



Augmented Reality Video as a Storytelling Tool in Marketing for Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis was to build an augmented reality experience for marketing. To build the AR experience research was carried out to collect information on young adults' expectations and needs for an interesting video, find the ingredients for a good storytelling and build a prototype. Based on the research, a prototype of an AR video was built. The aim was to measure the augmented reality experience for further development. A survey was conducted to gain feedback from the AR experience; how young adults felt about the AR experience and did the AR video raise interest in the play or the theatre. This project was conducted together with Kotka City Theatre. The theatre's objective in the development project was to add interest in the theatre among younger target groups and adopt new technologies for marketing purposes. The AR experience built was used in theatre's marketing campaign for a play, The Addams Family.

The data was collected by desktop research and conducting both qualitative interviews and an online survey. Service design was chosen as an approach to find out more about the young adults' target group and to design the experience in a user-centered way. The development project utilized service design process.

Based on the interviews with young adults, the most important characteristics for good video content is relatability. Providing additional information, visual expression, and a good story are valued as well. To engage young adults with the AR content, it should be implemented and produced so that it fulfills the technical quality expectations. The prototype built is a linear video, without possibility to interact. For the next initiative, interaction with the viewer and augmenting as in fitting the elements in their surroundings better, should be developed. Even though the quality and the content of the AR were criticized, half of the responders were interested in the play or theatre and considered buying a ticket. The prototype was successful in adding interest to the play or the theatre.

The findings indicate that AR should not be used just as a gimmick in marketing. In best, AR can be a storyteller for the brand messaging, engage the audience, and create great customer experiences.

Key words: AR experience, AR video, marketing for young adults, storytelling in AR, theatre, service design process

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1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing communication and advertising help brands to grow and deliver the messages to their target audiences. Marketing communication consists of different channels and communication methods like advertising, branding, packaging, PR, and more. As digital consumption increases, marketing in different media increases also. Brand storytelling should work in every channel chosen and creative people planning the communication need to find new ways to tell the story in different channels.

I work as a creative and visual designer in the field of marketing communications. My work consists of keeping up with the latest developments in advertising, marketing communications, and brand building. I specialize in storytelling and creating visuals for e.g. films for marketing purposes. In my field of profession, storytelling is in transition and constantly changing digital media environment offers new tools to communicate. Technology enables the creation of a new kind of storytelling and strengthens the customer experience. New communication channels open up opportunities for marketers and commercial messages. When using a product or service, businesses create experiences, and every action is part of the story that builds the connection with the brand (Godin 2018, 22).

My personal objectives for the master's thesis development project were to study the young adults as a target group, discover new possibilities for storytelling, experiment new technologies, make a prototype that utilizes AR technology, and learn from the results. For this thesis project I studied service design and learned how to use ZapWorks Studio to make an AR video.

Kotka City Theatre's objective in the marketing communications campaign was to reach new audiences and add interest in the theatre among younger target groups. According to Kaisa Rannanjärvi, the marketing manager of Kotka City Theatre, the theatre's typical customer is over 35 years old. The theatre was also interested in adopting new technologies in a controlled manner and demonstrating that the theatre is modern operator that is able to utilize different

digital communication channels. This project was a prototype; the theatre never expected customers to find AR videos in large numbers.

A marketing campaign which included an AR experience was conducted together with the client. The produced AR video promoted The Addams Family play. The video's storytelling was designed to attract younger target group. The qualitative interviews and desktop research were conducted to find out the needs and expectations for an engaging video and good storytelling.

I started planning the project with Rannanjärvi in the beginning of 2022. The AR experience was completed, and campaigning started in September, one week before the premiere of the play.

After the premiere, I conducted an online survey concerning the prototype to receive feedback on the prototype to find out how the target group felt about the experience and if the AR video added interest towards the promoted play or the theatre.

The research questions of the thesis are:

- What are the needs and expectations for an interesting video for young adults (20-25 year old)?
- What are the ingredients for good storytelling?
- How did the target group feel about the AR experience, did the AR video add interest in the play or the theatre?

2 AR EXPERIENCE

2.1 Definition of the AR experience

Extended reality (XR) consists of computer-generated environments that merge the physical and virtual worlds or create an entirely virtual experience for users. XR is an umbrella term for all the immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality (MR). (Breia 2022).

AR refers to added digital objects which overlay on top of the real world. Augmented reality blends the real and the virtual world, for example in Instagram, the social media platform, filters are used to add objects to photographs and moving image. One of the most well-known AR applications is Pokémon Go game (Pokémon GO 2022), where animated game characters and the real environment are mixed on the phone screen.

Another example of an application that uses AR technology is the IKEA Place app (IKEA, N.d.). The application was launched in 2017. The application is a practical tool that gives an opportunity to virtually try the product in home environment. The user can add furniture virtually into a room and see how furniture would look in the physical environment.

The AR experience utilizes technology to engage viewer with the content. The content is usually seen through digital devices (Scholz & Smith 2016, 152). The content can be viewed on a mobile device through downloadable app or using the WebAR technology. In WebAR technology augmented reality experiences can be created and published directly in mobile web browsers and the user does not require download an app to the mobile device (Zappar, 2022). WebAR utilizes QR codes or direct links to trigger the experience.

2.2 AR for marketing purposes

International brands spend vast amounts of money on marketing. According to Miri Rodriguez in year 2018 alone, AR advertising brought in \$428 million in revenue, and it's expected to raise to \$2 billion by 2022 (Rodriquez 2020, 110).

In recent years, brands have started to include augmented reality to their marketing activities as they like to appeal to their target audiences with novel and interesting content. Snap's consumer AR report predicts that by 2025, nearly 75% of the population and almost all people with smartphones will be using AR regularly (Snap Consumer AR Global Report 2021). Companies like Timberlake, Converse, Balenciaga, Coca-Cola, and McDonald's are already engaging their customers with AR technology. To find out how AR has been used in marketing purposes I searched for reference cases for young adults.

Balenciaga created virtual fitting room for shoes (Kivisense 2022). The viewer can try out the sneakers virtually and walk as if the wearing them in real-time. The AR technology has capability to detect body movements (Chengdu Kivisense Technology 2022).

Ribena is a soft drink brand that created an experience where you could "doodle" and bring everyday objects to life with interactive animated characters. Users were able to scan a QR code on the bottle with their mobile devices, which took them to app store where they could download and install the app. With the app, users were able to generate 3D animated characters that interact with the object and other objects within the devices frame. This Doodle your World AR app became very successful. According to Diverse Interactive, the app exceeded its target by 184%. In four months, the app was downloaded 46,000 times, 30% of these users purchased at least two bottles of the product, and over half of users shared campaign content on Facebook to estimated audience of five million. Diverse Interactive suggests that gamification and shareability of this campaign were keys to its success. (Diverse Interactive, N.d.)

