

Strategic Thinking at Sea

Implementing a Service Design Thinking Approach
onboard Aurora Botnia to Increase Customer Service
and Upselling

Christa Nordlund-Hiltunen

Thesis for a Master's degree in Business Administration (UAS)

The Degree Programme of Service Design

Turku, 2024



Author: Christa Nordlund-Hiltunen

Degree Programme: Master of Business Administration

Specialization: Service Design

Supervisors: Reija Anckar, Elina Vartama

Title: Strategic Thinking at Sea – Implementing a Service Design Thinking Approach onboard Aurora Botnia to Increase Customer Satisfaction and Upselling

Date 1.4.2024 Number of pages 63

Appendices: 5

Abstract

This Master's thesis was a service design research project commissioned by the ferry company Wasaline. The aim of the project was to design a method to increase upselling as well as the overall customer satisfaction onboard the vessel Aurora Botnia. By conducting thorough research with e.g. interviews, workshops, surveys and focus group discussions and using service design methods and tools, such as personas, design criteria mapping and journey mapping, the intention was to present answers, suggestions, and recommendations on how the company ought to act proactively and develop in the right direction. By redirecting the commissioner's view on the connection between customer satisfaction and upselling, the aim was to present an opportunity to use service design thinking as a tool in the future.

Several members from the management team on Wasaline were involved in this master's thesis project, and many employees and passengers contributed to the research. The project resulted in specific improvement suggestions as requested, and templates/models, which the company could use in future personnel training, were developed. Informative material based on this will be developed for the employees at a later stage. The survey form that was developed during this thesis project will be sent to customers biannually and employee workshops focusing on customer service and upselling will be conducted yearly.

Language: English

Key words: service design, strategic thinking, upselling, CLV, progressive leadership

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1. Introduction

Peppers (2016, p. 3) says; *“By definition, customers are every company’s source of revenue. No company can succeed without customers. If you don’t have customers, you don’t have a business. You have a hobby.”* This quote is a way to point out right here in the introduction of this thesis that upselling is not a separate act that can override the customer interaction and the customer experience. Upselling is a part of the service that the customer receives from the company.

Newbery and Farham (2013, p. 40) explain that a customer is a buyer, or a potential buyer of a specific product or service provided by a business, and that even a single customer’s behaviour can reflect the larger trends in consumer behaviour. In any business, the customer should be in focus, therefore, the customer will also be the main character in this thesis. What can we learn from the customers we already have?

Omer and Levin (2015, p. 70) point out that the customer lifetime cycle emphasizes the individual journey of every customer and that one needs to figure out the best way to approach each customer – yet, to optimize enterprise value one needs to optimize total customer equity, the sum of the customer lifetime value (CLV).

Having said that the customer always needs to be in the centre, there are certainly other parts that also need to stay in focus for the business to thrive economically. This thesis shall put some lights on these parts and will look for ways to increase upselling whilst improving customer satisfaction, since upselling is a vital part of customer service, and indeed a way to increase revenue.

1.1 Aim of the Thesis

With research and the use of different service design methods and tools, the aim with this thesis is to provide the commissioner with relevant and useful information that will benefit them both from the shareholders’ and the customers’ point of view. The researcher will attempt to investigate the connection between customer satisfaction and upselling, and after analysing the research, the aim is to be able to give useful suggestions on how to continue for a profitable future.

1.2 Wasaline – The Commissioner

Wasaline is a Finnish-Swedish shipping company with the main office situated in Vasa, Finland. The company's only ferry, Aurora Botnia, was commissioned by Kvarken Link, and has been in traffic between Vasa, Finland and Umeå, Sweden, since July 2021. It is a modern ship with two cargo decks and room for 935 passengers. It has a freight capacity of 1,500 lane meters for trucks and cars. The vessel was designed to be environmentally friendly, with a machinery running on a dual fuel and battery solution. The main source of fuel is liquefied natural gas, LNG. The vessel is also able to utilise biogas and the environmental policy of Wasaline entails the entire organization. The company transports both passengers and cargo across the Kvarken daily, and it is the northernmost, year-round ferry crossing in the world. The Wasaline route cuts across the Unesco world natural heritage site and the waters are rich in natural species. (Wasaline, 2023)

A devastating decrease from over 204,000 passengers in 2019 to 57,000 in 2020 combined with a costly investment in the new ferry has challenged Wasaline. To not only survive, but to also outdo the past, Wasaline has acknowledged that they need to not only reach but exceed the customers' expectations. The first whole year for Aurora Botnia, i.e. 2022, turned indeed out to be a very successful year with 267,651 passengers. Also 2023 was a profitable year for the company, setting a record by shipping 279,643 passengers. On the other hand, sales did not reach the set budget, which was no surprise due to the over-all situation in the world. Therefore, to keep the existing customers as well as attract new ones, Wasaline need to be receptive and willing to change and always develop.

1.2.1 The Researcher

The author of this thesis has been an employee at Wasaline since July 2021 and has therefore been a part of the Aurora Botnia journey and development all the way from before the maiden tour. Furthermore, the author has worked in total for more than twenty years in the cruise industry between Finland and Sweden. She is currently holding a leading position for the commissioner and thus has wide knowledge of the strategies and processes within the company and onboard Aurora Botnia. Even though it is beneficial to have this insight, it is also crucial for the author to be cautious and meticulous with the ethical aspect of this work. In addition, it is naturally of utmost

importance that the author's own preferences and thoughts are not given too much scope in this research.

All participants in the research for this thesis, both inside and outside the company, have been informed of the situation. Despite the participation in the workshops being obligatory for some of the employees, the participants were aware that all opinions and comments were always kept confidential.

1.3 Problem Area

Wasaline not having a fully developed customer satisfaction program at the initial start of this thesis is an area in need of improvement. In order to know what the customers want, you need to ask them, because not many will tell you otherwise. The company was looking for answers on how to become better, but had, during the beginning of this thesis planning, not yet asked any questions. As all companies, Wasaline wants to have satisfied customers, who are willing to return as paying customers again, as well as recommend the company to family and friends. To reach that goal the management needed to ask both the customers and themselves the right questions.

Increase upselling is a wish most businesses assumably have – however, it is a very vague wish. It is important to acknowledge why you feel the need to increase upselling, how well you want to measure it, or if it might in fact be the employees' attitude to upselling you want to address, rather than increasing sales of certain products. Since the first thesis draft, both the title and the research questions have been changed quite a few times. Finding the right angle and accepting the need to re-arrange your plan is a work in progress, in the same way a company needs to see its situation and wishes from different perspectives. During the process, questions were changed, deleted, and added again. The following are the final research questions that the researcher aims to answer within this thesis.

1.4 Research Questions

1. In which ways can a service design thinking approach improve the customer experience as well as increase upselling onboard Aurora Botnia?
2. Does strategic leadership and change management facilitate implementation of a service design thinking approach, and if so, how?

2. Project Plan

The framework that worked as a starting point for this thesis, as well as this project's frame of reference.

2.1 Identify and Solve

Ukrop Studio's framework for design thinking includes two phases – identifying and solving. The identify phase is for discovering new insights to define problems and the solve phase is for creating possible solutions with the help of ideation and prototyping.

Based on the original framework a new version was created for this project (Fig. 1). This image is a simple and clear illustration of how service design thinking works and shows what the thesis will be based on. Starting with discovering and defining the problem and continuing with creating a possible solution and evaluating the result. If one does not reach a solution, the process starts over anew.

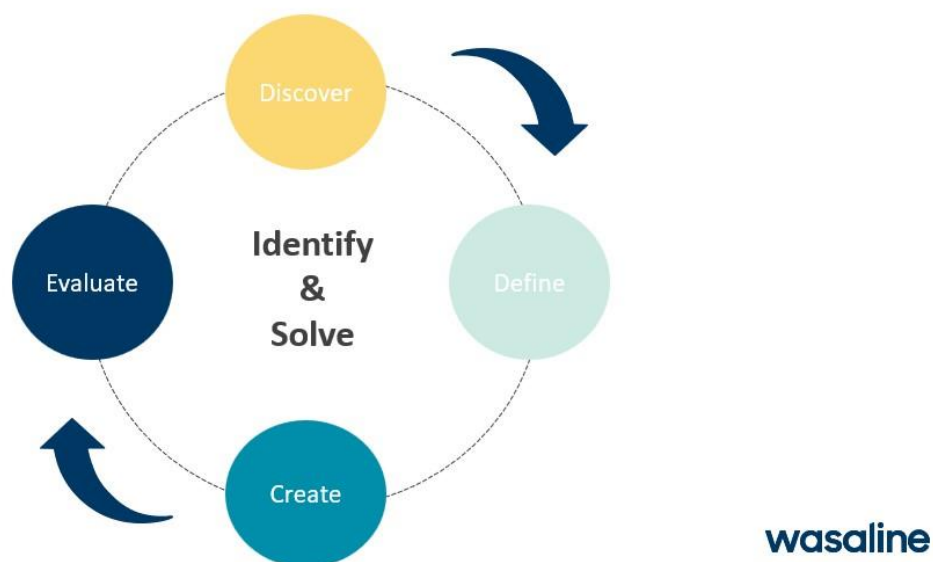


Figure 1. Identify & Solve

Design thinking works as a systematic way of identifying problems and solving them in a creative way. To obtain the best results, a diverse team is needed; team members with different backgrounds and training, who are open to different perspectives. Design thinking requires flexibility and respect for both the way of approach and for the content. Team members need to have an eagerness to try new ideas, concepts, and prototypes, and they cannot hold back due to fear of failure, since failure is indeed an important part of the design thinking road. The approach is intentionally nonlinear so that the problems are thoroughly explored and solved through iteration. (Luchs 2016, 1-2)

2.2 The Five Stage Model

The Five Stage Model was originally made by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, and it is continually used in service design, and will also be used as a framework for the research in this thesis. To better serve this specific project, a customized model was developed (Fig. 2), based on the original version as well as Hunter Miller's (2017) adaption.

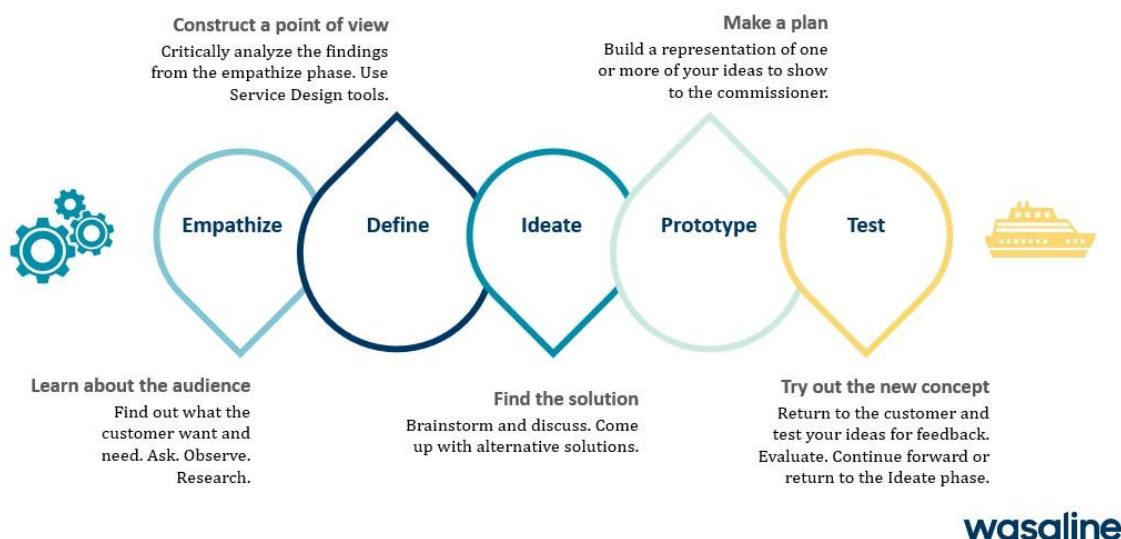


Figure 2. The five stages

This framework shows how important each of the five stages are in a process and never rules out the possibility/risk that one needs to start over from the beginning again or return to the ideating stage. These five stages are usable in many ways for both leaders and employees.

In a service design process empathy with the users/customers is a must and as a leader of a service design project one must be encouraging divergence, creativity and the one thing most employees usually try to avoid – failure. If possible, the ultimate situation would be that there is no time pressure, since that is usually a positive loss of control for the leaders and resulting in the best solutions. First suggestions for change come easily and are, therefore, most likely obvious solutions, but after that, one has to un-anchor from the initial thoughts, which will lead to new, more creative, solutions (Bason et al., 2019).

Rather than to stress about getting everything right the first time, using a service design approach one can rely on the structured process of prototyping and testing, while aiming to improve the product or service. (Stickdorn et al., 2018)

2.3 Frame of Reference

With this thesis the researcher aims to present ways in which the overall customer satisfaction and the company's level of upselling can be increased by taking on a service design thinking approach. The importance of strategic and progressive leadership, while implementing this method, will also be researched. To give clarity to the process the following frame of reference (Fig. 3) was developed. Service Design Thinking and Strategic Thinking make a strong foundation together with the well-anchored Progressive Leadership – working as a whole to give Customer Satisfaction and Customer Lifetime Value the most prominent role within Wasaline and onboard Aurora Botnia, while upselling maintains a solid but not too conspicuous part.

