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Attracting millennials to a restaurant: Case Vino

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Abstract		
<p>The main goal of the thesis is to attract new customers for lunch or dinner in the restaurant Vino. In order to attain that, the current market situation of Vino in Mikkeli was reviewed. During the analysis it was found that regular customer portfolio description is not relevant and needs to be reviewed. The qualitative study was conducted to access the information of customers. The theoretical background consists of user experience in the context of an empathy map as a tool to construct the persona of a customer.</p> <p>The structure of the thesis includes 7 chapters in total. Introduction proposed the means and motivation for carrying out research. Chapter 2 describes the following challenges in detail and formulates the problem to be solved further. Chapter 3 is focused on the theoretical background of the research. Chapter 4 provides reasoning for choosing the qualitative method, the process of conducting step-by-step, and limitations of research. Findings demonstrate the results of research related to the theoretical background. Chapter 6 includes an overview of suggestions and testing of the hypothesis. Conclusions discover future research suggestions and general summary of findings.</p> <p>Conclusion suggests that despite the limitations of the study, the customer's persona (profile) is completed, and challenges are found. Besides, the persona will help to recreate a persona with changing demand on the market and introduce a simple tool to gather information in a real-time environment. However, the method of persona and empathy map lacks trustworthiness and may be used only to find the challenges of a customer and create a flexible portfolio to work on.</p>		
Keywords		
Empathy map, millennials, market research, persona, user experience		

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1 INTRODUCTION

Customer needs and expectations are changing constantly in the modern world. To be successful, companies need to carry out market research to better understand the situation and what they should accomplish to attract more customers, henceforth, deliver better service and receive an additional advantage, comparing to competitors.

The commissioner of this thesis is the restaurant Vino, which is located near the town centre of Mikkeli at Raatihuoneenkatu 14. Restaurant Vino is the part of bigger company Serviini, which includes 5 branch restaurants in total. Besides, they are providing catering for events.

During practical training in the Mikaeli concert hall, it was discussed with the manager of Serviini that they are interested in researching more young people as regular customers at the restaurant. The manager told that their current customers are people over 40 years old and he would be interested in attracting people younger than 40.

Hence, the goal of this research is to attract people under 40 to the restaurant Vino.

Objectives for the research are:

- 1) To review the current market situation of restaurants in Mikkeli;
- 2) To describe regular customers of restaurant Vino;
- 3) To distinguish millennials as target customers by empathy map and persona;
- 4) To summarize millennials' challenges and possibilities of attracting them.

Primarily to analysis, it should be said that market situation and SWOT analysis is carried out based on the information from Vino's manager interview. Also, information about customers is taken from interviewees with customers during lunchtime.

Hypothesis: People in between 24-39 years old are reluctant to consider going to the restaurant because they find it expensive, not satisfying their needs and old-fashioned.

2 CURRENT MARKET SITUATION OF RESTAURANTS IN MIKKELI

In this section, the regular customer and current market situation will be described. It is necessary to find further focus of the research and to introduce challenges to be solved. In addition, the main competitors will be defined, and their advantages highlighted. All the answers were taken from the interview with the restaurant manager (see Appendix 1).

2.1 Market situation

To begin with, it needs to be found how many potential customers are living in the Mikkeli to know to what extent the restaurant is able to expand. In Figure 1, distribution among the age group of the population is demonstrated.

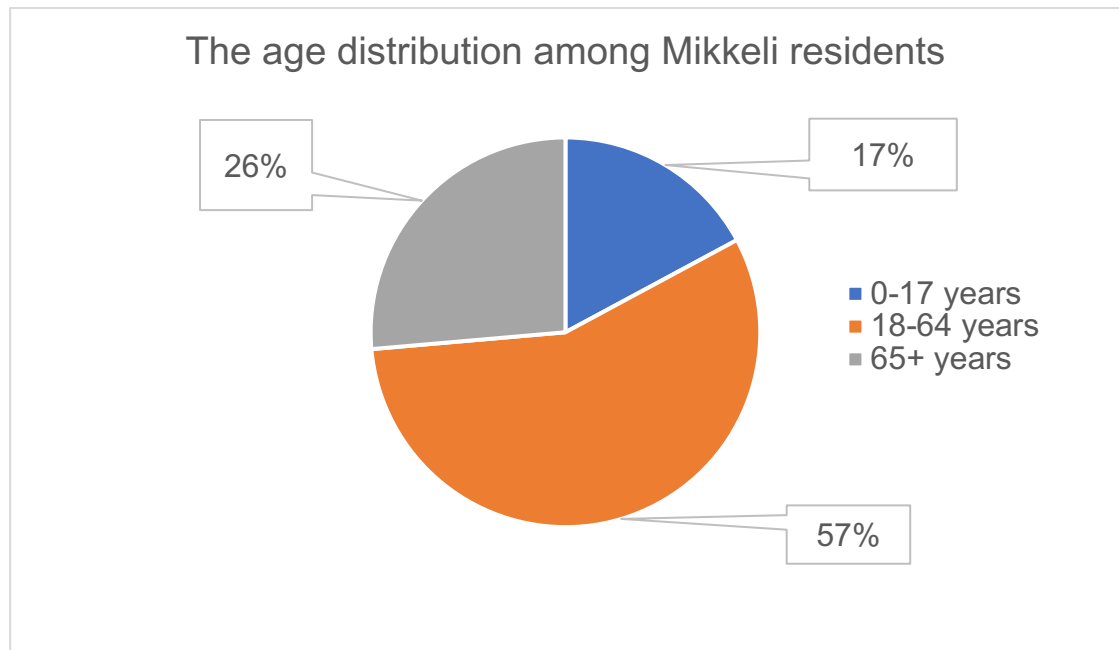


Figure 1. The age distribution among Mikkeli residents (City Population, 2019)

Potential customers of restaurants can be found in the 18-64 years category, which is about 30 000 people in Mikkeli, who can go to a restaurant with family, colleagues, or alone. Usually, senior people prefer to stay at home and eat home-cooked meals. However, it is considered that they have the possibility to go there and, hence, they are included in this category.

The next step is narrowing down the potential customers to lunch and dinner customers, whereas lunch customers are workers from nearby offices and dinner customers, who are yet to be defined. According to the manager, from

30000 potential customers 140 to 240 customers have lunch and dinner at Vino daily altogether.

One more option is to define potential customers by age distribution in Mikkeli's population. In Figure 2 the residents in a 10-year interval are demonstrated.

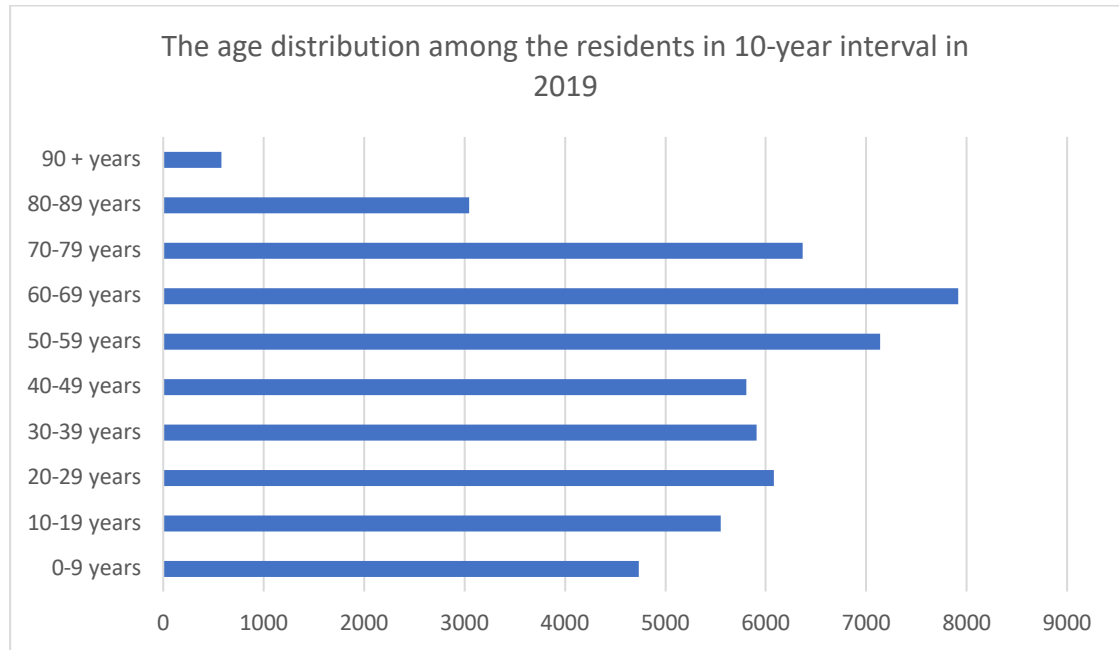


Figure 2. The age distribution among the residents in 10-year interval in 2019 (City population, 2019).