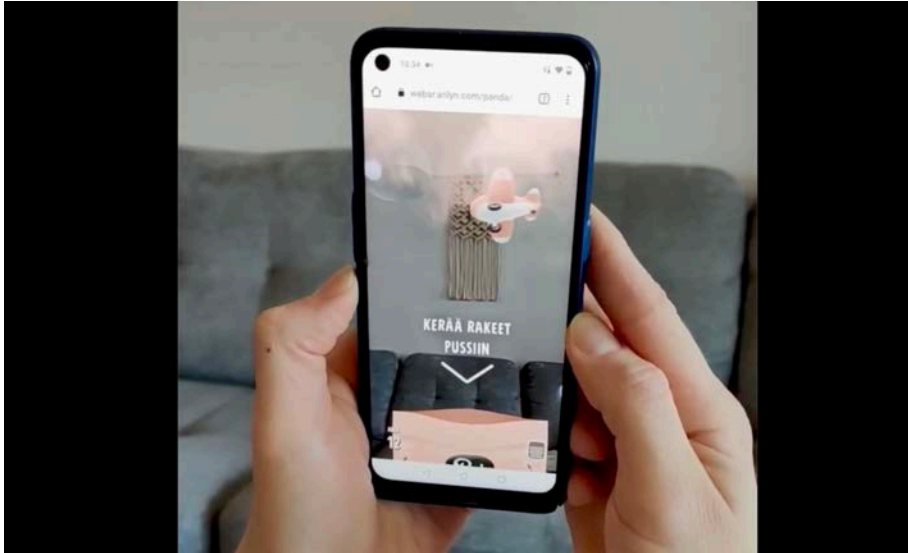
In Finland, consumer brands have used extended reality in their marketing to engage customers and experience their brand and product in novel ways. Brands like Panda, Kotipizza, Arla, and Valio have engaged customers with AR.

The Finnish confectionery brand Panda used AR to launch their Easter chocolate eggs. According to Arilyn's blog, in Easter 2019, the augmented surprise chocolate egg got almost half a million scans in a few weeks. Inside of the chocolate egg was an image that user could scan with Arilyn augmented reality app. The image activated the AR experience and virtual panda character leaped out of the picture (Picture 1). With every scan the user saw different events: panda watering flowers, painting Easter eggs or moving around. The client, Panda confectionery, felt that AR provided them with a unique selling point in a very saturated product segment. At that time AR chocolate egg was novel and differentiated Panda the from competitors. (Gullichsen 2019).



PICTURE 1. Screen capture of a Panda augmented easter egg experience (Gullichsen 2019)

In year 2022, the surprise within the chocolate egg experience was updated. This time it was designed to be a game, not just something that users can view but also interact with. The idea in the game was to catch easter candies. More candies the player gained, the higher levels they got (Picture 2).



PICTURE 2. Screen capture of a Panda extended Easter egg game (Mathlin 2022a)

According to Anna Willberg, the former Marketing Manager of Panda confectionery at Orkla, the goal of development was gamification and making the content more entertaining and engaging, which would increase the time the consumers spend with the brand. Willberg also added, that for the AR content to remain relevant, it needs to be updated regularly and extended reality will play a big role in consumer engagement in years to come. It offers unique added value, and Orkla is evaluating whether XR is something they should include more permanently into their toolbox. (Mathlin 2022a).

Other Finnish brand which has used XR in marketing is Kotipizza, the Nordic's largest pizza restaurant chain. In 2021 Kotipizza added scannable QR code to the pizza packaging box. The experience was created using Arilyn's WebXR technology that does not require additional application on mobile device to run the experience. The code opened a virtual showroom where the user could virtually walk around a restaurant and learn about Kotipizza's sustainable business. According to Kotipizza's Marketing Director Rainer Lindqvist, Kotipizza

wanted to add intelligence to the pizza packaging and tell a story about company's sustainable values and create a brand experience through XR. He added that communicating about sustainable issues can be challenging and extended reality as a platform was a great solution for Kotipizza. (Mathlin 2022b).

Augmented reality is still a novelty that attracts customers who find this kind of experience fun, engaging and memorable. It is likely that the novelty value will fade when AR in advertising develops into a common marketing technique (Engine Creative Agency 2022). When the novelty fades, it is important to use AR in ways that it interacts with the customers and brings value also in the future.

2.3 Building a captivating AR experience

When I started to work on my development project for Kotka City Theatre I wanted to learn how to build an experience that engages the audience and creates value. This kind of project had never been done in the Kotka City Theatre, and the work had to start by defining the requirements for an engaging experience.

Scholz et al. (2016) have created a framework for the marketers where they defined the building blocks of AR experiences. The successful AR experience must meet communication needs and address the right target audience. They also describe how to design the content to optimize the overall experience. (Scholz & Smith 2016, 149-161).

When designing an AR experience Scholz et al. (2016, 153) suggest following four steps:

- Define your target audience and communications objectives (campaign goals)
- Determine how the AR layer will be activated for users (trigger)
- Regulate how, and by whom, the AR layer will be furnished with targets and AR content (content contribution)
- Establish how the AR layer will integrate with specific social and physical contexts (context integration).

The early adopters of new technologies could be a suitable target audience for some AR campaigns, as these consumers are more likely to download and use the applications required for participating in the AR experience. (Scholz et al. 2016, 153).

In this master's thesis development project, the client and I wanted to get as many viewers as possible, and I decided to use WebAR, a technology where augmented reality experiences can be created and published directly to the mobile web browser without the need to download a specific app to one's mobile device. In the project, WebAR and QR code were used for triggering the content. The QR code was possible to place in a poster, newspaper ad, in space like the theatre entrance or distribute as a link through social media platforms such as Meta's Facebook or Instagram.

Fourthly Scholz et al. focuses on how the AR content is integrated with passive AR ingredients (i.e., bystanders and background). In this thesis' project, background could not be known because the user could view the experience in any place and in real-life through the mobile device. As an addition and to reach the right atmosphere for The Addams Family play, the theatre set designer designed an installation to the entry hallway of Kotka City Theatre where users could scan the QR code and view the augmented video content in a controlled space in the physical environment (Picture 3). The installation was first tested and later on build to match with the same setups in the play to give more immersive experience for viewing the AR video.



PICTURE 3. A test version of the AR installation in the entry of Kotka City Theatre

2.3.1 Entangling augmented reality

Scholz et al. suggest ways how marketers can create value through augmented reality. They recommend to craft experiences that generate value for both consumers and marketers. To create great AR experience, marketers should think the experience itself; nourishing engagement, the target audiences, AR aligning with the marketing program, neutralizing threats, goals, leveraging brand meanings, and enticing consumers. (Scholz et al. 2016, 156).

