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# Co-creating meaningful experiences with WeTravel: a design game for travel planning

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## Co-creating meaningful experiences with WeTravel: a design game for travel planning

Katariina Salonen  
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This Master's thesis discusses how design games can facilitate customers' co-creation of value, goal and expectation management, and help them build shared visions of the future. The objective of this thesis was to create a meaningful travel planning experience that focuses on the why and how of leisure tourism. The development project was implemented with a Finnish mobile app development company Uneni mobile, whose goal was to create an application that serves their target group.

This thesis consists of a theory section and an empirical section. The theoretical section discusses leisure tourism, value emergence, goal and expectation management, facilitation, design games, co-creation and customer engagement. The empirical part focuses on deciphering what customers find valuable when travelling with other people, and what kind of goals and expectations they have of leisure tourism to help build meaningful content for the design game.

The study was based on qualitative research methods. Data were collected by conducting five semi-structured in-depth interviews about people's experiences of travel planning and travelling with friends. The interviews were conducted in September 2017. The data from the interviews were analysed abductively, using categories built by concept driven coding. Based on the insights from the literature review and interviews, a prototype of a travel planning design game was made. The prototype was tested in September 2017 and received positive feedback.

The results from the interviews showed that people do build their own service experiences when it comes to leisure tourism, by using multiple service providers. People's expectations and goals regarding the trip were influenced by the people they were taking the trip with and the purpose of the trip, more than their own individual goals or expectations. The value from the travel experience comes mostly from expecting and planning the trip, and during travel the value is co-created with the other travellers. However, other people were mostly influential in people's value destruction but the negative effects were downsized by the cost of a good travel experience: making compromises and understanding each other.

The design game, WeTravel, was built based on literature review, insights from the interviews and feedback received from the prototyping session. The game includes three steps, where people get to build their own holiday persona, define their holiday goals and manage causes for conflict through scenarios. WeTravel works as a tool for facilitating customer value co-creation, as well as a tool for gaining deeper understanding on customer's lives in their own context.

Keywords: design games, value co-creation, customer expectation management, tourism

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## 1 Introduction

In today's world people can learn more about the products and services they use with the help of internet. This has led to people designing more individualized, experiential and differentiated products and services for themselves that fit their own needs, and companies and designers are no longer able to create meaningful service offerings without valuable end user input. (Wu & Fang 2010, 570; Payne et al. 2008, 89; Jaakkola & Alexander 2014, 257; Hatami & Mattelmäki 2016, 328.)

When it comes to travel planning, people have various services and opportunities to help them create their ideal holiday experience. Websites and applications such as Inspirock ([www.inspirock.com](http://www.inspirock.com)), Travefy ([www.travefy.com](http://www.travefy.com)) and TripAdvisor ([www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)) all help people decide what to do on their vacation. When it comes to designing meaningful service experiences, the focus should be on why things are done (Sinek 2009). To get to the why, people need to talk about their needs, goals and dreams, something that seems to be missing from the market.

When a group of people get together to plan their holiday, there are always emotional risks involved in this co-creation session. People need to be able to feel safe enough to express their own needs and at the same time celebrate each other's differences. Design games can help frame the interaction so that people have easier time in contributing to the travel plans. In fact, design games, are probably the best way to open for participation and inquire into existing practice and jointly create future visions. (Vaajakallio 2012, 72; Brandt 2006, 65.)

Design research is about creating opportunities for creative collaboration between different people. My thesis will focus on how design games can facilitate customer to customer interaction. I decided to focus on this because customer to customer interaction strengthens idea generation, usually creates better experiences and increases customer satisfaction, and is a source of value for the company and the participants. (Vaajakallio 2012, 13; Yoo et al. 2012, 1319; Wu & Fang 2010, 577; Jaakkola & Alexander 2014, 249.)

The theoretical frameworks for my project on creating a Design game for travel planning are customer dominant logic and the Play framework. Customer dominant logic goes further than Service dominant logic and it emphasizes a deeper understanding of the customer and the service experience as a long-term, context bound process. In Customer dominant logic value emerges not from just using the service but from having the service become embedded in the customer's context, activities, practices and experiences together with the company's activities. The Play framework sees design games as a tool for the designer, a mindset for the

player and a structure for the design game designer. (Ojasalo & Ojasalo 2014, 3-4; Vaajakallio 2012, 218.)

My thesis furthers the discussion on creating tools for understanding customers and the processes they are involved within their own context proposed by Heinonen et al. (2010, 545) and self-facilitating design games started by Hatami & Mattelmäki (2016). My project fills the gap on available travel planning apps by focusing on people's needs, goals and expectations when it comes to travelling instead of focusing on what to do on the holiday.

### 1.1 Defining the design problem

The collaborator for my thesis is Uneni Mobile. The reason for this thesis project is to create an application that creates a solution to the market that does not yet exist. To help me guide this process I used Mindshake's E6 Design thinking model, introduced in the next chapter, because it takes into consideration both the needs of the researcher and the company.

The starting point of the model is Emergence. In the emergence state the opportunities of the design problem are identified. The opportunity that was seen when considering several travel planning apps, was that all the apps were focusing on the what of travel, instead of focusing on the why and how.

An opportunity mind map was created and an intent statement for the design project was created:

*A fun and meaningful travel planning experience that has people focusing on the why and how of travel.*

In order to create a viable solution for the design problem I started my thesis by asking the following main research questions and sub questions:

*How to build a meaningful travel planning service?*

- 1. How does value emerge in service process?*
- 2. What are people's expectations, needs and goals regarding travel?*
- 3. How to best facilitate the travel planning process?*

To begin answering the research questions I studied extant literature on value emergence, customer expectations and goals, facilitation and design games, and based on the relevant literature I created a theoretical model to support my thinking as I started choosing the research method. The research was conducted as semi-structured interviews and gave answers

to research sub questions 1 and 2, which helped me to create meaningful content for the design game that is a possible answer for sub question 3 based on prototyping experience. By answering research sub questions 1, 2 and 3 I have managed successfully to answer the main research question.

## 1.2 Service Design process

Design thinking is a way of thinking that can be used to transform, evolve and innovate services and organizations. Service design is seen as part of innovation activities, it helps with defining the problems to solve and uses customer centric tools and methods to co create solutions. With service design, you can create more functional, desirable and aesthetically pleasing services and environments. Service design borrows its tools, methods and metaphors from different fields, including design, marketing, strategic leadership and the theatre world. For example, the different aspects of the service scape are described as front stage and back stage. (Tschimmel 2012, 1; Jyrämä & Mattelmäki 2015, 27; Vienamo 2014, 79; Vaajakallio 2012, 121.)

There are several different Design Thinking and Service Design processes. They all share certain commonalities, the most important being the notion that the process is iterative. In figure 1 is shown the Design Council's Double Diamond model, which is widely used and gives a simple illustration of the Design thinking mindset. In the beginning, there is a phase, where the researcher gets familiar with the topic and finds opportunities for design. As shown in figure 1 phase is called Discover, and the idea is to diverge your thinking and keep an open mind to different ideas.

The second phase is about testing the ideas formed in the first phase and finding which ideas are most feasible to start building on. The figure 1 illustrates this nicely, by showing the converging stage of the design process. The third phase is about building on the ideas decided on phase two by building first prototypes and scenarios, and again diverging and looking for all possible solutions. The fourth phase is about converging again and implementing the service and delivering the final solution, which can then be later improved on. (Design council; Stickdorn & Schneider 2010, 128-135.)

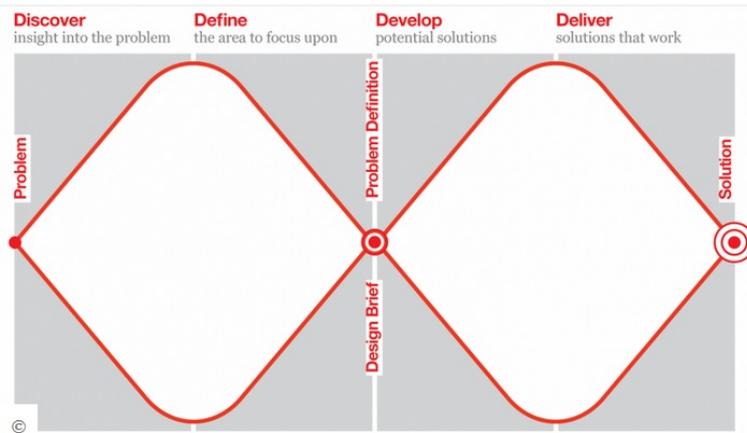


Figure 1: Double Diamond (Design Council)

Stickdorn & Schneider (2010, 126) point out that the process used is always decided based on the project in question. In my project, I have decided to implement the E.volution 6 elevated 2 -Design Thinking model created by Katja Tschimmel (Mindshake) shown in figure 2, because it works well in service innovation and it considers the business side, including marketing, of service design and innovation. This was important in my thesis project, because aside from the research project, the goal is to create a viable product that the case company can develop and benefit financially from.

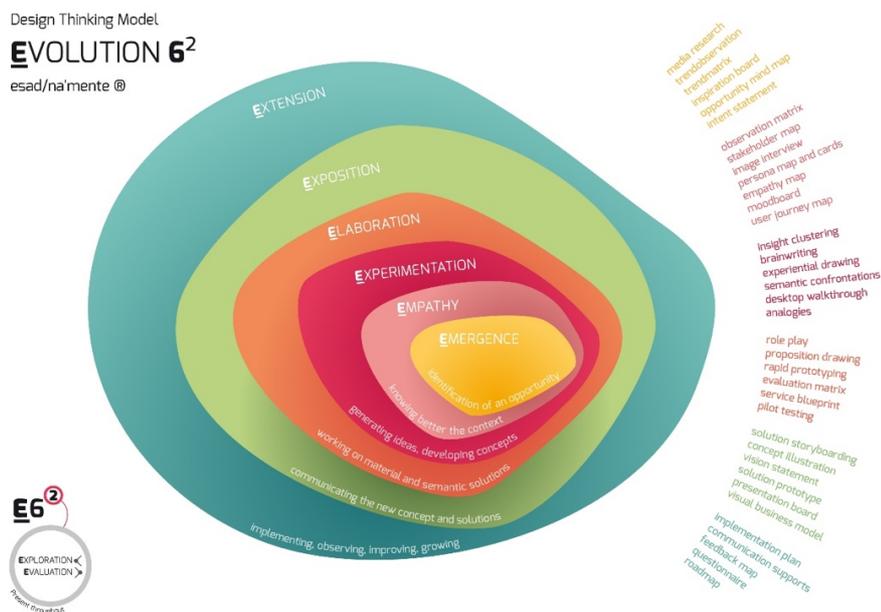


Figure 2: E.volution 6e2 Design Thinking Model (Mindshake)

The Model works in six phases, illustrating the process shown in figure 2 not from diverging and converging point of view as the double diamond, but from the view point of the solution growing from the initial idea into a final solution. The process has six phases: First comes the discovering phase, which are named in this model as: Emergence (identification of an opportunity) and Empathy (knowing better the context). Then comes the Defining stage, which is: Experimentation (generating ideas, developing concepts).

After working on developing the concept, it is time to move to the Developing stage by Elaboration (working on material and semantic solutions). After the concept has been decided on it is time to Deliver by Exposition (communicating the new concept and solutions) and Extension (implementing, observing, improving, growing). (Mindshake; Design Council.) I find that this model is more suitable for my case, than the simpler double diamond, because this model also focuses on how the new concept should be communicated. From a business point of view, this is also an important factor to think how to sell the solution to possible customers.

During my project, I will go through all the phases of the model. The emergence phase was the starting point of this project, where I created an opportunity mind map and created the intent statement that guided my design brief. I expanded my knowledge on the topic by doing extensive literature review, which guided me to the Empathy phase. During empathy phase I interviewed people on their experiences in planning and going on holidays with their friends. I could move to Experimentation and cluster my insights from the user interviews and literature review by building a persona and emotional customer journey maps to go to Elaborating by a way of rapid prototyping and pilot testing. I then moved to Exposition phase where I created the solution prototype. The ending point of my thesis project is the Extension phase where I roadmap the future for the solution.

### 1.3 The structure of this thesis

My thesis is divided into five chapters that follow the thesis format and also the chosen design thinking model, as shown in figure 3. Chapter 1 is the emergence phase of the E.volution design thinking model, this chapter introduces the design problem and research questions that guide my thesis. Chapter 1 also introduces the case company, Uneni Mobile Oy, and the chosen design thinking model.

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical frameworks related to the topic of my thesis. In this chapter, I go to the Empathy phase, and gain understanding of the relevant extant literature on value emergence, goal and expectation management, facilitation and design games to help me answer my research question on how to build a meaningful travel planning service.

Chapter 3 introduces the research method. It also discusses the data collection and analyzing methods and introduces the initial results. In chapter 3, I am still in Empathy phase, and gaining understanding on the possible future customer of this service, by conducting semi-structured interviews and analyzing the data using concept-driven coding. Chapter 3 also introduces the answers to research questions 1 and 2.

Chapter 4 introduces the business case and solution to the design problem on “A fun and meaningful travel planning experience that has people focusing on the why and how of travel” built based on the research. Chapter 4 gives an initial answer to research question 3 which is mainly answered by literature in chapter 2. This chapter focuses on the experimentation, elaboration and exposition phases of the design thinking model.

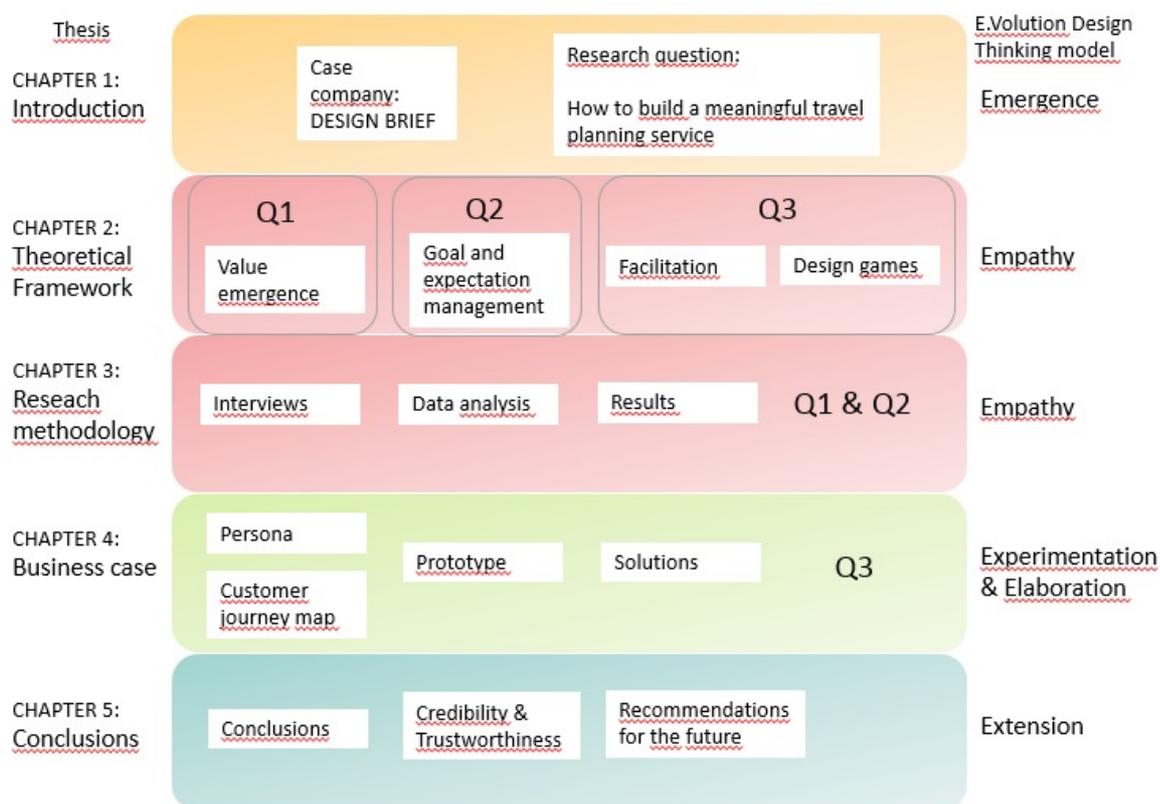


Figure 3: Structure of the thesis

Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions of the thesis project and introduces the key insights from the study. This chapter also discusses the credibility, trustworthiness and transferability of the results. Chapter 5 focuses also on the extension phase of the design thinking model by focusing on the recommendations for future study and business planning.