The research will focus on the age categories 20-29 and 30-39 respectively. According to these categories, in Mikkeli the number of potential customers consists of 11 992 people. This data narrows down the search of potential customers more than for a half comparing to what was suggested earlier. In addition, the histogram suggests that there is huge potential in terms of attracting more older people (50-59 and 60-69 respectively).

At the moment Serviini operates only in Mikkeli and has 5 restaurants in total. There are about 15 to 20 lunch restaurants in the city and 5 of them offer cheap student meals. Hence, the competition for customers in the city is very tight, which causes the restaurants in Mikkeli to seek new alternatives to attract customers.

Restaurant Vino located in the heart of the city, right next to the city's market square. Vino, without any doubt, is a lunch and a la carte restaurant. On average, the restaurant aims at serving 140 to 240 customers per day to ensure that revenue covers the expenses on food, electricity, and salary, plus, make a profit on the top of that.

The position of restaurant and parking lot nearby provide huge benefit among competitors, since it is easy to come by. Yet the location cannot be a benefit because the main competitors of Vino are only two blocks away from the city centre and there's a convenient place for parking everywhere (Figure 3).

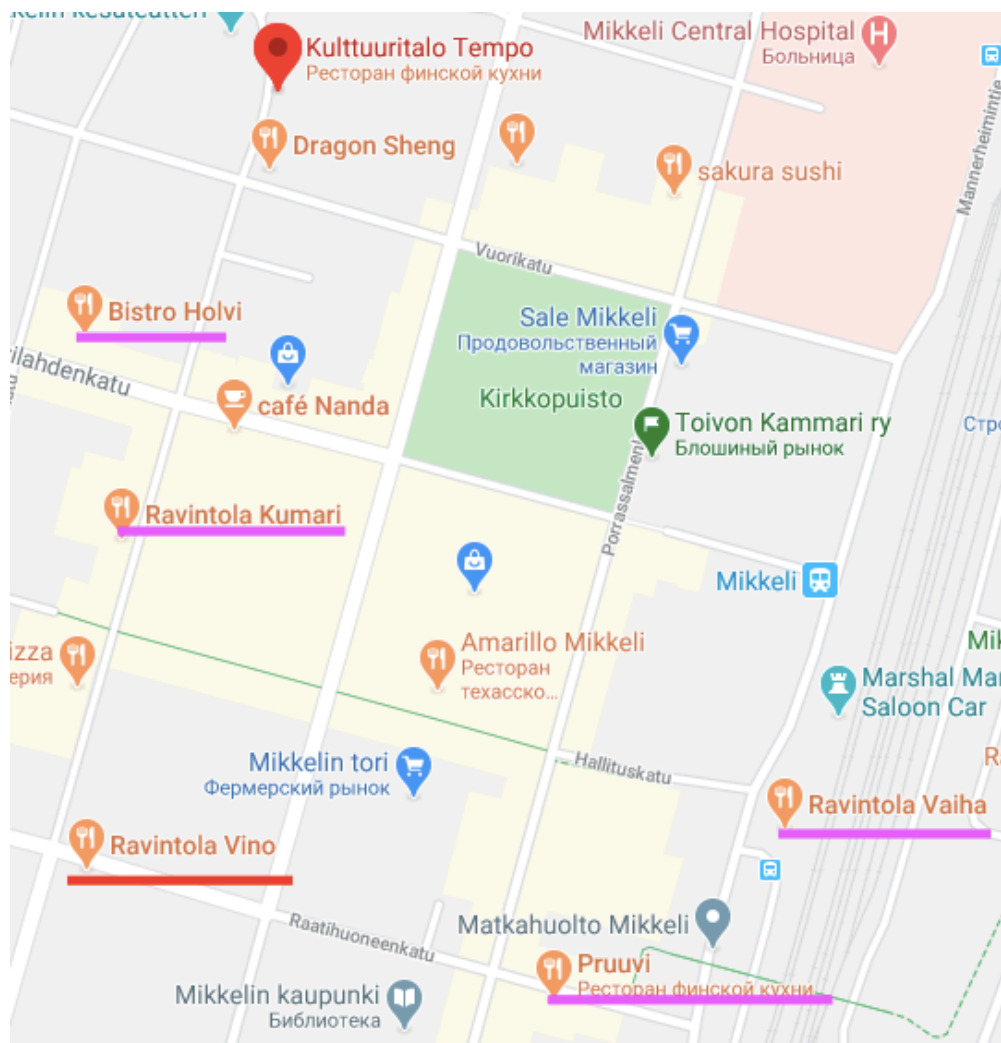


Figure 3. Competitors nearby (Google maps, 2020)

According to the manager, the main competitors are located in the area of two blocks away from Vino, in particular, restaurant Pruuvi, Bistro Holvi, Restaurant Vaiha, Restaurant Kuumari, and Kulttuuritalo restaurant. At least, they have the same advantageous position as Vino.

2.2 SWOT analysis

Taking into consideration the market situation, the SWOT analysis of restaurant VINO should be made. Table 1 demonstrates the current situation from the manager's interview. Also, the template by Chaffey (2019) suggests strategies to receive a competitive advantage among other restaurants.

Table 1. SWOT analysis matrix (Chaffey D., 2019)

Restaurant VINO	Strengths – S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good reputation among customers - High quality of food - Average price on meal - Good location - Loyal customers 	Weaknesses – W <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narrow choice of dishes in the menu - Lack of specials in menu
Opportunities – O <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To expand in other neighboring cities - To Buy a competitor's restaurant 	SO strategies Continue to work on strengths to maximize opportunities ('Attacking strategy')	WO strategies Eliminate weaknesses by using opportunities ('Building strengths for attacking strategy')
Threats – T <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial risk of expanding - Unknown market situation in other cities - Starting a new restaurant in a chain 	ST strategies Using strengths to lower threats ('Defensive strategy')	WT strategies Eliminate weaknesses and threats ('Building strengths for defense')

S: Good reputation among customers is the main strength of VINO. Consistency in quality of food, reasonable price, and good location always bring in customers easily in the restaurant. The price of lunch in the restaurant is set on the average level, comparing to town, thereby regular customers could afford to visit this place and receive good value for money. In addition, the loyalty of the customers or willingness to come back supported by membership discounts for the business partners. Plus, the information about restaurant

spread in a form of recommendations to friends and colleagues, since Mikkeli is a small town.

W: On the other hand, the menu and new products should be introduced to the customer, with the purpose being to develop loyalty and a good reputation further.

O: It is reported that some opportunities exist. While competition is too harsh in Mikkeli, Vino could expand in other cities such as Jyväskylä, Lappeenranta, etc. Another alternative is to buy a competitor's restaurant on the market.

T: There are certain predicaments, which are restraining Vino from expansion. Firstly, the risk of financial loss associated with the launch of a new restaurant in another city. The market situation is unknown to owner and they may not have a return on investments afterward. Secondly, starting a new restaurant in Mikkeli couldn't be an option since it can prove costly and needs a lot of resources, not only financial, to accomplish an opening.

Another section of the SWOT matrix provides valuable advice on how to use the components of SWOT analysis to achieve an advantageous position on the market. Regarding Chaffey, there is no proper term for this approach. However, the author concocts the abbreviation TWOS, which is inverted SWOT in letters (Chaffey D., 2019).

SO: 'Attacking strategy's' main gist is to maintain strengths and open new opportunities for expanding. For example, find a room for improvement for the quality of food, reputation, price, location, and loyalty of the customers. In other words, enhance the strengths that already exist and when revenue has increased, start to use already existing opportunities or discover new ones.

WO: 'Building strengths' strategy suggests using opportunities immediately. However, this is not realistic due to the significant risk of financial loss for the company. Moreover, the current market situation of restaurants in the other cities is unknown for Vino and demands a market research. Again, it's too high a financial risk to buy a competing restaurant.

ST: 'Defensive strategy' shows that strengths need to be used to eliminate threats. Indeed, if the restaurant continues to work on the internal factors then why they need to face threats from outside?

WT: 'Building strengths' focuses on drawbacks in the external environment. One way is to search for investors or prosper to handle the risk. Another way is to carry out market research in the other cities or launch a new restaurant in town, which, of course, will take a lot of resources that must be present at that time. Another alternative is to work on the menu and the customer preferences and suggestions for food.

