

Louvain School of Management

How do perceived trust, social value, and pricing fairness influence the adoption and early network effects of an intergenerational two-sided platform (Genly) in a university-town ecosystem?

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Academic year 2025-2026
Master [120] in Business Engineering
Daytime schedule

Statements on use of generative AI

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The content of our master's thesis is our original output, even if we used generative AI to help prepare it.	YES
We master the theories, tools and methods that we use for the thesis.	YES
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Foreword

The original idea of creating a platform facilitating intergenerational interactions was developed one year before the writing of this thesis as part of the course “Platform Strategies” led by Paul Belleflamme. In this context, over a period of 6 weeks, we pushed our reflection on the creation and development of a platform, from which the idea was built. We were then encouraged to develop it further as a research project. It thus seemed natural for us to write about this subject.

Our writing and research journey was a work of coordination across time zones, each of us completing our internship on different continents as part of our master’s degree. Thanks to a structure established very early in our process, we overcame this challenge and managed to find a good balance.

This thesis was enriched by numerous exchanges with stakeholders in the field but also by a very useful theoretical support, the book *Platform Strategies: A Guidebook for Entrepreneurs in the Platform Economy* by Paul Belleflamme and Nicolas Neysen. It guided us in our structure, our approach to understanding the platform environment and all the challenges related.

Artificial intelligence was used to ensure the text flowed smoothly. The goal was to rephrase sentences to ensure correct syntax. It was also used as a tool for translating self-written text into English.

We would like to thank those that made this work possible. Firstly, thank you to our supervisor Paul Belleflamme for the trust he placed in us and the valuable advice he gave us throughout the process. Next, we would like to thank our classmates with whom we started working on this project last year. We are grateful for all the participants, students, seniors, and institutions for their contributions and their valuable insights. Finally, we would like to thank our parents who dedicated their time to proofreading.

We hope that the findings presented in this work will provide a contribution to the intergenerational studies and will lead to new scopes of research.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Local context and demographic paradox

Ottignies–Louvain-la-Neuve is a municipality located in Walloon Brabant and presents a distinctive demographic configuration within the Belgian context. This stems from the presence of Louvain-la-Neuve, a university town specifically designed around UCLouvain, an institution which alone hosts approximately 23,500 students on its main campus (Université Catholique de Louvain, 2025). When including other higher education institutions established in the city, such as the Institut des Arts de Diffusion, EPHEC, Haute École Léonard de Vinci, HELHa, and Fabula Campus, students constitute a significant share of the municipality's population. The municipality counts only 31,766 registered residents (Statbel, 2025). This figure underestimates the true student presence, as most students study in Louvain-la-Neuve without being registered as residents (Noppe, 2024).

At the same time, a demographic trend stands in contrast to the fact that there is a strong student dynamic. In Ottignies-Louvain-La-Neuve, the proportion of residents aged 65 and over has risen from 6.4% of the population in 1992 to 20.9% in 2025 (Iweps, 2025).

Two distinct generations coexist geographically within the same place and create a context that is particularly relevant when investigating opportunities for intergenerational value creation. This gap is the starting point of this thesis: how can Genly, an intergenerational two-sided platform, facilitate meaningful exchanges between students and seniors?

1.2. Theoretical framework of needs

Beyond their demographic presence, students and seniors experience structurally similar, though contextually distinct needs. To analyse these needs, this research draws on established frameworks from human motivational theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological drivers of well-being as well as on broader perspectives on higher-order needs such as those highlighted in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs.

This research conceptualises the experiences of students and seniors through two interconnected dimensions: (1) the need for competence and guidance, and (2) the need for belonging and meaningful connection. The first dimension reflects the desire to develop skills,

to be able to manage uncertainty, while the second captures the importance of social integration and a sense of purpose that comes from valuable interactions.

1.2.1. Students' need for competence and guidance

Among students, the need for competence and guidance manifests in academic, professional, and personal dimensions. After completing high school, students are required to determine the direction of their future careers by choosing a college major. This is a challenging decision that many students are not prepared to make with confidence. Vocational indecision is widely understood as a multidimensional phenomenon: it may come from a lack of self-knowledge such as uncertainty about their interests, values, or abilities and a lack of information about career opportunities, or difficulty integrating this information into a coherent choice. In this context, students require both internal reflections and external guidance (Gati et al., 1996). Major milestones in students' academic journeys can also be particularly challenging and may leave students feeling overwhelmed, for instance, writing a final thesis, securing a good internship, or preparing for the job market. What makes this particularly difficult is not only the complexity of the decisions themselves, but the absence of the right people who have already navigated professional trajectories. Career indecision can increase anxiety regarding employability and reduce psychological well-being (Nalbantoglu Yilmaz & Çetin Gündüz, 2018).

In this context, mentoring plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty by providing career-related information, emotional support, and opportunities for social learning and helps support student development (Nabi et al., 2024). Students can better clarify their goals and develop greater confidence in their decisions, thanks to interactions with more experienced individuals. Mentoring also provides role modelling and psychosocial support, elements that are valuable during the transitional and disorienting period between academic life and professional entry (Gati et al., 1996).

1.2.2. Students' need for belonging and meaningful connections

Students also have a need for belonging and meaningful connection. University environments are often perceived as an exciting place to be socially surrounded; however, empirical study suggests that a significant share of students experience loneliness or only superficial interactions. This feeling is further reinforced by structural elements in the day-to-day student life such as large auditoriums, different schedules, student jobs after class or even seeing

friends only in parties. Research demonstrates that loneliness is primarily driven by difficulties in forming meaningful relationships and achieving social integration, rather than by physical isolation alone (Diehl et al., 2018). Therefore, this highlights how it goes hand in hand with the feeling of not having enough deep connections with people. The transitional life phases such as entering university or relocating from home, having new friends, or living with unknown people are some factors that contribute to this situation. As a result, students may find themselves surrounded by people yet still lack deep, authentic exchanges with them.

1.2.3. Seniors' need for competence and guidance

Among seniors, rapid digital transformation generates a need for competence and guidance. The digital divide is disproportionately affecting seniors: in 2021, the European Commission (2023) reported that only 25% of individuals aged 65 and over possessed above-basic digital skills. This structural gap is further reinforced by the continuous evolution of technologies, including the growing integration of artificial intelligence into everyday tools and services. For many seniors, this growing change might be challenging, because adapting to new digital environments requires constant learning and cognitive effort (Hunsaker & Hargittai, 2018). At the same time, research demonstrates that older adults do not necessarily reject technology entirely. Many of them express the desire to remain autonomous, socially connected, and informed, but face barriers when it comes to accessing the necessary skills and support (van Dijk, 2020). The digital divide is not only a technical issue but also a social one. It can lead to frustration, increased dependency on others, and reduced autonomy in daily life. This highlights the importance of guidance and support mechanisms that can help seniors navigate digital environments and maintain their independence in an increasingly digitalised society.

1.2.4. Seniors' need for belonging and meaningful connections

The social needs of seniors are more varied than people often assume. It would be a mistake to reduce them to only isolation, and this is confirmed by the data collected for this research (cfr. appendix 8.5.2.). Seniors who expressed interest in interactions with students were not exclusively or primarily those who experience loneliness. A significant number of them described having active social lives, friendships, and family connections. The desire to remain useful, to stay intellectually engaged, or to share the knowledge they accumulated over a lifetime with someone who might genuinely benefit from it, that is what drew them to the idea of intergenerational exchange.

That said, loneliness does affect a significant and growing proportion of older adults, and it would be equally wrong to minimise this. During the COVID-19 pandemic, three out of four people aged 65 and over reported feelings of social isolation (Vlaamse Ouderenraad, 2021), and even after the pandemic, structural factors continue to expose many seniors to disconnection, such as reduced mobility due to health conditions, death of a partner, financial precarity, or loss of independence. These conditions not only limit social participation but have serious health consequences, such as elevated risks of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline (World Health Organization, 2021). Research shows that seniors who maintain high-quality social relationships have a better mental health, higher life satisfaction, and improved cognitive functioning (Haslam et al., 2014).

1.3. Research gap and opportunity

What emerges from this dual analysis of needs is a structural complementarity. Intergenerational interactions emerge as a particularly effective answer. Both groups aspire to competence and belonging but from a different point of view. This convergence constitutes the foundation of intergenerational mutual value. Rather than positioning one group solely as beneficiaries and the other as providers, this research adopts a reciprocal framework in which value is co-created through exchange.

Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve is a densely populated municipality where meaningful intergenerational interactions are limited. Despite the presence of a large group of students and seniors, there are few structured ways for them to connect, which is why they are socially divided. This shows that there is a hidden inefficiency in the local social structure.

Digital platforms have demonstrated their capacity to reduce search costs through location- and interest-based matching systems (Gawer, & Srnicek, 2021). Applying this logic to intergenerational exchange creates an opportunity to activate the underutilised relational capital that already exists within Louvain-la-Neuve.

The core obstacle that Genly could encounter is not motivation but coordination failure. Although both groups possess complementary needs and resources, no efficient mechanism exists to help them discover this and engage with one another. Genly is a digital two-sided platform that facilitates meaningful intergenerational exchanges and generates sustainable network effects – which means that a service becomes more valuable to its users as the number of people using it increases – within a university-town ecosystem.

The platform connects students and seniors through verified profiles, where users specify their motivations and needs, and are matched by an algorithm based on complementary expectations. The platform has a guided onboarding, first-meeting protocols, and trust mechanisms to reduce uncertainty and provide a safe environment. Its interactions are structured around reciprocal value exchange rather than unilateral assistance. Students can provide technological support or companionship, while seniors offer life knowledge, guidance or professional insights. The reason why this research is linked to Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, is to be able to observe real adoption behaviour, trust formation dynamics, and early-stage network effects.

1.4. Research question and objectives

Genly's primary objective is a social one: to facilitate structured intergenerational exchanges between students and seniors in Louvain-la-Neuve, demonstrating that such exchanges generate mutual value for both groups while addressing their respective needs. It also aims to address the complementary needs identified on both sides and to demonstrate the potential of socially oriented digital platforms to generate meaningful societal impact. These three objectives form the foundation of the central research question, guiding this thesis.

How do perceived trust, social value, and pricing fairness influence the adoption and early network effects of an intergenerational two-sided platform (Genly) in a university-town ecosystem?

Beyond this value proposition, Genly also aims to create meaningful relationships between generations by allowing students and seniors to share their time, skills, and stories through a safe and user-friendly digital platform.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

This thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach to evaluate the feasibility of an intergenerational two-sided platform. It analyses the societal relevance of intergenerational exchange and operationalises it into a newly developed platform, Genly.

This research contributes to four main dimensions, each corresponding to a dedicated section. First, a theoretical foundation is built to better understand intergenerational needs and opportunities. They are presented as a form of latent social value constrained by coordination

failures and structural barriers. Second, these insights are translated into a platform design, covering Genly's positioning, the competitive landscape, and the defensibility of its competitive advantage through network effects. Third, this design is empirically validated through surveys and interviews. Key drivers of adoption are identified such as trust, perceived social value, and pricing fairness, as well as barriers on both sides. Lastly, the empirical findings are translated into Genly's Minimum Viable Platform, the go-to-market strategy, and monetisation logic. Together, these dimensions demonstrate how socially oriented platforms perform under real market conditions, and how structured intergenerational exchange can generate mutual benefit for both groups.

2. Revealing Latent Social Value

Understanding the opportunity behind intergenerational exchange requires going beyond the observation of social needs and examining the mechanisms through which value is created. The needs documented in the previous chapter on both sides point to a clear opportunity for mutual value, but the persistence of social isolation and generational distance in a city like Louvain-la-Neuve suggests that identifying complementary needs is not enough to activate them.

This chapter explains why intergenerational exchange represents a form of latent social value – which is a potential source of mutual benefit that exists within society but remains largely unrealised – that is well-established but insufficiently activated due to structural and behavioural barriers.

2.1. Theoretical foundations

2.1.1. *Fundamental psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness*

A first part of the analysis is based on identifying the needs that drive social behaviour. The **Self-Determination Theory** (Ryan & Deci, 2000) implies that individuals are driven by three fundamental psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. It also distinguishes two types of motivation that shape how these needs are pursued: (1) Intrinsic motivation refers to taking part in an activity for the satisfaction it provides such as the pleasure of learning, connecting, or growing. (2) Extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity to obtain a different outcome, such as a reward, recognition, or social approval. According to the theory, these motivations are not opposites: extrinsic motivations can become intrinsic over time, especially when the social environment of the individual such as a mentor, a therapist, or a peer, supports their sense of autonomy and competence.

This distinction is directly relevant to the two groups at the centre of this research. Students who engage in intergenerational exchange are driven by both intrinsic factors such as curiosity, desire for authentic connection, and personal growth and extrinsic factors, such as career guidance, professional networking, and thesis support. Similarly, seniors are motivated by intrinsic factors, such as the satisfaction of sharing experiences, feeling useful, and maintaining social bonds, as well as extrinsic factors, such as gaining digital skills or social stimulation. The theory suggests that to sustain exchanges, they should support both types of motivation and fulfil the three underlying needs. The exchange becomes self-reinforcing rather than

dependent on external pressure. The users can develop competence by sharing skills and offering mentorship, they can preserve autonomy through voluntary and self-directed participation and feel relatedness through genuine connections.

This framework goes beyond simply identifying what students and seniors are missing. It also explains the conditions under which intergenerational exchange can work. Not as a service imposed from outside, but as a context in which the psychological needs of both groups are met by engaging with each other.

2.1.2. Complementary motivations: a basis for mutual value

The **Socioemotional Selectivity Theory** (Carstensen, 1995) provides a more dynamic explanation of why older and younger generations are naturally drawn to complementary types of societal interactions. Social motivation is shaped by age and by individuals' perception of time (cfr. figure 1). Younger generations perceive time as expansive and open-ended. They prioritise **knowledge-related goals**, for instance, broadening their horizons, travelling, meeting new people, acquiring information, and they tolerate short-term vision only if it benefits them. On the other hand, older generations perceive time as more limited. They prioritise **emotion-related goals**, for instance, investing in meaningful relationships or interactions, maximising their emotional well-being, and minimising their negative experiences.

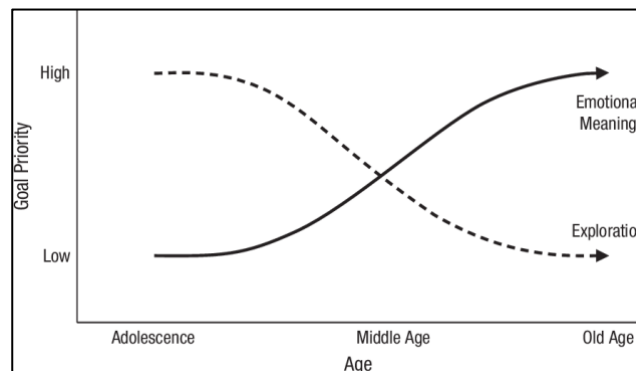


Figure 1: Socioemotional Selectivity Theory: Lifespan changes in motivational goals

These goals are highly compatible. Students are looking for experience, guidance, and advice, which can easily be provided through seniors' life and professional experience. On the other hand, seniors seek emotional engagement and recognition, which can be provided by younger generations. The goals of each user group are met through intergenerational exchange. This

generates mutual enrichment without requiring one of them to compromise their core social objectives.

It is important to acknowledge that this theory has certain limitations. It has been criticised for confusing age with time perception. In reality, perceptions of time can vary significantly within age groups depending on health, life events, or cultural context (Carstensen et al., 1999). Another risk is that the theory oversimplifies the motivations of each group. For Genly, these limitations are instructive, rather than assuming that motivation is determined only by age, the platform should allow users to select what reflects their actual goals – whether these are knowledge-seeking, emotional connection, or both. Genly should avoid giving a static role to either generation.

2.1.3. Conditions for interaction: the role of perceived reciprocity

The **Social Exchange Theory** (Homans, 1958) provides a critical framework to understand why the existence of complementary needs and motivations does not automatically translate into actual interactions. According to this theory, individuals engage in social relationships based on implicit cost-benefit evaluations. Interactions happen when the perceived rewards – such as emotional support, knowledge, or companionship – outweigh the perceived costs, such as time, effort, or uncertainty. Relationships are sustained only when they are perceived as fair and reciprocal, individuals are unlikely to continue a relationship that they perceive as unbalanced, even when the absolute benefits are positive.

In the context of intergenerational exchange, this is particularly important. Even when both groups are highly complementary, the exchange may fail to take place if one of the parties perceives it as unbalanced. Seniors may refuse interactions that feel like they are being taken advantage of or in which they feel like they give without receiving recognition or connection in exchange. Students may avoid situations that feel like obligations or charity, instead of opportunities. These perceptions are powerful obstacles to intergenerational exchanges, whether they are accurate or not.

Structuring exchanges to ensure balanced value creation and perceived fairness is important, the reciprocity of the exchange must be visible and felt by both parties. Without it, even highly motivated individuals could choose not to commit.

2.1.4. Structural perspective: intergenerational exchange as a two-sided market

At a structural level, intergenerational exchange can be analysed through the **Two-Sided Market Theory**. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) define a platform as an entity that brings together economic agents with complementary needs and facilitates interaction among them and distinguishes two-sided platforms as those connecting two distinct groups of users whose participation generates value for one another. Rochet and Tirole (2003) formalised this, showing that value creation in such systems depends on the quality and volume of interactions between them.

In the present context, students and seniors constitute the two sides of the market: students offer time, digital skills, and openness to exchange, while seniors also offer time and openness to exchange alongside experience, knowledge, professional perspective, and a desire for meaningful engagement. As Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) describe, this value can only materialise through interaction, it cannot be extracted in isolation. This creates cross-side network effects: as more seniors engage on the platform, its value to students increases, and vice versa.

However, a real challenge of two-sided markets is the chicken-and-egg problem: users on each side are only willing to join if the other side is present, yet neither side wants to join without the other. This dynamic can trap a platform in a “ghost town” equilibrium. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) propose to offer stand-alone benefits, a value that users can derive from the platform independently of whether the other side is already present. In that way, the users are not dependent on each other anymore and the barrier to adoption is lowered. For Genly, this suggests that the platform’s early design should offer intrinsic value to each group (cfr. section 5.1.2.).

Pricing is another important structural consideration. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) argue that platforms should set prices across both sides to encourage participation and activate network effects, instead of relying only on willingness to pay. In practice, this often means that one group is subsidised to attract users, while the other bears a larger proportion of the cost. The survey results (cfr. section 4.5.3.) indicate that the majority of respondents are unwilling to pay to use the platform: 75.3% of students stated they would never pay, and 73% of seniors indicated access should be free. While a detailed pricing model for Genly falls outside the scope of this thesis, this perspective provides a useful framework for how value capture might be structured in future

Intergenerational exchange can therefore be understood as a latent two-sided market: characterised by strong complementarities and real network potential yet constrained by a coordination failure. The problem is not the absence of mutual interest, but the absence of structural, informational, and economic mechanisms needed to activate that interest at scale.

2.1.5. Empirical evidence: proven benefits of intergenerational exchange

Beyond theoretical frameworks, a significant number of empirical research confirms that intergenerational exchanges generate important benefits for both younger and older generations. Hernandez and Gonzalez (2008) demonstrate this clearly. They conducted an intergenerational service-learning programme that paired 179 university students with 101 older adults presenting slight depression. Their results are very instructive. First, seniors who interacted with students showed significant reductions in depressive symptoms and improved their self-perception, while those in the control group with no intergenerational contact saw their symptoms worsen. Second, the authors find that seniors benefited more from interacting with students than from working with a professional trainer. This result is attributed to the fact that seniors felt genuinely useful, knowing their participation was directly contributing to the students' learning. This is particularly relevant to Genly's model: the reciprocal nature of the exchange, in which both parties perceive themselves as contributors rather than recipients, appears to be what generates the effect.

A concrete local illustration of this is Dyle Solidaire, a volunteer initiative active since 2017 in Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve where local volunteers visit isolated individuals, mainly seniors. Volunteers are asked to engage for at least a year, to ensure continuity and allow trust to be built over time. It also highlights a key limitation: volunteer initiatives rely heavily on volunteer-based efforts, which cannot easily be scaled.

This demonstrates that intergenerational exchanges are not only theoretical ideas but something that works in practice. Genly is not trying to create demand from scratch, but it is responding to a real and growing gap between generations, while also showing that current solutions are still limited.

2.2. Limitations of existing theories: the problem of unactivated value

The theoretical frameworks reviewed above each offer a distinct explanatory perspective: the Self-Determination Theory identifies the psychological needs that are at stake, the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory explains the motivational complementarity between

generations, the Social Exchange Theory clarifies the conditions under which interactions are maintained; and the Two-Sided Market Theory highlights the structural logic of the coordination and pricing.

It is important to distinguish what these frameworks actually do. The first three theories provide strong evidence of why intergenerational exchange should take place, but not how to implement it. The Two-Sided Market Theory is different: it is more practical and action-oriented, introducing concepts such as stand-alone benefits and the chicken-and-egg problem to address real challenges of platform launch and participation.

The limitation of the Two-Sided Market Theory is not that it fails to create value, but that it does not fully capture intergenerational exchange, which is socially embedded rather than commercial. The theory was mainly developed for transactional settings in which willingness to pay is clear. Intergenerational exchange is different: the costs are not just financial, but also social and psychological. Trust cannot be created through pricing signals, and the value for each side is harder to define or predict in advance. These problems cannot be solved only by pricing strategy or network effect management.

Three specific friction sources can be identified. First, individuals face interaction costs, as described by the Social Exchange Theory. Initiating contact with another generation may create a feeling of uncertainty, fear of awkwardness, or unclear expectations. Intergenerational interactions require both groups to step outside their social comfort zones simultaneously, unlike intra-generational interactions, where shared context reduces the risk of misunderstanding. The perceived cost here is not time, but social risk. Even motivated individuals may never act on that because the first step feels too uncertain and this is particularly difficult to reduce without having structural support.

Second, there is a lack of structured interaction infrastructure. Most areas of social interaction such as networking, romantic connections, and peer-to-peer commerce have developed organised systems that reduce search costs, indicate mutual intentions, and establish behavioural norms. Intergenerational exchange has not. Historically, these interactions relied on informal proximity: grandparents living in the same household as the family, the retired neighbour, or the older colleague in the open-plan office. These mechanisms have eroded over time due to a quickly changing environment, urbanisation, and no organised infrastructure has emerged to replace them. This does not mean that the desire for intergenerational connection has disappeared, but rather that the structure that made it possible collapsed.

Third, there is an absence of trust signals and information asymmetry. In most markets, participants can evaluate the value of an interaction before committing to it. This is done through reputation systems, testimonials, or social proof. In intergenerational exchange, these signals are largely absent. A student cannot easily assess whether a senior's experience is relevant to their situation. A senior cannot easily judge whether a student's request is genuine or opportunistic. Without mechanisms to reduce this uncertainty, both parties prefer being cautious, and the interaction does not take place. This is a predictable response to an environment with insufficient information.

These three sources of friction reinforce each other. High social risk discourages people from initiating contact. The lack of infrastructure means there is no natural setting in which such interactions can take place. The absence of trust signals makes interactions, if they occur, fragile and not likely to continue. As a result, individual motivation alone is not sufficient to overcome these barriers, and the necessary conditions for exchange are not completed.

The challenge is not to convince individuals of the value of intergenerational exchange. There is existing evidence that proves that awareness is not the main issue. The challenge lies in reducing social risk, providing coordination mechanisms, and creating trust signals that enable individuals to act on their motivation. Active coordination mechanisms are required to realise the network potential of two-sided markets, without them, complementarities remain unexploited (Belleflamme & Neysen, 2023).

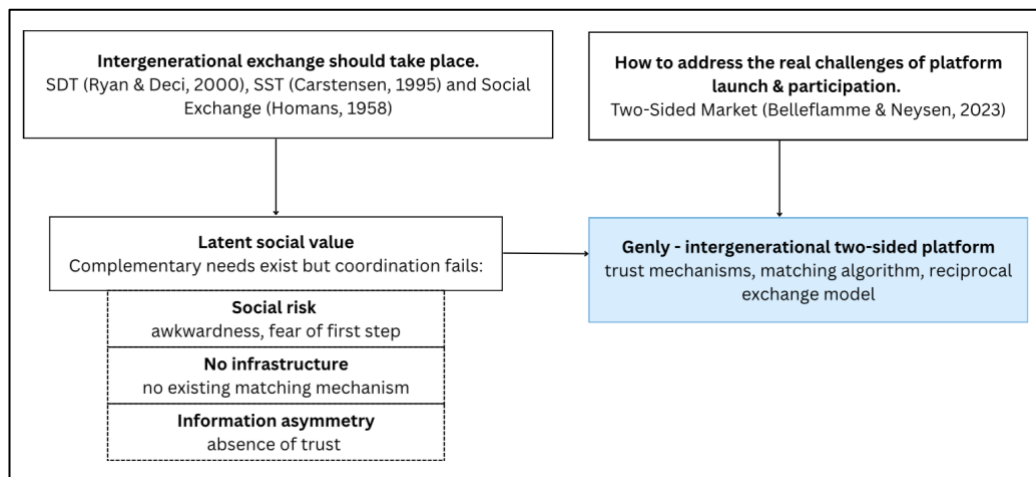


Figure 2: Conceptual framework: Four theories highlight dimensions of intergenerational exchange, and reveal latent social value limited by three structural frictions that Genly aims to solve.

A well-designed digital platform can fulfil this role, if it is conceived as a structural initiative that prioritises trust-building, social risk reduction, and guided coordination over pricing optimisation or network effect management alone, so not as a commercial matching engine. This is the foundation on which the Genly platform is built (cfr. figure 2).

3. Creating social value: the Genly platform

This chapter aims to understand how the platform creates value by facilitating interaction between two different user groups and how they create value by interacting with the platform.

3.1. Objectives & mission definition

To define Genly's mission, three key objectives have been determined.

The first objective is to **facilitate one-to-one interactions between a student and a senior**. Genly provides the opportunity to connect and build relationships within a dedicated and trusted platform space and enables both user groups to create value for one another. Trust is a central aspect of the platform: profile verification reinforces users' sense of security, a clear and accessible onboarding process reduces uncertainty regarding the use of the application, and a personalised matching system based on users' needs increases the quality of future interactions.

The second objective is to **address similar identified needs** of the two targets groups. Genly promotes a model of reciprocal value creation, where both groups contribute and benefit the same way. As a result, their shared needs are fulfilled and rather than positioning one side as providers and the other as recipients, the platform emphasises balanced exchanges.

The third objective is to demonstrate the **potential of socially oriented digital platforms** to generate societal impact particularly within dense ecosystems where intergenerational opportunities remain underutilised. The goal of social platforms is mainly for users to connect, share content, and build connections based on interests, which emphasises human interaction, networking, and the exchange of needs. This is a space structured around similar demand and knowledge sharing, to also communicate and keep real life exchanges.