#### 1.4 Introduction of the case company

The case company of this thesis is Uneni Mobile Oy, which is a small application start up founded in 2011. The company is owned by my brother and I. During the past six years, our company has remained a hobby for both of us. We have started developing some application and game idea based on hunches but, in the end, they have not seemed viable and the projects have been abandoned.

In the future Uneni Mobile has ambitions to create meaningful business to consumer solutions. The main target group is active people living the city, who are 25 to 45 years old and are interested in incorporating new technologies in helping them live their lives and reach their goals. Even though the focus will be on consumer products, Uneni will also focus on finding business opportunities from the solutions, for example how to modify them to one specific company's needs. The interest for Uneni Mobile is to also function as a digital service design partner for other companies.

The relevance of this thesis project for the case company is to learn and carry out a research based development project to create a viable digital product that creates a solution not found in the market yet and serves our main target group. This project helps Uneni Mobile to gain insight and skills to go from a hobby to an actual company with a finished product in the market that is not based on just a hunch but on research.

The finished app will work as a calling card for future development projects; helping Uneni Mobile go from a simple app building company to a digital service company. The purpose of this thesis is for me to develop my own skills as service designer and as a design game designer, that benefit the company in the future.

## 2 Building empathy on how to facilitate value co-creation with design games

Customers are starting to take a more active role in designing individualized service experiences for themselves. They create services for their own use, support each other in how the service is used and promote the services by providing their input of money, time, effort and skills. These activities integrate customer's value creation by physical activities, mental efforts and socio-psychological experiences and result in services that the customers use themselves. (Jaakkola & Alexander 2014, 247; Xie et al. 2008, 109-111.)

Botero (2013, 17) argues that there is a risk in this "everyone as a designer" thinking because it can turn design into something that is cheaply outsourced to a crowd and thus also putting the blame on bad design on the user themselves. This increasing involvement of non-designers

in the design process means that design practitioners and researchers need to have a new role as facilitators of this process when creating services that are embedded into the customer's reality and ecosystem. (Hatami & Mattelmäki 2016, 327; Heinonen et al. 2010, 533.)

In this chapter I will discuss how customers, non-designers, can design and co-create meaningful travel experiences that are facilitated by a design game that has been designed for this purpose. The inspection on how customers can do this starts by understanding how value emerges in customers' lives, what kind of expectations and goals they have regarding travel and how design games can help facilitate the travel planning process. In this chapter, I will also introduce the theoretical frameworks of my thesis: Customer Dominant Logic and the Play Framework that help me answer my research questions.

## 2.1 Customer-dominant logic and emergence of value

In this chapter I will focus on answering my first research question by understanding how value emerges in service process. The reason why people want more individualised services is, because value is something that is unique to each customer. They experience and perceive value in their own context, for example for some the value from leisure tourism already comes from the planning of the trip, whereas the other finds value in the new experiences and memories gained from the trip. (Grönroos & Voima 2013, 135, 146.)

From a business point of view companies and their activities are guided by strategic mindsets called business logics. Traditionally this business logic has been, what is known as, goods dominant logic which states that value is embedded in the end product and customer experiences value when he buys the product in a process that is called value-in-exchange. Vargo & Lusch (2014, 247) argue that goods dominant logic limits understanding of value by focusing on special cases of value creation. Therefore, the next step of understanding value creation is the service dominant logic. The service dominant logic focuses on the idea that value is co-created between the company and customer by integrating resources and exchanging services. Heinonen et al. (2010, 532) argue that the view of service dominant logic is still too focused on the company's actions instead of the customer's and have developed the thinking further by creating customer dominant logic. (Ojasalo & Ojasalo 2014, 1-2; Vargo & Lusch 2014, 241, 246-247; Heinonen et al. 2010, 532.)

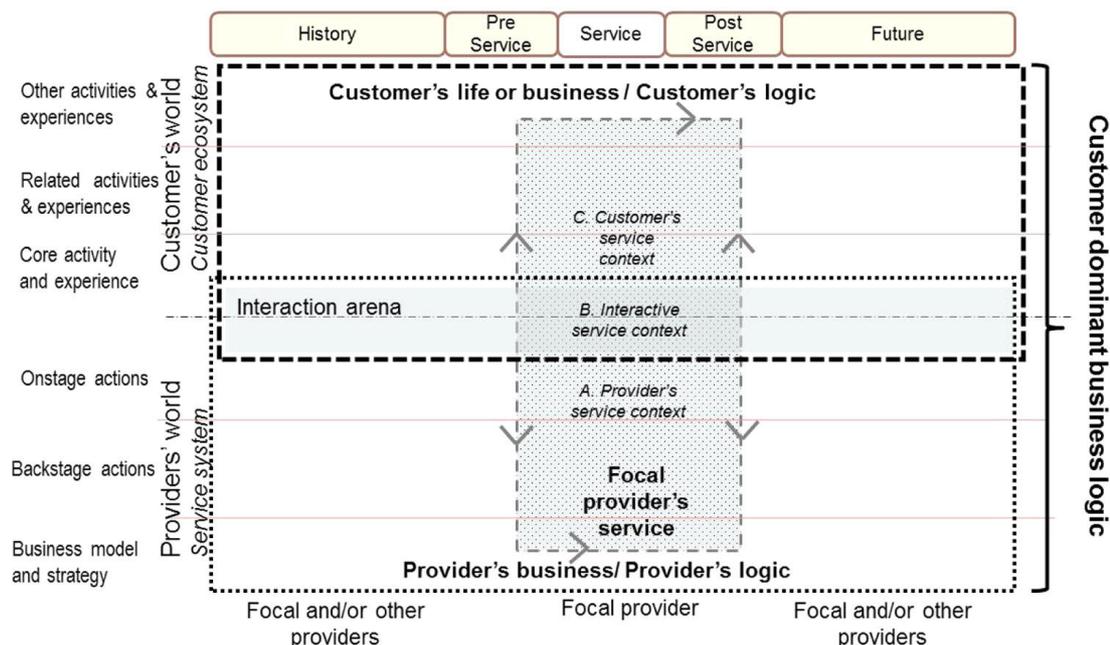
Customer dominant logic takes a more holistic look at customer's life, practices and experiences than service dominant logic. In my thesis, I have chosen to use customer dominant logic as the business logic because by understanding the customer's activities, tasks and the system of actors and spheres the customer is involved in makes it easier to design services that each customer finds valuable and meaningful. Customer dominant logic shifts the focus from company's actions to understanding what personal goals the customer is trying to accomplish and

which service or services he is using to accomplish these goals. From the customer's point of view, service contains three types of elements: outcomes of the service provider's internal activities, co-creation processes and their outcome elements, and process and outcome elements of the customer's own activities. (Heinonen et al. 2010, 533-534, 537; Heinonen et al 2013, 107.)

From the business point of view the company can gain financial value through supporting the customer in their value creation. From the customer's viewpoint "service" means to use resources in a value creating way. For the customer, value emerges when the service is used and it becomes embedded in to their context, activities, practices and experiences influenced by their goals, positions and roles. This value includes the service in question but it also includes the surrounding services that support the service in question before and after the actual encounter. (Grönroos 2011, 285, 288; Heinonen et al. 2010, 537; Voima et al. 2011, 1016.)

In customer dominant logic value-in-use emerges for customers in their context. Customer can be defined as a single person, a group of people, like a family unit or a group of friends, a company or an organisation. The customer in my thesis will be a customer unit consisting of group of people, who are planning a trip together. (Voima et al. 2011, 1015.) Customers interpret the experiences they have and have had in the past to build their own dynamic and multiframed reality where value creation happens before, during and after the actual service encounter. From a customer's perspective, earlier experiences are always present as invisible context and are continuously updated through new experiences. Value in context is thus inherently integrated in the value-in-use evaluation. (Heinonen et al. 2010, 538, 540; 2013, 108-112.) It is also important to remember than when the customer consists of a group of people, the value might come for only one actor at a time, because the individuals in the group experience value in different ways. Thus, value is created both in individual and collective level. (Voima et al. 2011, 1020).

Value is formed in customer's many visible and invisible experiential spaces, which reflect their ecosystem and life sphere. Customer ecosystems, introduced in figure 4, are systems of actors and elements related to the customer that is relevant in a specific service. They include service providers, other customers, other actors and the physical and virtual structures related to the service. Value is embedded in this shared, collective and dynamic customer sphere. The position of the customer in the ecosystem does not refer to the position they have related to the company, but to the position they have in relation to the other actors, such as friends and family. (Voima et al. 2011, 1015, 1020; Heinonen et al. 2010, 538; 2013, 108-112.)



**Source:** Expanded from Heinonen *et al.* (2010, p. 535)

Figure 4: Customer dominant logic of service (Heinonen *et al.* 2015, 476)

Most of the customer's value-in-use might be invisible to the company, because the value emerges in customer's everyday life processes by using both goods and services. The reasons why the value emergence is partly invisible are: The customer's time frame for the service is broader and it is influenced by customer's changing emotions. For example, when it comes to holiday trips, the value starts to emerge already during the planning process, for some just planning the trip brings excitement. Then during the trip itself, though the presence of other people can bring complexity to this value creation process, because emotions contribute to the process when people interact with each other. And later after the trip in form of memories. (Heinonen *et al.* 2010, 539; Malone *et al.* 2017, 5-6.)

In Customer Dominant logic this time frame does not only include the service but for example the emergence of new friendships from the trip. Another reason is that value-in-use has a larger scope than only "use" and the context is dynamic and dependent on the customer's role, position and interaction within a social structure, which subsequently forms the basis for both the co-creation of service and value-in-use assessment. People's own emotions contribute and are affected by other people's emotions in the value co-creation process, meaning that the influence of others can also affect value destruction during the holiday. Even though value is co-created, the destruction of value happens individually, meaning that other people in the group might not be aware of one person's unhappy feelings. (Heinonen *et al.* 2010, 539; Malone *et al.* 2017, 6.)

## 2.2 Understanding goals and expectations of travel

In this chapter I will focus on answering my second research question by understanding what are customer's expectations, needs and goals when it comes to travelling in tourism context. It is important to point out that in my thesis, when I talk about travel, I mean leisure tourism. Tourist meaning a person, who travels outside his usual environment for more than a day but less than a year. United Nations (2010, 9-10) makes a distinction between travelers, visitors and tourists. People can travel without being tourists, but to be a tourist you always have to travel. There are also business tourists but I have decided to exclude those from my thesis. (Miettinen 2007, 43.)

To understand the expectations and goals better, it is also good to understand what exactly makes you a tourist. Cohen (2004, 38) points out that when you are a tourist, you are voluntarily experiencing the round trip, tourist trips are also temporary and have a set duration from the beginning to end, and the experience is non-recurrent in its nature. Most importantly travelling is the main goal of the experience.

Travelling involves emotional and experiential elements that are shaped by people's expectations, current needs and future wishes. Therefore, it is important to not only consider customers' activities, experiences and preferences but also their goals, tasks and reasoning when it comes to planning their travels. Even though goals can also be something unpleasant to avoid, my research will more likely focus on people's goals as something pleasant they want to achieve. Goals are something that we want and values define why we want them. It's useful to remember, for example, the goal of leisure tourism for many people is making their dreams come true. They expect to experience something new and have exciting experiences. These can be quite the expectation for the trip and it is important to transform customer's expectations from somewhat unrealistic to more realistic expectations. (Vaajakallio 2012, 57; Gutman 1997, 545, 558; Heinonen & Strandvik 2015, 477-478; Payne et al. 2008, 92; Grönroos 2007, 87; Miettinen 2007, 43.)

When people are travelling together, they are not only influenced by their individual goals, but they also have relational and collective goals (Epp & Price 2011, 37). People need to manage all these goals together and choose solutions, for example what to do on a given day, to support shared goals. According to Epp & Price (2011, 44) there are four approaches to managing goals:

- Prioritize (choosing some goals over others)
- Symbiotic Activity (using the same service offering but doing alternate activities)
- Parallel Activity (doing the same activities but not directly interacting with each other)

- Partition (breaking the group apart, and smaller groups doing different activities)

People on holiday trips can use multiple service companies, so mostly the value from the trip is co-created with other tourists and the people they are travelling with. Therefore, it is important that the people travelling together understand each other's goals and expectations toward the holiday trip and each other before going on holiday. The game should facilitate conversation so, that people know how to manage the group's goals, whether they want to do everything together or if they want to do things separately. (Huang & Hsu 2010, 80; Hsieh et al. 2012, 699; Epp & Price 2011, 44.)

Customer expectations are mental states and are thus challenging to clearly define and find out what is influencing them. Sometimes the customers themselves do not have a clear understanding of what they want and need from the service. Customer expectation literature (e.g. Parasuraman et al. 1991; Grönroos 2007; Ojasalo 2001) categorizes service expectations from five to seven categories. Parasuraman et al. (1991, 41) categorize service expectations to five categories:

- reliability (the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately)
- tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials)
- responsiveness (the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service)
- assurance (the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence)
- empathy (the caring, individualized attention provided to the customer).

Reliability comes first when it comes to judging how service expectations are met and it is connected to service outcome. The other dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, however, are judged while the service is being delivered and these factors are important when it comes to exceeding customer expectations. (Parasuraman et al. 1991, 41.)

Grönroos (2007, 90) integrates previous research to come up with seven categories for service expectations and the criteria on which customers perceive service quality. These are:

- professionalism and skills (people and systems have the knowledge and skills required to solve customer's problems)
- attitudes and behavior (customers feel that the service employees are interested in solving their problems in timely and friendly manner)
- accessibility and flexibility (customer feels that the service, location and systems are accessible and adjust to their needs)
- reliability and trustworthiness (customers can trust that what is agreed on will happen)

- service recovery (when something goes wrong, customers can rely on the service provider to find a solution quickly)
- servicescape (surroundings support a positive experience)
- reputation and credibility (service can be trusted to have good value for money and share the customer's values).