Since the competition is very harsh in the town and the risk of financial loss is high, it is proposed to focus on the development of strengths and look into customer service and experience in more detail. If choosing between strategies, the best way is to combine SO and ST strategies in order that the main idea is to keep developing strengths inside and temporarily avoid threats in the business environment. Therefore, marketing needs to be reconsidered carefully, in a customer-oriented way, bringing in new customers and defining regular customers in more detail.

2.3 Portfolio of a regular customer

The portfolio of a regular customer is developed based on the interview from the manager and the statistics that were provided by the manager.

In Figure 4 the average customer attendance per day for each month is demonstrated. The graphic shows the period from January 2019 to February 2020 respectively.

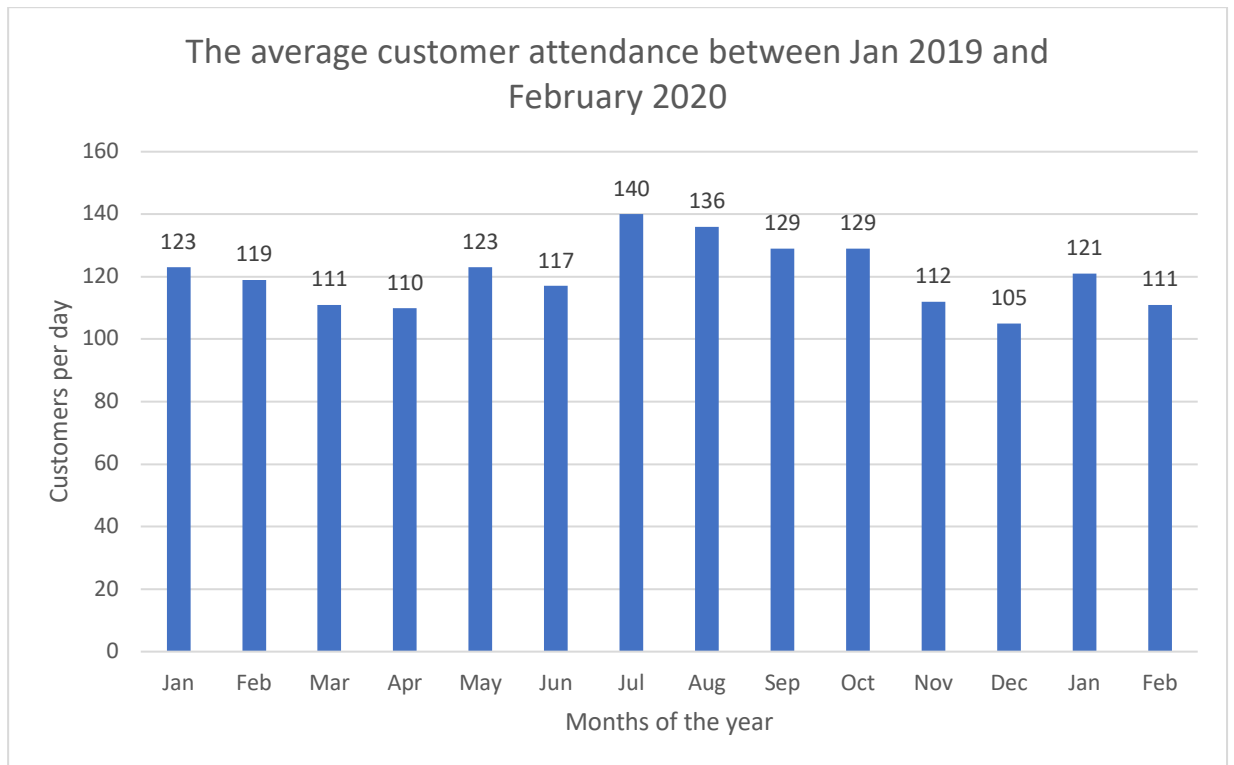


Figure 4. The average attendance of customers per day between January 2019 and February 2020 (made by the author, 2020)

The given numbers were calculated from the daily number of customer visits. Next, each month separately summed up and divided by the number of days in each month. Hence, each column represents the average number of customers per day.

According to the average attendance, the peak season for attendance occurs during July and August, when people have vacations, which is the reason for the increased customer flow. Also, summer vacation time brings in a lot of tourists to this region, which might be the reason why attendance is the most frequent during the months mentioned above.

The expected number of customers in Vino is 140 to 240 people daily, however, the statistics show that Vino needs to attract more people to bring more revenue to the place.

In the central area of town, Vino serves 140 to 240 customers daily which are mainly nearby office workers. Short description of the customer could be introduced as a few statements from the manager's interview:

- 'He/She expects good quality of food at a reasonable price';

- 'Usually, they are quite busy because lunch time is approximately 30 minutes';
- 'People that are willing to pay 8,5-10,5 euro per day on lunch'.

As can be concluded from the statements, not many details are known about the regular customer in VINO. However, these statements will be used as a requirement for creating a customer portfolio.

The goal of the restaurant is to get customers to spend the aforementioned amount of money and keep the daily customer flow from 140 up to 240 customers or more if possible.

From another point of view, loyalty or ability to come again of customers is supported by providing small discounts for the business partners of the restaurant. However, at the moment VINO can't offer any customer card or membership, which could have been the benefit among competitors.

Lastly, the unique value proposition of the restaurant is set for many years now. In short, VINO is trying to keep their customers satisfied by providing them a superb service and quality of food while ensuring that customer receive what he/she paid for. Another reason is that the owners of the restaurant have a lot of contacts in their business sphere, which will help to attract more customers to the restaurant.

From this point on, the reasonable solution for further research is to create a customer portfolio in more detail based on information that they already have about their customer.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the main concepts and ideas of research are going to be presented. The main focus of the review is empathy map, user experience, persona, and example of how these concepts can be applied to conduct market research with specific requirements for Vino.

3.1 User Experience

User experience (UX) has gone a long way to become what it is today. The first example of UX design dates back to 6000 BC when the Feng Shui concept was introduced. The concept includes everything that concerns an arrangement of interior design, for example, tables placement in restaurants or kitchen placement. Everything should be arranged to guarantee user-friendly approach.

A more modern approach was invented by Donald Norman in 1995, who was the first to define the term 'user experience design'. Steven E. in her article quoted Donald Norman on UX design: 'I invented the term because I thought human interface and usability were too narrow: I wanted to cover all aspects of the person's experience with a system, including industrial design, graphics, the interface, the physical interaction, and the manual' (Stevens E., 2019).

The understanding of user experience in terms of technological advancement and human-computer relationships is found in the design of products, software, and app development. However, the generalized concept can be applied in different fields of service designs. One of the alternatives is to consider it a tool to find possible solutions to meet customer expectations or to exceed them.

User experience plays an important role in designing services and products because it contains perceptions and responses of the user in the possible use of service or the result of using it (ISO 9241-11:2018, 3.2.3). The elements of user experience include as ISO 9241-11 (2018) states: 'emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, comfort, behaviors, and accomplishments that occur before, during, and after use'. (Figure 5).

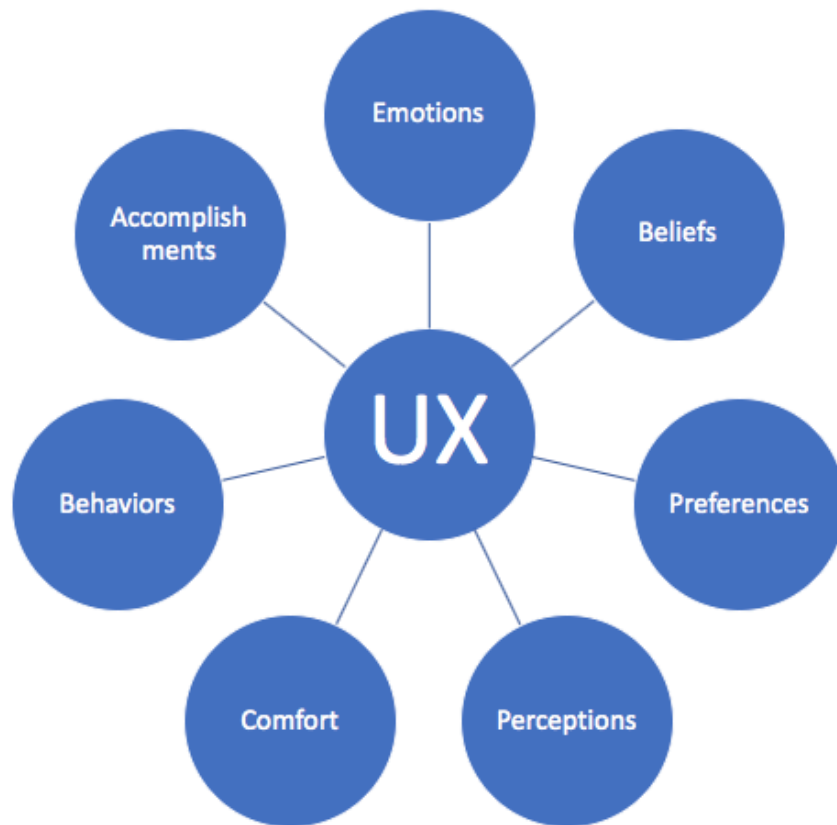


Figure 5. UX - user experience components (made by the author)

These elements include the information from all of the customer relationships with the company – before, during, and after use of service or product. Therefore, user experience is a dynamic process rather than a static information about one particular period of customer engagement (Vermeeren et al., 2010). Comprehensive information about service can be used to better understand a targeted customer segment and as a result service can be modified to provide a more pleasurable user experience.

