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From Stress to Smart Celebrations: AI-Driven Event Planning in the German Pre-Marriage Party Market. An Illustration on Business Model Validation

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Abstract

ENG

This thesis investigates how an AI-driven platform can support the planning of pre-marriage parties (PMPs) in the German market by reducing coordination burden, emotional labour, and decision complexity. The study addresses two research questions: (1) which scientific evidence is most relevant when building a multi-sided event-planning platform, and (2) what customer values and feature expectations shape users' willingness to adopt such a solution. To answer these questions, a literature review synthesizes insights from the Digital Platform Economy, technology acceptance frameworks, and Business Model Innovation. Together, its insights highlight that successful consumer-facing platforms must combine efficient ecosystem coordination with trust-enhancing mechanisms and sustainable, user-centric value architectures. Empirically, the thesis uses ten semi-structured interviews with Millennials and Gen Z professionals who have experience planning PMPs or similar group events. A qualitative content analysis, based on combined deductive and inductive coding, identifies core user values such as fairness, transparency, emotional relief, and the desire for structured collaboration tools. Interviewees emphasize the need for centralized communication, budgeting transparency, reliable vendor coordination, automated reminders, and low-visibility AI features that support, but do not replace, human decision-making. Adoption readiness depends strongly on preserving group legitimacy and personal authenticity.

The findings contribute to research on AI-enabled service platforms by showing that user acceptance in socially embedded contexts is shaped not only by functional utility but also by emotional, social, and group-dynamic factors. Practically, the results provide design principles for developing a PMP planning platform that aligns technological orchestration with user values and collaborative behaviors.

PT

Esta dissertação analisa como uma plataforma apoiada por inteligência artificial pode facilitar a organização de festas pré-casamento (PMPs) no mercado alemão, reduzindo a carga de coordenação, o esforço emocional e a complexidade das decisões. O estudo responde a duas questões: (1) que evidência científica é mais relevante para desenvolver uma plataforma digital multilateral e (2) que valores dos utilizadores e expectativas de funcionalidades influenciam a intenção de adoção. A revisão da literatura integra contributos da Economia das Plataformas Digitais, dos modelos de aceitação tecnológica e da Inovação de Modelos de Negócio, mostrando que plataformas eficazes exigem coordenação eficiente, mecanismos de

confiança e propostas de valor centradas no utilizador.
A componente empírica baseia-se em dez entrevistas semiestruturadas com profissionais Millennials e Gen Z que organizaram PMPs ou eventos semelhantes. A análise de conteúdo qualitativa, com codificação dedutiva e indutiva, identifica valores como justiça, transparência, alívio emocional e preferência por ferramentas de colaboração estruturada. Os participantes destacam a necessidade de comunicação centralizada, transparência orçamental, coordenação fiável com fornecedores, lembretes automatizados e funcionalidades de IA discretas que apoiam, mas não substituem, a decisão humana. A intenção de adoção depende da legitimidade do grupo e da autenticidade individual.
Os resultados contribuem para literatura sobre plataformas habilitadas por IA ao demonstrar que a aceitação em contextos sociais é moldada não só pela utilidade funcional, mas também por fatores emocionais, sociais e dinâmicas coletivas. Na prática, o estudo oferece princípios de design para desenvolver uma plataforma de PMPs alinhada com valores dos utilizadores e comportamentos colaborativos.

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Preface & Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to my parents. Thank you for always being there for me and supporting me on my journey. Without you, I would not be here.

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III. Table of Abbreviations

Pre-Marriage Parties	PMP
Research Questions	RQs
Digital Platform Economy	DPE
Service Dominant Logic	SDL
Sustainable Business Model Innovation	SBMI
Technology Acceptance Model	TAM
Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology	UTAUT
AI-Enabled Product and Service Acceptance Model	AIEPSAM
Business Model Innovation	BMI
Sustainable business model innovation	SBMI
Personal Communication	PC
Proof of Concept	PoC
Product Market Fit	PMF

1. Introduction

Digital Transformation has fundamentally changed service industries over the past three decades and remains one of many central drivers for innovation and efficiency of business models. Following a study by (Chin et al., 2023), the success of digital services is not only influenced by technological possibilities but also by society's acceptance and regulations. Furthermore, a conducted study of (Hanelt et al., 2021) underlines that specialized service sectors remain highly fragmented, resulting in coordination challenges for the end consumer. Considering their systematic literature review with 279 sources, digital transformation offers flexibility but does not solve market fragmentation and inefficiencies. This exemplifies what happens whenever consumers must navigate multiple service touchpoints. With missing centralization, their coordination effort creates coordination friction (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). This challenge gets especially reinforced in group planning contexts when differences in customer preferences lead to unmet expectations, increasing consumer stress (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018).

This phenomenon connects to a decline in customer satisfaction and increasing coordination costs (Athanassopoulos, 2000). The information overload when interacting with fragmented digital platforms and multi-service touchpoints increases cognitive load, resulting in a more stressful decision-making process, leading to harmed continued use intentions (Chou & Hsu, 2021). Followed by the research of (Yang et al., 2022), higher cognitive demand affects lower customer satisfaction, and such associated behavior will position platforms into more competitive market dynamics. The combination of psychological burden, measurable satisfaction impact, and competitive dynamics of platforms forms the problem of economic fragmentation and social coordination.

This observation is portrayed within the German bachelor party (pre-marriage parties /PMP*)* planning segment. Pre-Marriage Parties (PMPs) is a different term for bachelor/bachelorette/stag parties, described as parties of grooms and brides with their friends before the wedding day. Its addressable market is represented by the number of marriages in Germany, with approximately 360 000 marriages retrieved from the Federal Statistical Office (Statista, 2024) in Germany. Those occur mostly for people in their mid-thirties, as stated in the weddings and marriages report in Germany, with an average age of 35.3 for men and an average age of 32.6 for women (Statista, 2024). In comparison to life-stage statistics, this target group indicates high stress levels at work (Rauschenbach et al., 2013), emphasizing their need for less cognitive load when using digital platforms. With an orientation of approximately 360 000 marriages, a potential addressable market of over 700 000 PMPs results.

Those events combine the problems of fragmentation costs. This is emphasized by over 240 000 providers in Germany's event service industry, distributed along accommodation, catering, entertainment, and travel, which act mostly as micro-enterprises or self-employed (Zanger & Klaus, 2021). The relation of market competitors is characterized by intense rivalry among international agencies or local niche operators about cost pressures and delivered quality. They result in cognitive overload, shown as coordination stress and quality uncertainty for customers (MarkWideResearch, 2025).

To summarize the problem statement, the target group of Millennials and Gen Z customers, seek digital convenience and tailored experiences. However, they are underrepresented as they explore their demanding professional life alongside private group activities (Chandrakumar, 2024). Additionally, upcoming problems in social planning include budget disputes (Dahana Mia Alfin, 2020), differing interests in activities (Gardner, 2010), and last-minute alterations, which intensify stress and diminish overall satisfaction (Konradt et al., 2023). These highlight an urgent need for platforms that solve both economic fragmentation and social coordination issues.

This thesis investigates how AI-driven event planning platforms might validate sustainable business models in fragmented service marketplaces by overcoming consumer adoption hurdles and social planning conflicts. It specifically analyzes the pre-marriage party planning sector to extract actionable information for my startup, aiming to innovate this industry.

1.1 Research Question and Objectives

The guiding problem statement, "How can AI-driven event planning platforms achieve sustainable business model validation within the fragmented service market of pre-marriage parties in Germany?" is divided into research questions (RQs) of the thesis as follows:

1. Which scientific evidence should be leveraged when building a multi-sided platform for event-planning?
2. What are the customer values of target users and desired features to consider when building an event-planning platform?

To answer the problem and its RQs, the following objectives will be part of the master's thesis. Beginning with a theoretical analysis, my literature review will focus on digital platform strategy, consumer behavior in group decision-making, and business model innovation, aiming to point out factors that influence the adoption of artificial intelligence and platform viability in fragmented service markets.

Continuing with my own empirical investigation, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with potential target users to uncover existing pain points, usability must-haves, and desired platform features for pre-marriage parties. Both theoretical foundation and practical investigation will be synthesized within a business model development for a validated business plan for my own AI-driven PMP planning platform, including value proposition design.

1.2 Theoretical and Practical Relevance

The research conducted in this master's thesis contributes to management science by examining adoption behavior in fragmented markets. Additionally, the influencing factors for AI-enabled services will be explored. The interaction between the factors trust, transparency, and user experience showcases how adoption in emotional group contexts works. Thirdly, it evaluates business model innovation in terms of service dominant logic (SDL). This demonstrates how digital value creation can affect experience-centered industry fields.

1.3 Thesis Structure

The following chapters of my master's thesis will guide you through the process of how scientific evidence of my problem statement leads to my proposed AI-driven platform solution. My second chapter of literature review establishes a theoretical foundation for platform adoption, consumer behavior, and business model innovation, underlining how AI specifically can mitigate coordination friction and cognitive load. This will be followed by a synthesis of those information streams within a conceptual model guiding my own empirical study. Chapter three integrates the methodology, where the research design, sampling strategy, data collection, and information procedure will be integrated, ensuring transparency and academic standards. Chapter four presents the interview data of target users around their platform design requirements and key adoption factors. My discussion in Chapter Five will elaborate on theoretical and practical implications for my platform design and highlight contributions to industry practice, wrapped up by a conclusion summarizing key insights and suggesting areas for future research. To end, RQs of the thesis are answered. Results and detailed data insights are projected in the appendix.

2. Literature Review

By examining the existing literature and current research, the understanding of how to build a digital platform leveraging its network effects, building user-centric technology while disrupting the market of event planning is built. Subchapter 2.1 will dive into the core concepts of the platform economy. Subchapter 2.2 summarizes consumer behavior of my target audience, Generation Z and Millennials, considering existing technology acceptance models. It connects it with post-COVID event needs and the resulting social gathering pressure. Subchapter 2.3 underlines current research on value proposition and scalability of business model innovation. By summarizing current findings, a conceptual model for my situation, an AI-driven event planning platform, can be derived in subchapter 2.4.

2.1 Digital Platform Economy

The development of the global digital platform economy (DPE) over the past five decades was examined by (Acs et al., 2021). The inception occurred with the microprocessor in 1971, thereafter accelerated by advancements in cloud computing and artificial intelligence (Acs et al., 2021). Technological advancements have reduced the cost of information sharing and collaboration, resulting in a transition from hierarchical companies to platform-centric ecosystems. In this transformation, platforms have evolved from mere intermediaries to coordinators of value generation through data, algorithms, and network effects. These systems are markets characterized by positive feedback loops and interdependent parts, where coordination, compatibility, and expectations determine efficiency and market dominance (Katz & Shapiro, 1994). Their analysis of competition among systems demonstrates that early adoption benefits and collaboration between enterprises and consumers can lead to market tipping. Especially when one system gains power due to network effects that enhance its strength. (Kenney & Zysman, 2016) argue that the concentration of a limited number of dominant parts indicates a broader structural transformation: the rise of "platform capitalism". There, economic power is defined by ownership over data and digital infrastructure. Similarly, (Jacobides et al., 2018) describe platform economies as meta-organizations that coordinate distributed innovation within ecosystems. (Rovenskaya et al., 2025) describe them as complex adaptive systems that evolve over time through multiple layers of interaction. Generally, these macro-level perspectives regard the DPE as a self-organizing system that transforms production, labor, and governance on a grand scale.

To expand on this macro-level foundation, (Jovanovic et al., 2022) present a co-evolutionary model of industrial digital platforms. It shows how architecture, services, and governance evolve jointly to expand platform value. Their findings distinguish three

archetypes: product platforms, supply chain platforms, and platform ecosystems. Each of them reflects a different stage of architectural maturity and openness. The progress in the digital servitization process shifts manufacturers further away from collecting data centered around the product. Instead, it moves to developing AI-powered ecosystems that connect diverse stakeholders via shared technological infrastructures and resources. These insights reveal that platform value is dynamic, developing through the continuous interaction of technology, governance, and service innovation.

