PASTBEHAVIOR / PRODUCT ARCHITECTURE

The Sendable Product

When another person's participation is part of the job

Most products treat sharing as something that happens after the useful part. You buy something, finish something, or create something, and then the product asks you to invite someone, refer a friend, post it, or send a link.

A different class of products works the other way around. Another person's participation is part of completing the job. An event needs guests. A meeting needs participants. A group trip needs people to commit. A group purchase needs buyers.

That architecture guarantees something traditional sharing does not: exposure to another participant through normal product usage.

But exposure is not acquisition. Acquisition is not propagation. And the research found almost no public evidence showing that recipients reliably become future senders. That distinction is the story of this research.

18 CLASSIFIED CASES · 8 NEGATIVE CONTROLS · 3 MATCHED PAIRS ATTEMPTED, 0 SURVIVING

Evidence labels: **EVIDENCED** (filing, documentation, or on-record statement), **STRONG INFERENCE** (conclusion drawn across cases, labeled as such), **WEAK SIGNAL** (thin or third-party evidence), **UNDERDETERMINED** (the public record cannot answer it).

HEADLINE FINDING

Sendability is real. The growth advantage is unproven.

The strict architecture survives testing. Products can be separated cleanly based on whether another person's action is necessary for the intended job to complete.

The commercial hierarchy does not. No public evidence base establishes that required coordination produces stronger recipient-to-sender propagation than optional or economically consequential participation.

UNDERDETERMINED ON THE HEADLINE EMPIRICAL CLAIM

WHAT IS ESTABLISHED	WHAT APPEARS TRUE	WHAT IS NOT ESTABLISHED
Required coordination creates embedded exposure.	Products work best when recipient utility is immediate and monetization sits close to the coordinated action.	That recipients reliably become future senders, or that Tier 1 outperforms Tier 2.

RESEARCH UNIVERSE

CLASSIFIED CASES	TIER 1 CASES	NEGATIVE CONTROLS	ATTEMPTED MATCHED PAIRS	MATCHED PAIRS THAT SURVIVED THE METHODOLOGY
18	6	8	3	0

The brief called for 20–30 cases and 3–4 matched pairs. The research stopped at 18 cases and zero valid matched pairs rather than padding the evidence base or constructing favorable comparisons.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fifteen questions, fifteen verdicts.

01 **Is sendability a real product architecture or a useful metaphor?**

Real and definable. The strict test — can the sender's job complete without the recipient — cleanly separates Partiful, Zoom and Pinduoduo from Amazon Inspire, Duolingo and Splitwise.

EVIDENCED

02 **Does required recipient participation create stronger distribution than optional sharing?**

No public evidence base can answer this. Four companies whose growth narratives depend on it declined to quantify it.

UNDERDETERMINED

03 **What separates coordination from collaboration?**

Whether the second person's action gates completion or merely improves the outcome. The distinction holds under testing and reclassifies several products commonly cited as social.

EVIDENCED

04 **Which categories benefit most?**

Events, group travel, and multi-party meetings — where the real-world job is already multi-person and the coordination currently happens in messaging apps.

STRONG INFERENCE

05 **Which objects travel most naturally?**

Invites and claimable inventory. Both carry a deadline, a named recipient, and an unambiguous next action.

WEAK SIGNAL — RESTS ON TWO CASES

06 **How important is recipient friction?**

Zoom and Partiful both describe no-signup recipient action as central, and both grew fast. The one matched pair built to isolate this variable (Zoom against Webex) collapsed because the variable was not cleanly present.

UNDERDETERMINED

07 **Does pre-transaction coordination outperform post-transaction sharing?**

In financial services the pre-transaction version is the one that is legally buildable — a different and stronger claim than outperformance.

STRONG INFERENCE ON BUILDABILITY · UNDERDETERMINED ON PERFORMANCE

08 **Which mechanics have demonstrated commercial value?**

Pre-commitment collection against a defined event. Free-participant-to-paid-host conversion (Zoom, quantified). Group-threshold pricing (Pinduoduo, inseparable from subsidy).

STRONG INFERENCE

09 **Which negative controls weaken the thesis?**

Duolingo is the strongest: no sendable mechanic at all, and the best organic acquisition in the set. Organic growth does not require recipient necessity.

EVIDENCED

10 **Does the recipient reliably become a future sender?**

No company discloses this, including four that assert it.

UNDERDETERMINED FROM PUBLIC SOURCES, AND STRUCTURALLY SO

11 **Where is monetization strongest?**

Where revenue occurs inside the coordinated action rather than beside it. BeReal is the counterexample: strong coordination behavior, no transaction to attach to, no viable model.

STRONG INFERENCE

12 **Which fintech opportunities are buildable without becoming credit or collections?**

Pre-commitment collection against a defined event with an organizer. Ledger-only tracking. Not formalized informal debt.

STRONG INFERENCE

13 **What should familiar consumer brands build differently?**

Move the coordination that currently happens in the group chat inside the product, at the point money changes hands. Three of the eight brands examined return no viable mechanic.

WEAK SIGNAL — HYPOTHESES, NOT TESTS

14 **Where does the thesis break?**

Organic acquisition without any sendable mechanic (Duolingo). Required coordination that only worked because it was subsidized (Pinduoduo). The absence of any isolable natural experiment.

EVIDENCED

15 **What remains underdetermined?**

The entire causal core. See the open-questions register.