In the hospitality sector, user experience needs to be gathered and analyzed to provide an insight into what people come through and what feelings or challenges do they have in the whole process: before, during, and after service. Mostly, the concept of user experience in the hospitality field associated with a customer experience and customer journey.

To summarize data of a customer and to get a better understanding of needs and experiences, designing teams rely on creating personas of customers

(Ferreria et al. 2015). The concept of persona helps to create a target customer segment and create portfolio for the whole group of customers instead of using the individual experience of them. Summarized experience is used to create a fictional character (persona) and, after that, the designing team treats their customers as a persona with its traits, behavior, and habits.

As a result, the designing team creates a portfolio for the whole group of customers that includes the following characteristics: biographical information, demographics, psychographic (Curedale R., 2016). Consequently, the generalized experience would demonstrate the customer challenges, which need to be solved.

3.2 Persona

In 1999 practical guide for use of personas as a design tool was introduced by Alan Cooper. As he describes the persona himself, he says: 'Personas are not real people, but they represent them throughout the design process' (Cooper A., 1999). The main goal of creating a persona is to precisely describe a group of people in one fictional character thereby designing team would be able to show empathy to him/her and know what person needs to accomplish with a focus on meeting his goals or expectations. Persona creates an image of a real customer rather than valid generalized data. However, it helps designing teams to stay focused on essential service features.

The method of creating a persona is often questioned due to methodological issues. There's no valid method to verify if personas are accurate in relation to the selected population (Chapman C.N., Milham R., 2006). In other words, a persona is too descriptive and cannot include specific data of users all in one. In addition, a persona cannot be falsified. Persona is assumed a fictional character and you cannot falsify fictional character, hence, it's beyond the scientific method. As a result, relation to data is not determinable and validity cannot be achieved.

Despite counterarguments, there's no other method that helps to obtain user-centered approach, whereas the customer has his values and not the values of the company. It is evident that in the development of a service for people,

the whole process of the service design must be user centered. In design developing, however, it is difficult to manage user-centered approach due to the following reasons (Pruitt, J. & Adlin T., 2006, 5-6):

- 1) Naturally, people can't develop service for others because people tend to be concentrated on their wants and needs;
- 2) End-users of a product are complicated and sometimes you can't satisfy all users at once;
- 3) People who building or designing a service are not connected with people who carry out a market research and distinguishing end-users because they cannot keep up with new data on users, hence, they miss important details in the end product.

Successful user-centered design can be achieved through the use of personas. Knowing that persona is a 'hypothetical prototype of a real user' (Ferreira, 2015), personas can create an image of a real dynamic user as if it was a real person. Amongst other customer segmentation approaches, persona conveys information in ways that others cannot (Pruitt, J. & Adlin T., 2006, 11). Also, a persona is considered as a valuable method of getting insight into customer experience by showing empathy to a customer and decrease self-reference (Curedale R., 2016, 51).

The personas are classified into four categories: Primary, secondary, stakeholders, and exclusionary (Figure 6).

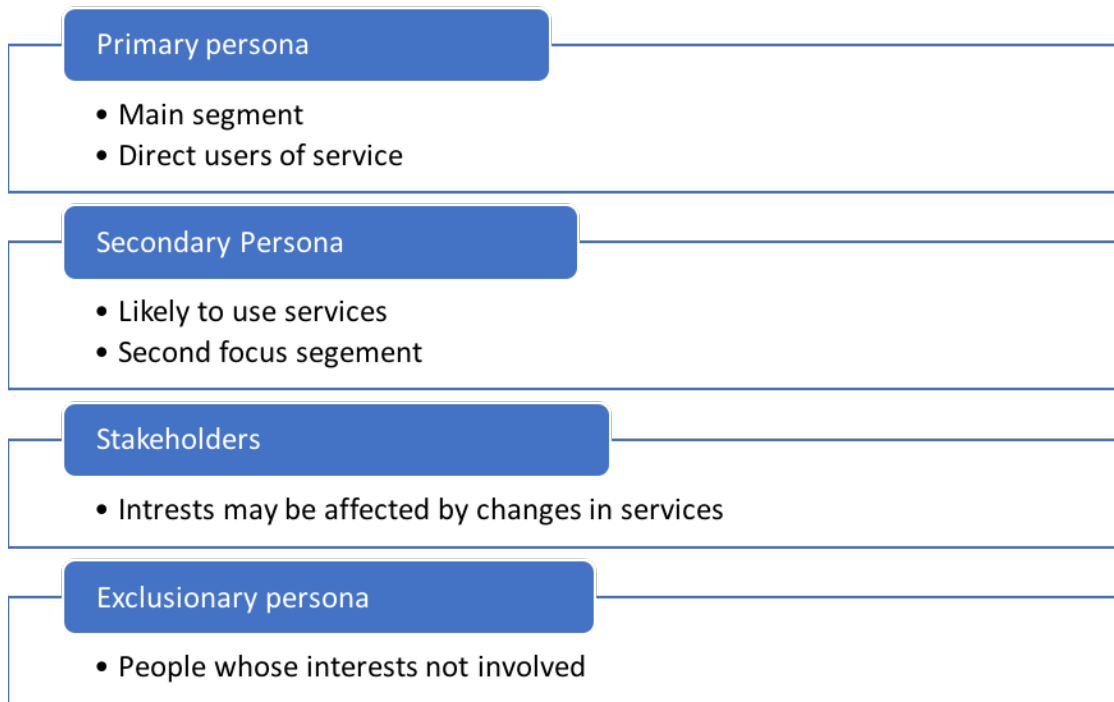


Figure 6. Persona classification (Curedale R., 2016)

Primary personas are the customers who will be the main segment for whom services and products will be designed, for example, customers who aiming to have lunch or dinner in a restaurant, in other words, target population – millennials.

Secondary personas are those who are likely to use service, but not considered to be the main focus of market research – students or people who do not use services on a regular basis.

Stakeholders are people whose interests may be affected by service – mainly they are employees of the company or friends and acquaintances of customers. Often stakeholders are excluded from persona because they might have conflicting interests (Curedale R., 2016, 59). Finally, exclusionary persona is someone whose interests are not involved in the process.

Background information for personas includes standardized characteristics as follows: biographical, demographic, and psychographic. Robert Curedale suggests following-up questions to define persona: When searching for biographic data it's necessary to name persona, attach the photo to have the visualization of constructed persona, find out where within the country he or she lives

and specify population of the place and whether it's rural or urban surrounding (Curedale R., 2016, 59).

Demographics includes information about age, gender, family size, life stage, income, housing, occupation, education, ethnicity, and nationality. Psychographics gives information about self-image (outgoing, leader, shy), beliefs that can be connected with potential service usage, attitudes to products, tech status that includes the way the person is thinking (early adapter, innovator etc.), interests, media channels.

To specify, in restaurant services the relevant information should include demographic, biographic, and psychographic. The suggested method of creating a portfolio will be used based on the portfolio template that is recommended by Curedale Robert.

To sum up, for obtaining comprehensive background information of persona in restaurant service the specific user experience should be considered. In the context of this research, the primary persona should be considered, and some characteristics will be taken from the interviews with participants. The main idea of creating a portfolio is to find experiences that persona wishes to avoid and what is getting in the way of achieving his/her goals in the context of service. Besides, it is essential to create a fictional character that will help designing team through the designing process.