These objectives are captured in Genly's mission:

Genly's mission is to connect students and seniors through a trusted digital platform that fosters reciprocal exchange, while strengthening social cohesion within local communities.

3.2. Value Proposition of Genly

A clear value proposition is essential to ensure that a product or service is well aligned with consumers' needs. The most well-known strategic tool for this purpose is the Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder et al., 2014), which analyses customer profiles in terms of jobs, pains, and gains, and the value map with pain relievers and gain creators, aiming to achieve a product-

market fit. However, a limitation arises when applying this tool to a two-sided platform: it would be necessary to create value proposition canvas (cfr. appendices 8.1.1. and 8.1.2.) simultaneously for two distinct user groups and then overlay them to capture the co-creation of value. Therefore, another framework called The Multisided Value Proposition Canvas (Belleflamme & Neysen, 2021) was introduced. It allows both user groups to be analysed in parallel, to better understand how to meet their needs and how to manage interactions (cfr. figure 3).

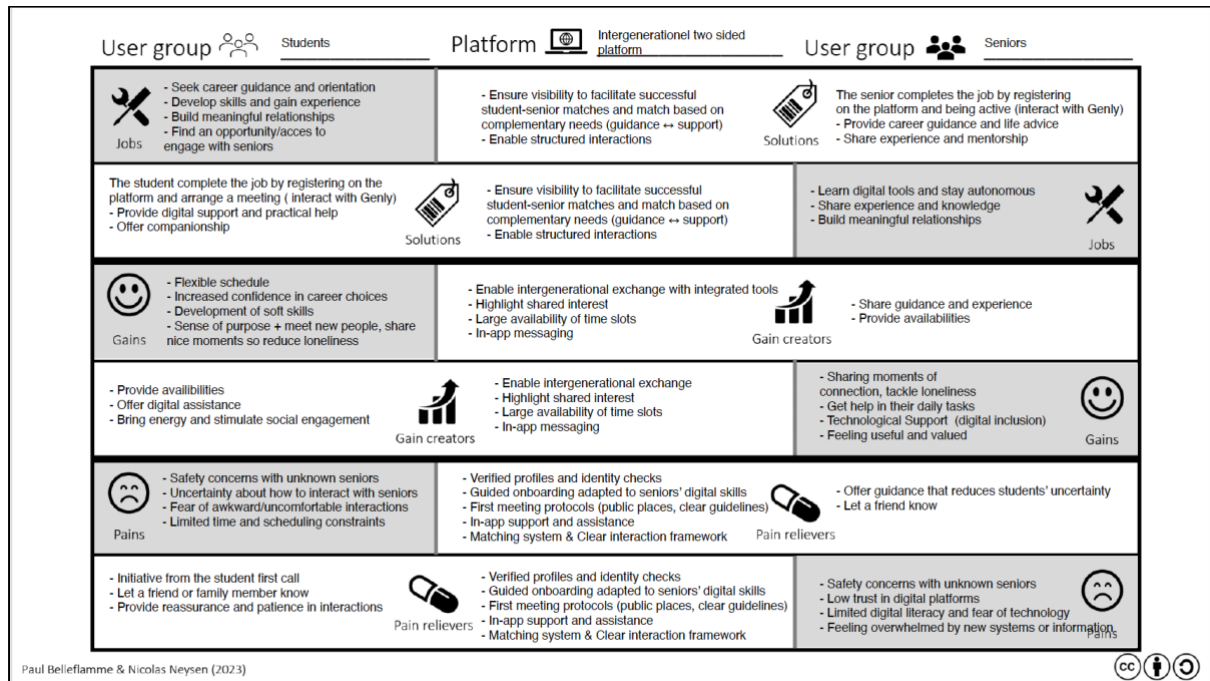


Figure 3: Multisided Value Proposition Canvas

Three questions were considered for each user group. The first one defines the main motivations of users and the objectives and problems that the platform must address: **“What are users’ jobs-to-be-done?”**. The analysis reveals a complementarity between the two groups: students seek advice, experience, and social connection, while seniors aim to share their knowledge, stay active, and feel useful. The second and third questions: **“Which gains are expected by users?”** and **“Which pains are experienced by users?”** address, respectively, the targeted benefits from the digital platform, and the fears or obstacles that may hinder adoption or satisfaction. The expected outcomes include skill development, increased confidence in decision-making, and relationship building for students, and a sense of usefulness, social inclusion, and digital autonomy for seniors. Some barriers remain, such as lack of trust, uncertainty, difficulties related to digital tools, and concerns regarding pricing.

Then, three further questions, more specific to Genly were addressed: **“What products/services help get the job done?”**, **“Which gain creators should be developed?”** and **“Which pain relievers should be developed?”**. The solutions are similar across both groups. The platform enables relevant connections through a matching system based on complementary needs, integrated tools – such as messaging and appointment scheduling to structure interactions – trust-building mechanisms for some seniors to reduce technological barriers and promote a smooth and inclusive experience. This explains the reciprocal logic of the platform. Despite having different needs, the expectations of both students and seniors are addressed through a shared set of solutions.

It is possible to create an effective value proposition statement by drawing on the jobs, gains, and pains identified through this framework, and by using the model suggested by Osterwalder et al. (2014):

“Our [Products & Services] help(s) [Customer segments] who want to [Jobs to be done] by reducing/avoiding [Pains] and increasing/enabling [Gains].”

Applied here, this leads to the following:

Genly, an intergenerational two-sided platform, helps students and seniors who want to build meaningful relationships, gain guidance, and exchange support by reducing loneliness, uncertainty, trust issues, and digital barriers, while enabling companionship, knowledge exchange, personal development, and increased autonomy.

3.3. Competitive Landscape

Genly’s value proposition is a central foundation, but it is necessary to have a comprehensive view of the competitive environment to assess the strength of this value proposition and identify where its distinctive advantages and limitations lie.

To this end, two complementary analytical tools (cfr. figure 5 and 6) are used: (1) the Platform Value Net analyses relationships between the platform and external parties, and (2) the Linking Map illustrates intra-platform relationships between the platform and its users. Together, they provide a holistic overview of Genly’s competitive position.

3.3.1. Competitors, complementors and co-opetitors

A. Competitors

The competitive landscape was examined (cfr. figure 4) by differentiating all types of threats that both the platform and users face.

First, **direct rivals** connect the same groups using a similar business model. Genly operates in a market where no perfectly direct competitor currently exists, as few actors combine a digital platform, intergenerational matching, and flexible interactions. The closest competitor in terms of business model is Maurice & Nora, a Belgian application connecting students with families or seniors for various forms of assistance, but it differs from Genly because it is not exclusively intergenerational and relies more heavily on a service logic that remunerates students. Another close competitor is ShareAmi, which is closer to Genly in terms of needs: it fosters social connection between young people and older adults, but it is fully online whereas Genly aims to offline meetings.

Second, **indirect rivals**, they connect the same user groups but using a different business model. That makes them the most significant share of competitors. Colette Club, Kap Senior, and 1toit2ages are initiatives that focus on cohabitation or one-time social events. They also promote intergenerational interaction, but they require levels of commitment – such as shared housing – that could discourage both seniors and students seeking lighter involvement.

Finally, **substitutes** were identified. For students, student jobs can capture their available time for income rather than for connection, and social media can also offer effortless social connection. Genly differentiates itself by transforming this time into something tangible with a real impact, a sense of purpose. Grandparents often play a similar role, stepping in as a kind of informal intergenerational bridge. But that relies entirely on family being available, and not everyone has that. For seniors, grandchildren can fill a similar gap, though again, it comes down to how close everyone lives and whether schedules actually align. There are other substitutes out there too such as nursing homes, CPAS, La Croix-Rouge, Entr'âge and they do provide a social structure and group activities. The issue is that these interactions tend to feel a bit imposed, rarely tailored to the individual. Genly works differently: it is about connections that people actually choose, built around things they genuinely have in common.

When all these options are compared, Genly stands out as a structured digital platform, designed for simplicity and trust. It has a low entry barrier, and its smart matching system increases the likelihood of meaningful matches. Furthermore, the platform's intended partnerships with recognised institutions will lend credibility and extend its reach into both

communities. By addressing the key limitations of both direct and indirect competitors, Genly takes a unique position that allows it to effectively engage its two-sided market.

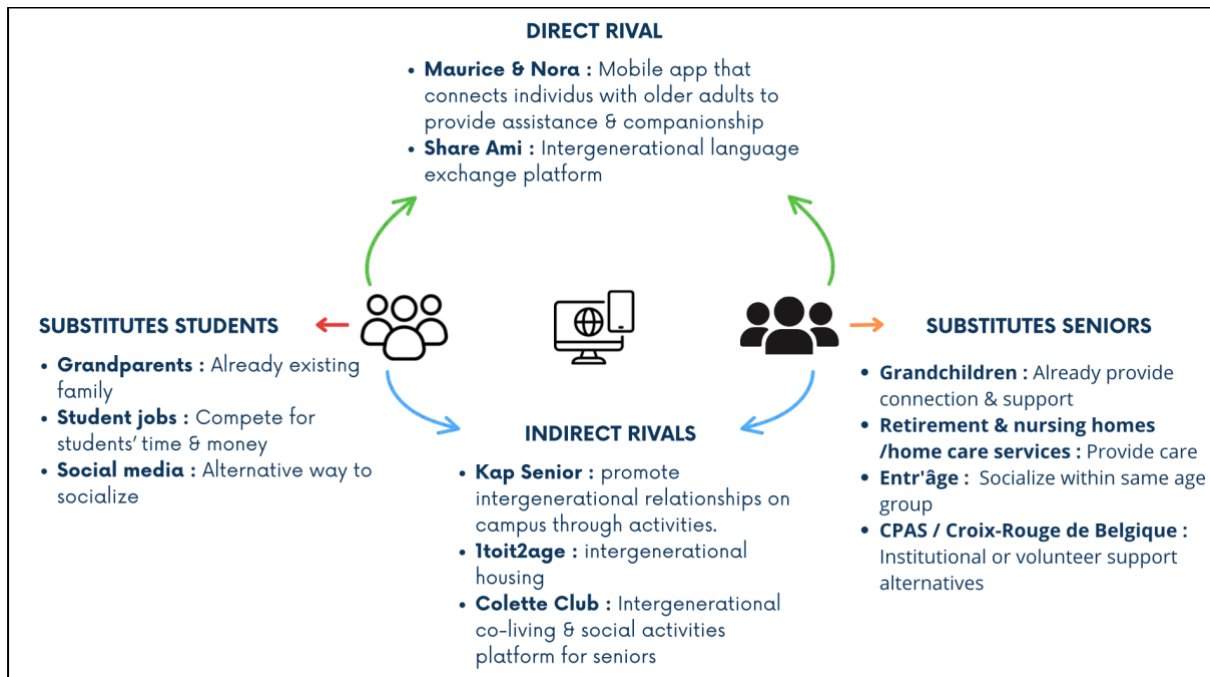


Figure 4: Competitive landscape

B. Complementors

Complementors are third-party actors, whose involvement increases the attractiveness of the platform. Genly benefits from an extensive network of complementors that boost its legitimacy, assist the platform's expansion, and improve user experience.

Public institutions: CPAS Ottignies–Louvain-la-Neuve, local nursing homes, and retirement residences act as key partners by giving Genly access to their database and networks of isolated seniors, which simplifies the outreach phase. Their involvement reassures older users and facilitates integration with existing local support frameworks.

Educational institutions: Université des Aînés, with more than 4,000 members, provides a substantial senior audience and a strong testing ground for Genly's early pilot phase. By co-organising on-campus events with the UCLouvain, Genly can attract students who are looking to enrich their culture or gain academic benefits from socially impactful activities.

Networks and promotions: Organisations such as kots-à-projets (KAP), Association Générale des Étudiants (AGL) or Maisons des jeunes de LLN, could spread awareness within student communities and help recruit early adopters. Partnerships with social media of the university can provide an additional online boost that gives authenticity to Genly's image among younger

audiences. Similarly, 1toit2age and Entr'âge can raise awareness among seniors already engaged in intergenerational activities, while neighbourhood platforms such as Hoplr can support local visibility and trust-based community engagement.

Practical tools: Genly integrates digital tools such as Google Calendar and in-app messaging to simplify scheduling and communication. Looking ahead, the platform aims to develop an AI-driven matching system and additional digital tools such as Firebase to make the experience even more personalised. The platform creates a flexible support ecosystem by strategically involving these complementors. This reduces the operating costs, boosts platform adoption, and accelerates community trust, all of which are essential for long-term success.

C. “Co-opetition” in Genly’s ecosystem

The analysis of Genly's competitive environment reveals an interesting dynamic: several actors identified as complementors simultaneously play the role of indirect competitors. This phenomenon, theorised by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) under the term “co-opetition”, refers to situations in which actors within the same ecosystem cooperate and compete at the same time.

In Genly's case, this dynamic is particularly pronounced for two structural reasons. First, the absence of a real direct competitor suggests that the intergenerational exchange market in Belgium is still largely immature and unstructured. This means that a single organisation can raise public awareness of intergenerational exchange – which would benefit Genly's user acquisition – while also absorbing part of that same target audience into its own model. Second, the platform operates on a two-sided market that amplifies the effects of this dynamic: the loss of users on one side weakens the platform’s attractiveness on the other side, undermining the network effects (Rochet & Tirole, 2003). Co-opetitive actors are therefore structurally more threatening than they would be in a conventional single-sided market.

Two types of co-opetitive dynamics can be identified. The first one involves actors that educate the market while partially capturing it: 1toit2ages, active in Namur, normalises the idea that a senior can welcome an unknown young person into their home and that a relationship of trust can be built between the two generations. This directly benefits Genly, whose primary adoption barrier is precisely the initial reluctance of both groups to interact with a stranger. However, a senior who has signed a cohabitation agreement with 1toit2ages no longer feels the need to join Genly, as their need for intergenerational connection is already met. Similarly, Entr'âge and local senior clubs offer Genly access to a base of seniors already sensitised to structured

socialisation, while at the same time addressing the social connection need that Genly seeks to fulfil.

The second one involves distribution channels that also propose competing offerings: UCLouvain and its student engagement structures represent the most powerful institutional complementor available to Genly. A formal partnership with the university would provide access to a great deal of students with a level of legitimacy that Genly could not build on its own in the same timeframe. However, these structures primarily attract the most socially engaged students, precisely the profiles that Genly seeks to recruit first, and a student heavily invested in a student association has limited capacity to commit to an additional platform.

This analysis has a practical consequence for how Genly should prioritise its early partnerships. Rather than treating all potential allies equally, Genly should distinguish between those whose market education reduces adoption barriers without targeting the same user profile. For instance, Entr'âge and local senior clubs target seniors who are already open to structured social activities but not yet involved in intergenerational exchange. On the other hand, actors whose distribution power comes with a real risk of user absorption, such as UCLouvain's student engagement structures, should be treated differently. The first group should be pursued from an early stage, as they expand the size of the target market without competing for it. The second group should be approached with a clearly differentiated value proposition and a defined scope of collaboration – such as event co-organisation or platform visibility – that captures the legitimacy benefit without giving up control of the relationship to a structure that already commands students' free time. In a market that remains largely unstructured, the actor that maps and formalises these distinctions first is not only better positioned competitively, but it also defines the architecture of the ecosystem that future entrants will have to navigate (Eisenmann et al., 2006).

These interactions are represented through the Platform Value Net presented below (cfr. figure 5). By mapping the relationships between Genly and the different external actors shaping its ecosystem, this tool provides a structured overview of the opportunities, dependencies, and competitive tensions influencing the platform's strategic positioning.

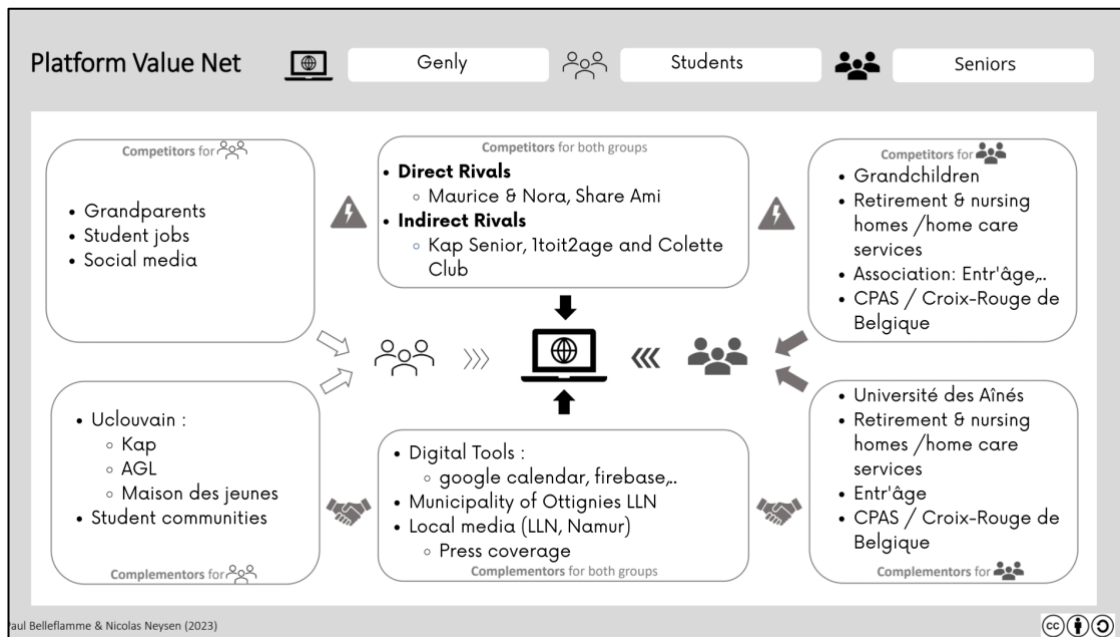


Figure 5 : Platform Value Net

3.3.2. Intra-platform interaction dynamics

Genly mainly facilitates one-to-one interactions between a student and a senior, as most of the needs identified are better addressed through this type of interactions. It encourages more personalised relationships and therefore more authentic testimonials. In the early stages of the platform, these qualitative reviews are essential to build trust and reassure future users. However, the platform is not limited to exclusive matches, users can connect with several people simultaneously. A student may therefore interact with multiple seniors, and vice versa, depending on shared interests, availability, and comfort level. This flexible matching system also helps reduce some barriers expressed by both sides (cfr. section 4.2.3. and 4.3.3.). Over time, users can choose to have some relationships that are regular, while others remain occasional.

In the last phase of our launch strategy (cfr. 5.2.4.), Genly will also integrate small group activities (many-to-many interactions), to further encourage first contact in a less intimidating environment and give users the possibility to choose in which environment they feel the most confident. This idea comes from the qualitative interviews where interviewees showed a strong interest for these types of interactions. Some students express preferring a group format for a shared activity, as this format feels safer, less intimate, and more spontaneously social for a continuous utilisation of the platform.

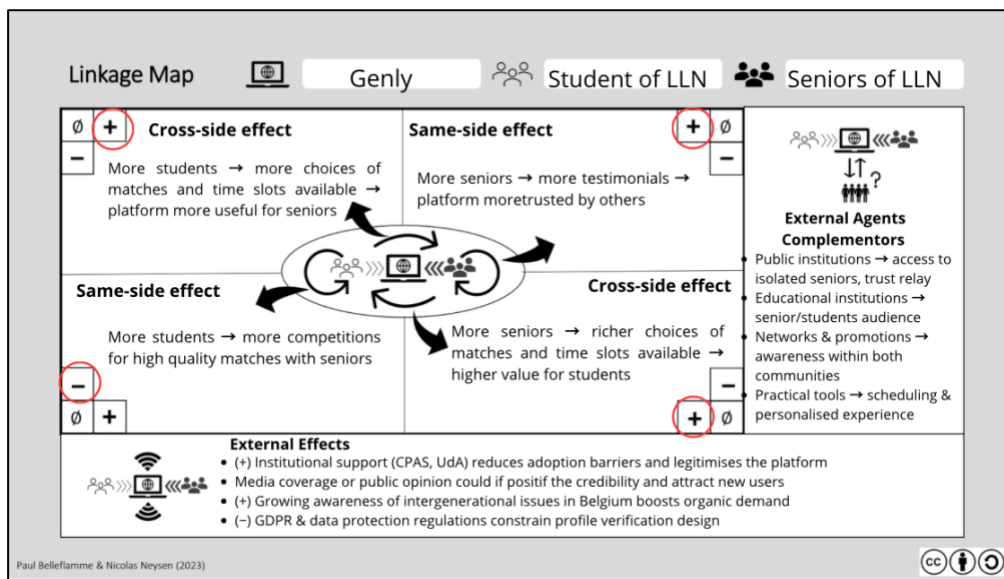


Figure 6: Linkage Map

These interaction dynamics are captured in the Linking Map (cfr. figure 6), which illustrates how value circulates between students and seniors through the platform. The four quadrants map the positive and negative same-side network effects generated as each group grows, while the central oval represents the cross-side exchanges that constitute Genly's core interaction. The right panel identifies the key complementors whose involvement amplifies the platform's reach and credibility, and the bottom panel represents the external effects that can have an influence on the way these interactions can develop.

3.4. Defensibility of Genly's competitive advantage through network effects

Assessing the strength of Genly's network effects is necessary but not sufficient to evaluate its competitive position. Strong network effects only translate into a durable competitive advantage when they are also defensible, which means when they are specific to the platform and difficult to replicate by rivals (Belleflamme & Neysen 2023).

3.4.1. Specificity

Network effects are specific to a platform when users must be registered on it to enjoy their benefits. This creates a dynamic in which the platform grows at the expense of its rivals and potentially leading to "the winner takes it all" outcomes. In Genly's case, specificity rests on the uniqueness of its value proposition. As established in the competitive landscape analysis, no existing actor currently combines all the following features simultaneously: a fully digital

interface, intergenerational matching, a social and professional dimension, and a trusted system. A student seeking career mentorship, or a senior looking for structured companionship, cannot replicate this specific combination through any of Genly's identified rivals or substitutes. The value created by an additional user on either side of the platform depends, at least in part, on them being registered on Genly itself. This is the condition for specificity to be established.

That said, the specificity remains weak at this early stage. Genly has not yet built a sufficiently large user base to generate switching costs, which Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) identify as a key driver of defensibility. Having a stronger specificity is therefore a priority for the platform's early growth phase.

3.4.2. *Replicability*

Two factors limit Genly's replicability advantage. First, its network effects are inherently local: they operate within the Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve ecosystem and do not extend across other geographical areas. As Hagiu and Wright (2020) note, local network effects are weaker than global ones because the matching between users depends on geographical proximity rather than on the volume of registrations at a national or international level. A rival entering a different university town would not be constrained by Genly's existing user base. Second, the general concept of an intergenerational exchange platform, while currently underdeveloped, is not technically complex to replicate. The technological barrier to entry is relatively low.

However, two factors work in Genly's favour. (1) The institutional partnerships that Genly is building with UCLouvain, UdA, CPAS, and local associations create a barrier to replicability driven by complementors. These alliances depend on trust, shared legitimacy, and a sustained local presence and are not easily reproduced by a newcomer. (2) Genly's trust-driven engagement model generates platform-specific data and community dynamics. Over time, as the platform accumulates more interactions, verified profiles, and testimonials, Genly's informational advantage will increase, making replication progressively more costly.

Taken together, Genly's network effects present a mixed defensibility profile. The platform benefits from genuine specificity in terms of its value proposition, and from a local network effect that creates first-mover advantages within its target ecosystem, while being geographically bounded. Its institutional partnerships and event-driven models further reinforce replicability barriers over time. However, the absence of a large user base and the low barriers to entry mean that this competitive advantage depends on the rapid acquisition of

users and strengthening partnerships. The strategic priority is to grow both sides of the market at the same time, so that the local network effect becomes self-reinforcing before a rival can enter the same ecosystem.

4. Validating the Opportunity: Empirical Insights

The objective of this chapter is twofold. On the one hand, this thesis aims to validate the opportunity behind Genly and confirm that there is a genuine demand for structured intergenerational connections. On the other hand, it seeks to better understand the needs, motivations, and barriers of both students and seniors to design and personalise the platform in the most pragmatic way possible. This will help create an environment that is as favourable as possible for interactions and ensure the quality of those.

4.1. Methodology

To this end, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through a combination of surveys and interviews distributed to the two target groups, students and seniors. As both researchers were pursuing internships abroad, the surveys and interviews had to be conducted remotely. Together, these two methods allow for a richer and more reliable picture than either would provide alone: the surveys identify patterns and measure the prevalence of certain attitudes, while the interviews explain the reasoning and emotions behind them.

The research focuses on students aged 18 to 25 and seniors aged 60 and above. Secondary school students and younger individuals were deliberately excluded due to their different levels of autonomy and developmental needs. The decision to set the senior age limit at 60 is motivated by two factors: this group usually has more free time due to retirement or reduced professional commitments, and brings a significant amount of life experience, which is a meaningful resource in the context of intergenerational exchange.

4.1.1. *Quantitative methodology*

The quantitative data was collected through an online survey completed by both target groups. The surveys were anonymous and gathered a total of 123 responses, 38 seniors and 85 students, distributed in the Ottignies–Louvain-la-Neuve area. The corresponding survey materials are available in appendix 8.5. While this sample size is sufficient to identify meaningful trends and orient strategic decisions, it remains modest and the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically representative of the broader population.

The survey was adapted to each respondent profile while keeping the same core objective: assess willingness to use the platform and interest in intergenerational exchange. For students, the questions focused on the dynamics of their current social interactions, their professional uncertainties, and their openness to engaging with seniors. For seniors, the questions were

centred on digital habits, social needs, and perceptions of how they could contribute to an exchange.

To reach students, the survey was shared through social networks, university groups, and personal networks. As seniors are less reachable through digital channels alone, the survey was sent via email to organisations with strong local networks, including nursing homes, elderly care services, and local associations, as well as through personal networks and Facebook groups dedicated to residents of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve. This was necessary to reach seniors who would not have been accessible through standard online recruitment.

4.1.2. Qualitative methodology

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with all of Genly's key stakeholder groups. Participants were identified through the survey's closing question, which invited respondents willing to share further insights to leave their contact details. This approach ensured that interviewees had already engaged with the platform concept and were able to provide informed and considered perspectives.

A total of seven interviews were conducted with students from the Louvain-la-Neuve campus (cfr. appendix 8.3.) and five with seniors living in the municipality (cfr. appendix 8.2.). The interviews explored themes including daily social habits, professional uncertainties, openness to intergenerational exchange, perceived barriers to participation, and expectations regarding trust and platform design. Three additional interviews were held with institutional representatives (cfr. appendix 8.4.). These organisations were selected for their direct connection to the senior population and their practical expertise in social participation and local community initiatives. The institutional interviews covered the daily challenges faced by seniors, barriers to digital adoption, the perceived relevance of an intergenerational platform, and potential collaboration opportunities with Genly.