Expanding on the economic foundations of two-sided markets and value interdependencies, explaining how platforms facilitate interactions between distinct user groups whose participation mutually reinforces each other. Foundational research defines a two-sided market as one in which an intermediary, such as a payment network, video game console, or operating system, connects two interdependent groups, with the decisions of each side affecting outcomes through indirect network effects (Rysman, 2009). To elucidate this idea, (Rochet & Tirole, 2003) demonstrate that platform operators must engage both parties by balancing incentives and implementing cross-subsidization among groups. Their model demonstrates that value creation relies on the management of cross-market externalities, wherein involvement on one side enhances the utility of the other side. The pricing design and platform accessibility influence market competitiveness and the potential for "winner-take-all" scenarios. These processes illustrate that wealth creation on digital platforms depends on network interdependencies and strategic pricing instead of conventional linear transactions, supporting the macro-level network dynamics described by (Katz & Shapiro, 1994).

Looking through the Lens of organizational transformation and governance, (Gawer, 2022) showcases the significant influence of digital platforms. According to her, platforms and ecosystems are the primary organizational structures of today's markets and are changing the processes of value creation and capture. At the same time, traditional companies use ownership structures and hierarchies to control processes. In the digital age, platforms use data, connectivity, and network dynamics to coordinate distributed production while centralizing value capture. This difference is as follows: although digital platforms promote the generation of new ideas and creativity, their commercial structures often lead to a centralization of authority and consolidation of power. Platform governance plays a crucial role in achieving a balance between innovation within the ecosystem and the equitable distribution of wealth.

Additionally, (Autio, 2022) defines orchestration as the conscious alignment of autonomous actors in the ecosystem towards a common value proposition, achieved by influence, not authority. Actors need to create a framework for engagement, define governance

protocols, promote trust, and implement uniform standards. Therefore, effective orchestration can strike a balance between autonomy and collaboration and contribute continuously to value creation. Following current observations, governance and orchestration methods are critical for coordinating interviewees in decentralized systems and enabling sustainable value creation in complex digital ecosystems.

To extend this discussion, (Li et al., 2023) explored how digital platforms enable sustainable business model innovation (SBMI). They show that platforms act as intermediaries between new technologies. Their development is environmentally friendly by facilitating information exchange, collaboration, and collective value creation. Their framework points out three mechanisms through which digital platforms enable SBMI: (1) bringing together digital and green technologies to optimize resource use and reduce environmental impact, (2) dynamically restructuring partnerships and value networks to promote adaptive governance, and (3) applying data-driven process optimization to improve circular value flows between ecosystem interviewees. This perspective expands the concept of DPE from an efficiency-oriented system to promoting sustainable, cooperative, and innovation-oriented growth. As a result, it improves upon previous research on organizational and governance frameworks proposed by (Gawer, 2022) and (Autio, 2022).

The integration of these perspectives illustrates that diverse digital platforms should be viewed as complex ecosystems where technology, economics, and governance generate scalable value together. The theory of platform design in fragmented service markets includes the interaction of technological infrastructures (Acs et al., 2021), the joint development of architectures (Jovanovic et al., 2022), network feedback effects (Katz & Shapiro, 1994), economic coordination (Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Rysman, 2009), governance dynamics (Gawer, 2022) and orchestration mechanisms (Autio, 2022). These interdependencies illustrate the transformation of digital platforms into dynamic systems that can coordinate multiple interest groups while promoting innovation and sustainability (Li et al., 2023). This synthesis demonstrates the ability of platform-based ecosystems to overcome coordination problems in fragmented markets. These problems can impair value creation.

2.2 Consumer Behavior and Adoption of Technology

To understand consumer behavior in the era of digital platform economy, it is necessary to examine the processes through which individuals and groups accept, evaluate, and use new technologies. Until now, fundamental studies on technology acceptance have been shaped primarily by models like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1987) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

These models emphasize the relevance of key factors in user behavior like perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence as. To make it more suitable for the digital age, (Gonzalez-Tamayo et al., 2024) have expanded the UTAUT framework with entrepreneurial and organizational contexts. They show that motivational, effort expectations, and enabling conditions significantly predict successful acceptance behavior among younger, digitally savvy individuals. Parallelly, (Pramanik & Jana, 2025) argue that those well-known acceptance models lack when it comes to AI-based products and services. Considering that issues such as data protection, algorithmic transparency, and ethical fairness are neglected, they approach another model for the acceptance of AI-based products and services (AIEPSAM). This integrates these factors into the diverse expectations of consumers in AI-driven scenarios, expanding the focus around algorithmic personalization and trust.

In the context of event technology adoption, (Sjukriana et al., 2025) identified ease of use, perceived benefits, social influence, and privacy concerns as principal determinants of attendee acceptance of event technologies such as VR, mobile apps, and AI tools. Connecting it to the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid events and digital engagement technologies have changed the way we expect to interact, with a new focus on safety, control, and transparency. Therefore, worry, uncertainty, and perceived scarcity alter consumption patterns during crises, marking a significant shift in consumer behavior (Omar et al., 2021). For the use of technology when planning or coordinating events, key pillars must integrate reliability and safety. Further studies stress that effective digital collaboration at the group level depends on integrative complexity, which is the balance between having different points of view and bringing them all together (Brodbeck et al., 2021). Structured through iterative recapitulation, group dissent has been demonstrated to promote more informed and innovative decisions compared to consensus-driven methods. Additional research supports that making decisions together makes people more kind and helpful to members of their own group (Tan, 2021). However, those effects cannot be applied to external stakeholders. Concluding these studies, technology acceptance depends on both psychological and social factors. This emphasizes the co-existence of individual perceptions of usefulness and trust with collective dynamics of coordination and belonging. Taking post-pandemic developments into consideration, these interdependencies have been amplified.

2.3 Business Model Innovation

During the last years, Business Model Innovation (BMI) (Teece, 2010; Zott et al., 2011). has impacted strategic and innovation management. According to (Teece, 2010), a business model is defined as the design and architecture that outlines how a company creates, delivers,

and captures value. It showcases the behavior of companies from value creation and delivery to capturing when navigating through evolving technological and competitive landscapes. Foundational Research by Foss and Saebi's systematic review is the first synthesis of this field, clearing up the conceptual confusion that used to surround BMI. In that sense, the innovation of business models integrates both deliberate design and systemic transformation. The development of the business model and its architecture are associated with "designed, novel, nontrivial changes" (Foss & Saebi, 2017).

For them, business models are complex, interrelated systems, with interactions among environmental change, managerial cognition, and dynamic capabilities. As a result, they affect organizational adaptability and performance (Foss & Saebi, 2017). Their research streams of conceptualization, process, outcome, and performance have expanded BMI inquiry into specialized areas that are relevant for digital platform development. Additional research by Amit and Zott introduces activity systems. They represent an essential shift in understanding business models as interconnected networks of value-creating activities that transform firm boundaries (Zott & Amit, 2010). Their framework conceptualizes business models as systems of interdependent activities characterized by design elements such as content, structure, or governance, and design themes such as novelty, lock-in, complementarities, and efficiency. They collectively determine value creation and appropriation mechanisms. This approach has become foundational for analyzing platform-based business models, where value emerges from coordinated activities across multiple stakeholders instead of isolated firm-level processes (Zott & Amit, 2010).

The practical implications of BMI have been clearly demonstrated through key case studies. The fundamental analysis of Johnson, Christensen, and Kagermann about transformative business model reinvention provides a clear framework for identifying the need for business model innovation and for understanding how existing companies can effect significant changes to their value creation processes. According to (Johnson et al., 2008), five strategic circumstances require business model change: (1) opportunities to address underserved customer segments through disruptive innovation, (2) capitalize on new technologies, (3) leverage fallow customer bases, (4) respond to industry shifts, and (5) cross industry boundaries. Therefore, successful BMI requires an integrated approach to customer value propositions, profit formulas, key resources, and key processes as underlined in their systematic framework.

The intersection of sustainability and digitalization has emerged as a prominent research area at BMI. Following pioneering research, digitalization significantly impacts the evolution

of sustainability-focused business model innovations, highlighting the possibility of both positive and negative consequences (Bohnsack et al., 2022). It's stated that the fundamental attributes of digital technologies, such as reprogramming capabilities and data standardization, promote cross-sector convergence and innovation. However, it is contended that these technologies can simultaneously produce unintended consequences, including the intensification of inequality and the increase in resource intensity.

Subsequent research offers tangible evidence from digital platform ecosystems and delineates three methods by which platforms can foster sustainability: integrating digital and eco-friendly technologies to enhance resource utilization, adaptively restructuring partnerships and governance frameworks, and employing data-driven process optimization to refine circular value creation methodologies (Li et al., 2023)

Together, these analyses show that digitalization and platform-based ecosystems can help make and run sustainable business model innovations. This shows how important it is to work together in a way that is both effective and good for society in the long run.

2.4 Synthesis of Research Gap matching market opportunity

Synthesizing the reviewed literature, it can be derived that building a successful multi-sided platform requires an integrated understanding of technological, behavioral, and strategic dimensions s. Figure 1. Summarizing from the macro-level, the DPE emerges from declining coordination costs (Acs et al., 2021) and self-reinforcing network effects (Katz & Shapiro, 1994), while data and infrastructure ownership concentrates power (Kenney & Zysman, 2016), ecosystems operate as meta-organizations that orchestrate distributed innovation (Jacobides et al., 2018), and platforms evolve as complex adaptive systems across multiple layers and time (Rovenskaya et al., 2025). These conditions set the structural rules under which platform architectures, services, and governance co-evolve (Jovanovic et al., 2022), and under which two-sided pricing and openness decisions shape competition and winner-take-all dynamics (Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Rysman, 2009).

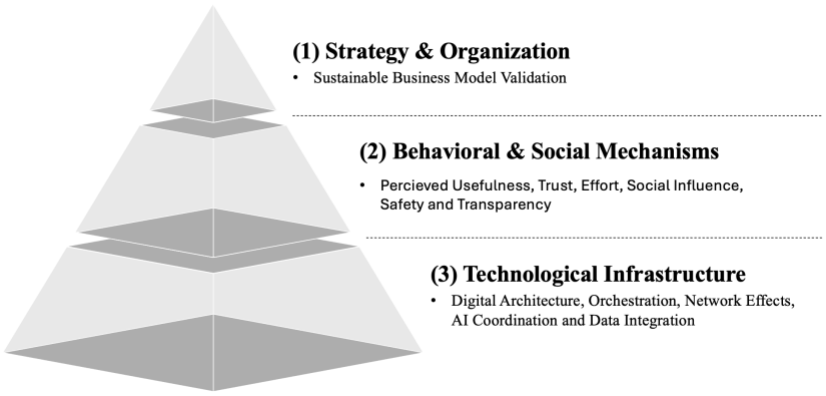

Figure 1: Conceptual Model 1, Source: own elaboration based on cited Authors from the Literature Review

The created conceptual model can be applied to the niche of event-planning platforms. Breaking down the structure, starting with the technological and structural level from bottom up. The conducted research on DPE provides theoretical foundations for coordination in multi-sided ecosystems of fragmented markets. Therefore, the evolution to ecosystem-based coordination influences organizational design and how market participation works. Research by (Acs et al., 2021) and (Jovanovic et al., 2022) states the relevance of interplay from infrastructure, governance, and service innovation for digital platforms. The pillars can be understood as orchestrators instead of intermediaries, dealing with value creation. For that AI-driven coordination, data analytics, and network effects are taken into consideration for the management of multi-stakeholder interactions. This is consistent with a platform context where power centralizes around data and infrastructure control (Kenney & Zysman, 2016), innovation is organized at the ecosystem level (Jacobides et al., 2018), and coordination remains path-dependent and adaptive (Rovenskaya et al., 2025), strengthening the rationale for orchestration in fragmented service markets.

The second level of behavioral and social factors emphasizes that technological efficiency alone is insufficient to ensure proper adoption. Research dealing with TAM and UTAUT of (Venkatesh et al., 2003), (Gonzalez-Tamayo et al., 2024), as well as (Pramanik & Jana, 2025) shows that adoption in the AI-mediated services is based on four key dimensions: perceived usefulness, effort expectancy, trust, and ethical transparency. Considering the development of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event-specific research of (Omar et al., 2021; Sjukriana et al., 2025) concluded that user expectations went from being mostly influenced by convenience to higher valuing safety, reliability, and social reassurance. Additionally, further insights of (Brodbeck et al., 2021; Tan, 2021) highlight the role of group decision-making dynamics in influencing the adoption outcome. Combined, their research showcases that digital platforms operate as both technical systems and psychosocial environments when used in social

contexts. This underlines that not only individual perceptions but also group coordination determine the retention and user participation in digital platforms, positioning user trust and transparency as design constraints that must be embedded in platform architecture and governance.