3.3 Millennials

The millennials are people within the same age cohort who are sharing similar characteristics, experiences, and beliefs and were born between 1981 and 2000, although there's no definite answer to what age category they certainly relate to (Beckmann M. & Noll F., 2015). The generation of millennials is dominant to other generations in number. As we reveal statistics on this issue, the number of millennials has outgrown 4.2 billion in developing and emerging economies (Lingelbach et al., 2012).

Knowing that millennials were born in a certain period and sharing the same characteristics, experiences, and beliefs, it could be concluded that they share

the same values and consumer behavior. The era of high technological advancement has a huge impact on millennials' characteristics and personal traits. For instance, millennials are technology-savvy. Millennials use the Internet as a platform to share positive and negative experiences and if they are unconfident of their choice, they easily can research the Internet to search for more detailed information.

Millennials are aware of their choice and know that optimal decision cannot be reached. When choosing a product, they prefer to make fast and well-informed decisions which will mainly provide satisfaction. The speed of decision making is explained by their preference to put a little effort to reach their goals or meet expectations. Usually, they prefer to switch brands in case they know that they can receive more benefits from it (Beckmann M. & Noll F., 2015). In addition, the decision-making process of millennials does not depend on advertising because they receive information through social networks and the Internet respectively. Hence, Millennials appreciate honesty and transparency as core values for service or product, based on the opinions and reviews of others.

The behavior of Millennials refers to a lifestyle where self-realization is the most relevant. The reason for this is that they've grown up in a highly competitive environment, where individual success is a top priority. Due to that, they are having the desire to be special, unique, and have their own opinions on any subject. Although they can be tolerant and open-minded, individualistic lifestyle makes them care more about themselves than other people. Also, being well-informed about what is happening in the world, they try to make a world a better place and, hence, they are showing a high interest in environmental and ethical issues, meaning that they will choose products made by more socially responsible entrepreneurs (Beckmann M. & Noll F., 2015).

To recap, millennials share the same values and characteristics as the same age cohort. When defining a persona of millennials, it is important to include characteristics of this market segment into consideration to clarify their goals which they are willing to achieve throughout the process of a restaurant service.

Based on the general characteristics of millennials, the example of a persona template is suggested. The persona is demonstrated in Figure 7. According to the statistics in Finland, the average salary of males for 2018 is 3 398 euro (Statistics Finland, 2018). In addition, the average age of millennials between 24-39 is 31 with compliance with arithmetical mean. Occupation is not important in this case, but it assumed that they will be from the middle class. Gender can be defined as both male and female, but to specify portfolio the male gender was taken. Usually, people within the middle class have at least a bachelor's degree, meaning that they are well educated.

The best characteristic quote for millennials, which indicates that millennials prefer to make fast decisions and achieve satisfaction as fast as possible based on the fact that their attention cannot hold for more than 10 seconds. (Strictly Positive Teaching, 2019).

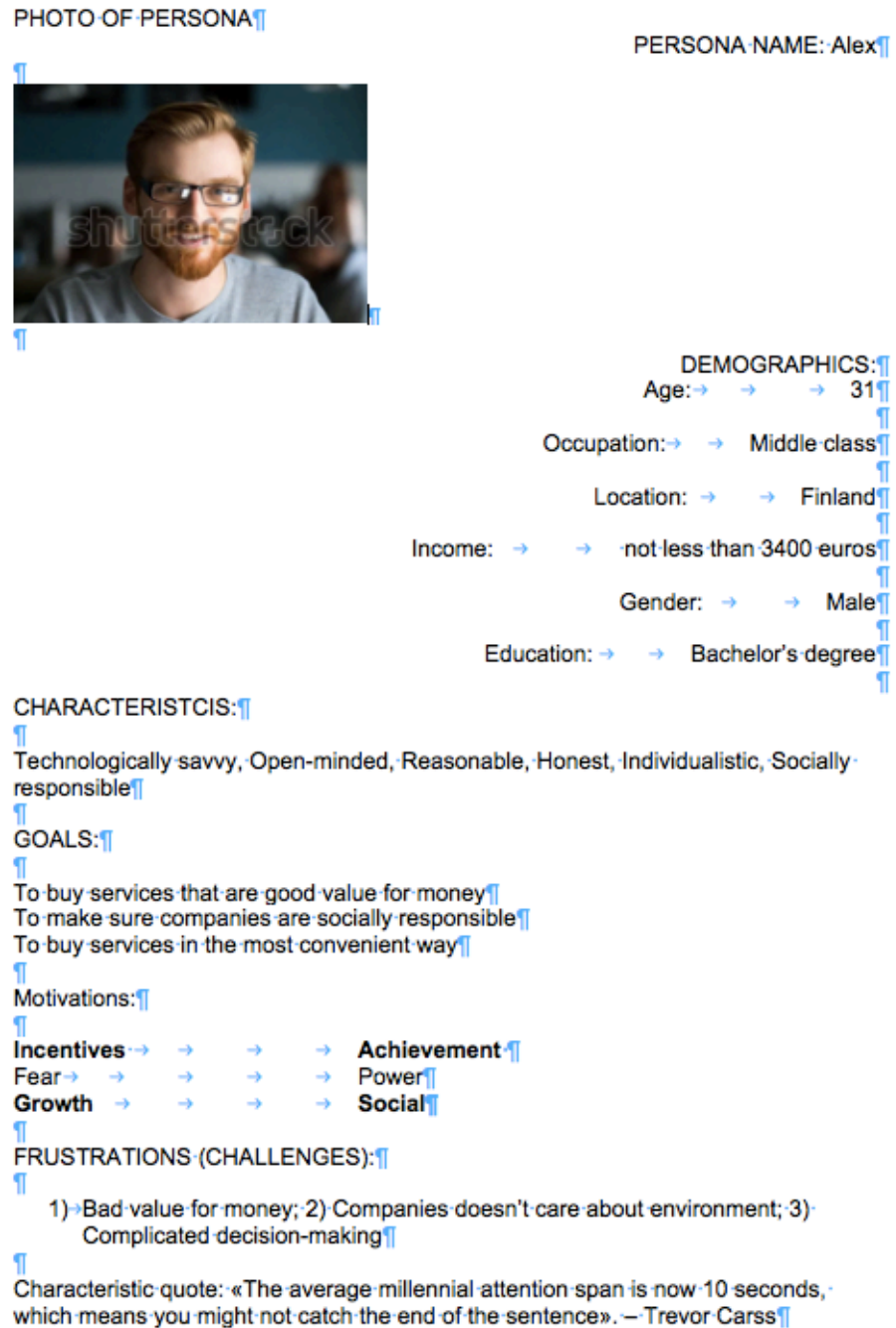


Figure 7. Millennial persona (Curedale Robert template and author corrections)

The visualization tool to gather information about the challenges of millennials in a convenient way is going to be discussed in the following section.

3.4 Empathy map

Empathy map is a tool that helps to get a deeper insight into the customer experience. A visual image of customer behavior provides a simple and fast method to research customer expectations and reasoning that lays under it.

(Curedale R., 2016). Moreover, the huge advantage of this method is that it allows to develop a better understanding beyond only demographical characteristics. Hence, it aims to create a certain degree of empathy to a specific group of persons rather than collect background information (Ferreria et al. 2015).

The initial template for empathy map was suggested by Matthew and he proposed to divide a map into four categories. Sometime after, his template was modified by Bland and he added two more categories. As a whole, the empathy map is consisting of six areas, which can be seen in Figure 8 (Ferreria et al. 2015):

- 1) See – what user see in the surrounding environment;
- 2) Say and Do – what the user says and does in public;
- 3) Think and Feel – what happens inside the person’s mind;
- 4) Hear – what person hear and how it changes his/her behavior;
- 5) Pain – challenges of the person or what he/she failed to achieve;
- 6) Gain – what a person is trying to achieve and how it can be done.

Each area of the map has supporting questions which can help the researcher to make more sense when collecting responses.