Each interview was recorded with the participants' consent and analysed thematically. Recurring patterns were identified and cross-referenced with the quantitative survey findings to ensure coherence between the two data sources.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when analysing the results. While this sample size is sufficient to identify meaningful trends and orient strategic decisions, it remains modest and the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically representative of the broader population.

4.2. Students' perspective

4.2.1. Student profile

The profile of the students who responded to the survey shows that 80% of participants come from UCLouvain and 94.2% of them are between 18 and 25 years old. A significant proportion of students, namely 67.1%, do not live in Louvain-la-Neuve but commute there for their studies. This factor was examined to determine its potential influence on the social needs expressed by students and their willingness to engage with Genly. After cross-referencing the responses by place of residence, no significant differences were revealed. Students who commute to Louvain-la-Neuve express comparable needs and show a similar level of openness to joining the platform as those who live there. This suggests that residential proximity is not a determining factor in interest for intergenerational exchange.

The interviews conducted show that most of the students have particularly active and busy lifestyles: they combine studies, student associations, sports activities, student jobs, and personal commitments. This lack of free time appears to be an important element in the way they perceive additional social interactions.

One of the main objectives of the questionnaire was to assess the level of loneliness experienced by students. The results reveal that a significant proportion of respondents experience some form of loneliness: 40% of students report feeling lonely “sometimes”, “often”, or “very often”. In contrast, 52.9% indicate experiencing this feeling rarely, and 7.1% state that they never feel lonely.

Qualitative interviews provided additional insights, as several students mentioned a need for more enriching discussions despite already having active social circles.

4.2.2. Perceived benefits and motivations

The data highlights a particularly interesting paradox. Only 28.3% of respondents report having interactions with elderly people (cfr. figure 7), and 70.6% of students state that they would be willing, at a level of 3/5 or higher, to spend time with elderly individuals in exchange for support or reciprocal interaction (cfr. figure 8).

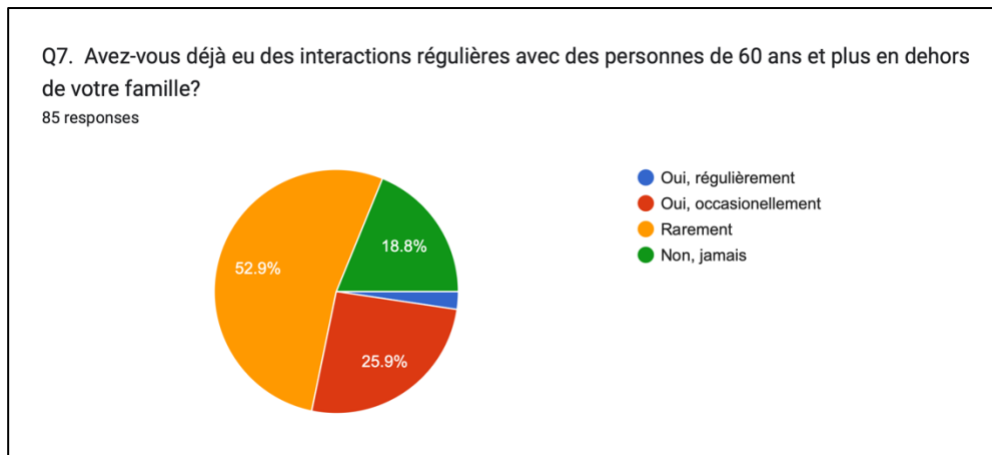


Figure 7: Proportion of respondents who have regular interactions with people aged 60 and over outside their family.

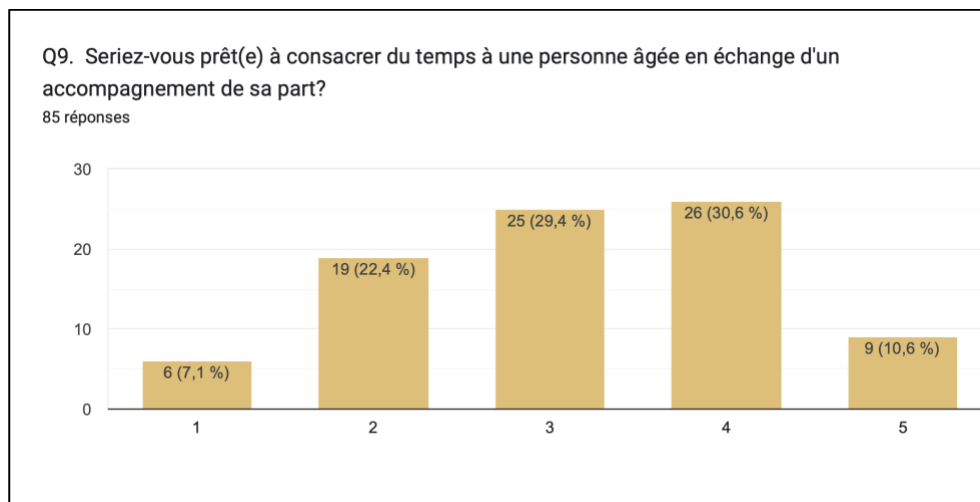


Figure 8: Proportion of respondents who are willing to spend time with elderly individuals in exchange for support or reciprocal interaction.

These results show that, although intergenerational interactions are limited in students' daily lives, they seem largely open to this type of exchange when an appropriate framework is provided. The main motivations they expressed – sharing life experiences, receiving professional advice, passing on skills, and cultural exchange – directly correspond to their identified needs, particularly regarding career orientation, personal development, and social connection. Some interviewed students also explained that they particularly appreciate spontaneous discussions with seniors encountered in professional or associative settings, which they perceive as more authentic and human than certain interactions between students.

The need for human connection appears to be a central dimension of the study. While 52.9 % of respondents stated that the main reason they would be attracted to the platform is to develop authentic human relationships, interviews also show that this openness remains a condition. Several students explained that simply “coming to talk” would not be enough to motivate users in the long term. Students appear to be more attracted to exchanges that have a concrete purpose or real added value.

4.2.3. *Barriers to participation*

Despite their openness to intergenerational exchange, students identified several barriers that would prevent them from engaging with Genly. The most consistently cited was time: students described busy schedules with coursework, student associations, part-time jobs, and personal commitments, leaving little room for an additional social engagement of uncertain return.

Beyond logistics, students expressed psychological barriers that are harder to design around. Several mentioned a fear of awkwardness, the difficulty of sustaining a conversation with someone from a very different generation and life context, with no shared reference points to fall back on. Others worried about interactions becoming too emotionally demanding or too rigid, particularly in a one-on-one setting with a stranger. A minority expressed apprehension about seniors who might be too dependent, too closed-minded, or difficult to understand. These findings are consistent with the pains identified in the Multisided Value Canvas presented in section 3.2. (cfr. figure 3).

What emerges from both the survey and the interviews is that students are not opposed to intergenerational exchange in principle. 64.3% expressed willingness to participate at a level of 3/5 or higher, but they need the conditions to feel manageable before they will commit. These are the criteria they identified as essential: identity verification, institutional backing, a rating and review system, clear guidelines, and first meetings in public spaces. All these criteria point to the same underlying need: enough structure to make the first step feel safe without making the exchange feel transactional. This directly informs the platform design decisions developed in Chapter 5.

4.3. Seniors' perspective

4.3.1. *Senior profile*

The sample consists exclusively of individuals aged 60 to 80. The 60-64 age group is the most represented, with 34.2% of respondents followed by 65-69 (26.3%), 75-79 (21.1%) and 2.6%

for 80 years old. A large number of respondents (63.2%) are retired, and as captured in figure 9, 42.1% of the seniors are living alone.

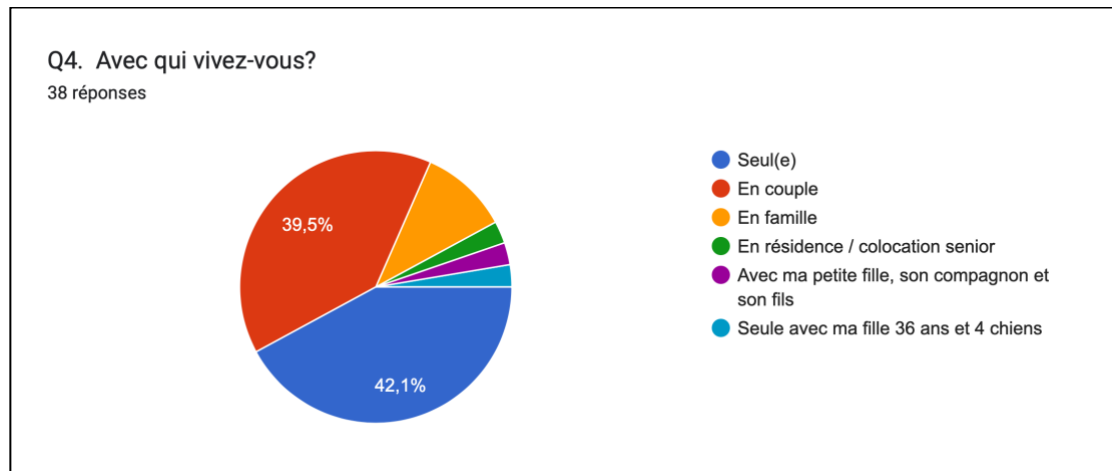


Figure 9 : Household composition of participants

Some respondents maintain regular social contact: 34.2% see friends or family every day, whereas 21.1% only have contact a few times per month, and only one respondent reported rarely or never seeing their social circle. Nevertheless, 23.7% of respondents reported feeling somewhat socially disconnected, scoring themselves between 1/5 and 3/5 on a scale of 1 to 5. 28.9% of respondents have regular interactions with younger people outside of their family while 44.7% report having such interactions rarely or never. This result indicates that the concept of intergenerational exchange is not unfamiliar to the target audience, which creates favourable conditions for the adoption of Genly and similarly suggests a potential new demand for such a platform.

The expressed needs are distributed among the following categories, shared activities or outings, digital assistance, social connection, and online administrative assistance. It is worth noting that 57.9% of respondents reported no particular functional need. This suggests that for a majority of seniors, the appeal of intergenerational exchange is relational rather than instrumental. This is consistent with what emerged from the qualitative interviews, where the most frequently cited motivations were shared activities and meaningful social connection rather than practical assistance. Seniors want to remain engaged, to feel useful, and to maintain contact with younger generations. Digital assistance, even though it is a real need for a portion of the sample as 45.9% report low digital literacy, appears to be a secondary driver of participation rather than the primary one.

One participant expressed strong resistance to digital technology, preferring direct human interaction. These “digitally reluctant” profiles represent a challenge for onboarding.

4.3.2. *Perceived benefits and motivations*

The data reveals that seniors do not approach intergenerational exchange primarily as a solution to loneliness. Their motivations are more active and varied than this framing suggests. When asked about their primary motivation for joining a platform like Genly, 52.6% of respondents cited contributing to something socially useful, ranking above both the pursuit of authentic human relationships and the development of new skills. This positions seniors not as passive recipients of connection but as individuals who seek to remain purposeful and engaged.

This orientation towards usefulness is confirmed by responses to the open-ended question about what seniors feel they could offer. The range was wide: companionship and attentive listening, transmission of professional experience and know-how, life and career advice, help with everyday tasks, and cultural exchange. Several respondents described specific professional backgrounds in law, medicine, education, or business, that they felt could genuinely benefit a student navigating similar territory. Others emphasised less formal contributions like patience, perspective, and the ability to listen without an agenda.

The interviews added an important nuance: seniors described a particular satisfaction in exchanges where they felt taken seriously as equals rather than assisted. Several mentioned the pleasure of being challenged by a younger person's perspective, suggesting that seniors are motivated not only by the opportunity to transmit but also to learn. This mutual curiosity mirrors the student motivations described (cfr. section 4.2.2.) and reinforces the reciprocal logic at the heart of Genly's design. Genly's communication with seniors should therefore emphasise contribution and mutual exchange rather than need or assistance.

4.3.3. *Barriers to participation*

Among seniors, only 26.3% stated that they would be willing to use a platform connecting students and seniors and 42.1% were mitigated with a rating of 3/5, which at first glance suggests some resistance. However, the interviews reveal that this reluctance is more specific than a simple rejection of the concept. The most dominant concern is not safety but reliability: seniors expressed a fear of being stood up, or of investing emotionally in a relationship that the student would abandon after one or two meetings. This fear of discontinuity is very different from distrust of the platform itself, and it requires a different design response.

A second barrier is digital apprehension, even though the answers vary within the sample. While 44.7% of respondents reported low digital literacy, a meaningful proportion is comfortable with technology and did not identify it as an obstacle. A small number expressed fundamental resistance to digital interaction that no onboarding process is likely to overcome. These profiles represent a limit of the platform's reach rather than a design problem to be solved.

A third barrier regards uncertainty about what seniors are expected to contribute. Several respondents were unsure whether their experience was relevant or valuable enough to justify the exchange. This connects directly to two findings. First, that seniors do not perceive themselves only as recipients, but it suggests that this self-perception needs to be actively supported rather than assumed (cfr. section 4.3.2.). Second, similarly to the students the pains identified in the Multisided Value Canvas (cfr. section 3.2., figure 3) are consistent with these statements. The platform's onboarding design must therefore do more than explain how to use the application: it must help seniors articulate and own the value they bring to the exchange.

4.4. Institutions' perspective

The three institutions interviewed: CPAS Ottignies–Louvain-la-Neuve, Université des Aînés (UdA), and Dyle Solidaire, were selected because of their close and sustained relationship with the senior population, as well as their practical expertise in social participation and community initiatives. Their perspectives provide a deeper understanding of what structured social engagement looks like in practice, where it succeeds and where it fails, which the surveys could not offer.

Several recurring themes emerged across all three interviews that have direct implications for Genly's design and positioning. The first one is the centrality of trust as a prerequisite rather than a feature. All three organisations independently emphasised that seniors will not engage with a new initiative, digital or not, unless it is supported by an institution they already know and respect. The CPAS stated that its ability to connect with isolated seniors depends almost entirely on the trust it has built over time through its consistent presence. Similarly, UdA mentioned that even among its own members, who are already engaged and digitally capable, new initiatives require a period of credibility-building before adoption becomes organic. For Genly, this confirms that institutional partnerships are not simply a distribution channel but also a trust mechanism and that the platform's early design must make this institutional backing visible and apparent to users from the first interaction with the platform.

The second theme is the heterogeneity of the senior population, which the three institutions said should not be ignored. UdA works primarily with intellectually active and socially engaged seniors who are comfortable with technology and self-directed in their participation. By contrast, the CPAS works with a much more vulnerable population: seniors who are isolated, sometimes digitally excluded, and who require human mediation to access any service. Dyle Solidaire sits between these two profiles; they bring together volunteers with seniors who are lonely but not necessarily incapacitated. This heterogeneity has a direct implication for Genly's onboarding strategy: the platform cannot be designed for a single senior profile, and the institutional partnerships built in the launch phase will largely determine which segment of the senior population is reached first. Based on this analysis, UdA represents the most accessible entry point, its members are already digitally engaged and socially motivated, while the CPAS represents a longer-term partnership opportunity for reaching more isolated seniors once the platform has established credibility.

The third theme is about the structural limitations of using volunteers and organisations to bring different generations together. Dyle Solidaire explicitly identified the short-term nature of volunteer engagement as its primary constraint: relationships that start with genuine warmth often fade when a volunteer moves away, graduates, or changes their priorities. The CPAS noted that the demand for its services is growing faster than its capacity to respond, and that they are actively seeking complementary initiatives, particularly those that can operate at scale without requiring direct institutional management. Both organisations therefore perceive Genly not as a competitor to their existing work but as a structural complement: a system capable of generating the kind of sustained, personalised intergenerational relationships that their own models struggle to maintain over time. This perception of complementarity is strategically significant, as it transforms potential institutional partners from gatekeepers into advocates. These organisations have an active interest in Genly's success because it serves their own missions.

Finally, all three interviews emphasised the importance of in-person interaction as the foundation of any meaningful intergenerational relationship. Even though digital tools are accepted as a coordination mechanism, none of the institutions viewed online-only exchange sufficient to generate the depth of connection that their users seek. This confirms the platform's design choice to use digital infrastructure to facilitate physical meetings rather than to replace them.

4.5. Key adoption drivers

A cross-analysis of the perspectives of students, seniors, and institutions makes it possible to identify several key factors conditioning the adoption of Genly. Beyond a simple willingness to use the platform, the data reveal that user engagement rests on specific conditions that must be integrated from the very design of the product. Three main drivers emerge consistently across all stakeholders interviewed: trust and safety, perceived social value, and pricing fairness. These elements are not independent of one another. Together, they form the pillars on which Genly must build its value proposition to maximise its chances of adoption and ensure the quality of the exchanges generated.

4.5.1. Trust & Safety

Trust emerges as the most transversal determining factor in our study. Among seniors, 100% of respondents rated trust at 3/5 or above as a prerequisite for using the platform. Among students, several criteria considered essential converge around this same dimension: user identity verification, support from a recognised institution, a rating and review system, and personal data protection. The institutional interviews emphasise the importance of a simple interface and progressive onboarding, highlighting that a prior phone call represents an important step before any physical contact. UdA, for its part, highlights that credibility must be the central pillar of the platform, supported by concrete testimonials and clear information. Relational and institutional security therefore does not constitute a competitive advantage, but rather a prerequisite for the adoption of Genly.

4.5.2. Perceived Social Value

The data reveals that the perceived value of the platform is above all social rather than functional. The primary motivation expressed by 51% of seniors is ‘contributing to something socially useful’, before the pursuit of authentic human relationships. Seniors do not perceive themselves only as recipients of help, but as individuals capable of providing real value sharing, which reinforces the relevance of a mutually beneficial exchange model rather than a one-sided support system. Among students, 52.9% state that they are attracted to the platform to develop authentic human relationships, with motivations including cultural exchange, professional guidance, and personal development. Dyle Solidaire confirms this reading by highlighting that intergenerational exchange is perceived as a creator of social bonds and a source of mutual enrichment. These findings indicate that Genly's positioning must emphasise the dimensions

of knowledge transmission and social usefulness rather than a one-sided assistance logic, to resonate with the deeper motivations of both target audiences.

4.5.3. *Pricing fairness*

The question of the pricing model constitutes a major barrier to adoption for both audiences. Among students, 80% stated that they would never pay, while 73% of seniors believe the platform should be entirely free. Any pricing strategy that contradicts this would undermine the adoption of the platform before network effects even have the chance to develop.

However, the idea of institutional funding receives strong support from both groups. Students suggested institutional partnerships, local sponsors, and community organisations as appropriate sources of revenue. Seniors expressed similar expectations, viewing Genly more as a social or community infrastructure than a commercial service. The institutions interviewed also perceive Genly as an indirect lever for their own missions. These elements point toward a B2B business model, in which institutions and local partners fund access to the platform, thereby maintaining free access for users while ensuring Genly's economic viability. The practical implications of this for Genly's revenue structure are developed in section 5.3.

4.6. Network Effects

Before analysing network effects further, it is necessary to clarify a foundational design choice that has direct consequences for how those effects operate. As mentioned in section 3.3.2., Genly is currently designed around **one-to-one, recurring interactions** between a single student and a single senior.

However, this design choice has an important theoretical implication that must be acknowledged. As Hagiu and Wright (2020) note, the nature of network effects in two-sided platforms depends critically on whether interactions are transactional (any user on side A can interact with any user on side B at any time) or relational (users form stable, recurring pairs). In a **relational model** such as Genly's, once a student-senior pair is matched and begins meeting regularly, additional users on the platform add little direct value to that pair. Network effects are therefore concentrated at the **matching and discovery stage** : they matter when a new user joins and needs to find a compatible partner, but they attenuate once the relationship is established.

For Genly, it is not "as many users as possible" but rather "sufficient diversity of profiles to enable high-quality matches." Once a certain number of users have been reached in a given

local market, the additional value of gaining more users becomes negligible. This has a practical implication: Genly's competitive advantage lies not in the size of its user base, but in **the quality of its matching algorithm and the depth of its trust mechanisms** because these determine that the discovery stage produces durable relationships rather than failed first meetings.

An alternative model worth considering is the introduction of **small-group formats**. For instance, a senior sharing knowledge with two or three students simultaneously, or a group conversation around a shared interest. This would generate stronger ongoing network effects (more participants leads to a richer group dynamic), while potentially reducing the social anxiety associated with one-to-one first meetings. The current thesis focuses on the one-to-one model as the minimum viable interaction, with the expectation that group formats could be explored in the last phase of the launch strategy once the core matching infrastructure is established.

These network effects are local because geographic proximity is precisely what makes intergenerational exchanges concrete and sustainable. This is confirmed by Dyle Solidaire, which highlights the difficulty of building lasting relationships without a strong local grounding. The local dimension has two aspects: (1) it is a constraint because positive feedback loops can only be formed once a critical local mass is reached, and (2) it is a structural advantage because it fosters high-quality interactions within a framework of trust.

Indirect network effects should also be anticipated. Third-party actors could be integrated into Genly's ecosystem to enrich its offering and act as onboarding facilitators for those who are least familiar with the digital world. Finally, the positive externalities generated by the platform – reduction of social isolation, strengthening of local community ties, and promotion of intergenerational connection – are likely to encourage local and university authorities to actively support its development, thereby creating an additional and sustainable growth lever.

5. Value Capture: Adoption and Economic Viability

This chapter translates Genly's value proposition and the competitive analysis developed in Chapter 3 into a concrete platform design and launch plan. The priority is to ensure that the project is internally coherent and capable of generating real value. Monetisation is acknowledged as a necessary part but is deliberately kept secondary at this stage.

5.1. Platform Development

5.1.1. *Minimum Viable Platform*

To launch Genly effectively, the development plan is built around a Minimum Viable Platform (MVP). As Ries (2011) and Choudary (2014) explain, a Minimum Viable Product is the version of a product that contains the minimum set of features needed to generate value for early adopters while minimising costs. When applying this to platforms, the concept becomes the 'Minimum Viable Platform': rather than optimising a product, the focus is on enabling the 'core interaction' between users.

For Genly, this 'core interaction' is the first meeting, which is grounded in trust. Every element of the MVP is designed to make this first meeting possible. Platforms facilitate transactions rather than controlling them; this is why Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) argue that trust is the primary responsibility of a platform. Without it, even highly motivated users will not engage. For Genly, this challenge is intensified by the personal and recurring nature of the interactions. Hidden information problems such as "I don't know enough about you to engage" and hidden action problems such as "I cannot control what you will do once the structure falls away" are significant on both sides and arise differently for each group.

There are two categories of trust-building mechanisms: active measures taken by the platform, and passive infrastructure that allows users to build trust among themselves (Belleflamme & Neysen 2023). For Genly, a third category is necessary: structural signals that reduce the perceived social risk of initiating contact. The MVP is therefore structured around these three pillars and also addresses the chicken-and-egg problem.

Pillar 1: Active trust-building: screening and certification

The first and most direct way to address hidden information problems is to actively screen participants before they can interact. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) note that by doing so, a platform becomes the bearer of the collective reputation of the users it admits: a buyer – in Genly's case, a student or a senior – does not need to trust each counterparty individually. They

can trust the platform, because they understand that the platform has far more to lose from a reputational stain than any individual user does. This logic is connected to Botsman's (2017) trust stack model. Strong initial screening results in institutional credibility to every match that the platform proposes.

For Genly, this translates into a verification system that operates on two levels. At the individual level, students register using their university email or via itsme. Seniors register through a referral partner institution or also via itsme. Both groups submit a criminal record certificate, which is reviewed manually by the team. At an institutional level, the involvement of CPAS and Uda serves not only as a distribution channel, but also as a trust mechanism. These organisations already hold a high level of trust from both target groups. By recommending or sharing Genly, they help users who would otherwise hesitate to use a structured intergenerational platform.

In addition to this, Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) argue that screening must also operate after the initial verification: the platform should expel or impose sanctions to users whose behaviour does not meet acceptable standards, thereby maintaining the collective reputation over time. For Genly, this means that the report mechanism – which allows users to flag concerns that are reviewed by the team within 48 hours – is not a secondary safety feature, but an integral part of the screening logic. This allows the platform's reputation to remain credible as the user base grows. Active screening is the most powerful when it is combined with the passive trust mechanisms described below. Screening is the basis, and the 3R system – which will be explained in pillar 3 – builds trust into an ongoing, self-reinforcing asset (Belleflamme & Neysen, 2023).

Pillar 2: Structural trust signals: reducing social risk before the first meeting

Screening and certification address hidden information: they tell each user that the other has been verified, but they do not address hidden actions such as the risk that a user behaves well in a formal sense, yet still fails to commit, follow through, or engage genuinely. For Genly, this causes the most concern. In the interviews, seniors expressed a fear of abandonment, not a fear of safety. The fear of being stood up, or of a student disappearing after a single exchange. Students, on the other hand, feared interactions becoming too demanding or emotionally intense once the platform's structure falls away.

These are not problems that can be solved only by verification. According to Belleflamme and Neysen (2023), they require structural signals: elements that make each party's intentions clear

before the interaction begins, to reduce the perceived social risk of initiating contact. In contrast to formal trust mechanisms, structural signals are based on behaviour, they don't guarantee good conduct, but they make it more costly to behave badly and more visible when someone does.

For Genly, these signals are incorporated in the onboarding and matching design. Students complete a declaration of availability and commitment when they join Genly. This is not a binding contract, but it proves their intentions to the seniors they are matched with. The matching system highlights complementary motivations between users, so they both see what the other is looking for and clarify expectations before any contact is made. Once a match is confirmed, both users receive a first-meeting protocol that includes suggested public meeting places in Louvain-la-Neuve, conversation starters, and a summary of each person's expectations.

There is a reason behind the choice of public locations. It is partly a safety measure, but also a social design decision: a structured, neutral setting reduces the interpersonal pressure of a first meeting between strangers from different generations. This lowers the activation energy required to show up. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) note that the perceived cost of initiating intergenerational contact is not primarily financial but social: the risk of awkwardness, misalignment, or disappointment. Structural signals work by making that cost feel manageable in advance.

Pillar 3: The 3R system: Ratings, reviews, and recommendations

Once users are interacting on the platform, peer evaluation becomes the primary trust-building instrument, progressively replacing screening. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) describe ratings, reviews, and recommendation systems as the 'Swiss Army Knife' of digital platforms: they build trust between users, create positive feedback loops, and increase switching costs, which discourages users from leaving. Furthermore, research by Farronato et al. (2020), implies that peer reviews are more effective to build trust than formal platform verification. Users trust what other users say more than what the platform certifies.