The top layer of strategy and organization demonstrates the dependence of sustainable digital ventures on BMI. According to the research of (Foss & Saebi, 2017; Johnson et al., 2008; Zott & Amit, 2010), the determining factors are the purpose design of value architectures, technological capabilities, stakeholder interests, and revenue mechanisms. Integrating digitalization and sustainability into BMI extends it to ecosystem-level collaboration. Previous investigation of (Bohnsack et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023) emphasizes the above-mentioned development from BMI into SBMI. It reframes the focus on efficiency to shared value creation. Hence, SBMI depends on aligning systemic orchestration (macro) with adoption constraints (behavioral) so that value architecture, revenue logic, and stakeholder interests reinforce each other rather than conflict.

The synthesis of the three streams of the literature review should be integrated for an event planning platform and is broken down as follows:

1. Platform Infrastructure and Ecosystem Governance (DPE) creates the structural conditions under which value can be co-created. These conditions include network-driven tipping, data and infrastructure-based power, meta-organizational orchestration, and complex adaptive evolution. (Acs et al., 2021; Jacobides et al., 2018; Jovanovic et al., 2022; Katz & Shapiro, 1994; Kenney & Zysman, 2016; Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Rovenskaya et al., 2025; Rysman, 2009).
2. User Adoption and Trust Mechanisms (TAM / UTAUT) define the behavioral preconditions that determine the success of multi-sided engagement.
3. Business Model Innovation and Sustainability Orientation (BMI) provides the strategic blueprint for transforming user participation into long-term viability. Here, SBMI is feasible only if orchestration choices at the macro level reduce behavioral frictions at the adoption level.

The theoretical research in these areas will help to construct a multi-sided platform. However, the results reveal a gap at the intersection of how AI-driven platforms can integrate behavioral acceptance factors with systemic business model design in consumer-facing, socially complex service markets such as event planning of *pre-marriage parties*. Existing DPE literature focuses primarily on industrial or B2B ecosystems, while adoption research treats users as individuals detached from broader platform strategy. Meanwhile, BMI studies

emphasize firm-level reconfiguration without accounting for the psychological and social adoption barriers that determine whether new platforms can achieve sustainable traction. This fragmentation reveals a lack of integrative frameworks connecting technological orchestration, social adoption, and business model validation in service-oriented multi-sided platforms.

For the targeted niche market of *pre-marriage parties'* event planning, it's crucial to understand how AI specifically can mitigate coordination friction and cognitive load. The industry integrates coordination complexity, fluctuating trust of consumers, and post-pandemic behavioral sensitivities, making their integration particularly crucial. Concluding which scientific evidence should be leveraged when building a multi-sided platform for event-planning, it is therefore proposed that an AI-driven event-planning platform must:

1. Embed mechanisms of user trust and transparency into its technological architecture,
2. Leverage data-based orchestration to coordinate multiple stakeholders efficiently
3. Design a sustainable, value-sharing business model that reflects both individual and collective user needs.

Synthesizing across the literature streams, this thesis positions its contribution within the intersection of digital orchestration, behavioral adoption, and sustainable business modeling. The author allocation for the conceptual model is portrayed in Appendix A.

By empirically exploring how target users perceive value, coordination, and trust in such a platform, the following chapter aims to bridge this conceptual gap and provide actionable insights for achieving sustainable business model validation in fragmented event service markets.

3. Methodology

Chapter three is devoted to the discussion of the research approach used. Consequently, the chapter is divided into subsections with their respective focal points, which are explained in detail. First, the research design is presented. Second, the sampling technique criteria are then comprehensively described, and the selection criteria are presented. Next, the target user interview for data collection is described as a primary research tool, and the questionnaire design is presented. To answer the second RQ on what the customer values of target users are, and what desired features to consider when building an event-planning platform, qualitative Interviews will be conducted. The decision for qualitative research lies in its ability to uncover complex, context-related human experiences and social processes that cannot be quantified (Brown, 2010).

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative research approach is applied within an exploratory study of the customer values of the target users and their desired features for an AI-driven event planning platform for PMP. Since there is no comparable solution in the market, the study aims to investigate the product-market fit to tailor a business plan for execution. It should be noted that quantitative analysis would not allow for a sample big enough to derive insightful data for product market fit. The research question requires an evaluation of qualitative data, allowing for the analysis of complex connections between text passages. The qualitative approach brings richer information derived from its explorative approach. The methodology of qualitative content analysis enables a structured and comprehensible evaluation of the data (Brown, 2010). The basis of the data to be evaluated comes from primary research, in this case, target user interviews to collect original data, whose criteria are explained in detail in the following sub-chapter. The decision to use a primary research approach is due to the limited data on customer values of target users for AI-driven event planning platforms.

To guide a successful process of qualitative research, observing essential quality criteria ensures a comprehensible data evaluation. In this case, the focus is on three quality criteria: transparency, intersubjectivity, and scope. Transparency requires that research into the subject matter is always documented and should be understandable to third parties. Intersubjectivity, on the other hand, describes the critical reflection and discussion of the data collected. This aspect is primarily addressed in the discussion chapter. The third criterion is scope, so the choice of method does not influence the results obtained. Doing an exploratory study aims to get a comprehensive understanding of target consumers' preferences and challenges, which are not covered in prior research. Due to limited time and resources, the research will concentrate on a

particular target population. With personal experience of the researcher in planning group events as a young professional in a high-pressure industry, like interviewees, reflexivity is applied. This minimizes bias. It includes questioning assumptions, separating personal experiences from the interviewees, and using clear rules for coding. While positionality provides contextual familiarity that improves interpretation, steps were taken to avoid preconceived opinions on the analysis.

3.1.1 Sampling Technique

To derive insightful data from the qualitative interviews, it is important to conduct them with the primary target group. This group of people and future core-users of my platform are young adults from all genders aged between 25 and 35, being part of the Generation Z or Millennials. Those people either have experience with planning PMPs or other social events and are likely to experience PMPs in the upcoming years. For my use case, I identified people with (previous) full-time employment in high-performance sectors such as consulting, finance, or marketing as most suitable, having a busy, structured work life with only limited capacity for additional planning of social gatherings. They are characterized by middle to upper income to ensure a disposable income for travel and events. They most likely live in urban areas, are digitally savvy, and event oriented. Apart from work, they seek stress-free and personalized experiences in their free time. With my own significant experience in consulting for a 23-year-old with a professional network on LinkedIn, volunteer candidates will be picked, purposively, to show either meta-level reflection from previous planning experiences and recurring challenges, such as coordination friction, budgeting, or communication overload, or lack of unique experiences, or address wishful thinking about desires. This ensures both learnings from previous experiences and green-field approaches are integrated into the platform design. Since I address the German Market, I will address German-speaking people.

3.1.2 Data Collection Process

After establishing the sampling criteria, data collection is initiated through semi-structured interviews. This method is established in exploratory qualitative research for gaining comprehensive insights into interviewees' experiences, beliefs, or attitudes (McGrath et al., 2019). They combine both flexibility and structure, being guided with basic open-ended questions, and supplemented by spontaneous follow-up questions (Kallio et al., 2016). In that sense, interviewees can articulate their values and functional preferences in their own words, while a standardized interview guide ensures consistency. All interviews were conducted via video chat on MS Teams and lasted 55 minutes on average. Thematic saturation is approached

when no substantively new insights emerge. After seven interviews, recurring themes (coordination friction, fairness expectations, emotional workload, and preferences for structured digital support) appeared consistently. The final three interviews confirmed these patterns without generating additional categories. For an exploratory study, it indicates adequate saturation and supports the sufficiency of the sample size used. The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent for transcribing and analysis via Maxqda. The interviews continued until information saturation was reached (McGrath et al., 2019).

3.1.3 Ethical Considerations

All interviews were conducted in accordance with ethical research standards and the guidelines of Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Targeted interviewees received a short briefing before getting interviewed. It outlines the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality rules, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Before each interview, informed consent was obtained verbally for participation and audio recording for simplified transcription. All recordings were stored securely, anonymized during transcription, and used exclusively for academic purposes. Identifying information was removed to ensure Interviewee privacy and data protection throughout the research process.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

The semi-structured interview guide focuses on collecting data for the research question of: What are the customer values of target users and desired features to consider when building an event-planning platform? The guide (Appendix B), is structured for depth, comparability, and flow for the interviews. It begins with warm-up questions, moves into the event-planning journey, explores pain points and motivations, and concludes with desired features and perceptions of value. It's designed to be conversational, allowing follow-up probes for clarification, if needed.

3.4 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis follows a deductive and inductive approach to ensure alignment between RQs, the interview guide, and the coding structure. Deductive categories, including platform governance, technology acceptance, and value-based service design, are derived from the literature review. To allow Interviewee experiences to shape the final coding tree, deductive categories are complemented by inductively emerging themes from the interviews. This alignment guarantees that both theoretical constructs and user-driven insights are systematically captured in the analysis. Following the collection of data via a semi-structured questionnaire, the interview transcripts underwent qualitative content analysis, a systematic methodology employed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within text (Lim, 2025; Saldaña, 2013).

The analysis entailed multiple readings of the data, coding pertinent excerpts, and categorizing these codes into overarching themes that corresponded with the study's research inquiries (Sutton & Zubin, 2015). Coding utilized both existing literature and novel insights (inductive complement) derived from the data, facilitating the organic development of themes rather than enforcing established frameworks (Saldaña, 2013).

This inductive methodology guaranteed that interviewees' viewpoints and unforeseen results directed the interpretation, rather than my confirmation bias (Brown, 2010). After that, the first codes were put together into larger themes that showed what customers valued, what problems they faced, and what platform features they would like best. The coding process is carefully documented to ensure the analysis is credible. Themes were refined through several rounds of review to make sure they accurately reflected the views of the interviewees (Lim, 2025). This process turned unstructured qualitative data into useful, clear insights that helped shape the design of the platform and the business plan. Since the code is being developed by the researcher, further reliability criteria of the study are supported through iterative refinement of the coding tree, as well as systematic application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, reducing subjective code interpretability. Furthermore, even though the qualitative analysis provides insights into users' values and expectations, it is limited in its generalizability due to sample size and homogeneity of interviewees. Further quantitative investigation could settle the results to validate the findings since this study reflects depth-oriented inquiry instead of breadth-oriented.

4. Empirical Findings

The following empirical findings are derived from qualitative interviews with target users of the PMP planning platform. After summarizing the interview sample in detail, the data analysis provides first insights on Customer Values & Pain Points of Target Users and secondly, Desired Features, Monetization & Adoption for Platform Design. The generated outcomes are being consulted as a basis for discussion on whether product-market fit is achieved and which implications can be drawn for the Business Plan design (Appendix E).

4.1 Interview Sample Description

The sourced data is a total of ten semi-structured interviews, conducted between October 27 and November 3, 2025, with interviewees aged 25 to 34. The sample represents a balanced mix of genders and professional backgrounds, primarily drawn from consulting, management, and creative industries. All interviewees have experience either organizing or participating in group events such as bachelor and bachelorette parties, birthdays, or team trips. A summary table (Appendix D) provides an overview of interviewee demographics, professional background, event experience, and digital tool use. Interview interviewees were labelled P1-P10 to ensure anonymity. Consistent with qualitative best practice, the transcripts were "polished" for clarity while preserving meaning. This allowed high-quality coding in MAXQDA, using the hybrid coding-tree (Appendix C). Across the sample, several commonalities emerged: All interviewees had previously used WhatsApp as their main organizational channel, supplemented by tools such as Google Sheets, Doodle, Tricount, and Pinterest. Group sizes typically ranged from 6 to 12 people, with organizers often belonging to the inner circle of friends. Most interviewees had organized between 3 and 15 events, indicating substantial planning experience. Their use of Digital tools was high, yet all reported frustration with fragmented platforms, inconsistent communication, or emotional fatigue during coordination of the event. In this way, the RQs are covered comprehensively, and the theoretical framework is also enriched.

4.2 Overview of Emergent Themes from the Thematic Analysis

As a base for the qualitative content analysis, structured themes and sub-themes could be derived. As a result of the coding process (stated in 3.4), four overarching themes structure the coding-tree (Appendix C) and are summarized below. They reflect the interviewees' experiences of group planning events and resulting expectations for an AI-driven event planning platform.

Theme one is about Customer Values and Social Experience, capturing the associated underlying values and social meanings with event planning. It emphasized that planning is a

socially embedded and emotionally charged activity instead of purely a logistical task. Its sub-themes of emotional experience, group harmony, togetherness, efficiency, time saving, personalization, and fit to group, as well as planning enjoyment and identity, demonstrate that customer value is multi-dimensional. In that sense, it combines emotional, social, functional, and self-expressive elements.

