PEER+

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1. Introduction

If a tree falls and no one hears it, does it even make a sound? This thought-provoking question resonates deeply with the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals who continue to experience violence and discrimination in today's world. It highlights the importance of having a voice and responding to the struggles faced by marginalized communities.

In a world where the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals, including violence and discrimination, persist, it's crucial to address these issues and provide a platform for marginalized communities to have a voice. With this in mind, we are excited to present the prototype and vision for PEER+, a mobile app and program aimed at tackling the pressing issue of violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals.

PEER+ is our response to the urgent need for safer and more inclusive spaces. It empowers LGBTIQ+ individuals and their allies to combat violence, access resources, and foster a supportive community. Through the thoughtful use of technology, community engagement, and data insights, PEER+ seeks to drive positive change, promote inclusivity, and amplify the voices of the LGBTIQ+ community.

This document outlines our vision, strategy, and the potential impact of PEER+, as we endeavor to create a better world for all. By aligning social responsibility with a sustainable business model, PEER+ offers an innovative solution that can benefit users, businesses, and communities alike. We invite you to explore the key aspects of PEER+ and join us in our mission to create a safer and more inclusive world for everyone.

2. Problem Statement

At the heart of our initiative lies a profound recognition of the pervasive issue of violence and discrimination directed at LGBTIQ+ individuals. Disturbing statistics shed light on the alarming rates of violence, harassment, and discrimination endured by this community. According to data from Monitoring Trans and Homophobic Violence in Berlin[1], the incidence of violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals has been on the rise in recent years. These figures emphasize the pressing need for an innovative and comprehensive solution like PEER+ to address this issue, combat violence and discrimination, and foster safer environments for LGBTIQ+ individuals.

The problem extends beyond physical violence and encompasses emotional and psychological harm, contributing to heightened mental health challenges within the LGBTIQ+ community. Additionally, discrimination in critical areas such as healthcare, education, and employment further exacerbates the marginalization of this community, impeding their ability to lead authentic and fulfilling lives. The LGBTIQ+ community rightfully deserves a platform that empowers them to navigate their daily lives with confidence, resilience, and unwavering support.

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[1] ● The number of anti-LGBTIQ crimes recorded by police in Berlin since 2014 is continuing to increase: 377 crimes were recorded in 2020 and as many as 456 in 2021.
● The classification of anti-LGBTIQ crimes as extremist criminality, which has been the case since 2019, and making up the majority of cases in 2021, points to a paradigm shift in the way police are evaluating the problem.
● The years 2019, 2020 and 2021 show a reduction in the district of Tempelhof-Schöneberg's significance as a crime scene while Neukölln's significance has increased.
● As far as Berlin's districts are concerned, there are overlaps with those exposed to particular pressures with most of the crimes in 2020 and 2021 being recorded in Kreuzberg and Mitte.
● Particularly Neukölln but also Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg show high shares of actual and grievous bodily harm.
● The average age of victims, 36 years, is higher than that of the suspects. On a percentage basis, 20 to 30-year-olds represent the most frequent age group.
● The cases registered by police confirm the findings of previous studies that transphobic crimes are often particularly violent. For cases classified under the sub-theme "Gender/sexual identity", the share of violent offenses is 31.6%, 10 percentage points above the share for cases classified only under the sub-theme "sexual orientation". Actual bodily harm and particularly grievous bodily harm make up a comparatively far higher share.

More information at https://www.lsbti-monitoring.berlin/

More statistics at https://www.dw.com/en/lgbtq-community-is-there-a-backlash-in-europe/a-66675016

3. Solution Overview

PEER+ is a mobile app concept currently in the development phase, aimed at empowering LGBTIQ+ individuals and addressing the challenges of violence and discrimination. It encompasses a wide array of features tailored to meet the specific needs of this community. Here's an overview of the key components of our envisioned PEER+:

▸ **Community Empowerment:**

At the heart of PEER+ lies a deep appreciation for the strength and resilience inherent in the LGBTIQ+ community. Unlike conventional approaches that often focus solely on the victim, PEER+ places a strong emphasis on the power of community, peer support, and empowerment. Through the envisioned registration process and the encouragement for users to have their voices heard, the app aspires to foster inclusivity and community engagement. During this development stage, we prioritize the confidentiality of user information, with only essential data being considered for in-app communication.

▸ **Real-time Assistance:**

PEER+ envisions providing a critical lifeline for LGBTIQ+ individuals facing distressing situations. In this concept, when an individual encounters a dangerous situation, they would have the capability to utilize our app to send out a "Shout". This Shout would serve two crucial functions. Firstly, it would immediately send a text message to specific contacts saved within the app, notifying them of the distress. Secondly, it would send push notifications to all nearby users who have the app installed, ensuring that the envisioned call for help reaches a broad range of nearby individuals prepared to offer assistance.

▸ **Vetting System:**

PEER+ incorporates a rigorous User Verification system to uphold the app's integrity and user safety. The process commences with strategic onboarding of respected entities within the LGBTIQ+ community, encompassing prominent LGBTIQ+ advocacy organizations, established LGBTIQ+ business proprietors, and influential community members. These entities form the initial cohort of trusted partners. Subsequently, the system involves an extensive validation and endorsement process led by these trusted entities, ensuring the authenticity and credibility of prospective PEER+ users through identity verification, reference checks, and background screening. Once endorsed, users progress to the Peer-to-Peer Registration Process, enabling trusted users to vouch for others they

know and trust, fostering a network effect that gradually expands the community of verified users. Ongoing monitoring and oversight, including periodic profile reviews and community feedback, sustain the reliability and integrity of the platform.

This meticulous approach reinforces PEER+'s commitment to establishing a secure, supportive, and inclusive space for LGBTIQ+ individuals and their allies, mitigating risks, fostering trust, and enhancing the overall user experience and community engagement.