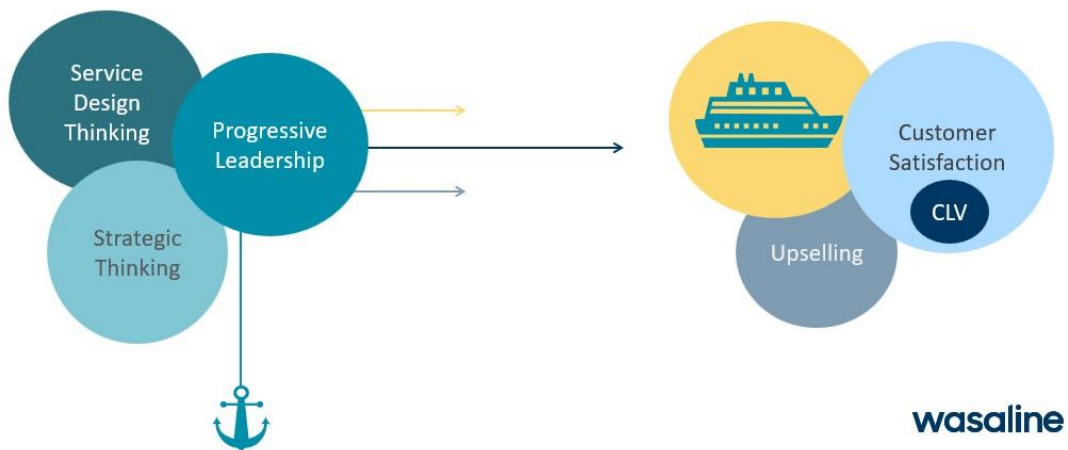


Figure 3. Frame of Reference

2.4 Process Chart

To give clarity to the process, this timeline (Fig. 4) from the first seminar until the third seminar is added below. The process was prolonged since the initial plan was developed, and now stretches over a year – the first seminar being held in March 2023 and the final seminar a year later.

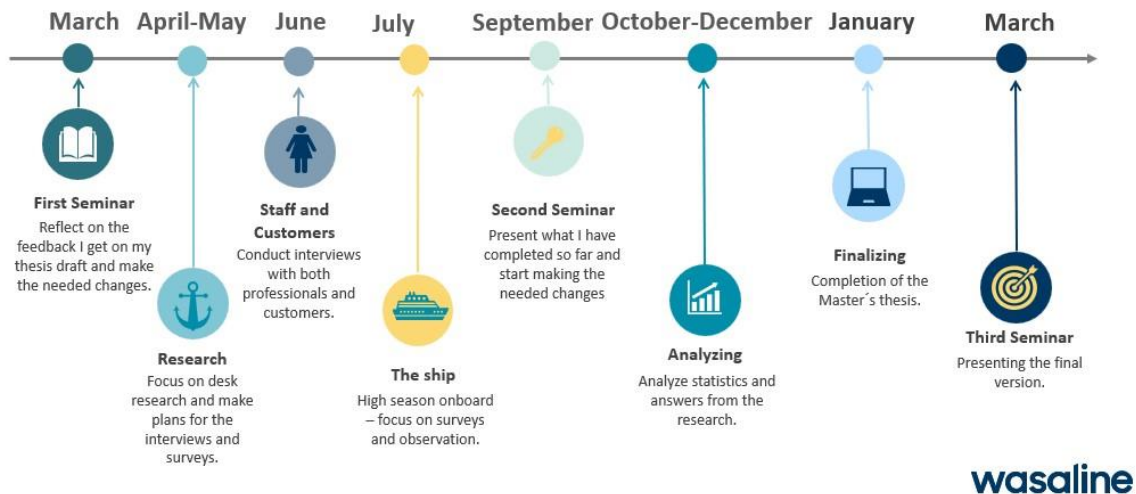


Figure 4. Timeline

Before the first seminar the plans concerning the thesis were discussed with the commissioner; goals and aims being in focus. Already at this point the first workshops were being held. After the first seminar, desk research was in the main approach as well as designing and scheduling for the upcoming interviews and surveys. At the beginning of the summer 2023 interviews with both employees and customers were conducted, and when high season for Aurora Botnia peaked in July, the focus was shifted to observation and survey. The second seminar was held in September and thereafter the analysing stage began. The third was held in March 2024.

3. Theoretical Background

Johnson (2002, p. 5) says that theory provides a way to look at the world by creating boundaries and that by developing and testing theory you contribute to general knowledge since the right theories work to guide actions.

To give a clearer vision and a deeper understanding of this project the keywords will be presented and discussed in the theoretical part, except for service design, which will

be addressed in the research part. The first topic to be delved into is strategic thinking and the company strategy of Wasaline.

3.1 Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking is a way to analyze critical factors that could influence the long-term success of a business. The competitive situation may vary and change quickly, for different reasons, and by incorporating strategic thinking into the business, you will become better at anticipating and forecasting opportunities and threats. (Cmoe, 2002)

Irene et. Al. (2011, p. 3) says: "*First, customers change. If nothing else customers get older*". While this refers to the demographic of the customers, it is comprehensive. By planning strategically, businesses can stay competitive and achieve their goals in a constantly and rapidly changing marketplace.

McCallum (2001) also discusses strategic thinking and the importance of adapting to a new world in the article *Adapt or Die*. Mc Callum emphasizes that enterprises that do not adapt are in for a lot of trouble. Change is the problem. The more rapid the pace of change, the more dire are the consequences of stubbornly sticking to old ways.

Strategic thinking and strategic planning within a company is not only about revenue and profit, but about sustainability, encouraging innovation, providing direction, and enabling effective decision-making. Edwards (2017, p. 95) points out that having the role of strategic planning requires much time and thought, imagination, vision, guile, experience, patience, and diligence, but by ensuring you have a strong and secure platform the results will likely be successful.

Dawit (2020, p. 143) summarizes different authors' comments on strategic competence by saying it refers to the ability to get one's meaning across successfully to communicative partners, especially when problems arise in the communication process. Strategic competence refers to the ability to anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities. It involves forward-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, and in all of these, great communication is of utmost importance. Employees who possess strategic competence are better to handle changing situations and can help their organizations to do so as well.

Majaniemi (2020, pp. 10, 190) says that one needs to start thinking strategically and abandon the short-term hunt for immediate benefits, to harness empathy and use it to grow your revenue on a long-term. Majaniemi emphasizes that by being a customer-centric and empathetic company you can develop a deeper understanding of your customers' needs, which will enable you to serve them better.

Even if having a strategy is always important, Dib (2021, pp. 52-53) points out that very few, if any, businesses are truly unique, and in strategy thinking there are two questions to be asked: Why should the customer buy this product, and why should they buy it from our company?

3.1.1 Strategy and Vision for Wasaline

In 2023 a new strategic plan was developed for Wasaline, the previous being four years old at that point. Between the two previous plans, six years had passed. Due to confidentiality and non-disclosure reasons, the current strategic plan will not be discussed in detail in this thesis, but overall, it focuses a great deal on customer satisfaction, which is also the focal point. The vision, mission and values of the company are well summarized in the sentence "Wasaline is the world's most warm-hearted shipping company and a great example of northern maritime know-how". The slogan "We make life a dash better" is also well connected to the three main words that the company aims to be associated with and described as – reliable, authentic, and warm-hearted.

The goals in the strategic plan for 2023–2025 is e.g. to have a continuing sustainable growth with happy customers and to develop more efficient processes that lead to better customer satisfaction. The process of obtaining the ISO 9001 certification has been active throughout this thesis project and will be shortly explained in the following paragraph.

3.1.2 ISO 9001

With the ISO 9001 certification, Wasaline aims to improve the ways in which the company works, by updating the consistency in its processes. ISO 9001 is a "*globally recognized standard for quality management*", that can help companies with their quality commitments, the customer experiences and to overall improve their performance (ISO).

Robitaille (2015, pp. 4-5) claims that the return on investment of being ISO 9001 certified, will pay dividends over time, by having much improved efficiency and far less time spent preventing disasters. Robitaille further points out that the number of customers that only do business with suppliers with the certification is constantly rising – it gives them a feeling of trust knowing that the company has been assessed by a third party.

Other than customer satisfaction, ISO 9001 certification is also about safety, environment, health, and financial controls. The quality improvements need to start from the management and go through all levels of the company, and the starting point must be to define quality as it applies to your company. The vision and mission are determined by the management, who then communicates this to the rest of the employees and provides them with the resources needed to meet the goals. “*Say what you do, and do what you say*”, is the summarized aim with ISO 9001. (Russel, 2015, pp 17, 21-22)

In a press release on February 7, 2024 Peter Ståhlberg, the Managing Director of Wasaline, was able to announce that Wasaline had been awarded ISO 9001 quality certification as well as the ISO 14001 certification, which is the most recognized international standard for environmental management systems. During January 2024, the classification society DNV audited the offices in Vasa and Umeå, as well as the vessel Aurora Botnia. The company’s processes had been documented during 2023 ahead of the certification that was approved on January 29, 2024.

3.2 Upselling

To become a customer-strategy company it is imperative that you use information that can help you get a competitive advantage and gain growth. Growth is something you accomplish by upselling additional products or cross-selling other products to the customers (Peppers, 2016, p. 6). Hallberg and Kvistensson (2020, p. 53) separate the goal to get as much profit as possible, from the goal to receive satisfied customers. These are indeed two very different goals, but part of the aim with this study is to research whether the two in fact are connected. Do satisfied customers spend more money onboard the ferry, and is a customer who purchases a product or service more satisfied after the purchase?

Dib (2021, p. 184) explains that “*upselling is the bundling of add-ons with the primary product of service being sold*”. A version of upselling is cross-selling but in this thesis,

upselling will cover both versions – upselling is when you sell a product or a service to a customer that this customer was not planning on purchasing – whether it is an additional make-up brush with the face powder, a more expensive bottle of wine or upgrading a B cabin to an A cabin.

A product or a service can be very beneficial to a customer, but the benefits cannot be realized if it is not available in the service moment. You must be able to present the benefits to the customer to significantly increase the opportunity for the customer to make the purchase – and in addition to presenting the benefits, you also need to show why the customer should buy it from you instead of from someone else. The customer needs to see the values this product or service could bring, how it would satisfy her/his wants and needs. (Henriksson, 2014 pp. 4, 20, 31)

Communicating with the customer – recommending products and suggesting the use of different services – is not only about the customer buying something in that particular moment. It is about forming a relationship with the customer. Elmgart and Bloch (2017, p. 11) say that it is a basic need to feel seen, heard and to have a connection with other people – and that this is something one must also remember in a customer service situation. There is nothing better you can do for your company than to genuinely be interested in the customers and give them your real attention. Majaniemi (2020, p. 191) says that the reason a product or service fails is because it does not meet the needs of the customers. Therefore, the employees need to be focused and attentive when interacting with a customer, so that they in that situation can give a better suggestion or recommendation.

Upselling is something that the employees need to realize is an essential part of their work tasks, and to do a great job they need to be comfortable with this. Education in upselling for the employees is needed, and above all the leadership that both demands and encourages upselling from the employees. The whole company needs to appreciate that upselling is a part of great customer service and the customer experience. Fogelqvist (2017, p. 131) points out that everyone needs at least one coach that can help you to get better at your work, and the researcher believes this is something that should not be ignored. Employees need coaches to have the knowledge needed to be comfortable with upselling, and managers need coaching in encouraging upselling in the right way. It is also good for a company to have clear strategies for getting the

customers to purchase more, e.g. professional employees that have much knowledge of the products or special deals that make it easier to upsell certain products (Maxe, 2013, p. 19).

Upselling is not *only* about money and revenue, but certainly it is, in the end, about the profit a company makes. Leijala (2019, p. 11) says that the price of a product or service is only one of all the competitive factors in a company and more important than cutting your expenses, is that you can motivate a higher price. Dib (2021, p. 182-185) also says that customers are not as price sensitive as one might imagine – especially when it is about purchasing an additional product – and that once the customer is already in the buying state of mind, she/he is much more receptive to other offers as well. Dib also points out that if a company keeps its prices constant for a long time, it is actually effectively lowering them because inflation makes the same nominal amount of money less valuable over time.

The value of a product or service almost always arises in relation to other circumstances (Hallberg & Kvistensson, 2020, p. 98). It is necessary to realize that every touch point onboard the ferry is as important as the next, and that they are all connected also where upselling is concerned. The customer journey is one service design tool that can pinpoint potential upselling situations in a very visual way, and this will also be discussed more in depth in the research part of this thesis.

To optimize your company's value, you must optimize the total customer equity, which is the sum of the lifetime value of the customers (Artun & Levin, 2015, p. 73), and yet this is something that will be discussed more in the following chapter, the researcher wants to emphasize that upselling is an essential part of the customer experience and the lifetime value that a customer will bring to the company. One additional purchase after another.

3.3 Customer Lifetime Value

Customer lifetime value, CLV, is the amount of money a customer spends in total on a business during the entire period of your relationship. Recognizing CLV as an important metric helps businesses to develop strategies to acquire new customers as well as retaining existing ones while maintaining profit margins. (Qualtrics, 2023)

Bolton (2016, pp. 9-10) says that CLV is a measure of all the future cash flows to a business from a customer over a lifetime of the relationship, minus the company's costs of serving the customer.

