

CUSTOMER PROFILING IN ART MUSEUMS

Case Oulu Museum of Art

Jääskeläinen, Anni

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Tekijä	Anni Jääskeläinen	Vuosi	2021
Ohjaaja	Ulla Kangasniemi & Esa Posio		
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Opinnäytetyössä profiloitiin Oulun taidemuseon asiakkaita käyttäen kvalitatiivista sisällönanalyysia ja asiakaskyselyä. Tavoitteena oli luoda asiakasprofiilit taidemuseon asiakkaista ja luotujen profiilien perusteella pohtia sopivia palveluiden kehityskohteita. Opinnäytetyön tuloksena syntyi yksi Suomen ensimmäisistä julkisista museoasiakkaiden profiloinneista, joka keskittyy vain yhteen museokohteeseen. Perinteisesti museoilla on yksi maailman tyytyväisimmistä asiakaskunnista.

Museot ovat muuttuneet ajan saatossa, mutta tyypillinen asiakaskunta on Suomessa pysynyt samana ainakin 80-luvulta lähtien. Odotukset museoelämäyksenä ovat kuitenkin muuttuneet modernin kulutuskäyttäytymisen mukaisiksi. Sekä paikalliset että matkailijat arvostavat taidetta samankaltaisista syistä. Taide ei ole enää vain rikkaiden harrastus, vaan taidemuseot ovat avautuneet kaikille yhteiskuntaluokille. Modernin teknologian avulla palvelut voidaan tehdä saavutettaviksi ja nautittaviksi yhä useammalle ihmisryhmälle. Taidemuseoita pidetään kuitenkin yhä hienostuneina ja vanhanaikaisina instituutioina, minkä vuoksi uusiin ratkaisuihin saatetaan suhtautua varautuneesti.

Tutkimuksen tuloksena luotiin kaksi asiakasprofiilia, jotka ovat demografisesti samankaltaiset, mutta asiakkaiden elämäntilanteet ja heidän kohtaamansa esteet museokäynnille ovat erilaiset. Voidaankin sanoa, että Oulun taidemuseon kävijät ovat pääosin yli 40-vuotiaita naisia, joilla on samanlainen arvoperusta. Palvelukehitys keskittyy ratkaisemaan kävijäprofiilien esteitä ja pohtii myös tulevaisuuden mahdollisuuksia esimerkiksi digitalisaation kautta. Digitaalisiin palveluihin suhtaudutaan kuitenkin vielä varautuneesti kävijöiden keskuudessa. Suurin osa kävijöiden toiveista liittyykin perusasioihin, kuten aukioloajoissa joustamiseen ja tiheämmin vaihtuviin taidenäyttelyihin.

Avainsanat kulttuurimatkailu, kotimaanmatkailu, taidemuseot, profilointi, palvelumuotoilu

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Author	Anni Jääskeläinen	Year	2021
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The object of the thesis was to construct a profile or profiles of the typical customers of the Oulu Museum of Art. The thesis was commissioned by the Museum and Science Centre Luuppi, located in Oulu, Finland. This thesis contains one of the first public art museum customer profiles made in Finland. Traditionally, museums have enjoyed one of the world's most satisfied and loyal customer bases. While the museums have changed with the passing of time, their customer base has stayed relatively the same at least since the 80s. However, the expectations set for a museum experience have shifted towards modern-day consumption. Art is no longer a hobby for only the elite and people from all walks of life are invited to art museums. Modern technology is making its way into museums, offering an opportunity to better serve all the different customers. However, art museums still carry an air of a traditional and old-fashioned institution, which might play a part in making both customers and employees wary of modern digital solutions.

In this thesis, the customers of the Oulu Museum of Art are profiled through the means of a qualitative content analysis and a customer survey. The content analysis was conducted from past ticket sales while the customer survey was implemented as an online survey, spread primarily through social media. The theoretical background of the research was gathered from modern-day sources, from both general cultural tourism research and studies meant to profile customers of other art museums. While cultural tourism has grown during recent years, this growth was not visible in the amount of art museum research available.

As a result of the research, two customer profiles for the Oulu Museum of Art were made. While the demographics of the two sample customers are the same, they lead different lives and face different obstacles before and during art museum visits. They however share the same values. The service development suggestions are made based on the discovered customer profiles and the issues that arose during the research, especially the existing obstacles. The customers are still reserved towards digital services but they are not completely out of the question either. Most of the developments desired by the customers themselves were rather basic, such as extended opening times or new exhibitions.

Key words cultural tourism, domestic tourism, art museums, profiling, service design

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SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Augmented Reality
DMA	Dallas Museum of Art
FMA	Finnish Museums Association

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses customer profiling in art museums in the form of a case study. The objectives of the study are to identify and profile visitors in the Oulu Museum of Art and make future service development suggestions based on the findings. The study is interesting as most art museums have not profiled their customers before but based their understanding of their customers on assumptions and experience instead of facts (Uusitalo 2008a, 15). Thus, this thesis presents one of the first art museum customer profiles in Finland.

The thesis was commissioned by Museum and Science Centre Luuppi, located in Oulu. Luuppi has nine different attractions related to culture, history, art and science. (Luuppi 2021a.) Due to the number of destinations, the thesis discusses only one of them. Researching the customer base is important to the commissioner's future developments. The art museum was chosen to be studied due to the fact that it has most pre-gathered data available and some comparable studies of other art museums have been made, providing insight into what type of customers art museums in general have. In addition, the author has personal interest in the field of cultural tourism and work experience from the field, which led to the topic choice.

The study concerns the fields of domestic tourism, museum tourism and cultural tourism. It examines the field of arts and culture through the lens of tourism theories. The thesis objectives are pursued by the means of qualitative content analysis, customer survey and researching literature related to the usual habits and preferences of art museum customers in general.

2 MUSEUM AND SCIENCE CENTRE LUUPPI

The commissioner of the thesis, Museum and Science Centre Luuppi, is located in Oulu, Finland. Luuppi has nine different attractions related to different fields of culture, namely history, art and science. The thesis concerns only one of their attractions, the Oulu Museum of Art. The art museum chosen as the object of research was opened in 1963 and it specialises mostly in modern art, and art produced in Oulu and Northern Ostrobothnia. (Luuppi 2021a.)

Luuppi has made it their mission to preserve and share northern stories through their attractions. Some of the attractions are open all-year round, but smaller destinations are open only during the summer season. In addition to the attractions, Luuppi offers services for different audiences, and specialized expert services, such as conservation guidance. There are also shops and cafes attached to some of the attraction, as well as a variety of events. It is fair to say that Luuppi has a wide variety of services to offer and recently Luuppi's visitor numbers have risen across all destinations, peaking in year 2019 with over 200 000 visitors. (Luuppi 2021a.) Illustration of the development across recent years can be seen in Figure 2.

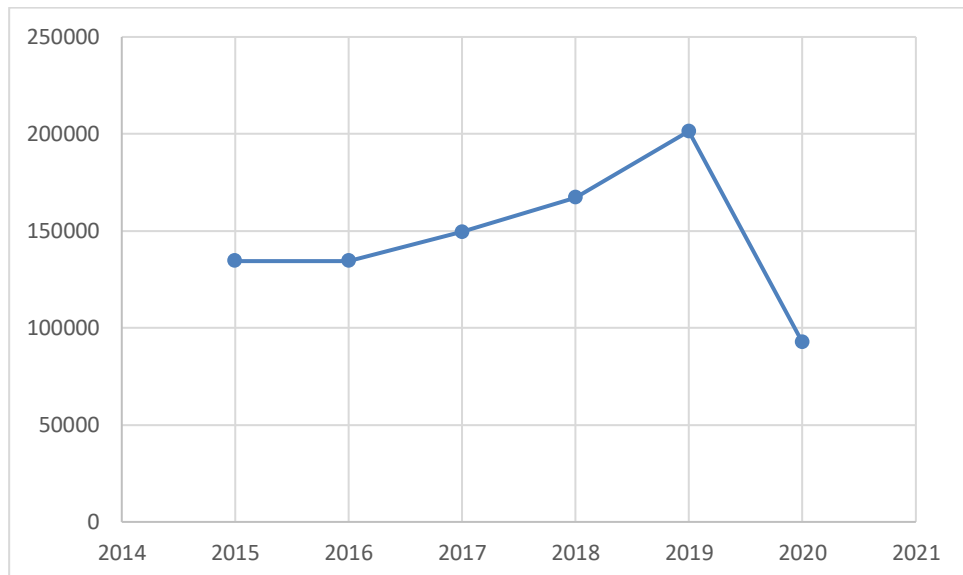


Figure 2. Development of Luuppi's Visitor Count Across Years 2015–2020 (Luuppi 2021a)

As the commissioner of the thesis Luuppi hopes to gain insight into the customer base of the Oulu Museum of Art to develop their services to further satisfy the customers and to attract new visitors. With rebranding in sight, having to change many other things presents a chance to make a bigger overhaul at the same time if needed. (Häll & Hirvonen 2021.) Visitor statistics and ticket sales reports were provided as research material by Luuppi.

3 CUSTOMERS AND SERVICES IN ART MUSEUMS

3.1 Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour concerns all activities customers do in relation to satisfying their wants and needs through commercial activities, including the actions that lead to consumption and those that take place after consumption. Generally, the process of consumer behaviour is not separated into phases, but the process is seen as a continuous journey that cannot be separated. (Cohen, Prayag & Moital 2014, 872–873.)

In Finland, consumers' main decisive factor for a purchase is quality, followed by the origin of the product and brand image. Finns perceive quality through the aspects of customer service and buying experience which both can affect also the brand image. (Banco Santander 2021.) This is not to be confused with connoisseur-ism but rather in case of art museums, art has become an activity for middle class, artists, students and segments that previously in history have been unable to attend art exhibitions. Wider audiences seek to admire high-quality art and experiences, and digitalization has made reaching new markets easier than ever before. These days, museums focus on acquiring new audience over acquiring new art. (Uusitalo 2008a, 7–8; Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 157.) Consuming art in art museums has primarily symbolic value (Uusitalo 2008b, 133–134). All these new audiences and customer groups behave and consume differently but are united in purpose: admiring art.

Consumer behaviour in art museums has started to shift from seeking to be educated and learning something new towards typical modern-day consumption, where art museums and their exhibitions are products or services to be consumed (Uusitalo 2008a, 17). Back in the 1950s, after World War II, the number of museums and exhibitions grew rapidly because of post-war nationalism. During that time, the audience's interest was in the technique of how a piece of art or an item had been produced, as well as the visual appeal of the item. Not much attention to the stories behind the museum items has been paid until recently, around 40–50 years ago. (Koivunen 2015.) This does not mean that modern audiences are no longer interested in art techniques but that their

interest has expanded to new fields. These days, a majority of art consumers seek for experiences and stories instead of passive museum tours and art museums have no other choices than to adapt or lose their touch with their customers. (Uusitalo 2008a, 17–19; Taivassalo & Levä 2012, 15.)

3.2 Customer Profiling and Segmentation

To successfully serve customers, it is vital to know who those customers are. Profiling customers and understanding what market segments a company's primary target groups are, are essential factors for both customer satisfaction and successful business strategy. (Parsell, Wang & Kapoor 2014, 1; Kim, Jung, Suh & Hwang 2006, 106.) Briefly, the aim of customer profiling is to find out the most typical customer of a business, and segmentation separates these typical customers into smaller groups united by chosen characteristics.