The design of the review system requires a clear distinction between two types of evaluation: The first one concerns the **platform experience**: was the onboarding process clear, did the matching feel relevant, and did the interaction format meet expectations of users. The second concerns the **interpersonal interaction**: was the exchange valuable, respectful, and worth repeating. These two dimensions should be separated in the review interface, because

combining them results in feedback that is difficult to act on. For interpersonal reviews in particular, the criteria should be adapted to the motivations stated by the user at registration. For instance, a student seeking career guidance should evaluate the quality of professional insight received, whereas a student seeking companionship should evaluate a different set of dimensions. A generic satisfaction scale would be uninformative in both cases.

Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) identify several structural threats to the effectiveness of two-sided rating systems that are directly relevant to Genly. The first one is **collusion and retaliation**. When both parties rate each other, there is social pressure to leave positive feedback. In Genly's context, this pressure is increased by the warmth of intergenerational relationships, where leaving a critical review can feel uncomfortable on a personal level. The solution is to make reviews anonymous and simultaneous: neither party sees the other's feedback until both have submitted their review. This removes the desire to “take revenge” and reduces the social cost of honesty.

The second threat is the tendency to **copy the behaviour of others instead of making independent decisions**: early reviews tend to influence the ones that follow, and positive feedback spreads faster than a negative one. During Genly's early phase, when the pool of reviews is small, the first few reviews have a disproportionate impact on the platform's reputation. It reinforces the argument mentioned in the go-to-market strategy for manually selecting the first matches. These first meetings serve as proof of concept and establish the reputation that the 3R systems will build over time.

A third structural risk is **off-platform migration**. Once a student-senior pair is formed, there is nothing that prevents them from continuing to meet outside the platform and bypassing the review system. This weakens the feedback loop over time. Several mechanisms could mitigate this. First, automatic post-meeting notifications to invite users to leave a review after each exchange, this reduces the risk of users forgetting to complete the review. Second, a points system to reward consistent behaviour, users who accumulate x points gain increased visibility or priority access to new matches. Third, monthly engagement challenges such as leaving 5 reviews within a given time period – similar to Strava's goal-setting model – can help sustain this without making it feel compulsory. These mechanisms transform the review system from a passive feature to an active part of the platform experience.

Finally, the recommendation dimension of the 3R system works differently than the ratings and reviews. Rather than evaluating past interactions, recommendations are forward-looking:

they refer users to the platform through word-of-mouth or in-app referral mechanisms. Peer recommendation is likely to be one of the most cost-effective acquisition method available to Genly, particularly within student networks where social influence travels quickly. Some interviewees confirmed that their willingness to join the platform would increase if they heard someone else recommend the platform. A structured referral feature can help formalise this dynamic and would also connect the 3R system directly to the platform's growth logic. For instance, inviting a friend to join the platform after a successful match.

5.1.2. Stand-alone benefits: addressing the chicken-and-egg problem

Every two-sided platform faces the same structural challenge at its launch: users on each side are hesitant to join unless the other side is already present. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) describe two sources of value for platform users. (1) The value from interacting with other users (network benefits) and (2) the value from platform services that do not depend on the presence of other users (stand-alone benefits). Providing strong stand-alone benefits breaks the dependency on simultaneous recruitment, lowers the barrier to early adoption, and solves the chicken-and-egg problem.

For students, the stand-alone benefits are built around preparation and anticipation rather than self-sufficiency. Before any match is confirmed, students can complete a short, structured reflection on what they are looking for, such as their field, their uncertainties, and what kind of experience or perspective would be most useful to them. This also has value in itself: it forces a clarity of purpose that many students lack, and it makes them more attractive and legible as a match partner. A student who has articulated what they want gets better matches and has a more purposeful first conversation.

Students also have access to a community space where early members share brief testimonials of their first exchanges: what surprised them, what they gained, what they did not expect. This helps reduce the anxiety of a first meeting with a stranger from a different generation and creates a low-stakes form of engagement that keeps students active on the platform while the matching pool grows. It generates curiosity for seniors rather than replacing them.

For seniors, the stand-alone benefits are designed around visibility and readiness. Before being matched, seniors are invited to build a rich profile that goes beyond basic information. They are asked to describe a professional chapter they are proud of, a skill they enjoy sharing, or a moment in their life they would like to pass on. This is not simply a registration step; it is a reflective exercise that helps seniors articulate their own value.

Seniors also have access to a curated space where they can read brief profiles and introductions from students who have already joined, their fields of study, their questions, and their motivations. This gives seniors a concrete and human sense of who they might meet, which replaces the anxiety of interacting with a stranger with something much more specific and approachable. Seeing that a student is studying law and is anxious about their first internship is far less intimidating than the idea of meeting a young person. It also creates a natural conversation starter before any match is even proposed.

These stand-alone features have a dual purpose: they give early adopters a reason to join before the matching pool is large, and they generate the first platform data that improves the matching algorithm over time.

5.2. Go-to-Market strategy

Building the platform is only a part of the challenge: the harder question is how to attract people to actually use it. A two-sided platform requires two very different user groups, and none of them want to join without the other. To address this, the launch strategy is built on two analytical tools: the ‘User Acquisition Cost’ (UAC) and the ‘Attraction Power’ (AP). Together, these tools form the Lever Selector, a method for deciding which group to prioritise first and how to structure the launch accordingly (Belleflamme & Neysen, 2023).

5.2.1. User Acquisition Cost

The UAC represents what it costs to bring a new user to the platform. Three types of costs are identified: (1) prospecting users (identify and reach them), (2) easing users’ adoption (compensate for onboarding costs), and (3) establishing trust (reduce perceived risk before any interaction takes place). Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) first recommend focusing on the group with a lower UAC, because for the same budget, more users can be attracted. In figure 10, the UAC is compared between students and seniors across the three types of costs:

UAC	Students	Seniors
Prospecting	LOW – Compact campus, reachable via UCLouvain mailing lists, AGL, kots-à-projets, student associations and social media.	MEDIUM – Reach via CPAS, nursing homes, UdA and local associations; requires personalised and institutional support.

Easing adoption	LOW – Pioneers in the digital age, comfortable with apps, strong stand-alone benefits	MEDIUM – 21 out of 38 seniors have no major digital difficulties, but overall willingness to use a platform is average; stand-alone benefits
Establishing trust	LOW-MEDIUM – First-meeting protocol and identity verification are the top requirements, Genly's social mission reduces perceived risk	HIGH – Institutional backing, identity verification, and easy reporting are essential, fear of student unreliability is a key concern
Overall UAC	LOW	MEDIUM-HIGH

Figure 10: Comparing UAC Students vs. Seniors

5.2.2. Attraction Power

The AP addresses a different question: once one group is present, how strongly does it attract the other user group? Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) define it as ‘the strength of the cross-side network effects’ and evaluates it through three criteria: (1) scarcity (how rare is this group?), (2) exclusivity (how hard is it to reach them outside the platform?), and (3) substitutability (how easy is it to replace them?). In figure 11, the AP is compared between students and seniors across the three criteria:

AP	Students	Seniors
Scarcity	MEDIUM – The UCLouvain counts 23,500 students; only those motivated by both career guidance and meaningful connections represent a valuable profile.	HIGH – Seniors with relevant professional backgrounds, genuine availability, and willingness to share experiences are scarce.
Exclusivity	HIGH – Students' time is limited by other activities such as student jobs, classes, social media, friends, student associations and other activities.	MEDIUM – Most seniors mention having little to no contact with young people outside their family. Genly offers access to an unreachable group.
Substitutability	MEDIUM – Alternative platforms for career guidance exist, but the combination of mentorship, meaningful	HIGH – Seniors seeking ongoing, personalised connections with students have very few alternatives;

	connections, and social contribution is hard to find elsewhere.	most interviewees were unaware of any similar existing projects.
Overall AP	MEDIUM	HIGH

Figure 11: Comparing AP Students vs. Seniors

However, attraction power only captures half of the equation. A high AP means that a group is valuable to attract, but it says little about whether they will stay. The retention dynamics differ considerably between the two groups. For students, the primary retention risk is their other activities that could lead them to deprioritise the platform. For seniors, the main risk is their fear of investing in a relationship that the student eventually abandons, which was confirmed in the interviews. This asymmetry matters for platform design: retention mechanisms should address different problems on each side. The stand-alone benefits will help retain certain users and the group events and local partnerships will also convince users to continue using the platform. Retention rate remains a limit of the platform, a challenge that is fully recognised.

5.2.3. The Lever Selector: recommendation

By combining these results, Genly is positioned on the ‘buy up or replace’ case of the Lever Selector matrix (cfr. appendix 8.1.2.). Students are cheaper to recruit but have a weaker AP, while seniors are harder to recruit and have stronger AP. Genly cannot do without the group who is the least likely to join spontaneously.

Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) propose two responses: (1) Buying up seniors rather than approaching them individually. Genly works with trusted institutions which already have an established relationship with the senior population. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) call this partnering with a ‘chicken farm’: accessing an entire group through a single organisation rather than building trust from scratch with each individual. (2) Temporarily replace the senior side with curated content (stand-alone benefits) that gives the students something to value while waiting for enough seniors to join. This breaks the dependency between the two sides during the period of launch, which is very fragile.

Finally, within the senior group, some profiles matter more than others. For instance, a retired lawyer or doctor – whose background directly matches what students are looking for – will attract more interest than a less visible profile, but it will also reassure other seniors that the platform is worth joining because their presence is a convincing signal that the platform is

likely to thrive. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) call them the ‘marquee users’ or the ‘golden eggs’, their AP is larger than the average.

The approach that follows is straightforward: attract students first, then seniors through institutional partners, with the most credible senior profiles to attract other seniors.

5.2.4. Launch strategy

These two analytical tools brought insightful information: the UAC is lower for students, while the AP is stronger for seniors. Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) advise: *“To launch a platform, it pays to focus on the group with a lower user acquisition cost and/or a stronger attraction power.”* But when these two do not align, a strategy must be found to exploit both.

Phase 1 – Student pre-registration (months 1-2)

Students will be targeted first given their lower UAC. This phase will happen before the platform is live. Given the diversity of student motivations identified in the survey, the recruitment will be conducted through three different channels: career-oriented networks, career services and faculty associations; social impact communities such as kots-à-projets and volunteering associations; and student wellbeing initiatives. This will motivate them to join an innovative intergenerational platform. The goal is to have 200-300 verified student profiles, which is enough to demonstrate to institutions that the platform is serious and ready to receive senior users.

Phase 2 – Institutional senior onboarding (months 2-4)

Once a student base has been established, the focus will shift to seniors. Genly will work with institutions that seniors already trust to be effective. Uda is the most accessible group of seniors, they will be the initial target for this phase. CPAS Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve will be approached later on as a referral partner for isolated seniors who are the hardest to reach, but who would benefit the most from this initiative. Local nursing homes and retirement residences will also be contacted. The target is 80-120 senior profiles.

Phase 3 – First matches & activations (months 4-6)

Once both sides have enough verified profiles, the matching system will be activated. The first wave of matches will be selected manually by the team to ensure quality and maximise the likelihood of a positive initial interaction. These interactions are very important, as they will lead to the first testimonials and demonstrate the platform’s value to institutional partners. With

the consent of the users, early success stories will be documented and used to reach the press, social media, and report to partners. The objective is to complete 50-80 first meetings in this phase.

Phase 4 – Growth & iteration (months 6-18)

From this point, growth will become more spontaneous and self-sustaining. Each new academic year brings new students to Louvain-la-Neuve, and satisfied users attract new users through word of mouth. Next, group events, such as intergenerational workshops, will be organised to create community moments to reinforce trust and engagement and generate visibility. Many-to-one and many-to-many interactions will be considered to enlarge Genly's activity base as one-to-one interactions are not always adapted for every type of users.

The priority at this stage of the platform growth will be to densify the value proposition rather than diversify it too quickly. Densification means enriching the experience for the existing users – improve the matching algorithm with accumulated interaction data, add engagement features (milestones, badges), and deepen institutional partnerships – before expanding geographically. The risk of growing too fast without a sufficiently validated model is illustrated by the collapse of Take Eat Easy. Growth should serve the platform, not bring an end to it (Belleflamme & Neysen, 2023).

Then, geographic expansion to other university cities with comparable demographic configurations will be a natural second step. By first densifying the value proposition in Louvain-la-Neuve, it ensures that the replication is based on a tested and stable model rather than an untested one. Local complementors represent a difficult-to-replicate entry barrier for potential rivals, so any expansion will leverage the institutional relationships and the reputation built locally.

5.3. Monetisation strategy

A full monetisation and financial model falls outside the scope of this thesis, as it would require competencies in financial modelling, legal, tax, and accounting expertise. However, it is important to outline a sustainable model that is consistent with the platform's social mission and the empirical findings from Chapter 4, being that neither user group is willing to pay for access to the platform.

Genly's monetisation logic therefore rests on three complementary revenue sources:

- (1) Institutional funding is the primary early-stage revenue source. Service agreements with public and social organisations would co-finance the platform in exchange for access to a social infrastructure that directly serves their missions. The CPAS, for instance, identified Genly as an indirect lever for its own goal of keeping seniors autonomous and socially connected. Beyond direct service agreements, several complementary funding channels are worth exploring. Belgian philanthropic foundations, such as the Fondation Roi Baudouin, regularly support initiatives that address social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity, areas that map directly onto Genly's mission. At the regional and European level, public programmes targeting digital inclusion, active ageing, or community resilience could provide project-based grants, particularly during the development and pilot phases. This alignment of interests makes institutional and public funding a realistic possibility. However, the interviews also revealed that local institutions have limited structural flexibility and cannot guarantee revenue streams. Grant-based funding is by nature time-limited and depends on reporting obligations. Institutional funding is therefore a foundation, not a guarantee, and converting these opportunities into formal agreements or successful applications would require a dedicated development effort beyond the scope of this thesis.
- (2) Advertising revenue represents a second complementary source, that serves a dual function: it generates income while simultaneously addressing the chicken-and-egg problem. Targeted digital advertising, through Meta and LinkedIn, allows Genly to reach distinct student and senior audiences through channels they already use, with messaging tailored to each group's motivations. A particularly effective approach is asymmetric advertising: concentrating early spend on the side with the higher attraction power. As established in section 5.2.2., seniors have a stronger AP than students, which suggests that advertising investment should initially prioritise senior recruitment through Facebook groups, local community channels, and institutional newsletters, because each additional senior profile generates disproportionate value for the student side. Once a visible senior base is established, student-facing advertising can shift from acquisition to conversion. Once the platform reaches sufficient scale, Google Ads and traffic-based digital advertising represent a natural revenue stream that grows proportionally with the platform's audience without requiring any behavioural change from users. It is important, however, to be realistic: advertising revenue in the early phase will be modest and should not be treated as a primary funding mechanism. Its financial contribution becomes meaningful only once

network effects are self-sustaining. In the launch phase, its primary value is strategic rather than financial.

- (3) Partnership programmes represent a third resource. They are relevant once the platform reaches sufficient maturity. Local businesses that benefit from these exchanges, such as cafés or restaurants, could contribute to the platform in exchange for visibility or by being part of the suggested meeting locations. For instance, the Good News, a bar in Louvain-la-Neuve already has a partnership with a student association and the members of this association have reductions when they go there. This model keeps access free for users, while creating a local commercial ecosystem around the platform's activity. Several students interviewed spontaneously suggested this type of arrangement, which confirms its intuitive appeal to the target audience.

These three sources form a model in which institutional funding covers early operational costs, advertising revenue grows with the user base, and partnership programmes provide long-term diversification. None of these streams require users to pay, which preserves the social logic of the platform. A feasibility study, with a cost-analysis structure, revenue planning and forecasting, and a break-even model would be the natural next step if the project moves towards implementation.

5.4. Ethics and data protection

GDPR compliance, data protection and the legal structure of the platform – whether as a non-profit platform, a social enterprise or a cooperative – are acknowledged as important but left to the appropriate financial and legal experts. A cooperative or social enterprise model would have the strategic benefit of aligning users' interests with the platform's performance. This would reduce leakage risks, as Belleflamme and Neysen (2023) observe in comparable cases. These elements are not limitations of this research, but reflections of what still must be done: this thesis demonstrates that the project is coherent socially and strategically, which is a necessary condition before addressing operational and legal questions in detail.

6. Conclusion

This thesis investigates *how perceived trust, social value, and pricing fairness influence the adoption and early network effects of an intergenerational two-sided platform (Genly) in a university-town ecosystem*. The work conducted across the preceding chapters allows for a substantive answer to that question. It goes beyond confirming that the need exists.

The four theoretical frameworks of Chapter 2 do not simply describe the problem, they diagnose it. The Self-Determination Theory establishes that both students and seniors are motivated by needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness and that intergenerational exchange can address all three simultaneously. The Socioemotional Selectivity Theory explains why this potential is significant for seniors: they become more selective about their social investments, meaningful exchanges become more attractive, and this is exactly what Genly offers. The Social Exchange Theory clarifies the conditions under which these interactions are sustainable: perceived reciprocity, manageable costs, and reliable returns. Lastly, the Two-Sided Market Theory introduces the operational logic, the chicken-and-egg problem, the stand-alone value, and the need for active coordination mechanisms, which explains why exchange cannot be generated by motivation alone and needs structural support. These frameworks lead to the same conclusion: the barrier to intergenerational exchange is structural, not attitude-based. The willingness for intergenerational exchange is present, what is missing is the infrastructure to make it possible.

The survey data collected from 85 students and 38 seniors in the Louvain-la-Neuve area and validates the theoretical framework. Both groups express genuine openness to intergenerational exchange, and their stated needs are structurally complementary: students seek career orientation, experiential guidance, and meaningful connections, while seniors seek recognition, contribution, and purposeful social engagement. These findings align with the motivational complementarity predicted by the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory and the reciprocal value logic of the Social Exchange Theory.

The most critical adoption condition is trust and is a prerequisite rather than a byproduct of engagement. This is a significant contribution to the existing literature on platform adoption, which tends to treat trust as a general condition rather than a layered, progressively developed variable. The finding that institutional trust is decisive for seniors is important: it suggests that the platform's credibility cannot be self-generated and must be borrowed, at least initially, from established institutions.

Another consideration concerns the structure of interactions themselves. This thesis has focused on one-to-one exchanges as the core model, based on the preference of users for personalised, recurring relationships. However, the data also reveals that a meaningful share of students expressed hesitation about the intimacy of one-to-one first meetings with a stranger. Small-group formats could therefore serve as a lower-barrier entry point, reducing social risk without sacrificing relational quality. Rather than replacing the one-to-one model, group interactions could function as a trust-building mechanism where compatible pairs can naturally emerge and lead to more personal connections.

The data also confirms the pricing hypothesis: both groups perceive Genly as a social infrastructure rather than a commercial service, and there is a strong and consistent resistance to direct monetisation across profiles. This is not simply a preference for free services, it reflects a deeper perception of what the platform is and what paying for it would mean. A pricing model that contradicts this perception would not only reduce adoption but would also undermine the social legitimacy on which adoption depends.

The limitations of the data complicate the theoretical picture. Individuals do not always behave in accordance with their stated intentions. The gap between what survey respondents say they would do and what they would actually do once the platform exists is well-documented and cannot be closed through a questionnaire alone. The data provides a solid foundation for platform design decisions, but it cannot take the place of the actual behaviours that only a real launch can generate.

This thesis offers three actionable insights for organisations that consider the development of socially oriented platforms. First, trust must be designed into the platform architecture from the beginning through institutional partnerships, identity verification, and first-meeting protocols. Then, the order in which the launch strategy is executed matters as much as the strategy itself: institutional, interpersonal, and relational trust must be built in a specific order, and by rushing these stages early adopters are not likely to convert into active users. Finally, the revenue model must align with the platform's social identity, capturing value from institutions that benefit from its impact, such as universities, municipalities, health insurers, rather than from the individuals who generate it.

This thesis suggests that the standard logic of two-sided platforms built around pricing strategies and network effects, does not directly apply to platforms whose primary purpose is

social rather than commercial. In these contexts, what makes a platform work is not how its pricing strategy, but how well it builds trust and reduces the social risk of human connections. Several limitations of this research must be acknowledged clearly. The empirical sample is modest in size and geographically concentrated, which limits the applicability of the findings to contexts beyond Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve. The platform has not yet launched, which means that all conclusions regarding adoption behaviour and network effects rest on stated intentions rather than observed conduct, a significant methodological distinction. The monetisation model remains conceptual and has not been analysed in a formal financial feasibility study. Finally, the legal, operational, and data protection aspects of the platform fall outside the scope of this work and would require dedicated expertise before any real implementation can be considered.

These limitations define the natural next steps. A controlled pilot launch involving real users would enable the testing of the intentions stated at the beginning of the conclusion against actual behaviour. It would allow the platform's core mechanisms to be gradually improved. A formal financial feasibility study would be necessary to assess the platform's economic sustainability. In the future, long-term research should track the outcomes of interactions facilitated by Genly and determine whether the platform delivers the promised social value and under what conditions.

What this thesis has attempted to establish is that the problem is real, the demand is genuine, the design logic is solid, and the barriers are structural rather than motivational. Whether Genly can turn that argument into practice is a question that only its launch can answer.

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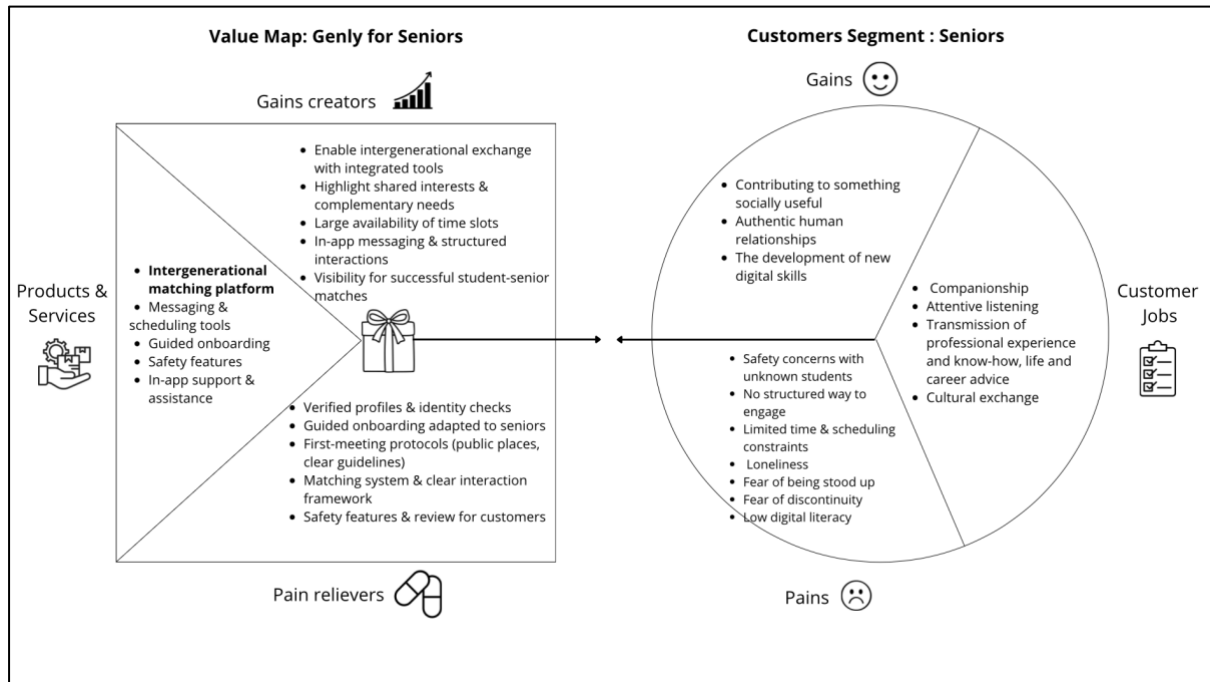
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8. Appendix