—

01 / THE DISTINCTION

Sharing is not the same as distribution.

The claim under test: the strongest distribution loops do not ask people to share — they make another person's participation necessary to complete the job. The test that makes this examinable is whether the mechanic sits beside the transaction or inside it. A share button, a referral code, and a comment feed sit beside; the customer can finish without them. A meeting invite, a group-purchase threshold, and an event RSVP sit inside; the customer cannot finish without them.

TIER 1 — LOAD-BEARING: YES **Required coordination** Without the second participant, the intended job cannot complete. Zoom · Partiful · Eventbrite · SquadTrip · Braid · DoorDash group ordering (narrow job definition)	TIER 2 — LOAD-BEARING: NO **Outcome-changing participation** The job can complete without the recipient, but participation changes price, access, inventory, or economics. Pinduoduo team purchase
TIER 3 — LOAD-BEARING: NO **Collaborative utility** The second person improves the result but is not required. Airbnb wishlists · Splitwise · Tricount · Zelle (group-expense context)	TIER 4 — LOAD-BEARING: NO **Social decoration** The social behavior sits beside the job. Amazon Spark · Amazon Posts · Amazon Live · Amazon Inspire · Venmo's global feed · BeReal · Duolingo

> The tiers describe architecture, not proven commercial performance. Nothing below should be read as evidence that Tier 1 outperforms the others — that question is open, and Section 18 explains why.

02 / METHODOLOGY IN ONE EXAMPLE

The job definition changes the answer.

Whether a participant is "required" depends on what job the researcher says the customer is completing. DoorDash group ordering makes the problem concrete.

DEFINE THE JOB AS	DEFINE THE JOB AS
“Everyone gets the meal they chose.”	**“Dinner arrives.”**
Recipient action is necessary — each person adds their own items.	One person can order for everyone. Recipient participation is not load-bearing.
→ TIER 1	→ NOT TIER 1

Both descriptions are available in the company’s own material. The tier follows the job definition, so the research recorded the functional job before assigning the tier and rejected definitions narrowed merely to manufacture Tier 1 cases.

Methodological note: Partiful survives this test more cleanly — no guests means no event, regardless of how narrowly or broadly the job is described.

03 / THE CORE MEASUREMENT PROBLEM

Exposure is not a loop.

A sendable architecture guarantees the first step of a chain. The thesis requires the whole chain. These are not the same thing, and the distance between them is where the evidence runs out.

1
Embedded Exposure
The product necessarily reaches another person.

↓

2
Recipient Action
They interact with the workflow.

↓

3
Recipient Acquisition
They become an activated user or customer.

↓

4 THE MISSING METRIC
Same-Workflow Sender Conversion
They later originate the same type of workflow.

↓

5
New Recipients
The process repeats.

WHAT COMPANIES DISCLOSE AT STAGE 4

Four companies whose growth narratives depend on propagation describe the loop publicly. None publishes the recipient-to-sender conversion rate.

Zoom	Participant → host	Claimed in the S-1; an adjacent metric (free-host-to-paid) quantified
Eventbrite	Attendee → creator	Claimed in the S-1; never quantified
Airbnb	Guest → host	Claimed in the S-1; never quantified

Duolingo	Word-of-mouth virality	Claimed in the S-1; no sendable mechanic and no propagation metric

Companies publish the conversion that bills. They do not publish the social step that precedes it.

04 / POSITIVE CASE

The closest thing to evidence still stops one step short.

Zoom

TIER 1

A meeting cannot happen alone.

Invitees can participate without first becoming paying users.

The S-1 explicitly describes the growth path as meeting participants becoming paid hosts and businesses becoming customers.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Zoom S-1/A, SEC

DATE
2019

SAMPLE / METHODOLOGY
Business section narrative

EXACT FINDING
Viral enthusiasm continues as meeting participants become paid hosts and businesses become customers.

WHAT IT PROVES
The company asserts the loop under securities liability.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Any magnitude.

CAVEAT
Qualitative.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Zoom S-1, SEC

DATE
2019

SAMPLE / METHODOLOGY
Product description

EXACT FINDING
Participants invited by a host can begin using the platform immediately; a participant wanting to host can subscribe.

WHAT IT PROVES
Low recipient friction by design.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
That friction caused the outcome.

55%

of Zoom's 344 customers contributing more than $100,000 of revenue in FY2019 started with at least one free host before subscribing.

EVIDENCED

WHAT IT PROVES
A measurable free-host-to-paid-customer path existed.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
That those free hosts first arrived as recipients of another host's invitation.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Zoom S-1/A, SEC

DATE
2019 (FY ended 31 Jan 2019)

SAMPLE / METHODOLOGY
Company customer accounting

EXACT FINDING
55% of 344 customers contributing more than $100,000 of revenue started with at least one free host before subscribing.

WHAT IT PROVES
A measurable path from free host to enterprise customer.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Participant-to-host conversion. A free host may have arrived directly, never having attended another host's meeting.

CAVEAT
The metric sits one step downstream of the propagation event.

This is the strongest quantified case in the research, and it still does not measure recipient-to-sender propagation. The metric sits one step downstream of the propagation event the thesis needs.

05 / POSITIVE CASE

The purest architecture has the weakest public measurement.

Partiful TIER 1

The invite is the useful product object — not marketing for it.

A host cannot accomplish the job without sending it.

Recipients can RSVP without downloading an app or creating an account.