The importance of customer segmentation was summarized by Dibb and Simkin:

Market segmentation is an analytical process driven by customer needs, which helps maximize resources, emphasizes business strengths over competitors, and enables more effective and better targeted marketing programs to be developed (Dibb & Simkin 2008, 1).

In practice, customer segmentation consists of grouping individual visitors with similar service and product needs into bigger groups. Traditional segmentation has focused on demographic traits but recently value and lifestyle-based segmentation has gained popularity. (Parsell, Wang & Kapoor 2014, 1.) Additionally, businesses may opt for customer value segmentation in which customers are segmented based on the value they have for a business – briefly put, whether the customer is profitable for a business to retain or not (Kim, Jung, Suh & Hwang 2006, 101). However, values go both ways, and the value customers seek from the business is measured in benefit segmentation.

Demographical segmentation is seen as the easiest way to segment customers, as the values customers have are often hard to measure, but simply assuming customers of certain age or gender all have the same wants or needs does not tell the whole truth. Especially in art museums the customer experience is subjective and reliant on the customer's relation to art. Age and gender cannot

accurately predict one's interest in art or what type of art they prefer. (Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 159.)

Customer segmentation theories can also be applied to create wide yet descriptive segments through psychographic or behavioural segmentation (Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 159). In 2008, Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) conducted a qualitative interview research to segment their visitors depending on the level of engagement with art. The final visitor clusters of the study were called Tentative Observers, Curious Participants, Discerning Independents and Committed Enthusiasts. All the clusters have their own distinctive traits and the information gained through the study helps the DMA staff to better understand the visitors and what sort of services and experiences they need. (DMA 2008, 1–6.) A similar study was conducted in Finland based on tourists' motives for travelling to Finland. Six different segments were identified and for example customer needs, behaviour and social situation were analysed to gain results. (Nepa 2017.) These methods can help understand customers' motivations better than the demographic approach (Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 159).

Specifically in art museums, organized customer profiling and segmentation is rare and museums often measure their success in terms of complete audience attendance instead of measuring the attendance of specific customer segments or target groups (Uusitalo 2008a, 15). Traditionally, museums tend to avoid activities that are perceived as too commercial, such as targeted marketing, segmentation and branding, but during recent years this has changed and museums are starting to see also the positive aspects of the aforementioned activities – audience engagement, content and service development, and increased customer satisfaction. (Uusitalo 2008a, 16; Pusa & Uusitalo 2014.) The main obstacle museums have faced is the fear of compromising on the democratization of art, but with the right type of customer segmentation that focuses on customers' values and appreciation of art, the principle of democratization will not be endangered (Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 160).

As art is a subjective form of entertainment, it can be argued that demographics-based segmentation is not enough for comprehensively profiling art museum visitors. It is suggested for museums to better understand whether their audience

is local, domestic or international. Otherwise, demographic segmentation makes no sense from the point of the core value arts museums try to deliver. Art can be enjoyed by everyone regardless of their socioeconomic background, age, gender or other traits that an individual does not have much power over. The exception to this are exhibitions and activities aimed mainly at children who cannot see art that is placed too high and appreciate exhibitions adults do not enjoy as much, as well as need special guidance and materials. (Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 157–159.) That being said, it is important to consider the demographic traits of the customers to better serve special groups such as children, elderly and foreigners, as long as the demographic traits are not allowed to lead the research (Hollway & Jefferson 2000, 10–15).

There are countless different ways to profile customers but arguably the ones with most value to art museums are the methods that chart customers' values, lifestyle and the benefit they seek from art museums. Museums have not made much effort towards profiling their customers but there are benefits to be gained for both the museums and their audience. Encouraging museums to recognise the importance of profiling their customers is recommended if the whole museum industry wishes to stay in touch with their visitors.

3.3 Service Development

Society is progressing from product-centred economy towards service-centred economy or even experience economy. It has become increasingly important to continuously develop and improve services to satisfy customer needs and keep up with competition. Service development can happen both in front and back offices, in on-site services or contacting customer online. (Jovanovic, Raja, Visnjic & Wiengarten 2019, 1–2.) Regardless of where the development happens, the first step in service development is to understand the customers' needs and wants and how to meet them (Du Cros & McKercher 2014, 156, as cited in Ahonen 2019, 23).

As previously said in Chapter 2.1.1., art museum customers have recently started to seek stories and experiences instead of passive art museum tours. This factor is important to note when developing new services in art museums. At the same

time other competitors for customers' leisure time have risen and rapidly grown, such as movie theatres and streaming services like Netflix. Anyone can share their art online on websites such as DeviantArt or Pinterest, and art museums must compete against services that their audience can access from their own homes as well as other museums even on national scale. Additionally, museums must compete against each other for audience, but they do have an option of co-competition, for example through a combined admission ticket. Non-profit art museums often perceive that they have no competitors, but this is not the case. (Uusitalo 2008a, 17.)

Art museums are concerned that the increased experience and story elements hinder the core product they are trying to deliver: the visual art itself (Uusitalo 2008a, 18). Balancing between new trends and art museum's mission is challenging yet important to remember in service development to deliver value that is both meaningful and true to the original intention of art museums. Museums do not need to give up on their core products but rather devise new ways to experience art.

Increasing number of customers come to museums to experience and enjoy. Allowing customers to touch, listen and feel the exhibitions through multisensory stimuli are realistic and recommended next steps to take when developing museum services. However, museum visitors in general are already some of the most satisfied customer groups in Finland and the biggest improvements could be made regarding the location and promotion of museums. (Taivassalo & Levä 2012, 23–25.) Virtual and digital services are also making their way to the world of museums, and they can be used to enhance an existing museum experience or to create something entirely new (Sylaiou, Mania, Karoulis & White 2010, 1–2). The near-future customers are predicted to be increasingly independent to the point of directing their own museum tours, a need to which digital developments can answer to (Gensler 2015).

Service development is a process that starts from generating ideas and ends in implementing the service and controlling it. The process starts by planning the new development, generating ideas, and analysing the current situation of the business and its' customers. It is also possible that stakeholders or management

have placed requirements on new services and taking them into account already at the planning phase prevents unrequired services from being developed. (Torney, Kuntzky & Herrmann 2009, 3.) The different phases of service development are shown in Figure 1.

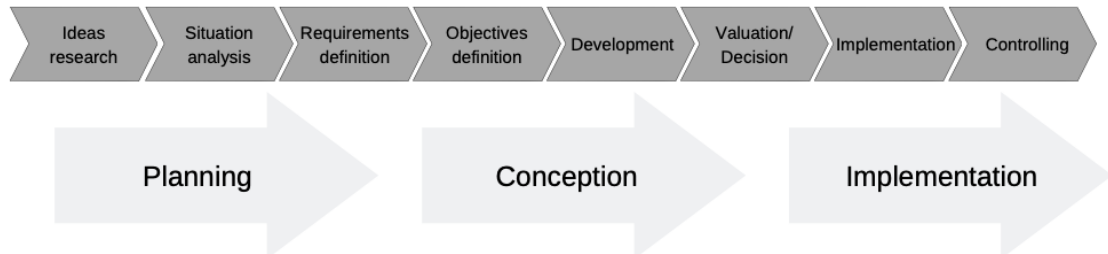


Figure 1. Service Design Process (Torney, Kuntzky & Herrmann 2009, 3–4)

The second phase, conception, starts by setting the detailed objectives the service development. This phase defines the details of the service such as the target group and describes the format and quality of the service. It might also propose multiple different service ideas that answer same problems, but likely results into only one implemented service to prevent the services from competing with each other. (Torney, Kuntzky & Herrmann 2009, 3.)

Finally, the service is implemented. Before the service is made available for the public it should be prototyped and tested to ensure it works as intended and changes are easier to make when the service is not already running. Once implemented and made available for the audience it is vital to maintain control of the service and measure its success, as well as make adjustments based on feedback and experience. It is also possible that the end product does not fulfil the set requirements and objectives which results in having to return to the earlier stages of the service design process and adjust the service or develop something completely different. (Torney, Kuntzky & Herrmann 2009, 3.)

In this thesis the service design process is taken only to the planning phase and thus it makes only service development suggestions based on findings from the customer survey. The service design process described serves as a model to better concretise the nature of service design process and the multiple steps it

takes to develop a new service. It also shows what can be done already at the planning phase and what should be done before taking any further steps.

4 CULTURAL AND MUSEUM TOURISM

4.1 Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism directed towards cultural attractions and distinctive traits that differ from the everyday experiences of the tourist. Cultural tourism can be directed to both micro and macro level destinations, starting from singular museums or historical sites and ending in national level experience. Cultural tourism also involves food and drinks, clothes, religion and many more aspects. While often associated with international tourism, cultural tourism happens also in domestic level. (Stylianou-Lambert 2011.)

UNWTO (2021) defines cultural tourism as:

A type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. (UNWTO 2021.)

The definition by UNWTO is wide yet it fully encompasses the complex nature of cultural tourism that reaches the roots of a nation and its people. Modern traditions or works of art have sprung from cultural background, whether meant to portray the history of a nation or criticize societal problems or made purely for aesthetical value – what we perceive as aesthetically pleasing is also influenced by our culture. Many tourism trips are motivated by other reasons than culture, but cultural immersion is an inevitable part of all holidays as being in contact with locals and their traditions is bound to happen. (Stainton 2020.)

Globally, Finland is not considered to be a cultural tourism destination, even less as a museum or art museum destination even if cultural tourism is one of the main motivators of international travellers. While recognised as a rapidly growing international tourism destination, Finland's cultural offerings are not well known. (Business Finland 2021.) Promoting cultural tourism is not a new phenomenon in

Finland but productizing culture to the means of tourism in a national level is (FMA 2013). However, studies have found that even when a tourism trip has not been motivated by cultural tourism motivators, half of the tourists still end up using culture services during their holiday (Business Finland 2021).

Cultural tourism has considerable impact. The rise of culture-motivated tourism has encouraged nations and institutions to preserve objects and traditions of cultural importance as they can become attractions capable of drawing tourists into the country. Increased tourism activities lead into economic benefits in the form of new jobs, increased revenue, money flow to supporting businesses such as restaurants, stores and hotels, and much more. On the other hand, overly increased tourism flow can result into overtourism and attract copycats or even exploitation of native cultures. The negative sides of cultural tourism can result to social change and even resentment towards rich tourists if left unchecked. (Stainton 2020.) In Finland, the native Sámi culture has been an object of cultural exploitation and while a shift towards responsible cultural tourism has taken place, there are still those who see no problem in using symbols and traditions belonging to other cultures (Sámediggi 2021). The construction of Sámi museum Siida is a prime example of a step taken towards sustainable cultural tourism in Finland (Siida 2021).

4.2 Museum Tourism

Museum tourism is a subtype of cultural tourism aimed towards visiting museums. Renowned museums are often some of the top attractions of their countries, and tourists deem them worth visiting even when coming from afar. However, most museums are unknown on international scale and their main customer groups consist of domestic and local audiences. (Stylianou-Lambert 2011.)

There are different fields museums focus on, such as art, culture, science, and heritage. Because of the large selection of different museums, it is impossible to define a clear motivator for all museum visits or construct a persona for “the” museum tourist. (Stylianou-Lambert 2011.) In 2019 there were 7,6 million museum visits in Finland (FMA 2020a). There are 153 professionally maintained Finnish museums, half of which are specialised in cultural heritage, followed by

special museums and art museums. Special museums consist of museums that have exhibitions relating to particular topics, such as games, toys or history of spying. (FMA 2020b.)