The key influence of a service experience is cost (Parasuraman et al. 1991, 40). In customer to customer interaction, this cost could be thought of as what the person is willing to “pay” in attitude and behavior for the trip to go well. This is also relevant in goal management. How do people prioritize their individual and collective goals to have a great trip (Epp & Price 2011, 44). Another important factor of a successful service is trust. When people do not play fair, there can be resentment and mistrust especially if people in the group feel that someone is benefiting unfairly from the decisions that are being made. The game should facilitate conversation in a trust building way, so that everyone can feel that they have had influence on the group's decisions and they can trust that everyone will do as has been agreed upon. (Parasuraman et al. 1991, 40-46.)

The real challenge, when it comes to expectations, is that often these expectations can be fuzzy and implicit. Expectations are fuzzy when a person knows that something should be somehow better, but they do not know exactly how. When friends or family travel together, the expectations are easily implicit; people expect to know each other so well that they know what everyone wants and there is no need to discuss the specifics of the holiday. There are two kinds of information that are easily implicit: general information related to each other as people and case-specific information about what they want to do on holiday and how things should be arranged. (Ojasalo 2001, 203-204.)

As mentioned before, people can also have unrealistic expectations toward each other and the trip. Sometimes customer expectations can have fuzzy, precise, implicit, explicit, realistic and unrealistic elements all at the same time. (Ojasalo 2001, 203-205.) Interestingly, people's expectations are affected by co-creation. When people are involved in creating the service experience, it raises their expectations towards it. However, even though the expectations are higher, it will not influence the perception of the service negatively because when people have co-created the experience, they feel ownership over the concept and probably like it more. By co-creation, people's ability and motivation to evaluate the service are affected, thus leading to more positive experiences. (Habel et al. 2016, 373; Stickdorn & Schneider 2010, 199; Cheung & To 2011, 272-273.)

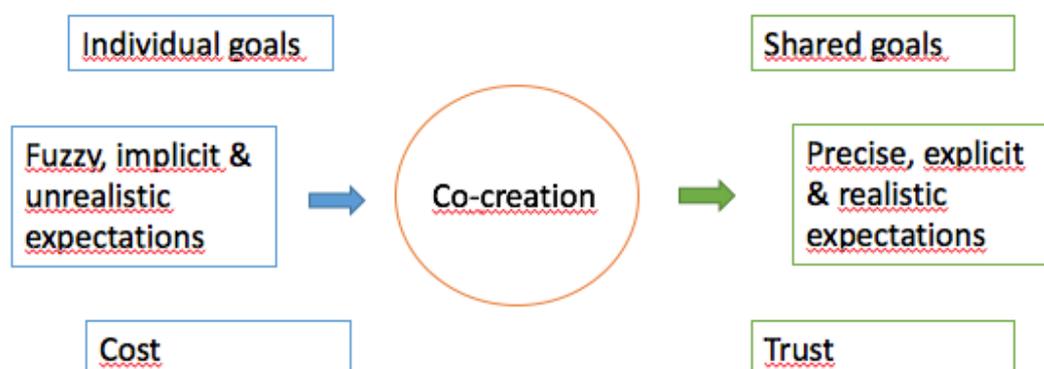


Figure 5: Goal and expectation management

The game should try to facilitate the conversation so that it becomes co-creative and trust building, as figure 5 illustrates, so that individual goals are made to shared goals, the unrealistic expectations are calibrated to more realistic expectations, the fuzzy expectations are focused to more precise expectations and the implicit expectations are revealed to become explicit expectations, and the costs are discussed. This happens by focusing the conversation on different aspects of the journey and then having the people co-create solutions for the problems they have identified during the game, and finally find a common goal for the trip. (Ojasalo 2001, 203-205.)

### 2.3 Facilitating communication between people

To begin answering my final research question: how to best facilitate the travel planning process, I will begin by discussing what is facilitation and what is the role of the facilitator in the planning process. The basic principle behind facilitation is to make group work easier by activating people into conversation using a set of tools designed for facilitation. Facilitation can be used to creative problem solving, creating and implementing strategies, managing change, solving conflicts, leading networking events, handling results of research, and managing team building. (Summa & Tuominen 2009, 8; Kantojärvi 2012, 11.)

It is important to note that facilitation can also refer to the design event itself, like playing design games. In my thesis by facilitating I mean the action that a designer performs in a co-design setting to enable the participants to collaborate, be creative and innovate by using different methods and encouraging the participants to focus on key issues. (Soini 2015, 31; Brookfield & Preskill 2015, 2.)

Facilitation is a good way to lead the discussion when the participants are the experts on the issue that is being discussed. Like in the case of my thesis, people discussing their own expectations regarding the future holiday they are taking together. Facilitator is neutral about the content of the discussion and does not produce any ideas, or judge them in any way. The facilitator is only there to guide the discussion and make sure that everyone gets heard. (Summa & Tuominen 2009, 9; Kantojärvi 2012, 36.)

According to Kantojärvi (2012, 40) a good facilitator is transparent about what they notice and what they are about to do next during the workshop, focused and flexible on the process that is planned so that the goal of the workshop is met, gives clear instructions, is neutral on the content but helps the discussion and decision making by summarising the discussion and making sure everything necessary is documented, and keeps the group focused, active and energized. Summa & Tuominen (2009, 10) also add that a good facilitator is always looking to improve themselves by learning about group work and new facilitation methods.

The facilitated workshop needs to have a clear purpose and goal, so that people are motivated to show up, take part and get excited about the content of the workshop. Before starting the workshop, it is also good to communicate the length of the workshop and the main points of the session: what is going to happen and how, and give clear instructions to the participants on what they should do next. At the end of the workshop everyone should have a clear picture how the ideas created in the workshop will be put into action. (Kantojärvi 2012, 43-51, 212.)

Design games can take the role of the facilitator because people might accept the rules of the game as a way to go about the workshop better than from a person (Johansson 2005, 79). In the following chapter I will discuss more reasons why Design games are the possible answer for my research question and how to engage people during the facilitation event, in this case, playing the design game.

#### 2.4 Design games and the Play Framework

In my research to answer the final research question: how to best facilitate the travel planning process? I chose to focus on design games, because having people planning their trip together can be thought of as a co-creation session and this co-creation session should be facilitated so, that it becomes fun and easy; minimizing the emotional risk that is involved when people with differing opinions and personalities are working together. A design game has the ability to facilitate sessions by invoking the play spirit and is probably the best way for people to participate in jointly creating a future vision, in this case, their holiday together. (Vaajakallio 2012, 72, 217; Brandt 2006, 65.)

Design games are based on theories of play, games and performance. I will quickly introduce the core themes of these theories before further delving into design games. Huizinga's (1949) *Homo Ludens - A study of the play-element in culture* is the most often cited source on understanding what is play. First, play is seen as a voluntary activity. It is something that it outside of ordinary life and is limited to time and place and goes by its own rules, meaning that the activity of play begins and then ends, and people go back from the play world to ordinary life. By playing together people have an easier time to bond together. Usually when play is discussed, people think of child's play. Adult play is often seen as a form of recreation, something that is relaxing and helps people connect with their inner child. (Huizinga 1949, 7-13; Heljakka 2013, 216-218.)

Elias et al. (2012, 6) point out that there is no good definition of what a game is. Games can be seen as systems where players engage in an artificial conflict, they are defined by rules and result in quantifiable outcomes. Many games have some common elements, but not all games share the same ones. Except that they all have rules. It might be easier to understand games through their properties: the length of time spent playing the game, how many people are playing the game, and how the rules of the game work and how the player can gain mastery in the game. (Salen and Zimmerman 2004; Elias et al. 2012, 7-11.)

When people play design games, they are taking part in a co-design session. Design researchers (e.g. Halse 2008, Vaajakallio 2012) are using Schechner's (2006, 225) three-phase performance process to understand co-design process and the nature of activities during it. The similarities are found in the way of thinking that both in performance and in co-design people need to workshop their ideas before the actual presentation and then "cool down" from the session. Co-design sessions can be seen as performances, where people are exploring and producing new what if worlds, somewhat in the same way as performers are experimenting with different materials, creating a team and eventually creating the finished product, the play. (Vaajakallio 2012, 123; Halse 2008, 84; Schechner 2006, 233-249.)

Based on these theories of play, games and performance Vaajakallio (2012, 218) defines design games as "tools for co-design that purposefully emphasise play-qualities such as playful mindset and structure, which are supported by tangible game materials and rules. -- it is an expression that highlights the exploratory, imaginative, dialogical and empathic aspects of co-design."

I chose design games as the answer for my third research question about the method for facilitating conversations about people's expectations, needs and goals because of the following three common main qualities, that all design games share (Vaajakallio 2012, 99):

- 1) design games create a common design language
  - a. helps participants to be explicit in their choices and understandings
  - b. gives space for personal insights, comments and ideas
- 2) design games promote creativity and explorative attitude with materials and rules
  - a. invites both verbal and non-verbal reactions
  - b. supports various means of expressing one's thoughts, dreams and knowledge
  - c. helps move between rational and intuitive thinking
- 3) design games facilitate the players in envisioning and enacting what could be by creating scenarios based on game material

I think it is important for the objective of my design problem that design games can have the possibility to promote dialogue that can bring about inspiration, information and participation. Design games have the ability to bridge that gap between people's current needs and the solution, and facilitate exploration of different what if -worlds without the fear of failure. Importantly, they also work as a platform for co-design in use, where the actual users of the service are designing the solution in the absence of professional service designers. (Vaajakallio 2012, 42, 60-61; Brandt & Binder 2008,62; Hatami & Mattelmäki 2016, 327.)

## The Play Framework



Figure 6: The Play Framework (Vaajakallio 2012, 218)

The second framework supporting my thesis is the Play framework, as illustrated in figure 6, that sees design games as a tool, a mindset and a structure. The framework addresses the three different aspect of design games that they bring to different roles: the designer, the player and the design game designer. For the designer, design games are a tool for addressing

the three needs of co-design: organizing dialogue, supporting empathic understanding and gaining several contributions in order to identify, frame and solve design problems. For the players, design games appear as a mindset that creates an experience of being in a special game world, a magic circle, which is a physical and ideal playground with a special ordering of time, roles and rules that are not bound by the laws of ordinary life. For the design game designer, design games are a structure with tangible design game materials, explicit rules or fixed elements, and performance roles that can be manipulated depending on contextual needs. (Vaajakallio 2012, 218.)

There are four aspects of design games that are central when looking at them through the lens of the Play framework. First, the game provides a shared focus of attention for the players to discuss their experiences and insights of travel using game materials in a visual way. Second, when the game is being played predesigned material can be used to document the decisions that are being made and referenced back to later. Third, design games work well as tools for binding inputs from various people and forth, design games help transport the players into another world, which helps them imagine new possibilities for the future. (Vaajakallio 2012, 135.)

I chose to use the Play framework, because it supports the process of becoming a skilled design game designer and facilitator of creative collaboration by illustrating how the interplay between design games as tools, mindset and structure can make a design game (Vaajakallio 2012, 221).

#### 2.4.1 Co-creating a shared understanding of the future

Customer dominant logic defines co-creation as intentional goal- and task oriented activity, which is not always a straight forward. Design games can work as excellent tools for co-creation because even though they are a playful method, they are not played for fun; there is always a goal or a task involved in playing the design game. Through participating in the travel planning design game, people will be creating value for themselves and each other beyond their roles as just participators. (Heinonen & Strandvik 2015, 479; Vaajakallio 2012, 42; Heinonen et al. 2010, 538, 543.)

The goal of the design game is to focus fuzzy expectations, reveal implicit expectations and calibrate unrealistic expectations people have of each other and the trip. The task is to co-create a shared understanding and a common goal for the trip. This co-creation process will be facilitated by the design game, by organising productive dialogue between the people. Even though there are emotional risks involved in co-creation, if people celebrate each other's differences and support others' creativity instead of just focusing on one's own needs,

the group becomes more than the sum of individuals in it. (Brandt 2006, 57; Vaajakallio 2012, 72.)

Co-creation sessions are highly social events, where people who do not necessarily know each other are working together to reach a common goal. People use their differing creativity, brightness, expertise, education and skills when contributing their time and experience to play the design game. The interaction between people, and the outcome of the session, will be influenced by group dynamics, and people's preconceptions and expectations. Thus, it can be challenging to organize this kind of collaboration, when people have differing interests and their own subjective goals in the coming trip. The design game should facilitate conversation so that people listen carefully to each other, have an opportunity to be responsive to what other people say and negotiate with each other, so that compromises can be formed, if necessary. (Vaajakallio 2012, 30, 113; Wu & Fang 2010, 573; Xie et al. 2008, 112; Jaakkola & Alexander 2014, 255; Kuusisto et al. 2008, 19.)

The co-creation session will be influenced heavily by the facilitator, in this case, the design game. The design game should be able to get the people to transition from ordinary life to the game play and encourage people to be themselves. The design game needs to have an active role in encouraging the participants to explore different options, and build multiple what if scenarios and futurescapes, so that people can get something new and possibly surprising ideas about what to do in their travels from the design game. (Vaajakallio 2012, 73, 76; Kuusisto et al. 2008, 16-17.)

#### 2.4.2 Engaging people in conversation

Traditionally customer engagement is seen as interactions that happen between the company and the customer, that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in the company (Harrigan et al. 2017, 598-600). People are engaged with the service when they have interactive and co-creative experiences with it. To drive this engagement people need to feel that they have ownership of the project and the support of the other people involved in it. (Brodie et al. 2011, 270; Jaakkola & Alexander 2014, 250-251.)

When building an engaging design game, the focus should be on five dimensions: enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction and identification. People need to be enthusiastic, in other words, have a strong level of excitement and interest regarding the subject of the game. They need to be kept focused during the game, even to a level of high concentration and engrossment. People's interaction with each other and the game is fundamental, so that people can share and exchange their ideas, thoughts and feelings about travel. People need to feel that they identify with travel and that the solution matches their self-image. (Harrigan et al. 2017, 598-599.)

Getting people to interact, and communicate their needs better happens by focusing on three dimensions: frequency, direction and content. Frequency refers to the amount of time people communicate with each other; learning about each other's needs and iterating different solutions from the different ideas they have been generating. Direction refers to how well everyone is able to take part in conversation and contribute to idea generation. Content refers to how well the knowledge sharing is context bound, in this case about people's experiences and needs when it comes to travel, making it easier to identify latent needs. (Gustafsson et al. 2012, 314-321.)

By focusing on these different dimensions, it is easier to motivate people to take part in the design game. People need to feel that their participation is needed and appreciated to make a high-quality solution. Turn taking and rules can make the game play more equal, but it should be taken into consideration that there still might be some challenges to equal participation due to the player's varying skills and more dominant players overruling the others. (Kuusisto et al. 2008, 22-51; Vaajakallio 2012, 29.)