Artun and Levin (2015, p. 64) explains that CLV describes how much revenue you can expect for your company but continues to discuss that there are different ways to calculate this. Historical Lifetime Value is defined as the actual profits from customers over their lifetime so far, but this only considers past purchases. This version can be used when you are trying to detect if the customer value is trending up or down. Predicted Lifetime Value, on the other hand, is especially useful when deciding how much to invest acquiring or retaining a specific customer, or to identify high-value customers early in the life cycle. Upside Lifetime Value calculates how much more money a customer can spend in your company.

Qualtrics (2003) provides much interesting information about CLV, and it is pointed out that it is worth focusing on increasing the current CLV of the existing customers to drive growth, rather than to rely on new customers. It costs five times more to attract new customers than it does to keep your existing ones, and they are also willing to spend 31 % more money than new customers and are 50 % more likely to purchase a new product from your company (Forbes, 2023). Peppers (2016, p. 32) points out that no matter what kind of company it is – the longer it can keep its customers, the more value the customers will generate for the shareholders.

Loyal customers are the best sort since they are usually willing to spend more money and often act as word-of-mouth marketers for your business. Although customer loyalty is unquestionably important, Reinartz and Kumar (2011, p. 93) want to challenge this thought. After doing research they claim that as much as half of the most profitable customers were new to the company, spending a great amount of money on high-margin products during a short period before completely disappearing – which

would mean that the relationship between loyalty and profitability is much subtler than loyalty programs may claim.

As mentioned, the formula for calculating CLV can vary based on the business model and industry, but a basic version is explained by Ware (2021). Below is an example of it by means of a framework developed for Wasaline to facilitate comprehending Ware's point of view.

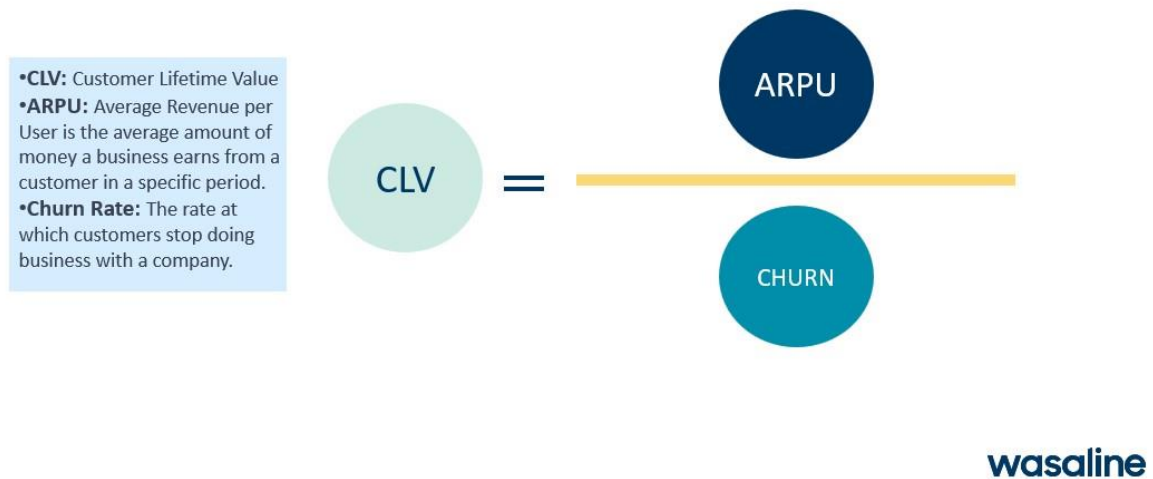


Figure 5. CLV (Ware, 2021)

It is important to note that CLV is not a static metric. It evolves as preferences, customer behaviour, and market conditions change. Therefore, it is crucial for a business to regularly update its CLV. In summary, CLV is a strategic metric that transcends immediate profits, urging businesses to build sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships with their customers. It aligns well with the idea that successful companies are those that prioritize long-term value creation over short-term gains.

Dib (2021, p. 180) believes investing in the lifetime value of existing customers is the smartest thing a company can do economically. To do this you must have strategies for getting existing customers to do more business with you and you must know, manage, and continually improve key numbers in your business.

CLV for Wasaline has been calculated for the commissioner but will not be presented in this thesis due to confidentiality and non-disclosure reasons.

3.3.1 Customer behavior

Many companies can define and differentiate the company's own offerings and movements in detail, but only manage to draw a rough sketch of their customers' journeys, wants and needs. It is too common for a company to make the mistake of considering themselves as the most important part of the business and diminishing the importance of the customer. (Hallberg & Kvistensson, 2020, pp. 30, 94)

The customers' purchasing behaviors can be divided into three different groups, the first one the reasonable customer who likes to have information about the product (or service) and spend time comparing it to other products. The emotional customer follows the impulse of the moment, while the convenience customer values a simple purchasing process and takes the product's use value into account. (Pakkanen et. al, 2001, p. 13).

Even if it is good to be aware of these roughly drawn stereotypes of customers, a business needs more detailed information about their own customers to succeed. Yet, some customer behavior features apply virtually to everyone. Klaff (2019, p. 145) says that customers need to have at least the illusion of being in control over the buying process, which is why it is important as a salesperson to avoid time pressure, scarcity pressure and other sales tactics that scare the customer away.

One of the most important tasks in a company is understanding the priorities and behavior of their customers, since this will clearly reveal where to invest time, money, and energy. But one cannot wait for the insight to suddenly appear, rather one ought to conduct thorough research to find the answers. To get insight into the customer behavior, demands purposefulness, patience as well as time and energy. (Fogelqvist, 2017, pp. 32, 37, 56)

There are three behavioral dimensions of customers based on sources of value that some business experts use: The duration, the depth (frequency) and the breadth (number of products/services) of the customer relationship. High-quality service experiences lead to longer, deeper, and broader customer relationships than low-quality experiences. Long-term customers are more willing to buy high margin products than short-term customers. (Bolton, 2016, p. 10)

Customer focus work is a continuous process, and a company must make sure they have insights into customers' needs, behavior, and problems – as well as continuous reconciliation with the target image (Elmgart & Bloch, 2017, p. 215). The best chance of creating a great customer experience is to involve the customer when planning the services. Hallberg and Kvistensson (2020, p. 99) emphasize that resource integration almost always is a prerequisite for value creation, and in this thesis process a considerable part of the research will involve the customers of Aurora Botnia.

When discussing customer behavior, feedback – both positive and negative – is something a business needs to take seriously. A customer with a genuine complaint is quite an asset since the feedback might reveal something that is, in fact, causing the company to lose business without you knowing, because of many people not willing to make the effort of giving feedback (Dib 2021, p. 197). Another part of customer behavior is, naturally, that some customers choose to leave the relationship with your company, but Artun and Levin (2015, p. 74) point out that not all is lost, since in addition to building new customer relationships, it is also on average “*ten times cheaper to reactivate a lapsed customer than it is to acquire a new one*”. Next theory topic to be discussed is an essential part of creating an customer focused environment – progressive leadership.

3.4 Progressive Leadership

A company that is determined to build successful customer relationships needs to understand the importance of great, committing leadership that can show the way to highlight customer value as a priority to the employees throughout the organization (Peppers, 2016, p. 6).

You are not automatically a leader as soon as you reach a specific pay grade, neither does leadership necessarily have anything to do with one's position in a company's hierarchy. Leadership does not require titles and it has nothing to do with personal attributes, since leadership is not an adjective. Nor is leadership the same as management. Managers manage things, while leaders lead people. (Kruse, 2013)

While a manager is not automatically a leader, a manager can of course be a very good leader. So, what is needed for you to be a great leader for the future, a progressive leader? The researcher doubts there is a leader in this world who does not want to be

perceived as great, modern, and forward-looking regarding what they are doing. However, defining a good leader is not so simple, since it is not only one thing or trait needed. And before adding the word great or good before leader – what makes a person a leader in the first place?

When leading, you motivate the employees and try to influence their behaviour with the aim to achieve organizational objectives. Managers give orders to the team members, but managers who are also good leaders will connect with their employees. The manager does this by using interpersonal skills to encourage, inspire and motivate the employees to perform to the best of their abilities. (Indeed.com, 2021)

Majaniemi (2020, p. 11) says that empathy is the key to great leadership. Your business needs you to be smart, and empathy is smart – it helps you to understand more. Fogelqvist (2017, p. 33) is in the same world of thought and says that one insight leads to another – when you share knowledge with another human being, a cognitive process starts and expands your understanding in depth.

” Leading involves the social and informal sources of influence that you use to inspire action taken by others. If managers are effective leaders, their subordinates will be enthusiastic about exerting effort to attain organizational objectives (Principles of Management, 2015, p. 31)”.

In *The Leadership Experience* (2008, p. 6) Daft says that it is easier to see our own opportunities for leadership, and to recognize the leadership of people we interact with daily if we stop equating leadership with greatness and public visibility. We must remember that not all great leaders stand on stages, and that in fact many true leaders are working behind the scenes.

Thomas (2012, pp. 68-69) says that an engaged leader works to create an environment where critical thinking is encouraged instead of suppressed. Becoming a more critical thinker empowers one to self-analyse, make more informed decisions and channel one’s thoughts towards social advocacy – which all enhances your leadership skills.

To provide the best customer satisfaction on a cruise ship, as in any other service-focused business, you need to have empathy and acknowledge different opinions, but also be able to sort out the most relevant ones. Customers, as well as employees, will always have a lot of opinions, but as a leader you must also be realistic since a shipping

business needs to be financially beneficial to survive on the market. You need to identify what needs to be improved and then focus on finding a solution to those problems – a progressive way of leading your team.

3.4.1 Change Management

“Change is the only thing that will never change so let’s learn to adopt by change management.” This quote by Kansal & Chandani (2014, p. 208) is in the researcher’s opinion applicable in every aspect of life. No matter how much we might want to stop time for a while at certain moments in our lives, we cannot. And if we are not able to put the concept of time on hold, we cannot prevent change either. Not in life in general – and not in business.

If change did not exist, it would be very straightforward and easy to be a manager. How to cope with change defines whether you are a good manager or not – a good manager has the competence to manage change within the company. Internal changes can be alterations in structure, technology or people, and there are of course also external forces that create the need for change; for example, market situation, laws, regulations, and economics. (Passenheim, 2010, p. 7)

Businesses must constantly evolve and adapt to meet the different challenges, and failure to do so could lead to stagnation, or worse. Change Management refers to the actions a business or organization takes to adjust or change a component to make it more profitable. (Miller, 2020)

To manage the process of implementing change in a company is the definition of Change Management – making the changes needed to reduce the risks and costs of change as well as optimizing the benefits (Murthy, 2007, p. 22).

When using a service design approach, one needs to see the company’s problem or dilemma, the future, from the customers’ perspective. That can only be done by including current and potential future clients, and finding out what their wants and needs are. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2010, p. 120)

Service design thinking is all about the customers’ wants and needs, and analyzing the customer journey is of great importance for a company. But what the researcher feels is often forgotten, or at least not mentioned enough, is that the customer journey is not

static – it is constantly changing. There might be a pattern, but the customer journey is individual and changeable. Therefore, also in moments when everything is going smoothly, and you, as a leader, feel that you can lean back and just relax – you should not. As a good leader it is your job to be one step ahead, managing the changes that are inevitably coming. Patterson (1995, p. 26) says that you must ask yourself if your company can afford for you to stop improving, stop learning and stop competing for the company's position in the marketplace? The answer is most certainly no.

4. Research

Research has been explained as “*systematic enquiry whose goal is communicable knowledge* (Archer 1995, p. 6)”. Still, research is not automatically as complicated as that sentence may sound, but in fact very present in everyday life and a normal human activity. Humans gather, analyse, and use data constantly (Kara, 2020, p. 19).

Privately you see and watch while in research you observe, privately you have expectations while in research you have hypotheses. The difference between normal human activity and conducting research is that for the latter all investigation and analysing is systematic and formal, and the aim is to reach new and true knowledge. (Thrane, 2018, p. 15)

“ Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analysing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations. Quantitative research is the opposite of qualitative research, which involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g. text, video, or audio) (Bhandari, 2020)” .

Qualitative data analysis is interpretive while quantitative data analysis is statistical. With qualitative research you want to develop an initial understanding, identify and explain behaviour, when using quantitative research, you are trying to identify prevalence, averages and patterns. (Hennink et al., 2020)

When the purpose is to study the customer journey, research customer satisfaction and develop suggestions on how to improve the business from both the customers' and the

shareholders' point of view. Both quantitative and qualitative research is necessary. The quantitative research methods that have been applied in this thesis are surveys (digital questionnaires) and the application of secondary research. The qualitative research that has been conducted consists of workshops, interviews and focus group discussions. Also, the surveys tend to be partly qualitative research when using open-ended questions.

Mixed methods research may be the best choice if you feel that quantitative or qualitative data alone will not sufficiently answer your research question. As you formulate your research question, you should try to directly address how qualitative and quantitative methods will be combined in your study. However, it is important to bear in mind that mixed methods research does not just mean collecting both types of data; you need to carefully consider the relationship between the two and how you'll integrate them into coherent conclusions. Mixed methods can be very challenging to put into practice, so it is a less common choice than standalone qualitative or quantitative research. If your research question can be sufficiently answered via standalone quantitative or qualitative analysis, a mixed methods approach may not be the best option. (George, 2021)

Hallberg & Kristensson (2020, p. 57) comments that if you really try to put yourself in the customer's position, you will move from standardized, quantitative research methods to more customized, qualitative research methods - and it will be more value-creating the more real curiosity there is within the company. For this thesis the researcher aims to find out the pain points in the customer experience and is putting much focus on qualitative research methods.