When visiting a museum, visitors do not perceive the exhibitions primarily through a cultural lens but through professional and art-loving values. It seems that museum visits are not primarily motivated by a need to experience another culture. In addition, those who do not visit museums at their home country do not visit them when abroad either and those who are active visitors of museums in their home countries continue to be active visitors in other countries too. (Stylianou-Lambert 2011.) From this can be said that museum tourism does not function same motives as the more general cultural tourism, but museum tourism is perhaps driven by a desire to simply visit museums. The exception to this is sightseeing tourists who aim to visit famous cultural sites, among which can be famous museums such as Louvre (Stylianou-Lambert 2011).

Cultural tourists who visit museums are all different and they might have more in common with the local visitors than with each other. There are multitudes of different museums all with their own visitor base. However, museum tourism can be seen as an extension of one's normal life even when abroad. (Stylianou-Lambert 2011.) Like other institutions, museums have changed, and the museum tourists experience these changes through their role. Museum tourism is shifting from spectating to taking an active role. Shao, Ying, Shu, Morrison and Booth (2019, 1–2) call these new-age museum tourists "cultural shoppers". This means that museum tourists have new demands and museum tourism has taken a step towards modern-day consumption.

While museums themselves rarely focus primarily on making profit, they have a considerable economic impact. Especially hospitality services near or attached to museums reap benefits in form of increased number of customers and revenue when tourists need refreshment after visiting a museum. Traditionally, museums have not been considered to be a part of the tourism industry, despite engaging with tourists and being some of the main attractions of their respective locations. In addition, museums make the image of a region or city more positive. (Piekkola, Suojanen & Vainio 2014, 4–16.)

One of possible future trends for museums regarding visitor and tourism satisfaction is further embracing the increased individualization of customers. Najbrt and Kapounová (2014) suggest developing a virtual guide that customises a tour depending on each visitor's characteristics. The authors claim that the use of a virtual guide can maximise the educational benefits of a museum and increase visitor satisfaction when the tour through the whole museum or just a singular exhibition is customized. While this type of artificial intelligence-based solutions might seem out of the reach, customising the museum visitor experience to some extent is relevant in terms of higher audience satisfaction and engagement. However, according to multiple experts (e.g. Najbrt & Kapounová 2014; Sylaiou, Mania, Karoulis & White 2010, 1–2) virtual solutions are becoming increasingly relevant in the context of museum institutions. Finding a compromise between the new technologies and preservable traditions of museums is certain to be a challenge but from the viewpoint of customer experience there is much to be gained.

In our individualized society, it is likely that the individualization will continue and affect museum experiences as well. The research team of Gensler (2015) speculates that new technologies will allow the customers to direct their own museum visits, and at the same time museums will become more community-oriented and welcoming to public. Museums have already started welcoming in all kinds of people (Uusitalo 2008a, 7–8), but they do not necessarily have a strong presence in their respective communities (Gensler 2015). Having a positive impact on surrounding society is a key factor when building museum reputation, which in turn can boost the image of the whole city or region (Riel & Heijndijk 2017, 17–22).

4.3 Typical Art Museum Customer in Finland

According to a study conducted by Taivassalo and Levä (2012, 15), a typical art museum customer in Finland is 56-65 years of age, a woman and has a higher-level education. However, the average age of visitors is found to be dependent on the exhibitions the art museum currently has to offer, ranging from the average of 28 to the average of 64 (Lindholm 2011, 41–42). This means that the general

demographics of the visitors can be different depending on the time of measurement.

What makes art museum visitors special is the fact that out of all the respondents only 7% were visiting a museum for the first time in 12 months. In addition, most of the respondents heard about new exhibitions or were otherwise recommended to visit a museum by their acquaintances, making word of mouth a considerable source of information regarding marketing of art museums. The same research found that 41% of art museum visitors visit different museums over five times a year, and 22% of visitors considered visiting art museums as their hobby. (Taivassalo & Levä 2012, 15.) Based on this it could be said that art museum customers are rather active and value the input of other visitors.

The main expectations art museum visitors place on their visit are experiences and enjoyment. The main motivators the respondents had for visiting art museums were seeing a specific exhibition and/or the general theme of the art museum. Other reasons the participants specified were professional interest, seeking peace of mind, seeing the work of a specific artist or an exhibition review. (Taivassalo & Levä 2012, 15.) The fact that over one-third of the respondents considered experiences as their primary motive for visiting an art museum compliments the previously presented fact that experience industry is growing and designing experiences is increasingly important.

These past studies have been conducted only in Southern and Central Finland with heavy emphasis on capital area even if they claim to represent the customer base of whole Finland (Taivassalo & Lehvä 2011; Lindholm 2011). It is likely that the art museum visitors from Northern Finland do not differ too much from their Southern counterparts, especially considering that art museum customers seem to be similar even on European level (Piekkola, Suojanen & Vainio 2014, 20), but the possibility of slight regional differences cannot be ruled out completely without further research.

5 CUSTOMER RESEARCH

5.1 Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology refers to the research methods that aim to answer questions that cannot be directly answered from numerical data. Such questions include topics like experience and perspective that are difficult to place on a numerical scale without leaving out vital information, for example the reasoning behind choosing a particular option. (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey 2016.) This does not necessarily mean an attempt to get inside a participant's head even if qualitative research is easy to perceive as such, but qualitative research can also be used to research behaviours and processes (Silverman 2020, 3–6).

Fully understanding an individual is rarely possible and too time-consuming considering time constraints of most studies. Because of this, while qualitative research scratches the surface deeper than quantitative research, qualitative research should not be treated as a form of psychoanalysing research participants but as a research method that aims to uncover underlying behavioural patterns, values and different experiences the research participants may have. (Silverman 2020, 3–6.) The sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be smaller than in quantitative research which aims to make more general results from a great amount of statistical data. (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey 2016.)

There are many different qualitative research methods but the term “qualitative” is often associated with conducting interviews. These interviews fall into three main categories: group discussions, semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews. These interviews can also be conducted as online surveys with some restrictions. Additionally, qualitative methods include a research method of analysing text and documents. There is no clear definition for what those texts and documents must be, but the choice of materials depends on each research, and they can range from official reports to personal diaries. (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey 2016.)

Qualitative methods were chosen as they produce both data that is comparable to the past studies of art museum customers and data that can be analysed to

better understand the specific art museum's customers' values and expectations. The results produced are somewhat generalised and give an overview of the typical customers of the Oulu Museum of Art while still being capable of researching the motives behind art museum visits. The art museum also has some data ready in form of information of past ticket sales and visitor activity so a quantitative research on that topic is not needed and it is possible to move forward with qualitative content analysis of the ticket sales. This study borrows some principles (e.g. Heikkilä 2014) from quantitative methodology when explaining and handling big numbers of data but the analysis itself is conducted according to the principles of qualitative research.

5.2 Customer Research Methods

5.2.1 Content Analysis from Ticket Sales

The process of content analysis includes collection of data, integrating it into a data analysis system and finally applying content analysis methods into the integrated data (Parsell, Wang & Kapoor 2014, 1). The aim of analysis is to find patterns and relationships (Chambers 2018, 1) and it helps to understand customers and to develop the customer experience (Digia 2021). There are multiple methods of content and data analysis, and for this study, graphical methods were chosen.

Like the name of the method suggests, graphical data analysis focuses on analysis made from graphics. The biggest advantages of graphical methods are seeing hidden patterns, differences and data errors, which are helpful especially when handling great amounts of data. It can be used to display data itself or details derived from it. This is not to say that graphical methods are without flaws – while some numbers are being displayed it is important to ask what is not being displayed. (Chambers 2018, 1–9; Cuesta 2013, 16.) Making and analysing graphics requires attention from the analyst and sometimes it is necessary to give a second look to the numerical data to erase the risk of leaving important information out. In addition, the graphics produced need to be truthful and not made to look advantageous to one result via visual means (Heikkilä 2014).

The process of content analysis used in this study is adapted from a model described by Cuesta (2013). According to Cuesta, the analysis consists of five steps: the problem, data preparation, data exploration, predictive modelling and visualisation of results. Of these steps, predictive modelling has been left out due to the fact that the study focuses on past and present information and does not attempt to predict future developments, which predictive modelling is meant for.

Firstly, the process starts with defining the analysis' objective, called the problem. This can be, for example, how to identify and track different customer groups by age. After defining the problem, data are gathered and integrated into the chosen platform and made measurable. Measurable in this case means transforming data into standardized numerical values that are directly comparable with each other. Once done, data can be explored in either numerical or graphical format to discern patterns, correlations or other noteworthy matters. These results can then be visualised and special attention should be paid to presenting the data so that the audience is also able to understand the results. (Cuesta 2013, 12–14.) The adapted process for this study is also visualised in Figure 3.

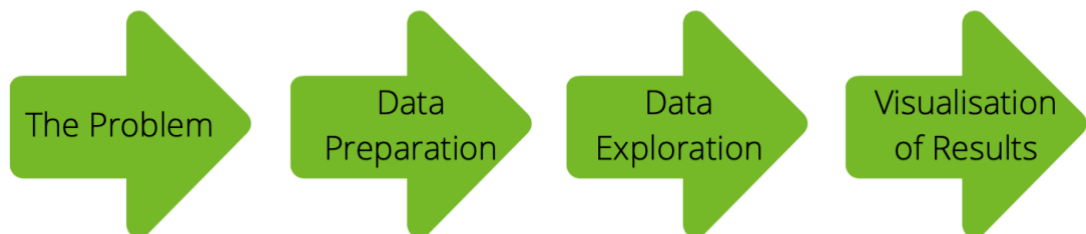


Figure 3. Adapted Content Analysis Process (Cuesta 2013)

In this study, the problem can be defined as investigating the different customers the Oulu Museum of Art has with the aim of constructing a customer profile. The data is gathered from Luuppi's ticket sales information from years 2019 and 2020. The data is explored via graphical data analysis and the results are then visualized.

5.2.2 Online Customer Survey

Surveys are data-gathering methods where information is extracted from customers or other respondents by asking them questions. Surveys are generally meant for larger population than interviews and they are characterized by having pre-selected options to choose an answer from. Surveys do not necessarily require for the respondent to make any physical contact with the party conducting the survey, making it an effective way to gather large quantities of information. (Fowler 2014, 1–7.)

The advantages of a properly conducted survey consist of planned probability sampling and standardized measurements. Probability sampling means that choosing the right sort of a sample increases the likelihood of getting results that reflect on the whole population. As surveys can be distributed and conducted without physical restrictions, the shy members of the population have better chance of being heard as opposed to interviews that tend to place emphasis on more vocal respondents. Standardized measurement means that all answers to the same are measured by the same scale, for example on a scale from 1 to 5. Since surveys emphasise giving out a limited number of answers to choose from, surveys can create comparable statistics, given that all participants understood the question similarly. (Fowler 2014, 3.)

The survey research format was chosen to be used because of aforementioned reasons, but also due to the other major research method being content analysis. Content analysis process is time-consuming and because of limited time and resources, conducting in-depth interviews with a large audience proved to be challenging. On-site conducted interviews were not an option either due to Covid-19 pandemic closing the doors of the Oulu Museum of Art. Out of the remaining options, a customer survey was chosen as it does not strictly tie the respondent to a time and place, the survey link is easy to share online, and the data gained is already in a digital format.