▸ **Knowledge and Resources:**

Empowerment begins with education and awareness. Within the PEER+ concept, we envision offering an extensive collection of educational materials covering various topics related to discrimination and violence. By accessing these resources, users would gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by their peers and receive guidance on how to respond, react, and promote safety for themselves and others. This knowledge aims to equip users with the tools needed to create safe spaces and drive positive change within their communities.

▸ **Heatmap Feature:**

To be there for others, it's essential to first be present for oneself. In the concept of PEER+, we propose incorporating a Heatmap, a visual representation of areas where incidents of violence or discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals have been reported. This map would not only raise awareness about areas with higher incident rates but also encourage users to exercise caution and take proactive measures to ensure their safety in specific locations. By promoting self-awareness and vigilance, the envisioned PEER+ empowers individuals to navigate their environments confidently and make informed decisions regarding their personal safety.

4. Target Audience

PEER+ envisions a broad user base, including LGBTIQ+ individuals, allies, community organizations, and potential business partners. Let's delve into each segment:

▸ **LGBTIQ+ Individuals:**

At the core of PEER+ are LGBTIQ+ individuals, who will benefit from a secure and inclusive platform currently in development. This platform empowers them to navigate daily life and combat violence and discrimination. With features like real-time assistance, access to resources, and a supportive community, PEER+ aspires to become an indispensable tool for LGBTIQ+ individuals to enhance their safety and well-being.

▸ **Allies:**

Allies, those who support the LGBTIQ+ community, have a pivotal role to play in promoting inclusivity and fighting discrimination. PEER+ extends a warm welcome to allies, offering them access to educational resources, guidance on supporting LGBTIQ+ individuals, and opportunities for allyship. Engaging allies helps PEER+ build a robust support network and amplifies its potential to create a safer, more inclusive society.

▸ **Community Organizations:**

Community organizations, including LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups and support networks, are essential collaborators in the development of PEER+. Through collaboration, we can better reach our audience, tap into their expertise, and ensure our app aligns with the LGBTIQ+ community's needs. PEER+ provides a valuable platform for community organizations to engage their members, offer resources, and strengthen their advocacy efforts.

5. Market Analysis

Market analysis reveals a growing demand for LGBTIQ+ community safety and well-being solutions. By focusing on this niche, PEER+ can make a substantial impact and establish a strong presence.

The LGBTIQ+ market constitutes a significant and expanding portion of the population, with Germany showing a higher percentage of identifying individuals than anywhere else in Europe. This demographic holds substantial purchasing power and seeks products and services aligning with their values and needs. However, the market still lacks comprehensive safety and inclusivity solutions. By addressing this gap, PEER+ has the potential to become the preferred platform for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Beyond the consumer market, PEER+ offers collaboration opportunities with NGOs, local authorities, and LGBTIQ+ organizations. These partnerships can provide invaluable support, credibility, and potential funding sources, further enhancing the app's impact and outreach.

6. Business Model

PEER+ is developing a sustainable business model to ensure future viability and growth. The core elements of our strategy encompass:

▸ **Partnerships and Sponsorships:**

Collaborations with NGOs, local authorities, and LGBTIQ+ organizations are integral to PEER+'s future success. These partnerships will offer funding opportunities, enhance the app's credibility, and amplify its impact. By aligning with organizations sharing our mission, we aim to expand our reach, access additional resources, and drive meaningful change.

▸ **Consultancy Services:**

PEER+ plans to offer consultancy services to businesses aspiring to establish LGBTIQ+-friendly spaces. This includes training, support, and guidance to transform businesses into inclusive environments. By leveraging our expertise and the insights gathered through the app, we will provide tailored solutions to help businesses create welcoming atmospheres for the LGBTIQ+ community.

▸ **Data Insights:**

PEER+ will collect anonymized user data from reports, which can be analyzed and shared with interested parties, such as academic institutions or research organizations. These insights will offer valuable information on trends and concerns related to violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals. Sharing this data will support evidence-based interventions, advocacy, and policy-making initiatives.

PEER+'s business model not only ensures the app's future sustainability but also aligns with its mission to create a safer and more inclusive community for LGBTIQ+ individuals.

7. Marketing and User Acquisition

A robust marketing strategy is crucial for future user acquisition, increasing awareness, and fostering app engagement. Our approach combines targeted marketing tactics and community engagement efforts:

▸ **Targeted Advertising:**

We plan to utilize online platforms, social media channels, and LGBTIQ+ community networks to effectively reach our target audience. By employing demographic targeting and leveraging digital advertising tools, we aim to optimize our marketing budget for maximum user acquisition.

▸ **Community Engagement:**

Collaboration with LGBTIQ+ organizations, support groups, and influencers will be pivotal in building awareness and establishing trust within the community. Through participation in community events, workshops, and conferences, we will engage potential users, gather feedback, and cultivate strong relationships.

▸ **User Feedback and Testimonials:**

Encouraging users to provide feedback and share positive experiences will be a cornerstone of our marketing efforts. User testimonials and success stories will be shared on our website, social media platforms, and other channels to highlight the value and impact of PEER+.

▸ **Referral Programs:**

We aim to implement a referral program to incentivize users to invite their friends, colleagues, and peers to join PEER+. By offering rewards or exclusive features for successful referrals, we intend to harness the power of word-of-mouth marketing and accelerate user acquisition.

Our marketing strategy will remain dynamic, evolving based on user feedback, market trends, and the ever-changing needs of the LGBTIQ+ community. We will employ data analytics to monitor and measure the effectiveness of our marketing initiatives, enabling us to refine our approach and optimize resource allocation.