4.1 Service Design

Service design thinking is a way to increase customer satisfaction, reduce customer irritation and improve the entire user experience for the customer. Working with a service design approach one can identify exactly what can make an actual difference to a customer and develop improvements that will give the customer real tangible value (Reason et al., 2016, p. 14).

The author claims that service design thinking is mainly about looking at a business from a customer's point of view. The physical conditions of a business, the economic

circumstances, the demand on a product or service – all these factors are changeable and somewhat unpredictable. Naturally, also customer behaviour can and will change over time, but the customer is, and always will be, the single most significant piece of a successful business puzzle. Customer satisfaction is what keeps a business or company alive. To include service design thinking in one's business strategy is therefore of great importance.

To define what service design is in one or a few sentences can be difficult since a lot of factors play important roles in the procedure. Using service design thinking is implementing great service standards in an organization or company, a way to inspire your staff and to assure that the customer is getting the best possible service. The purpose of service design is to focus on the customer's wants and needs, the goal is to create the optimal customer experience. It is interesting that definitions of the term service design vary among experts, and that every explanation is as true as the next.

In the service design process designers strive to create sustainable solutions and optimal experiences for the customer. Based on for example actors and location the designers break services into smaller sections and try to find solutions that will suit all users. A designer must appreciate the macro- and micro-level factors that affect the reality of a customer to be able to design for everyone concerned. (Interaction Design Foundation, 2021)

Service design is a process to be more innovative as a company or organization. It is used to innovate and develop both products and services, and to connect people and technologies across multiple channels. An organization or a company does not have to, and usually does not, go all in with service design thinking directly, but begin by using one or a few of the service design tools. They learn how to use the tools, what needs to be done, learn to speak the service design language etc. The company build up competence among the workers through for example workshops and masterclasses, and over time service design thinking becomes a natural part of the organizational culture. (Stickdorn, 2016)

According to Kurokawa (2015, p. 9) in design thinking one needs to approach a dilemma or problem with positive acceptance, without prejudice and an honest attempt to really understand the situation. Luchs (2016, pp. 1-2) says the term design thinking means that one is approaching problems the way a designer would, and

finding solutions to these problems as a designer would. By using service design thinking organizations can recognize strategic opportunities in their business strategies, develop the already existing services as well as innovate new ones (Tuulaniemi, 2011, p. 24).

4.2 Service Design Methods

A service design tool is a concrete model like for example a customer journey map and different templates, while a method is e.g. an interview or a focus group discussion - *what* the researcher uses are the tools and *how* the researcher gets the information is the method (Stickdorn et. al. 2018, p. 36). To get a truthful picture of the current situation, different research methods and tools were used in the process. The researcher will start by trying to answer the question how, by presenting the methods and their results.

4.2.1 Desktop Research

With desktop research you review previous research findings to get knowledge of the subject, instead of collecting new information. This way you will develop an understanding of the business needs and identify gaps in the existing data. This is the fastest and cheapest way to acquire knowledge on the subject. (vic.gov.au, 2022)

In this project, desk research was crucial to get a clear overall picture of the thesis situation. Much has been written about the core subjects of this thesis, which certainly is beneficial when it comes to seeing different points of view. Desk research was conducted throughout the process, nonetheless the largest part was in the beginning. The results of the desk research are found in both the theoretical and the analyzing parts of this thesis.

4.2.2 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a useful quality tool that will help your company to continually improve its processes by learning how others do. By comparing your work practices with other you can gain valuable information, and this way learn what can work for your own business. Benchmarking can benefit your company in many ways, e.g.: meeting customer requirements, becoming more competitive and setting strategies. It

may also show you warnings that can help you avoid making certain failures and mistakes. (Patterson, 1995, pp. 4, 19)

For this thesis benchmarking was never in the original plan, but it was soon noticed that it is a very helpful and effective method to gain information, and that the researcher had indeed conducted benchmarking without even realizing it. A combination of shadow benchmarking and functional benchmarking are the versions closest to what was used, still most of it has been unplanned. Patterson (1995, p. 35) explains the previous one as competitor-to-competitor comparisons without your benchmarking partner knowing it, and the latter as a comparison between your own processes with similar ones. Patterson (1995, p. 7) also asks who the first ever to conduct benchmarking was, and after reading his following answer the researcher believes it might be rather common to not know exactly when you are indeed benchmarking. *“Possibly the second person to light a fire is humanity’s first benchmarker. The way it worked. The second fire starter watched the first fire starter and then borrowed the practice (Patterson, 1995, p. 7)”*.

There will be no separate description of the benchmarking in this work, rather the results will be discussed in different contexts throughout the thesis.

4.2.3 Observation

Observation is a way to collect data through observing. It may involve watching, listening, reading, and recording behavior and characteristics of phenomena. It is a research method that can be both structured and unstructured. (Business Research Methodology, 2023)

Observation was conducted onboard Aurora Botnia during the high season, June–July 2023. Observations was made by both the researcher and other staff members. The main focal point of the researcher’s own observation was on whether the staff members were acknowledging the customers before the customer approached the staff members. The first impression and the feeling of being seen is important, and this observation was committed during four different journeys in the same week. The results were somewhat negatively surprising – in out of 32 customer interactions, as many as 38 % were first initiated by the customer.

The researcher also asked two staff members to, for one day, keep statistics on their colleagues on how many times they tried to upsell by recommending a product or asking if the customer would like to add a certain product to their purchase. The number of customers in this case was 82 and upselling attempts had been made in 30 % of the interactions.

In addition to the researcher's and other staff member's observations, there was observation as a purchased service from another company. Maria Nyman, Service Director at Barona Horeca, a talent supply company, travelled as an anonymous passenger with Aurora Botnia for two separate journeys in August and September 2023 to observe the staff, followed by workshops with the management. The following results will be presented based on Nyman's summary.

The participants from the store were in Nyman's opinion the most reserved and skeptical, since they believed enough upselling is already made when ordering the right products. In the buffet restaurant, the first meeting between customer and staff is of great importance, and where the all-inclusive wine package must be offered to everyone. On the other hand, the staff in the restaurant must not leave all upselling responsibilities to the cashier/head waiter, and must be more active with offering *avec* etc. The conference department is a place where upselling is rather varying and where much development can be made, but it is also a delicate place, because you do not want to disturb conference guests in the middle of an important meeting.

All workshop participants agreed that the *à la carte* restaurant is the easiest place to upsell. Before Nyman dined there, she decided to buy everything that was suggested to her, but in this case the waitress had not offered neither an appetizer nor a small glass of wine, so Nyman ended up drinking water – so much can be improved. The bar staff impressed during these journeys, and clearly saw upselling as natural part of their contact with the passengers.

In general, Nyman says that she can clearly see several cultures onboard, with each department having their own sub-culture and way to look at upselling. For some, it is already an obvious part of the service process, while others are still struggling with upselling. There are two things for the leaders to focus on:

1. Make sure that the staff knows what is expected from them.
2. Create the conditions to make sure that the staff have the means to succeed.

Nyman emphasizes that the atmosphere onboard is warm and cozy, and that the service is very kind and welcoming. Still, the staff somehow seem to assume that the customers onboard are not the target audience for upselling. Nyman encourages the management to lead by example and try to create a stronger togetherness, and to remember the importance of positive feedback.

On February 9, 2024 the researcher had an online meeting with Maria Nyman to further discuss her findings onboard on the topic. Nyman again recalled that the atmosphere onboard was very delightful, and she added that the personnel seemed to feel very safe at Aurora Botnia, as well as motivated and dutiful. Somewhat typically Scandinavian, the staff has the perception of upselling being an inconvenience for the customers.

As a leader, know your products and make sure the employees know the products. Make the results visible and concrete for the staff. Start with something simple, and do not set the bar too high. Conduct surveys – find out what the customer wants and remember that upselling cannot be separated from customer service. Nyman emphasized that without the customer connection – recommending and discussing – there is no customer service to begin with. By communicating and suggesting products or services the customer feels seen and heard – unique and special – and it also shows and conveys to the customer that you genuinely care.

4.2.4 Survey – Questionnaire

Survey research is a way to gather information rather quickly from many people, where different data collecting methods can be used, the most common being interviews and questionnaires (Ponto, 2015). A survey can be a great way to find “a flicker of discontent”, which would not be something the guest would give feedback on directly to the personnel (Hallberg & Kvistensson, 2020, p. 55)

A questionnaire takes in a wider scene than many other research methods. Compared to when you are studying individuals, this method is both more comprehensive and more representative, giving it more breadth instead of depth. A survey is a very strategic method in real-life research. It helps you to identify both topics for focused investigation and issues for practical action. It is also useful for both implementing and evaluating changes. (Gillham, 2008, pp. 81-83)

The survey that was done for this research was completed in September 2023. During the spring of 2023 the author have, in association with the project team ashore, designed the survey questionnaire that then was sent to the passengers travelling with Aurora Botnia between July 15 and August 15, 2023. The link to the questionnaire was closed on September 10, 2023, and thereafter the analyzing stage began. The final number of responses was 962. Of these participants 424 chose to answer the survey in Finnish, 512 in Swedish and 26 in English. The three largest countries of residence among the participants were: Finland with 683 participants, Sweden with 241 and Norway with 14. The rest were from different, mostly European countries. Due to the test period being the absolute high season, when a considerable amount of the Finnish and Swedish population is on vacation, it is not very surprising that 929 participants were travelling privately, only 15 in business and 4 as commute. These numbers would most certainly look very different if the test period had been e.g. during autumn or spring.

The survey questions first draft was created based on results from benchmarking. The researcher compared survey questionnaires from four different companies, of which two were ferry companies and two were in the hotel industry. The researcher's own interest in the questions as a manager also undoubtedly played a role in the first version. Survey questions went back and forth between the researcher and the project team ashore for a short period until they finally compromised and agreed on which questions were to be implemented in the survey. With this thesis in mind, some vital questions were removed due to lack of space, but overall, a lot of information was gathered through this survey. The final version of the survey (Appendix I) was sent out again during spring 2024, this time focusing on receiving answers from passengers travelling during low season.

In this paragraph, I will shortly summarize the most prominent answers for this thesis, based on the statistics graphs developed (Appendix II). All customer service-related questions got very favorable answers, which is, both as the researcher for this thesis and as a manager within the company, much appreciated and a great steppingstone for further development and improvement. Also, the overall satisfaction of the customer experience was very positive, which proves that the employees of Wasaline are already doing great work with their customers. The amount of information the passengers had gotten before their journeys mainly received neutral response, and there is room for

improvement. The quality of food and beverages in the restaurant got overwhelmingly good feedback, as well as the helpfulness among the staff. Most people were satisfied with the selection in the shop, but also gave a neutral response, which suggests improvements could be in place. Of the participants in the survey, 853 persons made a purchase, while 109 did not buy anything while onboard Aurora Botnia. Even if 88,67 % is a respectable amount, 11,33 % did not make any purchases during the journey that lasted between 3,5 and 4 hours. One question that the researcher strongly would have wanted to include in the survey, but which was removed from the final version, was a few follow-up questions in regards to whether the customer made purchases or not: Did someone try to sell additional products to you, and as a follow-up question - did you purchase anything else than the products you had planned to buy? The researcher will further approach this in the evaluation part of this thesis.

The open-ended question “how could we improve our service?” received a huge amount of both positive and negative feedback. Some commented on the prices being too high, others on the prices being very humane. Some felt the food onboard was the best they had ever eaten, others that it was tasteless. The researcher agreed with the project team that the open feedback would not be presented in this thesis but will of course be an important part of the development work onboard.

4.2.5 Interview

Interviews consist of questions related to your project and can be a great way to gather information and opinions on a subject. By conducting an interview, you can receive perspectives, concerns, and visions into your project. (Stickdorn et. al., 2018, p.60)

A general rule in research is that the easier it is to get data, the less valuable they are – and interviews are certainly not in the easier end since interviews are very time consuming. It is not only the interview itself, but the thorough preparations and piloting that an interview demands, travelling to the interview situation itself, as well as transcribing and analyzing the interview. In many situations it might be both time saving and relevant choosing surveys like questionnaires instead of personal interviews, but other times it is certainly worth devoting to interviews. There is a great chance that interview is the method of research to go to if following are on the check-list; the material is sensitive, anonymity is not an issue, research aims mainly require

insight and understanding, small numbers of people are involved, and they are all accessible. (Gillham, 2000, p. 12)

Interviews with passengers have been conducted during the spring to get a deeper understanding of the customers before creating the personas. The reason interview was the method of choice was mainly the need of creating the personas as soon as possible and the want to get as clear a picture as possible of the situation. The possibility to add supplementary questions during the discussion was also of importance. The method was convenient due to the researcher being onboard Aurora Botnia, and therefore having easy access to the passengers. Passengers were approached by the interviewer based on something that could be called 'deliberate coincidence'. The interviewer reached out to different people based on age, gender and whether the person was travelling alone or with other people. During a period of ten days, sixteen people were approached by the interviewer of which eleven approved to participate. The interview questions (Appendix III) were used as a base for the interviews, with the addition of follow-up questions. The answers were the basis for the creation of the personas (Fig. 7). Through the results of the follow-up questions/discussions a Feedback Word Cloud (Fig. 6) was also created, based on the customers' opinions on the customer experience onboard Aurora Botnia. The duration of the interviews was between 20 and 60 minutes.