Theme two aggregates interviewees' frustrations and barriers of current event-planning. These underline why structured digital support is sought in event planning. Emerged sub-themes of coordination chaos and WhatsApp overload, low commitment and uneven responsiveness, budget uncertainty and transparency issues, cognitive overload, as well as role imbalance and emotional load on organizers highlight that planning challenges are technical, social, and emotional. That's why solutions for solving coordination costs and relational strain are requested.

The third theme of desired platform features and functional expectations summarizes the interviewees' vision for an ideal planning tool. Its sub-themes of centralized overview and shared workspace, automation, smart reminders and polls, budgeting and cost splitting functions, AI-generated suggestions and checklists, inspirations and creative discovery, as well as delegation, role assignment, and task transparency combine central features. Those convey a user's message seeking orchestration instead of substitution. They value technology for collaboration without removing the human touch.

As the last theme, attitudes toward AI, Trust and Adoption Conditions came through. It reveals both perspectives of adoption, technical and social. Its sub-themes of openness to AI as an assistant, control and verification needs, data privacy boundaries, as well as price sensitivity, PoC, and group buy-in show that AI acceptance is conditional and relational. Influential factors are trust, transparency, and visible group endorsement. Those underline individual attitudes are not the only levers for adoption.

In the following themes and their subcodes are separated into sub-chapters to allow traceability and academic rigor, highlighting which themes came out of the thematic analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis on pain points of target users

About Pain Points, corresponding to Theme 2, in current event-planning practices, interviewees consistently described event planning as both socially rewarding and cognitively exhausting. They report fun group initiatives turning into an exercise in navigating communication noise, uneven engagement, and hidden emotional labour. The sub-chapters below point out relevant sub-themes in detail.

4.3.1 Coordination Chaos and WhatsApp Overload

Regarding coordination chaos and Cognitive Overload, all interviewees used WhatsApp as their default planning tool, yet most characterized it as a "double-edged sword." As noted by Interviewee 4:

> "Everything happened through that group chat. It started simple, but after a few days, nobody knew which message mattered anymore" (personal communication (PC), October 30, 2025).

Similar patterns were observed by Interviewee 3, who remarked:

> "Discussions kept exploding with ideas, but in the end, I had to summarize everything because half the group stopped reading" (PC, October 29, 2025).

These accounts reveal the dual problem of coordination chaos and cognitive overload: too many parallel threads and constant switching between chat, spreadsheets, and calendar apps. Interviewee 10 highlighted this multitasking strain:

> "I'd love to have all my calendars, work, private, sports, synchronized in one place; checking three different calendars delays my reply" (PC, November 3, 2025).

The mental fragmentation described here underscores the need for centralization rather than mere new channels of communication.

4.3.2 Low Commitment and Uneven Responsiveness

About low commitment and uneven responsiveness, interviewees reported asymmetric engagement within groups as well. The same individuals repeatedly take responsibility, while others remain silent. Interviewee 1 observed, "It's always the same two or three who do the planning, others just vote late or not at all" (PC, October 27, 2025). This not only increases workload but also affects interviewees' morale. Interviewee 5 added:

> "Some people read the message but never reply, and then you can't book anything because you don't know who's coming" (PC, October 31, 2025).

This reflects social loafing familiar from group-work literature, s. Subchapter 2.2. For instance, it becomes emotionally charged in friendship contexts, as commitment signals care. When responses are delayed, planners experience both practical frustration and subtle disappointment.

4.3.3 Budget Uncertainty and Transparency Issues

In terms of budget transparency and emotional tension, a second recurring pain point involves financial coordination. Interviewees described struggles with unclear contributions, pre-financing, and awkward reminders. Interviewee 2 recalled, "I paid around €400 up front because others were slow, and that killed my motivation" (PC, October 29, 2025). Interviewee 10 similarly confessed that "collecting money was worse than planning itself" (PC, November

3, 2025). These experiences highlight how monetary management relates to emotional labour. It symbolizes chasing payments threatens harmony and dampens enthusiasm.

4.3.4 Role Imbalance and Emotional Load on Organizers

After initial test-coding within Maxqda, the theme of role imbalance and emotional load on organizers came up. Several organizers described "the process is rewarding but draining." For example, Interviewee 1 explained: "We were supposed to be three planners, but one barely helped, so the rest fell on us" (PC, October 27, 2025). In Comparison, Interviewee 3 described mixed feelings:

> "Some guests felt bad because I was doing so much, but I didn't mind since, without experience, it's easy to underestimate the work" (PC, October 29, 2025).

These statements emphasize that coordination stress is not purely technical. It reflects emotional labour and perceived fairness. Event organizers juggle logistics, interpersonal diplomacy, and expectations of gratitude, turning what appears to be "fun coordination" into unpaid relational work. Addressing this imbalance requires both technological and social design solutions. Those features make roles explicit and distribute tasks transparently for everybody involved. A further frustration relates to external coordination with suppliers, as Vendor Communication and Reliability in Coding-Tree. Interviewee 8 shared, "I contacted three venues, but two never replied" (PC, November 2, 2025). Those example of unresponsiveness force reorganization and undermines trust in manual bookings. Linking it to group indecision, vendor delays amplify stress and contribute to uncertainty.

In summary, pain points can be marked down to fragmented communication, uneven commitment, emotional overwork, and vendor reliability. It extends beyond logistical inconvenience to emphasize undisclosed social and affective costs. Furthermore, it explains the reason behind interviewees actively seeking structured digital support. The next section explores the underlying customer values and social dimensions that motivate individuals to plan events despite these burdens and that define what "successful planning" means to them.

4.4 Data Analysis on customer values

Orientation along recorded statements of target users reveals core values and motivations (Theme one) that drive people about event planning. Yet coordination difficulties dominate the complaints of interviewees. However, the interviews demonstrate that planning integrates personal significance, which extends beyond logistics. It's characterized by emotional intensity, social anchoring, and its frequent role in the definition of personal identities. Corresponding intertwined dimensions of emotional fulfilment, group harmony and fairness, efficiency as a moral value, planning enjoyment and identity, capture these.

4.4.1 Emotional Experience and Fit to the Group

For emotional fulfilment and shared event-planning experience, nearly all interviewees' motivation was to create lasting memories. For instance, Interviewee 3 described the satisfaction of: "seeing everyone happy, laughing, and knowing that all those hours of planning actually paid off" (PC, October 29, 2025). Interviewee 4 reported similarly that:

> "You don't do it because you love spreadsheets; you do it because you want the day to be perfect for your friend" (PC, October 30, 2025).

These statements show that emotional value lies not in the process itself but in the collective outcome. To elaborate further, planning becomes an act of care, which generates feelings of pride when the event succeeds. The emotional return for the work done legitimizes the effort expended during its preparation. However, the emotional payoff extends beyond the honouree. It reinforces social identity within the friend group. Exemplary, Interviewee 1 stated: "When people say afterwards, 'best weekend ever,' you forget how stressful it was" (PC, October 27, 2025). In General, the satisfaction derives from shared laughter and recognition, underlining that emotional fulfilment in event planning is fundamentally relational. The results show that a co-created experience validates social bonds.

4.4.2 Group Harmony and Togetherness

Throughout the interviews, the emphasis on social equilibrium was on group harmony and fairness. Interviewees want to maintain inclusivity and equality. As Interviewee 5 explained, they believe that unfair or non-transparent processes can: "ruin the mood before it even starts" (PC, October 31, 2025). Therefore, group harmony is an outcome and precondition for success. Further, fairness in group event-planning manifests on two levels: decision-making and finances. Organizers, as Interviewee 9, stressed the discomfort of money-related tension:

> "Avoiding awkwardness around money or who contributes what is just as important as choosing activities" (PC, November 2, 2025).

Additionally, others highlighted the relational cost of unresolved issues. If transparency fails, friendships can momentarily suffer. It transforms management tasks into collective rituals of trust. This underlines why transparency features like budget tracking or task visibility carry symbolic weight in later design expectations.

4.4.3 Efficiency and Time Saving

Moving on with efficiency and time saving as moral expectations, efficiency was repeatedly framed not only as a convenience but as a moral duty. For instance, Interviewee 2 summarized: "If it's easy and structured, I'll help again, if it's chaotic, never again" (PC, October 29, 2025). That being said, efficiency signals respect for others' time and competence.

Instead, disorganization erodes legitimacy. This moral framing repositions perceived usefulness as a social value. Tools that save time are valued because they prevent resentment, sustain enthusiasm, and preserve group harmony. In contrast, efficiency functions as a mediator between fairness and emotional fulfilment.

4.4.4 Planning Enjoyment and Identity

Looking at planning enjoyment and identity, most interviewees associated planning with stress. This new sub-theme broadens the understanding of motivation. Several expressed genuine enjoyment and pride in the organizer role. In that sense, planning is not solely an obligation but also a form of self-expression. Those insights are reflected by the target group. Interviewee 3 reflects: “It’s an honour and a lot of fun with high standards but enjoyable execution” (PC, October 29, 2025). Additionally, Interviewee 4 described: “Slipping into project-manager mode translates professional skills into social contexts” (PC, October 30, 2025). Furthermore, Interviewee 8 admitted that: “organizing gives me a weird sense of control with enjoying making things happen” (PC, November 2, 2025). Those examples indicate that for some, the organizer identity carries intrinsic value, integrating competence, recognition, and creative control. Therefore, a successful planning tool should not only reduce stress but also acknowledge and enhance this sense of mastery. Its users should feel supported and not replaced by technology.

To synthesize the customer values, these findings illustrate that customer value in event planning is multi-layered: Starting with its emotional value, integrating creating meaningful experiences and receiving recognition, whilst social value incorporates sustaining harmony, fairness, and transparency throughout the process. On the other side, functional value weighs in on achieving efficiency and clarity. Instead, the self-expressive value is about deriving enjoyment and identity from planning itself. The intersection of these values explains the paradox observed in the pain points. In contradistinction to the considerable demands imposed by the workload, individuals continue to volunteer for the organization of events. The motivation of the subject is rooted in the pursuit of emotional fulfilment and the attainment of social appreciation.

4.5 Data Analysis on desired features

To extend the analysis with theme three, the customer values are translated into desired features. Interviewees’ reflections on their frustrations and values translated into a remarkably coherent vision of an ideal planning tool. Across all interviews, they imagined a digital environment that simultaneously reduces chaos, maintains fairness, and sustains the pleasure

of collaboration. Their expectations are split around the subchapter with subthemes named below.

4.5.1 Centralized Overview and Shared Workspace

Looking at centralization first, the most frequent expectation was the need for a single shared workspace that replaces fragmented communication and duplicated information. Interviewees repeatedly described wanting "one place for everything." Exemplary, Interviewee 4 envisioned:

> "A board where everything sits together: the dates, the money, the ideas, instead of jumping between chats, Excel, and Splitwise" (PC, October 30, 2025).

Interviewee 6 added: "It should feel like a mix of WhatsApp and Trello, you still talk, but tasks actually move forward" (PC, October 31, 2025). This call for centralization directly responds to the coordination chaos outlined earlier. A single digital hub that connects all relevant strands without removing the human touch represents the users' desire for orchestration rather than substitution. Interviewees linked such a dashboard to cognitive relief. Interviewee 3 noted: "Once information is structured, you remember less and trust the tool more" (PC, October 29, 2025).

4.5.2 Automation, Smart Reminders, and Polls

Automation and smart assistance were welcomed as a means of social facilitation, not control. Interviewees wanted technology to handle repetitive or uncomfortable tasks such as reminders, polls, or follow-ups. Interviewee 9 remarked: "If the tool could send reminders automatically, half of the stress would disappear" (PC, November 2, 2025). Interviewee 1 framed automation as empathy:

> "People forget, not because they're lazy, but because they don't see it. If the app nudged them at the right time, everyone would be happier" (PC, October 27, 2025).

Automation was also linked to perceived fairness. Automatic prompts would make participation less dependent on individual diligence, thus redistributing accountability across the group. In technical terms, this feature equates to embedding social norms of reliability into system logic.

4.5.3 Budgeting and Cost-Splitting Functions

In terms of transparency in budgets and responsibilities, interviewees continued to stress financial and organizational transparency as fundamental to group harmony. A desired feature set included integrated cost-splitting, budget caps, and live payment tracking. In that sense, Interviewee 5 summarized: "A live bar that shows who paid and who hasn't, so you don't have to chase people" (PC, October 31, 2025). Furthermore, Interviewee 10 proposed automatic budget alerts:

> "If you could set a total budget and the app warns you when activities exceed it, we'd stop overspending" (PC, November 3, 2025).

