are working a strategy - 2 main sorts of things : 1/ work with partnership / events (PR), so that people talk about us without any sort of marketing. 2/ A Broad consumer marketing : we did a TV campaign, and things like that. That's more expensive, but it works.

And then the third part is sort of more highly targeted online advertisement. We work sort of a bit with paid search for example where we can for the parts of our service where we are a sort of direct replacement for something that came before for example car rental that's something that people have done for a while and we do pretty much the same just cheaper. In those cases it makes a lot of sense to just do sort of pretty highly targeted advertising.

THE LAST PART

I have another question: do you vary your communication depending on who you are talking to I mean in marketing and PR activities and stuff like that.

Yes, a lot. So we have a number of different target groups and we define these target groups as sort of based on which part of our service we think would be relevant for these people. So for example you have some sort of young students they'd often be passengers in a ride sharing situation. We also have sort of for example just older men, they'll often be sort of more person rents out their car or takes passengers when they go somewhere and we vary our communication quite a lot when we talk to these different target groups because we can see that it's not all the same things that are important to these different people. So for example, I mean our four main target groups would be for ride sharing passengers and drivers and then for rental it would be people rent out a car or people who might once rent a car. What we can see as a general rule ride sharing is more about sort of this social interaction and also the impact on the environment and these things whereas car rental is more sort of, it is just a cheaper way of doing something that you used to do or if you are someone who you want to rent out your car then this is a way of making some money on your car or saving few bucks on owning it. So there is a sort of the economic factors.

But this is not really a marketing… you don't market it as community thing when you talk about the car renting, it is not that like you can...

It's not that total secret that this is also a community and it is you know and it's local and all these things, it's just not sort of among our primary sort of communication goals of having people, think about this when you think about GoMore. GoMore rental what I would love for people to think when they think of GoMore rental is this is a cheap way of renting a car or this is a great way of making a little bit extra money on my car when it is stationary. Just simply because that's I mean when we try different things that's just what seems to work. Whereas ride sharing is sort of more social in itself because you have to get into a car with someone you don't know so I mean for some people that might be something that they really don't want to do. A lot of people, before they try ride sharing, think I am not that kind of person who want to do that, it sounds terrible. What we find then is that once people try it and if we can sell this as a possible thing once people try it a lot of people don't want to go back to sitting in a boring old train and just staring into thin air.

Oct. 13, 2014, 14:00 P.M.   Kompagnistræde 20C, Copenhagen

Conducted by: Lisa Olin, Ida Åsle, Danijela Premovic

00:00

Q. Why did you start GoMore?

A. Matias and I were both studying in Germany, and there it was quite common to use carpooling, so we thought: "Why have nobody done that in Denmark?" - that would be good for students - we were both students, and this enabled us to reduce transportation costs, and also because we have a green agenda - "why not fill up and use the resources we have better". So in the beginning it was the green and economic agendas, *later on* it was a more social agenda. But in the beginning it was these two things. Being students ourselves.

Q. What was your knowledge of the other companies?

A. We didn't know that much about the companies actually, we had been using them a couple of times...I think once online...back then in 2004 and around that time and before that in Tübingen where I was studying, at most universities there was a big box where people would put in cards saying they needed to go to Nürnberg or to Munich over the weekend who would want to drive along. So it was more about directly peer to peer actually. I would directly call you up and say: "could I go with you?", and also even using the first online platforms...my interest at that point was not how did they set up all their business. It was more about how can I get to Berlin.

So I didn't know so much about the companies. However, I soon found out that most of them were based a flat monthly rate instead of a booking rate. We went for the booking rate [at GoMore] because we liked the "no cure no pay" idea better. Then you don't have to pay every month if you don't get any rides. And sometimes perhaps you won't drive for a whole month, or you go along with somebody. We thought it was just that way. And we would also later on know much more about the behavior of our users if we had a booking system knowing when people where going and where to, instead of...everything just remains a black box if it's this monthly system where they get access to information so they can just call you up 10 times. And there was still not this... one of the [further] reasons we did the booking system was that if you had a popular route, i.e. to Aarhus in Denmark, you would get called up many times, which would be a hassle for our best customers. So even after giving away the free seats, they would get 10 phone calls. So it was in many ways much better with the booking system.

Q. What time period is this?

A. The booking system came in only 2 years ago, when we also introduced our business model. We wanted to connect with the "no cure no pay" and chose that, even though we were debating the two options. Because we of course have a lot of passive users. If you could get money from them too, the inactive ones, it would be nice. But still we thought we'd like to know more about their behavior and it would be more just if we said it was only the ride they had that they had to pay for. But of course, if you'd only get a tiny bit of money from many people not even using the platform, that would be a business model. And it exists in both ways in Germany still. So some platforms require a flat monthly rate.

Q. But then they mostly have active users?

A. I think...yes. After a while without using it you might want to get out of it, but sometimes it's just so little and perhaps you *support the idea*. That's also part of the business we're into, that people actually want to give money to Unicef or other helping organizations - then they might even support this even though they're not using it so much. So you could actually also make a business model based on that but even though... I think ours is more just... You need to be able to not only compete based on this *bad conscience,* or based on that we want to be a really strong transport alternative - and as I said *know more* about customer behavior. But I mean, the beginning of it was in 2004, and launching the platform in 2005...

Q. You were actively working with launching GoMore back in 2005?

A. Yes I was. Matias was in Germany for 1 year, and I was down there for a longer time, I needed to finish my PhD. So I didn't go back home but we were corresponding every other day about this. But he was also mainly in charge then. The structure between him and I...who owns the company more and such was also reflected in that. So I've always been more on the side. Anticipating the next question on why I'm not involved in the daily operations of GoMore -- I was never really apart of the daily business. That was a part of the agreement between Matias and I because it started up that way and I got my "dream job" at the university teaching philosophy, and so I wanted to this. I really like doing GoMore, but this is happy for me. And I also think Matias, based on this, he knows more about it, he knew more about these things and I developed some of the initial concepts. He knows now more about the daily business and he was in Denmark at the time and he also had the consultancy background, which he got later on. So he could take care of operations, and there can only be one manager. It was simply more obvious that it would be Matias.

Q. You don't have the study background within business?

A. No. Actually, Matias is a very smart guy but he also got that after we started up GoMore, and maybe also a little bit because he had this startup experience behind him. So he was doing his master's in Philosophy and I was doing my PhD in Philosophy and we thought we should do this and he went back to Denmark and started it up and then after doing that, then he... At that time there was no way GoMore could support even a minimum salary. You could say we should've been a bit more upfront about venture capital, but at that

time nobody had really heard about carpooling or the sharing economy in Denmark. So that wasn't possible and thus he [Matias] needed some kind of job. And then he applied for McKinsey which we talked a little bit about, and they hired because he was smart but probably also because he had been starting up a company

Q. So GoMore was kind of paused a little bit?

A. Yes, it was put a little bit on pause…and at the same time not. Because Den Blå Avis (DBA) wanted to go into the company and have more than 50% of the shares and also lead the everyday business. He [Matias] helped the new manager for a while, so it was just a new manager coming in…he was a nice guy but…

TIME: 08:32

Not so inventive, so it developed a bit slowly, and there was no real focus on nationally on sharing economy so it also, he was not a good manager even though he was a nice guy, and then also we do not have the same, there was not the attention to this sort of business, so it developed more slowly than Den Blå Avis would have liked to, and so they got out of it again… and there was a while, so it was not left alone at the beginning, then Den Blå Avis took over, and Mathias was there, and I was doing something else. And then as they got out of it, there was a little bit the question of what should we do now? I don`t know do you want to go further into that or…or are there other questions

No we have already been talking to Mathias about that, so we can go on with something else..

We can talk about it, I have no problem, then we came up to, there was a bit going back and forth, we were also looking for a development team to say ok, so Lasse came in with another guy, at that point so we were looking for a team that actually could take over the daily business. It was a bit back and forth having dialogues with different people, and it was not so constructive and we didn`t have enough to maybe do it and people did not really know what it was, and were not so interested, and sharing economy was also something they didn't know about, so it took a while …we made it later on with a couple of first sales and then gone with full time and Jesper [Buch] came in with his money …and then…

What was actually your main motivation to start it, I mean in the beginning when you were students…

The primary thing was that we did what we thought maybe or dreamed about it that it could be a big business at one time could be interesting to do, but also the motivation of bringing a concept back to Denmark that would be doing transport cheaper and also be for students, that would be the initial …and I was a bit of also dreaming about the future scenarios, and as you might know I have also been working for the Institute for Future Studies. And I have been thinking about on how that fits into a bigger agenda, and a long term agenda and thinking about how that could develop into more things. But still we, it was considered in the beginning as a hobby project, and this is why we didn't take are back and contact the business or the investors, or made a business model, but I mean we could have done more…in different ways…that is all

What values would you say GoMore was based on initially?

I think, I mean the optimization of resources and also you could say little bit student values and cheaper transport and the optimization also has to do with this green economy, so these its founded of these things but as we saw also , and the experienced on ourselves hat this social aspect is more, and more prievent then we thought, ok this is great, that people actually meat totally strange people in the cars and have a great talks , and so if you read the… we though that this is… and if you read the testimonials on the platform, it is the rating part which is nice. But there are also longer elaborations on how their trip was nice, and this is how marketing works, and say you have someone say ...I drove with an musician, architect or something, like that and.. it means a lot to people, and is also the way the marketing of the concept also works, and we thought it was giving the extra edge of what people like about it, so we need to play around more with this...with the social part of the concept..

So you would say that the values have changed, sort of developed into social?

Yes you could say that, that it changed and that there is more to it, got changed a little bit, and it is not as if other things have disappeared it is just like an addition of extra values. And also the concepts are growing around what we are doing, from car pooling to car sharing and maybe to other kinds of concepts, and there are also additions in different ways, the values and the easiness of transport, and stuff like that coming to and over time, but it is still the optimization of recourses…

Then you said you went into this because you thought that it could be a big business, but what were the exact ambitions in terms..

I think ,not because, I guess I have expressed myself wrong, but it wasn`t thought to be a …it was a thought we had that it could develop, so we just went into it because it was fun to bring back home, and see where it goes, and in those days we were also dreaming of where it could go, but it was not the reason we went into… was not because it would go there…could read the question again?

I was just wondering what you ambitions were in term of the size of GoMore?

I think we,..Hmm, I mean ,..size, I think we also thought it could be a bit more like mainstream , at some point, but it was also in the beginning to help students drive a bit cheaper, around Denmark, and then at that time we were also thinking what would have been nice, but know it is first coming, I think Mathias has probably had been talking about, back in those days the smart phone was really not a gadget, no one possessed, but even at that time we were thinking about what we called the electronic tomb that you could do something real time, that it was possible to be aware of people here and now, would wanted to go along if you somehow could send the message.

But know these things are being developed, and everybody had a personal computer along with her or him, in the pocket, and with a GPS function that makes all of this function, so we have, you have maybe do to the economy crises the sharing economy is blooming and then, everyone has these smart phones, so there is a

lot of things in our advantage and kind of supporting the sharing economy as we see it, but I mean to take a full utility of smart phones can help to develop these things, and transport is also about people wanting to get around, and needs to be quick, cheap and flexible so it is nice to have portable device with you that would help you…

Do you feel that in some way kind of external pressures have pushed GoMore in certain directions that you hadn't imagined before?

I mean that there are probably many external factors, there are political, or also investors I don`t know are there any you think about in particular?

Anything that comes to your mind?

We can say we did this application to the green called "obstructs" found. And then they will support us through this other concept, round car sharing. So it was a little bit us anticipating it, but we also got the money that we needed to do it at that time, and it seemed to be a good time so it was mainly we applied for it and got the money that we should also do it. Good fast answer that we did it at that time, and also I mean it's good to also develop that project on your own, but if the money comes from a government, then you have less power depending on what the government is saying, that you cannot do it, so we have been using that also. A bit of, awareness to support this you also need, I mean the law cannot be directly against us something like that.