According to Scholz et al. AR should be more driven by consumer-experience than technology. The understanding of the consumer should guide the experience that AR technology enables. The technology should not come first and only be a gimmick, the content, and the place where the experience is triggered are important too. (Scholz et al. 2016, 156).

In this thesis the idea was to focus on storytelling, for whom the AR was built for and how the content would fill the needs and expectations of the target group. I studied the possibilities in Zappar's tool ZapWorks Studio and in WebAR technology, looked at the resources we have, and based on that made decision on the technical production. It was also important to find out from the target audience what kind of content they would prefer and after producing the prototype also ask their feedback on the AR experience. Before the execution, it was important to understand the user and how his/her expectations and needs could be filled.

Scholz et al. also suggest that the marketers should nourish the consumer engagement. The engagement with the customers can be reached without producing the most expensive AR campaign. Thirdly, Scholz discusses that the target audience should be expanded from early adopters of new technologies and opinion leaders to people who are likely to create additional awareness and expand the reach of an AR campaign through sharing the experience in their social network. The AR should be integrated as part of overall marketing program to get the most out of it. When the AR experience is integrated to the marketing communications campaign, it can provide unique benefits. (Scholz et al. 2016, 158).

In this thesis the AR experience video was used as a sneak peek of the actual play. The events in the story can also be found in the play and the video showcases the characters that are seen in the posters and other communication materials of the play.

Scholz et al. also remind about the threats to the brand. If the AR is experienced outside in the streets, the marketers should consider what is the best placement for it, so that its physical environment supports their brand image. For example, purchasing the media for outdoor ads so that other, possibly competing brands cannot take the credit of the experience by showing in the background. AR installations located in stores can also have disadvantages. If the store is crowded with bystanders, and the visibility is not good, the experience might have an adverse effect on brand.

It is important to think about the goals, for example if the objective is brand awareness, the AR experience should have qualities that enhance it, such as location in public place. If the goal is in building community, the AR should be interactive, giving the users possibility to interact with the brand.

The optimal AR experience should be in line with the brand image and the creative design should contribute to the integrated marketing campaign.

2.3.2 Storytelling and the AR video

The main goal in the marketing video was to create interest and evoke positive emotions towards the play through storytelling for young adults. Based on the conducted interview the client and I selected a theme that young adults could relate to. The video's narrative relates to the theme *what is love*, and what does it mean to the different family members of the play. Youth is often associated with conflicts with parents, self-searching, and experiences of first love. This theme opens possibilities for viewers to think about their own families, thoughts they have about love, and being different from each other's. Every character in the film gives their own perspective to love.

The customer experience is in the center of any marketing communications activities. According to Matt Watkinson, the customer experience is every

interaction that a person has with the business, its products or services at any time or place (Watkinson 2013, 16).

To create great customer experiences, the marketers need to reflect customer's identity. Their beliefs and values play an important role in their behavior as customers. Experiences that strengthen people's self-image and resonate with their personal values and create brand loyalty. (Watkinson 2013, 35).

New kind of storytelling can also face resistance in the audience. If the execution and idea are too ordinary, then most likely the message will be ignored by the audience. But in the best case, the storytelling can engage new audiences.

Because of the changing media environment, also advertising has changed, and brands have realized that telling stories has become important to their future success. Especially when targeting for young adults, brands need to tell their story so that it connects with the audience on an emotional level. (Britton 2015, 232)

As a creative, I am interested in the ingredients of a great story and how to tell a compelling story. Every story has a beginning and an end. In between there are events that drive the story forward. Storytelling can be found in different mediums, meaning it is not always a written, linear story. According to Jeff Lyons (Lyons 2016) storytelling and writing are not the same thing. Stories do not need writers because stories can for example be danced, painted, sculptured, mimed, or spoken. Pen is not the only instrument to tell a story. There were stories in oral history even before written language was invented. This proves that stories do not necessary need writers; they only need storytellers. Lyons stated: "The function of storytelling is to teach ourselves about what it means to be human."

According to McKee, the best way to persuade someone is to tell a compelling story. Great storytelling is memorable, created by harnessing imagination and the principles of a well-told story. McKee suggests that a good story expresses how

and why life changes. It starts with a situation that is relatively in balance but then something happens. McKee calls it the “inciting incident” – something that throws life out of balance. Then the story goes on and describes how to restore the balance. (McKee 2003, 51-55).

AR is a novel tool to tell stories and create experiences. To create storytelling for multi-sensory experience, the surroundings of the customers physical environments are important. When designing the story in AR, the elements are laid on top of real-life environment, so that AR elements are a part of real-life surroundings and situation where the story is told. At best, AR can be visually engaging and create unique and memorable experiences.

3 THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WITH KOTKA CITY THEATRE

3.1 Collaboration and Kotka City Theatre objectives

In spring 2022, I made a contract with Kotka City Theatre to create a prototype of an AR experience for a marketing campaign of a play. Kotka City Theatre's objectives in the marketing communications campaign were raising interest in the theatre among younger target groups. The theatre was also interested in adopting new technologies in a controlled manner and demonstrating that the theatre is a modern operator.

The marketing campaign promoted the play *The Addams Family*. Video format was chosen as the production method since the theatre already had its own resources for video production that could be utilized. In June 2022 I conducted interviews to gain information on target groups' expectations and needs to build the prototype of an AR experience. The final video material was captured in August 2022.

As desktop research I analyzed Kotka City Theatre's recent customer survey. Qualitative interviews helped to understand the customer target group and survey feedback from the AR experience: how did they feel about the content and did the AR experience add interest in the play or the theatre overall.

3.2 Kotka City Theatre's audience and ticket sales

According to Rannanjärvi, Kotka City Theatre's typical customer is over 35 years of age, and the theatre wants to reach new audiences. More viewers are needed, and it is good to get young people interested in the theatre, to ensure they have viewers for the plays in years to come. According to Lippu.fi study (Lippu.fi Kotkan Kaupunginteatteri raportti 2021) between the years 2018-2021 the overall number of tickets sold has been decreasing. Especially the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect on ticket sales. In 2018, Kotka City Theatre sold 28,518 tickets and three years later in 2021 the amount of sold tickets was reduced to

7,536. Starting from 2020, many plays were cancelled and the theatre was closed. Year 2021, was even more difficult for the theatre ticket sales.

The tickets sales in online store increased from year 2018 to 2021. The increase in buying online can also be seen in the fact that tickets are bought earlier than before. In year 2021, 1.56% of the buyers who bought tickets online were 20-24 years old. (Lippu.fi Kotkan Kaupunginteatteri raportti 2021).