The task and goal of the game need to be meaningful to people, so that they can learn about each other and about new possibilities for their holiday, and so that they even take part in the game. If people feel that they can do it on their own, without the help of the design game, they will not use it. Although, in design games the dialogue and means to reach the goal are more important than the goal itself. (Kuusisto et al. 2008, 22-51; Heinonen et al. 2010, 538; Vaajakallio 2012, 129.)

The design game needs to facilitate conversation so that it is easy for people to communicate their needs, expectations and resources and to generate new ideas and solve problems. The conversation needs to be context heavy, in this case focused on the holiday trip, so that the future vision of what the holiday can be, is grounded on the knowledge of what is now. It is easier to imagine the future, if the link to the present is solid. (Wu & Fang 2010, 572; Vaajakallio 2012, 64.)

#### 2.4.3 People experiencing the world of the game

The rise of the experience economy has brought on the understanding that rather than satisfying the customer's physiological needs, customer satisfaction comes from how customers experience the service and how the service considers their emotional and psychological needs. Thus, customer value is connected to the meaning attached to the service and the experience they have with the service. When there is more than one person involved in the experience alongside shared meanings, other more individual meanings are attached to the service. (Hsieh et al. 2012, 697; Kuusisto et al. 2008, 10.)

People create their own experience landscape by picking and choosing experiences that suit them for themselves. A person's mood, understanding and frame of interpretation influences the outcome of a service experience. Therefore, the service has very little control over how the customer experiences the service, because experiences are something that people make themselves and they come within their own activities. In people's mind, a service is always put into a context of some kind, for example time or function. Based on the emotions, thoughts and activities the customer has, they will experience a different process, outcome and context. The design game needs to take this into consideration and also focus on people's activities and different consumption contexts. (Heinonen et al. 2010, 541-542.)

The playing of the design game should invoke a certain play spirit in the players. By placing play spirit at the core of the design game, it becomes also a mindset rather than just a tool. The three main qualities that create this play spirit are (Vaajakallio 2012, 130):

- 1) Proceeding with the proper boundaries of time and space
- 2) A magic circle as a physical and ideal playground
- 3) A balance between fixed and free - action governed by rules

Board games have advantages when it comes to formatting design dialogues. Board games, that are played for fun, are familiar to people and it is easier for people to feel that the world of the board game, structured by game pieces, is a protected space where ordinary rules, for example power relations, do not exist. The design game formatted as a board game can have an easier job in bringing about a magic circle, that invites the players to think beyond ordinary and envision alternative solutions. (Brandt & Binder 2008, 60-61; Vaajakallio 2012, 95, 127.)

If people have a positive experience when playing the design game, and further have later a positive and memorable experience with each other during the trip, could help form a long-term emotional bond between a service company and the customers. Having people associate the game with positive experiences, might make them come back and play the game again, possibly with new travel companions. Thus, building the customer base for the service company. (Bitner et al. 2008, 67.)

#### 2.4.4 Designing a design game

Planning a holiday trip consists of several activities and involves many people. These activities are only parts of an ongoing flow of interrelated experiences and sense-making and therefore, the experiences before and after the holiday trip also contribute to the overall ex-

perience. Therefore, measurable facts are not enough; more innovative methods that consider emotional responses, personal diversity and empathic understanding are needed. (Vaajakallio 2012, 57-58, 66; Heinonen et al. 2010, 541.)

The first objective of the game should be that it creates a safe, trusting and non-judging environment where everyone feels comfortable talking about their personal thoughts and experiences. The second objective of the game should be that it helps players re-examine their personal experiences and gain awareness of their own patterns of behavior before moving to imagining different approaches and future possibilities. The third objective of the game should be that it helps players explore multiple imaginary futures and build a shared vision of the future. (Hatami & Mattelmäki 2016, 336; Brandt 2006, 62.)

For the game to work, it should take some time so that people can have empathic understanding of each other's needs. This process includes discovery, immersion, connection and detachments. To begin the game, there should be some kind of ritual bridge, that tells that the players have entered the game world and they can begin discovery and immersion. The game play should move so that the actions and tasks move from simple towards more complex and they should be open-ended so that the players can interpret and influence what issues they want to focus on and build connections with each other. There should be some kind of documentation during the game, so that everyone can remember what has been agreed upon at the end. For example, post it notes can be used to write down things that have been chosen to be part of the solution. The documentation helps wrap-up the game and it creates a feeling of closure and detachment for the players. (Sleeswijk Visser 2009, 192; Vaajakallio 2012, 67-68, 76, 181; Brandt 2006, 63)

The game should have tangible materials that create a visible and concrete representation of the game's theme. The game materials help people relate to the themes and focus discussion on relevant issues. The materials can become things to think with and work with that inspire the players and help them engage with playing the game and build empathy towards each other. The game is always partly designed by the players on-the-fly, but major decisions on what to include in the game, where to focus and how to proceed are designed beforehand. When the artefacts of the game, such as the game pieces and rules, are well designed beforehand, the design game has the potential to facilitate itself in a process of seeking, sense making and co-designing a better future. (Hatami & Mattelmäki 2016, 335; Brandt 2006, 64; Vaajakallio 2012, 105; Mattelmäki et al. 2011, 92.)

The game should have visual and playful elements to help evoke curiosity and direct the discussion to certain themes. They should be concrete enough to support communication but abstract enough to allow freedom of creativity. The aesthetic design of the game pieces should

resemble the content and grab the attention of the players it is meant for. The game pieces should not, however, steal the focus of the discussion away from the content of the game. It should be taken into consideration that kids seem to be inspired by symbolic images, whereas adults can be set off by more abstract images as well. (Vaajakallio 2012, 41, 107-109, 178; Säde 2001,56)

The context of the game, travel, is most likely familiar to the players. In this case, it is likely that they work well with simple materials to envision the future. In fact, it could actually be more challenging for them to elaborate what they find important if they are given complex creativity props. The visual props, however simple, are important because through visualization design and innovation becomes emotional and people have an easier time to discover what is actually meaningful to them. (Hyysalo et al. 2014, 225; Ramaswamy & Ozcan 2016, 101.)

Like any game, the design game should also have rules that the players can follow. Rules work as tools in designing the interaction for the design game. In fact, according to Johansson (2005, 79) people have an easier time to follow the game rules than to have a facilitator as a guide. Even though, design game rules are often open-ended and ambiguous, they are needed to create a balance between complexity (needed in meaningful play) and restrictions (supporting the feeling of freedom with what can and cannot be done in the game). Vague rules and game pieces force the players to actively work on the topic and to be explicit in describing how they understand and interpret them, helping them create a common design language. Rules are a fundamental characteristic of design games and a necessary attribute of the Play framework. (Vaajakallio 2012, 126-127, 195.)

The design game should use symbolic time, so that people can use their lived experiences and their imaginative skills to create a solution. The lived experiences help people calibrate their expectations to a more realistic level. Symbolic time helps people talk about their past experiences, current needs and future expectations. Symbolic time helps the players move between the past to talk about their experiences, the present to talk about the situation at hand and the future to talk about the imagined what if world and dream situation while playing the game. Symbolic time invites creative interplay between reality and imagination and it supports the act of envisioning what could be in the future. (Vaajakallio 2012, 208-211; Ramaswamy & Ozcan 2016, 101; Jaakkola & Alexander 2014, 256.)

It should be taken into consideration whether the game should be tangible or digital. There is evidence that when a task involves less social-emotional interaction, such as idea generation, digital communication groups perform better than face to face groups but perform less well

when there are few items to discuss. Computer-mediated interaction works well in broadening the contents of the discussion but when the discussion goes deeper, it should happen face to face. Considering that the design game's purpose is to deepen the discussion, it means that the players should be face to face with each other, even if the game board itself is digital or tangible. (Wu & Fang 2010, 572-577.)

## 2.5 Review of the theoretical concepts

In this chapter I have been building a theoretical model to support the design of the game so that it will facilitate a meaningful travel planning experience and answer the research questions I have set. The model is illustrated in figure 7.

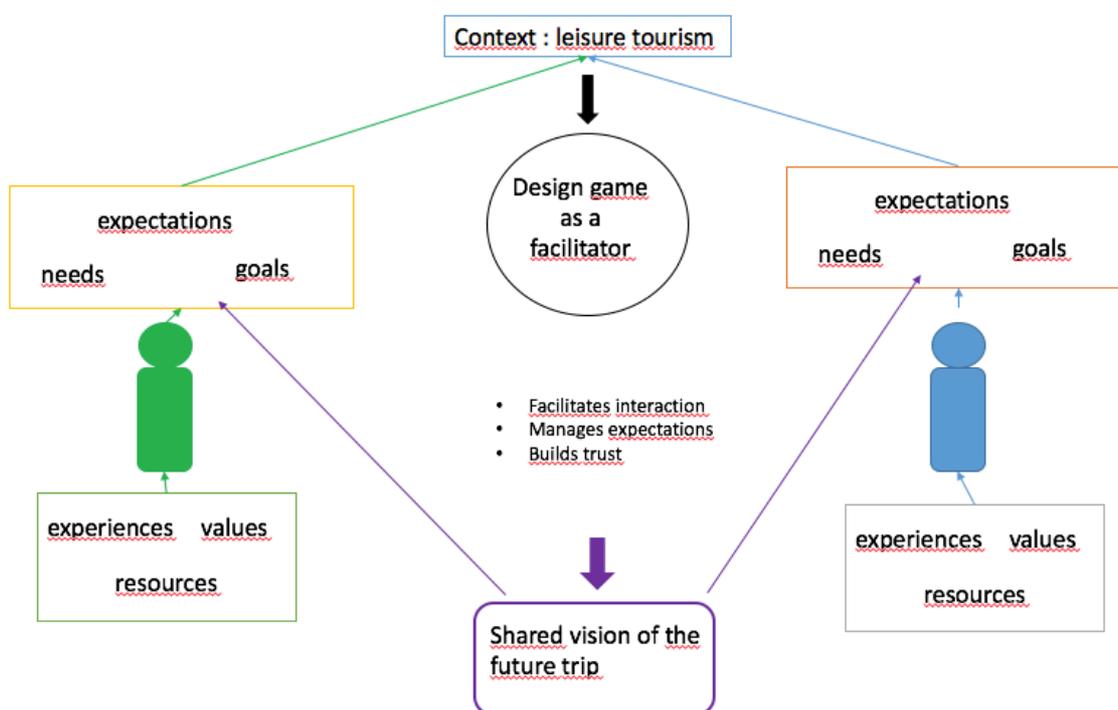


Figure 7: Theoretical model of co-creating a shared vision of the future trip

The game's context will be leisure tourism. In leisure tourism people are voluntarily experiencing a round trip where the main goal is travel (Cohen 2004, 38). The purpose of the game is for people to plan their travels so that they create a shared vision of the trip. People will bring into the interaction their values, experiences from their previous trips and their emotions about the trip and of each other, which affect their individual goals and expectations (Malone et al. 2017, 6; Epp & Price 2011, 44.) as shown in figure 7. Sometimes the expectations can have fuzzy, precise, implicit, explicit, realistic and unrealistic elements all at the same time (Ojasalo 2001, 203-205).

Co-creation is a good way to manage people's expectations, because when they have created something together, their expectations of it are both higher and might be more realistic as well (Habel et al. 2016, 373). People need to trust each other when they are working and travelling together, so the game needs to facilitate the co-creation in a trust building way. Facilitation works well to help people build a shared vision of the trip. It is used in creative problem solving, solving conflicts and team building (Kantojärvi 2012, 11).

Design games are a great way to facilitate co-creation. Customer dominant logic defines co-creation as intentional goal- and task oriented activity, which is not always a straight forward. Design games can work as excellent tools for co-creation because even though they are a playful method, they are not played for fun; there is always a goal or a task involved in playing the design game. (Heinonen & Strandvik 2015, 479; Vaajakallio 2012, 42.)

To reach the goal of the game, it needs to facilitate interaction, manage expectations and build trust between people by having content heavily focused on leisure tourism, visual elements that help people have a shared focus of attention and inspire explorative attitude by building scenarios (Brandt 2006, 24). The goal of the game is to build a shared vision of the future trip, as illustrated in the figure 7. This shared goal will then affect people's expectations, goals and needs for the trip.

### 3 Building empathy and understanding the user through research

In this chapter I will introduce how I gained further empathy with the topic by introducing the research methods used in my thesis project and results from the gathered data. After gaining understanding from literature on how to build a meaningful and fun travel planning experience, I wanted to build further empathy and understanding on how people experience travelling and travel planning so that I could answer the research questions regarding value emergence and people's goals, expectations and needs when it comes to travel. Heinonen et al. (2010, 538) remind that we need to understand customer's lives, including context, activities and experiences performing different tasks to understand the use and value of the service to the customer. Further research was also needed, so that I could fill the design brief for the game. By understanding how people experience travel planning, I could build the game in a way that it focuses on the right challenges.

As a research method, I chose qualitative research, because I am interested in understanding how people experience travel planning and travel. This interest guided me into adopting a phenomenologically informed approach. In phenomenology, the research is focused on the lived experiences of humans, and the purpose is to gather data by interviewing people and

then synthesize what is common in the interviewees experiences of travelling. However, my research does not go as deep as phenomenological research goes and thus I am using the term “informed”. (Saldana 2011, 8.)

To understand people’s goals and expectations regarding travel, I wanted to understand their experiences with travelling, so I decided to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews, because it is a common method used to gain deeper understanding of people’s individual self, lived experiences, values and goals. I reasoned this would best help me understand also the different activities and emotions people have toward travelling. (Kuusisto et al. 2008, 46.)

### 3.1 Interviews and Data analysis

I conducted five in-depth interviews in September 2017 with people who had been travelling with their friends during the past six months. I reasoned that five people would give me enough information to create an initial solution, because Brandt (2006, 60) also typically involves three to five potential customers throughout her projects when creating a common image of the customer.

The interviewees were recruited through a post on my Facebook wall. This meant that all the people I interviewed were my acquaintances and thus it was easier to get to a place of trust during the interview. With one exception, I did not know the other people they had gone on the trip with and this helped me keep an objective mind toward the interview, and the people could be more open about their experiences during the trip. The interviewees could suggest a place for the interviews and thus they all took place in a public setting, in a bar. All the interviewees were female.

The interview questions, introduced in appendix 1, were built to first understand what people value in leisure tourism and what are the goals of leisure tourism and how they went together with the trip they had had. Secondly, they were built to understand what kind of expectations they had toward the trip and what kind of experiences they had had during the trip. I was especially interested in their interactions with the other people on the trip and the sources of possible conflict. Third the interview focused on the tasks people do when planning their holiday and the roles they take during the planning process and on the trip.

I built my interview questions based on the understanding of value emergence, user expectations and needs gathered from my literature review. I also used Payne et al. (2008, 92) encounter map for travel agency and I focused on the tasks concentrating on the planning phase of the journey: customer’s goals in life, travel plans and decision making process. Customer’s goals in life when it comes to travel are: relaxation, new experiences, holiday plans, keeping

up friendships, social intercourse, developing hobbies and keeping up language skills. Travel planning includes: deciding time and destination, checking financial situation, collecting info, applying for credit card and passport, deciding number of participants, considering age of children, health, safety and insurance. The decision making process includes: applying for vacation, choosing destination, informing the family, booking, booking someone to take care of the house, flowers, dogs, making use of benefits. Themes that had risen from earlier interviews were added to the interview guide for later interviews.