Figure 6. Feedback Word Cloud

The most prominent comments were very encouraging, commenting e.g. on the staff, quality of food and shop selection. Overall the feedback was positive, but there were also negative comments and improvement suggestions. The size was often commented; the shop, the pet lounge and the children's room are all too small.

4.2.6 Workshop

A workshop can introduce a new way of thinking, be inspiring or promote actual process practice. It is a way to discuss and try new methods in a safe environment. (Meraevents, 2020)

Dissatisfaction may well grow among employees if the management leaves them out of the workplace-related decisions. Involvement, and having your voice heard, is very important. (Fogelqvist, 2017, p. 136)

Ropponen (2019, p. 129) explains that with a sales habit workshop you can help the sales personnel identify which specific methods need improvement or change, as well as in which situations to implement the change. It is much more effective when sales professionals get to give their own diagnoses, rather than having a manager tell them what is wrong, and why it is wrong.

Four workshops with staff were held during the spring and summer of 2023. All in all, there were 38 participants, everyone working in direct contact to the customers. Of the participants, 14 were permanent employees, and 24 seasonal employees. Each workshop took 1–1,5 hours and the building blocks and base for the workshops (Appendix IV.) was created based on benchmarking, discussions with the management and the researcher's own educational and vast work life experience in the industry.

The majority of the participants had a positive and active attitude from the starting point, while there were a few individuals that clearly showed they would rather have been somewhere else. However, the possibility to remain quiet and ignoring during the whole session was not an option for anyone, and everyone had to take part in the discussions. During these workshops an abundance of information was gathered, thoughts and ideas exchanged and a solid upselling-foundation to continue from was built.

Focusing on the challenges and needs for the employees, the researcher has tried to visualize the results from the workshop (Fig. 7). The results will be further discussed in the analyzing part of this thesis.

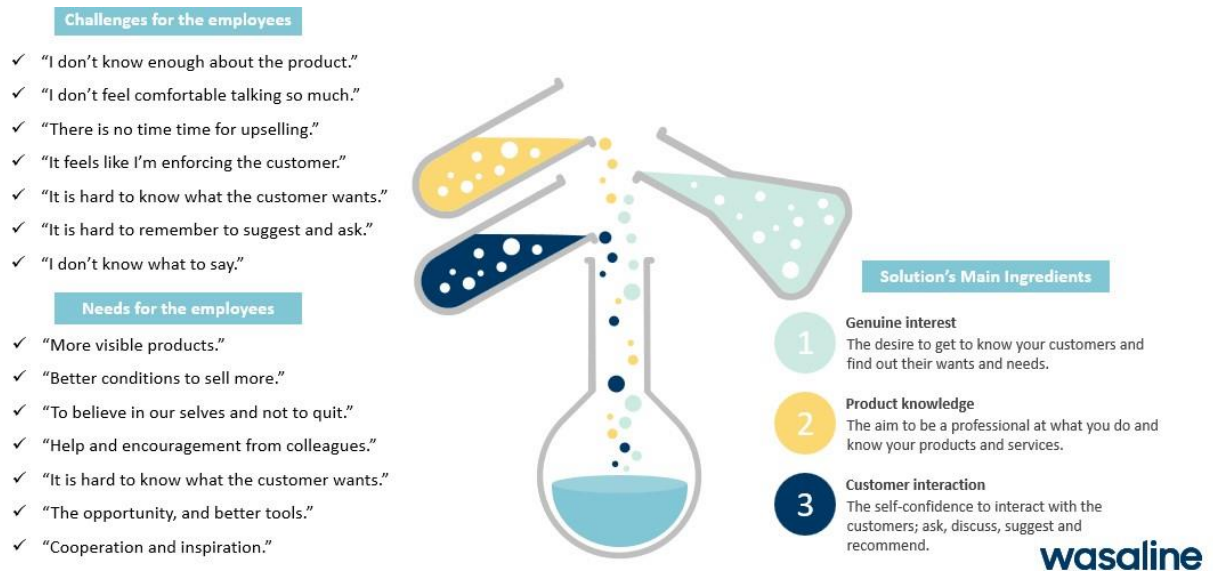


Figure 7. Workshop Summary

Based on the workshop discussions, the researcher also developed an CX Control Circle that shows the individual's responsibility and focus points on upselling and customer service in a company (Fig. 8). The researcher decided to make the circle with four circles and a heart in the core, representing the individual with different, important layers necessary when giving customer service. The layer closest to the heart is the individual's own attitude towards the customers and colleagues, but also towards themselves. No one can control your attitude but you, you decide whether to be open and positive. The second circle represents the individual's actions, which are very closely connected in every way to the attitude. You decide how you act, both with words and physical actions. The individual's knowledge is the third layer – you might not know everything you feel you need to know to give the best customer experience, but it is your own responsibility to ask for the help you need to feel comfortable. Finally, the outermost circle refers to the individual's choice. You have

chosen this work where you are the essential connection between the company and the customer, and you also need to decide that you want to do the best that you can.



Figure 8. CX Control Circle

4.2.7 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussion is a qualitative research method where you gather a small group of carefully selected participants, who will engage in a discussion on a certain topic. The moderator will present questions throughout the session and take notes on the discussions of the participants. The aim is to create a comfortable environment where the participants feel they can express their different or similar opinions on the subject. (Hennink et. al. 2011, p. 136)

On October 19, 2023, a focus group discussion on the topic of customer satisfaction and upselling was held. The five participants were all professionals within the area and are currently working for five different companies of which four are ship-based and one is a land-based position within the tourism industry. All of these participants have at some point in their carriers worked specifically with educating and encouraging staff and salespersons in the topics of customer service and upselling.

Already at an early stage, the researcher was very interested in conducting a focus group discussion. The opportunity to observe discussions between professionals, who had so many experiences and insights to share would be an important addition and counterbalance to the extensive and quantitative survey, the workshops with employees, and the interviews with passengers. All five participants were somewhat familiar with each other through previous work, which made the discussions very easy-going, yet honest and direct. The researcher had a draft of over thirty questions (Appendix V), which constituted the basis for the discussions, but just as with the passenger interviews, quite a few questions were added throughout the meeting. This discussion was recorded and lasted well over three hours. The material gained through the focus group discussion is very extensive, but the researcher will attempt to shortly summarize the discussions in the following paragraphs. A Q&A framework (Fig. 9) to visualize the findings was created.

To begin with reminiscing and recalling memorable incidents from old customer service interactions is a way to quickly pick up the speed in the focus group discussion. Even though the group members share stories that involve receiving gifts from overseas passengers or large sums of money in tips, the red line for the memories closest to their hearts is the joy in making the passengers happy, how cliché it ever may sound. As one of the participants said, “It is just like when you are giving a present to a friend, and you can see the happiness in the receiver – it brings just as much joy to the giver.” Nevertheless, they all agree that customer service must be genuine in order to be great. Ingratiating, and unauthentic customer service is somewhat distasteful and can do more harm than good for the business. Positiveness, empathy, and honesty are traits that are mentioned when discussing the perfect customer service employee. “And the lack of arrogance”, one participant mentions, which makes the rest nod in agreement.

They continue to discuss that while pride in one’s work is a good thing; it is far too often something that can transform into arrogance and an unattractive way to put oneself above the customer. “Anyone who has ever worked in customer service knows that the customer is most certainly not always right – but that does not mean that we shouldn’t make them feel like a king”. There is a full consensus between the focus group participants that few things have worse effect on the customer experience than arrogance, and that humbleness is a trait that should be acknowledged more. Also,

consistency and fairness in your way to treat the passengers is important, one should always give the same level of politeness and attention to the guests, whether they buy a glass of sparkling or a tray of cocktails.

When the focus group discussions address upselling for the first time, one of the participants smiles and points out that it is an emotional topic that often provokes quick reactions from employees. “It is always the same; we are already doing everything we can, the passengers hates when we are urging them to buy more, and all you think about is money. And the answers are simply: no, no, and well, yes.” No, most employees could absolutely do more – maybe recommend a new perfume to the customer, instead of just stating the price of the perfume the customer has asked about. No, most customers do not hate being seen, heard, and included in your world for a few minutes. And yes, we have chosen to work for a company that survives on making money, and that is our job.

The group members admits that they can also find it irritating sometimes, the eternal pressure on upselling, but follows back on the fact that it is an important part of the work onboard a ferry or in any similar business. As soon as you realize that upselling is not a separate, prohibitive action, but a natural way of working, it is not a hard thing that consumes you. When in a customer service situation – be present. Discuss, recommend, and suggest. Your goal is not to deceive the customer in any way by tricking them into buying something unnecessary that is not wanted, rather you are trying to give the customer an even better experience by showing options. You do not have to make that extra sale to be an asset to the company, upselling is much more than fast money in the pocket. It is a part of great customer service and is increasing the Customer Lifetime Value.

All the focus group members are currently in leading positions and when addressing leadership as a topic, the room is silent for a little while, before they all start laughing. “You remember both the really good and really bad bosses you’ve had and get somewhat self-conscious – which one am I?”, one of the participants ask. Concluding that all leaders, just as employees, have both more and less favourable sides, the group members agree on traits a leader in customer service ought to have. Consistent, accessible, and trustworthy – and set a good example by practicing what you preach.

	<p>Why must I focus on customer satisfaction?</p> <p>All of us need wake-up calls every now and then. Employees and managers – all must remember where we get our revenue from. The customer is the single most important detail in our company, without the customer we will not exist. Great customer service is not an option, it is a must.</p>		<p>Why is there so much talk about upselling?</p> <p>Upselling is an essential part of the machinery of this company. In addition to it increasing sales, interacting with customers and recommending products to them is a part of great customer service and something that increases also the Customer Lifetime Value.</p>
	<p>What if I don't like the customer?</p> <p>Nobody loves their job every single minute of every single day. Yet, you have chosen to work with customers for a living and your manager can expect you giving customers the impression of having the heart with you in what you do. If you are a manager, make sure you are setting a good example. Strive to genuinely love what you do.</p>		<p>What can I do to increase upselling?</p> <p>Don't turn it into a big obstacle, rather anchor upselling into your way of working. It is one of your work duties. See the customer, talk to the customer, ask the customer and make recommendations to the customer.</p>
	<p>How about when I have a bad day?</p> <p>Sometimes your battery is running low – and that's fine. Charge it by positivity. Tell your coworkers about your situation and let them help you, don't drain their energy as well with negativity. Nothing says bad customer service as an infected aura between staff members.</p>		<p>How can I help my coworkers with upselling?</p> <p>Be a role model, show your colleagues how it is done. Encourage them to step outside their comfort zones and engage more with the customers. Be positive and be proud of your own customer service skills.</p>
	<p>Can I ever take a break?</p> <p>At all time, in this business, you need to have a customer focused approach. Our relationship with a customer hopefully lasts many years, which is why every touch point, every time we meet the customer, is of utmost importance.</p>		<p>Can it really be true that my actions are that important?</p> <p>Yes. Every single customer touch point on the ferry is important, the one with you none the less. Having a positive interaction with the customer, will automatically have favorable effect on the next touch point through the customers journey onboard as well. The chain reaction of great customer service.</p>

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Figure 9. Focus Group Q&A

4.3 Service Design Tools

By using service design tools, the researcher aims to visually define the current situation in the company. The tools chosen are beneficial and essential to make the most thorough and accurate analysis.

4.3.1 The Design Criteria Canvas

The design criteria made for this thesis (Fig. 10) is based on the management's vision for the outcome – to increase upselling and customer satisfaction – and the research conducted. This tool is useful when forming a strategy for the future, design criteria form the principles of the change one is aiming for (Van der Pijl et. al. 2016, p. 70). By using design criteria, you can clarify what the company must and should focus on, what to consider doing if there is a possibility and what to avoid at all costs.

Must-haves for Wasaline include having a customer focused business, progressive leadership, a pro-change management and a willingness to let all employees be involved and have their voices heard. Should-haves and should-dos are to continuously conduct surveys and get feedback from customers to be able to develop in the right

direction. Leaders should have access to the needed methods and tools to work progressively and employees should receive in-house training if and when needed. Development should always be on the agenda and if possible, renewals could be made. Other could-haves would be more customer involvement in decision-making, education for leaders and recreation for employees. Won't-haves – things that are not on the table – are invisibility and ingratitude for the employees, static leadership without progress, ignoring bad case scenarios and taking the customer for granted.