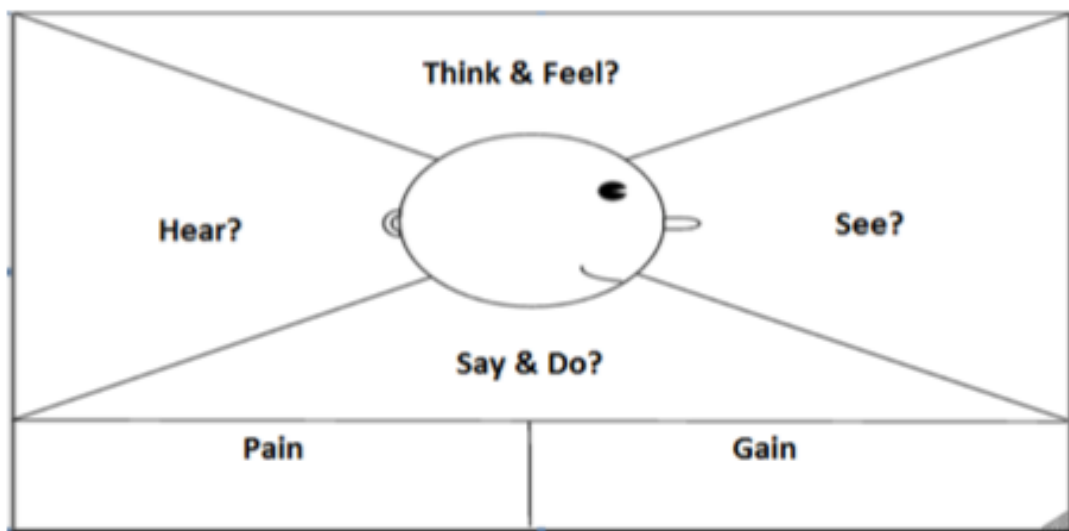


Figure 8. Empathy map template by Matthews and Bland

There's a lot of guiding questions available for each zone. For research convenience, suggested questions are shown in Table 2. Questions will be taken from Curedale's and Ferreria's work respectively.

Table 2. Guiding questions

Field	Guiding questions
See	What are they seeing in the environment? Which sites are obstacles? Are sights conflicting with their needs?
Say and Do	What are the activities stage by stage? Are there conflicts between thoughts, actions, and intentions?
Think and feel	What is important to them? How are they reacting? What are the emotions at each stage?
Hear	What are they hearing? Which sounds are obstacles? In the environment? From interactions with people? What are pleasant sounds?

As a result, the tool can be developed around a specific situation in a business company, for example restaurant. The template will be taken for further development in the hospitality field.

4 METHODS

In this chapter, it is going to be decided what method for the research should be used relying on methodological literature. Also, the study population, sampling method, data collection, and data analysis will be discussed.

4.1 Defining a method

For carrying out a study the qualitative method was chosen. This method allows using a variety of creative techniques to achieve a flexible and open approach to a research question, which allows to build or conceptualize new theories (Gabe T. Wang, Park K., 2016). Since the research will discover customer behaviour, which requires to find a solution to the problem – why millennials are reluctant to come to the restaurant – the best method of research is qualitative.

The most convenient way to conduct a qualitative study is to make an interview of people, where their answers could be used to create an empathy map and then persona. One-to-One interview would be the best choice because in-depth one-to-one interview helps to stay more focused on obtaining necessary data from participants.

The type of interview which best fits the goal and the research question is semi-structured. Meaning that before the interview, the interviewer will prepare guiding and follow-up questions beforehand, and during the conversation flow will try to engage in the dialog on selected topics. The main idea is to establish a communication where it is simple for the participant to provide the reasoning for his/her answers. In the aforementioned situation, the interviewer needs to follow the dialog and direct the interviewee towards explaining his or her opinion as detailed as possible.

4.2 Study Population and Respondent Profile

The population of the research is consisting of 7 people in total. One of them is the manager of Vino, which has explained the current market situation in the

area and shared the information about marketing, relevant challenges, background information, and named a list of the main competitors of the restaurant.

6 other people were the customers of Vino that agreed to participate in the interview and share the information about their user experience in Vino. The age category of participants is varying from 24 to 39 years old.

Mostly, interviewees were over 30 or around 30. Also, the participants were represented in two genders evenly: 3 men and 3 women. The level of income was also in priority. People were representing different professions and statuses – manager, insurance company agent, professional hockey player, student, manager in business marketing company, and designer.

Overall, respondents provided a reasonable representative portfolio based on the persona concept that was intended to be tested. However, it must be considered that one of the respondents was a student and that is the reason why the response of the participant might not be relevant for the research.

4.3 Sampling

The manager of Vino arranged the interviews by calling on the phone to his regular customers and one of the interviewees was a random customer that saw an information poster inside the restaurant by a chance and decided to take part in the research. Therefore, there wasn't any influence from the side of the researcher to participants, they were chosen by another person randomly from the list of contacts.

In this case, the sampling technique is a simple random which allows to provide an equal chance for participants to be chosen for an in-depth interview. However, it could be that there have been sampling biases, which were depending on manager selection of the customers (most of them were acquaintances and friends to him) and if the manager was near his friends during the interview or not.

In addition, the interview with the manager was arranged via email due to an unexpected pandemic of coronavirus. The questions were sent to the manager and he answered them one by one in the text file.

4.4 Data collection

The responses were collected by interviews in-person during lunchtime in VINO on two separate dates: 25th and 27th of February 2020. People were asked by the waitresses and the manager if they are willing to take part in the interview or not. The manager made a poster on the Finnish language, where he kindly asked English speaking auditory at the age of 24 to 39 to be interviewed.

In addition, the manager reserved a table for the interviewer in a quiet place, away from the lunch area, where people can be focused and answer the questions thoroughly. For those, who agreed to be interviewed, the manager offered an incentive – free lunch in VINO.

Before the interview, participants were informed about their rights in the interview and about the purpose of the research. The rights for participants are demonstrated in Appendix 2 of the thesis. The interviews took 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

During the interviews, probe and follow-up questions were used to obtain data. When the first interview was finished, two difficulties were detected:

- 1) Some number of questions weren't clear for participants;
- 2) Responses for probe questions weren't informative enough due to relatively closed questions.

Therefore, the validity of the first interview might be questioned. From the first interview, questions were modified and simplified thereby they can be clear and informative at the same time.

The response rate for interviews was sufficient because most of the participants were asked to participate in-person and 100 % of them is responded for the interview, including 1 customer that saw the poster by a chance.

The interview for the manager was carried out online. The questions were sent to his email address on the 17th of March and the results came back on the 19th of March. The biases could have taken place in case he wouldn't understand what information he would need to provide; however, the answers were clear and there were no signs of misunderstanding.

4.5 Data analysis

The data analysis process consisted of a few parts in total. In the first part, all interviews were transcribed into text files, and information from notes was added to transcription.

In the second part, all the answers were structured according to different areas of empathy map with the help of guiding questions for categories, described in the Curedale's work.

In the third part, all main categories were subjected to analysis so as to find the challenges of customers (pain) and the result they have achieved after using service (gain).

In the fourth part, the initial idea of the millennial's portfolio was reconsidered to show the relevant portfolio of the customer in Vino (Figure 9).

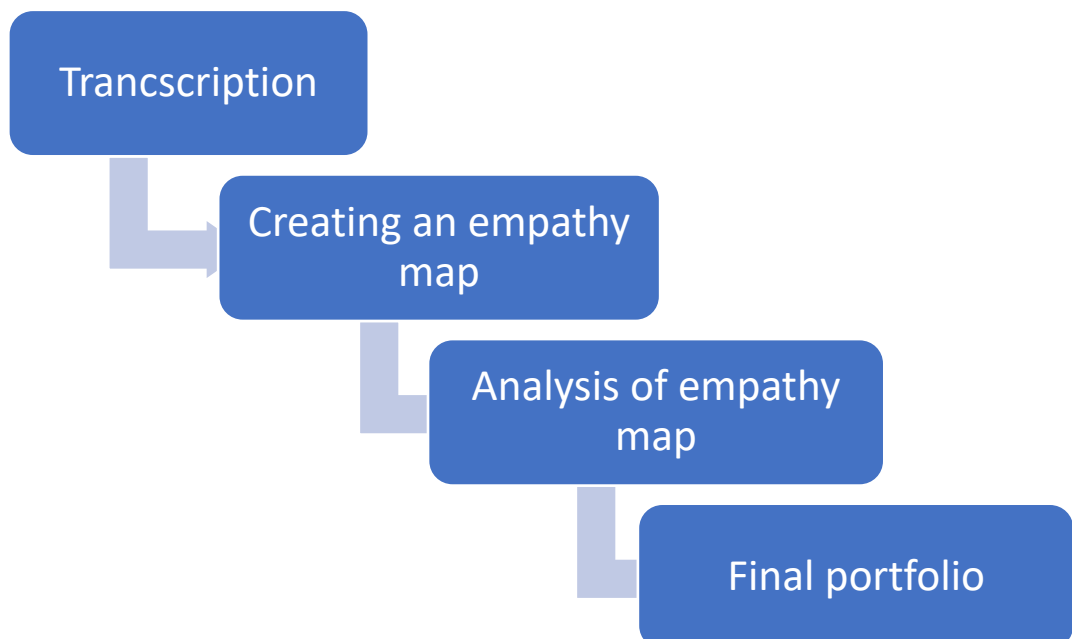


Figure 9. Data analysis process

Finally, it is essential to consider the limitations of research after the analysis is carried out to keep in mind the context of results' implementation.