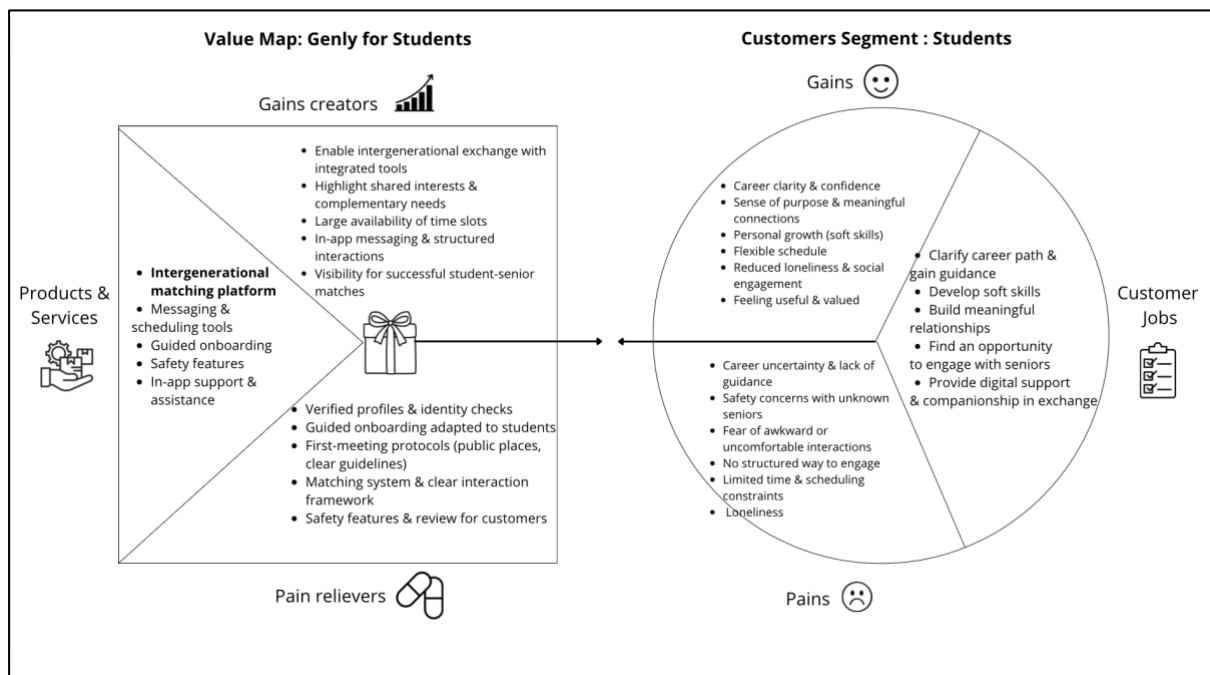
8.1. Figures

8.1.1. Value Proposition Canvas

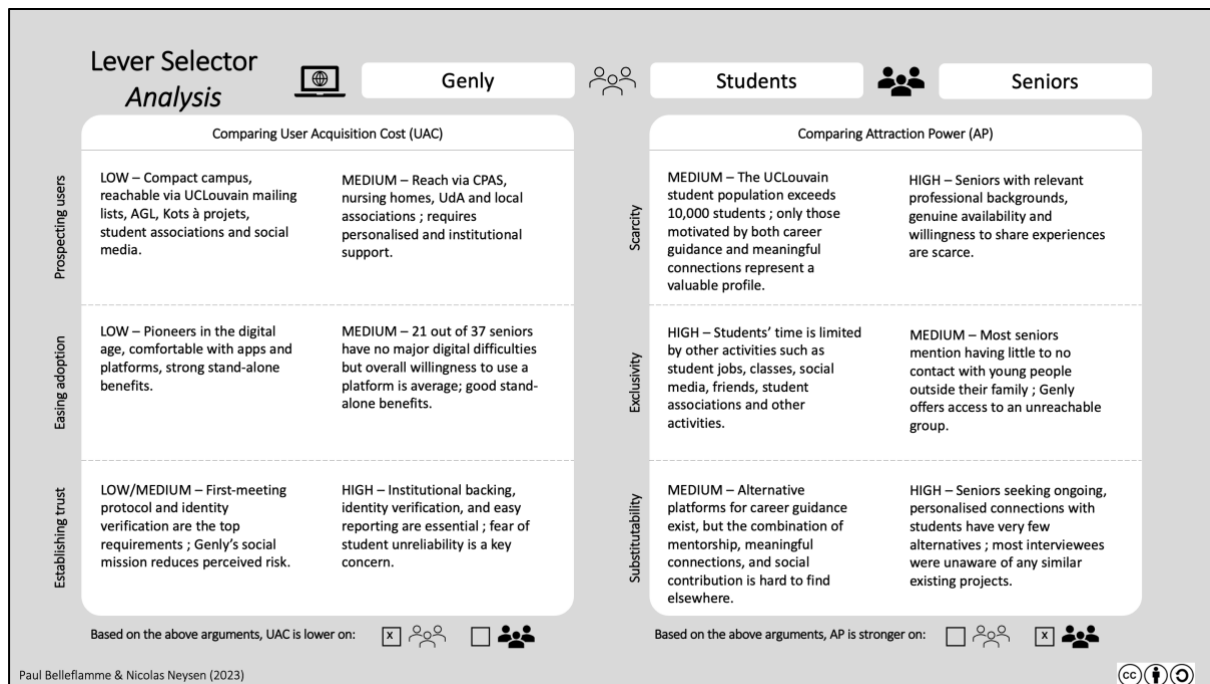
8.1.1.1. Seniors



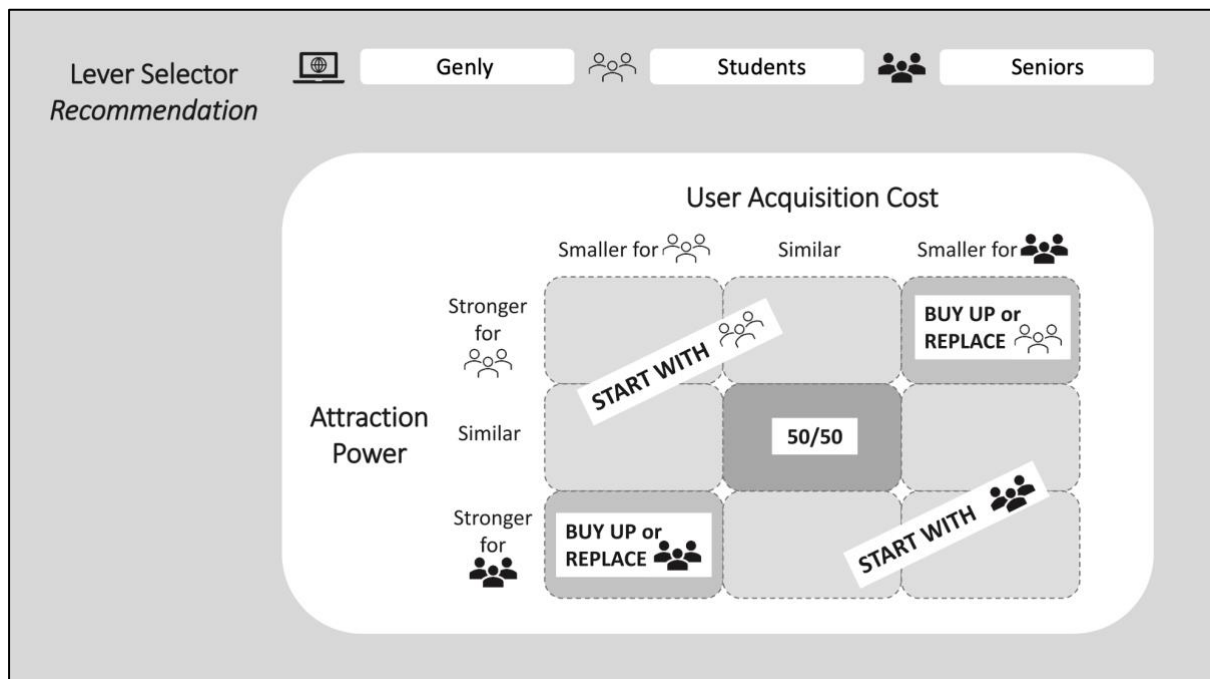
8.1.1.2. Students



8.1.2. Lever Selector



Lever Selector Recommendation:



8.2. Seniors

8.2.1. Interview questions

Introduction

Before the interview began, participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves (first name, age, living situation, and general daily routine).

Daily Activities & Unfulfilled Wishes

- What activities do you enjoy doing?
- Are there things you would like to do but currently don't?

Contact with Young People

- Do you have contact with young people?
- Would you like to have more?

Concerns & Trust

- What might worry you about meeting a student?
- What would make you feel at ease?

Openness to the Platform

- If a service connected you with students for activities, what would you think of it?
- What would be essential for you to agree to participate?
- What might motivate you to participate? (money, experience, social connection, curiosity...)

Reaction to the Platform

- If a platform offered to connect you with students for [activity], would that appeal to you?
- What would make it truly attractive or what does not seem relevant to you?

8.2.2. Interview summaries

8.2.2.1. Joëlle

Date	15/04/2026 from 10:00 to 10:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Joëlle
Age	76 years old
Living situation	Widowed, no children, lives alone in a flat; sold her house in La Hulpe after retirement

Profile

Joëlle is a retired medical specialist (specialist physician with her own laboratory in Brussels) who worked until the age of 63. She is widowed and has no children of her own, though she has stepchildren and a large family of siblings and their children. She describes herself as someone who lives in relative social isolation, without many active family ties, but who functions very well and does not suffer from it. She chose to participate in the research partly to show that solitude and suffering are not synonymous, and that older people can lead rich, self-directed lives.

Daily activities & unfulfilled wishes

Joëlle leads a highly self-determined life. After moving to the Ottignies area, she actively sought out local connections. She now runs painting workshops through a local association (Bras-dessus-Bras-dessous) and sewing workshops in a social space in Ottignies. She also participates in these workshops as a student, not just a facilitator. Her activities are her anchor, and she finds deep meaning in sharing her skills and watching people grow. She has no unfulfilled wishes, she is genuinely content, though she acknowledges she would welcome a few more young participants in her workshops.

Contact with young people

Joëlle has limited but valued contact with young people, primarily through a small number of younger participants in her sewing workshops, and occasionally through family visits during school holidays. She explicitly says she would welcome slightly more contact with younger people but is not in need, it is a preference, not an urgent gap.

Concerns & trust

Joëlle approaches potential encounters with students from a position of openness and respect, expecting the same in return. She has one significant concern, however: the risk that a platform encounter could be exploited, whether by a student seeking money from a vulnerable elderly person, or by either party placing excessive expectations on the relationship. She draws directly on her experience with Bras-dessus-Bras-dessous, where she was matched with someone whose needs were pathological rather than social, a person who needed psychotherapy, not companionship, which led her to withdraw from the relationship. This experience informs her view that encounters should be structured around a concrete shared project, not an open-ended social obligation.

Openness to the platform

Joëlle is conceptually very positive about Genly and sees clear parallels with her own workshop experience: a shared activity creates a safe container for human connection to develop organically. She is emphatic that encounters should not be built around simply "having a coffee and chatting", there needs to be something tangible to do together, something that gives each party a reason to be there and a topic for conversation. A book club, a walk, a creative project, a topic-based discussion, any of these would work. Over time, if the initial structured encounter goes well, a deeper and more personal relationship can naturally follow. She also values the signal that a platform match sends: both parties have chosen to be there, which removes the social awkwardness of an unsolicited approach.

Reaction to the app

Joëlle does not have a strong personal need for the app, given her already active social life. She might use it to find additional young participants for her workshops, or to discover seniors with skills she would like to learn. Her interest is more conditional and selective. She raises a structural difficulty she has faced herself: finding accessible venues for activities (affordable, PMR-accessible, with suitable facilities), and the lack of responsiveness from institutions like Kap Senior when she has approached them for space. This is a real operational challenge she hopes Genly could help address by building institutional partnerships. She also notes that Bras-dessus-Bras-dessous has lost momentum as an organisation, while the small workshop group she helped create continues independently, suggesting that organic community beats institutional structure when the latter loses energy.

8.2.2.2. Carla

Date	20/04/2026 from 13:00 to 13:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Carla
Age	Not specified
Living situation	Lives alone in a centrally located flat in Louvain-la-Neuve

Profile

Carla was reached through a volunteer contact (Cécilia) who had been visiting her as part of a social support initiative. She completed an anonymous questionnaire beforehand and agreed to a follow-up phone call.

Daily activities & unfulfilled wishes

Despite her age, Carla manages her household largely independently, shopping, cooking, laundry, though she has handed off some heavier tasks (vacuuming, ironing) due to balance difficulties. She enjoys going out with friends for drinks or a terrace chat, and values moments of relaxed conversation. She is deeply interested in the topic of intergenerational exchange and uses a poetic metaphor to describe it: seniors are old trees with deep roots, and young people are new trees with fresh branches, both have something to offer the other.

Contact with young people

Carla lives in Louvain-la-Neuve, a city full of students, but does not have regular contact with young people in her daily life. She has had two meaningful intergenerational experiences: an Argentine student who came to practise her French conversation (they have kept in touch), and another student contact for similar language exchange. These experiences were clearly positive and she values them. Her grandchildren are in their thirties and live abroad, so contact with them is limited but meaningful when it happens.

Concerns & trust

When asked what might worry her about meeting an unknown student, Carla finds the question difficult to answer concretely. What matters most to her is empathy, she needs to sense it immediately in an interaction, and without it, she feels no real exchange is possible. She distinguishes between a meaningful connection and "small talk that goes nowhere". The quality of the human connection is her primary filter.

Openness to the platform

Carla is open to intergenerational exchange in principle and has enjoyed it in the past. Her preferred format is conversation-based, discussions around books, literature or life experiences, rather than games or structured activities. She would not feel comfortable giving formal career advice but could offer attentive listening and gentle guidance to a student who feels lost. The essential prerequisite for her is mutual goodwill: she needs to sense that the student genuinely appreciates being with an older person, just as she appreciates being with them.

Reaction to the platform

This is where Carla draws a clear line. She has a principled objection to digital platforms, which she describes as "dehumanising". She owns a tablet but uses it reluctantly and would not agree to initiate contact with someone through an online interface. For her, the voice, its tone, its

warmth, the way someone phrases things, is an essential signal of who a person is. She would only feel comfortable being introduced to a student through word of mouth, a phone call, or a flyer. This makes her an important example of a senior segment for whom the platform itself is not the right entry point, and who would require a human intermediary.

8.2.2.3. *Elisabeth*

Date	17/04/2026 from 11:00 to 11:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Elisabeth
Age	66 years old
Living situation	Active professional (nearing end of career at UdA), large family, sporty lifestyle

Profile

Élisabeth is nearing the end of her professional career at the Université des Aînés (UdA) in Louvain-la-Neuve. She is highly digitally literate, having worked in computing-adjacent fields throughout her career. She has a large family, is very sporty, and lives a full and connected life. She does not feel isolated and does not personally need a platform like Genly, but she understands entirely why others would, and supports the concept warmly.

Daily activities & unfulfilled wishes

Élisabeth's daily life is rich and varied, professional responsibilities, family, sport, and social engagements. She is transitioning into retirement and is unsure yet how she will manage her time but anticipates having more of it. She has no unfulfilled wishes at this stage and is approaching the next chapter of her life with curiosity rather than anxiety.

Contact with young people

Through her work at the UdA, Élisabeth has indirect contact with students (some attend UdA courses or events), though the institution is primarily senior-facing. She also has grandchildren and a daughter who has personally benefited from an intergenerational housing scheme ("1toit2ages"), which she found excellent. This personal experience makes her particularly receptive to the concept of structured intergenerational connection.

Concerns & trust

Élisabeth's main personal concern as a potential senior user is reliability and coherence: she wants to know that the platform is trustworthy, that activities are relevant and well-matched to her interests, and that she knows where meetings would take place. Accessibility (parking, PMR access) is a practical factor she mentions. Testimonials from existing users are important to her as a trust signal.

Openness to the platform

Élisabeth is genuinely enthusiastic about Genly's concept and finds it excellent. She would personally be open to using it for activities aligned with her interests, bridge, painting, discussions on current affairs. She emphasises the importance of activity-based matching rather than purely social matching: the shared activity is what gives the encounter its structure and safety. She would not be drawn by a vague "come and chat" offer, but would respond positively to a specific, well-described activity proposal.

Reaction to the app

Élisabeth is technologically confident and would naturally gravitate toward a digital platform. She notes, however, that many seniors in the UdA community, while improving, still struggle with technology, and that a physical point of contact or human intermediary remains important for onboarding. She suggests SuperZen (a digital support organisation operating in Brussels and Louvain-la-Neuve) as a potential partner for physical drop-in points where seniors could encounter the platform in a supported setting. She also recommends that Genly ensure a well-maintained, clear and visible online presence.

8.2.2.4. Vivianne

Date	20/04/2026 from 17:00 to 17:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Vivianne
Age	Not specified
Living situation	Active, socially embedded; coordinates volunteer visitor programme Dyle Solidaire

Profile

Vivianne is the coordinator of Dyle Solidaire, a social volunteering initiative linked to the Christian mutual health insurance (MC/Mutualité Chrétienne), which matches trained

volunteers with isolated elderly people for regular fortnightly visits. She was identified through Cécilia, one of her volunteers. As a senior herself, she brings both an institutional and a personal perspective to the interview. Her profile in the institutional section below covers her role at Dyle Solidaire in more depth.

Openness to the platform & personal perspective

Vivianne is clearly supportive of the Genly concept and sees direct resonance between its goals and those of Dyle Solidaire. From a personal standpoint, she values human connection and structured social support. She understands the platform's potential for seniors who are isolated but still active and agrees that the "recently retired" segment, people who have just left their professional identity and face a sudden social void, is a particularly well-targeted audience. She also confirms the importance of ensuring that senior participants are emotionally stable and have realistic expectations: her experience at Dyle Solidaire has shown that mismatched expectations (a senior expecting emotional support beyond what a volunteer can provide) can damage the relationship and discourage volunteers.

8.2.2.5. Cécilia

Date	17/04/2026 from 13:30 to 14:00 (remote)
Person interviewed	Cécilia
Age	72 years old
Living situation	Lives in a building with 80% young residents/students; very active daily routine

Profile

Cécilia has lived in Louvain-la-Neuve for 30 years. She is a former IT professional (42 years in computing) who leads an exceptionally active life. She practises tai-chi every morning by the lake, attends weekly English conversation sessions, a watercolour workshop, a tai-chi course, and a body awareness class. She also volunteers fortnightly as a visitor for isolated elderly people through the Dyle Solidaire association. She is technologically comfortable and socially embedded.

Daily activities & unfulfilled wishes

Cécilia's week is fully structured with activities she genuinely enjoys. She has no sense of lacking anything in her daily life. What she does express is a deep satisfaction in human connection, both with the elderly people she visits as a volunteer and with the young neighbours in her building. She describes her volunteering as "as important as tai-chi" and speaks of it with great warmth, noting the intimacy and privilege of entering people's homes and lives.

Contact with young people

Cécilia lives in a building where approximately 80% of residents are young people or students. She sees them daily, in corridors, on stairwells, and says hello to all of them, even when she no longer recognises them outside the building. She does not feel she needs more contact with young people; she describes her current level as sufficient and enriching. The open architecture of her building, with its shared passageways and absence of locked stairwells, naturally creates a sense of community that she values greatly.

Concerns & trust

Cécilia has no real concerns about meeting young people, her daily life already involves constant, easy contact with students. She does not fear aggression or discomfort. The only caveat she mentions, almost as a hypothetical, is that a student should not be aggressive, but this seems more of a general observation than a personal worry. Her general stance is one of openness and trust.

Openness to the platform

Cécilia's life is already very full, and she does not feel a personal need for a platform like Genly. However, she engages thoughtfully with the concept and sees its value for others, particularly isolated seniors who, unlike her, do not have a built-in social environment. She is already doing informally what the platform would facilitate structurally: visiting isolated people, creating connection, bringing people out of their solitude. She notes that her volunteering relationship sometimes ends abruptly when the person moves to a care home or passes away, which is an emotional reality she has learned to navigate.

Reaction to the app

As a former IT professional, Cécilia is technologically confident, but she considers digital platforms an impersonal way to connect and would not personally seek out this kind of tool. She is, however, a valuable connector: she referred three other elderly women (including Carla) to the project, one of whom is wheelchair-bound and digitally capable, and another who is fully isolated. She also provided the contact details of Vivianne, the coordinator of Dyle Solidaire,

as a key institutional point of contact. Her role in this research is as much as a networker and facilitator as an interviewee.

8.3. Students

8.3.1. Interview questions

Introduction

Before the interview began, participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves (first name, age, field of study, place of residence).

Free Time & Social Life

- How do you spend your free time outside of classes?
- Do you take part in any social or associative activities?

Intergenerational Relationships

- Do you have interactions with elderly people? (family, neighbours...)
- How would you describe those interactions? How much importance do you place on them?

Interest in Intergenerational Activities

- Could it be interesting for you to do activities with seniors, and why?
- What would hold you back from spending time with elderly strangers?
- Would you feel comfortable? Why / why not?

Motivations & Incentives

- What could motivate you to participate? (money, experience, social connection, CV, curiosity...)

Reaction to the Platform

- If a platform offered you the chance to meet seniors, would that appeal to you?
- What would make it truly attractive or what does not seem relevant to you about this platform?

8.3.2. Interview summaries

8.3.2.1. Henri

Date	15/04/2026 from 14:00 to 14:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Henri
Age	23 years old
Studies	2 nd year master – Business Engineering (INEO programme)

Profile

Henri is a Master's year 2 student in Management Engineering and a participant in the INEO entrepreneurship programme. He is co-founder of two student ventures: Pass-Pass, an online ticketing platform, and Synerbrew, a brewing innovation project. His schedule is extremely busy, combining his thesis, entrepreneurial projects and a previous Erasmus semester, leaving him very little personal time.

Free time & social life

Henri describes having almost no free time. His spare moments are devoted to seeing his girlfriend and occasionally socialising with friends. He was previously involved in associative life but has stepped back to focus on his entrepreneurial projects. He belongs to a small informal finance club with peers, which represents his current main social outlet outside studies.

Intergenerational relationships

Henri's interactions with elderly people are limited to his family circle. His grandmother lives in a care home; his other grandparents have passed away. He occasionally sees his girlfriend's grandparents, who are still autonomous and active, a dynamic he appreciates. He notes that her grandmother has Alzheimer's disease, which has given him some exposure to the challenges that cognitive decline brings to family life and intergenerational interactions. He describes his interactions with elderly people as highly dependent on the mental state of the person in front of him: he adapts his communication significantly depending on whether the person is fully lucid or experiencing cognitive difficulties. He remains open and sociable regardless but acknowledges that interactions with people who have lost some of their faculties require considerably more energy.

Interest in intergenerational activities

Henri is fundamentally open to the concept of the platform, though he is candid about his current time constraints making active participation difficult. He is particularly interested in the mentoring and career guidance dimension: as he begins to think about life after his Master's, he sees real value in conversations with seniors who have built careers in areas that interest him. He also values more informal, convivial formats, board games, shared meals, group afternoon events, and draws a distinction between low-energy activities suited to elderly participants (a coffee, a casual chat) and more structured joint activities that could engage both generations equally.

Motivations & incentives

Henri frames participation primarily as a form of voluntary social action, closer to volunteering than a paid service. He is uncomfortable with the idea of being remunerated for time spent with elderly people, feeling it would undermine the authenticity and human value of the interaction. He suggests that the platform could be positioned as a form of social volunteering within student associations, where participating counts as a collective good deed rather than a personal transaction. He also acknowledges that for some students, financial reward or CV recognition would be necessary motivators, and sees these as legitimate secondary levers, particularly if framed around volunteer certification rather than direct payment.

Reaction to the platform

Henri responds positively to the concept and considers it genuinely useful. On the question of user retention, the risk that matched pairs simply leave the platform after a successful first meeting, he proposes a network-based solution: rather than relying on one-to-one connections, the platform could build community moments (monthly or bi-monthly group events) that give users a reason to return beyond any individual relationship. He also suggests developing interest-based categories within profiles (philosophy, technology, chess, languages, etc.) so that users can find seniors with specific expertise, making the platform a recurring resource rather than a one-time matchmaking tool. He raises a structural challenge around reaching elderly users who may be less comfortable with digital tools and recommends working through existing intermediary organisations, Kap Senior, Université des Aînés, care homes, retirement associations, to a human onboarding layer. He also identifies newly retired people as a particularly promising target audience, noting that retirement often brings a sudden void that this kind of platform could meaningfully address.

On outreach to students, Henri suggests embedding the platform within existing student associations as a form of social action, so that participation feels natural and collectively valued rather than individually solicited. He recommends promoting activities where the two generations do something genuinely enjoyable together, with the elderly person's activity or skill at the centre, rather than framing the encounter as one-sided assistance.

8.3.2.2. *Cédric*

Date	13/04/2026 from 17:00 to 17:15 (remote)
Person interviewed	Cédric
Age	21 years old
Studies	3 rd year bachelor – Economics - UCLouvain

Profile

Cédric is a 21-year-old student in his third year of a bachelor's degree in economics. He leads a full life between his studies and his associative commitments.

Free time & social life

Cédric spends most of his free time on sports and his involvement with the JCL (a youth movement comparable to scouts), in which he is very active. He also participates in scouts and attends occasional association meetings. Beyond these commitments, he has little time left to spare.

Intergenerational relationships

Cédric has regular interactions with elderly people: he has two sets of grandparents and relatively older neighbours. He describes these interactions as "slow but enriching and restorative". For him, they require a particular mindset: the ability to slow down in a daily life he himself describes as a "fast life". He insists that for these exchanges to be enjoyable, the elderly person must still have all their mental faculties. He cites the example of his girlfriend's grandmother, with whom communication has become impossible due to cognitive decline, which he would find very difficult to manage in a voluntary encounter with a stranger.

Interest in intergenerational activities

Cédric says he is generally open to spending time with unknown seniors, provided the person is still lucid and able to hold a real conversation. He distinguishes two profiles: on one hand,

very elderly people in the final stages of life, with whom he admits he would feel uncomfortable; on the other, "young retirees" around 70-75, still active, with whom he would have no reservations. He is particularly drawn to the life experiences and former positions of responsibility these people may have held, which he considers potentially very valuable for students.

Motivations & incentives

Among the various levers proposed (financial reward, CV value, curiosity, social connection), Cédric identifies curiosity as his primary motivation. He is attracted by the stories and life experiences seniors could share. Financial reward also plays a role, but selectively: he would consider it relevant for concrete tasks like running errands, but not for a simple conversation over a drink. He emphasises the importance of a personal return on investment, he wants the encounter to bring him something, and would not want to be committed long-term without having first tested the experience. He stresses the need to be able to enter and exit the process freely.

Reaction to the platform

Cédric reacts positively to the idea of Genly platform connecting students and seniors for various activities (board games, experience-sharing, occasional help, etc.). He understands the concept and is broadly in favour. What he sees as particularly decisive for convincing new users is the presence of visible testimonials from other participants, both young and older, so that each person can picture the experience before committing. He also highlights the risk of an unengaging onboarding where users do not immediately grasp the platform's added value. For him, the sign-up process must be clear and the benefit immediately apparent.

8.3.2.3. Gwenola

Date	21/04/2026 from 13:00 to 13:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Gwenola
Age	23 years old
Studies	Student at UCLouvain, PPE Bachelor

Profile

Gwenola is an active student at UCLouvain, heavily involved in her student union ("kapisterie") and in various associative projects (GIC and others). She describes herself as someone who seeks out social connection and engagement, notably through her student job at a health food shop, where she regularly interacts with older customers.

Free time & social life

Gwenola fills her free time with associative projects, sport, reading and social events. She is particularly committed to her student union, which she describes as the backbone of her social life. She mentions that during her first year she experienced moments of loneliness, which she actively addressed by getting involved in projects. Today, she no longer feels isolated.

Intergenerational relationships

Gwenola has a notably frequent and rich relationship with elderly people. Through her various student jobs, most recently in a health food shop, she interacts with seniors on a weekly basis. She also joined a Kap Senior initiative and had dinner with elderly participants as part of that programme. In her personal life, she regularly speaks with her boyfriend's grandmother and occasionally sees her own grandfather (now 90). She describes these interactions as deeply enriching and actively seeks them out. What attracts her is the authenticity of older people, she finds them freer in their expression and more willing to share, as well as their life stories, personal histories, and the wisdom and advice they offer. She spontaneously approaches seniors to ask about their past, their passions and their life choices, and sees them as figures of genuine wisdom.

Interest in intergenerational activities

Gwenola is clearly enthusiastic about the idea of a platform connecting students and seniors. She identifies two barriers she has personally encountered: first, the social inhibition of not knowing whether an elderly person actually wants to be approached, out of fear of intruding or bothering them; second, the simple lack of opportunities, without grandparents nearby or a specific mechanism, there is no easy way to meet seniors in everyday student life. The platform would directly address both of these obstacles.

Motivations & incentives

Gwenola is clear that financial reward is not, and should not be, a motivating factor. She finds the idea of being paid to talk with an elderly person uncomfortable, feeling it would undermine the authenticity of the exchange. Her motivation is entirely intrinsic: the value of mutual sharing, the fact that both parties enter the interaction willingly and on equal terms. She

appreciates the idea that a match on the platform would signal a shared readiness to give and receive, a kind of pre-established social contract that removes the awkwardness of unsolicited approaches.