Must	Should	Could	Won't
Customer focus	Periodic surveys	Involvement	Take customer for granted
Progressive leadership	Methods and tools	Education	Static leadership
Change management	Development	Renewal	Ignore bad case scenarios
Employee involvement	In-service training	Recreation	Invisibility and ingratitude
Non-negotiables	Important features	Optional features	Non-negotiables

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Figure 10. Design Criteria

4.3.2 SWOT Analysis

By making a SWOT analysis you are aiming to identify a company's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as future opportunities and threats (Mariani, 2017, p. 40). Strengths enable the company to perform well, while weaknesses prevent a good performance. Opportunities are trends and ideas that can help the company to make profit, and threats are possible events or forces that the company cannot control yet must take into consideration. (Harvard Business School, 2005, pp. 2-3)

Based on discussions with the management, the following analysis (Fig. 11) has been made. One clear strength is that Wasaline, with its ferry Aurora Botnia, has no competitors on the route Vasa-Umeå, while a weakness is that the company is dependent on the income from freight companies. One constant threat is that the fixed

costs become too high, but an opportunity is that the company is in an economic situation where it is still possible to both develop and improve services.



Figure 9. SWOT Analysis

4.3.3 Customer journey map

Lindstedt and Burenius (2003, p. 500) say that the entire lifespan of a product or service must be covered by the customer chain, and in the same way the researcher wants to point out that to create a great customer experience, the professionalism of the employees must cover the whole customer journey. To acknowledge the individual journey of every customer is important to find the right way to approach the customer and increase the customer lifetime value (Artun & Levin, 2015, p. 70).

For a company to be successful it must understand the importance of the entire customer journey. The market as well as the behavior of the customers is always in movement. Service is a continuous process that must regularly be updated and improved. (Tuulaniemi 2011, pp. 96, 105)

Pakkanen et. al. (2001, pp. 9-10) note that service is both immaterial and momentary, which means that each employee has a serious role for the whole company and the customer in their own personal connection with the customer.

Knowing how a customer feels during all the steps of a customer journey helps one to analyze all the different touch points, and most important of all; to be able to improve the customer journey you first need to trace it (Villani, 2019, p. 114). Customer experience is the entirety of a customer's interactions with the company and when mapping a customer journey, you are diagramming all the touch points a customer has when engaging with the company (Peppers, 2016, p. 40).

The customer journey map for Aurora Botnia (Fig. 12) was created based on benchmarking, observation, interviews, and discussions. All in all, fourteen touch points during the customer journey were identified, starting with the booking situation, and ending with the feedback after the journey. With the framework the researcher is aiming to visualize the customer journey, so that it becomes clearer to the employees how each meeting with the customer is important in creating a great customer experience. The seven numbers represent each weekday – and continuing week after week, all year around. The anchor represents the necessity of service design thinking and including all employees, while the heart is to clarify the importance of each employee's attitude and impact.



Figure 12. Customer Journey Map

4.3.4 Personas

In a design thinking process, using personas is one method that can help designers to move from the define phase into the ideation phase. The personas can be both fictional and based on research. (Interaction Design Foundation, 2022)

The most realistic personas are based on solid research on real people. Creating personas will help you to understand the customer in two specific ways – it will lead you in the right way in decision making and it will remind you that real people are using your services. (Caddick and Cable, 2011, p. 11)

As mentioned earlier in the interviews-paragraph, personas have been designed for this thesis, based on interviews with passengers onboard Aurora Botnia. Interview questions can be seen in Appendix III, and the personas created in Figure 13.

After the interviews the researcher decided that three personas would be enough to cover the largest differences, and that by further differentiating between details in customer behaviour, the results would be poorer and more difficult to interpret. The first persona is a truck driver, who travels with Aurora Botnia weekly through work. The second persona is a Finnish person who is studying in Umeå and is therefore using Auror Botnia as vessel for commuting monthly. The third persona is travelling with the ferry for the first time, and for leisure. In the persona figures there is more information about the characters, their needs and pain points, and the customer behaviour and goals of the personas are presented.

CUSTOMER PERSONA AURORA BOTNIA





CUSTOMER PERSONA AURORA BOTNIA



Figure 13. Personas

4.3.5 Empathy Map

Empathy mapping is a service design tool that can help build empathy for the group in focus by identifying their wants, needs and sensorial experiences. By using this tool, the researcher gains a deeper understanding of the participant’s experience. As a

researcher you are trying to answer e.g. what they see, say, do, hear, and think. (Haaga-Helia)

Creating empathy maps to get a better understanding of the customers can be very clever when creating for example Personas and Customer Journey Maps, but for this project the researcher has decided to create a map with the purpose to get a clearer picture of the service team leaders onboard. Earlier in this thesis the importance in leaders feeling and showing empathy for the personnel was mentioned, but to create a great customer experience it is just as important to be able to see a situation from a leader's point of view. By pinpointing the leaders' feelings and experiences, the aim is to be able to give concrete suggestions for improvement regarding the leader's role in the development of customer service, including upselling.

The following empathy map (Fig. 14) is based on interviews/discussions with middle level leaders within the company's customer service section and the focus group discussion held. The most common comments in each section have been summarized and written as quotations to make it more relatable.

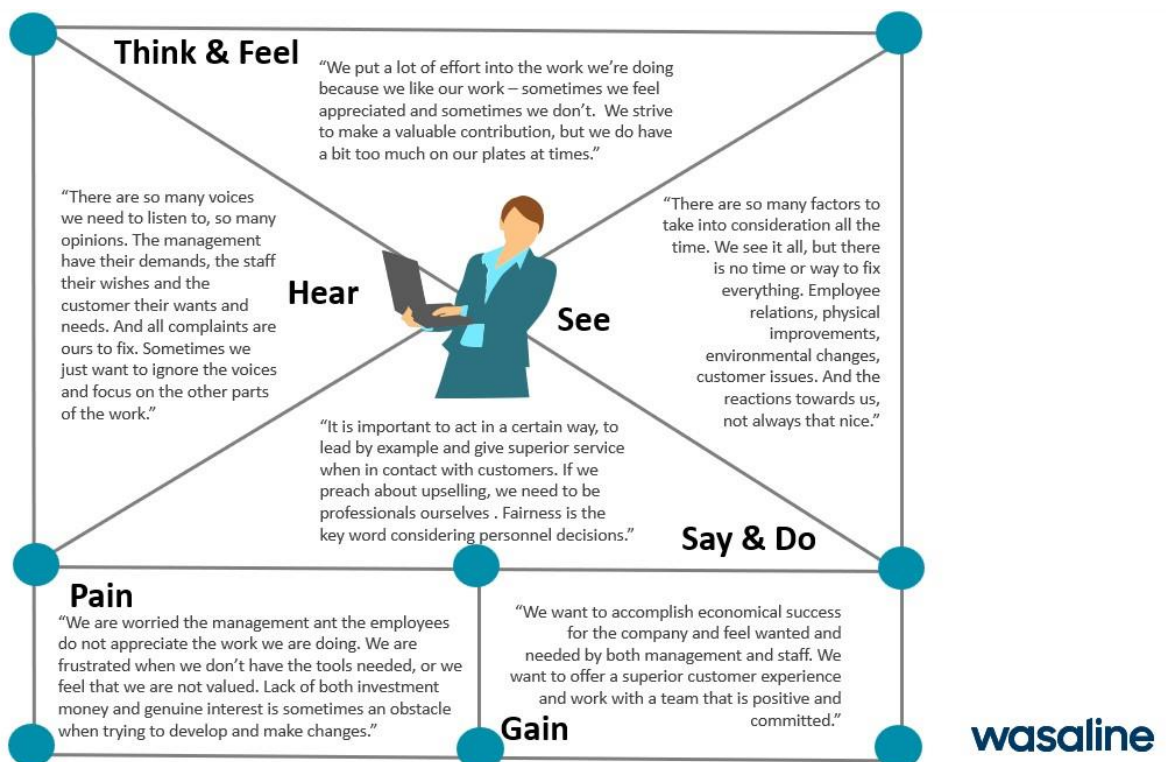


Figure 12. Empathy Map

5. Process Discussion and Reflection

Design thinking is a process that focuses on e.g. observation, collaboration, fast learning, and visualization of ideas – which leads to an innovative business strategy. It should be an integrative process that involves both designers and businesspeople, as well as the customers. When using a design thinking approach, you aim to apply a designer's sensibility and methods to solve the problems discovered – it is a methodology for innovation and enablement. (Lockwood, 2009, p. xi)

At this stage in this thesis process, one could argue that the identifying and defining stages are completed, as well as partly the ideating stage. That would mean that only creating/prototyping a plan and testing/evaluating would be left of the process. The researcher still wants to point out that this is an ongoing process, where after evaluating the situation, you are likely to return to the empathizing, defining, and ideating stage time after another. Just as there is prototyping and testing already within the defining and ideating stages. Following the researcher will discuss and analyze the process for this project.

5.1 Empathize

The empathize stage is shortly all the work you do to understand the situation and the people within the challenge you are researching. Working with design thinking you usually try to solve for example a company's dilemmas, and to do that you need to see the situation from different perspectives, not only from your own view. (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford)

In this phase you observe, engage, and listen. As a researcher you gather a tremendous amount of new information during this stage, but you also need to put aside your own assumptions. (Hunter Miller, 2017)

All research methods that have been used in this project can easily fit in the empathize stage since they have been used to understand the situation more thoroughly. The desktop research along with benchmarking and the observation onboard created a ground for this project, and the answers received through the survey and the

interviews built a firm knowledge bank on that ground. However, other methods that have been used belong in more than one stage.

According to the researcher, benchmarking and observations are rather similar. They are both research techniques that do not demand much preparation, not many people need to be involved or even know about it, and it is very cost effective. As mentioned earlier benchmarking was never in the original plan yet continuously used as a method throughout the work. In order to compare your situation with competitors and get new ideas, benchmarking is necessary, and so is observation. In a leading position you must constantly cast a glance at what is happening around you – both within and outside the company. The researcher is even prone to argue that when working with service design thinking, leaving out benchmarking and observation is not an option.

Fogelqvist (2017, p. 141) says that co-creation is a process where you together with the customers develop a solution to a dilemma, while Elmgart and Bloch (2017, p. 214) points out the importance of connecting the customers values with the company's values, as well as continuous development of the customer experience. These statements motivate the use of surveys and interviews in this project. The interviews conducted resulted in information needed to create e.g. the personas and visual word cloud of the customers opinions. In retrospect, more interviews could have been conducted to receive a wider range of answers and inputs.

The survey was certainly the most demanding of the research methods used for this project, even if it did not include meeting nor talking to the customers. More people involved and more requests to consider – and a must to compromise. Over-all the survey was well-made, and a great number of replies were received. After sorting out all the answers, the company now has a great first set of customers' opinions and a base to compare with when the next survey is conducted in March–April 2024. However, with the aim of this thesis in mind, excluding the question concerning upselling in particular, was understandably very disappointing for the researcher. Upselling is extremely difficult to measure but adding that question to the survey would give the management slightly better insight.

The Empathize Stage in this case was very broad and time-consuming, yet it contributed to a huge amount of information that needed to be categorized and analysed. At this point, it was also necessary to look at the research questions again

and contemplate whether the findings could possibly be of help in answering the questions or if other research methods still needed to be applied. Before moving on to the next phase in this project, the aim was to gain a lot more knowledge about the customers of Aurora Botnia, and the methods used were, indeed, effective, and useful. So, how do we know what the customer wants? Levesque (2019) points out that instead of guessing, you ask – and it is that simple for you to know the customers biggest frustrations, their deepest wants, needs and desires. This was accomplished.

5.2 Define

The aim in the define stage is to create clarity and to truly understand the problem or dilemma – it is where everything is starting to make sense (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford). At this stage you will analyze the findings you have already gathered, and your team will gather more ideas and be able to understand how to put these ideas into use in the most effective way (Hunter Miller, 2017).

The Personas, the SWOT analysis and the Empathy Map made for Aurora Botnia are solely results from research conducted in the empathize stage. By using these simple but effective service design tools you are concretizing and visualizing the current situation and the main customers in a logical way. Both the Design Criteria Canvas and the Customer Journey map could be added under the define stage as well, but the researcher feels that these partly go under the prototyping phase and will be discussed there instead. Here, rather than under the empathize stage, the Focus Group Discussion along with the feedback from the outsourced Mystery Shopping will be added.

The contribution to this project by the Focus Group Discussion participants and Maria Nyman from Barona Horeca has been enormous and the researcher feels that more than anything, they have helped to define the situation and largely also continuing into the ideating and even prototyping phases. The researcher was unaware of Nyman's involvement until after her first visit onboard the ferry, and not until February 2024 was it determined that parts of the results and feedback could be used in this thesis. Using mystery shoppers for research was in the first draft of this thesis, but it turned out to be too complicated and time consuming, as well as an obvious cost issue that was not an alternative at that point. Therefore, it was a welcome surprise to the researcher that the company had invested in this, even if it was not planned to be a long-term

collaboration. Ritchie (2005, p. 153) says that observational research like Mystery Shopping enables you to be part of the situation as a real guest and achieve a deeper and more honest picture of the situation – which gives a more accurate description of an event than the feedback you get from e.g. a survey that the customer answers several days after the journey was made.

The Focus Group Discussion conducted for this thesis was a well-planned research method and could easily go under the empathize stage, but because of one word - insight - the researcher will categorize it under the define stage. This way, the group can also reach both the before and after phase. The members of the focus group contributed with so much knowledge and thoughts that it would feel unfair to not give them enough room. Since the researcher also have a long history in the customer service field, the focus group was a great aid with remembering the importance of staying objective – to ask the questions without immediately participating in finding the answers.