4.6 Limitations

Nevertheless, the study has limitations and specific context of implementation, the reasons being as follows:

Validity: Validity and trustworthiness of research can be questioned. 5 out of 6 interviewees were well-known to the manager which means there is a chance that they answered some questions positively because they know the owners and manager. Also, one of the respondents was belonging to the age cohort of the study but lacked the necessary requirements (income, location) to follow description of a regular customer. However, the interpretation of results can be trusted if it is assumed that the sample for interviews demonstrated enough heterogeneity for the sample size.

Sampling: the sample size could have been more to provide more validity of data, but, in general, responses tended to follow repetitive patterns. The sample was presented in enough range considering the size of the sample.

Context: It has to be said that the results worked only with the limited customer segment and only in Mikkeli, Finland. The reason for that is the cultural difference and market situation in a concrete place even if results from persona mostly complemented with theory. For example, the mentality of people, personal traits, education can affect their choices of place and preferences in food. In this case, these variables must have been considered also.

Persona: The main problem of persona is that the information is analysed using the interpretation of results rather than valid mathematical analysis. In the theory mentioned above, it is said that validity for a fictional character cannot be reached because we cannot falsify it and assess the probability interval, conduct mathematical analysis, etc.

5 FINDINGS

The chapter suggest the results of the research summarized in areas of empathy map and millennial portfolio that are edited concerning the interview results. The sample of the interview is presented in Appendix 3.

5.1 Categories of the empathy map

According to the chosen method of study, the results of interviews will be interpreted using six areas of empathy map, going step by step as it is recommended in Robert Curedales' guide on the empathy map. The final version is presented in Appendix 4.

See: Overall, people find the interior design attractive. In particular, people responded positively about the following elements of design: composition of colours in dishes and place; salad table had a lot of ingredients that blend well together; a variety of fruits offered that is creating a competitive advantage over other restaurants in Mikkeli; lights in the evening mingle in very well with the design, creating the feeling of warmth and depth; staff and kitchen are well-organized and have been very nice and friendly.

Controversially, only 1 out of 6 interviewees claimed that it would have been greater if she could see photos of today's buffet and food on social media before going to the restaurant. In addition, the place became bigger than before that led to an extension in the number of places in the restaurant that caused 2 out of 6 people feel more insecure.

Think: In total, the majority of participants provided different reasons for choosing this restaurant over others, whereas the reasons being the availability of special food (vegetarian, lactose-free); a great selection of a la carte set menu; nice serving and food pairing of ingredients; the location is convenient and, whenever you decided to go, there is always parking place near; you can take food as much as it is enough for you. Also, the respondents found important to spend time with their friends rather than eat alone and try the food in Vino.

On the other hand, the menu should offer more Italian and Greek cuisine to try, half of the respondents stated.

Feel: The mood of participants was mainly dependent on the service and taste of food in the restaurant. The interviewees described their mood in the following adjectives: good, welcomed, willing to smile more, friendly, satisfied, trusted, not too fancy but still feeling of relation to this place. More introverted people responded that it would be nice to have more space between tables because it would ensure the feeling of safety.

Taste: In terms of taste, the respondents highlighted the importance of quality and freshness, which is present in the restaurant, in their opinion. One person told that it is nice to see the harmony between design and food in the restaurant, as something like a 'Greek twist'. However, one respondent had a bad experience once while eating pasta Carbonara. It was good looking, but the taste wasn't as good as it looked like.

Hear: All of the interviewees answered positively on using social media as a source of information to access the menu of the restaurant. Specifically, they use Facebook and Instagram. Nevertheless, they decided to go to the restaurant because either their friends recommended them, or they are in a good relationship with the manager or owner. A newspaper was a source of information about the opening of Vino.

The information they heard from friends were mostly about the high quality of food, good value for money and convenient location.

Say: The responses do not differ from what respondents were thinking in assumption. The answers were approximately the same, the statements being high quality of food, great location, reasonable price for good food and almost no waiting time in lines.

Do: However, there are a few contradictions between what people said and what they have done. Although, they would like to hear about favourite restaurant dishes and suggestions, they preferred to decide by themselves what's good for them. Mainly, respondents wished not to be bothered by somebody

during their meal although they opened to interaction. Moreover, they seek a more isolated place from other customers.

Pain: As a summary of results, it can be defined what challenges the customer faced in Vino. Firstly, photos of today's food weren't published in social media. Secondly, space between tables wasn't enough to sit in privacy and isolated from others. Thirdly, Italian and Greek cuisine are the most favourite among respondents. Fourthly, there's a little choice of desserts in the lunch buffet.

Gain: From the experience of customers, they have achieved the following values: Overall, there are nice atmosphere to eat with friends during dinner and lunch; The staff was friendly and nice to them, they felt welcomed; They can get good food for a reasonable price there; They felt belong to this place because it's not too fancy but still great; the size of portions is enough to eat properly; There's a little waiting time in line for lunch or dinner.

5.2 Persona of millennial

The primary portfolio of millennial needs to be changed according to the results in section 5.2. On page 22, the template of the persona is demonstrated. According to the results of the research, some changes are added to the initial template of persona.

Characteristics: All the characteristics from the proposed millennial template could be used to describe customers of Vino. Respondents show a very straight forward manner in communication, were honest, and opened to suggestions from the interviewer, however, they followed up the interview to gain the incentive after. There wasn't any sign of environmentalism in their responses. They haven't mentioned any elements of social responsibility or something connected with the protection of the environment.

Goals: Purposes of participants were different from the template, but they had one goal in common, to buy services that are good value for money. In addition, participants found it important to feel welcomed in this place and belong

to Vino to a certain extent. Furthermore, they don't like to wait for long and, therefore, showed their attitude towards waiting as negative.

They prefer to come with friends or colleagues thereby it's essential to have enough space for everyone. They came to satisfy their hunger because they have it in their nature. Finally, they feel uncomfortable in crowded places, hence, they prefer to choose isolated or more intimate places in the restaurant.

Motivations: Overall, the motivation for goals comes from the feeling of achievement and social motive. Nobody showed that they come to the restaurant to show their status or because they were under pressure. Also, there were no signs of personal growth or some additional reward from the restaurant to obtain.

Social motive refers to communication and spending time with friends as they would always take colleagues or friends there. Achievement relates to the concept of attaining initial goals. It could be seen in the 'gain' section in the empathy map that explains what they have achieved along the way.

Challenges: Respondents faced challenges in the service. They felt insecure because they haven't received an isolated place to sit alone or with their friends. In their opinion, the dessert menu could have included more choice and more Italian and Greek cuisine relations. Finally, one respondent highlighted the importance of photos in the social media before going to Vino.

Characteristic quote: The quote could be changed from the responses of interviewees. In the beginning it was suggested to characterize millennials as a person who has a lack of concentration and can't focus on certain things more than for 10 seconds. As findings suggest, the emphasis was put on 'good value for money' and 'feeling of belongingness' in the interview.

As a result, the main problem in the customer segment is that people must be able to afford such services. In this case, millennials or people from 24-39 years would be the best fit.

6 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the results will be discussed in more detail, concerning limitations, application of the results, and contribution of the research to restaurant Vino. Hypothesis will be subjected to testing and contradictions will be found.

6.1 Testing of Hypothesis

The initial hypothesis was formulated as follows: “People in between 24-39 years old are reluctant to consider going to the restaurant because they find it expensive, not satisfying their needs and old-fashioned”.

Firstly, the results of the research suggest that millennials don’t care about the price of lunch in the restaurant because it’s the average price in town, which is around 10 euro. Controversially, they find it good value for money or reasonable price for quantity and quality of food offered.

Secondly, in the “gain” section of the empathy map, it can be seen that most of the customer’s goals were achieved throughout the process except they haven’t found any photos of today’s lunch in social media; there wasn’t much of a choice in dessert on lunch; Italian and Greek dishes could be more present in menu and there was no isolated place from the crowd.

Thirdly, few respondents highlighted a comforting and soothing interior design with its recognizable style among other restaurants. In addition, there wasn’t any contradictive answers to design, in general, people liked the decorations and the design of the place.

However, if people are willing to come what ways of attractions and development could be suggested to attract more customers on a lunch or a la carte?