The possible disadvantages of a survey method are relatively high likelihood of misunderstanding questions, limited number of questions that can be asked before respondents give up on answering and a bad response rate of open

questions. (Heikkilä 2014.) The weight of these can be lowered through good planning of the survey by limiting the number of questions, making majority of them constructed and having multiple test persons to read through the survey questions and answer options before publishing it. All disadvantageous factors can never be fully removed but their effect can be minimized.

The survey used is constructed with the customers' experience in mind and made easy to answer. The survey starts with warm-up questions about the respondent's background, such as age and education. After that, the survey proceeds to ask about the previous museum visits of the customers and their reasons for visiting, as well as what do they appreciate in art museums. The third section of the survey concerns the services offered in the Oulu Museum of Art, and how their quality is perceived. The fourth section charts the respondents' interest in digital services and the willingness to pay for them. At the end of the survey there is an option to leave open feedback and take part in a raffle. The raffle was chosen to be a part of the survey as an additional incentive for answering. A full list of questions can be found from Appendix 1 and the English translations are available in Appendix 2.

5.3 Validity and Reliability Issues

Validity refers to how well the research measures what it was intended to measure. This includes the lack of systematic mistakes and using correct analytic tools to get valid results. When researching a large customer base one of the most important aspects for validity of research is having enough samples to draw conclusions from. (Heikkilä 2014.) The reliability of a research refers to the possibility of getting the same research results if the same research is conducted more than once. Briefly put, a research is reliable if it produces consistent results by using the same methods. (BRM 2021.)

For a qualitative research to be valid it needs to ask correct questions from the respondents, the research needs to be conducted so that it gains samples from different sources, and it needs to consider what or who exactly are those sources. The analysis also needs to be conducted while being mindful to any known personal bias of the analyser. (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey 2016.) In this

study the validity of research is ensured by having the visitor survey checked beforehand by multiple parties, including the commissioner and thesis supervisors. The survey is then spread in multiple channels including Luuppi's newsletter and social media channels. The survey includes a chance to enter a free raffle, giving more incentive to answers. These measures have been made in attempt to increase the number of responses.

Because of the electronic nature of the survey, the oldest visitors of the Oulu Museum of Art might have troubles answering the survey. Also, since the survey is spread in Luuppi's social media channels, those who do not follow the channels are unlikely to answer and it can be assumed that the respondents are rather devoted museum visitors. However, the survey is able to reach thousands of potential respondents – on 27th of February 2021, Luuppi has 5633 followers on Facebook and 2973 followers on Instagram, for a grand total of 8606 followers. This combined with the newsletter subscribers should result in a large number of potential respondents, so the reliability of the research relies heavily on getting those followers to answer the survey. A reasonable goal for the survey is to get at least 100 responses. The reliability of the research can be strengthened by charting what sort of customers did not answer the survey and taking that into account when analysing the results, for example if the number of child respondents does not correlate with the number of child visitors seen in content analysis results.

Outside of the survey research, what hinders both validity and reliability of the research is the lack of up-to-date academic sources regarding cultural tourism and museum tourism, in addition to the scarcity of previous art museum customer profiling. There are no examples to draw from and comparison to other destinations cannot be done in wide enough scale to imply if the Oulu Museum of Art has differences to other museums' customer bases. Despite this, it is possible to construct a customer profile for the Oulu Museum of Art, but the profile cannot be placed on a larger context to analyse what differences the Oulu Museum of Art's customers have to other art museums' customers. However, Finnish museum visitors have been profiled every ten years since year 1982 (Taivassalo & Levä 2012, 22), and the produced customer profiles can be

compared to see if the Oulu Museum of Art's customers are a part of the same general art museum customer base.

During the last stages of the research, it was discovered that the research methods and analysis used leaned towards qualitative instead of quantitative, which they had originally been labelled as. The research was originally planned to be conducted as a quantitative study. During the process the methods changed as the number of statistics required for a valid quantitative study was not met, and the missing data had to be compensated with increased in-depth analysis of the few existing sources. This led to the conclusion that the study was conducted as a qualitative research. The change happened organically over a longer period and while it does not contest the reliability of the results, the primary research methods such as graphical data analysis still do belong under the category of quantitative research methods, and many of the used theories are loans from quantitative methodology. In this case, it could be claimed that quantitative methods were transformed to be used in a qualitative manner.

6 FINDINGS

6.1 Content Analysis Results

The data analysis conducted from the Oulu Museum of Art's ticket sales from year 2019 and 2020 indicates that the major customer group of the art museum are adults, with slightly over half the visits been made by them. (Luuppi 2021b.) The results are illustrated in Figure 4. Generally, students tend to be 18-25 years of age, with some exceptions. While they could be considered adults age-wise, students behave differently as customers due to the limited disposable income, different lifestyle and daily environment and thus are kept as their own group. (Business.com 2021.)

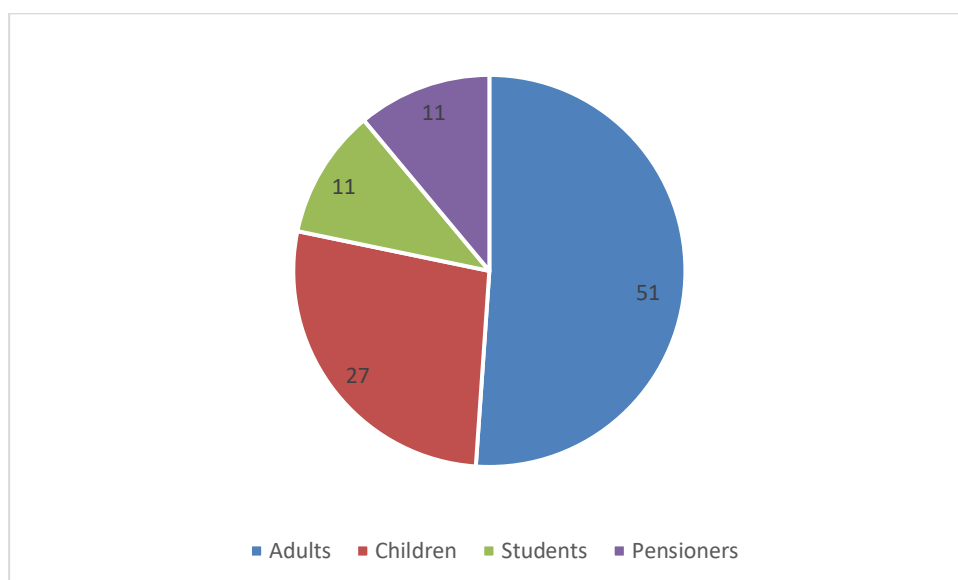


Figure 4. Ticket Type Spread by Percent (n=70.991)

As adults are the biggest group age bracket wise, it is no surprise they are the biggest audience group. What is interesting is the great number of child visitors, who form slightly over one-fourth of the customer base. One reason for many child visitors can be the fact that under 18-year-olds visit the museum free of charge (Luuppi 2021a), making the museum accessible for a group that normally does not have much disposable income. Figure 5 sheds some more light to the reasons why children visit the Oulu Museum of Art in such great number. One of

the main reasons is school-related visits but over half of the visits have been made for other reasons, such as visiting with family and friends (Luuppi 2021b).

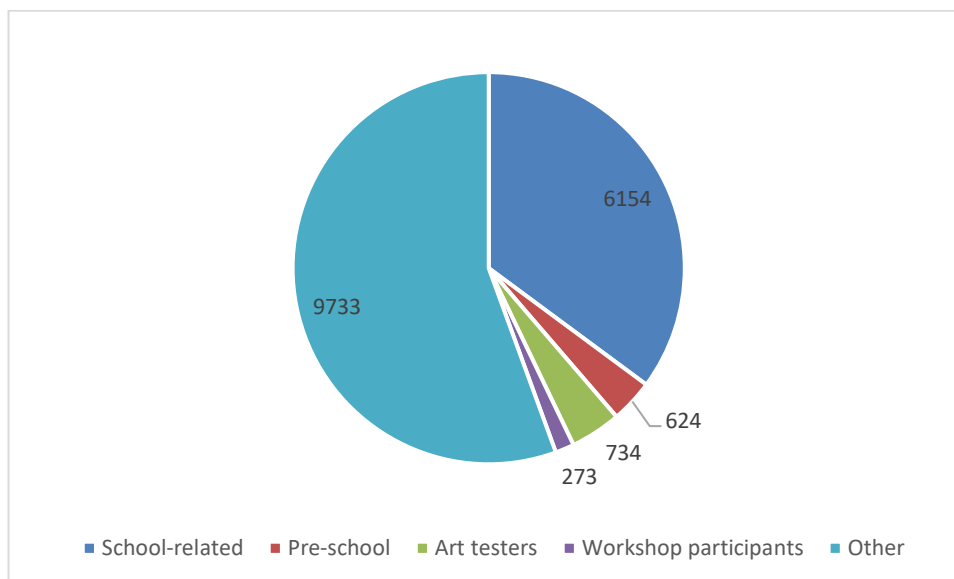


Figure 5. Reasons for Under 18-Year-Olds to Visit the Oulu Museum of Art (n=17518) (Luuppi 2021b)

In year 2019, 26,57% of the tickets were sold for different events, making event-attendance one of the main motivators of the visitors. However, workshop participation in years 2019 and 2020 was low, 1,21% (n=386) and 2,59% (n=105) respectively. In year 2020, the recorded workshop participations were mostly resulting of a babies' colour bath -workshop. (Luuppi 2021b) What can be said from these numbers is that the art museum customers are interested in taking part in events, but something is discouraging visitors from taking part in workshop activities.

As seen on Figure 6, vast majority of the visits to the Oulu Museum of Art have been made for leisure purposes (Luuppi 2021b). There is also an unspecified "other" category, but it was left out of the graphic due to this category comprising only 0,04% (n=17) of visits. The categories are very rough but shed light to the general reasons why people visit the art museum, and a majority of the visits seem to have been made during leisure time.

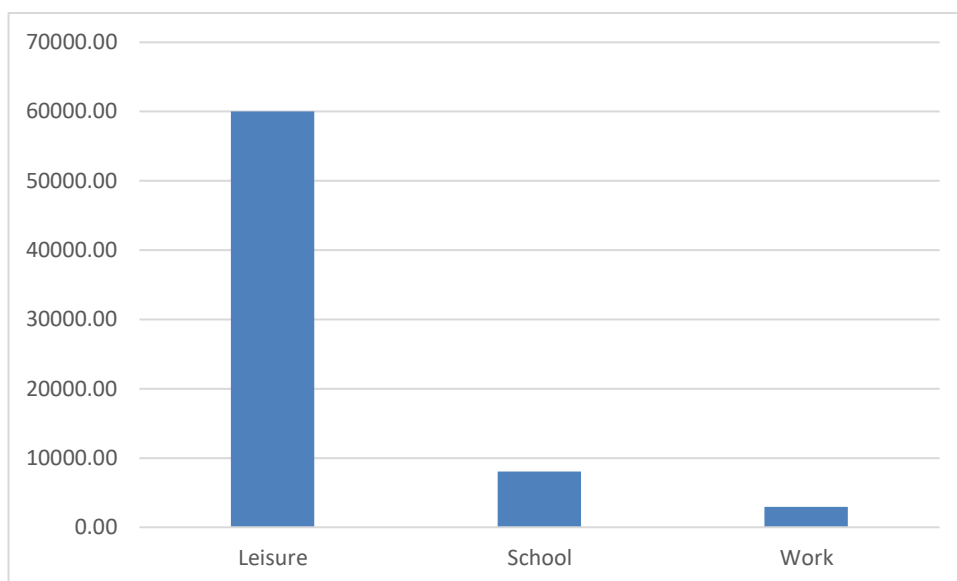


Figure 6. General Motives for Art Museum Visits (n=70974)

The content analysis also found out different combo tickets and the museum card to be effective motivators for visits. In year 2019, 16% (n=7321) of the visits were made with either a museum card or some other type of a ticket that gives access to multiple attractions. This number grew to 20% (n=5226) in 2020, mainly due to growth in museum card usage instead. Luuppi's own combo ticket instead halved its sales numbers in year 2020 compared to previous year, but the drop in sales did not make statistical difference due to lower overall audience attendance. The sales digits in year 2020 in general are much lower than the previous years', due to COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it imposed on service and leisure industry.