And then of course also the investors I experience and that also they are supportive and have their idea of it, it gives us a lot of freedom but it also if something's go not so well then they of course also are focused, but Jesper is important for us, because he has already developed a big company - JustEat. And he is also talking straight talk. So you hear when he thinks its good or when it is less good. But he has a couple ??, and also invested in one of these guys are also very straight talk. This does not that much land on my table so I have advantages and disadvantages on being a little bit on the side. But usually when we have workshops with the board it's really they are run well so far. We have a good relationship.

You can say, external factors as you mentioned it is also, these are not practically negative things, there are also political, I mean there is the whole sphere, the whole business of sharing economy there is a positive… it is standing in a positive light, and there are articles and newspapers, so external newspapers yes, the media and the general spirit of society is for us.

Some of the factors are also of course externalist about laws and countries, those have been, looking at car pooling for example, it was actually not been the case that if I give you money to drive along those are not considered as tax money because you are sharing expenses, so that law was actually in our favor and favor of green transport, even if it was not thought of at that time as something favoring.

Car-pooling as transportation, but with car sharing it has been difficult in the beginning saying should we, if I rent out my car to you or you should I reregister my car should it be a rental car. So that was a big issue and also, connected to insurance. Insurance companies haven't really known about these concepts before.

How does it work, what are the risks, how to insure, and if you would come to this reregister argument, there is a hassle for you as a owner to be registered, it costs money even if only 500 DKr, going to the tax authority, I re-register my car as a rental car or a company car, but then you also go to a different insurance category. Which makes the cost exploding, so you can't even make car sharing possible. so we were, the law was made at a time when people have not been thinking about these things. The law was against us first, but we managed to make it work.

Are the laws clearer now?

They are clearer because we got the ministry of justice to respond after 10 months which is a lot for a start up, to see if this was legal or not, can you do this? So then they said, this is legal but they did not, you do not have to reregister, but they did not give us any limit of how you can rent it out. I mean, the principle is that you can rent it out, but you do it one, 10 or 100 times it does not say anything about it. So if the Danish car union supported the concept, they also liked it so they pushed for it. They wanted to have more clear answers, and so did we. On the other hand with the clear answers would be very low, that is not something we should push forward, its a little bit also do you go in to see if you can get a really clear answer, to get more clear communication to the customers, but if its something that actually destroys the very concept then of course it is not so interesting. So right now we are also talking to politicians a lot, could we find a way to actually encourage people to share their resources. If it's a house, boat, car, drilling machine... Why does everybody need to buy one? So do you want to push that with the politicians, if we are lucky we could also see with the election in one year to see if one of the parties would actually go in and support this sharing economy? That would be interesting.

How are you doing this in practice?

There was a politician writing, she had been a national politician, and now she is for the city region, Charlotte Fisher, she wrote a debate article in the newspaper saying that we should support these things, so then I wrote to her afterward and said. Should we put up a meeting? We just had a meeting with her, and she knows more politicians so now we are setting up a meeting with her and a couple of other politicians, or at least that what we are planning for. And then I mean, also at the moment, a lot of favorites that we would like to do with all these sharing if possible that is if you rent out your apartment, it is deductible on a tax fee from 20 000 DKr a year.

We think there is no green argument in renting out your apartment, but if you are sharing your car then there is no one buying a car that we think is good about this field there is a good green reason to sharing your car.

So we want to see if we can have the same deductible, no matter what you are with other people there should be a minimum of 20 000 DKr per year that you do not have to pay taxes on. That would encourage people to share their stuff, it could be anything. The Danes think this law comes from the background which is also interesting to study these things, for example summer houses, if you can rent it out and you do not have to pay for it... probably also had to do with that 20 000 was considered low and you had costs to your house so it was not really an income.

But sometimes you also pay for your car...

TIME: 25:28

...so if you pay insurance in you car, it goes to get fix some stuff. It's more a little bit the same concept as using carpooling. actually. It is cost sharing. That's the principal difference.

You are participating in all that kind of work . So would you say this is important for you, that you take it on a personal level since it is not your daily job?

We know that things are a little bit. We take much time to develop the concepts, that's what we do everyday. I also have a flexible schedule but still taking these meetings doesn't fill in my working day. There's more than 35 or 40h per week, in average per person. So we have still time.

The sharing economy - how is it seen by Dansk? Positive?

I think It is positive, but not rooted fully. It can be open to sub-scandals appearing. Well, you've seen this Airbnb in NYC, these scandals with big parties there… It's open to big stories in the newspapers… It could crash a company. Things can always change. But at the moment we need to ensure this positive press. And of course now, also GoMore is so relatively old, and people have been using it, and it's not a new thing. We had some bad press, but not so much, for sure.

One of the reason for ???

But it is also an empowerment of the user, of the citizen, they make their own money, and being proud, and if they get a really good feedback in face to face, encounter the neighbors, somebody enjoying it, nobody can really take that away. So if you are really good at giving good experience, stories on the personal experience (I'm telling my friends about), they trust the story more I think.

And I also think that more reasons : due to stay… nothing

So, you mentioned the empowerment of the users. So that is one of the social impacts that GoMore has?

Yeah, that's the value

What more social impact?

Well, we talked about citizenship. Here we have a stronger case than Airbnb. I mean, if you're sharing your car to your neighbors in the area you are living, that area get to know people in a different way, and people share different things in a different way. That provides a different kind of neighborship.

And the other thing is global, cosmopolitan citizenship. That is another thing that we do socially.

The service can tell us that there are also some foreigners in the service, in the company.

I mean if somebody comes to you, and asks for you, the way you receive.

That mindset, well, how you feel a little different about you impact... ???

I you want to get more people, it is good to get good testimonials of users. So you have to treat your customers well.

You get more immediate feedback, which gives another work culture.

So you think that your impact is more on the car leasing or carpooling?

A lot of it is the same. But the social part is more predominant in the carpooling... But this is also why we think the 2 concepts work well together. The 2 concepts. Carpooling, if you go somewhere, you can fill your car and you could use the concept. ??? That fits nice way together.

TIME:34:00

365 days because either it's one or the other. So that in a sense would fits nicely together but still don't probably all ways be more people are doing and the car pooling and the other thing is also more expensive but as supposed for example MinBilDinBil rents out cars then we already had ... member space so we could have a lot of our members that started to rent out cars once in a while so it also even though we do not make as much money by generating one car pooling trip as renting out one car it is important for us also to have this user base.

But I think as it is now I have been looking so much into that and one things which interests me also with competition but I actually think we are the only company doing both and we think and it is quite obvious and fits nicely together but... and then of course you can also say it is always a little bit maybe we hope of a synergy, synthesis even and not so much maybe of trade off because I mean that might be something going lost in the clarity in your concept if you are doing more things but I mean on the other hand if they supplement each other nicely then we hope it is people find it to have more this synergy to be supplementing each other.

And MinBilDinBil is your main competitor in Denmark.

Yeah, you could say so, I mean there have been a couple of others in carpooling but also ... they started so much later even though and that's probably also and it was pretty good what they actually did two things pretty nicely. They had better application than we have but it showed that that time also that technology is one thing and it is important as a driver of innovation of a business but if you only have the technology and have no users because it ... content that we sell is a ride to Aarhus to Copenhagen and if you just have fancy divided it looked up who is driving tomorrow to Aarhus and it came up again and again the 0 rides then it is I mean it is nice that you can see it really fast that nobody is going there.

So of course even though they have developed a nice app which is not going to be that nice as the app coming out then this was not enough but they did a good job and then they actually also did something that we also did but they were doing that even more at that time that was kind of you can say unique this kind of critical mass to go anywhere with this concept but what they did and I think they did actually pretty well that was even more event based so they were able to get 103 ticket for Roskilde festival to hand out so as soon as everybody they didn't need the thousand and thousand of users if they just had some going to Roskilde or something. They were also setting up nice partnership with the Redbull and they have often Redbull makes this competition jump down from the Opera.

So if people go to the same place and those with a kind of events also generating press so they actually did a good job and something that we also can learn from but I mean everybody want to do carpooling and then they had many downloads because you put it in the app store and you can use it and people I think download it in Singapore and some of these apps for carpooling and of course they only work there is also a thing about sharing economy and a lot of these works locally I mean if you have hundred downloads in South Africa and Brazil I mean where they are gonna go carpooling with as a so. So it needs this critical mass concentration at some places.

So they just stopped after a while. And also the turning point for us also were our development we would even faster that's of course because people talk about sharing economy but was also the point of time where we could go full time because we had investors and they had not yet come to that point so then we just went faster way from competitors and they could not really keep up but they were well aware also that they went to the market where we were and we thought it was a bit strange because we had over the years seen more people who just programmed that little page for something like carpooling but had not really been seen that most of the customers were with us and that was a crucial part of it.

I am wondering because you are talking to a lot of different people about GoMore but you are not really doing marketing for GoMore, but you are talking to people anyway.

When I talk to you it is about objective things but I also have the way just I see it is of course is a biased light and I think those things are might be a little bit difficult to separate fully I mean the marketing part of it is also just thing ok what is the potential what are the prospects where we are going, why is it good in the first place? So I, when I talk to people also politicians I also mark the concept but I would.... In my case this two things they are connected.

What I wanted to ask is how do you vary your communication?

Ah, yeah, but it is probably more about if I am going out and talking that to the politicians or businessmen or finally if I am talking to the students, people that we could cooperate with so it is still in a sense that I think ok what would be a win-win set of why it is interesting for you and this is why it is interesting for us but I try

to then take a point of view if it possible for me to see what could be interesting in this concept for the other person or for the other organisation and then try to angle my communication that way.

So there is not one thing you always...

I am really think through the thing who are you talking to. And what are their values in a meta sense but also what is for example what is this company making business on or what are their expenses so for example also... we have so much energy into it but also with have different kind of B2B partnerships... I mean what we have with Q8 is also a business partnership... you could say when you go and get a coffee so it is... people buy many other things and they get a good marketing towards a lot of car owners so they get a good concept so that kind of... it's Matias who's taking care of that...

It's a B2B partnership. We have most business to consumers but through our partnerships, we also have B2B solutions. But we also have these B2B products where we can sell a carpooling platform to a bigger company organization, and there we also try to... to expand...and what it would give, I mean of social contact between employees and also if they have a lot of...

TIME. 42:30

[Interview recording cut off]

Interview with Thomas Holm, head of Customer Service at GoMore ApS

Oct. 13, 2014, 16:30 P.M.   Kompagnistræde 20C, Copenhagen

Conducted by: Lisa Olin, Danijela Premovic

How do you perceive GoMore - what's your motivation to work here?

I've started about one year ago, when they were only three employees, and I always been fond of entrepreneurship and small companies. I did an internship in another company, a really small company, I found it fun to be in an organization where you have a lot of different responsibilities and you know what everyone is doing and you can just talk to the marketing team if you want to ask them something. You can tell them if you have an idea and ask them and you can talk to the boss if you have a question.

I just like the flat hierarchy, there is in startups. And as well I think it's a good idea, it's green, and it's social so in future perspective is very good for this company.

Also when you work in a startup you work with very dedicated people. So for them it's not just work, the people that have been there from the beginning, they really put a lot of effort into their job and you can feel that when you are at the office, it's not only 9-5.

Has the green or social side, been a main motivation for you, and something you always seen GoMore as? A green company, a social company or is that something that has built up during the year you've been here?

Its been built up I would say. I was fond of the sharing economy, really liked Airbnb and thought that it was the greatest idea ever, and this car rental care pooling is like Airbnb for cars. And I just think there is a great potential, but it was not from the beginning the green or social aspect. It was the sharing aspect, and now I know what a big impact it has on our users and on society.