Based on your new understanding after doing research, your insight and point-of-view defines the right dilemma to address (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford). Both the conclusions from the Focus Group Discussion and from Nyman helped to pinpoint the pain points in this project. Though the customer input and co-creation is very important when creating a customer focused experience, the researcher would like to note that involving experts on the subject can also be tremendously favourable.

In the define stage one determines the challenge to take on and when moving into ideating mode one focus on creating solutions to the problem (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford). Already in the initial stage of this project, there was a clear aim, and therefore also an issue that needed to be solved – how to increase upselling and customer satisfaction – but before generating solutions, the researcher needed to deepen and concretize the dilemmas. A Problem Defining Mind Map (Fig. 15) with four pain points was created to specify the issues.

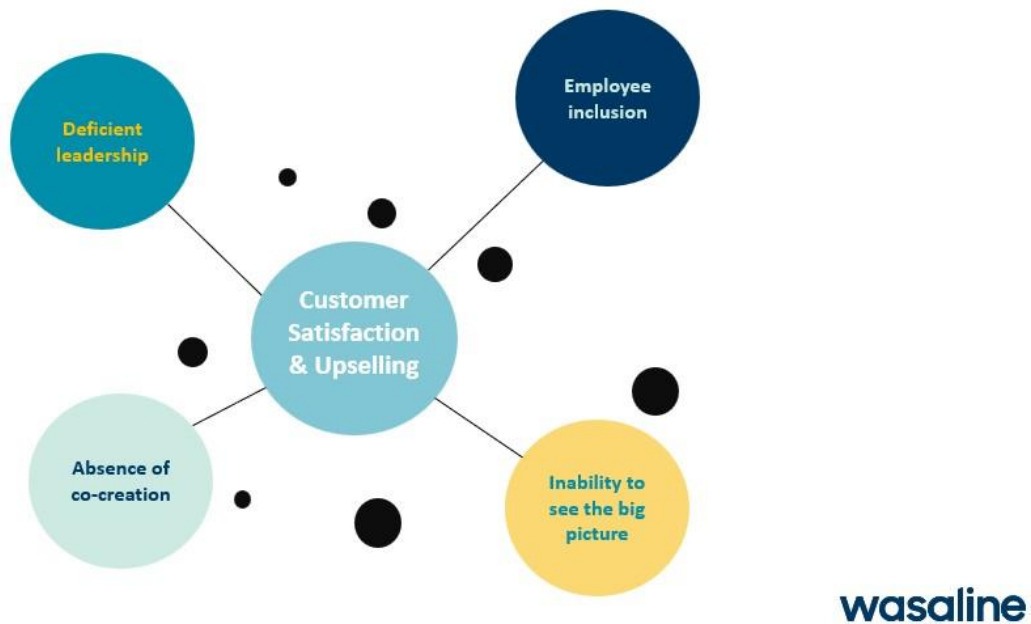


Figure 15. Problem Defining Mind Map

5.3 Ideate

During the ideate stage in the design thinking process you use the information you have gathered in the earlier phases and begin to generate possible solutions to the problems. In this stage it is important to produce many ideas and not to dismiss any examples straight away – here it is a benefit to allow yourself to really think outside the box. (Hunter Miller, 2017).

As previously stated, the Focus Group Discussion as well as the discussion with Nyman added a lot of value also to the ideate phase. Another research method that was conducted at a very early stage of this project, which according to the researcher also covers all the three first stages of the process, were the workshops with members of the service staff. During the workshops dilemmas were identified and discussed and a wide range of possible solutions were proposed. The survey answers and the interviews also resulted in many suggestions for development, but the workshops created room for discussion in a way that was not attainable through the other research methods.

The previously presented Problem Defining Mind Map is partly based on the material obtained from the mentioned workshops, where the participants managed to discover several smaller dilemmas within the main problems in focus. Especially the two upper circles in the mind map, Deficient leadership and Employee inclusion, were broadly addressed and discussed from different angles. A few of the comments were as follows: the staff's well-being and motivation is incredibly important for a company's success since how they feel converts into how they make the customer feel, and the fellowship and solidarity to the company will shine through and have a tremendous effect on the customer's travel experience. A company's leadership must be inclusive, fair and open, and the communication honest and sincere. Information about the company needs to be forwarded to all employees, and not only remain at management level – everyone must feel and be involved. Without the right knowledge and equipment, upselling cannot be carried out.

Hence, what were the possible solution proposals addressed in this phase, and what could be done to make the customer experience onboard Aurora Botnia superior? In Figure 16, the solution suggestions from the workshops are presented.



Figure 16. Solution Suggestions

When moving into the prototype and test stages, the project and process becomes real in a way, and this is where you need to put your more critical and realistic glasses on. Prototyping and testing are two different stages in the process, but in this thesis project the researcher suggests they are parallel entities. The transition forward from the ideating stage demands a lot of work from the researcher – in this project the deep analysis of the research is done here.

5.4 Prototype and Test

You prototype to communicate and to start a conversation with the customer, to test different solutions to a problem and to – if you fail – do it quickly and in a cost-effective manner. Testing is done to refine solutions and to simply learn more about the customer. (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford)

Prototyping, the researcher would claim, is in this project in many ways the analyses made based on the research conducted – and the suggestions for development possibilities presented to the commissioner. Testing is all about trying out new concepts and ideas, evaluating them, and then either continue forward or return to the earlier stages. Testing is in this project something that has been done continuously since the first workshop and should continue to be done in the future for Wasaline to thrive and to truly benefit from this project.

During this thesis project, focus has most widely been on empathizing, defining, and ideating, since this was required to possibly be able to answer the research questions and aid the commissioner in the most advantageous way possible. So, is there an answer to the question regarding in which ways a service design thinking approach can improve the customer experience as well an increase in upselling onboard Aurora Botnia? Yes, there is. Not a short answer, but certainly a comprehensive one.

Adopting a service design thinking approach can surely enhance the customer's travel experience onboard the ferry significantly and in several ways. It will help Wasaline to address and understand the preferences of the customer, and by using service design methods and tools, the company gains insight into what is expected and wanted from them, and this enables the development of services tailored to meet the customer needs. E.g. by creating a customer journey map, you can identify pain points and improvement opportunities, and create a better experience for the customer – and the

same applies to all the different service design tools applied in this project. Service design thinking is an approach that encourages innovation, which contributes to a creative, encouraging and including work environment for the employees. By prioritizing customer feedback and making adjustments and improvements based on it, Wasaline can ensure that their services both meet and exceed the customers' expectations, which in turn leads to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty towards the company and a willingness to spend more money while onboard the ferry.

With the work conducted during this project, can the second research question be answered? Absolutely.

Does strategic leadership and change management facilitate implementation of a service design thinking approach, and if so, how?

Strategic leadership ensures that the implementation of a service design thinking approach is applied throughout the company, and that it aligns with the rest of the goals the company has. It is up to the leaders to make sure that the use of service design methods and tools supports the company's vision and mission. The team leader has an essential role in the process of moving the company and its employees forward, into a more customer-focused attitude and way of working. A strategic leader leads by example and communicates the importance of excellent and genuine customer service to all personnel.

Change management is necessary when implementing new processes and ways to work – like introducing and using a service design approach. Strategic leaders have strategies for change management, e.g. to anticipate resistance and less desirable attitudes from employees, but still ensure implementation of the new methods. A strategic leader sees the whole picture from different angles and makes decisions based on the entirety and long-term effects. Customer satisfaction is in focus also when decisions are being made concerning for example budgets and working hours, and the leader is always promoting an overall understanding of customer needs and wants. Strategic leaders show the direction for the staff, manage change, promote collaboration, and mitigate risks – which will benefit Wasaline and undoubtedly increase both customer satisfaction and upselling onboard.

Finding ways to increase upselling and to increase the travel experience for the customers is not in any way ending with this thesis –if it were so, this thesis would be an utter failure. The following chapter contains a summary of the researcher’s recommended approach and development opportunities for the company.

6. Development Suggestions

Newbery and Farnham (2013, p. 40) wonder how a business will stay in business and suggest that the answer is by creating value and that this value needs to be identified, created, and delivered to the customers. To create value for the customer, you must know what the customer feels, and that you do by continually asking the customer through e.g. surveys and interviews, and by actively listening to and acknowledging feedback – and addressing promptly. The information you get from the customers, you must always consider in decision-making situations to show that you value the customer and to create value for the customer. Continue to be interested in what the customer has to say – conduct surveys, discuss and interview.

Always remember that the customer is the single most important detail in your business – many factors can, should and will change – but the importance of the customer remains. Elmgart and Bloch (2017, p. 216) lists several benefits and effects from always putting the customer in the first room, e.g. repurchase frequency, CLV, the possibility to get recommended, employee well-being and reduced handling cost per customer.

Lindstedt and Burenienius (2003, p. 501) say that you need to define all stakeholders along the customer chain as customers and that the conditions for producing a successful product, it must satisfy the needs of all stakeholders. For a successful business with customer focus you must value everyone included and realize that every employee in your company is important in creating an enjoyable and memorable experience for the customer. Train the personnel to deliver exceptional service, encourage them to interact with the customers, and always support the service design thinking approach.

Ensure that the staff members have the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools they need to be able to meet the customers' needs – and if not – provide them with the education, training or material needed. Show appreciation to your employees, keep them updated with company news and listen to their opinions or issues. If possible, do a little extra for the personnel to create unity among the staff members, maybe a kick-off or other leisure activities – this will most certainly reflect and have effect on the level of service they provide to the guests. Henriksson (2014, p. 22) says that the capability and willingness to serve a customer is customer service. Wasaline ought to do everything in its power to ensure that the employees have both the mentioned willingness and capability.

Accept that professional and strategic leadership is crucial for the success of a customer service company. Provide the leaders with the equipment needed – both physical and psychological. A good leader is a part of the team they lead, not the most important part, but equally essential as all the others. For a team to be successful, team members must work towards the same goal and help each other to have a chance to reach the goal. A good leader is always there for a subordinate in times of need, and the management needs to be there for the team leaders.

Service is something intangible that cannot be stored, and therefore it is necessary that every employee realizes their own important role in the business (Pakkanen et al., 2001, pp. 9-10). The Customer Journey Map shows that each touch point is a chance for the company to connect with the customers and to do exactly what this project is all about – to increase both upselling and customer satisfaction. Use all the tools and templates developed in this thesis – for all members of staff, for encouraging innovation and developing new ideas to test, for getting to know the customer and the personnel, and for searching answers. Service design methods and tools will help you get the insight you need to design a superior experience for the customer.

When possible, use mystery shoppers both during low and high season, preferably regularly. This way it is possible to measure and compare the results, and this is certainly a beneficial way to find weaknesses and issues, and to address these in time.

Do not rely on everything continuing as before but prepare for change and welcome it. Benchmark consciously and look around at what is happening in the world and in the travel industry. You must find a way to differentiate your company from competitors

and find out what processes need to be changed so that it turns to your advantage (Leijala, 2019, p. 66). Explore the possibility to personalize services based on the customers' preferences and past behaviour, develop for example onboard activities and different meal options. Optimize the customers' digital experience with the company since it is a very important part of the customer experience – make it easier for the customers to buy additional services or products and spend more money before they even set foot onboard the ferry. Find ways to improve the conditions for additional sales – develop more promotions, discounts and package deals that provide added value and makes it easier for the staff to recommend and upsell.

By embracing these suggestions and opportunities, Wasaline can effectively continue the work of implementing a service design thinking approach – a vital step when aiming for an increase in upselling and customer satisfaction.

The commissioner has, in addition to previous suggestions, received more concrete and detailed development alternatives that will not be shared in this study.

7. Conclusion

The aim with this thesis was to, by applying different service design methods and tools, provide the commissioner with relevant and useful information that would hopefully benefit them in their future work. Overall, the author is satisfied, and not particularly surprised, with the outcome. However, the research also led to some eye-opening situations, such as how few members of the staff actually did promote products during a customer interaction, and the depth in the focus group discussions. The research material, including methods, results, and development suggestions, was presented to the commissioner at the end of February 2024.

While customer centralization is what service design thinking is all about, the researcher wants to pinpoint one very significant detail that is not to be forgotten – reality and realism. Companies are built and developed to create profit for the stakeholders, and one needs to remember that even though the customer is in every way the most important part in making a business successful, it is not for the sole reason of giving great service. Both sides of a coin are valuable, creative vs practical,

bold vs logical, divergent vs convergent etc. As mentioned earlier – not everything has to, can, or should be changed at the same time. Easy does it, and every small step towards a more customer-centered approach is a step in the right direction.

When the topic for this thesis was first initiated by the commissioner, the author was rather sceptic to the width of the project. *Increase upselling* is far too vague a wish. It is close to impossible to measure, especially if you do not ask the customer that specific question – did you buy any additional products? However, in this work, specific measuring of upselling was put aside, and focus was put on diving into the world of customer satisfaction instead and steering the work towards upselling and the attitudes among employees. With this, the author would not claim to have succeeded, but we are, undeniably, on the right path. Customer connection and upselling possibilities are discussed, if not daily, then at least weekly, and there is not a member of the service staff who is unfamiliar with additional sales and it being a vital part of their work tasks.

This thesis is now reaching its final sentence, but for Wasaline and the crew on Aurora Botnia, service design thinking is still in every way a work in progress – for change is inevitable and the demands on customer service shifts – and that is something that will never change.