Reaction to the platform

Gwenola is very positive about the concept and would readily use the platform if she had more free time. She raises the question of user retention, the risk that two people who matched successfully might simply leave the platform and meet independently and offers a compelling answer: she would not see one good match as a reason to leave, because she is motivated by variety and continuous discovery. To keep users engaged, she suggests the platform develop a system of interest-based categories, areas such as philosophy, technology, chess, language learning, so that users can find new profiles aligned with specific expertise or passions. This feature, she argues, would make the platform valuable beyond any single connection, encouraging users to return for different kinds of encounters. She also raises a key structural challenge: how to make the platform accessible to seniors, who may be less comfortable with digital tools. She suggests working with intermediary organisations (Kap Senior, Université des Aînés, nursing homes, retirement associations) to onboard elderly users with support. Finally, she highlights the opportunity to target newly retired people specifically, individuals who have just left their professional lives and face a sudden void, as a particularly receptive audience for the platform.

8.3.2.4. Clara

Date	17/04/2026 from 13:30 to 14:00 (remote)
Person interviewed	Clara
Age	24 years old
Studies	Master in physiotherapy

Profile

Clara's clinical training means she is regularly in contact with elderly people during placements, which gives her a natural ease with this demographic.

Free time & social life

Clara does not explicitly address her leisure activities, as the interview quickly centres on the platform and her interactions with seniors. Her schedule is described as highly variable from week to week, alternating between course periods and clinical placements, which makes any fixed, regular commitment difficult.

Intergenerational relationships

Clara has frequent and meaningful interactions with elderly people, primarily in the professional context of her placements, where she may spend up to four to five hours a day with them. Outside of family, she does not have regular interactions with seniors in her personal life. She describes these exchanges as particularly enriching. What she values most is the historical and narrative dimension: she enjoys hearing what her interlocutors have been through, how they experienced eras she never knew, and the practical tips they naturally offer (local restaurants, useful addresses, everyday advice). She also notes that in a care setting, elderly patients are often those who take the most time to chat, creating genuine shared moments of life, unlike interactions with younger people which tend to remain more superficial.

Interest in intergenerational activities

Clara is enthusiastic about the platform concept and easily pictures herself in this kind of exchange. She does, however, express a reluctance to be alone with an unknown senior, preferring a small group format, two or three young people and two or three elderly participants, around a shared, informal activity, such as going to a restaurant recommended by the senior, or showing an older person around a neighbourhood. She estimates that half an hour to two hours per week would be a perfectly manageable rhythm. She also notes that the group format could appeal to more introverted or socially isolated people, who would not have to carry the conversation alone and could simply be present without pressure to contribute.

Motivations & incentives

What appeals to Clara is primarily the informal and convivial dimension of the encounters, rather than mentoring or functional assistance. She sees the platform as an opportunity for pleasant, unexpected moments driven by the spontaneity of intergenerational exchange. She does not mention financial reward as a motivating factor.

Reaction to the platform

Clara is very receptive to the concept and says she could fully get on board with it. She identifies two main barriers: first, the scheduling constraint, particularly if the platform

imposed fixed weekly slots incompatible with her variable student timetable during placements; and second, the need to test before committing, which makes her reluctant to pay upfront regardless of the amount. On the question of user retention, the risk that two people who got along well might simply exchange numbers and leave the platform – she proposes an original idea: sending a notification to both parties shortly after the meeting, inviting them to take a selfie together and write a short summary of their experience. She compares this to BlaBlaCar's post-trip review system, which helps preserve a positive memory of the experience and encourages continued engagement. On monetisation, she opposes any user-facing payment model but suggests a partnership-based approach with local businesses (restaurants, cafés), whose names could appear in the platform as suggested meeting spots in exchange for a financial contribution to the project.

In conclusion, Clara believes the platform's main challenge will be in its communication: presenting the tool without stigmatising loneliness and finding the right words to attract users without making anyone feel uncomfortable. She thinks that strong word-of-mouth, built on positive experiences, would be the most effective growth lever.

8.3.2.5. *Nicolas*

Date	17/04/2026 from 13:00 to 13:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Nicolas
Age	20 years old
Studies	Bachelor – E-business – EPHEC

Profile

Nicolas balances his studies with student jobs and an active social life. He describes himself as naturally curious, which proves to be a defining trait throughout the interview.

Free time & social life

Nicolas divides his free time between classes, student jobs, sport, and social outings. He does not mention involvement in associative or volunteer activities, and his schedule appears relatively structured around these four pillars.

Intergenerational relationships

Nicolas has regular contact with elderly people through two channels: his family (grandparents, visited and called fairly regularly) and his student jobs, where he interacts with elderly customers in a shop or restaurant setting approximately one to two times per week. He describes these interactions as calm and measured in tone, and associates elderly people with a sense of wisdom and composed presence. He finds these encounters generally positive, though he notes that seniors can sometimes be less open to new ideas or reluctant to engage with perspectives that challenge their habits, which he sees as the main communication challenge.

Interest in intergenerational activities

Nicolas is open to the platform concept, with curiosity as his primary motivator. He sees value in encountering people outside his age group and is particularly interested in the life experience and stories that seniors could share. He also expresses a genuine willingness to give back, for instance, helping seniors with digital tools, provided the person is open and receptive. His main reservation concerns seniors who are resistant to new ideas or unwilling to listen, which he sees as the most significant barrier to a productive exchange. His primary personal barrier to signing up would be time: setting up a profile, arranging meetings and managing scheduling commitments represents a real cost he would need to feel is worthwhile before investing. Once on the platform, however, he does not anticipate significant discomfort in the interactions themselves, he is confident in his ability to engage respectfully and adapt his communication.

Motivations & incentives

Nicolas is not motivated by financial reward and does not see this as a student job. His driver is curiosity and the novelty of the encounter, the fact that it would expose him to a radically different perspective from those he encounters in his usual social circles. He values the idea of receiving life experience and career insights from seniors, while offering in return a window into contemporary daily life and technology.

Reaction to the platform

Nicolas would not spontaneously use the platform on first encounter but would be persuaded by word-of-mouth recommendations from people within his social sphere, friends or friends of friends. This mirrors a broader pattern noted across interviews: personal social endorsement is more persuasive than general marketing or anonymous testimonials. What he identifies as the most important feature for attracting users is a rich, detailed senior profile, including anecdotes, career history, interests and personality traits, that allows the student to feel genuinely curious about the person before committing to a meeting. He believes this profile depth would convert

hesitant browsers into active participants, especially among naturally curious users like himself. On the question of user retention (the risk of matched pairs leaving the platform), he proposes organising multi-duo events, bringing together several student-senior pairs for a shared outing or activity, creating a social layer that would give users a reason to return to the platform beyond their individual connection. He also suggests establishing restaurant or venue partnerships, where meetings held at partner locations generate a small revenue share for the platform, creating a sustainable incentive alignment. On monetisation, Nicolas is one of the few interviewees to express openness to a paid model, provided it follows a freemium structure: one free introductory meeting, followed by a low-cost monthly subscription (maximum €5). He sees this as acceptable if the platform delivers genuine value and is well designed. He supports the inclusion of identity verification, favouring a simple PIN-based authentication linked to an existing system (such as a university login), which he feels would add security without creating friction.

8.3.2.6. *Clarisse*

Date	19/04/2026 13:00 to 13:30 (remote)
Person interviewed	Clarisse
Age	24 years old
Studies	2 nd year master – Business Engineering – LSM

Profile

Clarisse leads an extremely full life: she works a weekly student job, plays hockey (training and matches), leads a scout group, and maintains an active social life with friends. As a result, she has very little free time and approaches any new commitment with a strong filter for usefulness and personal return.

Free time & social life

Clarisse's schedule leaves minimal room for unstructured activity. Her time is distributed across her studies, student job, hockey commitments, scouting responsibilities and social engagements. Any additional activity would need to justify itself clearly in terms of personal benefit to fit into her routine.

Intergenerational relationships

Outside of her grandparents and occasional interactions with elderly customers during a previous student job at Colruyt, Clarisse has very limited contact with seniors. She does not currently consider intergenerational relationships a meaningful part of her daily life. That said, she acknowledges the potential value of such exchanges, she sees them as potentially enriching and interesting for learning and conversation, but her overall assessment is that seniors would likely need this kind of platform more than students would.

Interest in intergenerational activities

Clarisse finds the concept interesting in principle, but not naturally attractive to her without a clear and concrete motivation. She would be drawn to the platform if exchanges had a specific objective and delivered a tangible benefit for both parties, examples she gives include help with a thesis, professional advice, learning about new technologies or AI, and skill exchange. She is explicit that the prospect of simply "coming for a chat" would not be sufficient to motivate most students, including herself. The value proposition needs to be concrete and mutual from the outset.

Motivations & incentives

Clarisse's motivators are primarily practical and outcome-oriented: a concrete interest or utility, a genuine service exchange, and tangible advantages such as financial compensation, academic help, CV enrichment or professional opportunities. Social connection alone is not a sufficient driver in her case. She notes that financial incentives, being paid for her time, would significantly increase the likelihood of students engaging with the platform, and suggests that the student-facing side of the platform should ideally be free of cost, with monetisation structured elsewhere.

Reaction to the platform

Clarisse identifies several barriers to participation. The first is the risk of unbalanced or unstimulating interactions, she worries about encountering seniors who are overly dependent or socially exhausting, and about conversations that lack direction or purpose. She also raises safety concerns around meeting strangers, including the discomfort of one-to-one encounters in private settings with unknown individuals. To address these concerns, she emphasises the importance of first meetings taking place in public, reassuring settings, and advocates for a reliable identity verification system. She finds the idea of venue partnerships, restaurants or cafés acting as neutral, welcoming meeting points, particularly relevant for this reason. On the question of user retention (the risk that matched pairs leave the platform after connecting), she

draws a direct comparison with babysitting apps, where users typically exit the platform once they have found a reliable person. She acknowledges this is a structural challenge and underscores the importance of building loyalty mechanisms that give users a reason to stay even after a successful match, for instance through continued institutional framing, incentive structures, or community events. More broadly, Clarisse believes the platform has real potential, but only if it is highly structured: with clear objectives set in each exchange from the start, a secure and reassuring environment, genuine mutual value creation, credible institutional partnerships (UCLouvain, associations), and concrete incentives for students. She sees need-based and competency-based matching as the most viable and attractive format and recommends that the platform facilitate recurring encounters with the same senior, rather than one-off meetings, to allow a genuine relationship to develop over time.

8.3.2.7. *Laetitia*

Date	13/04/2026 from 17:00 to 17:15 (remote)
Person interviewed	Laetitia
Age	22 years old
Studies	2 nd year master – Management - LSM

Profile

Laetitia is a master student in management at UCLouvain. She describes an active social life centred on sport, friends and family outings, with a particular closeness to one side of her family.

Free time & social life

Outside of classes, Laetitia fills her time with sport, seeing friends from her university and hometown, shopping, family outings (meals, cinema), and studying. She does not mention involvement in associative or volunteer activities.

Intergenerational relationships

Her interactions with elderly people are primarily family-based. She speaks regularly on the phone with one grandmother (weekly or fortnightly) and sees her grandparents on the other side of the family less frequently, monthly or bi-monthly calls, with occasional in-person visits. Beyond family, her only interactions with seniors are brief neighbourly exchanges (a hello in

the street), which she does not particularly seek to extend. She describes interactions with grandparents as genuinely enjoyable when there is a specific activity or context, for example, inviting her grandmother for a meal, which she finds warm and easy. By contrast, large family gatherings tend to keep the generations apart, with conversation remaining superficial. Interactions with neighbours stay at the level of pleasantries. She is honest about not actively seeking out intergenerational connections beyond these existing relationships.

Interest in intergenerational activities

The main barrier she identifies is the "stranger" dimension: not knowing what to expect from someone of a different generation, and the risk of encountering people with rigid or closed-minded views, she notes that some elderly people can be resistant to contemporary ideas around self-expression and individual freedom, which she finds frustrating in conversation. She would feel comfortable discussing professional experience, travel or careers, but less so sharing personal details with an unknown person. She strongly prefers a group format, a group of young people paired with a group of seniors for a shared activity, such as going to the park, with each young person having an assigned elderly counterpart. This format feels safer, less intimate, and more spontaneously social. She is less enthusiastic about one-to-one private encounters, which she describes as potentially uncomfortable.

Motivations & incentives

She is not motivated by financial reward and explicitly rejects the idea of treating this as a student job. Her primary driver is curiosity, an openness to discovering something new and gaining a perspective she would not find among her peers. She also values the reciprocal dimension: teaching a senior something (digital skills, for example) in exchange for learning something from them (craft, life experience). She identifies skill-exchange activities, such as a crochet or sewing workshop led by seniors, alongside a digital literacy session led by students, as particularly appealing.

Reaction to the platform

She would not spontaneously use the platform based on seeing it alone but would be open to trying it if someone she knows, a friend or friend of a friend, recommended it positively. Testimonials from strangers would not be sufficient; she needs social proximity to the endorsement. She finds the concept genuinely useful, especially given what she observes in her own family: grandparents who are effectively isolated not by circumstance but by a reluctance to reach out, which she sees as a problem the platform could meaningfully address. Her key

concern is the private and personal dimension of one-to-one matching, which she feels could put young people off quickly if poorly managed. She believes the group activity format, structured, purposeful, bounded, is the most viable entry point for hesitant participants and could serve as a trust-building step before any more personal connection develops.

8.4. Institutions

8.4.1. Interview questions

Introduction

Before the interview began, the interviewee was asked to briefly describe their role and the organisation they represent. The Genly platform concept was then presented: a digital application connecting students and seniors in Louvain-la-Neuve for intergenerational exchange, mutual support and social connection. The conversation was deliberately kept open and exploratory, allowing each interviewee to share their experience and raise the issues most relevant to their context.

Profile of Seniors Served

- What is the profile of the seniors you work with? (age range, level of autonomy, living situation, social context)
- Are there meaningful differences between sub-profiles, for instance, recently retired active seniors versus more fragile, isolated or housebound individuals?
- What are their main needs today, social, practical, digital, emotional?

Key Challenges Observed

- What are the major challenges seniors face in your experience? (isolation, digital literacy, mobility, cognitive decline, managing expectations...)
- How significant is the problem of social isolation, and how does it manifest differently across profiles?
- To what extent do seniors seek help independently, versus being referred by family members, doctors or social workers?

Existing Activities, Formats & What Works

- What types of activities or services do you currently offer? What formats have proven most successful?

- What has not worked or been tried and abandoned, and why? (e.g. evening events, purely digital formats, open-ended social meetings)
- What do seniors respond to best, structured activities with a clear objective, or looser social formats?
- How do seniors typically find out about your organisation and its activities? (word of mouth, physical presence, Facebook, flyers...)

Gaps & Unmet Needs

- What is currently missing from your offering or from the broader local ecosystem in Louvain-la-Neuve?
- Are there practical obstacles you face in reaching seniors or running activities? (venue access, cost, PMR accessibility, digital barriers, referral gaps...)
- Are there needs, particularly around social connection and intergenerational exchange, that your organisation cannot address and that a complementary initiative could help fill?

Intergenerational Initiatives & Experience

- Have you already implemented or facilitated initiatives involving young people or students?
- If yes, what worked, what didn't, and why? What conditions made the difference?
- In your view, what does a successful intergenerational initiative require, in terms of structure, matching quality, activity format, and expectation management?
- What risks have you observed or anticipated in mixing generations, and how have you addressed them?

Digital Access & Technology

- How digitally literate is your senior population? Has this evolved in recent years (e.g. post-Covid)?
- What role does in-person or phone contact play alongside digital tools in reaching and engaging seniors?
- What would make a digital platform accessible and trustworthy for the seniors you work with?

Openness to Collaboration with Genly

- Does the Genly concept resonate with the needs and challenges you observe in your work?
- Would you be open to collaborating, and in what form? (referrals, communication relay, venue partnership, co-organisation of events, onboarding support...)
- What conditions would need to be in place for you to trust and recommend the platform to the seniors you work with?
- Are there other local organisations, actors or physical spaces you would suggest we connect with?

8.4.2. Interview summaries

8.4.2.1. Dyle Solidaire

Date	20/04/2026 from 17:00 to 17:30 (remote)
Institution interviewed	Dyle Solidaire
Location	Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve and surroundings
Objective of the institution	Social volunteering programme: trained volunteers visit isolated elderly people at home

Profile of seniors served

Dyle Solidaire works with isolated elderly people living at home, people who have few social contacts, are not in residential care, and who benefit from the presence of a regular, caring visitor. The seniors served tend to be more vulnerable than those reached by the UdA: they may have reduced mobility, health challenges, cognitive difficulties, or simply a lack of family or social network. Referrals come from multiple sources: healthcare professionals, social workers, other associations, and sometimes self-referral. Vivianne coordinates the matching of volunteers with seniors and supervises the ongoing relationships.

Main needs & challenges

The primary need is social presence and human warmth, someone who comes regularly, listens, and cares. Vivianne confirms that isolation is real and significant among this population, particularly for those who have lost a partner, moved to a new area, or seen their family network shrink. A key challenge is managing expectations: some seniors expect more than a volunteer can provide (emotional dependence, therapeutic support), which can be distressing for

volunteers and ultimately unsustainable. Another challenge is that relationships are inherently time-limited, a person may move to a care home, deteriorate cognitively, or pass away, requiring volunteers to manage grief and transition repeatedly.

What works well

The model of regular, one-to-one visits is deeply valued by both seniors and volunteers. For the senior, it provides a reliable anchor in their week. For the volunteer, it offers a profound sense of meaning and human connection. The programme succeeds because it is structured (fortnightly commitment), supervised (Vivianne provides coordination and support), and personal (volunteers choose seniors they can realistically visit, in their local area).

What is missing / intergenerational initiatives

Dyle Solidaire does not specifically focus on intergenerational exchange, its volunteers are not exclusively young people. However, the model shares DNA with what Genly is trying to achieve: structured, supervised, human connection between people who would not otherwise meet. An intergenerational dimension could enrich the programme but would require careful matching to avoid the kind of mismatch Joëlle experienced (being paired with someone whose needs exceeded what a social visit could address).

Openness to collaboration with Genly

Vivianne is open to collaboration and sees clear complementarity between Dyle Solidaire and Genly. The two approaches are not in competition: Dyle Solidaire serves a more vulnerable, housebound population, while Genly is better suited to active seniors seeking social enrichment and exchange. A referral pathway could exist, seniors who are active and motivated could be pointed toward Genly, while those with more acute isolation needs remain within the Dyle Solidaire model. Key conditions for collaboration include: clear volunteer training or onboarding guidelines, a supervised first contact process, and realistic framing of what participants can expect from the relationship. She also underscores the importance of not placing Genly students in the position of emotional caregivers, the relationship should feel mutual and light, not a burden.

8.4.2.2. Université des Aînés

Date	17/04/2026 from 11:00 to 11:30 (remote)
Institution interviewed	Université des Aînés (Élisabeth)

Location	Louvain-la-Neuve
Objective of the institution	Promotes lifelong learning and social engagement among seniors.

Profile of seniors served

The UdA serves a predominantly intellectually engaged senior population. Members are described as curious, educated and digitally improving year on year. They come voluntarily, which means they are self-selected for interest and motivation, a quality that distinguishes them from the general elderly population. The UdA has no age limit and is technically open to all, but is almost entirely attended by seniors, as daytime scheduling and the content profile make it unattractive for most students.

Main needs & challenges

The primary challenge identified is the digital divide, though Élisabeth notes this has improved significantly since Covid, when the UdA moved to remote delivery and forced members to adapt. Today, the UdA requires online registration and members manage it independently, a notable shift. Digital literacy courses (Windows, file management, photo management, Zoom, Teams) remain popular and in demand. Beyond the digital dimension, the UdA members' main need is for intellectual stimulation and continued learning in a structured, social environment.

What works well

The most successful programmes are lectures and courses on politics, current affairs, science and medicine, topics where the senior audience's depth of interest and quality of questioning genuinely surprises and impresses invited speakers. History and art history courses are also consistently popular. In summer, the programme shifts to more practical workshops (music, pottery, painting, golf, bridge) to suit the lighter seasonal mood. Weekly Tuesday lectures in a 400-seat auditorium are well attended and generate lively intellectual exchange. The UdA's word-of-mouth reputation is strong; members come spontaneously rather than through active recruitment.

What is missing / intergenerational initiatives

The UdA has not specifically developed intergenerational programmes, though it is theoretically open to students attending courses. In practice, the scheduling (daytime only), membership requirements, and course fees make student participation rare. Élisabeth acknowledges this gap and is open to the idea of greater cross-pollination but notes the UdA

has its own established faculty network and does not merge easily with external organisations. Evening events (including a board game evening) were attempted but failed because seniors strongly prefer daytime activities.

Openness to collaboration with Genly

Élisabeth is personally enthusiastic about the Genly concept and believes it has real merit. As an institution, the UdA could potentially act as a communication relay (posting information on its website or newsletter) or as a venue/partner for specific activities. She suggests that Genly could benefit from establishing a physical presence or drop-in point in Louvain-la-Neuve, given that seniors prefer in-person contact for initial registration and information-gathering. She recommends reaching out to SuperZen, a digital support organisation with a physical presence in Louvain-la-Neuve, as a potential partner for this. Her key condition for any collaboration is coherence: the activities proposed through Genly must be well-described, relevant and credible for a senior audience.

8.4.2.3. CPAS Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve

Date	24/04/2026 from 13:00 to 13:30 (remote)
Institution interviewed	CPAS – Centre Public d’Action Sociale
Location	Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve
Objective of the institution	Statutory public body providing social, financial and practical support to vulnerable residents

Role of the CPAS and services offered

The CPAS is a statutory public body that intervenes across multiple dimensions of social support for vulnerable residents, including seniors. Its "Home Support" service coordinates practical assistance enabling seniors and fragile individuals to remain living at home as long as possible: domestic help, household maintenance, grocery runs, accompaniment to medical appointments, family support, and psychological and social follow-up. A means-tested contribution of around 7–8 euros per intervention is requested, with the CPAS covering the remainder when necessary. The CPAS also manages a meals-on-wheels service (currently in high demand) and works with public digital literacy spaces (EPN – Espaces Publics Numériques) to support seniors in digital inclusion. Social workers conduct individual needs assessments and ensure coordinated, ongoing follow-up.

Profile of seniors served & main challenges

The CPAS serves a broad and diverse senior population, from active, recently retired individuals to fragile, isolated or cognitively impaired elderly people. The main challenges identified are: digital access and literacy (lack of equipment, fear of scams, apprehension around technology, limited financial means to equip themselves); isolation and loneliness, particularly among those who have lost a partner or whose family network is distant or absent; and mobility limitations that restrict access to social activities and services. Decision-making around social support often passes through intermediaries, children, GPs, social workers, meaning seniors rarely seek help entirely independently.

Perception of Genly & potential identified

The CPAS contact identifies clear alignment between Genly's goals and the social needs she encounters daily. The project's potential to reduce isolation, maintain social activity, create intergenerational connection, and complement existing formal services is seen as genuinely valuable. She notes that an informal, human complement to the CPAS's more structured interventions could meaningfully improve seniors' wellbeing and sense of purpose. The idea of a preliminary phone call before a first in-person meeting is specifically highlighted as a reassuring and important feature for this population. Indirectly, successful social engagement through Genly could also support the broader goal of home maintenance, seniors who remain socially active tend to maintain their autonomy longer.

Barriers identified

The principal barrier is digital access and confidence: many seniors in the CPAS's remit do not have a smartphone or computer, or are afraid of online scams, making direct app-based outreach insufficient on its own. Trust and safety are also central: seniors need to be reassured before any physical meeting with a stranger, and they are accustomed to having professionals or family members mediate new relationships. This means Genly is unlikely to succeed as a purely direct-to-user digital product for this segment, it needs human intermediaries, clear institutional backing, and a simple, non-intimidating interface.

Openness to collaboration with Genly

The CPAS is open to collaboration and sees several potential pathways: referral of suitable seniors (those who are still active and seeking social connection) toward the platform; integration with EPN digital support spaces for onboarding assistance; and communication via social workers who could mention Genly to seniors they assess as good candidates. The CPAS

contact emphasises that the platform would need to position itself clearly as a complement to, not a replacement for, existing professional services, and must maintain a strong human dimension. She also suggests that Genly's best-suited target within the CPAS's population is the recently retired, still-autonomous senior who is socially motivated but lacks the right connections or opportunities.

8.5. Surveys

This section includes the survey questions used in this research. The survey was originally conducted in French, and an English translation is provided here for the convenience of the reader.

8.5.1. Introduction

This questionnaire is being conducted as part of a final study project at the Catholic University of Louvain. It follows surveys conducted with students and seniors. The aim is to assess your interest in intergenerational exchanges and see if a digital platform enabling these exchanges would be interesting for you. The questionnaire is ANONYMOUS and should not take more than 3 to 4 minutes to complete. Any comments or questions? Contact us via email at zelie.descampe@student.uclouvain.be or giulia.pisaneschi@student.uclouvain.be.