In the marketing plan for the Addams Family play, more traditional and new channels were introduced to engage customers. Usually, the marketing campaigns in Kotka City Theatre consist of print, outdoor ads, social media advertising, and newsletters. Influencer marketing and AR experience were included to the campaign in the fall of 2022. To attract the certain target group, 20- to 25-year-olds, new way of communication was created. The theatre wanted to try augmented reality as a way to attract younger target group.

3.3 Target group's social media consumption

The use of smartphones is becoming more common every year. According to Finnish telecommunications operator DNA, 98% of Finns own a smartphone (DNA digitaaliset elämäntavat tutkimus 2021). To reach young adults, marketers should be present in the platforms these young adults spend their time in.

Rannanjärvi chose Facebook and Instagram as the social media channels for the campaign. Kotka City Theatre already had social media presence in these channels. According to DNA's study, 53% of 16- to 24-year-olds use Instagram Stories in daily basis and 55% of 16- to 24-year-olds use Youtube, 52% Tiktok and 71% Snapchat. Facebook use is moderately smaller with 43%. (DNA digitaaliset elämäntavat tutkimus 2021).

4 SERVICE DESIGN APPROACH AND METHODS

4.1 Service design

In this development project with Kotka City Theatre, the data and insights needed to be collected to better understand the expectations and needs of the target group. The aim was also to measure the AR experience for further development.

The theatre wanted to attract new customers and create value for them. There are points of convergence in marketing and service design. Marketing organisations want to build relationships with customers to co-create value and service design puts the stakeholders at the center of design process and preferably co-designs with them (Stickdorn et al. 2021, 50). Service design's toolset and iterative approach considers stakeholders needs and allows testing before making larger investments (Stickdorn et al. 2021, 15).

I selected service design as an approach because I wanted to find out more about the customers and design the experience in a user-centered way. According to Stickdorn et al. (2021, 36), it is crucial to understand of the habits, culture, social context, and motivation of users. The customers should be at the center of the service design process. When the customers are involved in the process, it is more likely that the service evokes co-ownership which in turn will result in increased customer loyalty and long-term engagement (Stickdorn et al. 2021, 39).

Service design is an emerging field and there is no one single definition for it. According to Stickdorn et al., service design is a new way of thinking and an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates different methods and tools from various disciplines. (Stickdorn et al. 2021, 28-29). Service design is an iterative approach that focuses on solving the problem or opportunity. That is why service design process usually start with inspecting the needs of the customer. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 14).

Service design enables building of a concrete prototype, which can be used to gain additional information for the development work. In service design, the aim is to build the models quickly and testing the concrete model, i.e., the prototype, with actual customers. Testing with prototype helps to see if the service works, is easy to use and has the desirable effect. (Ojasalo et al. 2015, 78).

4.1.1 Service design process

To conduct thesis project, I used service design process described by Juha Tuulaniemi (Tuulaniemi 2011, 128). Tuulaniemi's (Figure 1) service design process consists of five different parts: defining, studying/researching, design, service production, and evaluation.

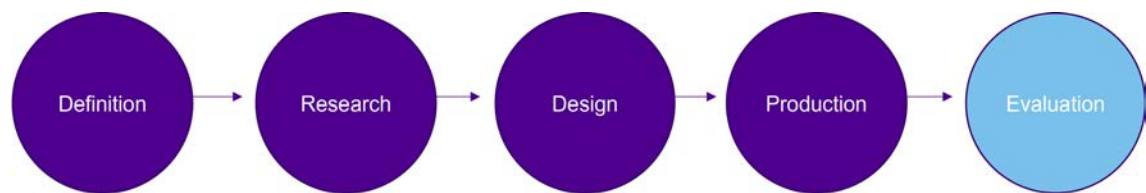


FIGURE 1. Service design process by Juha Tuulaniemi. (Tuulaniemi 2011, modified)

The process starts by defining the problem the development project is set to solve. The aim of this part of the design process is to understand the organization and its objectives. The second part consists of the research. The joint understanding of the development target, operating environment, resources and needs of the users is built by interviewing and discussing. In this part, the service providers strategic objectives will be defined. The third part consists of ideating and concepting the solution or possible solutions and testing it with clients. The indicators for service production will also be defined. The fourth part is service production that comprises the creation of the service concept to be tested and developed further. The last part is the evaluation in which the success of the development process is assessed, and the service will be further developed according to the experiences. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 128).

4.2 Qualitative interviews and survey

To gather the insights from the target group, I used qualitative interviews and survey as the data collection method. Traditionally research methods are divided into two different types: quantitative and qualitative research (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 104). Typical qualitative research methods are theme, open, and group interviews. I chose semi-structured interview as my data collection method. In such interview, the basic structure for questions is planned but there is room to deepen the discussions depending on what the interviewee was most interested in.

When using qualitative methods, the number of interviewees is significantly smaller than in quantitative research but provides plenty of material for analysis. This way more information on narrow areas could be gained for better understanding of the phenomenon. (Ojasalo et al. 2006, 105). In the development project, the subjects were young adults at the age of 20-25.

Interviews were recorded so that it would be easy for the interviewer to return to the interview situation again. Also the recording serves as a memory and as an aid in the interpretation of different situations. In addition, listening to the interview again makes it possible to find new perspectives or tones of speech. (Ojasalo et al. 2006, 105.) All respondents were asked the permission for recording.

After the interviews the material was transcribed and analysed by mapping and finding certain themes that were raised from the interviews and were common to several interviewees.

The data collected and recordings were stored securely at Kotka City Theatre. The names of the interviewees were not published and all personal data will be disposed after completing the thesis project in 2023. I analyzed the material by studying themes common to several interviewees.

Additionally, a qualitative survey was conducted to gather feedback from the prototype, the AR experience. The survey was made with TAMK's recommended digital survey tool LimeSurvey and it was anonymous. The survey data is secured in LimeSurvey and will be disposed after completing the thesis project in 2023. The survey included open answer fields to create a deeper understanding. The link to the survey was shared on social media to existing customers of the theatre and as a sponsored ad to young adults. A total of 16 people answered the survey with all answer fields filled in. The survey was available between 17th of September and 8th of October in 2022.

5 THE DESIGN PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AR EXPERIENCE

5.1 Qualitative interviews

The objective of qualitative interviews was to gather information on target groups expectations and needs in order to build the prototype of AR: the needs and expectations for an engaging video and the ingredients for good storytelling.