Working at customer support, what is the feedback you get from the customers?

Most are happy, but people call because there is something they don't understand. You can say, I would not say it's that complex, but we have our rules when you are a driver having people with you, you have to abide to some rules. So if people don't show up, because there is money involved, so we have to make strict rules in order for people to follow them.

And not all people read the rules so they just start using our webpage think it's a great idea. And then they want to cancel their ride 20 minutes before they leave and they get confused of why they can't cancel the ride. We need to make sure they know all the rules, and we have them all on our webpage so it's not like we are hiding it.

Do you hear anything from customers, that they are using your service because of the environmental aspect of it? Or what reasons are behind they using your service?

Yes, a lot of people love the social aspect; they think its great meeting people, having conversations. Instead of taking the train. We also have a setting if you are a driver you can set what kind of preferences you have, do you want to talk, listen to music, be quite, so some people jump in the car put on their headphones, some talk, two got married, people that have been become good friends through GoMore, and all of this is of main importance for our customers.

The first year I was here, that was what kept spreading the word about GoMore because we only have one student worker doing marketing, but every week we had 2000 new signups. And this was just because people had great experiences and told their friend bout that.

Do you notice anything from customers regarding security issues? People not feeling secure by the service offered?

There are some from the car rental, but I think it's mainly because they haven't fully understood it. But the payment, some people will always be a bit cautious about online payment. But we can always tell them our system is secure and we never had any problems, so people trust the system.

But the social aspect is not like you here from your potential customers that they are a bit skeptical, with the security being in a car with unknown people?

It's mostly people who just join, and ask what if this happens, what if that happen, and we never had any bad experiences on the car-pooling side. Somebody have been riding with a person who have been driving too fast but we also tell them to follow the law and we can always talk to the one being complained about and

ask them to follow the rules when using GoMore, and when not using GoMore, they can do whatever they want. We make sure if customer calls us with negative feedback, we make sure to follow up if is feedback about another user, just to make sure it does not happen again.

When you talk to customers, it does not seem like there is an issue with the social side, people do it because they want to be more environmental friendly, is this something you promote or talk more about when in contact with customers?

The marketing team is doing this the most. Of course we talk about the amount of CO_2 you can save and when we launched the carbon XXXX, we said that 23 out of 24 hours your car is standing still so instead of everyone going out an buying a new car, we can rent it to each other and save the environment. It is emphasized, telling people but we do not do in support when people call us then of course its focus on the issue they are having. If they are concerned about something, or wondering what the benefit is for them, we can also tell them that you are doing a good thing for society, so in that sense we could do it.

E-mail questionnaire sent to Søren Ipland, Digital Marketing Manager of GoMore

Oct. 21, 2014   E-mail correspondence

Conducted by: Joanna Mocek

1. **Who is your target group? How would you describe your customers?**

   In general, GoMore makes possible a type of organization and coordination that has existed for quite a while. The sharing of cars is not a new concept. But web platforms have allowed this activity to scale in a radically different way. Our software secures easy and simple coordination for both drivers and passengers. Also, we build user base in order to secure the critical mass necessary to reach a productive equilibrium between supply and demand. These observations are not only true for our ridesharing concept, but also for p2p car rentals.

   Being a type of market place, we need to connect people belonging to different user segments. Drivers tend to be older, established and predominantly male. Passengers are younger, often students and predominantly female. These divisions are true also for p2p car rental, but less markedly so.

2. **Have you realized the social value/impact GoMore is given?**

   Yeah. I think that our concept brings along a range of positive effects. It helps us reduce carbon emissions and it brings people together.

3. **How do you see the social impact of GoMore?**

   I think it is important for society as a whole to address climate issues. Therefore, I see what we do as something both important and necessary. On a more general level, I think sharing economy concepts point in an interesting direction for society. Bringing back more communal forms of organization in order to better utilize our resources will carry along huge social benefits.

4. **How does this play a role in your perception of GoMore?**

My perception of GoMore is influenced by this. But on the other hand, it is not the social dimension that drives me. It contributes to my personal happiness, that my work is purposeful. But on an everyday basis, I think of GoMore in way more practical terms. Essentially, it is about running a successful business. I think we are a great example, that business logic and purposeful social action can go hand in hand.

5. **Is this employed for marketing purposes? If yes, how? If no, why not?**

The 'green' dimension of our company is certainly an important USP for our marketing efforts. In my opinion, however, it isn't our primary USP. In terms of marketing our product, we rely more on telling people how cheap, fun and convenient our service is. The environmental dimension is more of an enforcing argument, helping us create stronger engagement and retention rates among existing users.

6. **What do you think could work better in the marketing aspect of GoMore?**

I think we could rely more on a content heavy approach, leveraging the vast potential for user generated content. We already try to do this actively, but there's room for improvement.

7. **Which social media channel do you pay attention mostly to? Are they of the same importance to you? Where would you see some changes/improvements needed?**

Facebook. My work is focused on the Danish market, where we already have a very large user base. Facebook is *the* mainstream social media and therefore the place to be. We can leverage the social graph to attract new customers (over time, there have been pretty steady correlations between signups and FB page growth). Recently, we have perhaps shifted more towards thinking of it as a display media, whereas I've always primarily thought of it as a tool for community management and stimulation of word-of-mouth. We could definitely spend more time being creative on different channels, especially those where our passenger type users are heavily represented (Instagram, Snapchat, Vine perhaps). It's all a matter of time and resources, though.

8. **Where do you observe more traffic: on your website or mobile application? Which channel is most used by GoMore users?**

Our website sees by far the most traffic. In my opinion, however, this is mainly due to us traditionally being a desktop first company. We see much higher activity levels among mobile users, and I think it is an obvious step for us to start transforming into a mobile first organization.

9. **How do you combine traditional and digital marketing channels? Which ones and why are they the most important to you?**

I work as a digital marketing manager, which sort of answers your question. Recently, we've been spending more time coming up with ways of marketing GoMore offline. We are, however, an internet company. And our strengths are clearly in the digital.

Interview #2 with Matias Dalsgaard, Founder and CEO of GoMore

May 15, 2015. 13:00 P.M.   Kompagnistræde 20C, Copenhagen

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Q: Maybe you can explain to me what you remember from the initial launch of GoMore back in 2005?

A: Many things...it was...we got a lot of positive attention from the press from early on...so there was quite good PR coverage, and that helped us get started, but apart from that, things didn't grow fast in the beginning. It was too early. In a way...I didn't think of it as too early, I more thought of it as..."maybe the Danes just don't want to drive together. It was like...I mean, we didn't have marketing budgets or anything like that, so maybe if we had had that, we could have attracted more members. It was primarily PR driven.

Q: Did you spend any money at all?

A: Not on paid marketing. Not the first half year, then we started spending a little bit on Google. But I don't think that was money well spent. I don't think it was the right way to do it. And it was also 1:34 very limited budget. We started getting some...Den Blå Avis [DBA] had invested. So we also got quite some coverage on their platforms...GoMore banners were exposed or featured on Den Blå Avis, both on their printed and online media. So that was...kind of paid marketing I would say, but it didn't really have any clear effect...maybe it didn't have any effect at all, but that's not clear. So...what I usually say today is that social media and mobile platforms, and all in all the whole notion of sharing economy, which are things that are...that exist today and are widely known...that didn't exist back then. So it was more like...even though we were online, it was really like an old-fashioned world still. To do online business in.

3:00

Q: Approximately how much time do you think you put into it back then - it was only you and Søren, right?

A: Yeah, Søren not so much. So we were cofounders, we spent the same amount of money on it - we spent our own money - we shared that, but I was doing the work. And I had a...back then I had a much bigger...so it was 80/20...that's kind of confidential, but anyhow...it's not you're welcome to know it Ida...so it was 80/20 ownership - I was in Denmark working, Søren was not working, he was in Germany. But we got the idea together, and we shared the budget, and I was happy to have him to discuss things with so I was not all alone

3:44

Q: What do you mean, 80/20, that you owned 80 and Søren owned 20?

A: Yes

3:52

Q: So you also did 80% of the work?

A: Or more. I would say more, I did maybe 90-100% of the work, but we shared the cost. But it was very little money we spent.

Q: How much?

A: Maybe like 5-10 000DKK each. We had some students help us - we paid them money to do the work for us, but very little, just so we could get the first version of the website.

4:26

Q: So they were developers?

A: One developer and one designer.

4:32

Q: What were your expectations of the platform back then? What did you expect from the future?

A: I thought this could become big. I always thought it was a good idea, and that it was something that could eventually become very popular.

4:56

Q: What timeframe were you imagining?

A: I had no timeframe to be honest. I was...I didn't know so much about business back then, and I had no notion of startup. I mean the way we make a startup, or how GoMore is a startup today, is like...yeah you can charge various money, and you try to grow very fast...and things have to scale very quickly. I think back then I would have been happy if we could have financed maybe one or two colleagues or employees and then over time grow and "let's see what happened". This whole...I mean it's not like I didn't want it to be big, and we were also planning on...we had a UK site and a Swedish site up and running but we didn't manage to market it that well, or I mean, maybe we did but we just didn't get any success out of it. So maybe it was also too early there. I think it was. So. It was very ambitious. I just didn't have such clear plans, let me put it that way, and we could've grown more slowly...I would maybe have been ok that way.

6:35

Q: When did you start thinking that it should develop faster? Was that after you received funding?

A: So we had DBA as an investor. After a few months they invested. And of course then, it was like, "now we have to see some progress". We didn't have budgets that were so clear as they are today, but also I didn't manage the budgets because I was working with McKinsey. I left the company, I was a little on the sides...sideline. Being just a member of the board.

7:17

Q: Wasn't there a new CEO from DBA?

A: Yeah, no not from DBA, but we hired...we recruited one with the money from DBA. He was not good enough for this. He was a fine person but not strong enough for this.

7:36

Q: Did that lead DBA to withdraw?

A: Yeah, not so much the team, I mean the team was so so, we had some good developers also then, or quite good. Actually Jacob [Tjørnholm], I had then met Jacob who's developer today, and he was putting in hours. He still had a day job, but just in his spare time because he liked the idea, he put in hours and he was paid some from DBA. So it was not like...that part was good only it was a very limited time he was able to put in. But…it was not all bad, and team wise it could have worked, but it just didn't grow that fast. It was just like slow growth...20-30 new members per day or something like that, compared to 300-500 today in Denmark only. So, simply because it didn't grow fast enough DBA withdrew after a year and a half.

8:49

Q: So they were in for a year and a half?

A: Yep. Or a little more maybe, around there.

Q: When exactly did they exit?

A: 2007. They were there from 2005-2007.

9:10

Q: At what point, later in time, was it that you experienced more growth? Was it in 2013 after the relaunch? It was just as slow as this until 2013?

A: 2011 we launched a new site. And that was Lasse who developed it with another developer. And then in the meantime, Jacob also joined, so Lasse and Jacob had joined as partners. And then a year later, or a year and a half after that, it had started growing so fast, that we thought, hmm, or I thought, that now it must be time to take this seriously. That was the new year between 12 and 13, or early 13, that I decided to go full time on GoMore. And then I raised money to do that.

10:21

Q: Along these years, what were your thoughts on critical mass?

A: Yeah I thought we always needed that, clearly. The thing is there were always people who used GoMore - not at all enough to make it a business - but still so many that some people were happy with GoMore and were using it frequently. So in that sense, we always had critical mass, if critical mass just means having so much mass that some people actually get transportation out of your system.

11:01

Q: How do you think that was possible?