Additionally, transparency also applies to responsibilities. Many organizers wanted a clear overview of who had volunteered for which task and when deadlines were due.

4.5.4 Delegation, Role Assignment, and Task Transparency

Referring to delegation, role assignment, and task transparency, interviewees wish for technology that helps distribute work fairly and make responsibilities visible. Several organizers envisioned digital assistance that would assign and track tasks. Interviewee 9 suggested:

> "Split responsibility by topic like accommodation, activities, or travel, so not everything sits on one person" (PC, November 2, 2025).

Interviewee 10 extended the idea:

> "If I select 'bachelor party,' the tool could offer time plans, to-do lists, and role suggestions based on what others typically include" (PC, November 3, 2025).

Also, delegation features were perceived as crucial for reducing emotional load while preserving agency. Interviewees did not seek automation that eliminates human control, but rather one that empowers coordination by clarifying who does what. In this sense, task transparency functions as both a management aid and a social equalizer.

4.5.5 Suggestions for Inspiration and Creative Discovery

Nearly all interviewees desired a creative layer, while structure and automation dominated functional discussions. They currently use Pinterest, Instagram, or Google for ideas but find these tools disconnected from execution. Exemplary, Interviewee 3 observed:

> "You scroll through Pinterest, screenshot, send to WhatsApp, then it's gone. Instead, it should all stay in one place" (PC, October 29, 2025).

Furthermore, Interviewee 7 imagined:

> "A feed of realistic options like activities, restaurants, or decorations which are filtered by budget and location" (PC, October 31, 2025).

However, creativity was not viewed as a luxury. It was central to enjoyment. Therefore, a successful tool must merge functionality with inspiration, supporting users in turning abstract ideas into executable plans. Examples are captured in the table below:

User Expectation	**Functional Translation**
Cognitive relief	Centralized dashboard & reduced tool switching
Social facilitation	Automated reminders & polls replacing manual nudging
Fairness & trust	Transparent budgets and visible responsibilities

Emotional relief	Delegation features redistributing workload
Creativity & enjoyment	Integrated inspiration feed and templates

Figure 2: Comprehensive design blueprint for user expectations and its functional translation, Source: Interview data

Interviewees thereby described a human-centered orchestration system, not a purely digital assistant. They want a partner that reflects their group's rhythm, encourages participation, and recognizes effort. Meaning, value is co-created between the user and the system through interactive processes. In sum, users envision an AI-supported co-planner that blends project-management clarity with social empathy. It should structure collaboration without stripping it of personality.

4.6 Data Analysis on adoption for platform design

The next section corresponds to theme four and explores how interviewees perceive the role of artificial intelligence, what they are ready to delegate to AI, where they draw boundaries of control, and which conditions determine their trust and adoption behaviour. When interviewing the target group about their attitudes towards AI and Conditions for its Adoption in event planning, a positive but cautious attitude could be monitored. For most of the interviewees, using AI tools for professional or private occasions was not new. That is why they remain open-minded to the investigated use case, however, they don't miss out on critical situations. Their acceptance connects on key dimensions, portrayed as subthemes below:

4.6.1 Openness to AI as an Assistant

Referring to the openness of AI as an assistant, interviewees agreed on the idea of a supportive assistant that simplifies repetitive and time-consuming tasks in the planning process. In that sense, they viewed automation not as a threat but instead as a relief. Interviewee 6 explained:

> "If AI can take over all the repetitive stuff like reminders, lists, writing messages, I'd use it tomorrow" (PC, October 31, 2025).

Similarly, Interviewee 3 thought of:

> "An assistant that understands the plan, remembers what's missing, and would fill the gaps automatically" (PC, October 29, 2025).

This enthusiasm aligns with the perceived usefulness construct from technology acceptance theory during the literature review. For instance, interviewees anticipated tangible time savings and reduced stress, highlighting the efficiency values. In that sense, they viewed AI as a collaborator, instead of a replacement. Exemplary, Interviewee 2 summarized this attitude: "AI should be the one to chase people for replies, not me" (PC, October 29, 2025). This illustrates a pragmatic openness of the target users of the exploratory study.

4.6.2 Control/ Verification Needs & Data Privacy Boundaries

Users want AI to handle coordination but still expect to direct the process. This distinction between delegation and autonomy reappeared throughout the interviews. Even for control, verification, and transparency, the most optimistic interviewees still maintained clear boundaries of control. The assistance of AI-Tools in generating ideas or reminders is valued. However, the potential users still rely on human verification for critical steps when booking or having to pay. Exemplary for that, Interviewee 5 stated, “I’d love it if it suggests things, but I’d never let it book or pay on its own” (PC, October 31, 2025). Further, Interviewee 8 agreed on this: “You still want to check before something is confirmed, otherwise you lose control” (PC, November 2, 2025).

This concern reflects the perceived risk component of technology acceptance theory. It emphasizes that their trust in AI is situational and not binary. Meaning, interviewees are willing to rely on it when the stakes are low. On the other hand, they demand transparency and control for financial or social decisions for the planning process. It refers to a data-security dimension of Interviewee 9: “I’d only connect my PayPal if it’s clearly encrypted and approved by officials” (PC, November 2, 2025). Furthermore, several interviewees noted the AI’s tone and personality in shaping trust. Therefore, Interviewee 4 emphasized:

> “If it talked too stiffly, I would ignore it. I want it to sound like a smart friend, not an accountant” (PC, October 30, 2025).

It underlines that trust is not only built through technical transparency but also through emotional resonance. Users expect an assistant that feels socially intelligent, like an extension of the group’s personality, rather than a detached system.

4.6.3 Group Buy-In and Social Proof for Adoption

Another emergent insight concerns the social nature of adoption and group buy-in. While previous literature often conceptualizes technology acceptance at the individual level, interviewees repeatedly emphasized group buy-in as a prerequisite for sustained use. For that, Interviewee 3 explained:

> “Not everyone is instantly hooked, and you need group buy-in. If I’m convinced, I’d convince my friends too” (PC, October 29, 2025).

Considering that, shared invitations, group tutorials, or referral incentives would probably accelerate group adoption. Contrary, Interviewee 1 added, “I’d try it, but only if the group agrees. It has to work for everyone, not just me” (PC, October 27, 2025). These statements reveal that adopting a new planning tool is a collective and not personal decision. So, trust extends beyond human–machine relations onto group endorsement and proof. This dynamic

mirrors the logic of network effects in platform adoption. Meaning, once the organizer successfully uses the system, it gains credibility within their social circle. Exemplary, Interviewee 7 can be quoted: “If I saw a friend’s event working smoothly with it, I’d sign up immediately” (PC, October 31, 2025). Therefore, the diffusion of AI-based planning tools may depend less on individual persuasion and more on visible group success stories to showcase.

4.6.4 Proof-of-Concept and Trial Requirement

To extend with PoC experiences, like demo events or free trials, individual trust and collective willingness to experiment would be reinforced, as Interviewee 7 stated: “If I saw a friend’s event working smoothly with it, I’d sign up immediately” (PC, October 31, 2025). Following this, interviewees seek AI as a context-aware companion that enhances coordination. So, they accept automation with restrictions, expect transparency when it acts autonomously, and strive for social validation before full adoption. Trust in AI, therefore, emerges as both technical and relational. It depends on system explainability, ethical handling of data, and compatibility with group norms making it a social process of co-adoption that follows patterns like word-of-mouth diffusion in consumer platforms.

4.6.5 Price Sensitivity and Value Threshold

The platforms' target group users were enthusiastic about the idea of making planning events smarter. However, their willingness to pay is restricted under certain conditions. Monetary commitment depended on three interlinked conditions: perceived value and proof of concept, social validation through group buy-in, and fairness between price and functionality. Together, these criteria shape a pragmatic but optimistic view of monetization potential.

About perceived value and PoC, interviewees agreed on the necessity of proven tangible benefits of the platform. It reflects users’ expectations to see before paying. This highlights the “trialability” dimension of technology-adoption research. For instance, Interviewee 7 stated: “I’d pay after a test run. If it solved the messaging chaos once, I’d be convinced” (PC, October 31, 2025). Furthermore, Interviewee 5 emphasized the same threshold: “It has to show real impact, something that saves time and stops confusion” (PC, October 31, 2025). Functionally, they looked for measurable time savings or reductions in stress. Emotionally, value meant restored harmony and smoother collaboration. To link both, Interviewee 2 stated: “If I can book faster and nobody argues, I’d easily spend a bit” (PC, October 29, 2025).

In terms of fair pricing and perceived fairness, interviewees converged on a shared sense of what feels reasonable: between €5 and €20/per event for basic functionality, or even up to

€10–€15 per person if premium features add visible value. According to moral logic in group coordination, pricing should be fair. For instance, Interviewee 6 mentioned:

> "I'd easily spend ten or fifteen euros if it saves hours, but only if everyone pays the same. It must feel fair" (PC, October 31, 2025).

To strengthen, Interviewee 8 stated:

> "It should not feel like another subscription trap and more like paying for peace of mind when it actually works" (PC, November 2, 2025).

Additionally, interviewees valued predictability over complexity, favoring clear, upfront costs, communication, and optional upgrades instead of hidden fees. They associate simplicity with trustworthiness.

Regarding group buy-in and shared willingness to pay, several interviewees explained that, despite perceiving value, they would only contribute financially once the group was aligned. Interviewee 3 reflected on the dynamics of group influence, noting that immediate captivation was not a universal phenomenon and that the attainment of group consensus was a requirement for the initiation of such activities: "If I am convinced, I would advocate for it to the group" (PC, 29 October 2025). Interviewee 1 added: "You can't charge one person for something everyone uses. It must be a group decision" (PC, October 27, 2025). This reveals that willingness to pay is socially constructed. It's shaped by group norms and peer endorsement rather than isolated evaluation. Therefore, adoption and monetization are intertwined: the more cohesive and satisfied a group becomes through use, the more legitimate payment appears. Interviewee 9 put it succinctly: "Once everyone's in, paying is just the last checkbox." (PC, November 2, 2025). In that case, monetization success will depend on how well the product embeds itself in the group's shared sense of value and fairness.

Regarding trust, data, and transaction confidence, trust extends to the payment process itself. Interviewees were cautious about data sharing but open to using familiar, verified payment providers. Exemplary, Interviewee 9 emphasized: "I'd only connect PayPal if it's clearly encrypted and approved" (PC, November 2, 2025). For interviewees, the assurance of secure transactions is synonymous with the professionalism of the platform. A secure payment design becomes part of the overall perception of reliability. For many, the act of paying marks the transition from testing to believing in the tool. These synthesized results portray willingness to pay as conditional co-creation rather than passive consumption.

5. Discussion

The above findings bridge directly into the discussion and its interpretation. The thesis's contribution to research is investigated. Following the RQs, their results will be synthesized with the theoretical lenses of TAM/UTAUT and SDL, providing the groundwork for the business plan and future product-market fit considerations. Lastly, the limitations and future research outlook will be pointed out.

5.1 Research Contribution

This thesis enriches the growing research on how people use AI to make decisions. Additionally, it adds knowledge on how young adults use digital platforms when planning events like pre-marriage parties. Firstly, the study adds to the TAM by showing that perceived usefulness in this area is not just about functionality. Instead, it's strongly linked to social and emotional relief as well. Interviewees judge how useful something is less by how efficiently it works and more by how much it reduces conflict, indecision, and anxiety about planning in groups. This goes along with what was already found by TAM, which mostly looks at how much people can make or how easy things are to use.

Secondly, the study adds value to research on SDL, showing that creating value in event planning is seen as a burden rather than to improve people's lives. While SDL normally assumes customers want to be involved, the interviews show a strong preference for partial delegation to AI. Users still want to be in control of the most important decisions, but they also want to outsource other repetitive work. This suggests that co-creation might not always be valued in all service interactions. Furthermore, it adds important details on the view of customers and shows when reduced involvement becomes important for value.

Thirdly, the study adds to the existing literature on the platform economy by looking at a small but growing market where the way the group acts, what is normally expected, and the influence of friends all effect whether people want to use the platform. The results show that people's willingness to adopt an AI-driven planning platform depends not only on their own attitudes, but also on how much their friends are likely to accept it. This suggests that in the future, when platforms are used for leisure, we should think about whether the group using them is acceptable and whether there are any risks. Other studies on group decision-making have talked about how difficult it can be to coordinate. This thesis uses real-life examples to show how this difficulty affects whether people will use a certain platform or not.