Interviews were conducted as phone or online interviews using Microsoft Teams. I interviewed five participants who were all over 18-years-old. The interviews were held in June 2022 in Finnish and took around 30-45 minutes each. The interview questions related to marketing communications, videos ads and qualities of a good video ad. The interviewees were also asked about their spare time activities, habits in getting information on culture events, and theatre visit related questions. After interviewing five people I noticed that the answers started to repeat, and new interviews would no longer bring additional information regarding the research questions. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Interview analysis

According to interview results, for the young adults the most important characteristics for good video content is relatability. Providing additional information, visual expression and a good story are valued next best.

In some of the interviewees watching YouTube and longer video content was emphasized. Advertisements in newspapers were also noticed, as well as outdoor advertising. Each of the interviewees use social media and the mobile phone to search for information.

I asked the interviewees to name the best video ad or any interesting ad they have seen and can remember. For the responders it was hard to remember any advertising. Snickers chocolate brand ad was mentioned, it was remembered

because of the humor that the ad contained. Sporting events ads were also mentioned. One responder felt that those ads had big emotional charge and supporting your homeland resonated more than commercial advertisement. If a video is instantly recognized as an ad promoting products and services, it was not appealing for some interviewees.

The interest for the video or ad would rise more on something contemporary and modern that is easy to relate to. The same applied to the theatre plays, modern times are easier to understand than things that happened in the past such as in the 19th century.

One of the responders remembered annoying ads, and the emotions they evoked. The ads that the interviewee remembered was Coca-Cola Christmas ads. Advertising created a warm atmosphere and feeling of belonging in a community.

I asked the interviewees about a good and engaging video; what does it consist of. The interviewees appreciated a good story. The beginning of the video was important, it needed to have a hook, something interesting to make the viewer watch the content to the end.

“I like that some expectations are set in the beginning of the video and expectations are met in the end.”

The video should differentiate from other videos to make it interesting. It was also pointed out that the story should be realistic and true to life, something that the viewer could relate to. Finding out new information was a nice addition.

Animations, effects and use of music were appreciated as well. Also, according to the interviews changing the balance in those elements keeps the viewer interested.

One of the questions concerned the definition of a good experience. As a part of a great experience the novelty and challenge in the experience were valued. The experience should evoke emotions like joy, sadness, empathy, or excitement. The experience should lift above one's everyday life and be something to be remembered. It was also important that the interest stays until the end for more captivating experience.

The interviews suggest that young adults make decisions in the short term. They are thinking what they should do tomorrow or the upcoming weekend. Only for the most interesting events such as festivals, events happening on winter holidays, etc. tickets are bought well in advance.

“Things have to happen right away and not in a week”

Based on the interviews, for the AR video we selected a theme that young adults could relate to using humour and tried to make the video as memorable as possible. The video was a teaser of the play and provided additional information.

5.2 Production: building the prototype

The work started in the beginning of 2022. I had meetings with Rannanjärvi and planned the structure of the campaign concerning all the medias that AR was to be implemented. Rannanjärvi helped in finding interviewees for the interviews and the survey. Kotka City Theatre acquired the license for ZapWorks. As a technique, we decided to use isolated video (alpha channel) filmed on green screen. The theatre had the capacity to film a video; they had the filming equipment and a location for the film shoot, so there were no extra costs for filming. A freelancer edited the selected clips, and I implemented the clips in ZapWorks.

The Addams Family is a musical comedy and a love story about a family with oddities. It is based on the characters created by Charles Addams, which he developed in his cartoons in the 1930s. The story was adapted to a television series in the 1960s. The Addams Family premiered on Broadway in 2010.

The play for Kotka City Theatre was directed by Katja Krohn. In the story the Addams family's teenage daughter Wednesday falls in love with a boy and asks her father Gomez not to tell her mother Morticia. The father must keep his daughter's secret from his wife. Families of the young couple meet for the first time for dinner in Addams' mansion, the audience will find out if young people's love will come true and who gets to keep whom. (Kotka City Theatre 2022)

5.2.1 Testing the video

I did desktop research on possible tools for making the AR video and started to experiment with ZapWorks Studio application. ZapWorks was chosen for the tool because it enables the use of WebAR technology. Using WebAR is more user-friendly than having to download a specific app for viewing the experience. The user can scan the QR code and launch the AR experience from the mobile device and view it in mobile device's browser.

To my experience using WebAR can reduce the possibilities of using of more advanced AR functions because of the development state of the tool. At the time the AR experience was produced, the AR experiences seemed to work better when using an app that controls the experience. An app downloaded to the mobile device can control the functions, such as placement of the video. Mobile devices browsers differ from each other and to make technically coherent and advanced product, the production needs vast amount of testing. To get as many viewers as possible, I had to remove one immersive function to make an experience that would work in most of the mobile devices. The function I had to remove was image tracking. In image tracking digital content anchors to target image, in this case, the QR code.

Zappar, the company behind the app, provided tutorial for building the AR video. The tutorials were not complete and there were some issues that were difficult to solve. I was also tutored by an expert who was more familiar in using ZapWorks Studio.

Kotka City Theatre's technical crew filmed the first test video, and the video was imported to ZapWorks Studio. The first demo video's length was one minute and 16 seconds. The video uploaded without problems, and it could be viewed from mobile device without delays. Technically things that needed to consider in the testing phase were the image quality, sound, and the length of the video clip. It was also noticed that the video should be anchored to the surroundings to make the experience more tangible. If the videoclip was not anchored to the real-life surroundings and moves when user is moving the mobile device, the experience does not feel as immersive as it could. In this case the clip is only floating on top of the mobile devices screen without strong attachment to the real-life environment.

5.2.2 Prototype

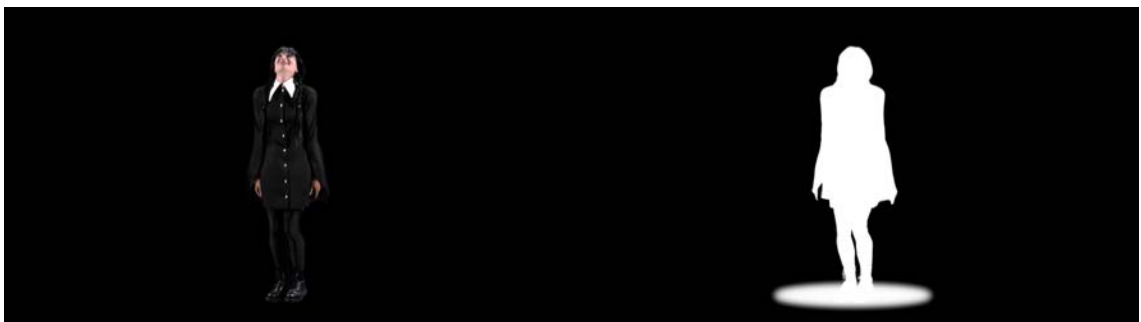
The filming day for the final film product was on 17th of August in 2022. The three separate clips were filmed in Kotka City Theatre (Picture 4). Behind the filmed character was a green cloth as a backdrop. To get the green screen fabric look as smooth as possible, the lights were fixed a few times. Also, the sound levels were tested before starting to film. The length of all clips was less than 60 seconds. While filming the director selected the best clips from each performer. The clips were edited into one film clip for easier implementation for ZapWorks Studio. The video footage was colour graded and graphics and sound effects were added. ZapWorks Studio supports alpha video i.e. a video which has areas that are transparent. To make the clip suitable for ZapWorks Studio, I had to transform it into a side-by-side alpha masked video. The colour channels of the video were arranged to the left hand side of the frame, and the alpha channel on the right hand side. With the produced clip the character becomes a solid white shape (Picture 5). After making the arrangements the video was ready to be imported to ZapWorks Studio (Picture 6). Though in the testing phase it was noticed the video should be anchored to the surroundings to make the experience more tangible, it was difficult to make it work. When the video was tested with multiple different mobile devices and browsers the video did not appear in the correct place in the screen of a mobile device or the video did not play at all. Therefore, decision was made not to use the anchoring so that many people as possible could view the video from their personal mobile devices. Instead, we