6.2 Customer Survey Results

The customer survey conducted from 24 March to 4 April 2021 gained a total of 105 answers, which barely passes the minimum expectation set for this survey. The survey link was spread in Luuppi's social media accounts on the first day of the answer period. Two of the answers to the survey were deemed as untrustworthy based on the fact that the respondents had never actually visited the art museum, bringing the number of answers used for analysis to a total of 103. The survey was able to reach only Finnish respondents and no responses were made by underage visitors.

As seen in Figure 7, the age of the respondents was high, with 79,61% (n=82) of respondents reporting to be over 40 years of age. The most active group to answer the survey were 41–50-year-olds. This indicates that the Oulu Museum of Art's active followers are of mature age, which seems to match the information Taivassalo & Levä (2012) found during their research. The information regarding the gender of museum visitors is also matching. The customer survey responses were dominated by female respondents who comprised 81,55% (n=84) of all answers. Taivassalo & Levä (2012, 31) found 62% of museum visitors to be women. The difference between the two numbers is considerable, but they both indicate that a typical customer of the Oulu Museum of Art would be a woman.

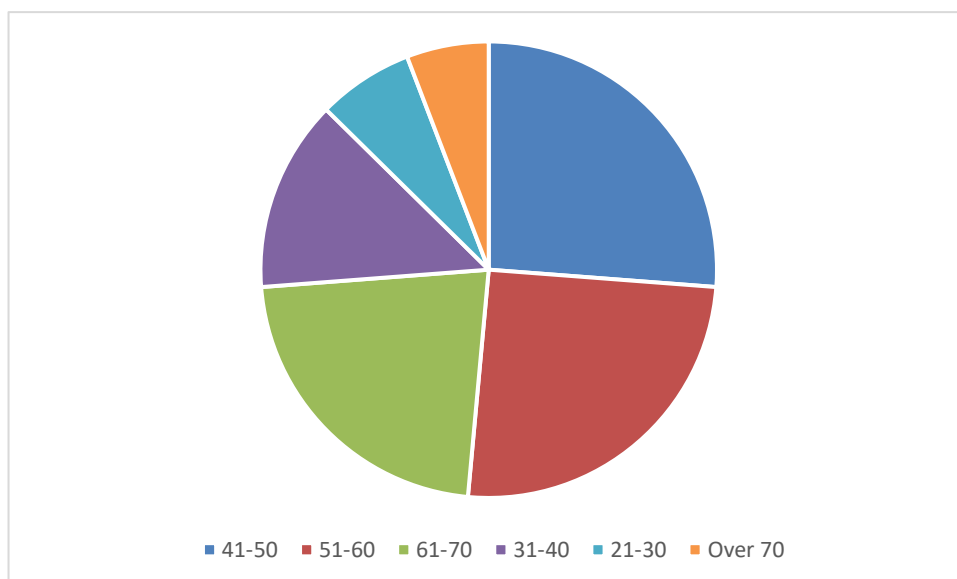


Figure 7. Age of Survey Respondents (n=103)

86,4% (n=88) of the survey respondents were from Oulu, which was expected considering that the museum is located there. The rest of the respondents were mostly from the nearby towns with no considerable exceptions. In addition, majority of the respondents had higher education from either a university or university of applied sciences, forming up 63,11% (n=65) of the respondents. Roughly one-fourth of the respondents had a vocational education background. The information regarding educational background also seems to match the findings of Taivassalo & Levä (2012, 15) with the exception of high number of responses from those with vocational education. Statistically, the customer

survey had over twice the number of vocational school responses compared to the research of Taivassalo & Levä (2012, 31).

Most of the art museum's customers are employed according to Figure 8. However, while the employed visitors comprise roughly a half of the survey respondents, the other half includes many other types of employment statuses. The biggest singular group of non-employed people are pensioners who often have special health-related needs that need to be considered even during museum visits. However, they often have more time to visit as they are not restricted by traditional working hours. Some of the "other" category respondents reported being laid-off due to COVID-19 pandemic, indicating that "employed" category could have taken a slightly higher share of the responses under different circumstances.

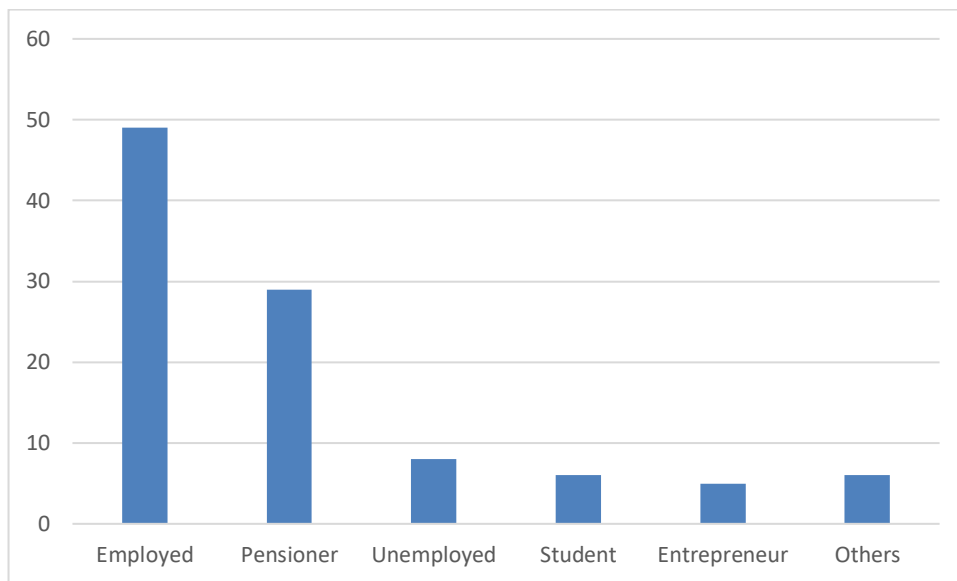


Figure 8. Employment Status of the Respondents (n=103)

The visitors of the art museum are rather active with most of the respondents having visited multiple times. Only 2,91% (n=3) of visitors reported having visited only once. 46,6% (n=48) of the respondents had visited over 10 times. According to this information, the Oulu Museum of Art is a repeat destination that can be visited multiple times, and the customer experience does not seem to suffer from repeat visits. This can be due to changing exhibitions. However, a single visit to the art museum is short, as 89,32% (n=92) of the respondents estimated that they spend less than two hours on a single visit. No respondent reported

spending less than 30 minutes in the museum, which indicates that even for the fastest visitors, the art museum has some retain value. On the other hand, the time spent on the museum can vary depending on if the customers came to see just a single exhibition or the whole museum.

One-third of the museum visits were made alone while one-fourth were made with friends. While people visiting alone were the biggest category, different social groups combined form a majority of audience visiting the museum, for a total of 67,96% (n=70) of visits being made accompanied by someone. The numbers are illustrated in Figure 9. Museum visits in the Oulu Museum of Art seem to be more of a social activity, but the number of single visitors indicates that the art can be enjoyed without social interaction as well. One of the respondents commented that they like to visit a new exhibition first alone and enjoy in peace, and the visit for a second time with a friend and discuss about the art on display.

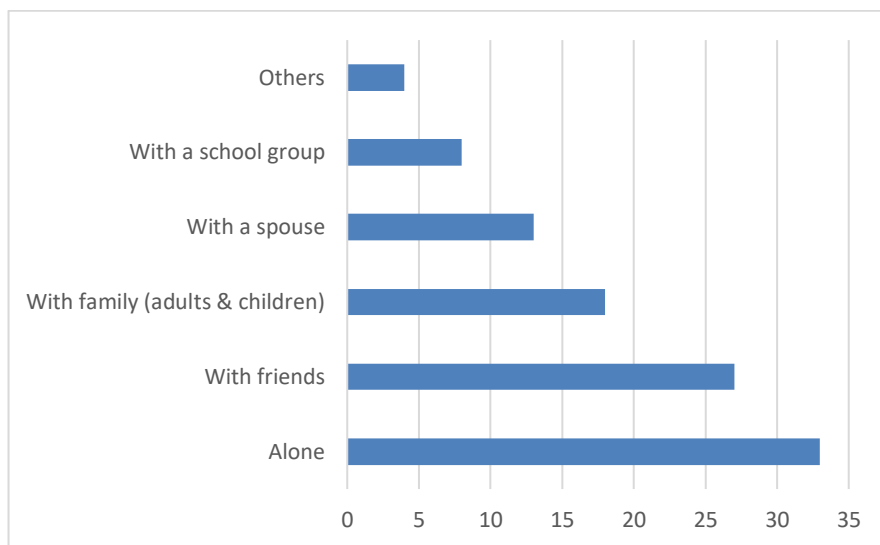


Figure 9. Visitor Group Types (n=103)

The motives for art museum visits were already partially covered in Chapter 5.1. and the results seem to match those of the survey. Majority of the visits, 83,51% (n=157) were made for leisure purposes, the major motive being seeing the exhibitions. Other notable motives inside the leisure category were visiting the café and gift shop, and event-related visits. School and work-related reasons were not popular among the respondents, resulting in a combined total of 11,7% (n=22) of the visiting reasons. The respondents were able to choose multiple options, so one respondent could have visited once for school-related reasons

and then returned as a leisure visitor, for example. However, both the content analysis and survey indicate that most of the visits are driven by recreational purposes.

The respondents reported having found information about the art museum from various channels, most notably from Luuppi's own webpage. Traditional media's share as an information channel was surprisingly high, considering the age of digitalisation. Newspapers were reported to be the second most used information channel. On the other hand, the art museum's customers are of mature age and thus more likely to read newspapers than their younger counterparts. While social media channel Facebook was reported to be used frequently as information retrieval channel, Instagram did not share the popularity even if the link to the customer survey was spread in both channels. The details regarding other information channels can be found from Figure 10. The respondents were able to choose multiple options as their information sources. Identifying all the information sources helps to better understand what channels the art museum's customers use.