8. Technical Implementation

PEER+ is being designed with a robust technical infrastructure and advanced data management systems to ensure a secure and seamless user experience. Key aspects of our technical planning include:

▸ **Shouter + Responder Scheme:**

In times of distress, the Shouter can activate a Shout, which is broadcast to all active (logged in) users who have enabled push notifications and share their location in the background. This shout also reaches any additional contacts added within the app. This feature is pivotal in establishing the PEER+ network (see Screens #1 - #4 under **User Interface and Design**).

When a Responder receives a shout and is available to assist, they can contact the Shouter for more information and access the Shouter's location using integrated navigation. While en route, the Responder can access our guidebook to learn how to provide assistance in various situations (see Screens #15 - #21 under **User Interface and Design**).

During this time, the Shouter can provide additional details about their situation, helping both the Responder and themselves assess the seriousness of the event. The specific events, combined with shared locations, contribute valuable data for generating a heatmap and tracking the occurrence of incidents and high-risk areas. Additionally, Shouters can pinpoint safe spaces they discover, transforming them into safe hotspots (see Screens #5 - #8 under **User Interface and Design**).

Once the Shouter receives assistance or no longer feels threatened, they can mark themselves as safe and provide a comprehensive account of the event, including its location, de-escalation methods employed, and whether they require further support. We also offer a guide on coping after a traumatic event to aid in recovery and resilience-building (see Screens #9 - #14 under **User Interface and Design**).

▸ **Data Protection and Privacy:**

User privacy and data protection are our top priorities. PEER+ adheres to stringent data protection regulations and incorporates industry-standard security measures to safeguard user information. Throughout the app's development, we maintain strict confidentiality to ensure user data remains secure and protected.

▸ **Scalability and Reliability:**

PEER+ is designed to handle potential growth in the user base and increased usage. Our technical framework allows for scalability, guaranteeing that the app can

accommodate a larger number of users without compromising performance or reliability. We continuously monitor and optimize the app's performance to deliver a seamless user experience.

▸ **Real-time Location Tracking:**

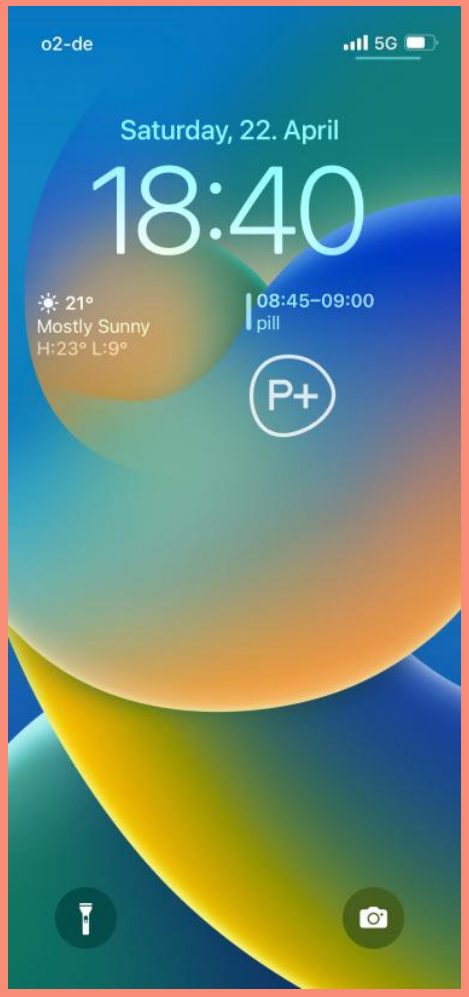
By making use of real-time location data from users' devices, PEER+ connects individuals in need with nearby responders. This integration facilitates prompt and effective assistance during critical situations. Location data is securely transmitted and accessible only to authorized individuals for the sole purpose of providing assistance.