added a shadow underneath the video to make the character fit more into the surrounding.

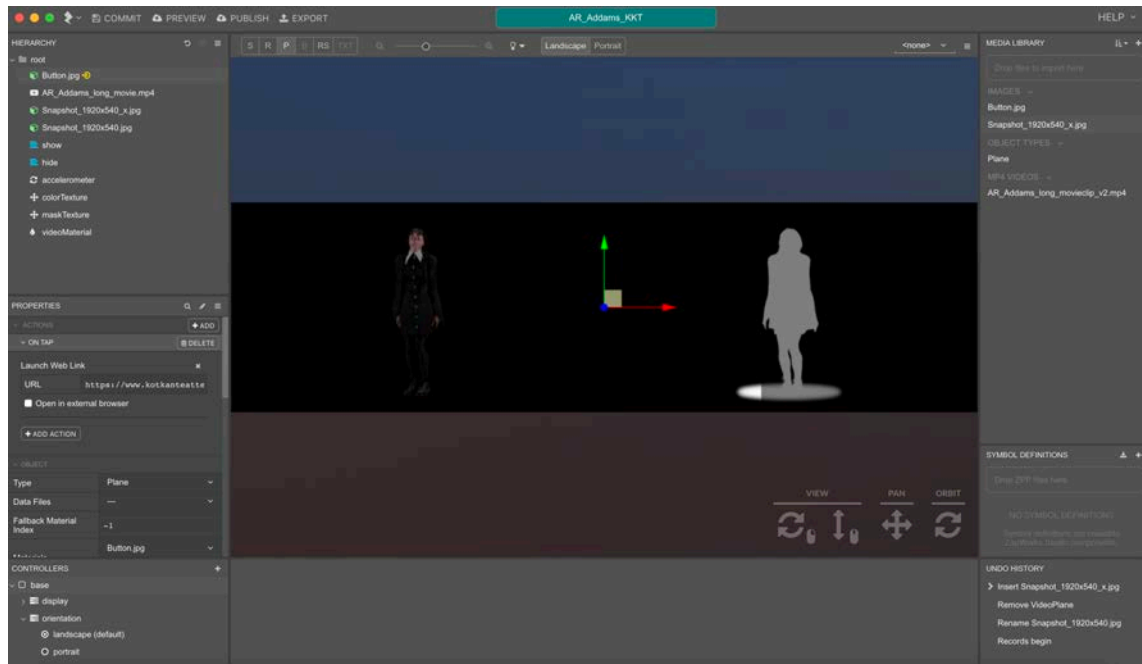
After watching the video, the user could click the image or the button in the end that led to Kotka City theatre's landing page for The Addams Family play. At the website the user could get more information on the play and buy tickets to it.



PICTURE 4. Mumma performing for her video

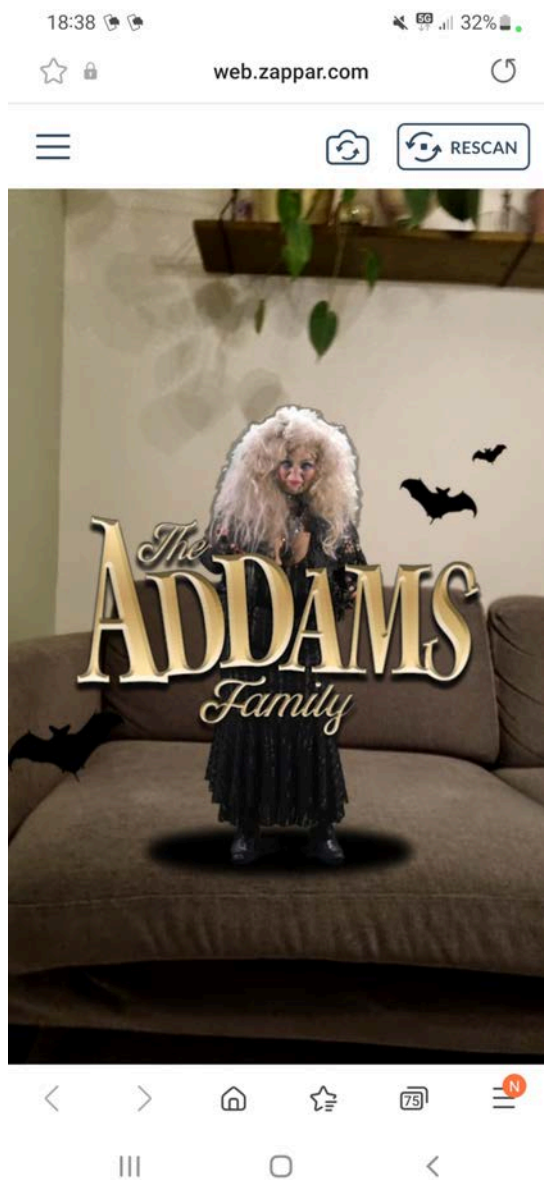


PICTURE 5. Screen capture from preparing the video clip for ZapWorks Studio



PICTURE 6. Adjusting the video in ZapWorks studio. A screen capture from for ZapWorks Studio application

The final AR video was released on the 2nd of September and the marketing campaign started right after that (Picture 7). The active campaign period ended after two weeks, and the AR video was well-received. To see the video, the user could scan the QR code or click a weblink with mobile device (Picture 8).