The interviews were mostly audio recorded. In one of the five interviews the interview was only partially recorded, because the place got too loud for audio recording. The end of this interview was recorded by taking notes. After all the interviews, I wrote down initial thoughts and possible insight that guided my following interviews. The recordings from the interviews were analyzed by partially transcribing and translating the interview. Together the transcriptions and field notes were 32 A4-pages.

I used abductive approach to build categories for concept-driven coding for data analysis. I chose abductive approach because I wanted my categories to be informed both by the literature review and themes emerging from the interview data, so that I could make sure my research was as valid as possible. Those results would guide me to design meaningful content for my design game. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 142; Saldana 2011, 93.)

### 3.2 Results from the interviews on travelling with other people

The tables below show the categorized and coded data from the interviews. Table 1 introduces the comparison between people's personal goals and the shared goals of the trip, and their "holiday me", an emerging theme coming from the interview data. Table 2 introduces the expectations people had towards their trip. Table 3 introduces the experiences people had on the trip, and how they avoided or resolved the different causes of conflict. In this sub chapter I will go into more detail about the meaning I derived from the data and the results gathered from the data.

## HOLIDAY ME

Goals (personal)	Goals (shared)	“Holiday me”
Active	Reunion	Travelling alone
Great views	Road trip / see and experience as much as possible	Not having to think about your look
See and experience as much as possible	Special occasion	Likes to plan things
Take a break/Relax	Active trip and see as much as possible	Would love to live in the moment, but can not
Share the experience with others	Partying	More relaxed
New experiences	Relaxing	Gets annoyed if plans are not flexible
Exotic places		Gets annoyed if things do not go as planned
New cultures		Does not get annoyed, because does not want to ruin the trip
New people		Let's others take charge
Travel with great people		
Activities you cannot do in Finland		
Depends on the length of the trip		
History and culture		
Reload		

Table 1: Listing interviewee's personal goals and shared goals, and their role on the trip

First new theme that started to emerge during the interviews was this idea of a “holiday me”. These traits are listed in table 1. During the first interview the person mentioned, that they usually like to plan things carefully but in this case, they had not done this, because they were not in that role for the trip.

“One of my friends was going on a trip with another friend and I sort of invited myself along. -- We did not plan much on this trip, because the others are not that type of people. I like to have some kind of organization every now and then but with them we did not have any.”

This made me add a question about people's “holiday me's” to the interview guide. During the rest of the interviews, the people kept saying the same thing. There was even an idea that your holiday me should be more relaxed and different from your everyday me. Person 3 talked about this, saying

“I get this little bit of fear of missing out if I am somewhere, I feel like now that I am here I need to experience as much as possible and little bit like perform, I can’t get rid of it and it annoys me because the idea is to live in the moment on holiday”.

This idea that somehow you are, or you should be, a different person on holiday than during your everyday life came up in several interviews.

## GOALS OF TRAVEL

The interviewees goals of travel did not bring any new themes to the discussion of leisure tourism. When travelling for leisure tourism, people wanted to relax, see and experience new things as much as possible, share experiences with their friends and enjoy great views as listed in table 1. I picked the most relevant ones to illustrate in figure 9. What was interesting, however, that the personal goals did not always meet the shared goal of the trip they had taken.

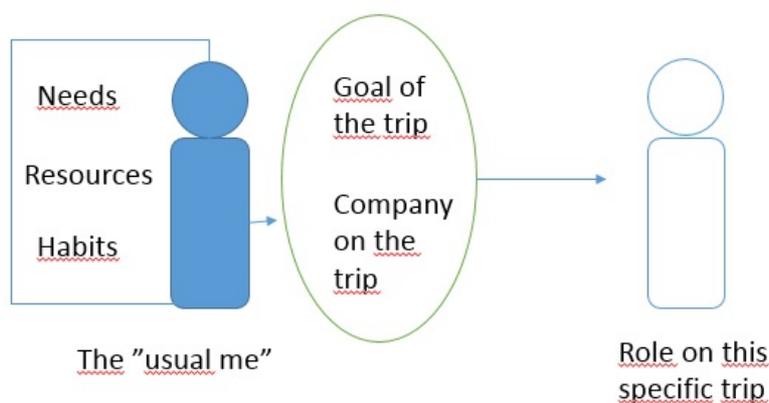


Figure 8: The “usual me” influenced by the context of the trip

As was the difference between the “every day me” and “holiday me” there was also differences between “the usual holiday me” and the goals and roles they had taken for the trip they discussed during the interview. Figure 8 illustrates this influence that the shared goal of the trip and the other people on the trip had on the person. For example, person 1 said of her travel planning:

“I am interested in history, so if the place has a lot of that, I check the most interesting ones and where I at least want to go” but because the trip she had taken was a beach holiday she mentioned “if it is a beach destination, then there is not a lot to do than just the beach so it does not require any planning”.

Person 3 was travelling for a friend’s birthday trip and mentioned that she usually likes to see and experience as much as possible, but that was not the goal of this trip. It was to hang out and relax in a place with not a lot to do and see. She had also already expected this, so she was not disappointed. She did, however, show concern about the possibly conflicting goals they might have on the trip:

“I was afraid that all the others were the birthday girl’s party friends, they would all be like woop woop. And I do not like to party that much.”

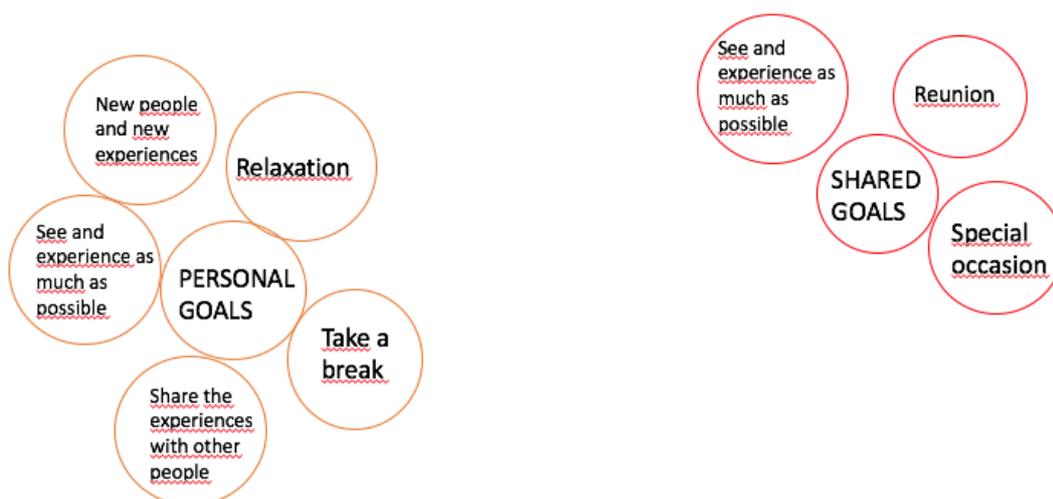


Figure 9: personal and shared goals of travelling

## EXPECTATIONS OF TRAVEL

Expectations (general)	Expectations (attitude and behaviour)	Expectations (Reliability and trustworthiness/Flexibility)	Expectations (Service Scope)
Great holiday	Cool and nice people	Not counting pennies	Cheap but not awful
Budget can be flexible	Everyone does things together	Plans can change	Luxurious with a great view
First time with new people	Easy to make decisions together	Plans can be made on the spot	Enough room for everybody
Warm weather and relaxing	You can be yourself		Safe
Different and fun	We are like a family		Affordable
It can be stressful, so there might be some conflicts	Might be difficult to get along		
Doing a lot of new things	You don't have to do everything together		

Table 2: Interviewee's expectations on the holiday

Table 2 lists people's expectations of the trip they had taken. It was starting to become evident that you could use Grönroos' (2007, 90) categories of customer expectations, when it came to customer to customer interaction, and modify it a little bit. I took the liberty to categorize expectations people have in customer to customer interaction. These categories are, as illustrated in figure 10:

- Attitudes and behavior (people feel, that their travel companions are willing to discuss and solve problems in a friendly and timely manner)
- Flexibility and credibility (people feel that adjustments can be made according to their needs and that other people share their values)
- Reliability and trustworthiness (people can trust, that what is agreed upon will happen)
- Servicescape (people feel, that they can all have a positive experience in the chosen surroundings)

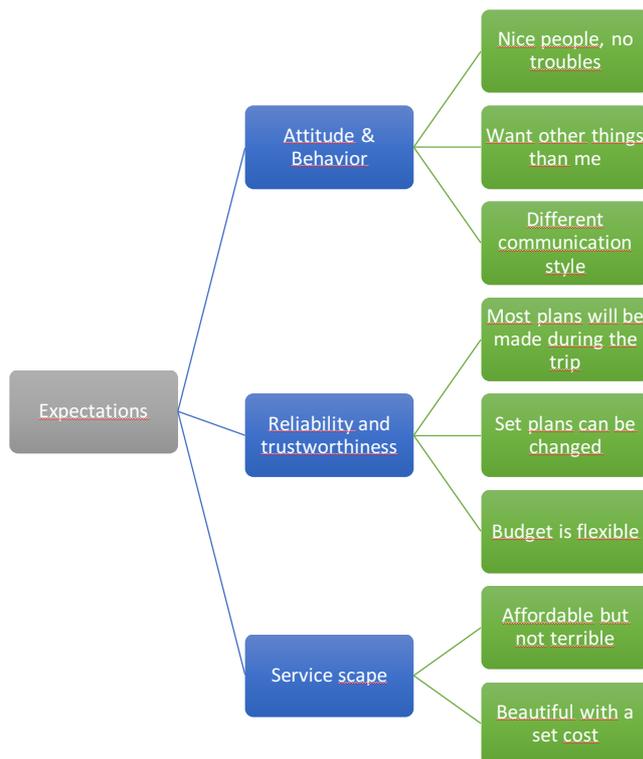


Figure 10: Expectations in customer to customer interaction

People expected to get along with their travel companions, even though they might have had different communication styles and wishes for the trip. People felt that they could rely on each other to make plans as they went along and that if plans had to be changed, they could do this and also have flexible budgets. They were also all expecting comfortable level of service scope.

#### EXPERIENCING THE TRIP

When comparing the planning phase and the experiences from the trip, it became evident that the person who had done most of the planning, also made most of the final decisions during the trip. Even though most mentioned that the planning and decision making were done together easily and in good faith, there was always someone who took the role of the leader. This was not seen as a problem, even by those who liked to usually take charge and were not in these cases, because they felt that their role on the trip was just to go along.

Experiences from the trip	Causes for conflicts	Cost of a great trip
Similar energies	Different energies and rhythms	Understanding one another
Learned new things about self	Other one being too dominating/passive	Making compromises
Enough space to do your own thing	Not having enough space	Not being provoked
Space for the unexpected	Different communication styles	Taking and giving space
There was always one or two people in the group who were in charge	New surprising aspects from each other	
Things were decided at the location together	Alcohol	
Weather was an aspect	Cultural differences	

Table 3: Experiences from the trip

Table 3 lists people's experiences from the trip. The greatest causes for conflicts were seen coming from people having different styles of communication, different "energies" (fast and slow), different rhythms in eating and sleeping, not having enough space to be by yourself and wanting to do different things. These most important themes are illustrated in figure 11.

People mentioned in interviews the "cost" they had made to have a successful trip. For example, a way to avoid conflict was to make compromises and understand each other, and also not be provoked by others' different communication style. People mentioned different reasons for avoiding conflict, such as the idea of being relaxed and care free on your holiday, like in the case person 2 mentioned

"when you are on holiday, then you let things pass quite a lot, even though something annoys you quite a lot, you do not pay that much attention to it".

Another deciding factor in how to communicate in a possible conflict situation was the relationship people has with each other. Like in the case of person 4 who mentioned the two different ways she had handled the rising conflicts from different communications styles, this with a friend she had travelled with.

"I had no reason to be provoked, I knew it was her communication style, so I let it go, I have trained to be more Zen" and this when it came to her boyfriend "every now and then we would be upset with each other but nothing bad, just like why would you say that to me".

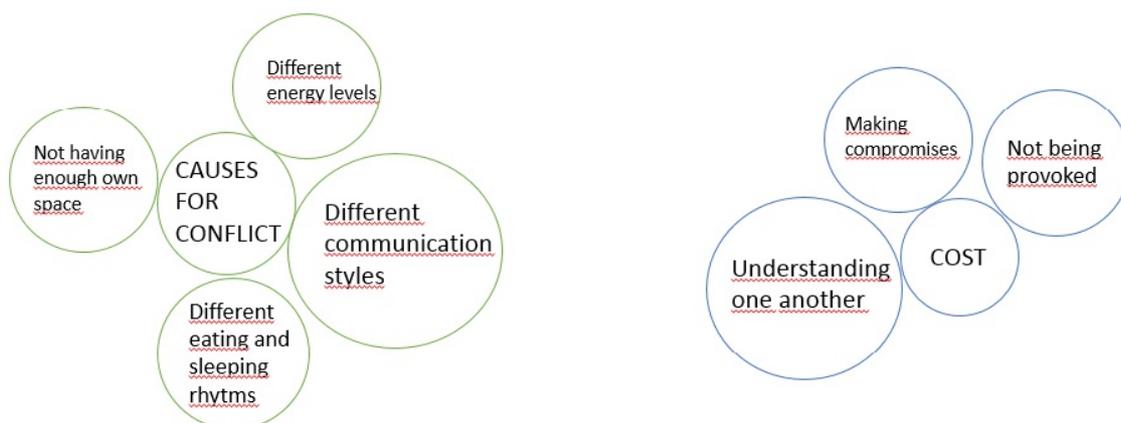


Figure 11: Causes for conflict and the cost of avoiding them

## CONCLUSION

The interviews were focused on how people experienced travel planning and travelling with their friends. The interviewees often had this idea that somehow you are, or you should be, a different person on holiday than during your everyday life. As Figure 8 showed how the person's "usual me" with their normal needs, resources and habits that they have in their everyday life are then influenced by why they are going on the specific holiday, goal of the trip, and who they are travelling with, company on the trip. At the end they had this description of themselves on how they usually are and how they were on that holiday, the role on that specific trip. Thus, the game should have questions that reveal people's attitudes and behavior during leisure tourism to define their "holiday me"s.

Next, because the goal of the trip can differ from your personal goals for travelling, the game should have questions that let people find a common goal for the trip, so that everyone can adjust their own needs and manage expectations accordingly. The game should have questions that help people position themselves in the group and feel comfortable with the way the planning and decision making are made. Another important factor the game needs to take into consideration, is conflict avoidance. The game should build scenarios based on the most common sources of conflicts and help people communicate about them better already before the trip. These scenarios help people gauge the "cost" of a successful trip and manage their expectations.

Based on this information, it became clear that the theoretical model for my design game needs to be adjusted, as shown in figure 12. Voima et al. (2011, 1020) discuss the importance

of understanding the customers' relation to each other and the context they have. My research further showed that it is important for people (and companies) to be aware of the influence of the other people taking the trip with them.