Monetization sits inside the coordination: a delivery fee plus a percentage of order value via an Instacart partnership.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Company product documentation; Sacra profile

DATE
2025

EXACT FINDING
Event link shareable anywhere; guests RSVP without downloading an app or creating an account.

WHAT IT PROVES
A zero-friction recipient path.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
The conversion rate.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Sacra company profile

DATE
2025

EXACT FINDING
$5 delivery charge plus a percentage of order value via an Instacart partnership; revenue tied to event activity.

WHAT IT PROVES
Monetization proximity.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Revenue scale.

CAVEAT
Not a company disclosure.

REPORTED USAGE

~500,000 MAU, Q1 2025 avg

+400% year over year

WEAK SIGNAL — THIRD-PARTY ESTIMATE

CONFIDENCE
Weak signal

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Sensor Tower estimates via CNBC

DATE
Apr 2025

EXACT FINDING
Roughly 500,000 monthly active users averaged across Q1 2025, up 400% year over year; about 90% US.

WHAT IT PROVES
Directional growth.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Company-verified users.

CAVEAT
Third-party estimate; conflicts with the company's own “millions by end 2023” claim.

> The company has described usage in the millions while app trackers show substantially lower installed-user numbers. The gap is directionally consistent with something important: many people may touch a Partiful invite without becoming installed users.
>
> Exposure can be much larger than acquisition.
>
> STRONG INFERENCE — NOT PROOF

06 / THE CONFOUNDED CASE

The strongest commerce example cannot separate the mechanic from the subsidy.

Pinduoduo TIER 2

Small groups of buyers — typically two to five people, coordinating through WeChat — formed teams to unlock lower prices. This is not load-bearing under the strict definition, because a user could purchase alone. The second participant changes the economics.

> In correspondence with the SEC, Pinduoduo itself tied coupons, credits and discounts to the team-purchase model that encouraged users to share and recruit friends and family.
>
> EVIDENCED — PRIMARY REGULATORY CORRESPONDENCE

The coordination mechanic and the subsidy were one program.

THE ECONOMICS

Sales and marketing expense rose roughly 900% in 2018 to RMB13.4 billion.

S&M approached ~90% of revenue in FY2019.

The ratio fell materially as the company matured — profitability arrived as marketing spend contracted, not as the loop scaled.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced
ORIGINAL SOURCE
PDD response to SEC staff comment letter
DATE
2019
EXACT FINDING
Sales and marketing means include coupons, credits and discounts, driven by the team purchase model, which encourages users to share with friends and family and invite them to purchase together.
WHAT IT PROVES
The mechanic and the spend are inseparable in the company's own accounting.
WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
That the mechanic was ineffective.
CAVEAT
Primary regulatory correspondence.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced
ORIGINAL SOURCE
PDD Q4/FY2018 results; investor materials
DATE
2019–2023
EXACT FINDING
Sales and marketing rose about 900% in 2018 to RMB13.44bn (about $1.955bn); operating loss peaked at RMB10.8bn (2018); S&M/revenue ran near 90% in FY19, roughly 69% in FY20, 45% by Q3 2021, and around 30% by Q2 2023.
WHAT IT PROVES
Growth was bought at scale.
WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
That the mechanic added nothing.

WHAT THIS CASE PROVES
Team purchasing can create meaningful coordinated behavior at enormous scale.
WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
That coordination alone caused the growth, or that it would have worked without the subsidy.

The honest reading: required coordination worked here because it was subsidized — which makes Pinduoduo a poor template for any company without a comparable balance sheet.

07 / NEGATIVE CONTROL

Four attempts to put social beside the transaction.

Amazon Spark 2017 → 2019	Shoppable social feed.	Shut down two years after launch.
Amazon Posts LAUNCHED 2019	Brand-led social feed.	Underutilized.
Amazon Live LAUNCHED 2019	Livestream commerce.	Struggled for adoption.
Amazon Inspire DEC 2022 → FEB 2025	TikTok-style shopping feed inside the app.	Discontinued after roughly 26 months.

NEGATIVE CONTROL — EVIDENCED

Amazon had the traffic, catalog, transaction infrastructure, creators, and budget. Four successive attempts at social layers beside the shopping workflow failed to become durable distribution products. The pattern does not show that the shared architecture caused every failure — but it weakens the argument that adding social behavior around a single-player transaction is sufficient.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced
ORIGINAL SOURCE
TechCrunch; Forbes
DATE
2019, 2025
EXACT FINDING
Spark launched 2017, shut 2019; Posts underutilized; Amazon Live struggled for adoption; Inspire launched December 2022, discontinued February 2025 (about 26 months).
WHAT IT PROVES
Tier 4 mechanics failed with maximum resources.
WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Which specific factor caused each failure.

08 / NEGATIVE CONTROL

The thesis has an uncomfortable counterexample.

Duolingo

TIER 4 UNDER THIS FRAMEWORK

The job is learning a language. No second person is required. Leaderboards, streaks and social surfaces sit beside the learning job. Yet Duolingo's S-1 explicitly describes organic growth driven primarily by word of mouth rather than paid acquisition. EVIDENCED

The strongest organic-acquisition story in the case set does not have a sendable architecture.