PICTURE 7. Screen capture of the video, viewed through a mobile phone



PICTURE 8. The trigger QR code to view the video in mobile device

5.2.3 Executions

The AR video was promoted in different channels such as Instagram, Facebook, newspaper ads, and in theatre's newsletters (Picture 9, 10, 11). Weblink to the AR video was published on Kotka City Theatre's website and the QR code was promoted by the installation in theatre's lounge area. The installation was carried out by Kotka City Theatre's experts.



PICTURE 9. Screen capture of a Facebook ad (Kotka City Theatre, 2022)



PICTURE 10. Screen capture of an Instagram ad (Kotka City Theatre, 2022)



PICTURE 11. Screen capture of an Instagram ad (Kotka City Theatre, 2022)

5.3 Evaluation of the process

The projects scheduling went well. The marketing campaign with the AR experience started a week before the premiere and the prototype was finished in time. During the project there were technical difficulties with ZapWorks Studio and some issues like attaching the video to the background could not be solved in the given time and were left out of the final AR experience.

Interviews helped in finding out the needs and expectations from the young adults. The project team could design the video based on the insights from the interviewees. I also gained additional information on how they get information on culture events, motivations, and their habits in visiting the theatre plays.

The people at the theatre were pleased with the AR video and with the development process. For the video's director Katja Krohn making an AR video was a positive experience. It was novel way to advertise a play.

5.4 Results

After the prototype was ready, the users tested the AR experience. I collected the feedback using an online survey. The respondents tested the AR video in their own environment, not at the installation in the theatre and the theme *What is love* was not mentioned to the respondents. The responders did not know that the content of the video was related to the play *The Addams Family*.

Kotka City Theatre collected the respondents to the survey from local networks and using paid social media advertising. Only some of the respondents were existing customers of Kotka City Theatre or a target group directly interested in Kotka City Theatre.

A total of 16 people responded to the survey, with all answer points filled in. The target group of 20- to 25-year-olds were more aware of the latest technologies,

and were also more demanding than other respondents in terms of content and technical features.

According to the feedback of the young adults, the videos were visually interesting, but some pointed out that the image quality and sound could have been improved. Other improvement suggestions included that video and the characters would attach better to the real environment.

Young adults would have improved the content by making shorter clips, adding a freedom to choose which performance to watch next, and an introduction to the content so that the viewer would better understand the context of the clips.

Though young adults were critical of the content, around half of them were interested in the play or the theatre after seeing the video. For some it was weird to see the theatre acting style on a video format, but for some the video was a refreshing way to see the characters coming to life.

Young adults were asked if they considered buying a ticket to the play after watching the video. Again, nearly around half of the responders considered buying a ticket to the play. One of the responders stated:

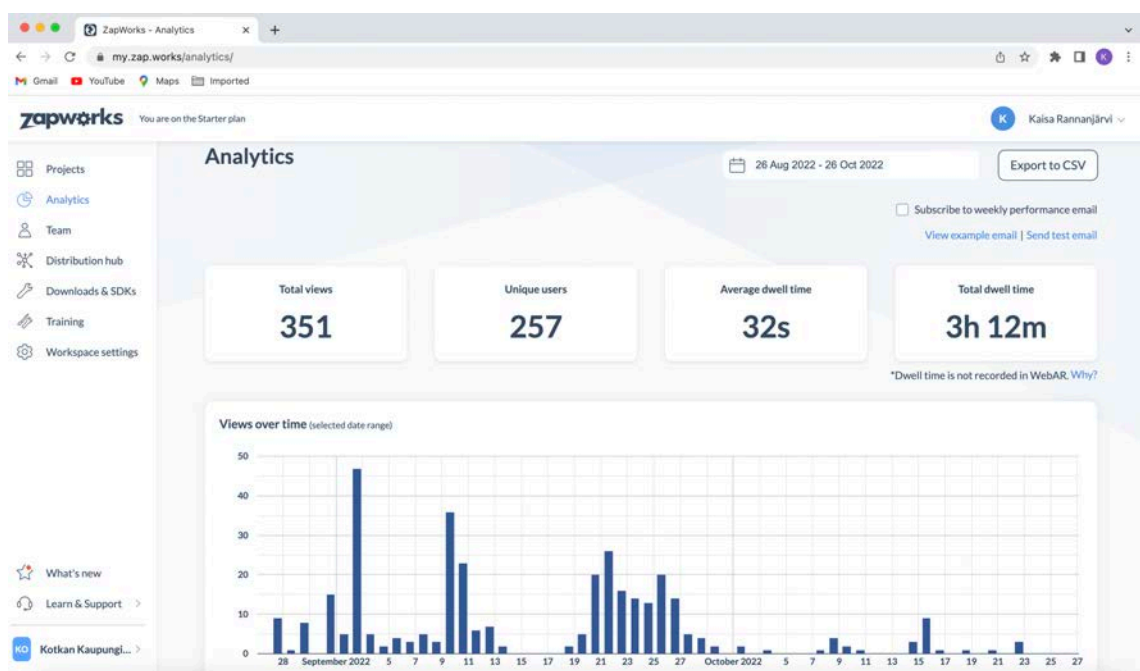
“Yes, because just making a video creates the impression that the production has been invested in.”

Other users, 26- to 46-year-olds, preferred the experience more compared to young adults. Although the video was made to engage young adults, according to the survey, it also entertained over 25-year-olds.

AR video is a nice addition for those who already go to the theatre. This kind of content works as a teaser as motivation to buy a ticket to a play. All in all, the videos get a positive reaction, which means that it is worth continuing to use them in the next marketing campaigns as well. The responders felt that Kotka City Theatre is modern operator and open for new ideas.

The theatre did not expect customers to find the AR videos in large numbers. The most important thing for the theatre was to get in touch with the new technology in a controlled manner and the fact that the theatre can show that they are a modern operator that makes use of new technologies.

According to ZapWorks analytics, The Addams Family AR experience had total of 351 views and 257 of those were unique users (Picture 12).



PICTURE 12. Screen capture from ZapWorks analytics page

According to Rannanjärvi, the customers at the theatre received the installation well, but they did not know how to connect the AR video to e.g., their social media photos. The customers posted on social media anyway, so the marketing activity was successful on that part as well.

Actors working at the theatre were very interested in the AR and it was easy to inspire them to join in the AR filming. The new technology naturally raised questions, but they received good instructions and were thus able to prepare for the filming very well.

6 DISCUSSION

According to the interviews of young adults, the most important characteristics for the good video content is relatability. Providing additional information, visual expression, and a good story are rated next best.

To get young adults more engaged with the content of the AR, it should be implemented so that it fulfills the technical quality expectations. The AR production must consider the balance between the file size and quality. If the file size is too big, it will take more time to upload, and the viewer must wait longer to see the content. This needs to be thought more in the planning phase and it has an effect on the length and quality of video. The prototype was now a video, without possibility to interact. For the next initiative I recommend interaction with the viewer and augmenting as in fitting the elements in the viewer's surroundings better.