A: Because there are some very popular routes here in Denmark - Aarhus-Copenhagen for instance. I mean, if you only have five users and one of them is a driver going that way and two of them are passengers looking for transportation that way, then they match right. So, yeah, but anyhow it was just not enough. We needed many more people transporting themselves on the popular routes and we needed of course in also to cover

smaller cities and less populated areas we needed much more mass than... And we are still not covering that much after all...but just much more

Q: Would you say that you've reached critical mass, though, in Denmark?

A: I mean that's kind of a...you have to specify the question more then, because yeah, if critical mass meaning having so many people offering and looking for the same thing, that they actually meet critical mass. The thing is, critical mass - if you make a global ridesharing app - then you maybe need a billion people to reach critical mass. But if you make a ridesharing app only focusing on transportation between Aarhus and Randers, if that's all you care about, then you need maybe 100 people in that area to obtain at least some success. So yeah, Ida, you have to, it depends on the perspective

Q: What was the biggest challenge back then, if you thought about it, of attracting drivers or passengers, for example? Did you have more of one kind, or more of the other?

A: We didn't know so much back then, also you... There was no booking engine, so people would just post a ride with a phone number on it and email. And then people would contact each other directly. So we didn't know - we actually didn't know who or how many were travelling with each other. And therefore we also didn't know how much or to what extent the cars were booked. My guess is that, as we see today, we could use many more drivers, at least on the popular routes - there's a big demand - I think it was the same back then. If we had had thousands of drivers between Aarhus and Copenhagen I think we would also have seen lots of growth in general.

Q: So I get that you didn't do anything in particular in order to attract new drivers back then, but do you do that now? Do you have a strategy for that?

A: Yeah, I don't think we're good enough at it. Back then it was just simple things, like putting flyers on cars, things like that. We did that. Sometimes we do that today also, but now we for instance starting to run campaigns for...we've done many small things in order to get drivers, and we haven't found anything that really works. PR is good because PR is just, you know, mass media, they always help you to become known. But that's just not...that it just, you know, obvious. Of course you like good PR. Something more targeted has been hard to identify. For instance having the GoMore stop at Mols Linien is an example of gaining visibility, and now we do the same...not the same but something similar with Q8 - get visibility there. Try to get visibilities where drivers are, and now we're also planning campaigns to get all young people, or young members to engage their parents - make their parents post rides on GoMore when they cross the country to

visit their children in the big cities and in Copenhagen primarily. So that's an example of, I mean, we go for the elder generation now but try to go through the younger generation.

Q: What about the drivers that you already have, or the ones that are already interested, how do you work on retaining those?

A: We communicate quite actively with our users. Our newsletter is quite important. We have a general onboarding and retention program that sends out mails, just depending on their activity on the website. That's more for new members still than for old members. Old members, I actually don't know exactly...I have two GoMore profiles. I actually just established...well I have several...but anyhow I had one that I really use but then I created a new account a month ago because I had to because our developers were making some changes...whatever, but anyhow, this new account...I can see that I've landed on the onboarding program because I receive mails saying how to use GoMore, how to get started, what I can do...on a frequent basis. But my old profile is not receiving that kind of mails. So it stops at some point. But I don't know exactly... Ok, so that's one thing. Newsletters we communicate actively, ongoingly, well also Facebook, Twitter, etc. etc. but it's not everybody who's following us there. And then we have the Super User program which can be refined much more. We're going to establish a new program fairly soon. Because right now you could become a super user after 3 rides or something like that if you also get good ratings.

Q: Aren't there very many super users then?

A: Yeah, there are too many in a way. We need to make more levels and gamify it. So some more. So that you still have something to compete for and that's also an excuse for us to communicate more actively with you, "you have now entered the next level of our super user program, why don't you do this, so you can become...super platinum gold diamond user"

Q: What will happen then?

A: Then we post a photo of you on Facebook...no I don't know. I actually...we haven't...we're definitely going to make a program where you just get different badges, and your online profile becomes richer and richer. I don't think we're going to reward you also with like physical real awards...we might give you advantages on the website.

Q: Like what?

A: More visibility, in the search for instance, that we'll put your ride or your car...we actually do that but in a different way, in rental already.

Q: There you can pay for it, no?

A: Yeah, that's one thing, but in general, we *filter.* So when you make a search, the cars that come up first, are with drivers that are fast responders, high accept rate, high rating, so we try to promote the best offers first. But of course we do that to give the customers the best experience. It's just a bad experience, right, trying to book a car trying to get an answer but you just get declined.

19:49

Q: When you launched GoMore back in the days, it was free to use, right? Was that decision only based on the fact that you had no way of collecting money, or was there another thought behind it?

A: We actually had to...we always talked about the possibility of running the transactions for people like we do today, but for me that was a little sci-fi back then. Not something that I thought would happen any time soon. So it was more simple, the business model that I had in mind, which was, "yeah, you can see the ads, the rides, but you can only get the phone numbers and the email addresses of people if you pay for access". That's actually how DBA has been making money for many years. That's a very common model.

20:50

Q: What was the reason for abandoning that idea?

A: It is more elegant, I think, that you book through us, and then you also only pay us if you have success. With this other model, you might pay for access for like a day or three days or a month or whatever, but you might still not get anything out of it. So, but, in a way you could still wonder, "would we be able to charge the users more money if we used this old model". I actually don't know.

21:37

Q: Are you willing to try it in the future?

A: Maybe. But I think it's a little either or. Because some users who are very active, they might be very interested in buying access so that they don't have to pay our fee every time. But then again, I mean, people they know math. And probably only those who are so active that we would lose money on offering them this model would prefer it. And it's going to mess up everything. It's not a small think to make various payment models. I think it's unlikely that we'll do it this way. We might offer people other things.

22:24

Q: When you decided to expand to Norway and Sweden, what was that decision based upon?

A: It's...it's a region that is culturally similar to Denmark, also language-wise, and there's no real competition there, so we thought it's natural that we at a minimum become the Scandinavian solution for ridesharing, and carsharing. And I'm...I must say I'm becoming more and more skeptical towards Norway. It is...we do see some rides there, and there are people using it, as you know, but I wonder, can it ever become big in Norway?

Rental maybe more so...it is more understandable and not so geography-dependent. And it's a small...I mean even if it became extremely popular, it's still a small market. And I think it's a very expensive market to win. But Sweden is culturally a challenge, I think they are just very reserved. But the Danes were very reserved in the beginning also. So...and Sweden, at least geographically, is so meaningful and population-wise so big that you actually can make quite substantial business there if you mean it. So yeah, as I see it today, it's like: invest more money in Sweden when we have right models, both rental and leasing ready. Invest not so much in Norway but let it grow more organically. Let's see how it can grow a little by itself.

24:35

Q: Like in Denmark?

A: Yeah, because it happened in Denmark, you might say, exactly.

24:40

Q: So the decision to expand to Norway and Sweden was only based on the cultural similarities and the fact that there was no competition?

A: AND geographic, of course, proximity. We thought we could run it from Copenhagen, find Swedish and Norwegian people here. It's becoming...I'm actually...and I'm also speaking to Ann about that, we are wondering if we should try to establish an office also in Stockholm so we can be a startup in Sweden. I feel that it's hard to win a country without really being there.

25:24

Q: But that's not the plan in Norway?

A: Not now.

25:27

Q: When you launched in Norway and Sweden, what strategies did you follow?

A: We tried to use the channels that we know about; PR is one thing, and then all the online channels, social media channels that we're also using in Denmark, both paid and organic. We're trying to build a brand that is appealing to the kind of users that we think we'll have, as first users there...relatively young, relatively well-educated, they care about the environment, they're quite social. We communicate with that...

26:17

Q: Was that based on your user base here in Denmark?

A: Yes

Q: So you have done some kind of surveys or the data you have on them?

A: Yeah, through the years we have, on many occasions, been doing...it's not something...I don't think we are that systematic about it, but we have done various surveys over the years, and we have lots of like

fragmented data to build on which pretty much says that, yeah, people are between 20 and 40 years, relatively well-educated, living in the bigger cities, that's like, where we start.

Q: So there is no overall strategy of how you do it, it's more "use what you know", or was there any special thoughts you had on how you could win those markets?

A: Yeah, but do you mean by strategy. One thing is channels, another thing is the brand or the message you want to convey. And then there's of course both how much money you actually have to invest in becoming visible. I think...I actually think with what we are doing already, if we just spent 100 times that amount of money, I think we would start growing in Sweden for instance. But then the question is...do you really want to spend 100 times, maybe you rather want to spend some money then in Denmark and some in Spain. I mean there's also a business case, of course... calculation going into this kind of thought. But it's not like I think...when you look at the things we're doing, it's not like I've reached a conclusion where I say these things are wrong...it's just too little somehow.

Q: You said earlier that you had sort of seen that Danish people were more reserved before, and then they started not being so reserved - because of GoMore?

A: I think because of social media, I think that changed a lot. Really both culturally but also in the way that people trust online profiles. Their personal online profiles. People have profiles online today which is so rich, rich LinkedIn profile, rich Facebook account, and profile, Instagram, Twitter, etc., also maybe. And that's very trustworthy. Previously, these things did not exist. So meeting somebody online was a little like responding to a dating add in the newspaper in the 80s...just a little weird. That's not weird any longer, so I think there's something more solid simply in presenting and running things online today, but I also think the mentality, or culture, changed a little due to these things..

Q: And then more in Denmark than in Sweden so far?

A: That's something I don't know but maybe so. The Swedes they seem as reserved as always, but I hope we can open up their hearts.

Q: That's what I mean, so you're trying to change people's behavior, right? Did you think about that before you launched in the other countries, how hard that might actually be?

A: Yeah, I'm not...from an investment perspective, it might look like we have been moving too slowly in Sweden and Norway the last 10 months or whatever it is. But personally I'm not that surprised and not that disappointed actually. I've started wondering whether the Norwegian geography does really...I mean also

the Norwegian economy is just weird. It's simply like...I mean...how can you convince a student that he should save 75kr with GoMore when he pays 200kr for a beer in a bar. That's just weird, ok...there's so much in Norway that's a little odd, ok. But, I previously...we have previously failed in Sweden with less effort than we put into it now, and I've seen other ridesharing services fail in Sweden.

Not as good services as the service we are providing today but still it didn't start growing in Sweden - it did start growing in Denmark. So I've seen Sweden being difficult. But what I have kind of accepted today, is a viewpoint that peer-to-peer economy will grow everywhere. It's just a matter of time and luck, and patience, right. Previously...I remember when I started GoMore in Denmark I had friends living in Brazil. They said "that's a fantastic idea, but clearly also something that could just never work in Brazil". Nobody today says this can't work in Brazil because the general sentiment has sort of occurred that "this can work everywhere". Of course you might need to refine the model, but a good example is...they would have said the same about Airbnb, that cannot work in Brazil, and now it's just booming in Brazil. So yeah, it can work in Brazil, where people are afraid of each other. So it can also work in Sweden, even if people are maybe more afraid of each other in Sweden than in Brazil. I'm not going to give up on Sweden, we're not going to let them go.

32:52

Q: I'm wondering, when you launched in Norway and Sweden, what were your expectations in terms of the timeframe and the success criteria?

A: We would have expected to have more bookings and real transactions, and a big part of our costs covered by *now*...which is not at all...I mean there's absolutely no income. We'd also expect that rental and leasing, especially rental, could've happened sooner. So there's some things...some things have taken longer time.

33:30

Q: What were your expectations based upon?

A: Nothing. Just hopes and dreams. Don't tell that to the investors. Of course that's based on our history in Denmark. The problem is that our history in Denmark is not a good model for a startup, because that's just too slow, right, so you cannot model anything against that. So you...trying to say: "okay, how much do you think it will cost to attract that number of members, etc.". But with these things, we also know more about now than when we started in Norway and Sweden because now we actually have some experience there. We've paid for members through Facebook, we do PR, we do everything, right, we needed to get that experience, we actually didn't have it.