That severs the inference from organic growth to recipient necessity: organic distribution can emerge from a remarkable single-player product. This does not disprove sendability. It does show that sendability is not necessary for organic growth — and that organic share cannot be used as evidence for sendability anywhere in this report.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Duolingo S-1, SEC

DATE
28 Jun 2021

SAMPLE / METHODOLOGY
Prospectus summary

EXACT FINDING
Grew organically, primarily relying on word-of-mouth virality rather than paid user acquisition.

WHAT IT PROVES
The claim was made.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Any rate, K-factor or invite metric.

09 / NEGATIVE CONTROL

Coordination without a transaction has a monetization problem.

BeReal

TIER 4

BEHAVIORAL DEMAND EVIDENCED
Rapid daily-active growth — roughly 50,000 in March 2021 to 20 million by end of 2022 — with half of users active six or more days per week.

COMMERCIAL REALITY EVIDENCED
Still pre-revenue years into the product, losing approximately $3 million a month approaching acquisition, on a declining user base.

THE MECHANISM STRONG INFERENCE
Brands including Chipotle and e.l.f. reportedly pulled back because the product lacked useful commercial linkage and sponsorship surfaces. There was nothing to buy, nothing to send, no transaction anywhere near the behavior.

BeReal demonstrated that coordinated social behavior can be valuable to users without creating an obvious business model.

Coordination appears commercially strongest when revenue sits inside or immediately adjacent to the coordinated action.

STRONG INFERENCE

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
Lead seed investor account; Voodoo acquisition release

DATE
2021–2024

EXACT FINDING
Roughly 50,000 daily actives in March 2021; 2 million by mid-2022; 20 million by end of 2022; half of users active six or more days per week.

WHAT IT PROVES
Behavioral demand.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Business viability.

CONFIDENCE

Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE

Voodoo CEO, Sifted interview

DATE

May 2025

EXACT FINDING

Had not started monetising; losing about $3 million a month; declining user base.

WHAT IT PROVES

Monetization was never attempted at scale.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

That it was impossible.

CONFIDENCE

Strong inference

ORIGINAL SOURCE

Fast Company

DATE

Jun 2024

EXACT FINDING

Chipotle and e.l.f. Beauty largely abandoned the app, put off by the lack of product linkage and sponsorship opportunities.

WHAT IT PROVES

The specific failure mechanism.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

That commerce would have fixed it.

10 / THE PATTERN THAT HOLDS

Put the money where the coordination happens.

REVENUE INSIDE THE ACTION	REVENUE OUTSIDE THE ACTION
Zoom host subscription	Splitwise subscription
Partiful event-linked commerce	BeReal advertising attempts
Ticketing fees	Social feeds around commerce
Marketplace take rates	
STRONGER COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE	WEAKER OR LESS DEMONSTRATED

Coordination as pure software monetizes weakly. Coordination adjacent to money changing hands monetizes well.

STRONG INFERENCE — NOT A CAUSAL LAW

11 / FINANCIAL SERVICES

Move payment before the debt.

76%	55%	47%	1 in 5
of Gen Z respondents who fronted money for a group trip or event said they were not fully repaid	said it created tension or damaged a relationship	went into debt covering it	canceled plans or muted a group chat to avoid the conversation

EVIDENCED — COMPANY RESEARCH

CONFIDENCE

Evidenced — company research

ORIGINAL SOURCE

Zelle research

DATE

2026

EXACT FINDING

76% of Gen Z respondents who fronted money for a group trip or event were not fully repaid; 55% reported tension or damage to a relationship; 47% went into debt covering it; one in five canceled plans or muted a group chat to avoid the conversation.

WHAT IT PROVES

The coordination problem is real and quantified.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

That a product solves it.

CAVEAT

Published by a company with an interest in the category.

AFTER THE OBLIGATION FORMS

Person A fronts money

↓

An informal debt exists

↓

Software records who owes whom

↓

Someone eventually has to collect

Splitwise · Tricount

BEFORE THE OBLIGATION FORMS

Trip or event defined

↓

Participants commit

↓

Participants pay

↓

Organizer executes

SquadTrip

The buildable opportunity appears to be collection before an obligation forms — not better software for formalizing debt afterward.

STRONG INFERENCE

Collection against a defined event works because the organizer functions like a merchant taking payment for a known deliverable. Money moves forward. Nobody extends credit and nobody collects a debt.

MODEL	EXAMPLE	CLASSIFICATION
Ledger without obligation	Splitwise, Tricount	Coordination problem. Buildable, weak monetization.
Pooled multi-user wallet	Braid	Unclear. One funded failure, cause unverified.
Pre-commitment collection	SquadTrip	Coordination problem. Buildable and monetizable.
Formalized informal debt	None surviving	Regulated obligation problem.

Braid — the caution

EVIDENCED ON OUTCOME · UNDERDETERMINED ON CAUSE

A pooled, FDIC-insured multi-user wallet with a branded debit card. $10 million raised from Index Ventures, Accel and others. Shut down after four years.

Regulation is a candidate explanation, not a proven one. Weak demand, poor frequency, bad acquisition economics and adequate incumbent workarounds remain competing explanations — one funded failure cannot distinguish among them.

CONFIDENCE
Evidenced

ORIGINAL SOURCE
TechCrunch

DATE
2023

EXACT FINDING
Braid offered an FDIC-insured multi-user pooled account with a branded debit card; raised $10 million from Index Ventures, Accel and others; shut down after four years.

WHAT IT PROVES
One funded failure exists.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE
Why it failed.