Finally, the study is one of the first to look in detail at how young professionals who are under a lot of pressure think about using AI to plan events. Most studies on AI so far have looked at how it can be used in the workplace, so this research is very interesting as it looks at

how AI can be used by consumers in a social area that hasn't been studied much. They improve existing theories by showing how emotions, society, and the way groups work together affect how people accept technology and what they think of it, in ways that are different from more traditional or purely selfish ways of consuming technology.

5.2 Interpretation and Insights for Product Market Fit

The results of the study indicate a generally high conceptual openness toward an AI-enabled event-planning solution, but they also reveal several barriers that challenge assumptions about immediate product–market fit. Across interviews, three insights in particular stand out: First, the core customer pain is confirmed, but more fragmented than expected. While nearly all interviewees described planning a pop as stressful, the underlying drivers varied considerably, from coordination fatigue to emotional labour to the sheer administrative load of searching and comparing options. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all value proposition may not be sufficient. A platform that only addresses logistical planning could miss customers who are primarily seeking emotional relief or conflict avoidance. Therefore, product–market fit appears achievable, but only if the platform targets the full experience pain, not only the organizational component.

Second, the willingness to adopt AI depends heavily on perceived fairness and transparency towards the group. In that case, interviewees reported concerns that automated recommendations could appear “biased,” “too generic,” or “not representative of the group’s preferences.” They reflect a deeper social tension, where users fear that delegating planning to AI may be interpreted by others as a lack of effort or emotional investment in PMPs. A platform positioned solely as a convenience tool may unintentionally trigger social judgments that limit adoption within friend groups of target users. Therefore, framing the platform as a facilitator rather than a substitute may be crucial.

Third, the platform’s strongest opportunity lies in structured decision-making, not in creativity. Many interviewees widely appreciated AI’s ability to structure workflows and break down complex tasks. However, they were skeptical about AI-generated tours or activity suggestions. This proposes that PMF will rely more on curating human-like, custom flows rather than pushing AI-generated plans. Taken together, these findings imply that PMF is within reach but conditional. The demand clearly exists, yet adoption risks being hindered by group-related identity concerns and the desire to preserve authenticity. Therefore, the platform must deliver high reliability and low visibility. Users want to feel supported but not replaced. As a result, PMF will strengthen if the platform succeeds in aligning with social norms rather than challenging them.

5.3 Implications for Business Plan Design

As this thesis aims to illustrate business model validation for a PMP planning platform in the German market, the implications are found in the business plan (Appendix E). The insights provide several practical implications for designing a viable business model.

From a business-model perspective, these findings imply that the onboarding experience functions as a monetization lever. A short, demonstrably successful use case, such as an automatically coordinated dinner or weekend trip, creates trust that later converts into paid usage. About the area of value proposition and positioning, the platform must position itself not as an AI replacement of human planners but as a collaborative facilitator that enhances group harmony and reduces friction. Highlighting "host empowerment" and "group fairness" can counteract the social concerns identified in the interviews. For that, a successful platform should enable both structure and self-expression, while preserving the social meaning of planning and relieving its burdens.

For the feature roadmap and service architecture, given skepticism around AI-generated creative suggestions, early iterations of the platform should focus on features that were unambiguously valued. Integrating structured to-do lists, transparent budget tools, preference aggregation, and smart conflict-resolution workflows, just to name a few. More creative AI elements, such as journey generation or automatic vendor suggestions, should be introduced progressively and accompanied by clear controls to personalize. This staged approach aligns with the finding of users not wanting to give up control but wanting the administrative burden removed.

Referring to revenue model considerations, many interviewees expressed a preference for transparency in costs and a willingness to pay for timesaving and stress-reducing features. However, there was marked variation in price sensitivity depending on group size, income level, and cultural expectations around PMPs. This heterogeneity suggests that a flexible, tiered pricing model, possibly subscription-based with add-ons, would better reflect diverse user values. Otherwise, freemium tiers with visible added value would be most acceptable for interviewees. Bundling premium coordination features with optional AI recommendation modules could provide both accessibility and differentiation. Therefore, a transparent freemium model offering complimentary coordination essentials and paid AI assistance or vendor integration would most closely align with their anticipated pricing expectations.

For a suitable go-to-market strategy, it should be noted that adoption within groups is socially contagious. Consequently, pricing mechanisms that facilitate shared contribution, such as split payments or group discounts, may not only simplify transactions but also symbolize

collective commitment. If one individual endorses the platform, others are likely to follow. This dynamic supports a “beachhead champion” strategy focused initially on the person responsible for organizing the event. For instance, try it for free at first, and then you could choose to pay a small amount to use it and get some extra features. By that, advanced features, such as AI suggestions and verified vendors, become accessible once the groups are registered. The platform should therefore deliver immediate, tangible value at the organizer’s entry point. Referral mechanisms and group onboarding flows should be designed to reduce perceived social risks, emphasizing collaboration rather than delegation. Furthermore, referral incentives could integrate social proof, like friends receive premium access. Every satisfied organizer acts as a micro-ambassador whose success story drives both adoption and revenue.

For suitable operational and partnership implications, the results also suggest opportunities for partnerships with local vendors, accommodation providers, or travel operators. In other words, reliability problems are as disruptive as internal coordination failures. Therefore, effective digital solutions should integrate verified local partners or automatic confirmation tracking to mitigate these risks. Further, it can be posited that reliable payment processing offers a dual benefit to businesses. Firstly, it ensures financial protection, and secondly, it serves to reinforce confidence in the brand. Since users are skeptical about bias, any planned commercial affiliation must be communicated with extreme clarity to the users. If incentives are not shown, they could weaken trust or harm PMF. Consequently, an operational model to prioritize transparency is needed. To sum up, the business plan should balance technological ambition with social norms and user autonomy. Assuring AI creativity or automation could harm credibility. Furthermore, focusing on supporting structured decisions and emotional relief connects more strongly to user expectations.

5.4 Limitations & Future Research Outlook

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, most of the people in the sample have a lot of education, and many of them work in consulting, technology, or finance. These people probably know more about AI, think more carefully about their plans, and are more skilled with computers than most people. This means that the results may show that more people are open to AI than they really are, and that people who are less open are not included in the results. Future research should therefore include a wider range of samples, particularly people with less digital experience or different cultural planning rules.

Second, the conducted research integrates target user interviews about what people plan to do, not what they actually do. Whilst respondents were able to articulate their preferences, they may encounter difficulties when confronted with actual planning issues. This emphasizes

that people's acceptance of AI depends on the situation. Decisions about usage can change. Especially when financial costs, group disagreements, or time pressure become important. That's why further research should be experimental, observing real-life interactions with a prototype of a PMP event-planning platform.

Thirdly, although the study uses well-known theories like TAM and SDL, it does not put these theories to the test by looking at real data. The qualitative design lets you understand a lot, but it doesn't let you draw conclusions about what causes things. In the future, we could use a survey or a special model to test which factors (social or functional) influence the adoption of AI for group events.

Fourth, the study looks only at things that happen before the wedding. While this provides a clear context, it may also limit how widely the information can be used. The way groups plan events like company days out, friend trips, or community gatherings can be very different. If the reasons for adoption across different types of events are compared, it could be derived how the situation affects how useful people think AI is and how they feel about it. Therefore, the key differentiator is about theoretical, as opposed to prototype-driven usage behavior.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis examines how an AI-driven platform for PMPs could meaningfully reduce coordination chaos, cognitive load, and social friction in the German market. Guided by two research questions, the study integrates platform strategy, technology adoption, and business model innovation. Additionally, empirical data from ten qualitative interviews with professionally active Millennials and Gen Z are considered. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the technological, behavioral, and experiential factors that determine if a multi-sided event-planning platform can be viable and desirable for PMPs. Regarding RQ1, the literature points out that a platform's success depends on combining the following core evidence streams. First, research on the DPE shows that ecosystems succeed when they minimize coordination costs, leverage network effects, and establish clear administration and interoperability structures. Second, technology acceptance research highlights that adoption in socially coordinated contexts depends on both perceived usefulness and ease of use, as well as on trust, fairness, transparency, and group-level legitimacy. Third, literature about BMI and SBMI emphasizes that long-term growth depends on aligning value creation, revenue mechanisms, and stakeholder collaboration with responsible data. Together, these insights signal that an AI-driven event-planning platform must integrate structural (ecosystem coordination), behavioral (trust- and group-oriented adoption), and strategic (sustainable value-sharing) evidence into a technological and business design.

Regarding RQ2, the empirical findings reveal that PMP planning is shaped by a blend of emotional, social, and functional values. Users want harmony, fairness, and transparency in group decision-making, while wanting to reduce the emotional labour, cognitive effort, and administrative workload associated with planning. These values translate into a preference for structural and smooth features rather than fully automated solutions. Across interviews, interviewees showed a strong desire for centralized communication, transparent budgeting and payments, equal task visibility, reliable vendor coordination, automated reminders, and preference aggregation tools. In parallel, they are expecting to have control over decisions involving personal meaning or group identity. Not to forget, adoption willingness depends on AI remaining low-visibility, supportive rather than substitutive, and consistent with existing social norms around fairness and authenticity. So, a viable platform must prioritize coordination facilitation, emotional workload reduction, and collaborative transparency instead of generic or prescriptive AI-generated outputs.

Taken together, this thesis contributes to the understanding of AI-enabled, consumer-facing platforms by demonstrating that technological elegance alone is insufficient in social use

cases. Instead, platform acceptance develops from aligning ecosystem design, user trust, and social value creation. To sum up, these insights provide a foundation for designing PMP platforms that respect group dynamics, preserve human agency, and apply AI in ways that reduce friction without undermining authenticity. For researchers, the findings highlight the need for further investigation into group-level adoption processes. Further, it emphasizes gaps in research on emotional workload outsourcing and responsible AI integration in leisure-oriented contexts. Even though the qualitative scope of the study is limited and a concentrated target sample, it offers an initial evidence base for designing AI-supported event-planning solutions. That's why it outlines promising pathways for future research.

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V. Appendix A: Author & derived Value Mapping across Conceptual Model Layers, Source: Figure 1 Conceptual Model 1

Model Layer	Core Authors	Main Theoretical Contribution	Design Implication for Event Planning Platform
(3)	Acs et al. (2021); Katz & Shapiro (1994); Jovanovic et al. (2022); Kenney & Zysman (2016); Jacobides et al. (2018); Rovenskaya et al. (2025); Rysman (2009); Rochet & Tirole (2003)	Defines how digital infrastructures, network effects, and feedback loops enable coordination and market tipping; identifies power centralization, ecosystem orchestration, and complex system adaptation.	Design the platform as an AI-driven orchestrator that manages multi-stakeholder coordination through data analytics, transparency, and adaptive governance; embed interoperability to prevent dominance traps.
(2)	Davis (1987); Venkatesh et al. (2003); Gonzalez-Tamayo et al. (2024); Pramanik & Jana (2025); Omar et al. (2021); Sjukriana et al. (2025); Brodbeck et al. (2021); Tan (2021)	Explains individual and collective acceptance depend on perceived usefulness, effort, trust, transparency, & social belonging; highlights post-pandemic risk perception and group decision dynamics.	Integrate trust-building interfaces, ethical AI transparency, and collaborative decision features; enable real-time coordination tools that reduce cognitive load and foster group alignment.
(1)	Teece (2010); Zott & Amit (2010); Zott et al. (2011); Foss & Saebi (2017); Johnson et al. (2008); Bohnsack et al. (2022); Li et al. (2023)	Defines Business Model Innovation (BMI) and Sustainable BMI (SBMI) as system-level redesigns aligning technology, governance, and stakeholder collaboration.	Develop a sustainable business model that links value creation with data ethics and user co-creation; ensure revenue and governance mechanisms reinforce long-term ecosystem trust and inclusion.

VI. Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide, Source: Synthesis of Literature Review

Research Objective:

To explore the customer values, pain points, and desired features of potential users to inform the design of an AI-driven event-planning platform for group events such as PMP

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Interview Type: Semi-structured (in-depth, conversational)

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling

Target Group: Millennials and Gen Z (aged 25–35) with experience in planning or participating in group events; (former) professionals in high-pressure industries (e.g., consulting, tech, finance, or marketing).

Interview Setting: Online, MS Teams; audio recorded with Interviewee consent.

Structure: Five sections (A–E) to ensure coverage of key topics while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions.