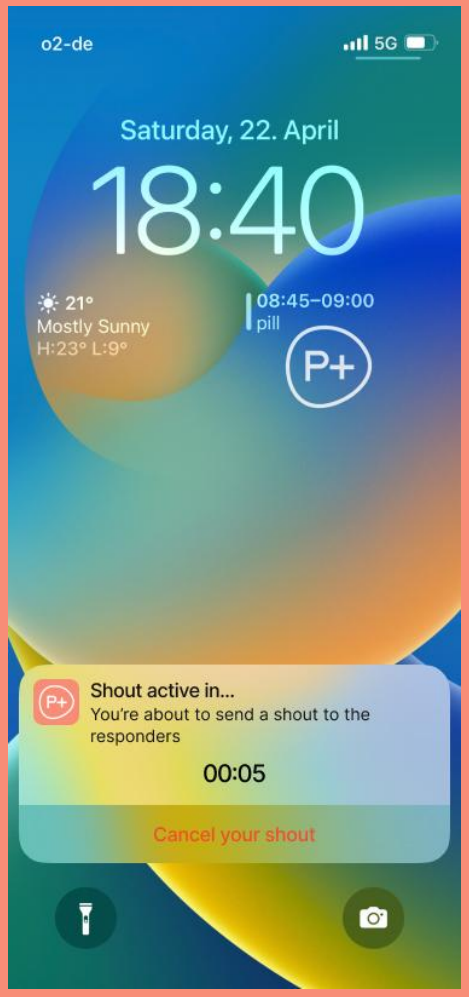
▸ **User-Friendly Interface:**

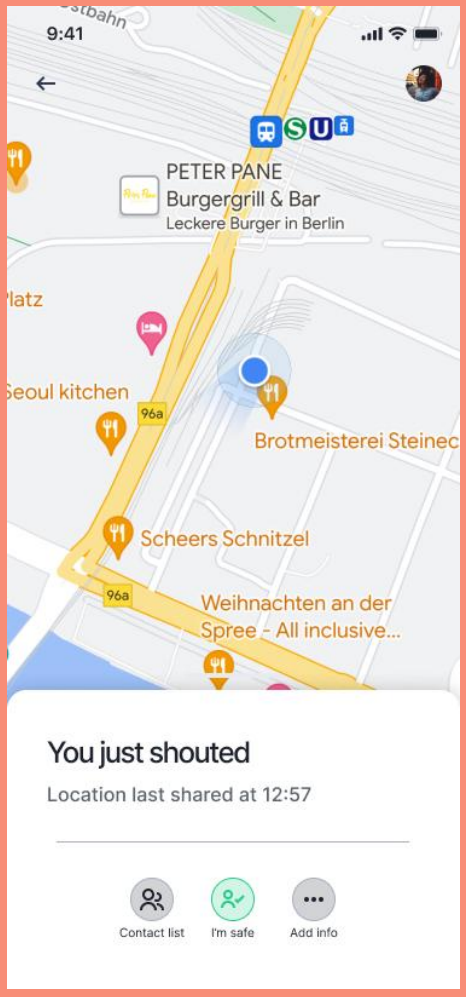
The user interface of PEER+ is designed to be intuitive, user-friendly, and accessible. We prioritize ease of use to ensure individuals of all technical backgrounds can navigate the app effortlessly. The app's features and functionalities are presented clearly, enabling users to access the resources they need quickly.