12 / A RESEARCH RESULT, NOT AN EMBARRASSMENT

Three attempted matched comparisons. Zero survived.

The brief required pairs selected on similarity of job, mechanic, transaction structure and evidence availability — before commercial outcome. Recording the failures rather than substituting favorable pairs is the point of the rule.

Amazon Inspire × Pinduoduo team purchase

FAILED

Job: Buy consumer goods online.

Intended variable: Social beside the transaction versus participation inside it.

> Selected partly because the outcomes diverge — which the brief's anti-cherry-picking rule forbids.

> Confounded by WeChat exclusivity, Tencent's roughly 16.9% stake, lower-tier city strategy, sub-$5 basket composition, and discounts up to 90%.

RETAINED AS AN ARCHITECTURAL ILLUSTRATION ONLY. NOT EVIDENCE FOR THE TIER HIERARCHY.

Zoom × Webex

FAILED

Job: Hold a video meeting with specific people.

Intended variable: Recipient friction — can the invitee act before converting.

> The variable is not cleanly present. Both offered comprehensive free plans supporting 40-minute meetings and 100 participants, and both permitted browser joining.

> Webex's weaker ratings are on setup (86%) and administration (87%) — host-side friction, on the wrong side of the transaction.

> Almost all comparative evidence is post-2020 and therefore post-pandemic; the relevant 2017–2019 evidence could not be established.

Eventbrite × any ticketing comparator

NOT RUNNABLE

Job: Sell tickets to a self-serve event.

> No quantified loop metric exists on either side, so there is nothing to compare.

Required-coordination products tend to win or lose on many attributes simultaneously, and the cases that would isolate coordination as the single variable are private, historical, or nonexistent. The failure to find a clean matched pair is itself evidence about the limits of the public record — and this page does not manufacture a comparison simply because a comparison would look better.

13 / READING THE RECORD CAREFULLY

The best architecture may have the worst data.

Three dimensions run through this case set, and they do not move together.

Strength of the mechanic	Strength of commercial evidence	Availability of disclosure
How structurally necessary the second participant is.	Whether acquisition and propagation economics are visible at all.	Whether the company files documents anyone can read.

Tier 1 architectures may disproportionately exist in younger private companies. Private companies publish the least acquisition and propagation data. Public companies produce more audited evidence but may be more likely to have mature Tier 2–4 mechanics.

> **Better disclosure is not better performance.**

The public record may systematically make optional mechanics look better evidenced than required ones. That is a warning about the data — not a claim that Tier 1 is secretly superior.

14 / THE CASE MATRIX

Eighteen classified cases.

Every case in the research, with the classification exactly as recorded. Negative controls, weak signals and experiments are shown, not hidden.

COMPANY	CATEGORY	FUNCTIONAL JOB	MECHANIC	OBJECT / ACTION	TIER	PLACEMENT	TYPE	COMMERCIAL EVIDENCE	CONFIDENCE	TRANSFERABLE LESSON
Zoom	Comms	Hold a meeting with specific people (S-1 product description)	Meeting invite, join without account	Meeting link → join, optionally become host	1	During	Positive	55% of 344 customers >$100k began with a free host (FY19)	Evidenced	Remove signup from the recipient path
Partiful	Events	Gather specific people at a time and place (product docs)	Invite page, RSVP without signup	Event link → RSVP, contribute, pay	1	Before	Positive	~500k MAU Q1'25, +400% YoY (third-party); transaction share via Instacart	Weak signal	The invite is the product, not marketing for it
Eventbrite	Ticketing	Sell tickets to an event (S-1)	Attendee exposure → creator conversion	Event/ticket link → buy ticket, later create events	1	During	Positive	Loop claimed in S-1, never quantified	Claimed, unquantified	Naming a loop is not measuring one
Pinduoduo	Commerce	Buy goods at group-unlocked prices (F-1)	Team purchase threshold	Product link + group → join group to unlock price	2	Before	Positive (confounded)	S&M ~90% of revenue FY19; company ties subsidy to mechanic in SEC letter	Evidenced (on confound)	Required coordination can be a subsidy delivery vehicle
SquadTrip	Travel / payments	Collect payment for a defined group trip (positioning)	Pre-commitment collection	Trip payment link → commit and pay share	1	Before	Experiment	Positioning only; no adoption data	Weak signal	Collect before the obligation forms
DoorDash group order	Food delivery	Everyone gets the meal they chose (narrow job)	Shared cart link	Cart link → add items; organizer still pays	**1 at narrow job · 3 at "dinner arrives"**	During	Experiment	Feature exists; no disclosed data	Weak signal	Job definition determines the tier
Airbnb	Travel	Book accommodation (S-1)	Wishlists, co-traveler invites	Listing/wishlist → view, comment; booking completes alone	3	Before	Experiment	91% direct/unpaid (denominator artifact); guest-to-host unquantified	Claimed, unquantified	Organic share is not a loop metric
Splitwise	Fintech	Track who owes whom (product docs)	Shared ledger	Expense entry → view, settle externally	3	After	Positive (weak monetization)	Free tier limited to 3 expenses/day; user backlash	Evidenced	Ledger-only avoids regulation and monetizes weakly
Tricount	Fintech	Track shared expenses (product docs)	Shared ledger	Expense entry → view, settle	3	After	Positive (weak monetization)	Free, ad-free, premium removed; bunq-owned	Evidenced	Competitor pressure caps ledger pricing
Zelle	Payments	Send money to a person (product)	P2P transfer + memo	Payment/request → pay	3	After	Experiment	76% of Gen Z fronting group money not fully repaid	Evidenced (on the problem)	The demand is documented; the product is not built
Braid	Fintech	Pool and spend money as a group (press)	Shared FDIC-insured wallet	Pool invite → contribute to pool	1	Before	**Negative control**	$10m raised (Index, Accel); shut down after 4 years	Evidenced (outcome only)	Tier 1 is not sufficient