Section A: Introduction and Context (Approx. 10 minutes)

Purpose: Establish rapport, explain research purpose, and gather background information.

Guiding Questions:

1. Please briefly tell me about yourself, who you are, what you do, and where you live & how we met.
2. How often are you involved in organizing group events or trips with friends?
3. Have you ever organized or helped plan a group event? For example, a bachelor(ette) party - if yes, what was your role in the process and how did you feel?

Section B: Event-Planning Experience (Approx. 10 minutes)

Purpose: Understand current behaviors, routines, and approaches to planning events.

Guiding Questions:

4. Can you describe the most recent group event you planned or participated in (type, size, location)?
5. What were your main goals for the event? (e.g., fun, bonding, surprise, relaxation)
6. How did you start the planning process? What were your first steps?
7. Which tools or applications did you use for communication, budgeting, and decision-making within the group? (e.g., WhatsApp, Excel, Doodle, Pinterest, Splitwise)?

Probes:

"Can you give a concrete example?"

"How did that make you feel?"

"Why do you think that was challenging?"

Section C: Pain Points and Underlying Values (Approx. 10 minutes)

Purpose: Identify emotional drivers, frustrations, and core values guiding the planning process.

Guiding Questions:

8. What specific parts of planning felt most stressful or chaotic/time-consuming, and how did that affect your motivation to keep organizing?
9. Were there any conflicts or misalignments within the group (e.g., budget, preferences, communication style)?
10. If you could change one thing about how such events are organized today, what would it be?
11. What do you personally value most when planning an event? (e. g. efficiency, creativity, group harmony, personalization, or something else)
12. How important is it for you to delegate or automate certain planning tasks?

Probes:

"Can you give a concrete example?"

"Can you describe a situation where coordination didn't go as planned?

Section D: Platform Expectations and Digital Behavior (Approx. 10 minutes)

Purpose: Explore digital habits, openness toward technology, and expectations for an AI-driven event-planning platform.

Guiding Questions:

13. How do you currently find inspiration or ideas for events (e.g., social media, online forums, friends)?
14. Have you ever used a dedicated event-planning tool or website? If not, why not?
15. Imagine a platform that uses artificial intelligence to plan group events. What features or functions would be most useful for you? (e. g. group polls, budget calculator, itinerary generator, automated booking, payment split, shared to-do list).
16. Which tasks would you trust AI to handle, and which would you prefer to control manually?

Probes:

"What would make you feel comfortable using AI in this context?"

"Do you have any concerns about data privacy or creativity limits?"

Section E: Reflection and Closing (Approx. 5–10 minutes)

Purpose: Assess adoption potential, price sensitivity, and overall perceptions.

Guiding Questions:

17. If such a platform existed and worked reliably, how likely would you be to use it for your next group event?
18. Would you consider paying for this service (e.g., small subscription or per-event fee)?
19. What factors would make you recommend it to others? (connect to Q10 &11)
20. Looking back at your experiences, what advice would you give to someone planning a similar event?

Closing Statement:

"Thank you very much for your time and insights. Your input will help identify how event-planning platforms can better reflect users' needs and values."

Notes for Interviewer:

- Follow interviewees' natural storytelling; maintain an open, empathetic tone.
- Allow flexibility for spontaneous digressions that reveal motivations or frustrations.
- Take short notes on emotional cues or emphasis for later thematic coding.
- Ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all responses.

VII. Appendix C: Coding Tree, Source: Interview data & Synthesis of Literature Review

Main Category	Sub-Code	Derived From	Definition / Coding Rule	Inclusion / Exclusion Criteria	Illustrative Quote (from transcripts)
1) Customer Values & Social Experience	Emotional Experience	Literature (TAM / Value Theory)	Desire to create positive, memorable emotions for the honouree and the group.	Include any mention of joy, surprise, celebration, or satisfaction with group memories. Exclude technical talk about tools.	"It's about making my brother happy and giving him a memorable evening." (P6, personal communication, Oct 31, 2025)
	Group Harmony & Togetherness	Literature (DPE / Service Value)	Need for balance, inclusion, and shared enjoyment in group decision-making.	Include references to fairness, inclusion, and conflict avoidance. Exclude financial fairness (Budget Transparency).	"It's important that everyone feels included otherwise it ruins the mood before it even starts." (P5, Oct 31, 2025)
	Efficiency & Time Saving	Literature (TAM - Perceived Usefulness)	Expectation that tools and structures save time and reduce organizational effort.	Include statements about speed, clarity, reduced workload. Exclude automation wishes (Desired Features).	"If it's easy and structured, I'll help again; if it's chaotic, never again." (P2, Oct 29, 2025)
	Personalization & Fit to Group	Literature (Value Co-Creation)	Wish to adapt activities to honouree preferences and group type.	Include tailoring of themes, intensity, tone. Exclude technical automation details.	"We tried to make the weekend exactly her style - not too wild but special." (P4, Oct 30, 2025)
	Planning Enjoyment & Identity	Empirical (Inductive Refinement)	Organizers experience pride, fun, or self-expression through planning.	Include positive emotions or self-description as "planner/project manager." Exclude stress complaints.	"It's an honour and a lot of fun - a mix of high standards and enjoyable execution." (P3, Oct 29, 2025)
2) Pain Points in Coordination & Planning	Coordination Chaos & WhatsApp Overload	Literature (DPE - Coordination Costs)	Fragmented communication via chats, causing confusion and message loss.	Include mentions of long threads, parallel groups, lost decisions. Exclude tool suggestions.	"After a few days nobody knew which message mattered anymore." (P4, Oct 30, 2025)
	Low Commitment & Uneven Responsiveness	Literature (Group Dynamics)	Interviewees' delayed replies or disengagement hinder progress.	Include late responses, no votes, ignored messages. Exclude vendor delays.	"Some people read the message but never reply, and then you can't book anything." (P5, Oct 31, 2025)
	Budget Uncertainty & Transparency Issues	Literature (TAM - Trust; DPE)	Lack of clarity about total cost and contribution fairness.	Include budget confusion, pre-financing burdens. Exclude vendor prices.	"I paid around €400 up front because others were slow, and that killed my motivation." (P2, Oct 29, 2025)
	Cognitive Overload	Empirical Refinement (+ DPE)	Mental fatigue from juggling multiple apps, calendars, and decisions.	Include mentions of too many tools or cross-domain confusion. Exclude emotional fatigue (Role Imbalance).	"I'd love all my calendars - work, private, sports - in one place; checking three delays my reply." (P10, Nov 3, 2025)
	Vendor Communication & Reliability Gaps	Empirical (Inductive Detail)	Suppliers/venues unresponsive or unreliable, creating insecurity.	Include late replies, cancellations. Exclude internal group issues.	"I contacted three venues… two never replied." (P8, Nov 2, 2025)
	Role Imbalance & Emotional Load on Organizers	Empirical (Inductive Refinement)	Repeated responsibility of few organizers causing fatigue or frustration.	Include statements about unequal workload. Exclude general coordination talk.	"We were supposed to be three planners, but one barely helped, so the rest fell on us." (P1, Oct 27, 2025)

3) Desired Platform Features & Expectations	Centralized Overview & Shared Workspace	Literature (DPE; Platform Orchestration)	Single digital space integrating chat, budget, and tasks.	Include all-in-one tool wishes. Exclude specific AI functions.	"A board where everything sits together -dates, money, ideas." (P4, Oct 30, 2025)
	Automation / Smart Reminders / Polls	Literature (TAM - Ease of Use)	Automated follow-ups, calendar sync, and reminders to ensure engagement.	Include mentions of reminders, auto-polls. Exclude AI creativity.	"If the tool could send reminders automatically, half of the stress would disappear." (P9, Nov 2, 2025)
	Budgeting & Cost Splitting Functions	Literature (Transparency in Digital Payments)	Integrated cost tracking, live payment status, budget alerts.	Include payment overview, fairness discussions. Exclude external apps.	"A live bar that shows who paid and who hasn't -no chasing needed." (P5, Oct 31, 2025)
	AI-Generated Suggestions & Checklists	Literature (AI Usefulness)	AI proposes ideas, timelines, and ready-made checklists.	Include AI giving concrete suggestions. Exclude creative aesthetic (Inspiration).	"An assistant that thinks with you, not for you." (P8, Nov 2, 2025)
	Inspiration & Creative Discovery	Literature (Customer Experience)	Curated visual ideas or partner content integrated into the planner.	Include aesthetic features, moodboards. Exclude automation logic.	"You scroll Pinterest, screenshot, send to WhatsApp -it should stay in one place." (P3, Oct 29, 2025)
	Delegation / Role Assignment / Task Transparency	Empirical (Inductive Refinement)	Functions supporting task distribution, accountability, and visibility.	Include mentions of role suggestions, division of responsibilities. Exclude general coordination.	"Split responsibility by topic -accommodation, activities, travel -so not everything sits on one person." (P9, Nov 2, 2025)
4) Attitudes Toward AI, Trust & Adoption	Openness to AI as Assistant	Literature (TAM / AI Acceptance)	Curiosity and positive expectations toward AI for planning help.	Include explicit willingness to use AI. Exclude control concerns.	"If AI takes over the repetitive stuff, I'd use it tomorrow." (P6, Oct 31, 2025)
	Control & Verification Needs	Literature (TAM - Perceived Risk)	Desire to approve AI outputs and maintain human oversight.	Include review, confirmation requests. Exclude privacy issues.	"I'd love if it suggests things, but I'd never let it book or pay on its own." (P5, Oct 31, 2025)
	Data Privacy Boundaries	Literature (TAM - Trust; Ethics)	Reluctance to share sensitive data; expectation of transparency.	Include data-security remarks. Exclude pricing.	"I'd only connect PayPal if it's clearly encrypted and approved." (P9, Nov 2, 2025)
	Price Sensitivity & Value Threshold	Literature (SBMI - Fair Pricing)	Assessment of acceptable cost in relation to perceived usefulness.	Include price expectations, fairness. Exclude payment methods.	"I'd easily spend ten or fifteen euros if it saves hours." (P6, Oct 31, 2025)
	Proof-of-Concept & Trial Requirement	Literature (TAM - Experience Trust)	Need to test or see demo before full adoption.	Include trial requests, referrals. Exclude general curiosity.	"I'd pay after a test run; if it solved the messaging chaos once, I'd be convinced." (P7, Oct 31, 2025)
	Group Buy-In & Social Proof for Adoption	Empirical (Inductive Refinement)	Adoption likely only if entire group uses or peers recommend the tool.	Include mentions of group agreement, referrals, peer pressure. Exclude trust in AI itself.	"Not everyone is instantly hooked, and you need group buy-in -if I'm convinced, I'd advocate for it." (P3, Oct 29, 2025)