34:19

Q: We talked a little bit about what your thoughts on the expansion are now, but what, if anything, would you have done differently last year?

A: In Norway and Sweden? I would've spent more money on Sweden and less on Norway.

Q: That's it?

A: Yeah, I would like to...we have fundraising now, and probably raising much more money than we've had so far. If we raise that money, if we raise much bigger money, then that's when we're then ready to, or I will be willing to, establish an office in Stockholm and...a team that will work with our team here in Denmark. But just people who can also do...make noise basically, in Sweden. And we're also going to work with very different, probably, marketing budgets, and more and more mass media marketing really to boost things in the beginning. We haven't had budgets for that, I mean, we could have shifted some from Norway to Sweden, but that's like it. It's not like we can just decide to spend more money because we don't have more money as it is right now.

35:52

Q: But if you knew what you know today, would you have launched in Norway at all last year?

A: Yes, but not...I'm happy that we have a site in Norwegian, and that we are presenting ourselves as a Scandinavian solution. So I think I would have done that...and then maybe had a part time student work on it, just do general social media updates. Spend a little but not focus that much on it. No, I would have done it that way. And maybe we could have waited with Norway then...I think it's very natural that we are present in Norway and that we'd love to grow in Norway but...yeah, I would give it less focus if I were to choose now.

36:55

Q: Considering the acquisition of the Spanish company [Amovens], what strategy was behind that decision? What were your thoughts?

A: So basically, they had no business model, but they had growing traffic. And they didn't know how to make a business out of ridesharing, because they're competing with BlaBlaCar who's much bigger and much stronger. And they have a better product, BlaBlaCar, than Amovens had. So Amovens would not just start...I mean Amovens was only growing because they were the free of charge service in Spain. But since we have a model where we don't need to make money on ridesharing, but we can make them on rental and leasing, the basic logic was: okay, let's merge the companies. Merge. Let's get their traffic, and then as let's as fast as possible launch rental and leasing in Spain

37:48

Q: Have you launched that yet?

A: No, but it is coming in May...be... very sooo...we are finalizing contracts and details for insurance and leasing and... it's really closing in but we're not...

38:09

Q: So you're subsidizing the ridesharing part?

A: Yeah, we spend quite a lot of money every month, and make absolutely zero money as it is right now. Well, actually they do make a little bit of money because they are still selling some owned white label solutions to big companies. Ridesharing platforms for companies, banks, ...in the Spanish speaking world. Not even in Spain all of it...Peru and

Q: If there had been something similar, like a similar service in Norway and Sweden, would you have considered acquiring them rather than going in like you did?

A: Yes.

Q: What are the most valuable lessons that you've learned from the GoMore expansion experience?

A: That it's hard to get started, but it's not impossible. I think it's very, it's not a success in Sweden and Norway now, but that we saw that we can actually acquire members through Facebook, and we have a sort of scalable machine there, that's very positive. So I feel quite confident that if we just increase budgets, we will be able to actually start growing a business there. I think we also need to show more creativity actually in our marketing and communication. But that might also come with increasing or expanding on the local team. That's also a matter, the time and resources for it. But it's just like...it's really standard or common knowledge that getting traffic is just very hard. And that's why people are ready to pay so much for online services that have traffic. Because reaching the point where you suddenly have traffic, that is just coming by itself every day, is just...a very slow process.

Q: I was wondering, because you talked about BlaBlaCar and they recently bought this German ridesharing company, right - what are your thoughts on that?

A: I don't know if you know it, Ida, but in January, I was in quite close dialogues with the owners behind the German carpooling. Because I was suggesting that we made a move on them, as we did with Spain; "ok, you have a big ridesharing community, but you have a problem with your business and also with your product in the market. Why don't we, GoMore, take over and then come with our other businesses to the market?". And they were very interested in GoMore acquiring them, but it would have been very...it turned out not really to be possible. Because they are much bigger than GoMore. Maybe we could've convinced them that we could merge in a 50/50 ratio...so that...because that's how we acquired Amovens in Spain. They got a little bit of cash, but really not much cash.

So it was basically shares, they got shares in the mother company. And combined with...so the founders in Spain are now also shareholders in GoMore, but GoMore owns the Spanish company. And we would have wanted to do something similar on Germany, but since they are so big compared to us, it would have been

not so easy to establish a case where...maybe we would have said 50/50. But seriously, they are like 10-15 times bigger than us. So it's a hard sell, but we have a much more interesting business model, and we also have other businesses than just ridesharing. But it was not only the 50/50...we didn't even get to that point because we needed...I don't know...somewhere between 2-5 million euros just to get started...funding there...I mean they were losing lots of money and were very expensive just to keep floating. So we both had to, in a very short time, raise lots of money.

And that would also dilute the company...I mean us as owners of the company. So it's not just a 50/50 thing, maybe we would have to give away another 10-20% of the remaining 50 because we had to raise money and dilute ourselves on that. So altogether, well, we couldn't raise the money with that short notice, and also it would be extremely risky for us, because we're suddenly giving away 70% of the company and maybe didn't work the plan we were working with, right. So, they were risky and not really possible. But the reason why we had to move that quickly was that they had to make a decision themselves whether they wanted to sell or not, and we knew they were negotiating with BlaBlaCar. So I actually hoped that BlaBlaCar would acquire them. They were also talking to 43:41 some other potential buyer, and ... but the good thing about BlaBlaCar buying them is that they only buy them with one purpose which is that they can monopolize the market and start charging. So they the German [company], they're charging 11% as service fee, BlaBlaCar is free of charge in the market. 44:01

Q: In France as well?

A: No, in Germany. In France they charge a lot for their service. In Germany not, they just spend millions and millions and millions of euro on marketing. In Germany, they offer free of charge their site. But of course attracts users from Carpooling, because they pay for the service at Carpooling. Anyhow, classic move - you buy the old one and you start charging yourself. And that's good, because then we can enter the market. 44:38

Q: How?

A: GoMore: free ride sharing. We're going to spam German Facebook with the free of charge solution, GoMore. 44:53

Q: Have you launched yet, in Germany?

A: No, we're preparing the site in German so that we can launch when BlaBlaCar starts charging. 45:07

Q: And do you have budgets for that?

A: No, I'm raising money now. We don't really have a budget for it now. We can do it extremely low budget - just put it out there, but I'm not sure that will attract any users.

Q: When is car rental going to be launched in Sweden?

A: hopefully now in June

Q: After the funding?

A: No, before. I was in...this is taking like half a year longer than hoped. But now I think we actually have the right partner for it, and we are making good progress with insurance and also through the leasing model. So, I think we are getting there now.

45:05

Q. What about Norway? Is that even coming?

A: Rental maybe at the same time. But I'm just pushing more for the Swedish solution right now and we let Norway follow. But it's the same insurance company that is going to provide insurance for all three countries eventually, starting with Sweden and Norway.

46:28

Q: Have you learned anything from other companies that have been in the same situation as you, have you drawn on any other company's experience in any way, through media or contacts?

A: Yeah, I mean, we talk of course a lot to many other startups and similar companies, so I guess we learned from each other all the time. But I cannot point to something specific just from the top of my head that "I learned this from AutoButler" or "I learned this from Airbnb", or "this from...", we'll just follow them and speak to them, and... So I guess we are all learning from each other. But yeah, I cannot think of something specific.

Q: Ok, cool, those were all the questions.

Interview with Lasse Gejl, CPO/Partner, GoMore ApS
May, 19. 2015. 14:00 P.M.   Kompagnistræde 20C, Copenhagen
Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Q: Can you tell me a little about why you chose to join GoMore?

A: Yes, I can. I've been freelancing for 10 years, and the last 3-4 years I was getting tired of having clients telling me what to do. So I wanted to start my own thing. So I started listing some of my free time in establishing companies in different areas. And I invested my time in a couple of things, and GoMore was one of the things that really took off. So I, yeah I went for that and gave it full time. One of the...actually...also one of the reasons why I chose the concept GoMore is, I think it's a, it's a nice thing to work with on a daily basis actually because it is *meaningful.* You're not just selling crap or whatever, you're creating change, both cultural, sharing economy change, but also infrastructural and eco-change in some ways.

Q: Besides being meaningful to work on, what was the potential that you could see in GoMore?

A: First of all, I could see that my daily rate had a max, right? I could charge a thousand kroner a day...an hour, sorry. But that was like the limit. So I wanted something with growth potential that I could like earn a lot of money on...in the long run... that's why I wanted to start something on my own. Yeah... What did you ask? What was the other question?

Q: I just meant: what were your thoughts on GoMore's potential in the future?

A: Oh, well, yeah, GoMore is naturally...it is very exciting because it taps directly into a big change, a trend that we have right now, that people are, you know, "less ownership, more sharing", and so I saw a big potential in that. And first of all, it was the potential of the website, which actually had 30 000 users when I came into the company, but no real traction and no, not a modern design and such. So I saw something that was like a head start that could be developed into something that was very valuable.

2:32

Q: What was it that you thought you could add so that there would be traction?

A: GoMore was created by Matias and Søren, who have no technical insight or design insight, and student programmers had programmed most of the first version of the site. And I'm a technician designer by trade, web designer, so naturally I wanted to bring something, a modern side into this, something that would scale a lot better, and that will be naturally shareable/scalable (?) and easy to use - more popular.

3:11

Q: In what ways would you say that you have been involved in defining and attracting user groups in Denmark?

A: In what ways have I been involved in designing user groups? Actually, not much. I think marketing has the biggest job of finding user groups and targeting them. But for ridesharing, it's really a huge group and it varies a lot depending on if you're somebody who needs a ride or somebody offering a ride. And I naturally, I've given some thought into that but I haven't defined them on a list, and I'm not designing for a specific kind of like small niche segments in areas of the site. I'm designing more mainstream, something, we want to be like, a *human, friendly, modern, Scandinavian* brand site. And that's kind of the essence of how we develop our app, both design wise and also how we talk to people. Like, I'm...putting in "day-to-day phrases" [everyday phrases] when I give people an error notice or whatever. So that's also design in some way. This, instead of saying "ERROR", we say "whoops - something happened"...you know this...

4:51

Q: On that note, what exactly have you done or, what do you do in order to improve the user experience of the GoMore site?

A: Actually, a lot of the GoMore site is built on "Best Practice", like experience from me and other guys using it

5:06

Q: From other websites?

A: Yeah, and also from 10 years of experience. But we could do, and that's also something on our list, and something that we'd like to do a lot more, is to dedicate, to hire somebody to just do user experiments and AB testing, and you know...because we do that like, for some small landing pages for some paid advertising a little bit, but we don't do it as much as we should. Because it's bottom line when we start scaling. So the focus now has just been building stuff from the ground up from best practice. And now we're getting into more like something that is so big and scalable that you have that amount of rentals or rideshare bookings that you would get a significant benefit from changing minor stuff. So I'm focused on "Okay, what's the color of this button", "how big is this sector". That's like minor things that you can adjust when you have scale...but in the start an app, it's more like building something that probably will work pretty good.

6:20

Q: But do you think that you're getting there now, in Denmark?

A: We're not getting there yet, but it's something that we would invest in within the next year.

6:37

Q: So you're not doing the testing yet, but can you give me an example of anything you improved after seeing what worked and what didn't?

A: Well, we do a little bit of AB testing, so we just, for example we have a landing page for ridesharing. And we have like, big sign up button and some customer references and some "how does this work"...and the sign-up box was...pretty OK, it was a big sign-up [via] Facebook button, and we tried to make like a big yellow box around it, so it converted 5-6% better, with the big, ugly, but really practical yellow box. So we just changed it, so that's just a small example of what you could do a lot more, which we don't do yet.

Q: But you will probably?

A: Yeah. Yeah we will. Somebody will.