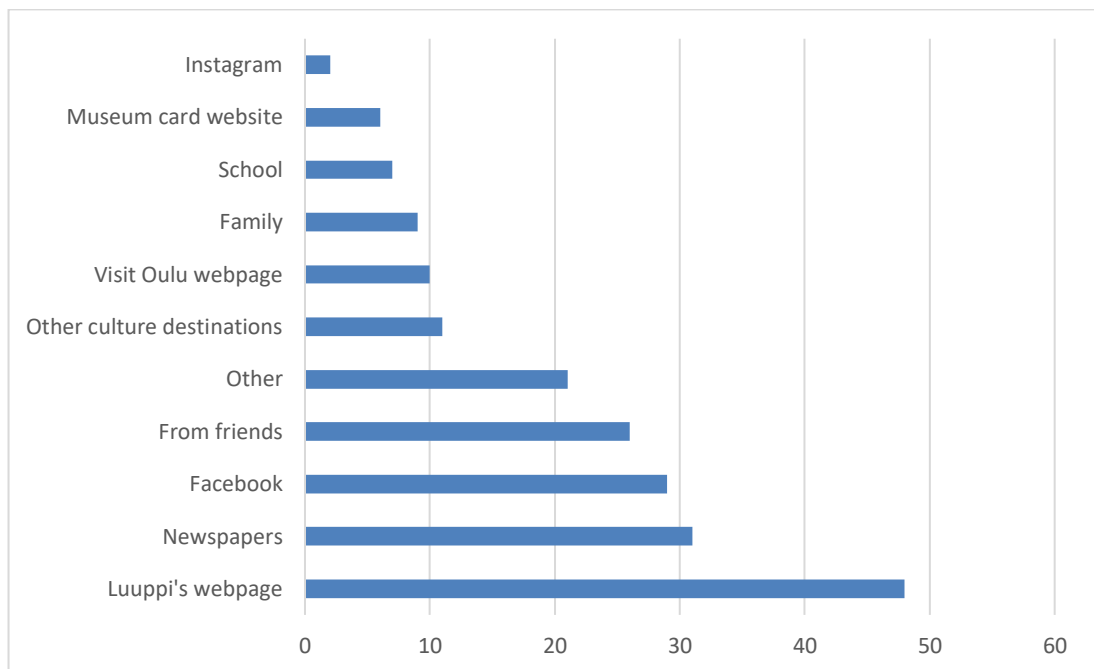


Figure 10. Channels Used for Gaining Information of the Oulu Museum of Art (n=200)

Table 1 measures the importance of experience-related aspects to the customers. The importance is measured in a scale from 1 to 5 and then the average is calculated. According to Table 1, the customers value practical aspects like exhibition variety and good ambience elements over activity offerings. The possibility to take part in workshops was valued low, but not as completely unimportant. What can be said, however, is that the visitors search for fairly basic things from their art museum visits, and no element measured was seen as unimportant.

Table 1. Importance of Experience-Related Elements

Variety of exhibitions	4,77
Own peace, no feeling of hurry	4,72
Lightning of the facilities	4,52
The sound environment of the facilities	4,47
Physical accessibility of the facilities	3,97
Offering of supporting services	3,86
Explanations of the techniques used for art	3,63
Explanations of the meanings of artworks	3,61
Child-friendliness	3,25
Possibility to take part in workshops	2,90

There were some differences in experience values between the visitor groups. Students found physical accessibility of the art museum 0,5 points more important than employed respondents, while employed respondents found the offering of supporting services 0,5 points more important than students did. Meanwhile, pensioners valued child-friendliness more than those who are working. Women also valued child-friendliness and physical accessibility more than the male respondents.

While variety of exhibitions is greatly valued among the visitors, uninteresting exhibitions were seen as the single greatest factor that discouraged the respondents from visiting the art museum. One respondent commented that the exhibitions change too seldom, which can be one reason for high number of responses to this category. Other noteworthy obstacles for museum visits were high ticket price, bad opening hours and lack of time. At the moment, for an adult it costs 10€ to visit the art museum, 7€ for students, pensioners, unemployed and those in civilian service. Underage customers visit for free. (Luuppi 2021a.)

According to Taivassalo & Levä (2012, 15), most Finnish art museum customers are willing to pay 4–7 euros for a visit, while the average price of an art museum ticket for an adult in year 2011 was 7 euros. Compared to this, the Oulu Museum of Art's ticket price is on the higher end. Regarding opening times, two respondents commented a wish to have more chances to visit during evenings. According to Luuppi's website (Luuppi 2021a), the museum usually opens between 9–11 a.m. and closes between 5–7 p.m., which can make it tricky to visit during the workdays for those who work during office hours. Examining the survey results confirms that all of those who reported bad opening hours were of working age, but only 54,55% (n=12) were currently working. The rest comprised of unemployed, pensioners and students. Overall, those who found the opening times inconvenient also reported slightly lower satisfaction towards all supporting services when compared to the average score of all respondents.

The quality of the supporting services was found good across all measured services, with guided tours being the most applauded one. The lowest score given for any supporting service was a tie between the café and the gift shop, with a score of 3,97 on a scale from 1 to 5. The workshops were liked among those who had taken part. One respondent commented that they wish for more workshops meant for the whole family. However, no negative comments regarding the supporting services were left. Generally, women had more positive experiences from the workshops than men. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive and 1 most negative, men rated the workshops' quality as 3,33 points while women found it to be worth 4,24 points.

The respondents of the survey were satisfied with their past museum experiences and would recommend the museum for others and come for a new visit themselves. On a scale from 1 to 5, score of 4,32 was given to the likelihood of recommending the museum for others, 5 being the highest likelihood. 76,7% (n=79) of the visitors claim that they will definitely visit again and 18,45% (n=19) will visit should there be new exhibitions or activities. Overall, the respondents were happy with the Oulu Museum of Art experience they have got in the past and no one reported complete dissatisfaction.

The respondents were asked if they were interested in digital services such as virtual tours or web galleries. As seen in Figure 11, the respondents are interested in them, but somewhat carefully. Surprisingly, out of all the respondent groups, pensioners were the most interested in digital services, scoring their interest as 3,66 in a scale from 1 to 5.

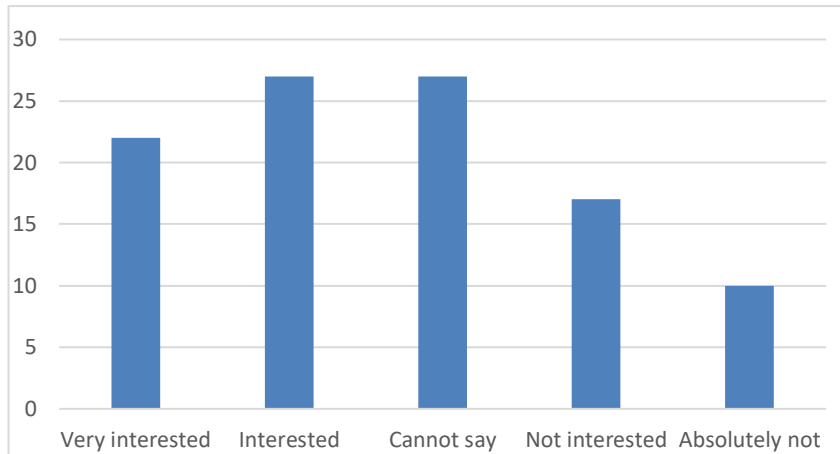


Figure 11. Interest in Digital Services (n=103)

However, according to Figure 12, the visitors are not ready to pay for the digital services and if they must pay, they will prefer to pay less than for physical services. Especially active visitors who had visited more than 10 times responded negatively to having to pay for digital services. One respondent commented that the experience is never the same as that of physical services. Digital services could perhaps be used as an additional part of a customer journey, but according to these results the demand for a paid standalone digital service is not high.

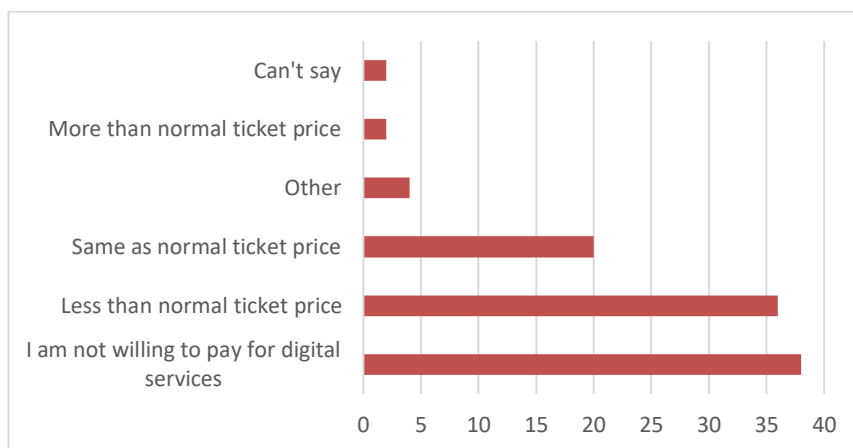


Figure 12. Willingness to Pay for Digital Services (n=102)

6.3 Customer Profile

Based on the findings of the content analysis and customer survey, it was possible to profile the customers and find common traits. The results of the survey were similar across all criteria used to divide the customers into groups, except for one dividing factor: the obstacles they face. Because of this, two customer profiles were made, first one illustrated in Figure 13.

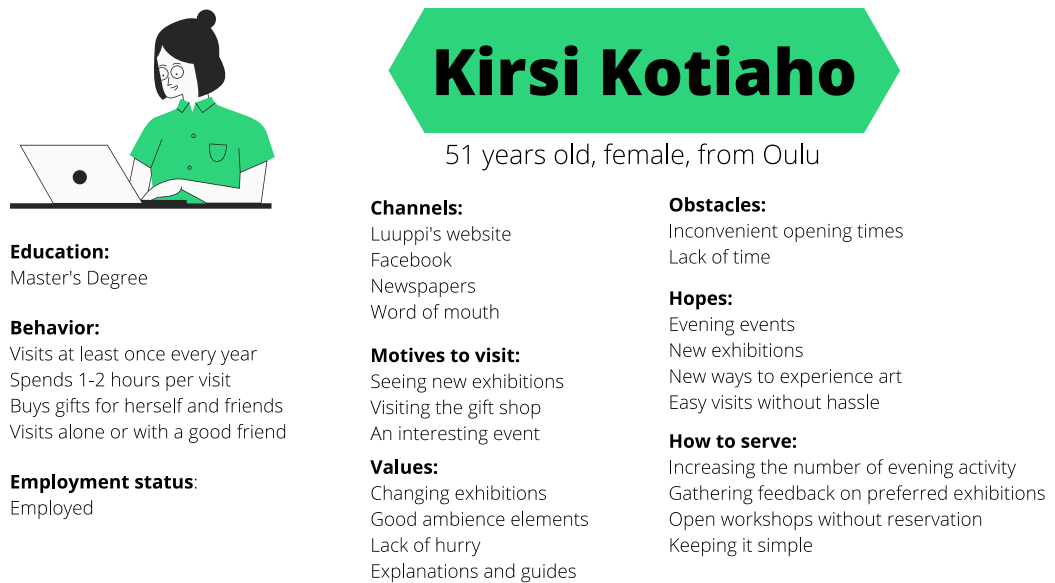


Figure 13. Customer Profile of Kirsi Kotiaho

The customer profiles constructed are very similar to the results of Taivassalo & Levä (2012, 15), but they scratch the surface a bit deeper. There are two types of customers in the Oulu Museum of Art: those who have money to visit but no time, and those who have time but no money. While the profile of “Kirsi Kotiaho” is that of a person who experiences that she does not have time for a visit when she wants to, the profile of “Taina Tiainen” in Figure 14 shows that even with enough time, customers can experience other types of obstacles for their visit.