COMPANY	CATEGORY	FUNCTIONAL JOB	MECHANIC	OBJECT / ACTION	TIER	PLACEMENT	TYPE	COMMERCIAL EVIDENCE	CONFIDENCE	TRANSFERABLE LESSON
Venmo (feed)	Payments	Pay a person back (product)	Public global feed	Nothing required → browse	**4**	After	**Negative control**	Feed removed Jul 2021 under external pressure; reaccelerated 2024 without it	Strong inference	Decorative social is removable
Amazon Spark	Commerce	Buy a product (product)	Shoppable social feed	Nothing required → browse	**4**	Beside	**Negative control**	Launched 2017, shut 2019	Evidenced	Maximum resources do not rescue Tier 4
Amazon Posts	Commerce	Buy a product	Brand feed	Nothing required → browse	**4**	Beside	**Negative control**	Underutilized	Evidenced	—
Amazon Live	Commerce	Buy a product	Livestream shopping	Nothing required → watch	**4**	Beside	**Negative control**	Struggled for adoption	Evidenced	—
Amazon Inspire	Commerce	Buy a product	TikTok-style feed	Nothing required → scroll	**4**	Beside	**Negative control**	Dec 2022 – Feb 2025, ~26 months	Evidenced	Four attempts, same architecture, same result
BeReal	Social	Share a daily moment with friends (product)	Simultaneous prompt	Post → view, post back	**4**	No transaction	**Negative control**	20m DAU peak; pre-revenue; ~$3m/month burn; distressed sale	Evidenced	Coordination without commerce has no model
Duolingo	Education	Learn a language (S-1)	Streaks, leaderboards	Nothing required → none	**4**	Beside	**Negative control**	Best organic acquisition in the set with zero recipient necessity	Evidenced	Severs the organic-growth-implies-sendability inference

Tier distribution: Tier 1 = 6, Tier 2 = 1, Tier 3 = 4, Tier 4 = 7. Type distribution: Positive = 6, Experiment = 4, Negative control = 8.

15 / FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

What the research says to build.

01

Test whether the second person is actually required

If the job completes without them, do not assume a social mechanic creates distribution. Amazon spent four attempts learning this.

02

Let the recipient act before converting

Zoom and Partiful — the two products with the cleanest architecture — both minimize recipient friction.

STRONG DESIGN INFERENCE, NOT EXPERIMENTALLY PROVEN

03

Put monetization inside the coordinated action

The closer the money sits to the workflow, the stronger the commercial evidence appears. BeReal is the cost of getting this wrong.

04

In financial services, coordinate before the obligation

Pre-commitment collection is buildable. Formalized informal debt is a lending and collections product.

05

Measure recipient-to-sender conversion yourself

This is the metric the public market does not provide. Nobody is benchmarked on it, so a company that measures it knows something its competitors do not.

06

Do not confuse exposure with growth

A recipient seeing the product is only the first step of the funnel.

What the evidence does not support: any claim that required coordination outperforms economically consequential participation. Tier 1 is structurally more defensible because usage necessarily produces exposure. Whether it converts better than Tier 2 is unknown.

16 / HYPOTHESES, NOT FINDINGS

Familiar brands: where the architecture could move.

Eight brands were examined, each with a current-feature existence check performed first. Three returned no viable mechanic — which was the point of the kill criterion. Requiring a mechanic per brand manufactures one.

Ticketmaster
HYPOTHETICAL — WEAK SIGNAL

Ticketmaster hasn't built this. Imagine:

A temporary block of seats is held while each friend claims and pays for their own seat.

THE REAL JOB
Get a specific group into specific seats together.

COORDINATION TODAY
Happens in the group chat — one person usually ends up fronting the full order.

WHAT THE RECIPIENT DOES
Claims and pays for their own seat inside the hold window.

WHY THE RECIPIENT IS LOAD-BEARING
The transaction cannot close until the group acts.

BARRIERS
Inventory-hold economics; scalping and abuse controls.

DoorDash
HYPOTHETICAL — WEAK SIGNAL

DoorDash already has group ordering. The hypothetical gap is payment.

Each participant commits and takes payment responsibility before the organizer fronts the bill.

WHAT EXISTS
Shared cart ordering is a live feature — shared ordering is not the gap.

THE GAP
One person still carries the bill and collects informally afterward.

TIER STATUS
Qualifies as Tier 1 only under the narrower job definition — “everyone gets the meal they chose.”

Airbnb
HYPOTHETICAL — WEAK SIGNAL

Airbnb hasn't built this exact mechanic. Imagine:

The booking confirms only after required travelers approve dates and commit their portion.

WHY IT COULD BE LOAD-BEARING
The booking does not exist until the group commits.

BARRIERS
Cancellation liability; host-side certainty; payment complexity.

NOTHING TO BUILD

Spotify

No viable sendable mechanic. Listening remains fundamentally single-player; Blend and Jam already provide collaboration.