People do have their individual goals and expectations, but the other people have a strong influence on these, so people are already adjusting their expectations and goals because of the other people. Therefore, I added to the figure 12 the influence that happens before people start to co-create the shared vision. Thus, it is important that the game asks questions that are both general, so people get to know each other and share their individual goals separate from the influence of other players and the coming trip, and after that context heavy so that people are focused on each other and the coming trip, when answering questions and building a shared vision of the future.

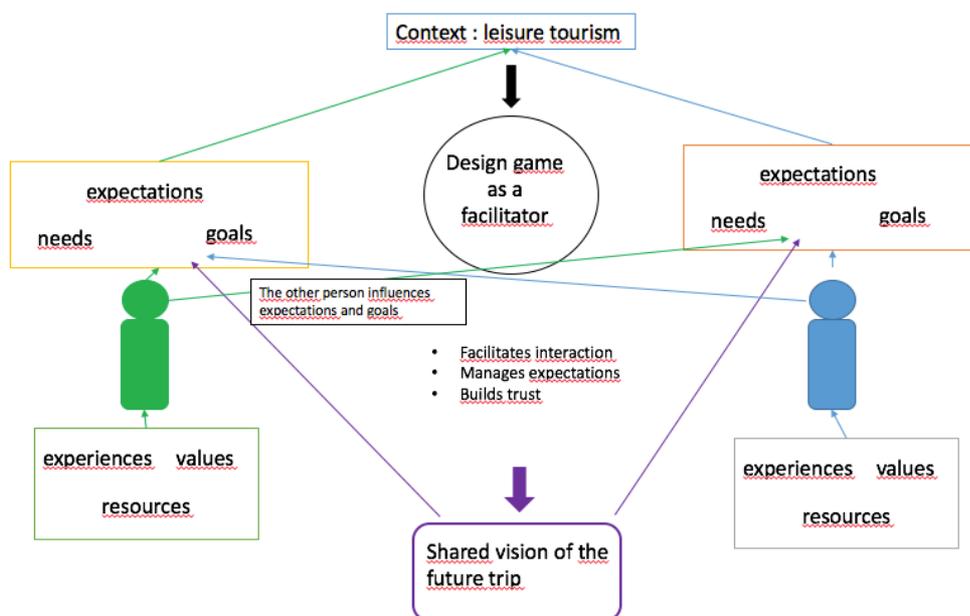


Figure 12: Model showing the influence of the other person

#### 4 From experimentation to exposition: Creating a meaningful design game for Uneni's target group

In this chapter I will first move to experimentation stage of the 6E2 -design thinking model and introduce how the prototype of the game was built and later in the chapter I will go to exposition by introducing the initial version of the finished design game. After answering the research questions, the second goal for my thesis is to build a design game that helps facilitate conversation between people so that they build empathy toward each other and specify a common goal and build a common idea of the trip in their minds. The knowledge I gathered from the literature review and insights from the interviews helped me in designing a first prototype of the game.

##### 4.1 Understanding the user through a persona

To help me create material for building a business case, I decided to use a persona, a fictional profile, as a design tool to represent the possible user based on the insight gathered from the interviews. I did this so that it would be easier to discuss the design of the final product by engaging with the persona and thinking about why they would use our service. (Stickdorn and Schneider 2010, 178.)



Figure 13: Persona for WeTravel

Basing the information on the interview results, I created a persona called Tia, shown in figure 13, who is 27 years old. She likes to travel to exotic places and share those experiences with friends. She is curious and energetic, and she likes to see and experience as much as

possible. She likes to plan her trips but dislikes all the actual work of travelling such as the hassle of packing and keeping to a budget.

I chose to do only one persona, because I felt that I did not have enough research insight to build more. I felt that Tia, as a persona, represented well the group I had interviewed on their goals and habits, and gave enough initial feel for who would be playing the game and what they use the game for.

Thinking about the game through Tia's eyes helped me when I created the prototype, because I could picture my user and think about the questions that would be meaningful for her and her friends to talk about before going on a trip.

#### 4.2 Following the user's emotional journey when travelling

As an added interview tool, I had people make an emotional customer journey map of their holiday trip. Emotions play a big part in value creation and more importantly value destruction, so I was interested in how people felt about the different aspects of the trip. Customer journey maps are usually used to characterize the different touchpoints and interactions the customer has with the service. I chose this tool because it is a good way to visualize an overview of the factors influencing the user experience. It helps pinpoint where people have problems during their travel experience and thus, helps to provide ideas about the content of the game. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2010, 158.)

In this case, I had the people write down all the tasks and activities they had before, during and after the trip on a scale from happy to neutral to unhappy. I found that it also worked well to reveal information that people had not discussed during the interview portion. This allowed for a deeper understanding of how value emerged from the different phases of the trip. Table 4 introduces the happy, neutral and unhappy aspects of tasks happening before the trip. People were the happiest about expecting the trip and the different aspects of it such as relaxing, sunny weather and seeing your friends again. Another task that made people happy was to plan the trip. Even though planning was fun, however the actual booking and price comparing were seen as neutral tasks. They were seen as something that you just had to do when travelling. Because people were happy to plan their travels, so if they did not have time to do this, made them unhappy. The facts of travelling, such as packing and budgeting, were also unhappy aspects of going on a trip.

BEFORE THE TRIP		
Happy	Neutral	Unhappy
Expecting the trip, knowing you could relax	Booking flights and accommodations	Packing
Expecting the sunny weather	General planning	Grooming
Planning the trip together and noticing similar way of doing things	Organizing all the bookings	Boyfriend could get more involved in planning
Expecting to see your friends again	Discussing and comparing prizes	Did not have time to plan
Planning the trip and what to do and when	No planning beforehand	Knew it would be a budget trip
Getting help from friends and family in getting the trip together		Cannot go to an exotic location
One person did all the bookings but you could influence the decisions on the location, time and accommodation		Organizing transport to the airport

Table 4: Interview data: Emotional customer journey map before the trip

Table 5 introduces the happy, neutral and unhappy aspects of being on a trip. People were happy that things were and went as expected. They were also happy to spend time together with the people on the trip with them, though the other people were also a factor for neutrality or even unhappiness in the form of conflicts. People were happy that they could relax and take part in meaningful activities. Some mentioned it as neutral and some as negative, when they had planned a too tight a schedule and had too much things to do during their holiday. People were also unhappy about things they had very little control over such as the car breaking down, weather or the number of bugs in nature.

DURING THE TRIP		
Happy	Neutral	Unhappy
More time with the women	Too much to do	Cultural differences
Breakfast time was always together	Some amenities were missing	Bugs everywhere
Accommodations were as expected	Other people on the trip	Differing strong opinions could cause conflicts
Weather was as expected		Boyfriend spent too much time playing with his phone
We found similar rhythms in sleeping, activities and eating		Small conflicts
Not having to do anything		Too much car time
Well organized		Changed locations too often
New animals		Rain
How strangers were willing to help		Car broke down
Road trip playlist		

Good luck		
Meaningful activities		
Met nice new people		
Great views		
Great spirit together		

Table 5: Interview data: Emotional customer journey map, during the trip

Table 6 introduces the happy, neutral and unhappy aspects of being home from the holiday. Most pleasure was taken from remembering the holiday and getting ready to plan the next holiday. People were also happy to have grown closer with the people they had been on the trip with. This then caused unhappiness because at the end of the trip you had to say good bye to the people you had just spent a lot of time with. People's neutral and unhappy feelings after the trip were mostly regrets about the trip, such as doing more on the holiday and not spending so much money.

AFTER THE TRIP		
Happy	Neutral	Unhappy
The trip gave a lot of energy and saw more than expected	Could have tried more activities during the trip	The trip could have been longer
Shared photographs and remembered the trip together	Would be nice to try a similar trip with different people	At the airport going home, felt that it was time to get some "own space"
Planning a new trip together	Too little time to talk one on one	Should have spent less money
Getting to know the people better		Being tired
Memories		Having to say good bye to the people you had travelled with
The trip made us closer		

Table 6: Interview data: Emotional customer journey map, after the trip

Using the information gained from the emotional customer journey maps I had the interviewees make, I created an adapted emotional customer journey map for the fictional persona, Tia, based on the personality of Tia. The journey map is illustrated in Figure 14. The customer map helped me focus on the most relevant pain points of Tia's journey, such as how to deal with having to change plans because of something unexpected happens and how to communicate everyone's opinions, so that they can have shared goals without having anyone spend too much money or having the pace of the holiday be too much for them.

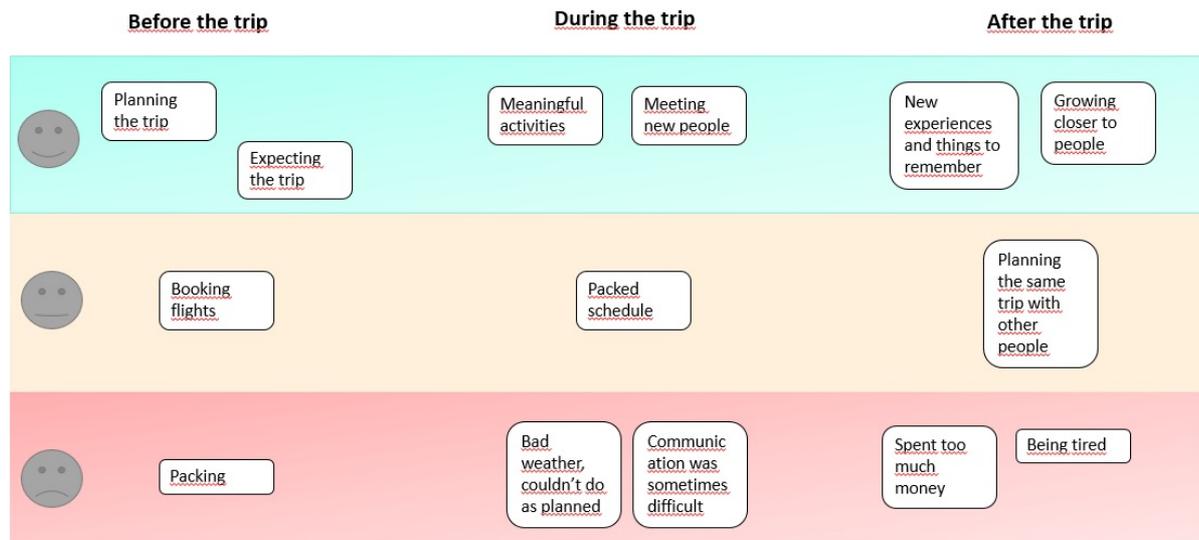


Figure 14: Emotional customer journey map for Tia

It was also good to focus on the happy aspects of the customer journey, so that the game could focus on how to discuss what are meaningful activities for each and what kind of experiences people want to have during the trip.

#### 4.3 Creating the design game for travel planning

In this subchapter, I will be introducing the prototype of the design game, which I named “WeTravel”. Having created the persona and emotional customer journey to get a feel for the possible user of the game and finding insight into what might be meaningful for her, I built the first prototype of the design game “WeTravel”. While designing the game, I kept in mind the relevant questions that Vaajakallio (2012, 175) suggests you keep in mind when doing a creative development process:

- What are the rules governing the actions?
- How does one start and end the game?
- What is the playing context?
- How are people engaged into the game play?
- How does the game look and feel?
- How long does it take to play the game?
- What materials are involved?

#### 4.3.1 Prototyping as a design tool

I chose to use service prototyping as a tool to test the design game, because it helps me test my idea in the place, situation and condition where the service will actually be used. In my case people planning their trip together. I could observe their interaction with the game and adjust the idea based on those. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2010, 192.)

I am using Blomkvist's (2011, 121) framework of perspectives on prototypes and prototyping, illustrated in figure 15, to discuss and evaluate the validity of my prototyping activity. These perspectives are: representation, fidelity, technique, validity, author, audience, purpose and position in process.

Representation is more important at later stages of the process, when it is more about how the service should look and not about what it should be. Fidelity comes into play more when discussing interaction design and is about the level of visual refinement and functionality. Technique of prototyping is about the approach how the service is prototyped. Validity is about how similar the situation and the people using the prototype is to the actual situation of using the service. (Blomqvist 2011, 121-123.)

The audience of the service prototype is usually the client, and the prototype should be designed so that the audience can give meaningful feedback on it. Author of the prototype is the one who designs it and usually decides on what makes it a success or failure. The purpose of the prototype can be one of three: to explore, evaluate or communicate the service idea. The position of the prototype is about when in the process the prototype is used and is connected to the purpose of the prototype. (Blomqvist 2011, 121-123.)

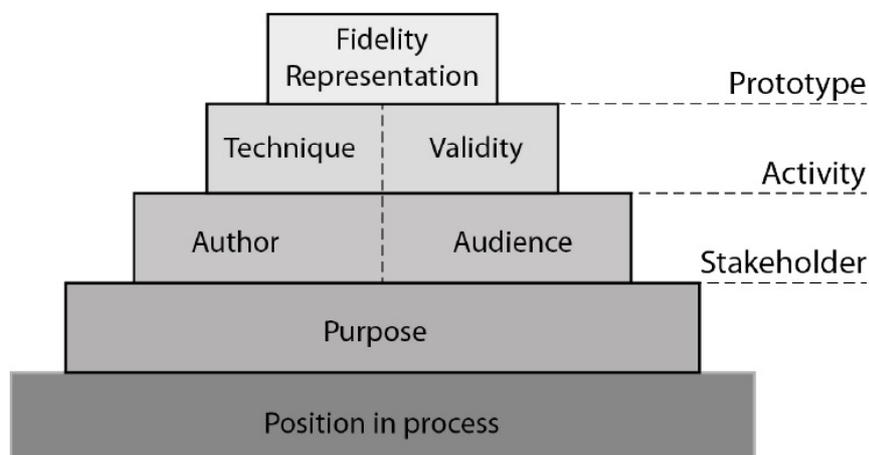


Figure 15: Framework of perspectives on prototypes and prototyping (Blomqvist 2011, 121)

### 4.3.2 Prototyping WeTravel

The prototype was a simple prototype. The game board was drawn on paper and the question cards were post it notes. Figure 16 shows the game board and questions cards being played. The players were asked to find a game piece to represent themselves. In this situation, they came to be whatever the players found from their purse first: a pen, a folded post it note and lipstick.



Figure 16: Prototype of WeTravel

The game followed the order which the literature review had suggested. First the game facilitated conversation so that people got to know each other. This was done by asking questions such as "I need alone time" and "When travelling, my budget is flexible" and then the players placed their game pieces on the game board according to their own answer from "yes" "maybe" "no". All the questions are introduced in appendix 3. The questions were inspired by the issues that had come from the interviews.

Second the players chose from pre-set themes such as "relaxing" and "culture" why they were taking the trip. After discussion, the players agreed on three goals that they all shared for this trip. The third part of the game was built around scenarios, where the players would each at turn take a card with a scenario such as "during breakfast I'd like to.." and "when I'm tired, I.." and then fill in the sentence, so that people could discuss how they behave during situations that might cause conflicts during the trip. The game ended by the players filling in an "agreement" that stated what the goals of the journey was and how they would dissolve a possible conflict, creating a tangible document of the results of the game.