Even though the quality and content were criticized in the survey, half of the responders were interested in the play or Kotka City Theatre or considered to buy a ticket to the play. The prototype was successful in adding interest to the play and the theatre.

Scholz et al. (2016, 153) design steps helped to prepare the AR experience and the campaign goal, adding interest to the theatre was achieved. I tested and made a plan how the AR was used and triggered by the user. With Kotka City Theatre we planned the distribution and made a physical connection by creating an installation to the theatre.

Prototype was designed to be user friendly so that the content opened with a QR code or a direct link. There was no need to download an app such as Arilyn to the phone.

When viewing the AR in the user's environment instead of an installation, the experience can be lacking. The novelty of seeing a character in one's own environment is no longer a new experience for young adults. For the next initiative, I recommend to continue making the installation. Viewing the content in controlled environment, instead of user's own environment, increases engagement with the experience. The installation could be thought of as a special implementation of outdoor advertising, e.g., at the town market, in which case it would reach people passing by.

New ways are needed in attracting people to see the theatre plays. Getting people on the customer path to buy tickets to the play is an outcome of many different areas. According to the interviews, the theatre should consider what kind of play they produce, think about the channels that reach young adults and the content that fits the chosen channel. The theatre could consider lower the ticket prices for young adults e.g., students. The interviews implied that young adults' friends or family usually suggested to go to a theatre play. The respondents that did not have such connection tend not to go at all.

As an AR production takes a lot of resources, it is worth using experienced professionals to avoid technical problems although the cost might be considerable high in novel AR productions. At best, AR can be a storyteller for the brand messaging, engage users, and create great customer experiences. In marketing, AR is not as its best when used as a gimmick but rather when used to deepen the brand messaging. A great experience creates interaction with the customer.

According to Godin, when it comes for example to style, technology, or innovations, most people like what they already have. They want to do what others are doing, and they are not actively seeking novelty. Some of the people are neophiliacs, the first one to try novel things. Marketers should try to attract the neophiliacs that search for novelty and tension and have the endless search for better (Godin 2018, 157-159).

Storytelling is a creative exploration towards the unknown and gives birth to something new. Ideas and channels that work today will not necessarily work tomorrow; as a marketer or creative designer, you must always look for something new.

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APPENDICES

1 (2)

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. Viestit, sisällöt ja mainonta

Oletko kohdannut teatteri/Kotkan kaupunginteatterin mainontaan?

- Jos olet niin missä, mitä pidit siitä ja muistatko mitä siinä näytelmää mainostettiin?

Muistatko nähneesi videomuotoista mainontaa viime aikoina, mikä on jäänyt mieleen?

Mikä on mielestäsi kaikkien paras näkemäsi videomuotoinen mainos?

- Miksi?

Millainen on mielestäsi hyvä video?

- Mitä elementtejä siinä on?
- Onko siinä esimerkiksi musiikkia, muita ääniä, yllätyksellisyyttä, tunteita, kiinnostava tarina?
- Kuinka pitkä se on?

Mitkä näistä videon ominaisuuksia ovat tärkeimpiä? Valitse kolme tärkeintä ominaisuutta.

- koskettava
- minulle sopiva eli samaistuttava
- jännittävä
- lisätietoa antava
- mielenkiintoinen visuaalinen ilmaisu
- siinä on hyvä tarina

Kuvaile omin sanoin mikä on hyvä kiinnostava elämys tai kokemus. Mistä se koostuu?

2. Vapaa-aika ja tottumukset

Mistä saat lisätietoa sinua kiinnostavista tapahtumista Kotkassa tai omalla paikkakunnallasi?

- Jos et ole hakenut näihin liittyvää tietoa, mistä lähtisit ensi hakemaan?

Käytätkö tiedon hakuun puhelintasi, läppäriä tai muuta laitetta?

Millaista tietoa jaat tapahtumasta ystävilleesi puhelimellasi ja miksi?

2 (2)

Kokeiletko mielelläsi uutta teknologiaa esim. lataatko appeja saadaksesi uusia kokemuksia?

- Jos et, miksi et?
- Minkälaisia?

Mihin näistä kulttuuritapahtumista menisit mieluiten ja miksi. Valitse kolme tärkeintä.

- taidenäyttely
- teatteri
- elokuvateatteri
- musiikkikonsertti (keikka)
- Miksi juuri nämä?

3. Teatterissa käynti

Käytkö teatterissa? Oletko käynyt viimeisen kahden vuoden aikana teatterissa?

KYLLÄ

- Miksi ja mikä teatterissa viehättää?
- Koska viimeksi kävit teatterissa?
- Minkä näytöksen kävit katsomassa ja mitä mieltä olit kokemuksesta?
- Mikä saisi sinut suosittelemaan kavereillesi näytelmää?
- Mikä on sopiva hinta teatterilipusta?

EI

- Miksi ei? Minkälaiset asiat estävät sinua käymästä teatterissa?
- (riittämätön tieto teatterissa käynnistä ja näytelmistä (ennakkoluulot)
- Koska viimeksi kävit teatterissa?
- Mikä on sopiva hinta teatterilipusta?

Käyvätkö ystäväsi teatterissa?

KYLLÄ

- Kenen kanssa käyvät?
- Olisitko kiinnostunut menemään mukaan?

EI

- Olisitko kiinnostunut menemään mukaan, jos kaverisi kävisivät?
- Harkitsisiko vanhempiesi tai sisarustesi kanssa teatterissa käyntiä?
- Mitkä asiat saisivat sinut käymään useammin teatterissa?

4. Kiitos ja lopetus

Minkälaisia ajatuksia tämä haastattelu herätti teatterissa käynnin suhteen?

Appendix 2. Survey questions

Mikä AR-videossa miellytti ja mikä taas ei?

Kiinnostuitko näytelmästä videon perusteella? Kerro miksi tai miksi ei?

Videon katsomisen pohjalta, harkitsisitko lipun hankkimista näytelmään? Kerro miksi tai miksi ei?

Sopiko video mielestäsi Kotkan Kaupunginteatterille? Miksi video ei mielestäsi sopinut tai sopi?

Mitä mieltä olet Kotkan Kaupunginteatterista videon nähtyäsi?

Vastasiko video mielestäsi jotain näistä ominaisuuksista: samaistuttava, lisätietoa antava, siinä oli hyvä tarina tai oliko video visuaalisesti kiinnostava?

Mitä mieltä olit videon sisällöstä? Piditkö siitä vai et? Mitä muuttaisit?

Kiitos ajastasi! Jos haluat, voit antaa palautetta tai kertoa muita ajatuksia AR-videon suhteen.