8.5.2. Seniors

8.5.2.1. Questions

ID	Question	Answers
1	How old are you?	☐ 60–64 years old ☐ 65–69 years old ☐ 70–74 years old ☐ 75–79 years old ☐ 80 or older
2	What is your postal code?	Open question
3	What is your current situation?	☐ Retired ☐ Still professionally active ☐ Other:

4	With whom are you living?	☐ Alone ☐ With a partner ☐ With family ☐ In a senior residence / shared senior housing ☐ Other:
5	How often do you see your friends and family ?	☐ Every day ☐ Several times a week ☐ Once a week ☐ A few times a month ☐ Rarely / never
6	Do you feel socially connected enough?	Scale from 1 to 5: 1 = not at all; 5 = completely
7	Have you ever had regular interactions with young people (students) outside your family?	☐ Yes, regularly ☐ Yes, occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ No, never
8	What type of support are you currently looking for? (<i>multiple answers possible</i>)	☐ Digital support (smartphone, computer, apps) ☐ Administrative support (online forms, procedures) ☐ Someone to talk to / social connection ☐ Shared activities or outings ☐ No particular need ☐ Other:
9	How open would you be to regularly meet an unknown student?	Scale from 1 to 5: 1 = not at all willing; 5 = completely willing
10	What would attract you most in an intergenerational exchange?	☐ Receiving life or career advice ☐ Having an authentic human relationship ☐ Contributing to something socially meaningful ☐ Developing new skills ☐ Nothing in particular

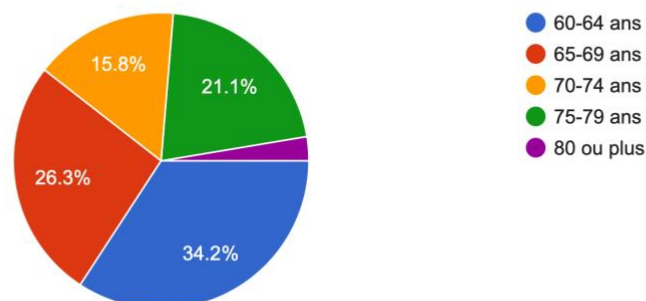
		☐ Other:
11	What would you like to offer to a student? <i>(multiple answers possible)</i>	☐ Life or career advice ☐ Sharing professional experience ☐ Help with daily tasks ☐ Companionship and listening ☐ Sharing a skill or expertise (crafts, language, etc.) ☐ Other:
12	How would you rate your comfort level with digital tools (smartphone, computer, internet)?	Scale from 1 to 5: 1 = not comfortable at all; 5 = very comfortable
13	What digital difficulties do you encounter most often? <i>(multiple answers possible)</i>	☐ Using a smartphone ☐ Browsing the internet ☐ Completing online administrative procedures ☐ Using applications (WhatsApp, email, etc.) ☐ I do not encounter any particular difficulties ☐ Other:
14	Would you be willing to use an application to connect with a student?	Scale from 1 to 5: 1 = definitely not; 5 = definitely yes
15	Which elements would seem essential for you to trust such a platform? <i>(multiple answers possible)</i>	☐ Identity verification of users ☐ Reviews and ratings from other users ☐ Support from a recognised institution (UCLouvain, CPAS, etc.) ☐ A supervised first-meeting protocol / A first phone or video call before meeting ☐ The possibility to easily report a problem ☐ Other:
16	How important is trust for you before accepting an exchange?	Scale from 1 to 5: 1 = not very important; 5 = absolutely essential

17	How many hours per month would you be willing to dedicate to these exchanges?	☐ Less than 1 hour ☐ 1–2 hours ☐ 3–5 hours ☐ More than 5 hours
18	Would you be willing to pay to access this type of platform?	☐ No, it should be free ☐ Yes, if it is less than €5/month ☐ Yes, if it is less than €10/month ☐ Price does not matter to me if the service is high quality
19	What do you think about the idea of institutions (university, municipality, CPAS) subsidising the platform so that access remains free?	Scale from 1 to 5: 1 = bad idea ; 5 = very good idea
20	Is there something you would dream of passing on or sharing with a student?	Open question
21	Do you have any concerns or questions regarding this type of platform?	Open question
22	Do you already know of any similar projects?	Open question

8.5.2.2. Answers

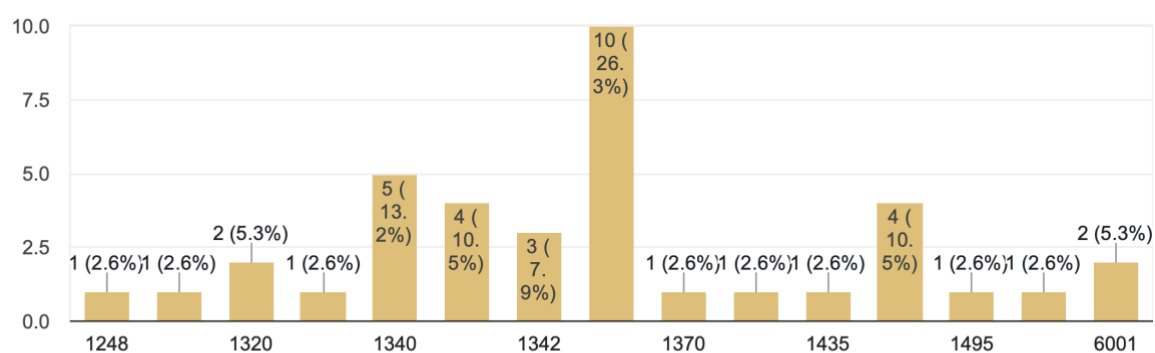
Q1. Quel âge avez-vous?

38 responses



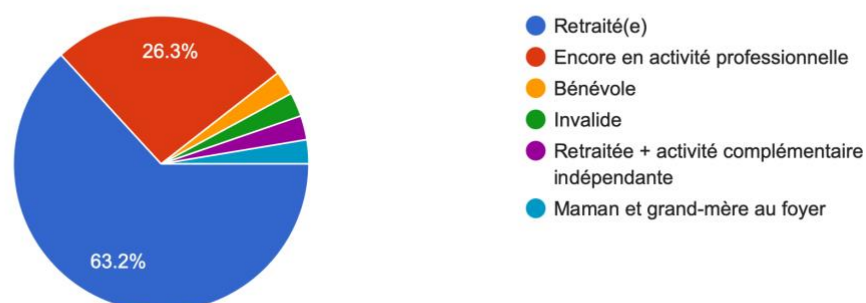
Q2. Quel est votre code postal?

38 responses



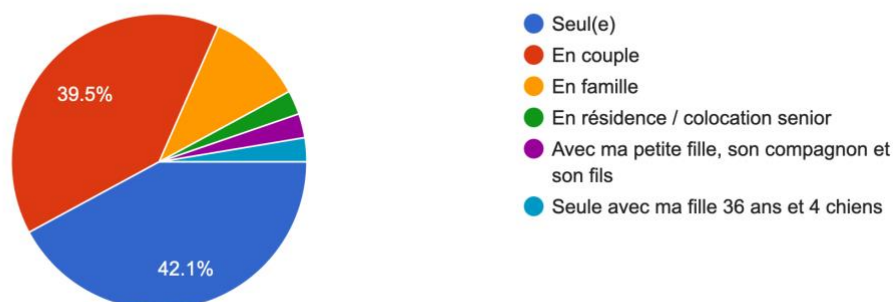
Q3. Quelle est votre situation actuelle?

38 responses



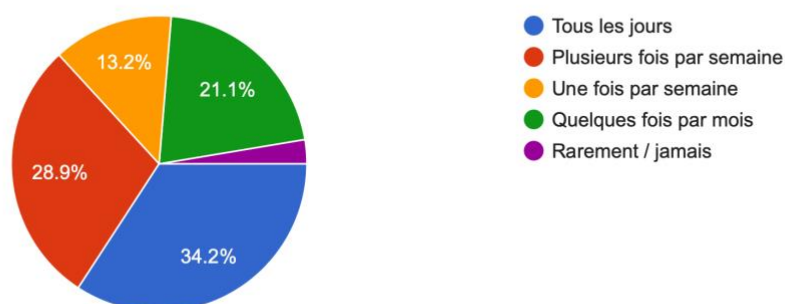
Q4. Avec qui vivez-vous?

38 responses



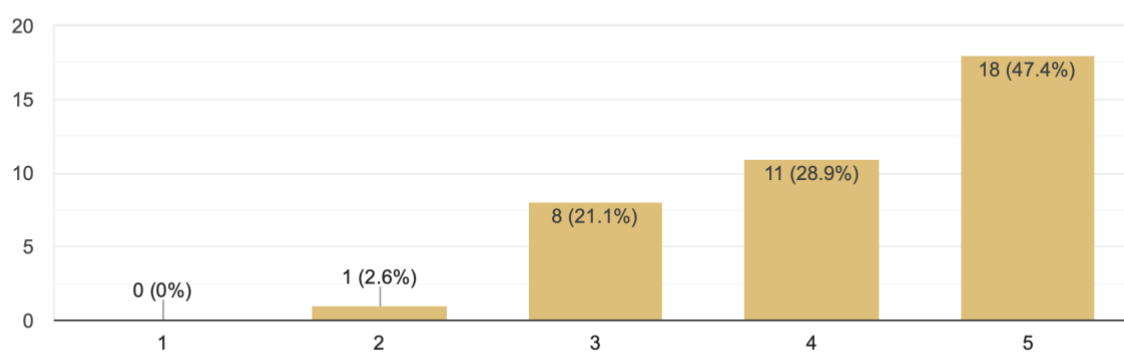
Q5. À quelle fréquence voyez-vous des amis ou de la famille?

38 responses



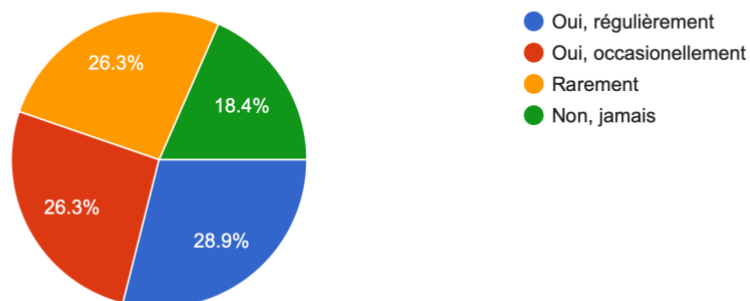
Q6. Vous sentez-vous suffisamment connecté(e) socialement?

38 responses



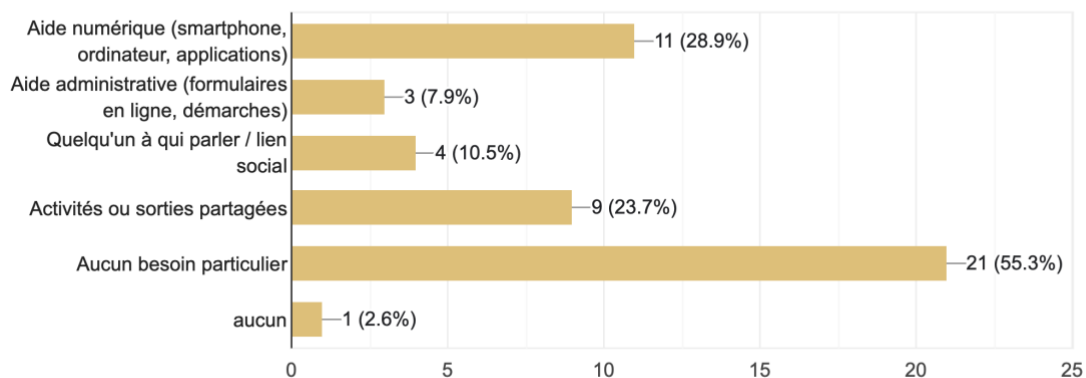
Q7. Avez-vous déjà eu des interactions régulières avec des jeunes (étudiants) en dehors de votre famille?

38 responses



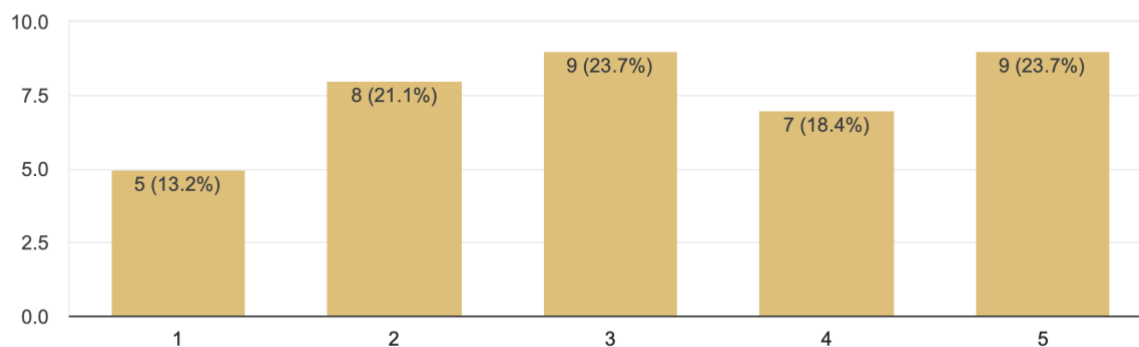
Q8. Quels types de soutien recherchez-vous actuellement? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

38 responses



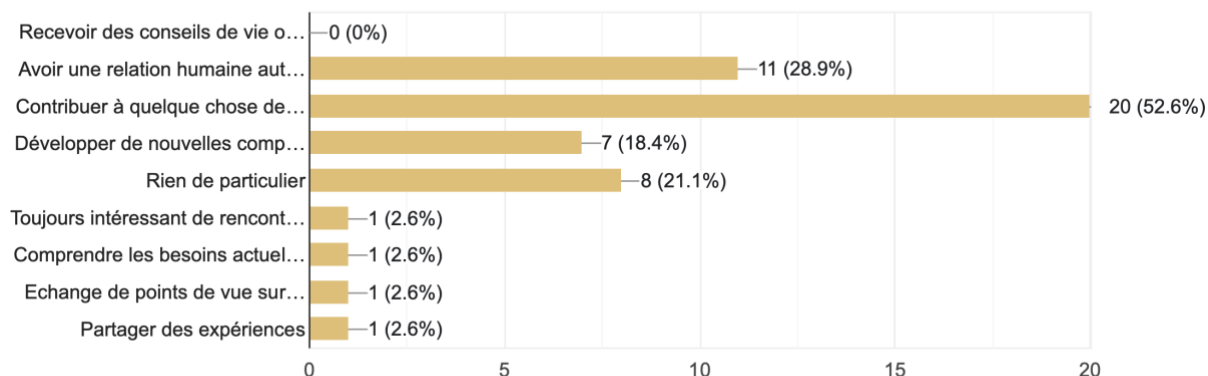
Q9. À quel point seriez-vous ouvert(e) à rencontrer régulièrement un(e) étudiant(e) inconnu(e)?

38 responses



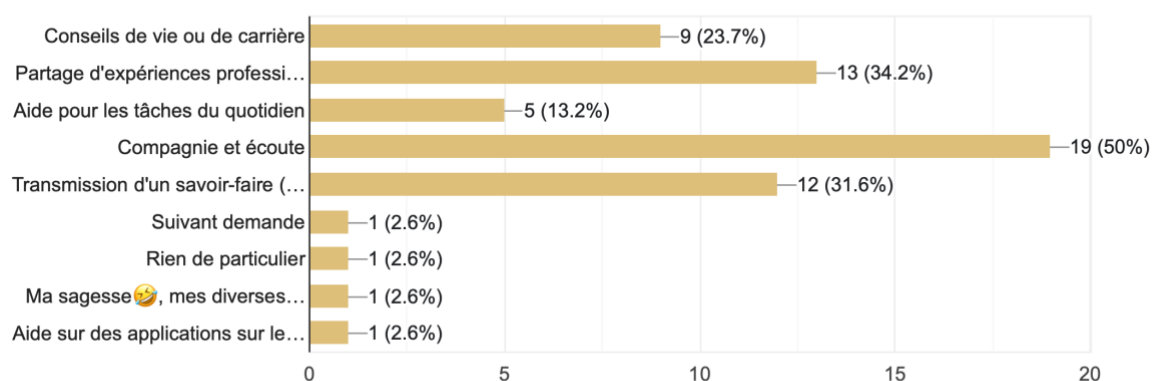
Q10. Qu'est-ce qui vous attirerait le plus dans un échange intergénérationnel?

38 réponses



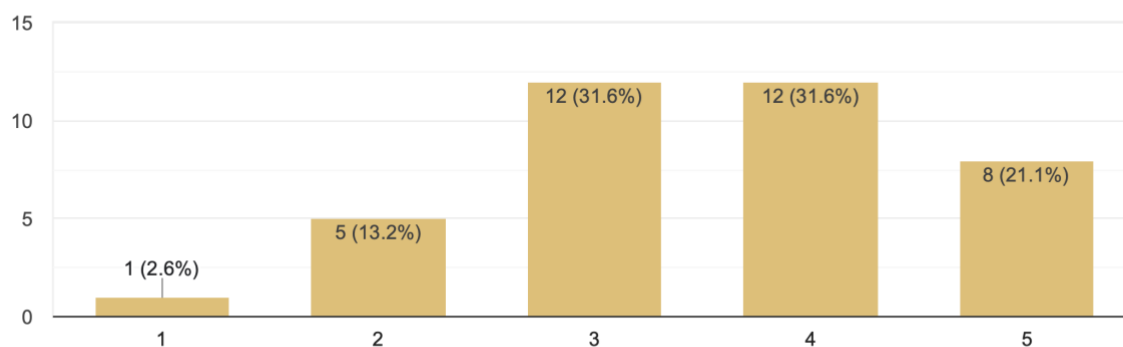
Q11. Qu'auriez-vous envie d'offrir à un(e) étudiant(e)? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

38 réponses



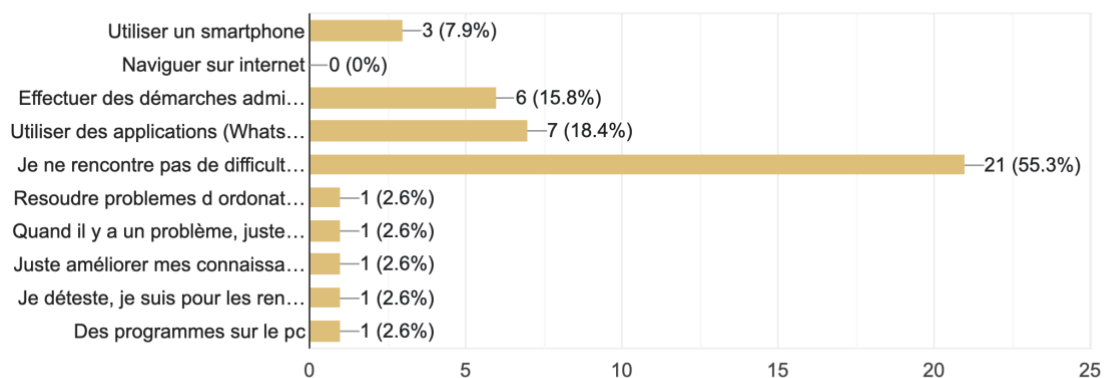
Q12. Comment évaluez-vous votre aisance avec les outils numériques (smartphone, ordinateur, internet)?

38 réponses



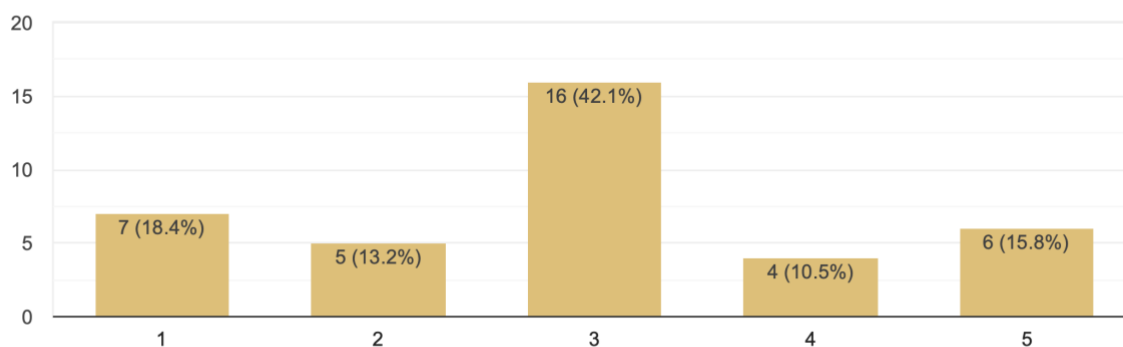
Q13. Quelles difficultés numériques rencontrez-vous le plus souvent? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

38 réponses



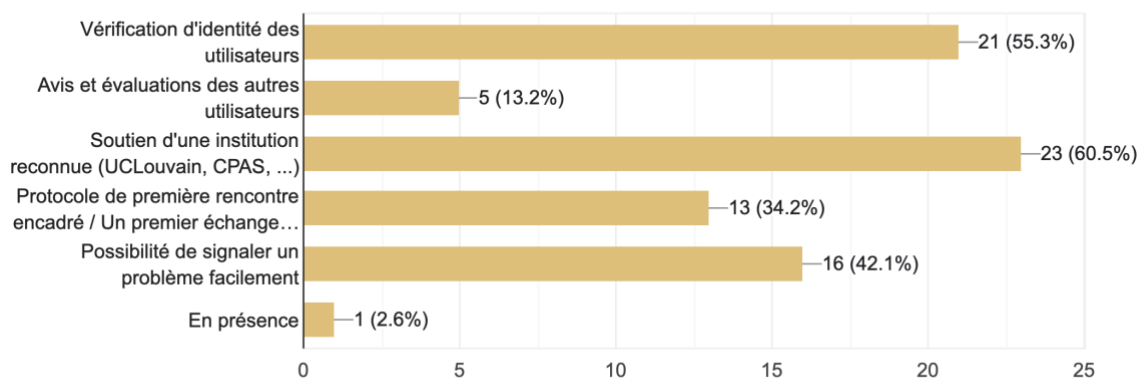
Q14. Seriez-vous prêt(e) à utiliser une application pour être mis(e) en relation avec un(e) étudiant(e)?

38 réponses



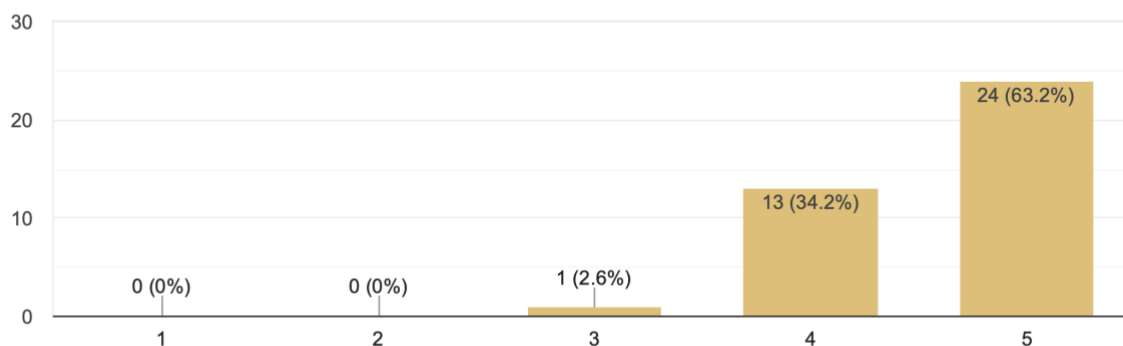
Q15. Quels éléments vous sembleraient indispensables pour faire confiance à une telle plateforme?
(plusieurs réponses possibles)

38 responses



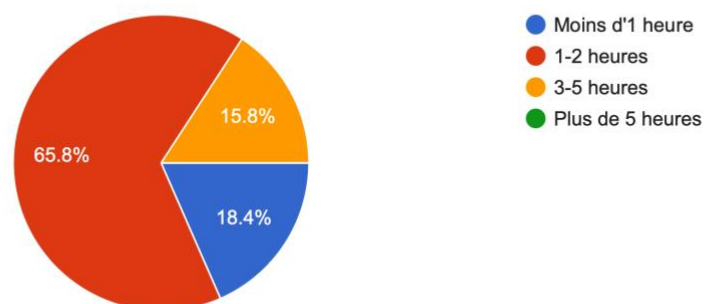
Q16. À quel point la confiance est-elle importante pour vous avant d'accepter un échange?

38 responses



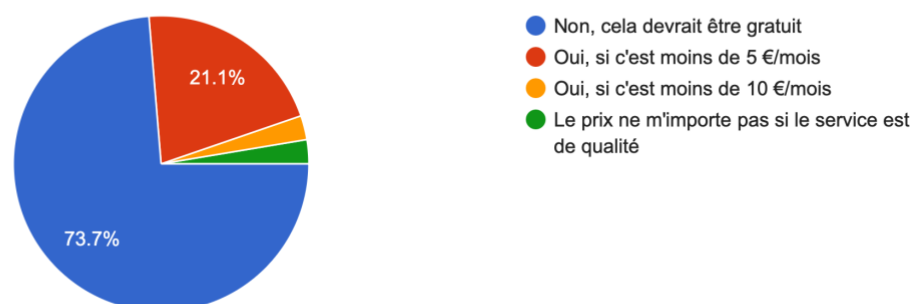
Q17. Combien d'heures par mois seriez-vous prêt(e) à consacrer à ces échanges?

38 responses



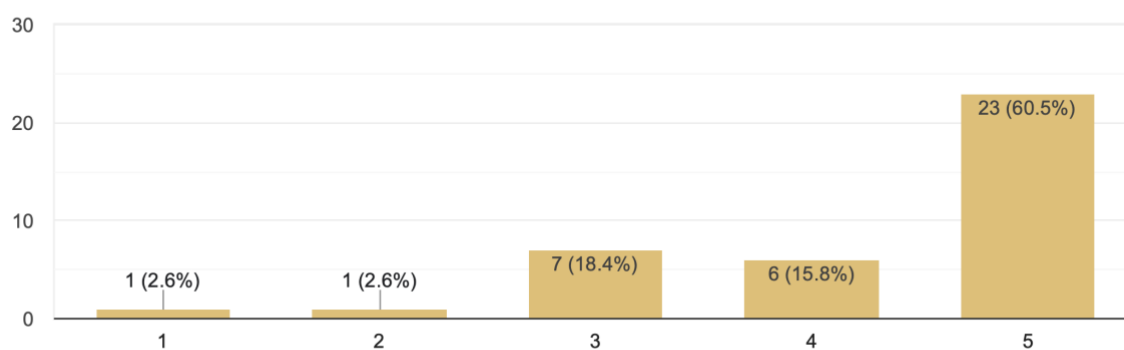
Q18. Seriez-vous prêt(e) à payer pour accéder à une plateforme de ce type?

38 responses



Q19. Que pensez-vous de l'idée que des institutions (université, commune, CPAS) subventionnent la plateforme pour que l'accès reste gratuit?

38 responses



Q20. Y a-t-il quelque chose que vous rêveriez de transmettre ou de partager avec un(e) étudiant(e)?

20 responses

Non

Non les vies sont trop différentes

Ca depend de l étudiant

Oser l'effort, avoir l'esprit curieux

En fonction de ce qui émerge

Je ne vois pas quoi

Expérience de vie

Une approche plus philosophique et plus "spirituelle" de la vie.

Le plaisir de lire et d'enseigner, les belles rencontres

La quiétude

Peut être mon expérience de vie quoiqu'elle soit peut être pas assez intéressante

L'expérience commune

La vie, l humanité,

Echanges culturels en espagnol

Pas d'idée actuellement

Mon expérience

Q21. Avez-vous des inquiétudes ou des questions par rapport à ce type de plateforme?

22 responses

Non

Facilite d utilisation

Le présentiel est primordial

Que la sécurité soit garantie, à 150%.

Des inquiétudes certainement. A qui faire confiance sur le Net?

Le discours donné pourrait être différent de celui des parents de l'étudiant.

Véracité

Oui

Nous parlons de relations. Il y de nombreuses variations.