### 4.3.3 Game play analysis and iteration

The purpose of the first prototype was to evaluate the idea of the game and that was why it was low-fidelity and had little representation. The game board was drawn on a piece of paper and the question cards were post it notes. The rules of the game and the questions used in the game are introduced in appendixes 2 and 3. I was more interested in testing the game in an actual situation, so that I could reach high validity for the game play. The game was played by three people in September 2017 at the beginning of a cruise to Stockholm. The game took about an hour to play and the game play was audio recorded.

As mentioned in chapter 2.4.4 the objectives of the design game should be to create a safe environment, that helps players re-examine their own experiences and behavior, and build a shared vision of the future. The game was played in a relaxed environment, in a very context heavy situation. It is difficult to estimate how well the game functioned as a tool to create a safe environment, because people playing the game were friends with each other. However, I feel that a ritual bridge between a usual conversation and the game play was established by setting up the game board and choosing the game pieces. This entered the players into the game world.

It is also difficult to estimate how well the visual elements would work. The prototype was very low-fidelity and not very attention grabbing. Sometimes the discussion would go into other topics and the other two players would have to be reminded to get back to the game. It was also a little difficult for the other two players to know during the game if it had already ended, because the prototype was so low fidelity. I, also, had not mentioned in the beginning where the game would end.

However, the visual placing of the game pieces helped the players to discuss the content of the game and build their own meaning toward the questions and topics. Sometimes even some gauging happened and another player chose their position on the board based on how the other player had placed their game piece. Like mentioned before, travelling is very context heavy, and the players mentioned many times that their answer depends on the situation. If they were travelling with someone else or to somewhere else they would answer differently, for example when it came to budgeting or activities. It was interesting how widely the players discussed their preferences, even though they were not about the current trip.

The rules of the game, introduced in appendix 2, were very simple. The players could themselves define if the questions regarded present trip or behavior in past trips, giving them space to use symbolic time. As the prototype was played with post it notes, for example, the goals of the trip stayed visible when moving to play the scenario cards. This helped focus the discussion in scenarios to the current trip, and also worked as tangible documentation of what

had been agreed before. The final result of the game was an “agreement” where the goals and conflict avoidance words were written down, this helped wrap up the game and let the other players know that the game had ended. Though, it was interesting to notice that during the trip, the other two players would refer back to the themes of the game if something relating to that came up. Thus, the game became part of the trip as well and was not only connected to the planning phase of the journey.

The play gave initial confirmation that people would be interested in playing a game like this when going on a trip. The other two players commented that “this would be great to play, before going on a trip with your new boyfriend”. This version had a game board with the choices of yes, maybe and no, because the discussion went so often to “well, it depends”, the middle option of maybe should be it depends. The next iteration of the game should also make sure that people can add playing cards to the game according to their own interests if they feel that, for example a goal of the trip they have is missing. The game should also have a visual reminder, or if a digital version is made, a sound to remind people to get back to the game if the discussion has veered off topic. The game should also show at which point the game is, so people know how much is still left and the agreement works well as a signal that the game has ended.

I recognize that there are issues that factor in to the validity of the first game play. First, I as the author of the game, was one of the players and the other two players were my friends. This might have affected the feedback I got. Second, I was also mindful of the risk that Vaajakallio (2012, 38) mentions that some unexpected issues might not have come to light, because I knew the game too well. I tried to use my authorship in a positive way to stimulate the discussion and be part of the game, but at the same time let the other two freely interpret the game. Third issue was that all the players knew each other well and had taken the same trip before so this might have also prevented knowledge from emerging. Fourth issue is a hypothetical one, all the players were female and this might have also influenced the game play.

#### 4.4 Introducing WeTravel - a design game for travel planning

The objective of my thesis was to create a meaningful travel planning experience that focuses on the why and how of travel. The game “WeTravel” is the solution to this objective. To create a safe, trusting and non-judging experience the game will have set rules and a light-hearted tone that match the game’s theme.

The game, illustrated in figure 17, is made of a game board and “holiday me” cards, goal cards and scenario cards. The game board will be used in the first part of the game, where people will create their “holiday me’s” that help them gain empathic understanding of each other by placing their game pieces on the board based on their answer for the “holiday me” card. The game board will still play a part in the second part of the game, because people will gather their shared goal cards to the game boards. Goal cards are used to manage people’s individual goals, where everyone gets to choose why they are on this holiday. These cards are then put together, and a common shared goal for the trip is chosen from the individual goal cards. In the third part the players will play through scenarios, which most often are sources of conflict, so that the players can play through imagined futures and create solutions to help them build a shared understanding of the future.

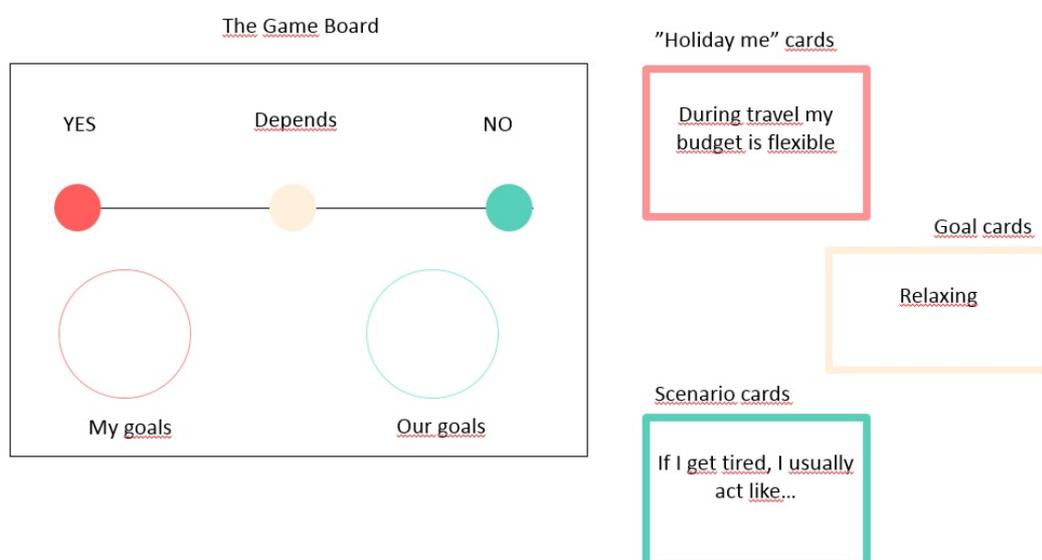


Figure 17: Paper version of the game

I introduced the paper version of the game, shown in figure 17, to the case company Uneni Mobile and after evaluating the game, they thought it had potential as a viable product that is not found in the market yet. The paper version will work as a version for further testing of the game idea. The game will be available as a free downloadable paper version. People will be asked to give their e-mail addresses so that further questions about the game’s content and playability can be asked and the game can be developed further.

Even though the literature suggested that design games work best when they have tangible game pieces, to hit the brief from Uneni Mobile I started to develop an app version of the game. The starting point in the app, illustrated in figure 18, is to note down where and when people are going on holiday. It works as a reminder, for example for flight times and numbers

and people can also note down why the trip is being taken. In the case shown here, it is a birthday trip to Barcelona.

The app follows the paper version's game play and feeling of fun. First people play the "holiday me" part of the game by placing their card on the game board as illustrated in figure 19. The player can choose if she wants to see the other player's cards or if she wants to hide them while making her own decision. The app also shows in the upper left hand corner, shown in figure 19, how far along the game is. The prototyping session revealed that the players were not aware if the game had ended already, so the progression of the game is good to be visible. Another visible clue for how many cards are left to be played is shown in the bottom of the screen.

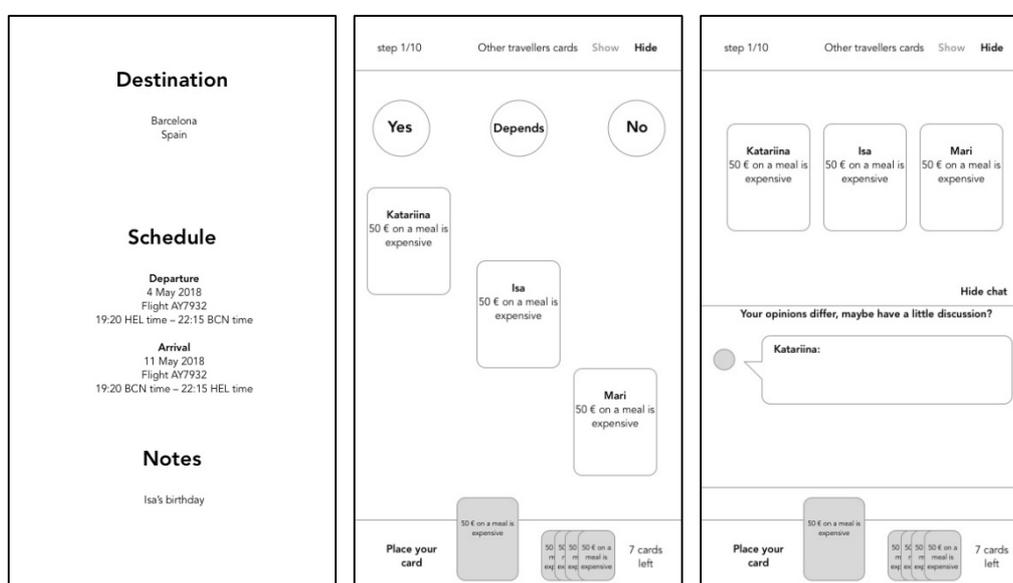


Figure 18: The trip

Figure 19: "holiday me"

Figure 20: discussion

After the players have made their choices, the game shows everyone's position on the board as illustrated in figure 20. Even though the ideal situation would be that people are in the same room while playing the game, so that they can discuss freely and build emotional bonds with each other, the app also allows for people to be in separate locations. If the cards are placed in different positions on the board, the game will suggest that the players discuss their choices by opening a dialogue box, shown in figure 20. The game keeps score of people's choices and starts building a traveler persona for each player.

As with the board game, the second part of the app version game will focus on the goal of the trip, shown in figure 21. First people get to pick their individual goals, again they can see

each other's pick in real time, and after everyone has made their choices they can discuss which three will be the shared goals for this particular trip.

Because the game can also be played remotely, the scenario card portion of the game is most different from the board game. The ideal situation, as mentioned before, would be that people are in the same room discussing for example how they are when they are tired, but in the app version as shown in figure 22, people can choose from set options what describes them the best. While designing the app version, I had help from a professional UI designer and Uneni Mobile's app developer. We had a long discussion about this portion of the game and even though I felt that this solution would take a little away from the idea of the game, I understood that this worked best in the app version and made it easier and faster to play. The set answers also help the game to build a persona card for the player.

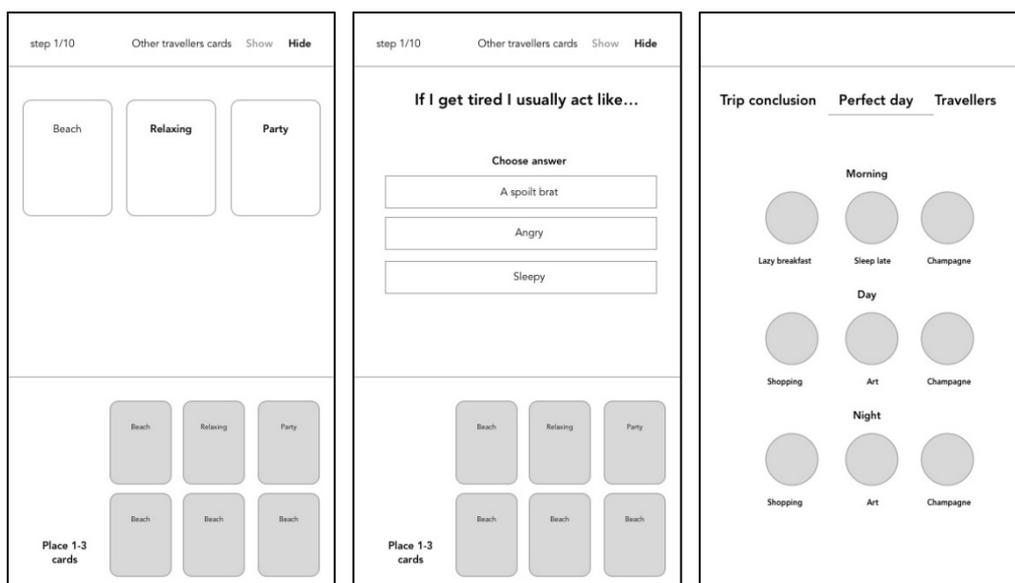


Figure 21: Goals

Figure 22: Scenario cards

Figure 23: Perfect day

After the game has been played to the end, the app creates traveler profiles, shown on the right of figure 24, the perfect day on the trip shown in figure 23 and what the goals of the trip and when the trip is. The professional UI designer then designed a mock up version of WeTravel introduced in figure 24.

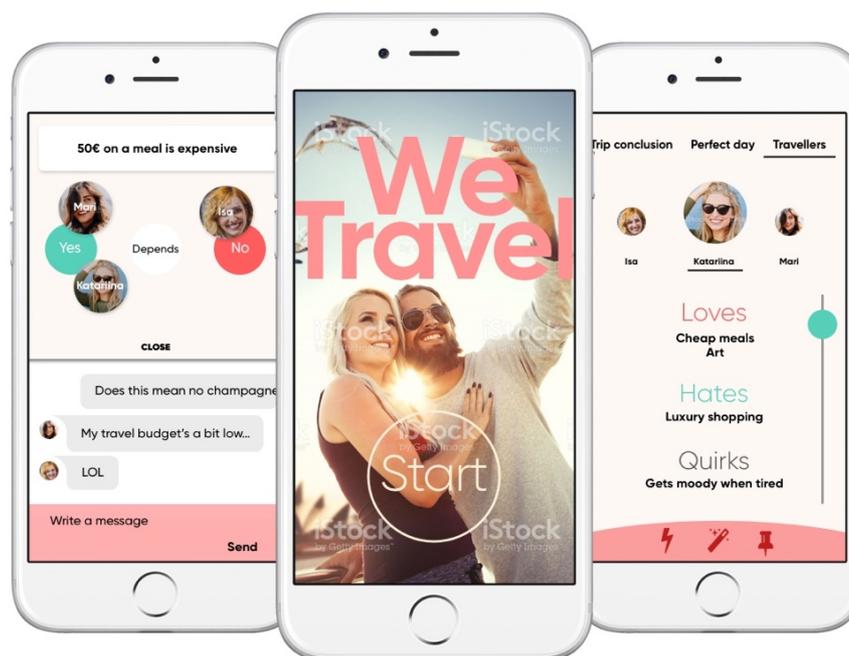


Figure 24: Mockup of WeTravel

Uneni Mobile was happy with the results and the next step in the project is to do user testing on the app and develop it further to build a final product. Because people do not have to be in the same room while playing the game, not only will people be able to create travel plans with people they know but they will be able to connect with other travelers as well. People will be able to create their travel personas and look for likeminded travelers to go on trips together. As the interviews showed, people want to meet new people and share experiences with each other so WeTravel's app version will also take this into account in the future.