VIII. Appendix D: Summary Table of Interviewees, Source: Interview data

ID	Gender, Age, Location	Role/Profession (Industry), Salary & Experience	Event Experience	Role in Event(s)	Core Values	Main Pain Points	Planning Tools Used	Group Size	Likelihood of Platform Use	Short Profile
1	F, 29, Cologne	Senior Consultant (Public Sector), ~ €60K / >3 years	~ 12 events/year incl. multiple bachelorettes in the past	Co-organizer / initiator	Structure, personalization, group harmony	Delayed replies, unclear roles, chaos	WhatsApp, Google Docs, Pinterest, ChatGPT, Doodle	6–10	~ 100%	Structured initiator valuing personalization & harmony.
2	M, 27, Berlin	Business Dev. Mngr. (Energy), ex-Consulting MD ~ €80K / >4 years	~ 10–12 events/year no prev. bachelor party exp.	Lead planner	Commitment, transparency	Manual research, low commitment, tool fragmentation	WhatsApp, Google, Skyscanner, Airbnb, PayPal, Splitwise, Doodle, Notes	6–8	~ 70%	Pragmatic planner seeking commitment & transparency.
3	F, 26, Cologne	Business Dev. Mngr. (Interior Design), ex-Consultant ~ €65K / >3 years	> 12 events/year incl. multiple bachelorettes in the past	Main & co-organizer	Creativity, efficiency, budget discipline	Budget limits, group logistics	WhatsApp, Excel, Canva, Pinterest, Instagram, ChatGPT, Shared Album	12–15	~ 90–95%	Structured-creative organizer balancing quality & efficiency.
4	F, 33, Cologne	Sr. Marketing Mngr. (E-Commerce), ~ €58K / >5 years	~ 10 events/year incl. multiple bachelorettes in the past	Interviewee / partial organizer	Clarity, reliability, transparency	Message overload, differing opinions	WhatsApp, Excel, Splitwise, ChatGPT, Pinterest	4–10	~ 80–100%	Communicative team player favoring structure & automation.
5	F, 25, Berlin	Consultant (Public Funding), ~ €60K / >2 years	~ 4 large events/year incl. multiple bachelorettes in the past	Peripheral and / main Co-organizer	Structure, clarity, delegation	Unanswered messages, no shared overview	WhatsApp, Notes, Amazon, Etsy, Depot, Pinterest, Instagram	~6	~ 90%	Organized planner valuing structure & transparency.
6	M, 31, Cologne	Sr. Consultant (Public Sector) ~ €70K / >3 years	~ 6 events/year incl. bachelor party exp. in the past	Co-organizer	Efficiency, fun, automation	WhatsApp chaos, manual coordination	WhatsApp, PayPal, Splitwise, Google, Phone	~20	~ 100%	Efficiency-driven planner focused on automation.
7	M, 32, Cologne	Sr. Consultant (Pharma), ~ €70K / >3 years	~ 4 large events/year incl. bachelor party exp. in the past	Interviewee / contributor	Flexibility, clarity, efficiency	Date coordination, no automation	WhatsApp, PayPal, Google Maps, TripAdvisor, Airbnb, Experiences, AI Tools	5–8	~ 30-80% if PoC exists	Analytical, tech-savvy Interviewee valuing efficiency.
8	M, 25, Munich	Consultant (Boutique), ~ €90K / >2 years	~ 5–6 events/year no bachelor party exp.	Organizer / initiator	Efficiency, quality, peer trust	Vendor unresponsive, delayed commitments	WhatsApp, Google Maps, Airbnb, Booking, Instagram, Search	4–50	~ 70–90%	Pragmatic planner valuing peer recommendations.
9	M, 30, Cologne	Sr. Consultant (Customer Relations) ex-Consulting MD, ~ €75K / >4 years	~ 4–5 events/year incl. bachelor party exp. in the past	Co-organizer	Structure, efficiency, role clarity	Slow decisions, unclear budgets	WhatsApp, Splitwise, PayPal, Teams, Airbnb, ChatGPT	5–10	~ 80%	Structured consultant valuing frameworks & AI support.

10	F, 26, Cologne	Consulting Manager (Marketing & Growth) ~ €75K / >3 years	~ 4 events/year no prev. bachelorettes exp.	Organizer / Co-organizer	Harmony, efficiency, creativity	Scheduling, low commitment	ChatGPT, Excel, Canva, Tricount, SpielerPlus, WhatsApp	10–20	~ 40–80% if PoC exists	Digitally skilled, structured organizer seeking synchronization.

IX. Appendix E: Business Plan Design, Source: Interview data & Synthesis of Literature Review

Note: The Business Plan was generated with the help of large language models to consolidate the results of the literature review and empirical findings into a functional business plan to pursue. It aims to answer how AI can mitigate coordination friction and cognitive load

A.1 Executive Summary

PMP is a digital platform designed to simplify the planning of pre-marriage parties (JGAs) and similar group events for Gen Z and Millennial users. The platform combines:

- a planning cockpit,
- an AI-assisted co-pilot, and
- a curated supplier marketplace

to reduce time, stress, and coordination effort for organizers. The business plan is directly informed by the results of the qualitative interviews (N=10 high-performing young professionals). Interviewees consistently reported:

- Significant time pressure when planning events
- Coordination overload through WhatsApp, Excel, Instagram, and multiple channels
- Fear of failure and social judgment if the event disappoints
- Demand for centralization, transparency, and decision support
- High willingness to use AI for idea generation, structuring, and optimization, but with final human control
- Acceptance of moderate fees and supplier commissions if service quality and time savings are visible

These insights establish problem–solution fit and shape the foundation of this business plan.

A.2 Research Question Alignment

This business plan explicitly integrates findings from the thesis' research questions:

A.2.1 RQ1 - Customer Insights

Interviews revealed core user pain points, desired values, behavioral patterns, and emotional drivers. Findings fed into:

- Problem definition
- Target customer segmentation
- Value Proposition

- Customer Journey
- Feature and AI design choices

A.2.2 RQ2 - Solution & Monetization Design

Interviews clarified expectations for:

- AI usage boundaries
- Payment preferences
- Transparency needs
- Expected service depth
- Premium willingness

These findings informed:

- Product architecture
- Revenue model
- Pricing strategy
- Operational layers

This ensures the business plan is empirically grounded and academically defensible.

A.3 Problem Definition (Interview-Driven)

A.3.1 Time & Cognitive Overload

Participants described planning as "a second job", often taking multiple weekends and evenings. They experienced:

- Over-researching
- Choice overload
- Mental exhaustion

Implication: PMP must substantially reduce planning time through automation and curation.

A.3.2 Coordination Chaos & Group Politics

Interviews revealed recurring issues:

- Scattered information across many channels
- Unclear responsibilities
- Disagreements around budget & preferences
- Emotional pressure to keep peace in the group

Implication: PMP must centralize information, structure communication, and support group alignment (polls, shared overviews).

A.3.3 Fear of Failure & Reputation Risk

Organizers feared being blamed if:

- The trip is boring
- The accommodation disappoints
- Budget is exceeded
- Logistics break down

Implication: PMP must create reliability, transparency, and professional feel (curated suppliers, clear price breakdowns).

A.3.4 Fragmented Market & Lack of Trusted Overview

Interviewees described switching between:

- Google
- Instagram
- Blogs
- Airbnb
- Activity sites

Implication: A vertical marketplace tailored to JGAs provides strong value and reduces the perceived risk of "missing something important".

A.4 Target Customer Segments (Interview-Driven)

A.4.1 Primary User: The Organizer

Consistent characteristics from interviews:

- Age 24–35
- High-performing jobs (consulting, finance, tech, marketing)
- Organizational responsibility within friend group
- Time-poor, stress-prone, high expectations
- Strong desire to manage reputation and avoid failure

A.4.2 The Group Participants

Interviewees highlighted that groups often include:

- Mixed income levels
- Different comfort thresholds
- Preference for fair, democratic decision-making

Implication: PMP must support transparency & group inclusion to avoid interpersonal conflict.

A.4.3 Early Adopter Profile

Based on interview patterns:

- Experienced JGA organizers
- Frequent planners (JGA, birthdays, reunions)
- Value structured tools & clarity
- Comfortable with AI as long as final decision remains human

This segment supports early traction and strong word-of-mouth.

A.5 Value Proposition (Derived from Interviews)

A.5.1 Core Value Proposition

“Plan a unique, risk-free and conflict-free pre-marriage party in hours instead of weeks - with tailored AI support and curated suppliers.”

A.5.2 Specific Values Identified in Interviews

Direct mapping from qualitative insights:

Interview Value	Platform Response
Convenience & time-saving	AI suggestion engine, pre-built itineraries, auto-generated lists
Transparency & budget clarity	Real-time per-person cost breakdown
Social harmony	Structured voting, transparent choices
Uniqueness & customization	Vibe-based AI recommendations, personalized itineraries
Reliability & reduced risk	Vetted suppliers with clear reviews and fixed prices

A.6 Product Architecture

A.6.1 Planning Cockpit (Free Tier)

Interview insights show organizers require:

- Centralization
- Structure
- Simple collaboration

Thus, the cockpit includes:

- Event canvas (destination, dates, budget, group size)
- Group invites without account requirement
- Voting tools
- Budget & timeline overview

A.6.2 AI Planning Co-Pilot (Premium Layer)

Interviewees approve AI if:

- AI does preliminary work
- They remain in control
- Suggestions feel transparent

Features include:

- Auto-generated itineraries
- Adjustments via natural language (“more budget-friendly”, “more relaxed”)
- Smart constraint reasoning
- Risk mitigation suggestions (“Plan B for bad weather”)

A.6.3 Curated Supplier Marketplace

Interviewees repeatedly referenced fear of choosing “bad” or “touristy” options. Thus, PMP includes:

- Vetted suppliers
- Standardized pricing
- Availability integration
- Clear cancellation policies

A.7 Customer Journey (Directly Derived From Interview Pain Points)

A.7.1 Stage 1 - Trigger & Search

- Engagement announcement triggers stress
- Organizers begin fragmented research

PMP Value: Inspiration landing pages + templates reduce initial overwhelm.

A.7.2 Stage 2 - Scoping

Interviewees prefer **guiding questions**, not blank forms.

PMP Value: AI-assisted question flow defines key constraints.

A.7.3 Stage 3 - Option Generation & Group Alignment

Most stressful stage per interviews.

PMP Value:

- AI-generated 2-3 scenarios
- Structured voting
- Automatic conflict resolution suggestions

A.7.4 Stage 4 - Booking & Payment

Interviewees hate:

- Collecting money
- Paying high amounts upfront
- Managing spreadsheet budgets

PMP Value:

- Per-person payment links
- Automated reminders
- Consolidated booking handling

A.7.5 Stage 5 - Pre-Trip & On-Site

Interviewees requested:

- Clear schedules
- Restaurant suggestions
- Backup options

PMP Value:

- AI-generated pack lists
- Smart recommendations
- Emergency concierge option

A.8 Business Model & Monetization Strategy (Interview-Validated)

A.8.1 Revenue Streams

1. **Supplier Commission (10–20%)**: Interviewees prefer indirect payment mechanisms. → This creates low friction.
2. **PMP Plus (Trip-Based Premium Tier)**: Suggested price range from interviews: 39–79 € per trip feels acceptable for significant time savings.
3. **Concierge Services (High-Touch Offering)**: High willingness to pay for high-stakes trips.

A.8.2 Pricing Principles (Interview-Driven)

- Clear communication is essential; hidden fees = strong deal-breaker.
- Group-split fees are perceived as fairer than lump-sum organizer payments.
- AI premium is accepted only if value is visible early (scenario previews, saved hours).

A.9 Go-To-Market Strategy

A.9.1 Early Focus Market

Germany → Identified in interviews as market with:

- High JGA budgets
- Strong willingness to outsource mental load
- Culturally high stress around "perfect event planning

A.9.2 Acquisition Channels (Interview-Validated)

Interviews show common behaviour:

- Asking friends for templates
- Instagram / TikTok searches
- Google search queries ("JGA planen", "JGA Lissabon", etc.)

Thus:

- SEO trip templates
- Influencer partnerships
- Referral programs
- University & employer partnerships (consultancies, tech firms)

A.9.3 Retention Drivers

Interviewees often plan more than one annual group trip. Thus:

- Loyalty program
- Automated re-engagement ("Time to plan Lena's birthday trip?")

A.10 Operations & Technology

A.10.1 Technology Stack

- Web-first MVP
- AI layer (LLM + constraint solver using budget, preferences, activities availability)
- Supplier backend (inventory management)

A.10.2 Operations

- Supplier acquisition team for quality control
- Trip Designer team to handle concierge requests
- Customer support for pre-trip and on-trip issues

A.10.3 Quality & Safety

Interviewees emphasized risk avoidance. Thus:

- Vetting suppliers
- Verified reviews
- Clear cancellation terms

A.11 Financial Model Logic (Conceptual)

A.11.1 Key Assumptions (Interview-Driven)

- Average group size: 7–10 people
- Average spend: 250–500 € per person
- Organizers highly value time savings (1–2 full weekends saved)
- Moderate willingness to pay for premium tiers

A.12 Funding Strategy (Germany/Portugal)

Suitable "Förderprogramme":

- EXIST-Gründungsstipendium: ideal for early PMP development
- Regional grants (NRW, Niedersachsen, etc.)
- Potential alignment with digital transformation funding

A.13 Risk Analysis (Interview-Grounded)

A.13.1 Low AI Trust & Need for Transparency

Interviewees want control, not automation.

Mitigation:

- Explain AI reasoning
- Allow easy adjustments
- Provide human override

A.13.2 Supply-Side Instability

Interviewees emphasized fear of poor suppliers.

Mitigation:

- Curation
- Standardized agreements
- Redundancy in each destination

A.13.3 Seasonality of JGAs

Mitigation:

Expand into birthday trips, reunions, team events.

A.13.4 Coordination Complexity

Mitigation:

Automate payment flows, reminders, and voting.

A.14 Milestones Roadmap

- 0–6 months: MVP, supplier onboarding, pilot trips
- 6–18 months: AI refinement, launch PMP Plus, expand destinations
- 18–36 months: National scaling, B2B event verticals, seed fundraising