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Wasaline customer survey

Wasaline has invited you to take a customer survey. We kindly ask you to answer a few questions about your trip.

We will raffle a day cruise with Archipelago buffet for two people among all participants. Value of the prize is 150_€/~~EUR~~/1_726_kr~~SEK~~. You can participate in the raffle after submitting the survey.

Taking the survey takes only a few minutes. Your answers will be handled anonymously.

SVARA PÅ SVENSKA VASTAA SUOMEKSI

When was your travel date? *

How did you travel? *

With own vehicle

With a travel agent or by bus

Without own vehicle

Booking

Did you book your own trip? *

Yes

No

Searching of information

Have you used following services to search for information related to your trip?

Map services

Review websites

Travel agents

Social media

Search engines

Wasaline.com

Choose all that apply

How would you grade the information you received before your trip? *

1

2

3

4

5

For example, timetable and pricing. 1 = Very insufficient, 2 = Insufficient, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Ample, 5 = Very ample

Where have you seen marketing related to your trip?

Digital ads on websites

Exhibitions and events

Newsletter

Radio

Social media

Search engines

Newspapers and magazines

TV

Outdoor billboards

Choose all that apply

Service on board

How satisfied were you with the service on board? *

Very unsatisfied

Unsatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very satisfied

Did not use this service

Selection in shop

Very unsatisfied

Unsatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very satisfied

Did not use this service

Quality of food and beverages

Very unsatisfied

Unsatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very satisfied

Did not use this service

Lounges and cabins

- Very unsatisfied
Unsatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied
Did not use this service
- Helpfulness of staff
- Very unsatisfied
Unsatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied
Did not use this service
- Cleanliness of the ship
- Very unsatisfied
Unsatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied
Did not use this service
- Entertainment
- Very unsatisfied
Unsatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied
Did not use this service
- Did you buy products such as food, drinks and souvenirs during your trip? *
- Yes
- No
- How satisfied were you with your purchase?
- 1
2
3
4
5
- 1 = Very unsatisfied, 2 = Unsatisfied, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied

Travel experience

How do you agree with the following statements about your trip: *

Totally disagree
Disagree

	Neutral	
	Agree	
	Totally agree	
I felt safe during the trip		
	Totally disagree	
	Disagree	
	Neutral	
	Agree	
	Totally agree	
My trip was worth the money		
	Totally disagree	
	Disagree	
	Neutral	
	Agree	
	Totally agree	
Wasaline met my expectations		
	Totally disagree	
	Disagree	
	Neutral	
	Agree	
	Totally agree	
I will travel with Wasaline again		
	Totally disagree	
	Disagree	
	Neutral	
	Agree	
	Totally agree	
How likely is it that you would recommend Wasaline to a friend or colleague? *		
012345678910		
0 - Not at all likely		10 - Very likely
How could we improve our service?		

Background information

What was the purpose of your trip? *

Business

Commute to work

Private/Leisure

Studying

Transportation of cargo

Du kan välja flera alternativ

How old are you? *

Under 18

18-29 years

30-49 years

50-64 years

65 years or more

In which country do you live? *

Finland

Sverige

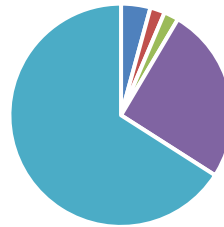
Norge

OtherOther

Send

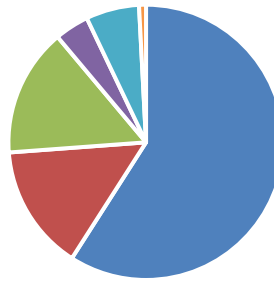
Appendix II. Customer Survey Results

How satisfied are you with the customer service when booking your trip?



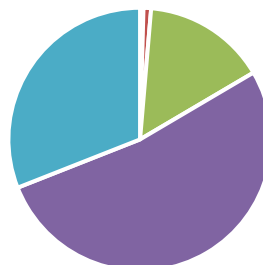
■ Very unsatisfied ■ Unsatisfied ■ Neutral ■ Satisfied ■ Very satisfied

Have you used following services to search for information related to your trip?



■ Wasaline website ■ Map services ■ Search engine ■ Review websites ■ Social media ■ Agent

How would you grade the information you received before your trip?



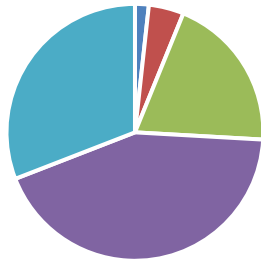
■ Very insufficient ■ Insufficient ■ Neutral ■ Ample ■ Very ample

Where have you seen marketing related to your trip?



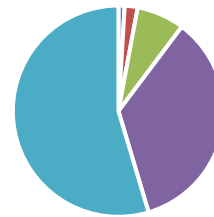
- Digital banners
- Exhibitions and events
- Newsletter
- Radio
- Social media ads
- Search engine ads
- Newspaper ads
- TV

Selection in shop



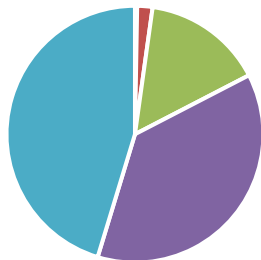
- Very insufficient
- Insufficient
- Neutral
- Ample
- Very ample

Quality of food and beverage



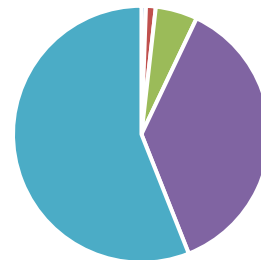
- Very insufficient
- Insufficient
- Neutral
- Ample
- Very ample

Lounges and cabins



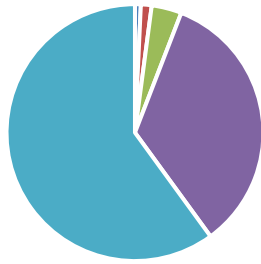
- Very insufficient
- Insufficient
- Neutral
- Ample
- Very ample

Helpfulness of staff



- Very insufficient
- Insufficient
- Neutral
- Ample
- Very ample

Cleanliness



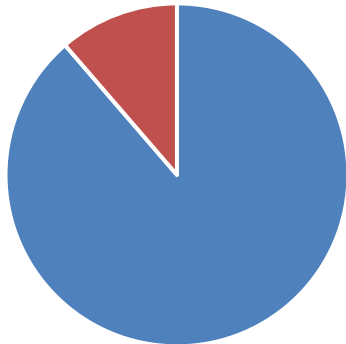
- Very insufficient ■ Insufficient
- Neutral ■ Ample
- Very ample

Entertainment



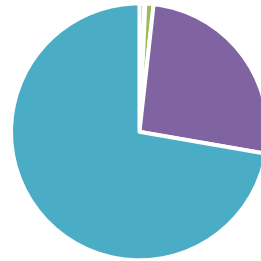
- Very insufficient ■ Insufficient
- Neutral ■ Ample
- Very ample

Did you purchase items?



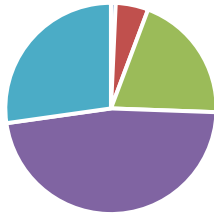
- Yes ■ No

I felt safe during the trip



- Totally disagree ■ Disagree
- Neutral ■ Agree
- Totally agree

My trip was worth the money



- Totally disagree ■ Disagree
- Neutral ■ Agree
- Totally agree

Wasaline met my expectations



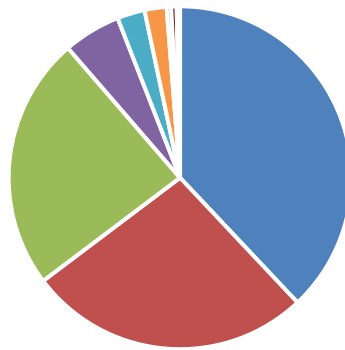
- Totally disagree ■ Disagree
- Neutral ■ Agree
- Totally agree

I will travel with Wasaline again



- Totally disagree ■ Disagree
- Neutral ■ Agree
- Totally agree

NPS Answers



- 10 ■ 9 ■ 8 ■ 7 ■ 6 ■ 5 ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1

Appendix III. Passenger Interview Questions

Interview questions

- How old are you and what is your occupation?
- Do you travel alone or with others?
- What is the purpose of your trip? Why did you choose to travel with Aurora Botnia?
- Have you travelled with us before? How often do you travel with us?
- How do you like to spend your time onboard?
- What amenities and features are most important to you during your time onboard Aurora Botnia?
- What improvements would you recommend onboard Aurora Botnia to enhance the customer experience? Anything specific you wish was offered onboard?
- How satisfied are you with the customer service provided onboard Aurora Botnia?
- Did you purchase anything while onboard Aurora Botnia? Why/why not?
- Did the personnel recommend anything else than the products you had decided to buy? If yes, did you make any additional purchases?
- How do you feel when sales personnel is recommending additional products?
- Who or what would you say is our biggest competitor to having you as a customer?
- Are there any technological features you would like to see implemented on Aurora Botnia?
- How does price influence your decision when choosing a ferry service?
- Are you open to paying extra for premium services or amenities?
- How important is sustainability and environmental responsibility to you when choosing a ferry service?
- Are there specific eco-friendly practices or initiatives you would like Aurora Botnia to adopt?

Workshops 2023

- What is upselling?

- Discussion about what upselling means to the participants.
- Upselling, cross-selling, recommendations etc.

- Why upselling?

- Economic viability; more money does not only mean more profit for the management, but it is also beneficial for all stakeholders. Commissions, reinvestments in the company etc.
- Higher Customer Lifetime Value, i.e. how much a customer is worth to the company over time.

- Customer satisfaction.

- It's more costly to get a new customer than it is to keep an already existing one. The connection between customer satisfaction and €.
- To be able to offer something to the customer they did not know they wanted/needed, and in that way making the customer experience even better.

- Customer interactions

- Discussion about own experiences of upselling, both as a salesperson and as a customer.

- The Comfort Zonen

- A great tool when working with upselling. Are you too comfortable to make the extra effort, do you feel discomfort with upselling?
- The more you step outside the comfort zone, the bigger it gets. All recovery takes place inside the comfort zone, but all progress on the outside.

- Questions

- Leading vs open questions.

- Challenge yourself and your colleagues, learn to use open question that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. When, where, how, who, what and which are interrogatives that you can begin with.

- Group work

- By department, discussions about examples of great upselling products.

- Calculations

- How much can we make by making an effort with upselling?

Example 1: 3 x GT-orders where the bartender succeed at selling a premium gin instead of the basic /work daya during a year. $150 \text{ (workdays)} \times 15 \text{ (€)} = 2250\text{€}$

Example 2: All workshop participants sell one beer an one coffee extra/day during a work shift. $11 \text{ (persons)} \times 7 \text{ (days)} \times 9,10 \text{ (€)} = 700,70\text{€} \rightarrow 15015\text{€}/\text{year}$.

- Attitude

- Upselling is part of the job description, not something that you can decline to take part in.

- What can you do to make upselling feel like a natural part of your work? (hand-heart-brain)

- What have we sold of certain products during the past months? What do you think you can sell?

- Answers

- All participants continue the following sentences:

*Upselling is...

*The biggest challenge for myself with upselling is...

*To increase upselling, I can...

*For my team to succeed with upselling, we need...

- Conclusion

- Upselling is not an occational act. It is continuous and constant.

- Encourage eachother, upselling is fun!

Appendix V. Focus Group Questions

- All five of you have worked in the service industry for over twenty years, some longer. You are professionals who have worked with guests in so many different ways; as “the floor person”, as the manager, as the educator of personnel. We will begin this discussion session with the infamous saying “customer is king”. Please, discuss.
- What are your expectations as a customer and what do you expect from your employees?
- Think back in time; what are your fondest memories in a customer service situation?
- Is there a red line between your experiences, what would you say are the common factors?
- Let us flip the coin. The worst experiences, nightmare cases that have made you regret ever working in the service business.
- What have you learned from these “bad” interactions with customers? What would you tell an employee who would experience the same thing?
- Which traits would you say are most important in a person working with customer service?
- So, can anybody learn to be great at customer service?
- All of you work/have worked for rather big companies, where customer service has been taken seriously. Please discuss the following words:
 - Consistency
 - Proactivity
 - Personalization
 - Customer Lifetime Value
- How important is customer service for a company’s success?
- What about the leadership, what is the managements’ role in customer service?
- What are the biggest mistakes you can make as a manager in a customer service centred business?
- “Upselling is an essential part of great customer service”. Please discuss.
- Share examples of when an upsell positively influences your own purchasing decision.
- Time to flip the coin again – negative experiences?
- In your opinion, what makes an upselling approach effective or ineffective?
- How important is that upselling strategies are discussed with the employees? Why?
- In what situations can upselling add significant value to the customer experience?
- All of you have at some point also worked with customer journeys on ships, would you say there is times during the journey where upselling is preferred, more effective etc.?
- Are there times when upsell is unnecessary, inappropriate, or pushy?
- Please discuss the following words when it comes to upselling:

- Unethical
- Transparency
- Consistency
- How important is upsell for a company's success?
- What about the leadership, what is the management's role when it comes to upselling?
- What are the biggest mistakes you can make as a leader talking to your employees about upselling?