## 5 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter I will summarize the thesis project and reflect on the credibility and trustworthiness of my results. Then I will go through the conclusions gathered from the literature and interview insights. Before reflecting on my thesis process, I will discuss the transferability of my results and the recommendations for future research and development.

The purpose of this thesis was to create a fun and meaningful travel planning experience that focuses on the why and how of travel. The objective was to create a design game that facilitates travel planning between people. To design the game, it was important to understand

how value emerges in service experiences and what kind of expectations, needs and goal people have regarding travel. To help reach the objective of the thesis, a main research question and three sub questions were formed. The questions were as follows:

How to build a meaningful travel planning service?

1. How does value emerge in service process?
2. What are people's expectations, needs and goals regarding travel?
3. How to best facilitate the travel planning process?

To reach the objective of the thesis, an extensive literature review was made on the extant research on topics of value emergence and value co-creation, customer's goals and expectation regarding leisure tourism and expectation management, facilitation, design games, co-creation and customer engagement. I believe I was able to review the most relevant authors for the topics, going by how much they were cited by other authors and also considering the most recent research by looking into relevant articles published in the past three years. After reviewing the relevant literature, a theoretical model to help build the research questions was made during spring 2017.

The method for the research was qualitative and consisted of conducting five semi structured in depth interviews. Due to time constraints, I was not able to conduct more interviews. Another factor that concerns the credibility and transferability of my results, is that all the people interviewed were females in their early thirties. However, they all fit into the case company's target group, so the insights from the interviews can be thought of as relevant to the case company. The interviews were audio recorded, and I also made field notes right after the interview. As an added interviewing tool, I had the people create emotional customer journey maps of their trip. Both the interview and the journey map making were audio recorded and later transcribed. Together the transcriptions and field notes were 32 A4-pages. The data from the interview were analyzed abductively, using a concept driven code based on the literature and emerging themes from the interviews. Categories and the relevant data are introduced in the tables shown in chapter 3 and 4. The interviews and the data analysis were made during September 2017.

The insight gathered from the interviews helped me answer my two first research sub questions: how does value emerge in service process and what are people's expectations, needs and goals regarding travel. This insight was used to create a user persona and emotional customer journey map that informed the content of the design game. A prototype of the design game, called WeTravel, was built using the insight from the literature and the interviews. The game prototype was played in late September 2017. Some possible issues with the validity of results from the game play are evident. I as the author was one of the players and the other

two were my close friends, so the feedback might not have been as critical as it might have otherwise been. It is also possible that some issues with the game did not rise, because I as the author knew how the game should be played.

Based on the analysis of the game play, initial results for answering the third research sub question: how to best facilitate the travel planning process, could be had in a form of a board game version of WeTravel, which was improved based on the analysis and presented to the case company. After getting approval and further development suggestions from the company, a wireframe model of the WeTravel application was developed during October 2017.

### 5.1 Conclusions from the qualitative research

The insight gathered from interviews showed that people truly are taking active roles in designing their own travel experiences. None of the people interviewed had used a travel agent to book their travels, instead they had used service providers such as Airbnb, Hotels.com and airline's own websites to book their stay and flights. It is easy to plan what to do and when in the age of the internet and many found value in already expecting the trip.

The first research sub question was focused on value emergence in service process. The insight from the interviews showed that though customers are doing business with multiple service providers, none of them mentioned having gained any value from it. In fact, the most value came from experiencing the trip together. Information from the customer dominant logic literature states, that this makes it important to understand the customer in their own context and it also proved again that customers take roles in their own groups and contexts. In all the cases, the goal of the trip and the people they were going on this holiday with influenced people's expectations and tasks involved in the trip.

It was also proved again, that other people on the trip influence value destruction but as was stated, this happens inside the mind of the one experiencing the destruction, the interviews showed that people are aware of this happening and are trying to change their own attitudes so that value is not destructed. I think this brought a new perspective to the discussion on value destruction from the point of view, that when people are aware of it happening, how are they managing it personally.

The literature review revealed that value emerges in people's own context through their actions before, during and after using the service and because of this nature of value emergence, when it comes to travel the value is more likely co-created with the fellow travelers than with the service companies. According to the insight gathered from the interviews it seems, that especially in travel services, the service companies are becoming facilitators in customer's value creation process. People find valuable to go to exotic places, do meaningful

things and share experiences with other people. For most customers, it does not matter after the experience who the service provider in these cases are, in fact only one of the interviewees mentioned the service provider of booking hotels, flights and rental cars. This seems to validate the research literature, that the value emerges in the customer's own context and usually involves more than one service provider who all become part of the whole experience.

My second research question was focused on understanding what kind of individual and shared expectations, needs and goals people have regarding travel. It also became clear that it was important to understand what kind of expectations people had toward each other. The expectations could be fuzzy, implicit and unrealistic. The interviews showed that the closer the people were to each other, the more likely it was they had had implicit expectations toward each other. They were not prepared for different rhythms in dining habits or communication styles.

According to the interviews, when people's expectations did not meet reality, some minor conflicts were born but people were willing to pay a cost in their own attitude and behavior to make sure that the trip went well, and not have their own value destructed, by giving or taking space for those who needed it, not being provoked by different communication styles and making compromises on what to do on the trip. People felt that there was trust and they could contribute enough to make them feel content with the decisions that were made.

Most of the interview results from the first and second research question affirmed the literature review. Some new points of view were raised however on value emergence when people are travelling together. People had primary sources of value from travelling but these were easily given up for secondary sources of value, which are important when wanting to belong to a group and get along with other people. I believe my results emphasize more the influence other people have on the value emergence from the service experience than what the literature review did.

The information gained from the research on relevant literature and the insight gathered from the interviews helped in creating the design game that answered my third research question on the best way to facilitate the travel planning process. Design game was chosen as the solution for facilitating interaction between people, because it invokes the play spirit, making the planning experience fun and meaningful. When people play together, they have an easier time to bond with each other and the game gives the frame for the context of the discussion.

The third research question was mostly answered by the literature review but the prototyping showed that, as an initial result, the design game works well to facilitate conversation where the players were able to share and exchange their experiences and expectations on travel. WeTravel can be looked at through the lense of the Play Framework. The game worked quite well as a tool to keep the conversation focused on the holiday trip and getting input from all the players, though the discussion would veer off into other topics. It created a visual transcript of the most important themes of the game.

As it was on people's experiences on the trip, also the game play showed that a person's mood, emotions, understanding and frame of interpretation influenced on how they played the game and how they experienced the service. Another great influence on these factors were the other people they were on the trip with, and playing the game. This again affirmed the research literature on design games and co-creation.

Important emphasis that could be concluded, that is very important that people are on the right mindset when playing the game. When it comes to self-facilitating design games, this becomes something that can be outside of the game's reach. With human facilitator, the facilitator can feel the room and do activities to help set the right mood but with the design game, it assumes that people are on the right mindset because they have chosen to play the game.

In conclusion, I could answer my research question on how to build a meaningful travel planning service by following the E.volution 6 elevated 2 -design thinking model and creating the WeTravel design game. I was able to create a meaningful business to consumer solution for the case company's main target group: active people living the city, who are 25 to 45 years old and are interested in incorporating new technologies in helping them live their lives and reach their goals.

My research furthered the discussion on customer dominant logic by gaining further empirical evidence of how important it is for companies to focus on the customer's context and by building a research tool for understanding how people's goals and expectations, and value creation, are influenced by the other people they are experiencing the service with. The research also managed to discuss how a design game can self-facilitate a co-creation session that manages people's expectations, builds trust and helps them create a shared vision of the future.

I believe the results of my research are not only useful for the service design community but also to the marketing communication community. Marketing messages are becoming more and

more customized to individual consumer, so it is important to understand what are the customer's shared goals regarding buying decisions. Depending who the one person is consuming the service with, might affect greatly what kind of things they are interested in.

Travel companies can use WeTravel as a tool to build detailed profiles on customer groups based on their answers and it can help recognize key customers who are influencing the group's decisions. This information can be then used to sell and market services, and also build more individualized service offerings. With modified content, it can also be used by different service companies.

My thesis works as a blueprint on how to gamify services using design games. People play games for fun but they most likely expect their service experiences to be meaningful. Design games are not played only for fun, instead there is always a goal or a task involved in it. By making the service experience a design game, can bring more fun and meaning to the customer's experience.

## 5.2 Extending the project: Recommendations for the future

The next step of the process for the case company is to develop the game in to an app format by using the knowledge from this research and the data gathered from the beta version, to create a business case for WeTravel. There is a possibility that the game can be adjusted to different context, for example getting to know a possible romantic partner, that opens possibilities for more business.

As the third research question on how to best facilitate a travel planning process was mostly answered by theory on design games, further research on this subject could be made. WeTravel itself can work as a tool to measure how well it functions as a self-facilitating design game in co-creating shared visions of the future holiday trip. Another interesting topic for further research is how playing the game affects the travel experience itself, and can it prevent value destruction during the trip.

Another subject for research is to further study how well WeTravel works as a tool for understanding customers and their tasks in their own context when it comes to leisure tourism. Can this information be useful in building future service offerings and be transferrable to other contexts.

Many companies have value propositions that include the other customers as part of the service experience, for example Laurea's Service Innovation and Design program emphasizing how the students also learn from each other. Interesting topic for further research would be first, how important is the value coming from other customers to the experience and since

other customers are involved in value destruction, what actions can the company take to make sure that this kind of value destruction does not happen.

### 5.3 Reflections on the thesis process

The starting point for my thesis project was a few conversations I had with friends in the fall of 2016 about their summer holidays travelling with other people. Everyone had stories about how someone had gotten upset over something that had not been properly discussed before the trip. I knew I had stumbled onto something and as I was thinking about starting my thesis project and I knew I wanted to do something with my own company Uneni Mobile, I decided to try and find a way to solve this problem.

Most of the time spent on my thesis work was reading through relevant and not so relevant literature based on the key concepts I could define early on, such as value creation, customer expectations and design games. Few conversations with my fellow students, and information from the articles, guided me toward more relevant literature. At some point, I had to decide that I had built enough of a theoretical base to support my thesis.

In my project, I felt that research came secondary to the objective of building a product for Uneni Mobile. I was interested in getting just enough information that I could build a working prototype for the game. However, as I got deeper into the analysis I realized that some interesting themes started to emerge and I would have loved to study them further. Unfortunately, there was no time.

During interview data analysis, I also realized how I could have scheduled the interviews better. I did all of them during two weeks and then transcribed them. I had picked new questions for my interview guide already but the later interviews would have benefitted if I had interviewed first some of the people, transcribed and analyzed, reviewed my interview guide and then done more interviews.

However, I am happy with the result of my thesis both the new insights I gained from the research and also the game WeTravel. I started building the game without any clue what the content or rules would be, I trusted the design process and it lead me to results that also made the case company happy and inspired to develop the game to a working application.

During my thesis process I benefited greatly from thesis supervision. My supervisor was able to shift my focus more to the research part of my thesis and especially at the end guide me to the parts of my thesis that needed more focus. During this process, I grew my professional skills as a service designer and I gained knowledge and expertise on creating meaningful content by understanding value creation and design games.

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## Appendix 1: Interview questions

Milloin olitte, kuinka kauan ja ketä teitä oli reissussa?  
Mikä oli matkan tarkoitus?  
Minkälaisia odotuksia oli matkaa kohtaan?  
Miten loma poikkeaa arjesta?  
Mikä on sinulle tärkeää lomassa?  
Minkälainen on unelmalomasi? Täytyikö tässä matkassa?  
Olisitko mennyt, jos ei olisi ollut ryhmää? Miten loma olisi poikennut?  
Kuinka kauan ennen matkaa aloititte sen suunnittelun?  
Miten suunnittelitte matkaa? Olisiko jotain voinut suunnitella paremmin?  
(raha, tavat, tekeminen ja pukeutuminen, ruokailu)  
Miten matka meni?  
-lomalle lähtö  
-kuvaile päivä matkalla  
-tuliko konflikteja, miten ratkaistiin? olisiko voitu välttää?  
Kuka teki lopulliset päätökset?  
Lähdettkö vielä uudestaan samalla porukalla reissuun?  
Eri ihmisten kanssa?  
Minkälaisen roolin otit tässä ryhmässä? Eri ryhmissä eri roolit?  
Suunnitteletteko eri tavalla?  
Matkustatko paljon?  
Matkustatko yksin? Miksi?  
Miten nämä asiat saisi paremmin esille kaverireissulla?  
Miten paljon koet tarvitsevasi omaa tilaa?  
Mikä ärsyttää eniten reissaamisessa? Milloin viimeksi paloi hermot?  
Tuliko reissun aikana esille jotain yllättävää itsestäsi? Muista?  
Emotional customer journey

## Appendix 2: Rules of the WeTravel game

1. Set up the game board and pick up the pink cards
2. Choose yourself a game piece to represent yourself
3. You can choose one person, or you can ask one by one, the statements on the pink cards and then place your game piece according to your own opinion.
4. Tell each other why you have chosen your placement
  
5. After the pink cards have been played. Everyone can choose one to three small yellow cards about why are you on this trip
6. After everyone has chosen, by discussing choose one to three things that you can all agree on.
  
7. One by one, pick a yellow card and finish the sentence on the card. Use some time to discuss the things that come up in the cards.
8. After all the cards have been played, you can use time to discuss some things that did not come up.
  
9. Using the small yellow cards you chose for your reasons for the trip, fill in the agreement. You can choose a “safe word” for situations when something is annoying us.

### Appendix 3: Game card questions

#### Pink cards (getting to know each other's holiday me's)

- During travel I like to be out the door by 9 AM
- 50 € on a meal is expensive
- More than 50 € per night for accommodations is expensive
- I need alone time
- 50€ on an event is a lot of money
- When travelling, I like to eat all my meals at a restaurant
- I don't mind compromising if it means we can do things together
- During travel my budget is flexible
- It takes me more than 30 minutes to get ready in the morning
- When travelling I like to plan carefully and stick to the plan
- When travelling I want to see and experience as much as possible
- When travelling I want to stay in luxurious places no matter the expense
- I don't mind as long as it's cheap
- I want to have authentic experiences when travelling
- I like to be in charge
- I usually travel alone
- I like to start planning trips 6 months in advance

#### Small yellow cards (goals of the trip)

- Beach
- Meet new people
- Culture
- Relaxing
- Shopping
- Special occasion
- Party
- Food

- Hang out

#### Yellow cards (scenarios)

- An ideal way to spend a day on this trip would be...
- If I need to ask for help but there's no common language I will..
- If something doesn't go as planned I will...
- I feel like others are not enjoying this trip so I ...
- If something annoys me I will...
- If I get tired I usually act like..
- I like to eat dinner at..
- I know we have plans to do something but I'd rather stay in so I..
- I am willing to compromise on...
- It's important to me that during breakfast..
- I wake up first, I am going to..
- I like to end the day by...
- A dream for this trip would be...