9. User Interface and Design

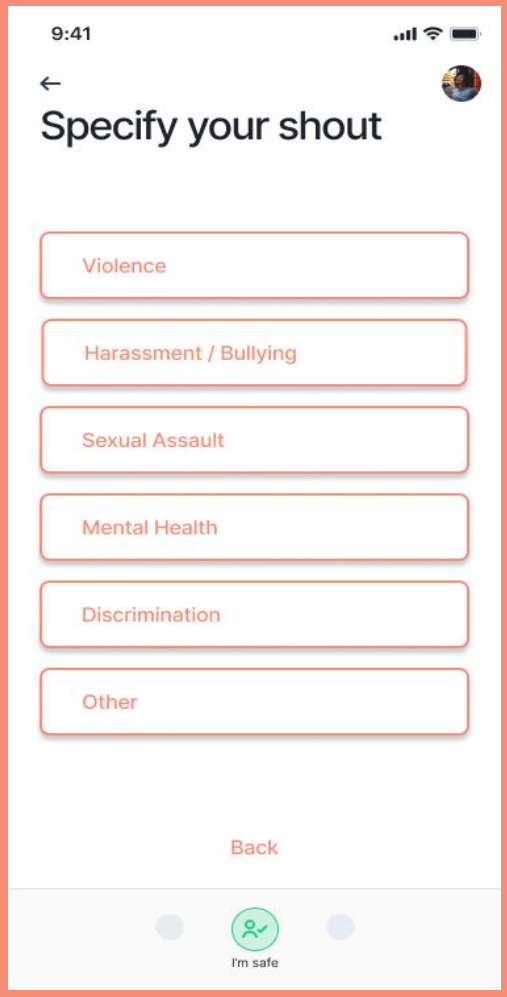
Shouter Scheme, Screens #1, #2, #3, #4

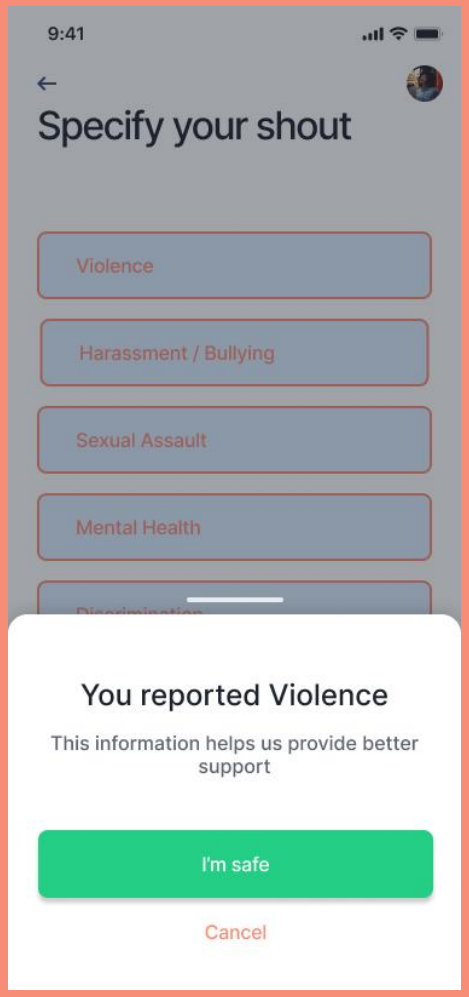


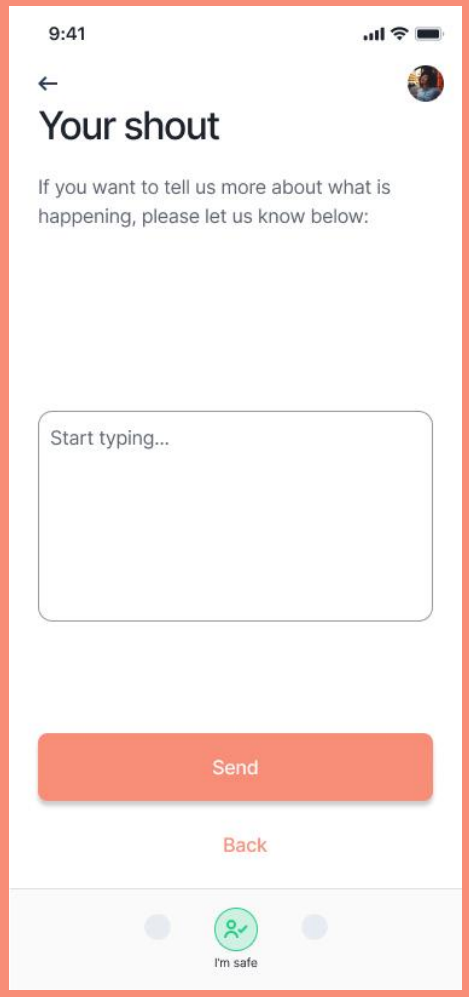


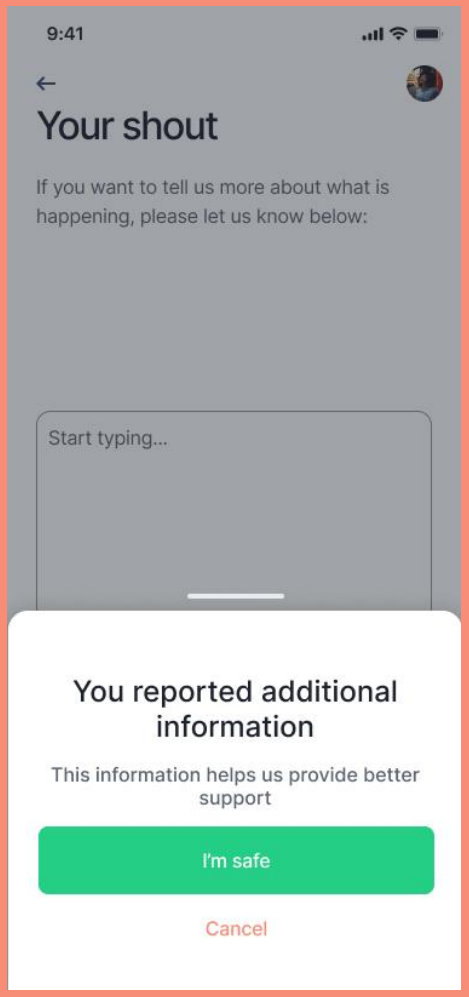


Shouter Scheme, Screens #5, #6, #7, #8

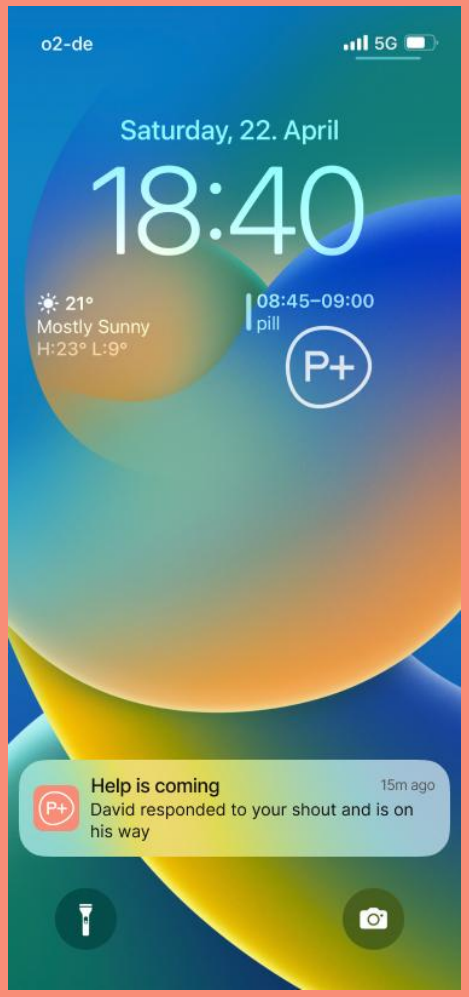


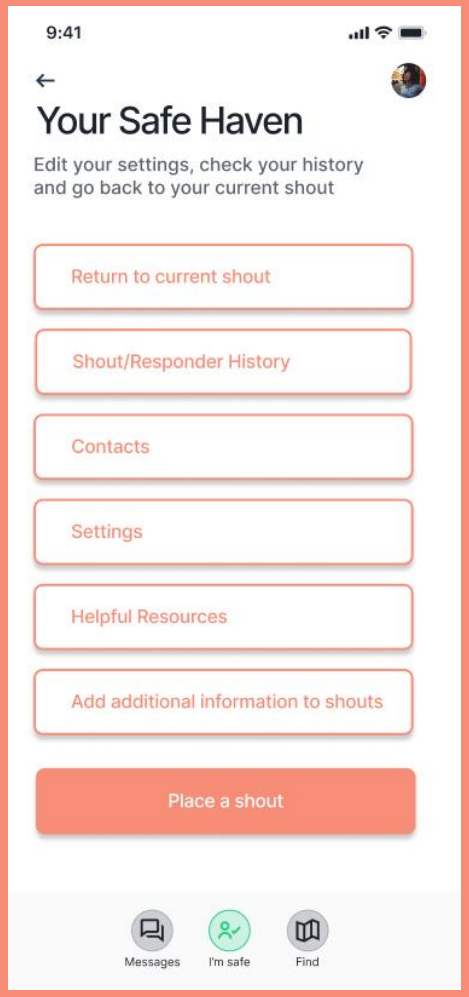


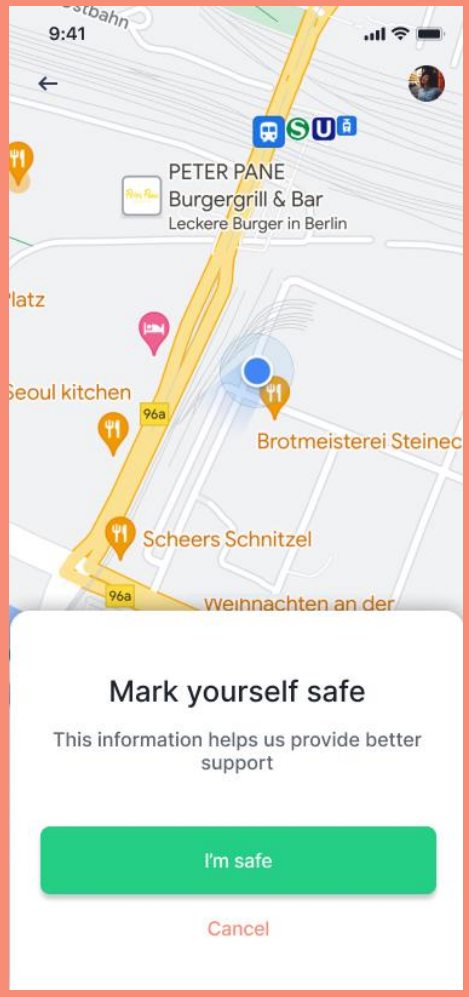


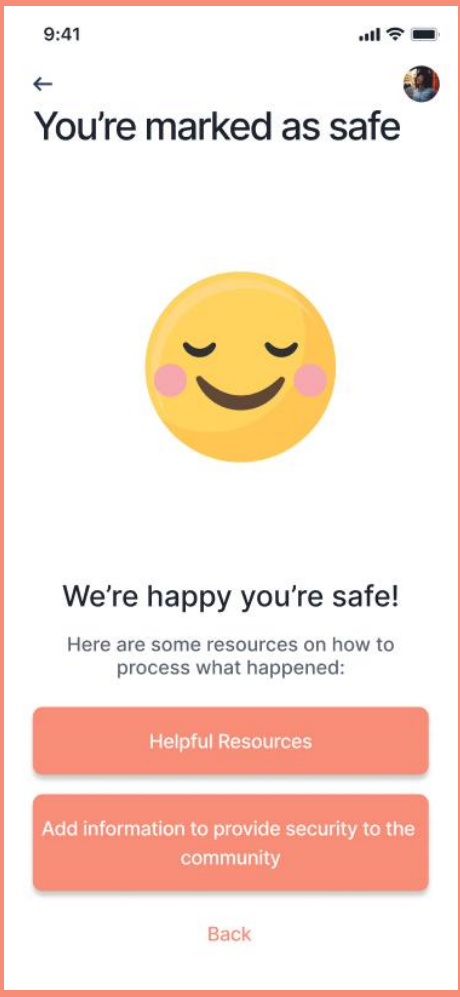


Shouter Scheme, Screens #9, #10, #11, #12

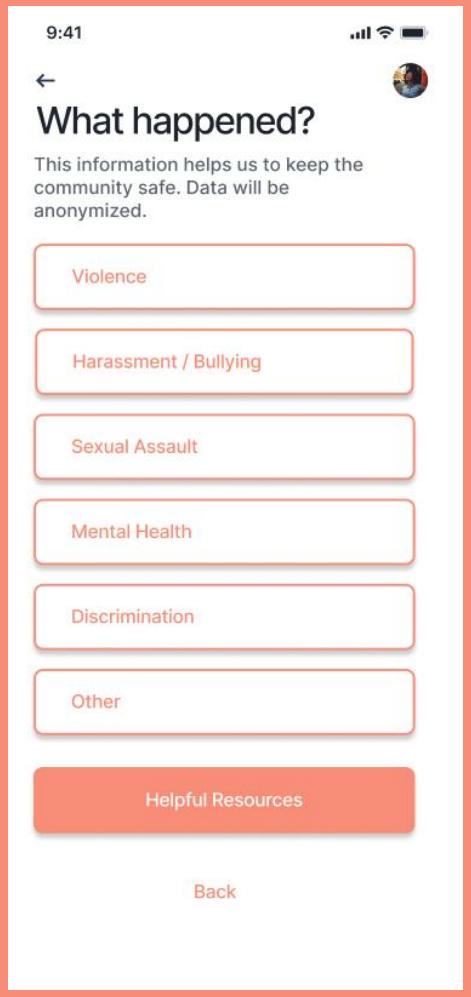


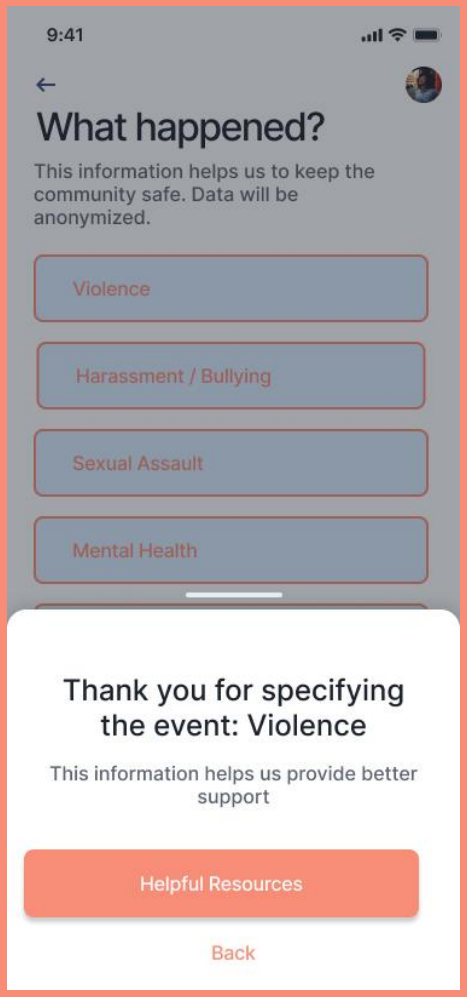




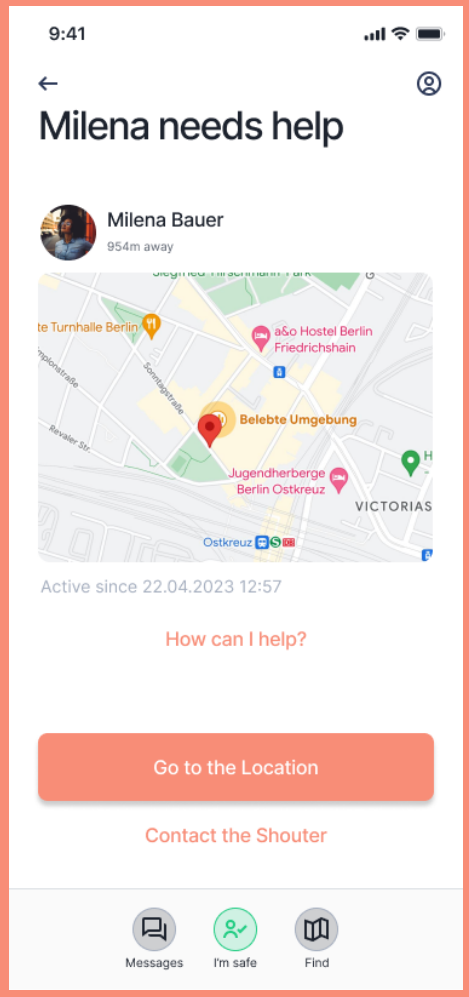


Shouter Scheme, Screens #13, #14

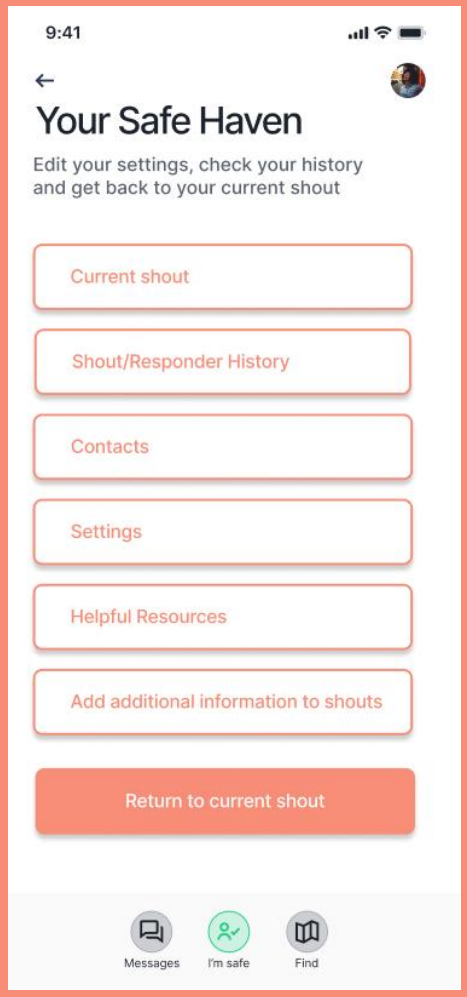


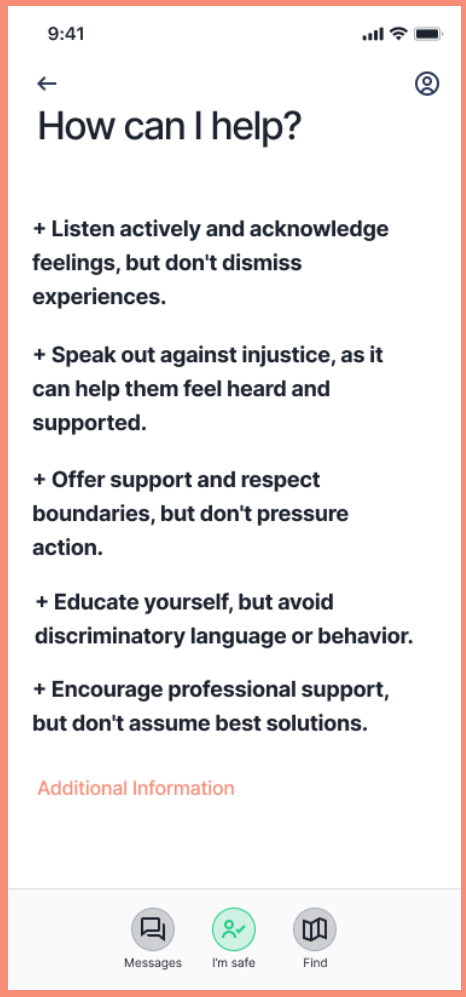


Responder Scheme, Screens #15, #16, #17, #18



Responder Scheme, Screens #19, #20, #21





10. Growth Strategy and Future Plans