Netflix

No viable sendable mechanic. Profiles already handle the household layer.

Zillow

No viable sendable mechanic under the strict test. A shared decision room could improve the buying process, but the second person's participation is not necessary to complete the purchase.

> **Collaboration is not coordination.**

17 / THE HONEST LEDGER

Where the Sendable Product thesis breaks.

01	**Organic acquisition can happen without sendability.**	Duolingo — Tier 4, the best organic acquisition numbers in the set.
02	**Coordination can require massive subsidy.**	Pinduoduo — the mechanic and the subsidy are inseparable by the company's own account to the SEC.
03	**Required coordination is not sufficient.**	Braid — a funded, well-backed Tier 1 product that did not survive four years.
04	**The causal comparison cannot be isolated.**	Three matched pairs attempted; zero survived.
05	**The key propagation metric is not public.**	Four claimed loops; zero direct recipient-to-sender metrics.
06	**Channel percentages can lie through the denominator.**	Airbnb's 91% unpaid share rose partly because paid spend was cut by about $1.08bn; dark-social share figures move as referral bases shrink.

These do not kill the architecture. They kill the inflated version of the thesis.

18 / THE UNDERDETERMINED REGISTER

Eight questions the public record cannot answer.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the difference between embedded exposure and a compounding loop — between an interesting product property and a growth advantage. It is the headline empirical question of the thesis.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

Four companies assert the loop in SEC filings: Eventbrite (attendees becoming creators), Airbnb (guests becoming hosts), Duolingo (word-of-mouth virality), Zoom (participants becoming paid hosts). One attaches a number, and it measures free-host-to-paid-customer rather than participant-to-host.

WHAT IS MISSING

Participant-to-host conversion rate. Attendee-to-creator rate. Guest-to-host rate. Invite acceptance by recipient type.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

A company voluntarily disclosing recipient-to-sender conversion, or an S-1 from a company whose entire growth claim depends on it and whose underwriters require the number. Private-company data via direct operator interview would also resolve it.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Instrument it internally. No competitor is benchmarked on it, so a company that measures it holds information the market does not price.

WHY IT MATTERS

It is the closest thing to a natural experiment on whether a decorative social layer carries commercial weight.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

Feed removed 20 July 2021. TPV grew 44% in FY21 and 7% in FY22, with Q4 2022 at 3% against Q4 2021 at 29%. Venmo exited Q4 2024 at 10% growth, accelerating 2 points, on monetized monthly actives up 24%.

WHAT IS MISSING

Any Venmo-specific cohort or engagement series isolating the change. PayPal reports Venmo TPV and little else.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

Internal cohort data, or a holdout the company never ran.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

The informative fact is not the volume series. It is that no one at the company defended the feed when regulators and journalists pressed. Treat that as the signal.

WHY IT MATTERS

Braid is the only funded attempt at the pooled multi-user consumer wallet — the product the Zelle data appears to imply. Its failure mode determines whether the category is a regulatory dead end or an execution problem.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

FDIC-insured multi-user account for pooling and spending, branded debit card, $10 million raised from Index Ventures, Accel and others, shut down after four years.

WHAT IS MISSING

A verified post-mortem. No founder account was located within this research.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

The founder's own written account, which likely exists and was not surfaced.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Do not cite Braid as proof that pooled wallets are regulatorily impossible. Cite it as proof that a funded, well-backed attempt did not survive four years.

WHY IT MATTERS

It is the tier hierarchy's only empirical content. Without it, the hierarchy is a taxonomy.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

One quantified Tier 1 case (Zoom, one step downstream). One Tier 2 case whose economics are inseparable from subsidy (Pinduoduo). No case in either tier with clean, comparable acquisition data.

WHAT IS MISSING

Any matched comparison. All three attempted pairs failed.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

A within-company experiment: the same product, same market, coordination requirement toggled. Companies run these and do not publish them.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Tier 1 is structurally more defensible because usage necessarily produces exposure. Do not claim it converts better.

WHY IT MATTERS

“Let the recipient act before converting” is the most actionable design instruction in the report and the least tested.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

Zoom and Partiful both describe no-signup recipient action as central, and both grew fast. That is two positive cases with no counterfactual.

WHAT IS MISSING

A comparison where the job, era and market are held constant and only recipient friction varies. Zoom against Webex was built to be this and collapsed because both permitted browser joining on comparable free tiers.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

Archived help documentation, app version histories and Wayback snapshots from 2017 to 2019 establishing what recipient friction actually was at the time. This was specified in the brief and not executed.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Act on it anyway. The cost of removing recipient signup is low and the mechanism is plausible even unproven.

WHY IT MATTERS

It determines whether "build the collection layer" is a product recommendation or an unbuildable one.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

Every surviving product avoids formalizing the obligation. Splitwise and Tricount hold no money. SquadTrip collects forward against a defined event. Braid pooled and died.

WHAT IS MISSING

Evidence that regulatory constraint actually suppressed supply, as distinct from being one available explanation. No company was found stating that credit or collections exposure stopped them building.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

Operator interviews at companies that considered and abandoned the product, or regulatory correspondence showing the boundary being enforced.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Treat the credit-and-collections boundary as a real design constraint, not as an explanation for market structure.