Je n'imagine pas une plate-forme pour ce genre d'interaction mais si c'est le cas alors en effet que les utilisateurs soient vérifiés avant de pouvoir utiliser le lien.

pas pour l'instant, peut être quand je serai plus agé

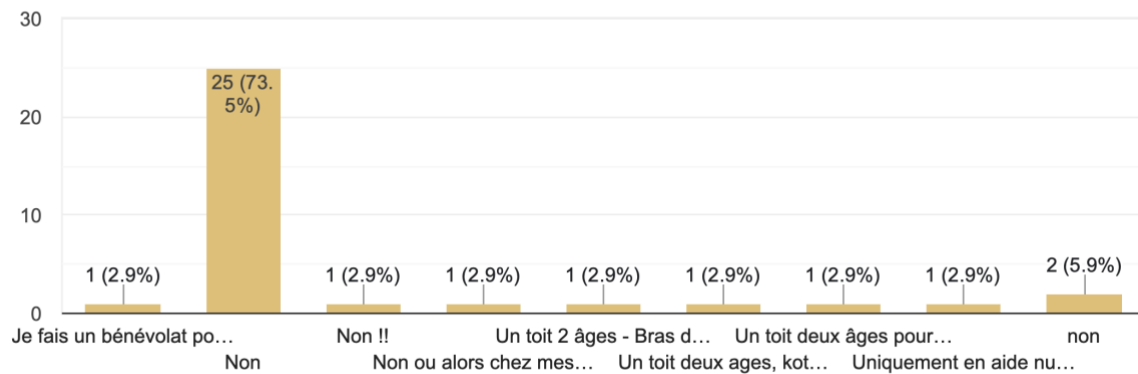
Je déteste

La régularité des étudiant.e.s qui n'ont pas vraiment le temps vu leurs études et peut-être aussi mes disponibilités qui peuvent varier d'un mois à l'autre?

Oui que cela soit trop intrusif

Q22. Est-ce que vous connaissez déjà des projets dans ce genre?

34 responses



8.5.3. Students

8.5.3.1. Questions

ID	Question	Response
1	How old are you?	☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-21 years old ☐ 22-25 years old ☐ 26 or over
2	Which institution are you enrolled at?	☐ UCLouvain ☐ IAD ☐ EPHEC ☐ Haute Ecole Léonard de Vinci ☐ HELHa ☐ Fabula Campus ☐ Other: ...
3	What year of study are you in?	☐ Bac 1 ☐ Bac 2 ☐ Bac 3 ☐ Master 1 ☐ Master 2 ☐ Bridge year / PhD/ Other

4	Do you live in Louvain-la-Neuve or the immediate surrounding area?	☐ Yes, I live there ☐ No, I come here for classes but I live elsewhere
5	How often do you feel lonely?	☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Very often
6	Do you feel you have sufficiently meaningful social relationships in your daily life?	Scale of 1 to 5: 1 = not at all; 5 = absolutely
7	Have you ever had regular contact with people aged 60 or over outside your family?	☐ Yes, regularly ☐ Yes, occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ No, never
8	What kind of support are you currently looking for? (Multiple answers allowed)	☐ Career guidance / career advice ☐ Help with thesis or academic work ☐ Someone to talk to / social connection ☐ Personal development ☐ Shared activities or outings ☐ Other:
9	Would you be willing to spend time with an older person in exchange for their support?	Scale of 1 to 5: 1 = not at all willing; 5 = very willing
10	What would appeal to you most about an intergenerational exchange?	☐ Receiving life or career advice ☐ Having a genuine human connection ☐ Contributing to something socially useful ☐ Developing new skills ☐ Nothing in particular ☐ Other:

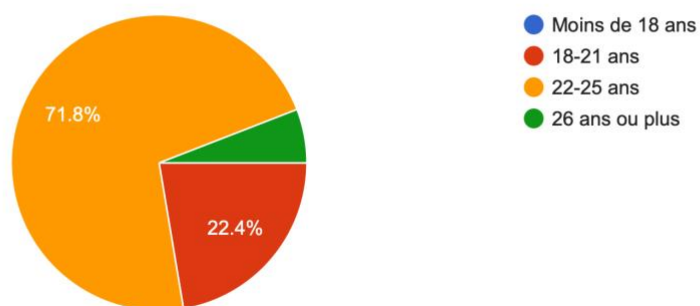
11	How comfortable would you be helping an elderly person with a digital device (smartphone, computer, app)?	Scale of 1 to 5: 1 = not at all comfortable; 5 = very comfortable
12	If a platform made it easier to connect students and older people in LLN, would you use it?	Scale of 1 to 5: 1 = definitely not; 5 = definitely yes
13	What features would you consider essential in order to trust such a platform? (multiple answers allowed)	☐ User identity verification ☐ Reviews and ratings from other users ☐ Support from a recognised institution (UCLouvain, CPAS, etc.) ☐ Supervised first-meeting protocol ☐ Easy way to report a problem ☐ Other:
14	Which format of interaction would suit you best?	☐ In person, at LLN ☐ Online (video conference) ☐ Both, depending on the circumstances ☐ No preference
15	How many hours a month would you be willing to spend on these exchanges?	☐ Less than 1 hour ☐ 1–2 hours ☐ 3–5 hours ☐ More than 5 hours
16	Would you be willing to pay to access a platform of this kind?	☐ No, never ☐ Yes, if it's free to start with and then becomes a paid service ☐ Yes, if it's very affordable (<€5/month) ☐ Yes, the price is not an issue for me
17	What do you think of the idea that institutions (universities, local councils, social welfare offices) could subsidise the platform to ensure access remains free?	Scale of 1 to 5: 1 = bad idea; 5 = very good idea

18	Is there anything you would like to share, learn or experience as part of an exchange with an older person?	Open question
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8.5.3.2. Answers

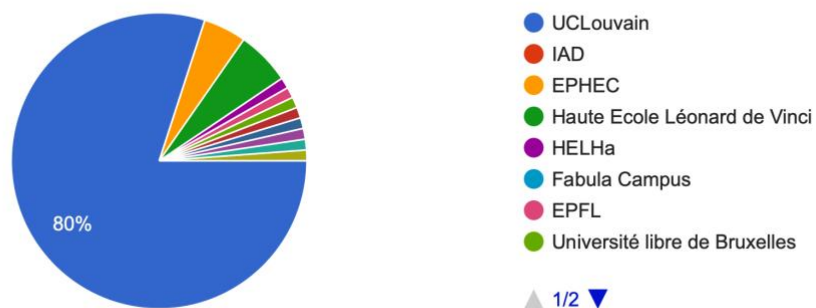
Q1. Quel âge avez-vous?

85 responses



Q2. Dans quelle institution êtes-vous inscrit(e)?

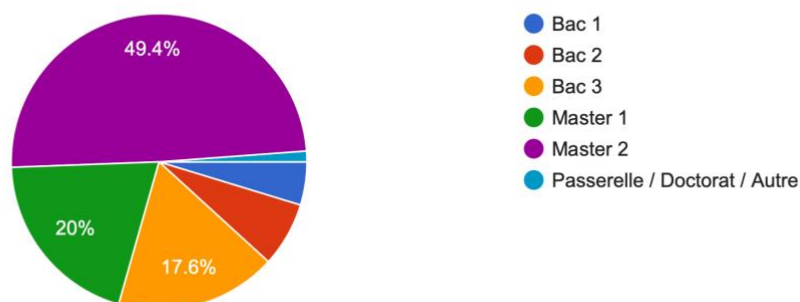
85 responses



▲ 1/2 ▼

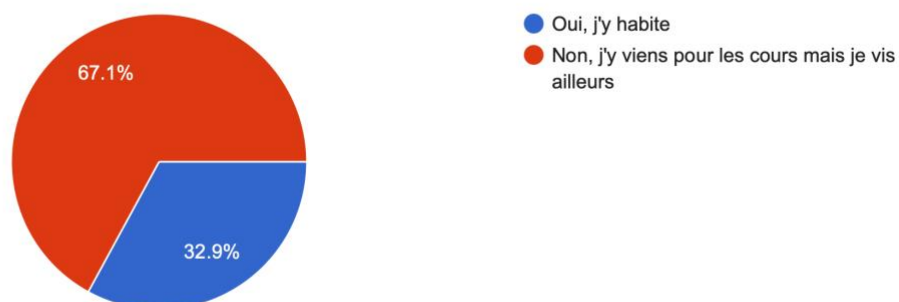
Q3. En quelle année d'études êtes-vous?

85 responses



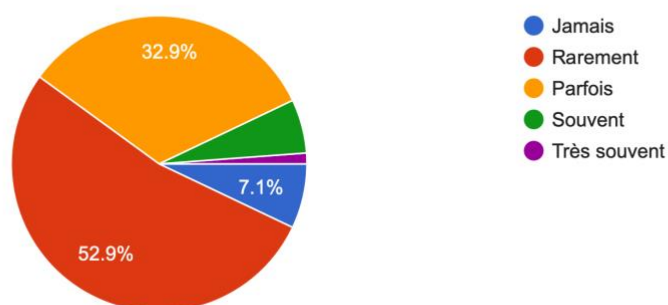
Q4. Résidez-vous à Louvain-la-Neuve ou dans ses environs immédiats?

85 responses



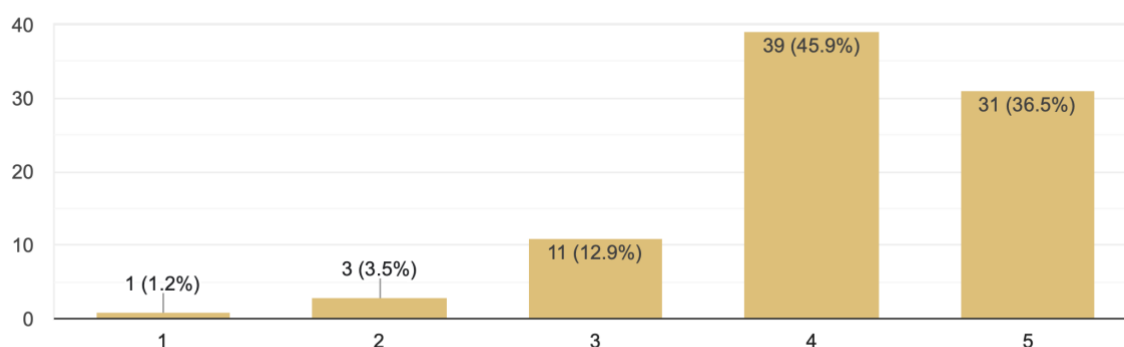
Q5. À quelle fréquence vous sentez-vous seul(e)?

85 responses



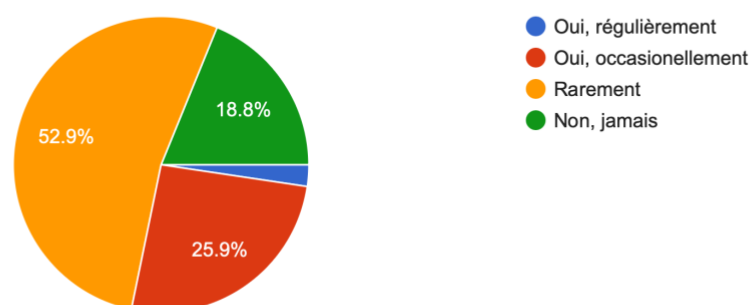
Q6. Estimez-vous avoir des relations sociales suffisamment significatives dans votre vie quotidienne?

85 responses



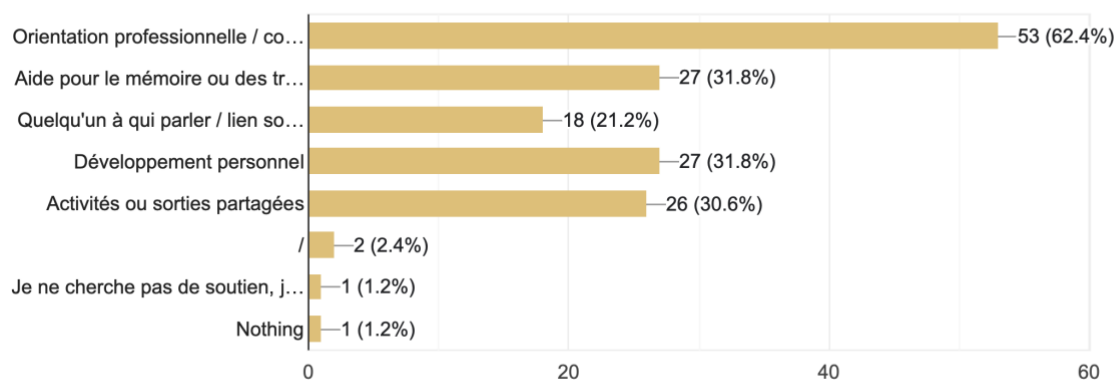
Q7. Avez-vous déjà eu des interactions régulières avec des personnes de 60 ans et plus en dehors de votre famille?

85 responses



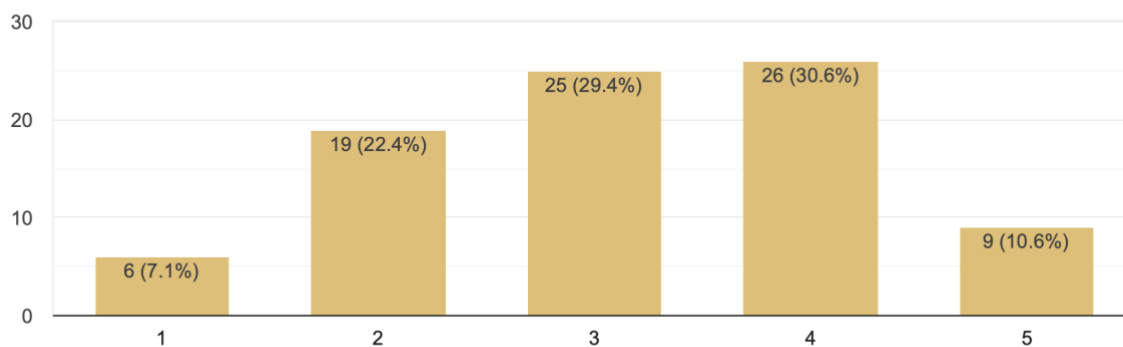
Q8. Quels types de soutien recherchez-vous actuellement? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

85 responses



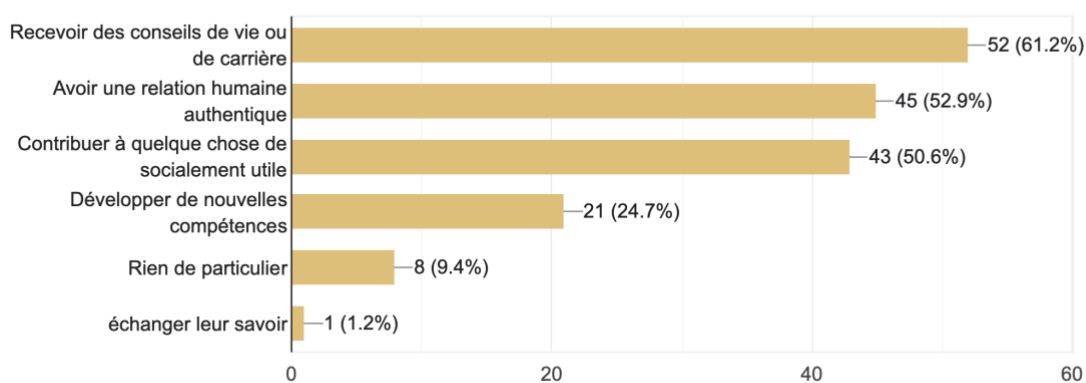
Q9. Seriez-vous prêt(e) à consacrer du temps à une personne âgée en échange d'un accompagnement de sa part?

85 réponses



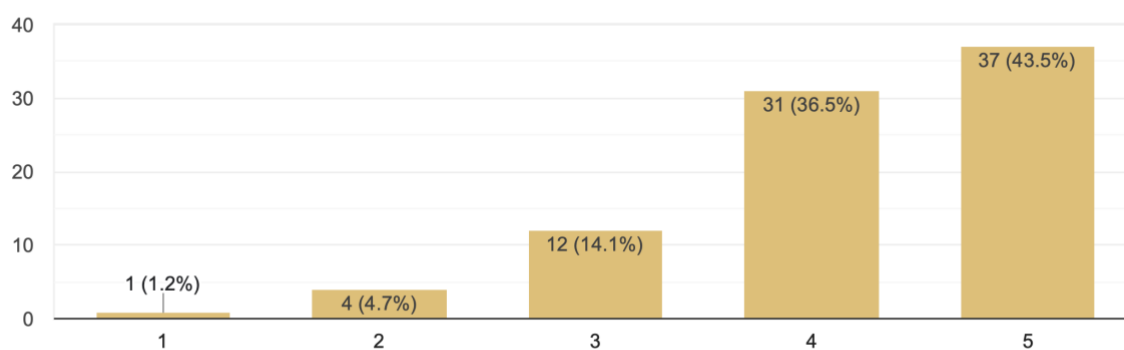
Q10. Qu'est-ce qui vous attirerait le plus dans un échange intergénérationnel?

85 réponses



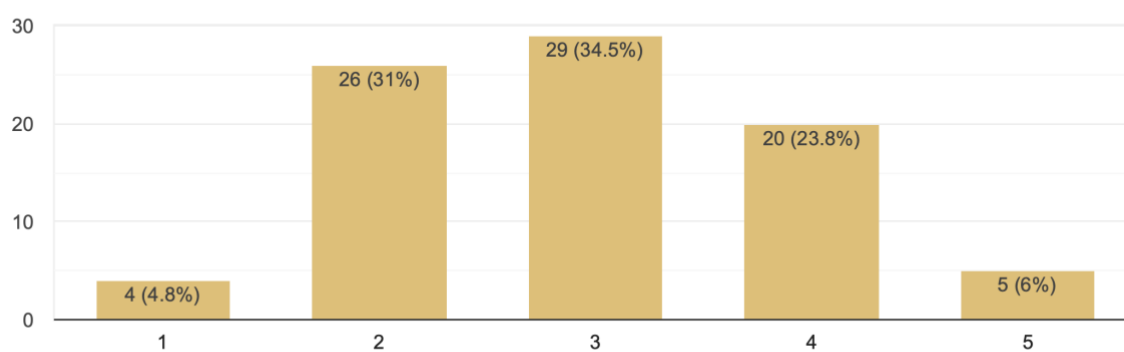
Q11. À quel point seriez-vous à l'aise pour aider une personne âgée avec un outil numérique (smartphone, ordinateur, application)?

85 responses



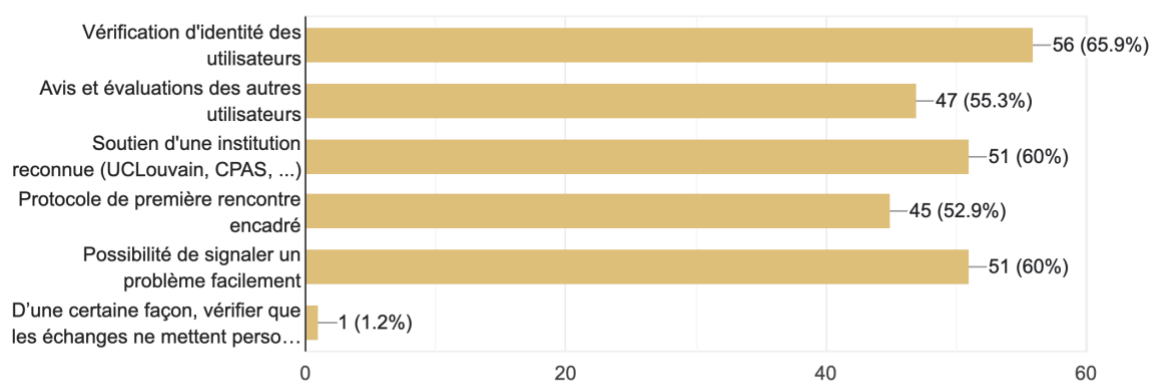
Q12. Si une plateforme facilitait la mise en relation entre étudiants et seniors à LLN, l'utiliserez-vous?

84 responses



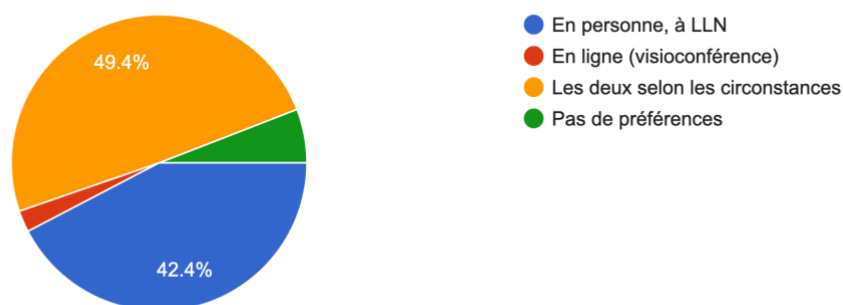
Q13. Quels éléments vous sembleraient indispensables pour faire confiance à une telle plateforme?
(plusieurs réponses possibles)

85 réponses



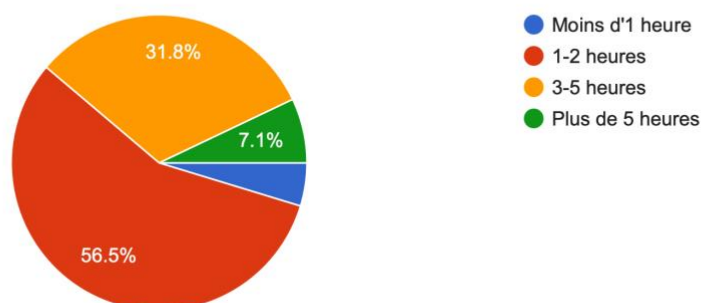
Q14. Quel format d'échange vous conviendrait le mieux?

85 réponses



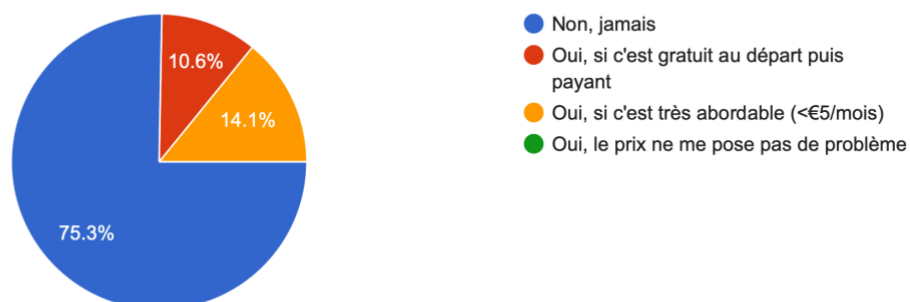
Q15. Combien d'heures par mois seriez-vous prêt(e) à consacrer à ces échanges?

85 réponses



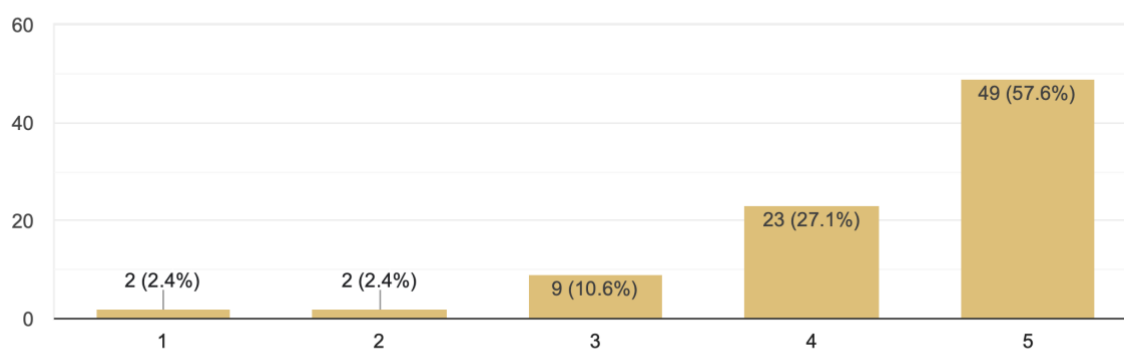
Q16. Seriez-vous prêt(e) à payer pour accéder à une plateforme de ce type?

85 responses



Q17. Que pensez-vous de l'idée que des institutions (université, commune, CPAS) subventionnent la plateforme pour que l'accès reste gratuit?

85 responses



Q18. Y a-t-il quelque chose que vous aimeriez partager, apprendre ou vivre dans le cadre d'un échange avec une personne âgée?

18 responses

/

Expérience et évolution de point de vue à travers le temps

très chouette expérience ave 1 toit 2 âges

Avoir des conversations ouvertes d'esprit et enrichissantes

Apprendre sur la vie, pas seulement professionnelle, pour avoir un avis d'une personne qui a beaucoup d'expériences

En apprendre plus sur leur vision de la vie, société et vice-versa.

Tips pro ou simplement conseils de vie sur choix et conséquences des choix

partager le nouveau monde technologique et apprendre leur "techniques de grand-mères"

Avoir des conseils

Partager mon quotidien et à l'inverse recevoir des conseils de personnes âgées qui ont vécu beaucoup de choses et qui peuvent nous aider à prendre du recul sur certaines choses qui nous semblent trop énormes et indispensables

La manière de profiter de la vie. Les regrets qu'ils ont.

Recevoir des conseils sur comment aborder certaines situations dans la vie

Non

De mon pdv, j'ai l'impression que c'est surtout les personnes âgées qui ont besoin de plus d'échange que l'inverse. Faire une plateforme ça pourrait augmenter les connexions entre générations. Par contre, si c'est payant, ça va faire fuir bcp de jeunes.

Pas spécialement, réapprendre une autre façon de vivre

non

Témoignage, parcours de vie. Je trouve cela tres riche

8.6. Verbatim

This document contains the full verbatim transcriptions of the interviews conducted as part of this research.

[Verbatim.docx](#)

Abstract :

In Ottignies–Louvain-la-Neuve, students and seniors share the same geographical space yet rarely interact in any structured or meaningful way. This coordination failure constitutes the starting point of this thesis' question: how do perceived trust, social value, and pricing fairness influence the adoption and early network effects of an intergenerational two-sided platform? Drawing on four theoretical frameworks, Self-Determination Theory, Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Two-Sided Market Theory this research demonstrates that students and seniors share structurally complementary needs: students seek career guidance, experiential knowledge, and meaningful social connection, while seniors seek technological support, purposeful contribution, and continued social engagement. These needs are a form of latent social value.

These insights are then translated into Genly's platform architecture: defining its value proposition, analysing its competitive landscape, and examining how network effects can support a sustainable competitive advantage. To validate this empirically, quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were conducted with students, seniors, and institutional representatives. The findings confirm openness to intergenerational exchange on both sides, while identifying three key adoption drivers: perceived trust and safety, perceived social value, and pricing fairness. Trust emerges not as a feature but as a prerequisite and one that cannot be self-generated by the platform alone but must be borrowed initially from established institutions. These insights are translated into a concrete platform design, covering Genly's Minimum Viable Platform, its go-to-market strategy, and a monetisation model centred on institutional funding, Genly is a social infrastructure rather than a commercial service. The conclusion to this thesis is that the barrier to intergenerational exchange is structural rather than motivational, and that a well-designed digital platform, based on trust-building mechanisms and institutional partnerships, can activate the existing relational capital within local communities.

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