Taina Tiainen

47 years old, female, from Oulu

Education:

Vocational School

Behavior:

Visits with family and friends
Uses 1 hour to visit
Uses café

Employment status:

On disability pension

Channels:

Word of mouth
Facebook
Luuppi's webpage
Other culture destinations

Motives to visit:

Seeing new exhibitions
An interesting event
Spending time with family and friends

Values:

Changing exhibitions
Good ambience elements
Lack of hurry
Physical accessibility

Obstacles:

Expensive ticket price
Unpleasant atmosphere

Hopes:

Free events
Lower ticket price
To feel more welcome to visit with children

How to serve:

Offering discounts or free admission hours
Reducing the number of physical obstacles
Help for visiting a museum with disability
Events for the whole family
Friendly service

Figure 14. Customer Profile of Taina Tiainen

Generally, the values of all customers were the same, but the needs of the two customer personas were different. While they are of similar age and both local, their daily lives differ greatly. As Stylianou-Lambert (2011) claimed, art museum visits can be seen as an extension of one's daily life and the daily needs and wants follow. Speaking strictly from a business perspective, it is advisable to cater to visitors who plan to return and have money to spend. However, museums often aim for high overall audience attendance and have a mission to be spaces open for all and to educate the general public (Uusitalo 2008a, 15–16). This means that both of the customer profiles should be taken into account on equal measure, unless one of them is perceived as more important by non-monetary standards.

Both of the customer profiles value similar and rather simple things, such as hassle-free and friendly service. Multiple open answers of the customer survey applauded the helpfulness and knowledge of the staff members, but there was also dissatisfaction towards the aspect of how welcomed the survey respondents felt when visiting the museum. As customer service is performed by humans, it is natural that there are some differences in service level quality, but in this survey the perceived quality seemed to be different depending on the respondent's socio-economic background. While museums as spaces have opened up to the general audience (Uusitalo 2008a, 7–8; Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 157), perhaps the

institution and its' image have changed slower and lower socio-economic classes still perceive art museums as high-class or even elitist institutions.

Additionally, there is a need for constructing a third customer profile, a child visitor. As no answers to the survey were given by underage respondents, constructing a fact-based customer profile for a child visitor is impossible. There is also a chance that the child visitors form multiple different distinguishable groups, and multiple profiles for children are needed. As the children form one-fourth of the Oulu Museum of Art's visitors, taking their needs into account is vital to ensure that their museum visits continue as adults and they feel as welcome as the more mature visitors.

6.4 Suggestions for Service Development

The service development suggestions that arose from the customer survey had to do with practical aspects of the museum. Roughly one-fourth of the respondents found the opening times limiting, which suggests that having the museum open later at evening could draw in more visitors. However, many of the collective agreements in Finland require the employees to be paid extra after 6 p.m., which would also raise the costs of keeping the museum open (e.g. PAM 2021). One possible compromise is to have the museum open later on specified days, such as every or every other Wednesday, and to observe if these times draw visitors in and increase customer satisfaction.

Many visitors found the ticket price too expensive, which is possible to fix either by lowering the price, increasing the amount of content of the museum so the perceived value of a visit rises, or offering alternative options to visit. For example, Korundi House of Culture in Rovaniemi offers free admission to their exhibitions on Thursday evenings, events which they have branded as "Art Thursdays" (Korundi 2021). However, many of the visitors who reported expensive ticket price as one of their obstacles for museum visits had visited the museum actively. This can mean that for some it is a matter of the value of the ticket and value of a museum visit not matching rather than an obstacle, but there were also those who had visited only 2–4 times during their lives and wish to visit again once the financial situation allows. On the other hand, the Oulu Museum of Art already

offers a discount for many groups such as students, pensioners and unemployed (Luuppi 2021a).

To keep up service improvements, the Oulu Museum of Art should also continuously gather feedback from their customers, and not only online. Customer listening solutions such as Feedbackly (Feedbackly 2021) can be easily brought to exhibition halls and to a museum info desk, allowing the visitors to leave feedback fast via tablets or other devices. Listening to customers and analysing the feedback are core means for improving services and should be done continuously to keep the service level high and fix the pain points. Currently, leaving feedback specifically to the Oulu Museum of Art or even the head organization Luuppi is hard, as the feedback is left via Oulu city's feedback system, creating an additional obstacle (Luuppi 2021a).

One of the issues within the art museum's service offering was low workshop attendance. While only a few survey respondents had tried them, those few were satisfied with the quality, and one open feedback was left asking for more family-oriented workshops. The workshops are targeted for groups, but the minimum group size is not specified on the website, leaving it unclear who can take part. It is also unclear if attending them costs something, apart from the room escape experience offered. The workshops must also be reserved beforehand by email. (Luuppi 2021a.) To increase workshop attendance, informing the customers of the workshops and their availability is vital, but having to reserve a workshop by email is an obstacle as well. To remove that, bookings could be made by an online booking system or the workshops could be run as open workshops on specified dates and times. There is still potential to bring the workshops to the knowledge of the general public. Plenty of people take part in art hobbies and lessons, so bringing those into an art museum should not be a big stretch.

Even though the survey respondents were not willing to pay for digital services, they were not against the concept of digital services. This opens a chance for introducing digital exhibitions and for example augmented reality (AR)-based solutions as a part of the total experience of the Oulu Museum of Art, but it is not recommended to introduce paid digital services at least yet. As Najbrt and Kapounová (2014) suggest, virtual solutions are one of the upcoming museum

trends, but the solutions they speak of take place inside the museums – bringing the authentic museum experience to one's own home is a challenge yet unsolved. Amos Rex (2021) has tried bringing the feeling of ancient Egypt to interested peoples' homes by launching an AR-based virtual tomb experience where the participants can explore an Egyptian tomb via a mobile application that makes one's surroundings look like the tomb. While it lacks all the physical elements and ambience of an actual tomb, it is a creative alternative for travelling to Egypt and requires participants to interact with their surroundings. The biggest obstacles for producing more such content are often monetary as AR applications can cost anything between several thousand to hundreds of thousands of euros depending on complexity (Golosovskaya 2021).

6.5 Conclusions

All in all, the Oulu Museum of Art's customers seem generally happy as they are, but improvements can still be made. The customers share similar values and behaviours but have different needs. The customers can be split into two profiles: those who have money but no time and those who have time but no money. Both of these profiles want to be able to admire art at their own pace, value changing exhibitions and often visit the museum accompanied by someone, making visiting art museums primarily a social hobby.

While the demographics of the profiled customers match that of previous research (Taivassalo & Levä 2012, 15; Lindholm 2011, 41–42), there have been no other mentions the importance of ambience elements to the customers, especially soundscape. Good lighting is a somewhat given element for an art museum as displaying art at its prime requires it, but the importance of multisensory experiences seem to have been underestimated, despite the fact that sound-based exhibits have existed in museums for a long time (Haas 2015). This fact opens the discussions of including the other senses into art museum experiences, and further charting what do the customers consider as a good soundscape.

Even though the demographics of a typical museum customer have not changed much during the past 40 years when the customers have been profiled, the

museums have adopted new technologies and the customers' expectations have changed (Taivassalo & Levä 2012). Uusitalo (2008a, 17) mentioned, the consumption of art museum services has shifted to resemble typical modern-day consumption. However, the respondents of the customer survey reported traditional forms of media as their main source of information of the art museum, with the exception of social media site Facebook. The changes have happened in the consumption of art and increased demand for experiences, rapidly changing content and new type of content – modern museums are no longer cabinets of curiosities but interactive learning and experiential centres.

Research shows that different exhibitions attract different types of audience, even atypical art museum customers such as youth and students (Lindholm 2011, 41–42). The high average age of the Oulu Museum of Art's customers that answered the survey suggests that the current and past exhibitions have catered to more mature audiences. This does not calculate in the high number of child visitors, evident from the ticket sales, as there is too little evidence on whether they have come to the museum out of their own will or whether their family members wanted to visit. However, the children form a formidable customer segment of their own and converting these child visitors into lifelong customers is a challenge, and the lifelong customer path seems to experience struggles during youth and early adulthood. If museum visits are an extension of one's daily life, art museums have to devise new ways to integrate the visits into a young person's life, even if youth is generally seen as a hard segment to market to. However, the things youth desire, such as experiences, thrills and shareability (Britton 2015, 13–19), are the very thing many museums are curious but cautious of (Ahola & Uusitalo 2008, 160).

While obstacles and pain points for integrating digital solutions into museums exist, it seems clear that the digitalization of services will be inevitable. The whole museum does not need to become a digital playground – examples such as the AR-based Egyptian tomb, made by Amos Rex (2021), prove that it is possible to implement digital solutions without compromising on the services and atmosphere on-site. While the general audience is still not ready to pay for digital museum services as much as they are willing to pay for physical ones, it does

not mean that will be the case forever. A careful interest for digital services already exists.

7 DISCUSSION

Briefly put, the Oulu Museum of Art's customers are characteristically similar compared to the typical art museum customer in Finland. The customers are generally satisfied and express a desire for future visits, a quality much wanted by all businesses. There is still room for improvement and this study has been a step towards those improvements, as it reveals some of the most acute needs and helps the commissioner Luuppi understand who exactly their customers are and how to serve them.

For the future, it would be worth researching the child visitors' needs and wants in the Oulu Museum of Art and how satisfied are they currently. There is possibly more than one child visitor profile to discover as children of different ages can have very different needs and a different understanding of the concept of art, not to mention how differently they might appreciate the art. The children are best reached on-site at the art museum, but young children can have troubles expressing their emotions and are perhaps better targets for participant observation.

Today's children will become tomorrow's adults and the art museums' customers will experience some changes as well – if not in the form of demographics, the expectations are likely to change as new generations become regular customers. Increased individualization in our society suggests a need for individualized museum experiences or tours. While trends change fast, international megatrends can serve as a good predictor for the values of future customers and be helpful when designing new services or planning new exhibitions.

From tourism's point of view, the Oulu Museum of Art appears to be a domestic and local destination. The number or the nationalities of foreign inbound tourists are not tracked, leaving some open questions regarding the demand for international services. On the other hand, if the experts referred to in this study are to be believed, the foreign tourists might not need special services other than translations and a welcoming atmosphere. Even without tourists, the need for language-bound accessibility is topical as exchange students, immigrants and other minorities are interested in cultural services as well. Small improvements to

accessibility can also count towards making a positive impact in the local community and give a message that the museum is truly open for all.

As mentioned previously multiple times, the typical museum customers in Finland have followed the same demographical characteristics for decades. It is hard to say a definitive reason for that fact – the museums have changed, but the customers have not. At the age of 40 and beyond, something causes an increased interest towards art museums, and it would be interesting to understand what causes this. Perhaps museums still carry the air of an old-fashioned institution and the younger members of society do not feel welcome, or the exhibitions rarely match what they find interesting and important. It is not like young people do not consume culture – on the contrary, cinemas, science centres and music festivals enjoy a large audience of younger visitors. Shareable, fun and interesting content seems to be the key to engaging the audience art museums have still been unable to reach.