WHY IT MATTERS

It determines whether any of this represents a behavioral change.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

RadiumOne's 2014 figures (69% global, 59% North America) from a vendor selling dark-social tracking. SparkToro's 2023 experiment showing public TikTok traffic recorded as direct.

WHAT IS MISSING

A single methodology applied across both periods.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

Re-running the 2014 Po.st-style instrumentation today, which no vendor currently offers.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Do not present any current dark-social percentage as evidence of a behavioral trend.

WHY IT MATTERS

The report contains product hypotheses and readers will treat them as recommendations.

EVIDENCE THAT EXISTS

None. These are structured hypotheses with existence checks performed, not tests.

WHAT IS MISSING

Everything downstream of the idea.

WHAT WOULD RESOLVE IT

Building and measuring them.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Label them as hypotheses in any downstream use, individually rather than under a blanket disclaimer, and note that three of eight brands examined returned no viable mechanic.

Zero of the eight questions were resolved. Two are the causal core of the thesis – and both appear structurally unobservable from public sources.

19 / A DECISION FRAMEWORK

Seven questions before building anything social.

01 **Is the real-world job multi-person?**

No → Keep it single-player.

Yes ↓

02 **Is another participant necessary to complete the intended job?**

No → Classify Tier 2–4 before proceeding.

Yes ↓

03 **Does that coordination already happen outside the product?**

No → Weak candidate.

Yes ↓

04 **Can the recipient act immediately without a heavy conversion step?**

No → Recipient-friction risk.

Yes ↓

05 **Does the recipient receive immediate utility?**

No → Likely referral or social decoration.

Yes ↓

06 **Is money close to the coordinated action?**

No → Monetization may be weak.

Yes ↓

07 **Can the recipient later originate the same workflow?**

Unknown → Instrument it.

Yes → Measured yes — a possible compounding loop.

BUILD INTO THE WORKFLOW	TEST AND MEASURE	KEEP IT SINGLE-PLAYER

METHODOLOGY / EVIDENCE QUALITY

Claims we deliberately did not use.

Each of these circulates widely. Each failed a source check. They are recorded here so the exclusion is visible.

“84% of all online sharing is dark social”

DESIGNRUSH (ATTRIBUTED TO STATISTA); HOOTSUITE (ATTRIBUTED TO PAST STUDIES)

Appears to be RadiumOne's 2016 mobile-only figure with the year, source and device restriction stripped.

“58% of all web traffic is dark social”

SAFFRON EDGE (ATTRIBUTED TO HUBSPOT)

No traceable original.

“41% of social interactions occur via private channels”

MEDIUM (ATTRIBUTED TO “TEKREVOL 2025”)

Aggregator citing aggregator.

“77% of Gen Z use privacy tools to limit visibility”

MEDIUM (ATTRIBUTED TO “PEW RESEARCH 2025”)

No corresponding Pew publication located. Likely false attribution.

“BeReal had 40m MAU at acquisition”

VOODOO ACQUISITION RELEASE, WIDELY REPEATED

Acquirer figure in an earnout-structured deal; trackers show 23m (Jan 2024) and 16m (end 2024).

“Airbnb's 91% proves organic acquisition strength”

WIDELY REPEATED IN MARKETING COMMENTARY

True but incomplete: the share moved from 77% partly because paid spend was cut by about $1.08bn.

CONCLUSION

The architecture survived. The growth claim did not.

Sendability is real. The strict test separates products meaningfully, produces useful product-design guidance, and explains why a meeting invite is structurally different from a share button.

But the evidence stops before the most commercially important claim. The metric that would prove a true distribution loop is whether recipients later become senders of the same workflow. No company in the public evidence base publishes it.

So the useful conclusion is narrower: another person's participation is a defensible product architecture. It guarantees exposure. It may create acquisition. Under the right conditions it may compound into distribution. But the public evidence does not establish that it produces superior economics.

The product question is not "How do we make this social?" It is "Is there another person who already has to do something for this job to complete?"

Methodology and limitations

ORIGINAL TARGET

40–60 candidates; 20–30 final classified cases; 3–4 matched pairs selected before outcomes were known.

COMPLETED

18 classified cases; 3 matched pairs attempted; 0 survived the selection rule. The research did not fill the shortfall with weaker cases.

EVIDENCE LABELS

EVIDENCED — filing, documentation, or on-record statement. STRONG INFERENCE — conclusion drawn across cases, labeled as such. WEAK SIGNAL — thin or third-party evidence, directional only. UNDERDETERMINED — the public record cannot answer the question.

COVERAGE GAPS

Categories in the brief with no case researched: insurance; real estate (beyond hypothesis testing); fitness; gaming; media; productivity; childcare; healthcare; transportation; marketplaces beyond commerce; creator products.

KNOWN WEAKNESSES

> Quiet-death research using archived help centers, changelogs and Wayback histories was specified in the brief but was not completed. The negative-control set is therefore biased toward highly visible public-company failures — Amazon appears four times in eight negative controls.

> Almost all comparative product evidence post-dates 2020. The pandemic is the largest confounder in the case set, and the relevant pre-pandemic window (2017–2019) could not be reconstructed from public sources.

> The two questions that form the causal core of the thesis — whether recipients become senders, and whether Tier 1 outperforms Tier 2 — appear structurally unobservable from public sources, not merely unresearched.

Facing a product or distribution problem that has happened before?

DISCUSS A PRODUCT PROBLEM

Independent product-architecture research. Compiled from public sources, August 2026.