7:38

Q: I'm also wondering, since I remember that you installed this filter so that people had to sign up in order to see the rides available. Now this is something different, but we talked a lot about critical mass at some point - that we needed to reach critical mass, and then Matias had some kind of idea of what that number was but nobody really knew, and it was just guessing. And do you feel like maybe this filter has led to a lot of inactive users of GoMore? That the numbers are sort of inflated?

A: Yes...and in general yes, in some countries yes. The main way we get users right now in Sweden and Norway is by guiding them through paid advertisement to a group page where you can't see rides, and you sign up to see the rides and maybe there isn't rides, or maybe there are so few so you kind of get a user that doesn't invest in the concept, but just invest in this group page. So yes, it's some less valuable customer, or rather member, it's not a customer yet. So, I think in Denmark, it was like 20 000 people that was critical mass...that's just a guess...but I could see that there were new rides and it was working. Nobody touched the site for 5 years, it was just working from 20 000 to 30 000 people just in 2 or 3 years, just working, just being in there.

So it didn't die without someone doing something with it. So that's kind of critical mass. In Sweden and Norway we see that that number...I think it's, it is higher, because it is a bigger country and there's a lot more routes to drive. In Denmark it's potentially only cross the bridge, also up and down Jutland, but that's a main route that can make GoMore DK exist for... So it's a lot harder and Sweden and Norway, and I'm positive that you are correct that the users are less valuable, so you need a higher number. Also, you attract passengers, so you need to get drivers to offer them some rides afterwards. But you kind of obtain users and then we match them whenever we get a ride...and also the matching process is more large or flexible in Sweden and Norway that it is in Denmark, because otherwise you'd get matches from everything. Because there's less rides.

10:34

Q: But would you, if you had thought now that you would launch in a new country where you didn't have any users beforehand, just like Norway and Sweden last year, and you would look back on your history in those countries to learn from the experience. Do you think it's valuable to look at the numbers, then, as a kind of indicator of how you can expect things to...when you can expect to reach critical mass, and so on?

A: I don't think we learn a lot from the numbers. I think the experience of launching in a market where ridesharing isn't big. That's the biggest experience. Because it, ridesharing is really a local success. You can be huge in one place and die in the other country. And what is...the biggest challenge, or the biggest difference between countries is "how is ridesharing in this country". Because in Germany for example, they have 8 million people ridesharing in different kind of ridesharing services and they've been doing it for 30 years. And the infrastructure has been really good for it. They didn't do that in Norway and Sweden. And I think what we've learned...or what we're kind of learning right now, I think it's going to be easier to steal customers from other ridesharing services than it is to create ridesharing mentality.

12:11

Q: I want to talk about pricing decisions on the platform. I know that in the beginning, it was free - you were on GoMore then too, right? What were the thoughts behind that?

A: There was, also in the original first version, there was a plan to make like a pro user and an ordinary and you would pay a subscription each month. Never happened because it wasn't scalable enough. What we found out when we...that was also a talk we had when we wanted to get a monetizing model on this...about a pro membership and they would pay. But what we...I think we did right was taking money from people who earn money. It's a lot easier. And also "no cure no pay", "you can get in for free here, but if you earn money you give a little bit to GoMore". That's kind of easy to understand for most people. So I think that's the biggest thought behind the model. It's no cure no pay, and if we do our job we match you with somebody who books, then you pay a little bit for that service.

13:27

Q: You recently increased [the fee] from 9 to 10% - why is that?

A: Because most people thought we were charging 10%. It's, we have also a flexible rounding, so we also round up if it's 9,2 it will also be 9, so...in some instances it was conceived as 10% even though it was only 9. But also, even though it was 9% in reality, people thought it was 10. I don't know why, it was so close to 10%. So we might as well just change it and earn a little bit more. Nobody noticed, really.

14:09

Q: In what way are you making use of all the customer data that you gather, if you're gathering

A: Yeah, we collect a lot of stuff. Mostly within the app. We use a service called Intercom to collect all this data from our app. We push this information about the users into Intercom, and via Intercom it's puzzled in a UI [user interface] to create conversations based on rules. And conversations can be like an in-app message, or it can be an email, a personal email or a more newsletter-type of email, and, or it can be set by different rules, [i.e.] "when did we last see a person", "how many rides", "how many bookings", and..."how is the accept rate"...and, different stuff, so it's a really complex organizational diagram that kind of puts people into different flows depending on what you do.

So if you're ridesharing and you...you suddenly search for a car because we advertise rental on the site in ridesharing, you...we put you in a *cross-flow*, so if you searched...we kind of start sending emails about "hey, it's a really good idea to rent a car - you can rent for your next holiday, or you can rent for your weekend trip with your girlfriend" or whatever. So we have a flow that they go into if they do different stuff.

15:48

Q: But the flow is mostly about interaction, there is nothing else going on like behind the scenes or?

A: I think there's a lot going on behind the scene because it...we will look at the user all the time, and if a rule matches a user, we will send out something, depending on what it is. And there's a standard flow. If you'd just sign up and do nothing, you get like 4-5 emails. But depending on if you do something, you get into a new flow.

Q: But it's mostly for interacting with those customers, there's nothing that the customer doesn't know about that you're doing with the data that you have on those customers?

A: Oh! Yes, in some ways because a lot of these emails and the communication is not based...it is based on what they do, but they don't know that we send them emails based on what they do. We just send them emails. So we...and it's...yeah it's not something that they know but it something that we do to make targeted communication, so that it will be something that is more actionable and something that they will hopefully do.

16:59

Q: But do you have any plans to employ more of the data for other purposes later on?

A: Well, we don't have any plans but it's natural to look at...if you really scale, there will be some information you can dive into...hidden within our user base depending on what they do. That could be used for cross selling other stuff. Either from other companies or something like an investor or whatever, it could be a lot of things, but we don't have any specific plans. But there's a lot more data that the data that we use. We're only, like, top of the iceberg.

17:44

A: and that's also something that we'd like to do more, because we do this and we have a pretty decent flow around it, but we could do a lot more

18:00

Q: What has been the outcome of publishing parts of the GoMore API so far?

A: Well, there was a main goal...is that we wanted to have big search engines pick up our rides, and link to us. Some were free and some we would have to pay a fee to get referral or maybe on not a click but even on a booking.

18:26

Q: Who's working on that?

A: I think Mikkel [CMO] is planning which ones right now, it's preferably two Spain actors - there's nothing in Denmark. So we developed this primarily for Spain and other markets because in Denmark and Scandinavia there is no big comparison search engines like that. There's Rejseplanen, where we would like to be, but they are not really interested because their main investor is DSB.

18:59

Q: What about Google?

A: Yeah, hah, it is...kind of interesting but also a bit frightening because they know s...they could, I don't know...it would need some kind of specialization...but they can show you live on a map "where's the traffic",

right. A big red dot. And they could actually also book people in each other's cars if they wanted to. I don't know if they want to. But that's a bit...it's a frightening thought in some way. If they really wanted to build a ridesharing, like, worldwide or something, they could actually do some really serious stuff and also change some stuff, infrastructural stuff, if they wanted to. I don't know if it's a focus...hopefully not. But it's also interesting to, yeah, to be included as a transportation method in Google. Could be really interesting.

20:07

Q: So nothing has happened on that front yet?

A: No, nothing at all. But on the API stuff, was more like...travel...like Momondo also...they have planes and trains also now, and rental cars. It could also be a way...the next natural step is to extend the API to have rentals within it. Because we would like to be at rentalcars.com or maybe Momondo or whatever, like big search engines.

Q: That would be good

A: Yeah, but it's, it's kind of...it depends on where you can buy the traffic. Because if they have the traffic and you can get a...you can see that you could earn money paying them to get a client and the client would turn directly to your site or whatever, "OK, there's unlimited budgets if it's a good deal", but on the other hand, more personally, I think it's a bit annoying because it's kind of like a middleman...online, that just makes everything more expensive.

21:14

Q: But if they have way more traffic than you...?

A: I know, then you can do it...

21:22

Q: Actually I have only one more question, so this was quicker than I thought. Are you still thinking about launching the real-time thing?

A: Yes. It's not something that we're not thinking about. But it's

Q: It's not something you're thinking about?

A: It's not something that we're *not* thinking about. We are always thinking about it because it's...a really interesting project. It's...but we haven't gotten very far because it's something that we need to time to find out how to...market and how to position in a ridesharing slash taxi world. Where we want to be in the right spot...and yeah. So that is also something on our long-term plan, but it's...

22:14

Q: How long term?

A: I don't know. Preferably we should start this year.

22:20

Q: Because it sounded like it was very close some time ago?

A: Yeah...it's...hopefully within this year. It depends on funding, and...people, employees, so...

Q: What about the legal side?

A: As I said, it's something about positioning yourself...and also how it works with our existing products because we don't want to...we want to create an extra value of having real time ridesharing for shorter trips and...commutes. But at the same time you don't want to lose your rides, like the predefined rides because that is what people keep coming back for. A real-time app can easily die if there's nothing. There's nothing right now, and they'll never come back. But if somebody published a ride, it kind of is there for a timespan, so it gives...it just needs to be scaled and launched like really successful. If it needs to be what ... be in the long run...

Q: But do you think, if you manage to launch this real-time [service], what would stop you from competing with Uber for example? And I get that you want to position yourselves differently, but it would essentially provide the same service?

A: Yeah, but we would not be someone who hired drivers, or employed drivers...It would be people sharing rides for somewhere where they were going. Not driving other people because they said they wanted to be picked up.

Q: Exactly, but how are you going to stop that? Are you going to have a cap on prices, or...?

A: I think that the pricing idea is interesting because if it's pretty cheap, if you cap it in some way, it's not a doable solution if you want to drive...if you want to make money as a taxi, you would only do it when you were going somewhere.

Q: So is that an option for you?

A: It is, definitely, yeah an option.

E-mail correspondence with Nicolay Schweigaard

[I tried to ask these questions from an outsiders' point of view so as not to influence my own biases onto the answers]

26.10.2015

Hi Ida,

Below I have tried to answer your questions to the best of my abilities. Please let me know if there is anything else you need, as I am happy to help :) Good luck with finishing up what I can only imagine has been a rewarding but demanding process.

What expectations were expressed by GoMore management in terms of critical mass estimations before/at the start of your employment?

While there was an understanding that estimating critical mass is difficult, the experienced critical mass of 5 000 users in Denmark was mentioned several times, as something to aim for. In terms of time, it was suggested we should have reached critical mass at least by Christmas 2014, although this was expressed after the realization that critical mass was way higher in Norway than in Denmark. Generally, though, it was made clear from the start that time was precious, and because of the investors' impatience, we had to show results fast.

What were the expectations based on?

At first, it seemed the only basis for estimations were similarities and proximity between the two countries. No real effort had been made as to estimating a precise number for critical mass in Norway. So I don't know exactly, but as time went by and critical mass was not reached, we often discussed why this might be. Some thought it was the geography, some the economy and some just the culture. I think it might have been a combination of the three. But as I said, no real estimations were made, just expectations in terms of "when it would work" sort of.

Did you ever discuss how cultural differences may prove challenging?

Cultural differences were discussed at the office constantly, however only in an informal and sometimes humorous way. And I got the impression that Sweden and Denmark was perceived as being more distant to each other than Norway and Denmark. And these discussions took place during lunch, it's not like they had any impact on strategy. I

Do you think they were discussed prior to deciding on countries for expansion?

No, not beyond just assuming the similarities, seeing as everybody had been to Norway and knew some Norwegians.

Whose task was it to identify the main user groups to attract/target?

At the start of my employment, I was presented with "these are the GoMore users" - go find them in Norway. My colleague and I did consider some other relevant groups, like North Sea workers, however it was never really encouraged by GoMore management. This was however not fully explored, due to the belief that Norwegian users would be the same as the Danish ones..

What was communicated by GoMore management in terms of these target group's motivations to participate in ride sharing?