However, it is not like the Oulu Museum of Art has a lack of visitors. Whether to serve the existing audiences better or attract new customers – or do both – is a choice that awaits when the museum is ready undergo new developments. Designing for everyone is rarely easy or even realistic. However, if the Oulu Museum of Art were to take some of the development suggestions presented and test and implement them, and gather customer feedback of those new implementations, it can take a step towards increased customer satisfaction and co-create value together with its' customers, and open new channels to understand and listen to their customers.

While digital and virtual services are lifted up multiple times in this thesis, there are no ready-made answers for what exactly those services should be. There are multitude of options such as guided video tours, AR-based applications, virtual reality exhibitions, digital customer listening solutions and much more. While testing them all and seeing what resonates with the audience would be a great solution, the monetary constraints are often too great. However, today's daring innovation can become a standard for the future, and virtual solutions can let the audience interact with art in a unique way, or even encourage artists to take a new approach.

The research goals of the thesis were well-met. Even if the need for profiling child visitors remains, the research managed to gather and analyse considerable amount of data and form two reliable customer profiles, in addition to finding some development ideas for the commissioner. The research was conducted in an ethical manner and all found data was considered in the research, and all exceptions have been mentioned in their respective context. While the research results were partially foreseen based on past research and general stereotypes, new results were also uncovered on the topics of values and obstacles.

The change from quantitative research to qualitative research was not planned beforehand but it is something that happened naturally as a part of the research process. Interestingly, the overall research still works even under a different label, which raises questions towards the research tradition. Drawing a definitive line between quantitative and qualitative research is not as easy as it sounds, and loaning research methods from the other methodology and adapting them is sometimes justified, even beneficial. In this case, the desired results were acquired despite the mix in methodology. For this specific research, it seems that the methodology itself was not a decisive factor when aiming for success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Customer Survey Form

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation

Appendix 1. Customer Survey Form. 1 (5)

1. Kuinka vanha olet? *

- Alle 10 vuotta
- 10-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- Yli 70 vuotta

2. Sukupuoli-identiteetti

- Nainen
- Mies
- En halua vastata
- Muu: _____

3. Asuinpaikkakunta

Oma vastauksesi _____

4. Koulutustaustasi

- Kansa-, keski-, tai peruskoulu
- Ylioppilas
- Ammatillinen tutkinto
- Alempi korkeakoulututkinto
- Ylempi korkeakoulututkinto
- Yliopiston jatkotutkinto
- Ei koulutusta
- Muu: _____

5. Valitse nykyistä työllistymistilannettasi parhaiten kuvaava vaihtoehto

- Työssä käyvä
- Opiskelija
- Eläkeläinen
- Yrittäjä
- Työtön
- Muu: _____

Appendix 1. Customer Survey Form. 2 (5)

6. Kenen kanssa vierailit Oulun taidemuseossa viime kerralla?

- Yksin
- Ystävän/ystävien kanssa
- Puolison kanssa
- Perheen kanssa (aikuisia ja lapsia)
- Koulu/opiskeluryhmän kanssa
- Muu: _____

7. Kuinka monta kertaa yhteensä olet vierailut Oulun taidemuseossa?

- Kerran
- 2 - 4 kertaa
- 5 - 7 kertaa
- 8-10 kertaa
- Yli 10 kertaa

8. Kuinka kauan aikaa vietät yleensä Oulun taidemuseossa yhdellä vierailukerralla?

- Alle 30 minuuttia
- 30-60 minuuttia
- 1-2 tuntia
- Yli 2 tuntia
- En tiedä
- Muu: _____

9. Mistä kuudit tai löysit tietoa Oulun taidemuseosta?

- Ystäviltä
- Perheeltä
- Koulun kautta
- Facebookista
- Instagramista
- Youtubesta
- Luupin nettisivuilta
- Visit Oulun nettisivuilta
- Sanomalehdestä
- Museokortin nettisivujen kautta
- Muista kulttuurikohteista
- Muu: _____

Appendix 1. Customer Survey Form. 3 (5)

10. Mistä syistä olet vierailut Oulun taidemuseossa?

- Näyttelyiden näkeminen
- Kouluun liittyvä käynti
- Vierailu liittyy työhöni
- Tapahtumaan tai muuhun ohjattuun toimintaan osallistuminen
- Muu seurue halusi vieraila
- Museokaupassa tai kahvilassa käynti
- Ei erityistä syytä
- Muu: _____

11. Kuinka tärkeitä seuraavat asiat ovat sinulle vieraillessasi taidemuseossa?

	Erittäin tärkeä	Hieman tärkeä	En osaa sanoa	Ei juurikaan tärkeä	Ei lainkaan tärkeä
Näyttelyiden monipuolisuus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kattava selitys taideteoksiin käytetyistä tekniikoista	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kattava selitys taideteoksien tarkoituksista ja tulkinnoista	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tilojen esteettömyys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oheispalveluiden (esim. kahvila) tarjonta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lapsiystävällisyys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kiireettömyys, oma rauha	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mahdollisuus ottaa osaa työpajoihin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tilojen valaistus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tilojen äänimaailma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1. Customer Survey Form. 4 (5)

12. Mikä mahdollisesti vähentää käyntejäsi Oulun taidemuseossa?
Valitse kaikki omaa mielipidettäsi kuvaavat vaihtoehdot

- Ajan puute
- Muut harrastukset
- Kallis lipun hinta
- Huono sijainti
- Huonot aukioloajat
- Huono asiakaspalvelu
- Liikuntaeste
- Epäkiinnostavat näyttelyt
- Epämiellyttävät tilat ja ilmapiiri
- Mikään ei estä minua vierailemasta taidemuseossa
- Muu: _____

13. Mitä mieltä olet Oulun taidemuseon seuraavien palveluiden laadusta?

	Erittäin hyvä	Hyvä	Keskiverto	Huono	Erittäin huono	Ei kokemusta
Kahvila	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Museokauppa Ainoa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opastettu kierros taidemuseossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taidepajat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Asteikolla yhdestä viiteen, kuinka todennäköisesti suosittelit Oulun taidemuseota muille?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- En suosittelisi Suosittelen varmasti!

Appendix 1. Customer Survey Form. 5 (5)

15. Aiotko vierailla Oulun taidemuseossa myös tulevaisuudessa?

- Varmasti!
- Vain, jos siellä on uusia näyttelyitä tai aktiviteetteja
- En tiedä
- En usko
- En missään nimessä
- Muu: _____

16. Kiinnostavatko sinua digitaaliset palvelut, esim. verkkonäyttelyt ja virtuaaliset museokierrokset?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Ei ollenkaan Ehdottomasti kyllä!

17. Kuinka paljon olisit valmis maksamaan museon digitaalisista palveluista?

- Enemmän kuin tavallisesta pääsylipusta
- Saman verran kuin tavallisesta pääsylipusta
- Vähemmän kuin tavallisesta pääsylipusta
- En ole valmis maksamaan digitaalisista palveluista
- Muu: _____

Muu palaute

Haluatko sanoa jotain muuta liittyen Oulun taidemuseoon tai itse kyselyyn?

Oma vastauksesi _____

Hyväksyn että yhteystietoni kerätään Oulun taidemuseon lippupaketin arvontaa varten.

Yhteystietojasi käytetään vain lippupaketin arvontaa varten, eikä niitä yhdistetä vastauksiisi. Arvontaan osallistuminen edellyttää yhteystietojen keräämisen hyväksymistä.

- Hyväksyn
- En hyväksy

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation 1 (6)

1. How old are you?

- a. Under 10 years
- b. 10-20
- c. 21-30
- d. 31-40
- e. 41-50
- f. 51-60
- g. 61-70
- h. Over 70 years

2. Gender identity

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. I would prefer not to answer
- d. Other (please specify)

3. Place of residence

4. Your education background

- a. Basic education
- b. High school diploma
- c. Vocational education
- d. Bachelor's degree
- e. Master's degree
- f. Postgraduate education
- g. No education
- h. Other (please specify)

5. Choose the option that best describes your current employment situation

- a. Employed

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation 2 (6)

- b. Student
- c. Pensioner
- d. Entrepreneur
- e. Unemployed
- f. Other (please specify)

6. Who accompanied you on your last museum visit?

- a. I visited alone
- b. Friend(s)
- c. Spouse
- d. Family (adults and children)
- e. A school/study group
- f. Other (please specify)

7. How many times have you visited the art museum (including all of your past visits)?

- a. Once
- b. 2-4 times
- c. 5-7 times
- d. 8-10 times
- e. Over 10 times

8. On average, how much time have you spent on the art museum per visit?

- a. Less than 30 minutes
- b. 30-60 minutes
- c. 1-2 hours
- d. Over 2 hours

9. How did you find out about Oulu Museum of Art?

- a. Friends

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation 3 (6)

- b. Family
- c. School activities
- d. Facebook
- e. Instagram
- f. Youtube
- g. Luuppi's website
- h. Visit Oulu website
- i. Newspaper
- j. Museum card programme
- k. Other culture destinations
- l. Other (please specify)

10. For what reasons have you visited Oulu Museum of Art?

- a. Seeing the exhibitions
- b. School-related trips
- c. Work-related reasons
- d. Attending a programme/event
- e. My companion(s) wanted to visit
- f. Visiting the gift shop or café
- g. No particular reason
- h. Other (please specify)

11. How important are the following aspects to you when visiting an art museum?

Choose from the following options: very important, a little important, I don't know, not too important, not at all important.

- a. The variety of exhibitions
- b. Explanations of techniques used for artwork
- c. Explanations of the meaning of artworks

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation 4 (6)

- d. Accessibility of the facilities
- e. Supporting services (e.g. café)
- f. Child-friendly environment
- g. Peace and not having to feel busy
- h. Opportunity to take part in workshops
- i. The lightning of the facilities
- j. The sound design in the facilities

12. What possibly discourages you from visiting Oulu Museum of Art? (Check all that apply)

- a. Lack of time
- b. Other hobbies
- c. Expensive ticket price
- d. Bad location
- e. Bad opening hours
- f. Bad customer service
- g. Physical disability (e.g. mobility issues)
- h. Uninteresting exhibitions
- i. Unpleasant facilities and atmosphere
- j. Nothing discourages me from visiting
- k. Other (please specify)

13. What do you think about the quality of the other services offered in the art museum?

Choose from the following options: Excellent, good, average, bad, very bad, no experience.

- a. Café
- b. Gift shop
- c. Guided tour

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation 5 (6)

d. Art workshops

14. On a scale from 1 to 5, how likely are you to recommend the art museum to others?

1: I would not recommend it

5: Very likely to recommend it

15. Do you think you'd like to visit the art museum again in the future?

a. Definitely

b. If it has new exhibitions and/or activities

c. I don't know

d. Not likely

e. Absolutely not

f. Other (please specify)

16. Are you interested in digital services, for example web galleries and virtual museum tours?

1: Not really

5: Definitely yes!

17. How much would you be willing to pay for the museum's digital services?

a. More than normal ticket price

b. Same as normal ticket price

c. Less than normal ticket price

d. I would not pay for digital services

e. Other (please specify)

Appendix 2. Customer Survey Form English Translation 6 (6)

Do you want to say something else related to Oulu Museum of Art or the survey itself?

I consent that my contact information will be gathered for a raffle for Oulu Museum of Art tickets. (Your contact information will be used only for the raffle, and it won't be connected to your answers. Taking part in the raffle requires you to consent for your information to be gathered.)

- a. I consent
- b. I don't consent