Our strategy for PEER+ outlines key initiatives to expand our reach, improve app functionality, and maximize our potential impact. Our future plans encompass:

▸ **Geographic Expansion:**

While our initial focus centers on Berlin, we aspire to extend PEER+ to other cities, regions, and countries where LGBTIQ+ community violence and discrimination persist. By broadening our geographic scope, we aim to offer support to a larger audience and drive systemic change on a broader scale.

▸ **User Acquisition and Engagement:**

At the core of our growth strategy is a firm commitment to trust and security within the PEER+ community. As we plan to acquire new users and foster engagement, we prioritize creating a safe environment through the design of a comprehensive User Verification system. This system includes validation by respected LGBTIQ+ community entities and a peer-to-peer registration endorsement process to ensure user integrity. This meticulous approach is part of our ongoing efforts to safeguard the community, attract new users, and encourage sustained engagement, nurturing a vibrant and active user community. Founded on trust and security, this community plays a pivotal role in reporting incidents, providing support, and fostering a sense of belonging. By prioritizing these elements, we aim to enhance user acquisition while strengthening the bonds that drive the growth and impact of PEER+.

▸ **Feature Enhancements:**

To meet the evolving needs of our users, we have a roadmap of feature enhancements in development. These improvements encompass the integration of additional resources and educational materials, enhancements to the user interface and user experience, and the implementation of advanced data analytics to provide valuable insights to our users and stakeholders.