It was clearly communicated that most people's motivations to ride share were based on a desire to save money and being social, i.e. meeting new people. The environmental aspect was more seen as a nice bonus, something you could brag about to your friends.

Even though GoMore has many users in Denmark, many people don't know about them. Did anyone from the Danish team ever talk about how to reach them, and reasons they might have for not participating in ride sharing?

No, I can't remember ever discussing that. At GoMore we mostly talked about increasing the user base through PR and marketing – and since GoMore considers themselves to be on a winning streak in Denmark, I don't think anybody saw a reason to look into that kind of stuff. They didn't seem to want to change the product. Most people presented with the idea also seemed positive towards it, I guess. That was the case in Norway too though, but many people still won't use it. So maybe there's something missing..?

Do you think GoMore primarily entered Norway with their ride sharing platform so as to preempt the market for their subsequent peer-to-peer car sharing service?

Definitely. Seeing as no company has managed to make a profit on ride sharing, I see no other option, really. So yeah, they wanted to preempt, in terms of recruiting a user base and building brand recognition.

But do you think GoMore was hoping that ride sharing would prove profitable at some point? Was this reflected in the price/fee?

Maybe they hoped it would, but I don't know how strongly they actually believed it. I think they thought of it as a community-building thing, a kind of "green cover", since car sharing can be argued to lead to increased car usage. It's a service thought to have a low threshold I guess, even though I must say I'm not sure I agree that it is in Norway, and thus that it would contribute to brand building efforts. It has the potential to create more good stories than car sharing. So the price of ride sharing I think was mainly meant to cover the direct expenses of that, like contribute to some tech development and customer service, not salaries and stuff internal to GoMore.

What about geographic spread - what was GoMore's strategy here, in your opinion?

Because of Norway's small population, limiting efforts to any one or just a few geographic area(s) was not encouraged. The full potential had to be exploited at once - or there was no point.

How was GoMore to catch the attention of the whole country? National and local media all over?

In the beginning, there was this sentiment that we were initiating some kind of "transportation revolution". Obviously, when there's a revolution, it has news value ;)

But it seemed the journalists did not agree. I mean, yeah, similar platforms have been launched before, GoMore isn't exactly revolutionary. Maybe it works better, but that's not enough. Anyhow, we did implement

more local strategies after a while, but it's not like we focused on one local area only. It was ALL local areas at the same time.

Why was the partnership with [charitable organization] cancelled?

The process started dragging out from their side, and eventually I stopped pushing for it because it would have resulted in such a mess internally and perhaps even bad press ("buying members from a charity") etc. This was around the time when we really cracked the code on university groups and city groups and got lots of signups there. So there was no need to pursue this expensive and risky strategy.

Why did you not succeed in having celebrities/opinion leaders drive a GoMore car?

Very few of them actually actually replied to our inquiries. Those who did, through their management agencies, required exorbitant payments for engaging in something like that. It was simply beyond our reach.

What about commuters – how did you reach out to them, and what was the result?

We discussed that several times, and tried connecting with some commuter groups. But most commuters are not members of those groups, and they have nothing sort of tying them together, except sharing the road. So reaching them was quite hard, and we did not really manage.

Did you see any change in signups during the last months of your employment in GoMore? [Nicolay quit in July 2015]

Yeah, after I started working only part time (in April), I saw a drop in the signup numbers. I kind of held it up "artificially" by focusing on infiltration only during my work hours, and I think if I hadn't done that, it would have dropped even more.

Sincerely,

Nicolay Schweigaard

Appendix D: Automatic e-mail sent «from my e-mail» starting January 2015 (approximately):

Statistics (gathered 21/06-2015):

Sent: 412 Opened: 48,1% Replied: 3,4% Clicked: 4,9% Unsubscribed 0,2%

E-mail:

Hei xxx,

Jeg ser at det er en stund siden du opprettet skyss på gomore.no. Hva er grunnen til dette?

Vi jobber hele tiden med å forbedre GoMore så samkjøring kan bli et reelt transportalternativ i Skandinavia.

Hvis du har feedback som kan gjøre oss enda bedre vil jeg veldig gjerne høre den!

Nå har vi flere medlemmer enn noensinne, og det blir hele tiden lettere å finne passasjerer når

du oppretter skyssene dine

Med vennlig hilsen

Ida fra GoMore

EN translation:

Hi xxx,

I can see that it's been a while since you last created a ride at gomore.no. What's the reason for this?

We are working non-stop to improve GoMore so that ride sharing can become a realistic transportation option in Scandinavia.

If you have any feedback that can make us even better I would very much like to hear it!

Now we have more members than ever, and every day it's getting easier to find passengers when you're creating your rides.

Best regards,

Ida from GoMore

Reasons, summary:

14 responses in total, of which 6 concerns critical mass and 4 technical problems.

[Critical mass + personal injury]

[No particular reason]

[This customer misunderstood the registration process and ended up attempting to pre-register her car for private rental rather than ride sharing technical/user mistake]

[Language issue]

[Problems registering the right time for rides – technical/user mistake]

[Lack of response/interest – critical mass issue]

[Critical mass issue – constructive criticism]

[No response/interest – critical mass issue]

[No response – critical mass issue]

[Technical issue. The counter requested is already there, however]

[Technical phone issues]

[No response – critical mass issue]

[Minimal need]

[Minimal need – more interested in rental]

Content

Replies: Norwegian version + translation

Respondent 1

Jens L., 01/02-2015

Hei Ida, grunnen til at jeg ikke oppretter skyss lenger er først og fremst at jeg aldri har fått med meg passasjerer tross sikkert 25 utlagte turer. Da mister man litt motivasjonen. Samtidig har jeg røket akillesen og kan ikke kjøre bil om dagen. JEg vil gjerne se dere lykkes, så jeg skal være flink å legge ut turer når jeg kan kjøre igjen.

☺

EN: Hi Ida, the reason I'm not creating ride ads anymore is primarily because I've never gotten any passengers on my 25 or more offered rides. You lose some motivation then. At the same time, I've torn my Achilles so I can't drive these days. I'd like to see you succeed so I will continue to add rides when I'm back driving. ☺

[Critical mass + personal injury]

Respondent 2

Trond M., 04/03-2015

Hei, Ingen spesiell årsak - bare ikke kommet i gang

EN: Hi, no particular reason – I just haven't gotten started

Lise C. P., 05/03-2015

Hei!

Jeg er egentlig svært interessert i samkjøring, synes det er en god ide. Men på slutten av registreringen kom spørsmål om kilometerstand og slikt. Da viste det seg at den bilen jeg vanligvis kjører, har gått for langt, og er for gammel dessverre ...

Så jeg får komme tilbake til dere når jeg får en annen bil!!

Med vennlig hilsen

Lise P.

EN: Hi! I'm actually very interested in ride sharing, I think it's a good idea. But at the end of the registration process there were questions about the cars' mileage and such. Apparently, the car I normally drive has driven too far and is too old, unfortunately…

So I'll return when I have another car!

[This customer misunderstood the registration process and ended up attempting to pre-register her car for private rental rather than ride sharing]

Respondent 3
Arild W., 07/03-2015

Hei Ida,

Har ikke brukt appen enda. Annet en tilbyd noen transport tilbud.

Hva med a legge inn enn auto oversetter til engelsk på eventuelle kommenterer. Sånn at den kan bli raskere å nå et større multinasjonalt publikum med kommentarer. Da kan denne appen bli mer tilgjengelig på flere språk.

Kanskje også legge inn hvilken språk bruker kan.

Og eventuelt tilby en rabatt til brukere ved å poste til sosiale medier ved utnyttet transport. Dere trenger flere brukere. Og reklame

Jeg kjører mye på fjellet 3-4 timers tur med halvfull bil. Hadde vært flott å kunne fylle bilen.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Arild W.

M: [phone number]

E: [email address]

 EN: Hi Ida,

I haven't used the app yet. Other than offering transportation to someone.

What about adding an automatic translator to English on potential comments. Then it would be easier to reach a larger multinational audience with comments. Then this app would become more available in several languages.

Perhaps also the languages that a user speaks.

I often drive to the mountains 3-4 hours in a half-full car. Would be great to fill the car.

Best regards,

[Language issue]

Respondent 4
Ragnar J., 22/03-2015

Hei. Ja det er en stund siden. Det er fordi jeg har vært utenlands. Jeg savner å ha to forskjellige klokkeslett i appen på "velg tid". Jeg jobber en del natt, og da hadde det vært naturlig for meg å legge inn tiden når jeg reiser hjem, og i tillegg tiden når jeg reiser til jobben igjen samme dato, hvis du skjønner, det var kanskje litt dårlig formulert

Roger

EN: Hi. Yes, it's been a while. It's because I've been abroad. I miss having two different time zones in the app under "choose time". I often work at night, and then it would be natural for me to enter the time when I go home, and aslo the time when I go to work again on the same date, if you know what I mean, maybe this was a poor formulation.

[Problems registering the right time for rides – technical/user mistake]

Respondent 5
Kjell B., 07/03-2015

Hei!

Frem til nå har jeg ikke fått respons på mine forespørsler.

Det har for det meste vært spørsmål om skyss og ikke tilbud om skyss, mulig at dette er årsaken?

Jeg vil fortsette å bruke GoMore og er spent på videre respons

Jeg ser at dere skal tilby privat bilutleie og dette er et interessant prosjekt.

jeg følger med!!

EN: Hi!

Up until now I have not gotten any responses to my requests.

It's largely been requesting a ride, not offering a ride, perhaps that's the reason?

I will continue to use GoMore and I'm excited about further response.

I can see that you're about to offer private car rentals and this is an interesting project.

I'm keeping an eye on you!

[Lack of response/interest – critical mass issue]

Respondent 6
Venke B., 09/04-2015

Hei, GoMore tenkte jeg vil være lurt å bruke når vi kan tilby/motta skyss som går ut over det hverdagslige. Her vi bor er det litt dårlig offentlig kommunikasjon når vi skal til nærmeste by osv. så det er da det er mest behov for å samkjøre.

Vi som bor her og synes dette var en god ide må vel alle stå på litt for å innarbeide produktet slik at noen velger å bruke det istedenfor en status på Facebook hvor du kun når dine egne venner.

Jeg kunne ikke finne noen måte å dele en skyss på via Facebook, kanskje det hadde vært en ting å jobbe for?

Venke

EN: Hi, I thought GoMore would be smart to use when we can offer/receive rides beyond the everyday. Where we live, public transport is not so good when we're going to the nearest city etc. so that's when there's more of a need to share rides.

I guess we who live here and think this is a good idea has to work a little to incorporate the product so that someone will choose to use this rather than a status update on Facebook where you're only reaching your own friends.

I couldn't find any ways to share a ride via Facebook, maybe that's something you should work toward?

[Critical mass issue – constructive criticism]

Respondent 7
Kjetil M. D., 10/05-2015

Grunnen er todelt.

- Har vært bortreist i utlandet i noen uker.

- Ser ut til at det er svært få brukere av appen i mitt område.

Jeg kjører lite utenom til og fra jobb mellom Bryne og Sandnes, Men tenkte det ville passe greit ta andre med på den turen morgen og kveld. Hele eller deler av turen.

Svært få som tilbyr eller leter etter turer her i området og ingen som har vist interesse for mine turer. Heller ikke om turene tilbys gratis.

Helsing

Kjetil M. D.

Mobil 47 50 11 00

EN: The reason is twofold:

-    I've been abroad for some weeks

-    It looks like there are very few app users in my area

I don't drive much besides to and from work between Bryne and Sandnes, but I thought it would be okay to bring others with me on that ride morning and evening. For the whole trip or parts of it.

Very few are offering or looking for rides in this area and no one has showed any interest in my rides. Neither if they're offered for free.

Best regards,

[No response/interest – critical mass issue]

Respondent 8
Christine H., 22/04-2015

Hei Ida.

Det er ikke så ofte jeg drar på langtur, planen er vel egentlig å legge ut skyss også neste gang jeg skal avgårde, selv om det ikke var en eneste interessert forrige gang.

Kanskje jeg trenger litt feedback på hvordan jeg kunne ha lagt ut skyssen annerledes, for å tiltrekke meg noen som kunne ha lyst til å sitte på? Kjedelig og lang tur aleine.. =/

Ha en fin dag videre! =)

Christine H.

EN: Hi Ida.

I don't go on longer trips very often, the plan is really to create ride ads the next time I'm going, even though I didn't get any response the last time.

Maybe I need some feedback on how I could have created the ride ad differently, to attract someone wanting a ride? Boring and long trip to take alone =/

Have a nice day!

[No response – critical mass issue]

Respondent 9
Jan E., 24/04-2015

Kanskje ha bredere oversikt over generell skyss. Evt. teller på hvor mange som har sett på turen

EN: Maybe offer a better overview of general rides. Alternatively a counter for how many people have seen the ride.

[Technical issue. The counter requested is already there, however]

Respondent 10
Arne J. L., 24/04-2015

Hei,

Vanskeligheter med mobiltelefon som lever sitt eget liv for tiden.

Må spare penger til ny mobiltelefon først. --

Arne J. L.

EN: Hi,

Trouble with my cellphone, which is living its own life at the moment.

I have to save up money for a new phone first.

[Technical phone issues]

Respondent 11
Morten V., 25/04-2015

Ikke en tok kontakt

EN: Not a single person contacted me

[No response – critical mass issue]

Respondent 12
Hilde H. (DK), 03/05-2015

Hej Ida, jeg oprettede profilen, fordi jeg af og til kører fra Oslo til Århus eller andre steder i DK -og retur. Da kan jeg tilbyde skyss.

Det er sjældent, men jeg skal tænke på det næste gang, jeg tager turen.

mvh Hilde

EN: Hi Ida, I created the profile beacuse I drive from Oslo to Århus, or other places in Denmark, and back once in a while. Then I can offer rides.

It's seldom, but I will consider it next time I drive that route.

[Minimal need]

Respondent 13
Simen S. (DK), 11/05-2015

Grunnen er for så vidt ganske enkel; jeg bruger bilen meget lidt for tiden.

Akkurat nu er jeg offshore og når jeg er hjemme er motorcyklen et soleklart førstevalg i sommerhalvåret ;)

Men jeg har lagt bilen ud som utleie hos jer. Hvordan går det med det? Sidste jeg hørte var at det ville komme i gang i mars/april...

EN: The reson is quite simple; I'm using my car very little at the time being.

Right now I'm offshore and when I'm home my motorcycle is the clear first choice in the summer ;)

But I've put my car up for rent at your site. How is it going with that? The last thing I heard was that it would start some time in March/April...

[Minimal need – more interested in rental]

Appendix E: Questionnaires with Norwegian Super Users

Innhold

Jonas Laberg

Interviewee: Jonas Laberg

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Date: May 5, 2015

Form: e-mail

22.05.2015

Why do you believe in the sharing economy?

I believe in the sharing economy for several reasons

1) Economic and ecological:

Utilizing existing resources more efficiently saves money and it saves the environment.

2) Social:

A sharing service such as GoMore offers meeting points for people. The better people know each other, the better: ideas can be exchanged, and one gets the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of people one would not otherwise have met. As such, a service such as GoMore might contribute to build an overall societal empathy.

How do you think that GoMore contributes to this?

By offering it's services. :)

How did you first come to hear about GoMore?

Can't remember, probably through SoMe [Social Media]

Why were you attracted to this specific concept?

Because I like to meet people and I like to drive. And I like to save money.

What other sharing economy services are you using/have you used?

AirBnB, EasyBring, FriBi, Finn (given away)

What has your experience of using GoMore yourself been like?

Rather disappointing. I got a couple of sharing requests in the beginning, from friends - since then, nothing.

What are your thoughts on the safety aspect of ridesharing?

For me, being a man, it's not really a concern. I also have very good experiences with AirBnB

How do you think GoMore could have reached a larger mass of people (in Norway) since its launch in 2014?

Perhaps advertise your service in service-relevant points such as petrol stations, bus stations, places where travelling people congregate.

Why have you/have you not used GoMore lately?

I'm an optimist, despite my disappointment. Plus, like I mentioned in pt. 1, it represents my values and I'd like to see GoMore succeed.

Is there anything GoMore could have done to make you become a more active user? If yes, what?

Well, I consider myself a pretty active user, so I don't know about that.

Bob Nerland

Interviewee: Bob Nerland

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Date: May 26, 2015

Form: e-mail

Info: We cooperated with Bob on a Facebook-project relating to a ride-sharing group he had created there with a fried. Bob moreover contributed by acting as passenger in God Morgen Norge's report on GoMore in November 2015 (God Morgen Norge, 2014).

Why do you believe in the sharing economy?

I wouldn't say I'm an undivided believer in the sharing economy. I like the idea, yes, but just like communism, it's never as rosy in reality as it is on paper. So in it's pure form, yes, I like the sharing economy, but I don't think it has much commercial potential. Just look at Uber and Airbnb. What those giants are doing has nothing to do with sharing. Maybe it's a better use of resources, maybe not, but its commercial exploitation nonetheless. I think what they're doing is cool though, but hiding behind some kind of "sharing" pretense is just hypocritical.

How do you think that GoMore contributes to this?

GoMore is also to some extent using this pretense, but they may be more entitled to in their current form. However, judging by the lack of financial success, I predict their business model will have to change to become more like Uber's. And then they won't contribute to the sharing economy. But maybe that was just a utopian idea anyway.

How did you first come to hear about GoMore?

You started spamming our Facebook group about a year ago (hehe), and that's when I heard about you.

Why were you attracted to this specific concept?

I just wanted to check it out, see if it could work. I'm generally positive to innovation, however I'm no naïve optimist. I'm not sure GoMore's concept is a great fit in Norway, although I have no qualms using it.

What other sharing economy services are you using/have you used?

Airbnb, Uber

What has your experience of using GoMore yourself been like?

Apart from that one time on TV, which was staged, I've never managed to successfully use GoMore. I actually haven't found any matches the few times I've had somewhere to go and remembered to check GoMore.

What are your thoughts on the safety aspect of ridesharing?

The integration with Facebook and the online payments makes it feel pretty safe. But I mean, if there was a mass murderer on there, I wouldn't know anyway. But I guess I just assume the chances of that are pretty small. I tend to trust other people, even strangers.

How do you think GoMore could have reached a larger mass of people (in Norway) since its launch in 2014?

I don't know. As I said, I'm not sure the platform is a great fit for what Norwegians want. So maybe they would just need another product. But I guess that's not what you wanted to hear. Anyways, I'm optimistic about the upcoming launch of p2p car sharing. I think that's a better concept for Norway. Moving farther away from the sharing economy, yes, but I think that's the future anyway.

Why have you/have you not used GoMore lately?

I check GoMore from time to time to see if there are any rides going where I go. But usually there aren't. I've stopped creating ride agents because I got no responses.

Is there anything GoMore could have done to make you become a more active user? If yes, what?

Yes, real-time ride sharing for sure. Without that, GoMore just becomes an afterthought, something I do because I know you guys or because I remember that I promised myself to become "greener" in 2015.

Stian Wasrud

Interviewee: Stian Wasrud

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Date: June 1, 2015

Form: e-mail

Info: Stian wrote his Master's Thesis on GoMore and got in touch with us during the fall of 2014. He visited or office on one occasion, and interviewed several employees in the organization.

Why do you believe in the sharing economy?

I think the sharing economy is the future. It's becoming more and more like people can decide their own work day and sources of income. That is something that resonates well with me, and my generation I think. We have seen our parents go to their boring office jobs from 9-17 forever – we don't want that. We want to be able to capitalize on what we have and be mobile – throughout the world. So I think the potential for the sharing economy is great, and I will do what I can to contribute to it.

How do you think that GoMore contributes to this?

I think GoMore provides an important but perhaps underdeveloped concept of ride sharing. To me, Uber and Lyft are providing ride sharing as it should be. Real-time and automatic payments. That's the future. GoMore is good for now, but it's limited how many people are interested in all the planning it takes to schedule ride sharing for the day after or even further into the future. That's why I think GoMore is and will remain a niche thing in Norway unless they change their service.

How did you first come to hear about GoMore?

I follow anything on the sharing economy closely, and I have family in Denmark. I knew about GoMore long before they entered Norway, and was excited about their launch.

Why were you attracted to this specific concept?

Because of the above, and because I generally like to try new things. I'm an early adopter.

What other sharing economy services are you using/have you used?

Airbnb, Getaround, Blablacar, Uber

What has your experience of using GoMore yourself been like?

Slightly disappointing, unfortunately. While I've been able to use it several times in Denmark, as a passenger, neither my ride ads or agents received any response on the Norwegian GoMore. I just think it's too little still, and not enough people are using it.

What are your thoughts on the safety aspect of ridesharing?

I think GoMore ensures safety to a satisfactory degree. If I were a girl, I probably wouldn't ride with someone who had no ratings on their profile, which I guess could be a problem in Norway, since no one has ratings yet. But being a guy who's familiar with ride sharing, I'm not that skeptical towards strangers.

How do you think GoMore could have reached a larger mass of people (in Norway) since its launch in 2014?

Good question. I think maybe they would need some higher marketing budgets or something. So far, their communication has seemed a little third-world-ish – competitions with prizes nobody wants, etc. I think Norwegians generally are hard to please, though. We've become used to having only the best of everything. Maybe that's about to change, but I don't know how fast.

Why have you/have you not used GoMore lately?

I tried to use GoMore to get to Copenhagen and interview you too, and even though there were quite a few available rides on the way back, none of them fit my schedule, unfortunately. Apart from that, I've only been writing my thesis lately, so I haven't been going anywhere.

Is there anything GoMore could have done to make you become a more active user? If yes, what?

No I can't think of anything. Except proof of activity on the page of course, but I guess that's not something GoMore could do themselves exactly.

Camilla Helgesen

Interviewee: Camilla Helgesen

Interviewer: Ida Åsle

Date: June 6, 2015

Form: e-mail

Why do you believe in the sharing economy?

I hadn't heard that much about the sharing economy before a friend told me about GoMore. Because I am quite poor at the moment, he thought it would be a good idea to post my rides on GoMore and try to get someone to ride with me. I drive a lot because I work at a hospital 40 min from where I live.

How do you think that GoMore contributes to this?

I think GoMore is a nice platform for making some money.

How did you first come to hear about GoMore?

As I said above, a friend recommended it.

Why were you attracted to this specific concept?

Because I'm poor and I needed someone who could share the gas bill with me.

What other sharing economy services are you using/have you used?

None that I can think of

What has your experience of using GoMore yourself been like?

Well, I only ever posted one ride – and it was not booked by anyone. My impression is that there is not much activity on the site. I didn't find any relevant passengers among the ride agents.

What are your thoughts on the safety aspect of ridesharing?

I haven't considered that. As long as people pay, I'm good. But I guess it could be nice to check out someone's Facebook profile before allowing them into my car.

How do you think GoMore could have reached a larger mass of people (in Norway) since its launch in 2014?

Maybe TV commercials? Honestly, I don't know. Norwegians are not that innovative I think, also they're quite shy and hate to meet new people. So I don't know if ride sharing will ever be big here. It's not like Denmark or America.

Why have you/have you not used GoMore lately?

Since no one booked the ride I posted, I kind of gave up.

Is there anything GoMore could have done to make you become a more active user? If yes, what?

Hmm… provide more passengers I guess?