▸ **Strategic Collaborations:**

Partnering with like-minded organizations, NGOs, local authorities, and LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups is essential to amplify our impact and broaden our reach. These collaborations will grant us access to resources, expertise, and networks, ultimately fostering greater awareness, adoption, and usage of PEER+.

11. Financial Model

Our financial model illustrates the growth potential of PEER+ and the appeal of investing in the app. While specific figures will depend on factors like user adoption, revenue streams, and market dynamics, here's a general overview of our financial outlook:

▸ **Funding Strategy:**

As we embark on the journey of launching PEER+ as an app operating under the umbrella of a non-profit organization, we recognize that securing funding is paramount to its success.

Given our non-profit status and commitment to not generate profits, our primary sources of funding will come from donors, grants, and potentially government support. These avenues align with our mission to create a safer and more inclusive world for the LGBTIQ+ community, as they prioritize social impact over financial returns. Donors who share our vision for a more inclusive society can contribute to the ongoing development and maintenance of the app. Grants from foundations, both local and international, that support LGBTIQ+ rights and community initiatives will provide essential financial backing. Additionally, exploring potential government grants and partnerships can further bolster our financial stability. While the app operates under the auspices of an NGO, we remain dedicated to transparency and accountability in managing these funds, ensuring they are used efficiently to support the LGBTIQ+ community and drive positive change.

Our financial model is shaped by our commitment to providing a valuable resource and fostering a sense of belonging for LGBTIQ+ individuals, with funding sources that mirror this mission.

▸ **Operating Costs:**

We recognize the importance of conducting a comprehensive evaluation of our operating expenses, covering areas such as personnel, infrastructure, marketing, and continuous development. While we are currently in the early stages of development and have not yet conducted an in-depth assessment in these areas, we are open to addressing these cost considerations as our development journey advances. As we move forward and potentially expand, our intention is to refine our operations for cost-efficiency while maintaining our commitment to providing the highest level of service and user experience.

While we rely on the support of donors and grants to fund our operations, we are committed to managing our operating costs efficiently and transparently,

ensuring that financial resources are allocated judiciously to maximize the impact of our mission.

Please note the financial model provided above is for demonstrative purposes and should be further refined through comprehensive market research and financial analysis. Additionally, we acknowledge that consultancy services will be reserved for a later rollout, contingent on achieving a reliable mass of users.

12. Impact Measurement

With PEER+, we are committed to measuring and assessing our potential impact to ensure that we can effectively address the challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community. Our impact measurement strategy encompasses the following key elements:

▸ **User Feedback and Anticipated Impact:**

We greatly value the feedback and anticipated impact shared by our potential users. Through surveys, user feedback mechanisms, and their expressed expectations, we gather insights into how PEER+ can potentially make a difference in the lives of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

▸ **Incident Reporting and Data Analysis:**

PEER+ plans to collect anonymized data on potential incidents of violence and discrimination reported by users. This data will be analyzed to identify potential trends, hotspots, and patterns, enabling us to develop targeted interventions and raise awareness about areas of concern.

▸ **Exploring Partnerships and Collaborations:**

Exploring collaborations with NGOs, local authorities, and LGBTIQ+ organizations will allow us to evaluate the collective potential impact of our efforts. Through potential partnerships, we may leverage additional resources, expertise, and networks to maximize our potential reach and effectiveness.

▸ **Envisioning Social and Systemic Change:**

The envisioned impact of PEER+ extends beyond individual experiences. By envisioning the potential to foster a safer and more inclusive society, PEER+ aspires to contribute to broader social and systemic change. Our impact measurement strategy includes envisioning shifts in public opinion, changes in business practices, and advancements in policy and legislation to assess the long-term potential impact of our efforts.

At PEER+, impact measurement is an ongoing process that informs our planning, guides our strategies, and underscores our commitment to accountability. We are dedicated to continuously improving our approach to maximize our potential positive impact on the LGBTIQ+ community and society as a whole.

13. Donor and Supporter Opportunities

Getting involved with PEER+ offers a unique chance to make a meaningful social impact. We extend an invitation to donors and supporters who resonate with our mission to join us on this transformative journey. By getting involved with PEER+, you can:

▸ **Drive Social Progress:**

Your financial support can contribute to the creation of safer spaces and the promotion of inclusivity for LGBTIQ+ individuals. By taking a stance against violence and discrimination, together, we can strive for a society where everyone can live authentically without fear.

▸ **Serve as a Catalyst for Transformation:**

Your contribution will bolster the development and enhancement of app features, facilitate expansion into new markets, and foster strategic partnerships. By investing in PEER+, you can serve as a catalyst for positive change, helping us reach more individuals and leave a lasting imprint on society.

▸ **Supporter Engagement:**

If contributing financially isn't feasible for you at this time, there are various ways to support PEER+ and make a difference. You can become a supporter by offering sponsorship, in-kind resources, or by leveraging your network to champion the app and its mission. Supporters play a pivotal role in helping us build awareness, boost user adoption, and cultivate a vibrant community around PEER+. Your involvement, regardless of the form it takes, is valued and appreciated as we work together to create a safer and more inclusive world for everyone.

Conclusion

PEER+ represents more than just a mobile app; it embodies a transformative vision that seeks to empower LGBTIQ+ individuals and allies in the ongoing fight against violence and discrimination.

By envisaging the utilization of technology, community engagement, and knowledge sharing, PEER+ envisions itself as a potential platform for support, real-time assistance, and advocacy. Through its inclusive features and dedication to promoting self-awareness, PEER+ aspires to contribute to the creation of a safer and more inclusive society, where the voices of LGBTIQ+ individuals are acknowledged, respected, and safeguarded.

Together, we have the potential to work towards a world free from violence and discrimination, where everyone can aspire to live authentically and with the dignity they deserve.

Contact

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