6.2 Suggestions and recommendations

The main idea of the persona and the empathy map theory is to create a fictional character that could help owners in designing services for their customers; to show empathy for their customers. In Appendix 5 the final version of

the customer's persona is shown based on the theoretical framework and interviews of customers.

This template could be used for further service development process to better understand millennials' customers that visit the restaurant. Plus, the recommendations could be concluded from SWOT and TWOS analysis. Persona challenges and SWOT matrix require to develop services in the following ways:

- Keep a good reputation of a restaurant with reasonable price on dishes and high quality by ensuring the competences of the staff and loyalty of customers;
- Loyalty of customers should be supported by membership or discount cards;
- Waiting staff should be always friendly as it is today;
- Reorganize location of tables in the dining hall so that people can sit in more intimate and faraway places from the crowd;
- On the lunch menu offer a more wide range of desserts on the choice of the guests;
- Add more dishes connected to Italian and Greek cuisine, maybe not original, but that have the elements of these cuisines for both lunch and a la carte;
- Post on the Instagram account the photos of today's offerings on lunch, photos of the food and more information about gluten-free, lactose-free and vegetarian meals for today, therefore, enhancing the engagement of a customer via social media;
- Implementing TWOS strategies (SO and ST) to develop further in the harsh market competition.

7 CONCLUSION

This chapter will summarize the most important findings of the research, acknowledge the limitations and weaknesses of the research, what contribution does study makes, and suggestions for the future development of the topic.

7.1 Summary

The purpose of the study was closely connected to the unpleasant experiences of customers and how they can be avoided in the future. Taking into account the current restaurant's market situation and the persona of millennial, external factors demonstrates that the expansion of Serviini cannot be accomplished in the near future because of the significant risk of financial loss. Instead, it is better to focus on the internal factors such as customer flow and delivery of services to increase revenue.

Hopefully, the revealed challenges when dealing with them could be used to accomplish the goal of the restaurant - to get customers to spend 8,5-10 euro and keep customer flow from 140 up to 240 customers or even more if possible.

Secondly, millennials as a target auditory provide more possible revenue because the market mostly consists of people in this age cohort. The majority part of the customers at lunch are belonging to this category, including office workers nearby. The core characteristics that were presented in the theoretical background complemented the study except people didn't mention the social responsibility of a business as an important part of the restaurant. Besides, it was observed that old people come into the restaurant as often as millennials.

Thirdly, the proposed persona could be easily adjusted to a changing situation and, therefore, can be easily used after the thesis is finished. The effectiveness of the method is that it is not time-consuming and can reflect data in a simple and clear structure.

Fourthly, the empathy map as a visual tool proved its advantages. It is not necessary to have an extensive background in marketing and customer relationship management to use this instrument for the restaurant.

7.2 Suggestions for a future research

For future research it would be reasonable to take into consideration older people and develop a persona for them because they contribute to restaurant income in approximately the same way as millennials. Moreover, the company could carry out research before launching a new loyalty customer system for older people and others as well.

Following up the summary, more variables can be explored further. For example, how cultural differences of people in Finland affect their choices and preferences in lunch and a la carte restaurant. Also, it is important to know more about education, personal traits that affect their decision-making process in Finland.

Another option is to develop the persona and the empathy map method. Perhaps it would be more valuable to connect this theory with mathematical analysis and find ways of improving the trustworthiness of this method.

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Interview of manager

What is current market situation? What are your current competitors? What about their location?

Current market situation on lunch market is very hard. Mikkeli has about 15-20 lunch restaurants, about 5 student restaurants that offer cheaper meal options. Potential lunch market is about 30 000 people but about 4000-5000 people use lunch restaurants daily. Restaurants have very tight competition and all restaurants search and think some kind of advantage in competition.

In central Mikkeli we have restaurant Vino which is lunch and à la carte restaurant. Usually lunch day is about 140-240 customers. Main goal per day is 220 customers.

Our current competitors are Restaurant Amica, Bistro Holvi, Restaurant Pruuvi, Restaurant Vaiha and Restaurant Tempo. All their restaurants are located about two blocks from central marketplace in heart of the city.

What holding you back from expanding? What difficulties do you face? What opportunities do you see? (SWOT analysis)

In Mikkeli our expanding is unlikely because this city has more than enough restaurants at the moment. Probably we could buy another competitors restaurant but starting a new one is unlikely.

We have thought about expanding to other cities but the financial risks at the moment are too big. We have to study the current market situation of another city first.

We see that our restaurants have good reputation and loyal customers. Good reputation brings new customers in easily. Of course, new products and for example different kind of menus could bring more people to restaurant.

How would you describe your regular customer? How old is he/she? What does he/she think about your services? What are his/her expectations? What they feel like? How much money they are willing to spend on your services? Are they known to you?

In central our regular lunch customers are typically about 32 to 45 office workers.

He/She expects good quality food for a reasonable price easily. Usually they are quite busy because the lunch time is approximately 30 minutes.

Usually lunch customer spends 8,50-10,50 € per day. Our goal is to get the customer to spend that amount every day and get volume.

What benefits or loyalty programs for regular customers do you have?

We have some business partners who get small discount of our products. At the moment we don't have any customer card, membership etc.

What makes you stand out from competitors? What is unique in your services?

A couple of things:

We have good reputation and our quality of food and customer service is always good. We can't let the customer feel like he/she didn't get more than he/she paid for.

Another reason is that we all three owners are local and have worked in many different kinds of restaurant in past. We have gathered some contacts on the way also.

The rights of participants

- 1) You have the right not to answer questions that you think are inappropriate in your opinion;
- 2) If you are feeling uncomfortable you have the right to stop the interview at any point you are willing to;
- 3) Your participation in the interview is voluntary;
- 4) During the interview, all the answers will be recorded, and notes are taken;
- 5) All information from recordings and notes will be used only in the sake of the research;
- 6) After research, the personal data of participant will be erased soon after the thesis process will be finished;

The sample of customer interview
30 years old, designer

Q1: When you first came into restaurant what caught your attention here? In the very first time?

Answer: The colors and everything outside are fresh. They have like Greek twist, you know. Not normal Finnish food. They have a Greek twist in their text. And I thought okay that's interesting let's go inside. And then I have to say, the girl, she is smiling and happy, and you know, I felt welcome like in the very first time. Immediately. It was nice. And it was a few years ago and since that time I've been eating here a lot.

Q2: ...So you continue your habit to eat here because of design and service? Colors? And...

Answer: Yeah, it looks clean. It is comfortable and it is nice to be here. Atmosphere is always good.

Q3: What about the food? What about the dishes? What do you prefer to eat here?

Answer: When you come to Vino, you always know that you can taste the food from this place. The taste, the food, you know. In Mikkeli there's a lot of lunch restaurants and always in every place there's a buffet. I like this place because I can recognize it is the Vino food. Yeah, the taste comes from this place. And I'm a quiet big eater, you know 😊. Buffet it's good for me and the price and quality it's perfect, very good. It's like around 10 euros. This price has been always the same. I like that there's always a pizza. The pizza is not the main thing for me, but it nice extra dish. You can take the main dish, which is in Vino the Greek style and then you can take pizza and always be full.

Q4: How did you know about the restaurant Vino? You saw it somewhere or you saw post in social media?

Answer: I'm local and I know the Henrik, who is the manager. We have been friends for 15-20 years now, so for the first time I heard about restaurant from Henrik. I can't remember any social media. Then the restaurant was open and staff.

Social media is the main source of information where I check the menu.

Q5: What about menu in restaurant? As I heard there's a daily menu for lunch...

Answer: Yeah, they make weekly menu. On Tuesday or Friday. Also, a la carte menu is open. But I can say I'm mainly the lunch customer. I've had a la carte like few times, but mainly it's lunch.

Q6: Do you like food here? I mean taste. You were saying that they have original taste. Is it original because you have some memories associated with that?

Answer: For these days, it's memories because a lot of my friends are eating here. We are coming together. It's always fun to come because the boss and waitresses are my friends...

Q7: You can say something about the taste. Why do you like it so much?

Answer: I like it because it's tasty – spices and staff are good. I'm thinking first there's a salad often there's a fresh pineapple – I like it. In other places there's no such thing. Watermelon... The salad table is more Greek or it's different. In other places there's only green salad and cucumber, tomatoes etc. Here it is more from Greek cuisine. From Mediterranean food.

Q8: Do you have any suggestions to make Vino a better restaurant to visit?

Answer: Before they were playing jazz music here. But it's not the thing. I would like to get more dessert because there's only cookies. If they would

have something more, it would be nice. But the price maybe higher than. It should be more than just cookies.

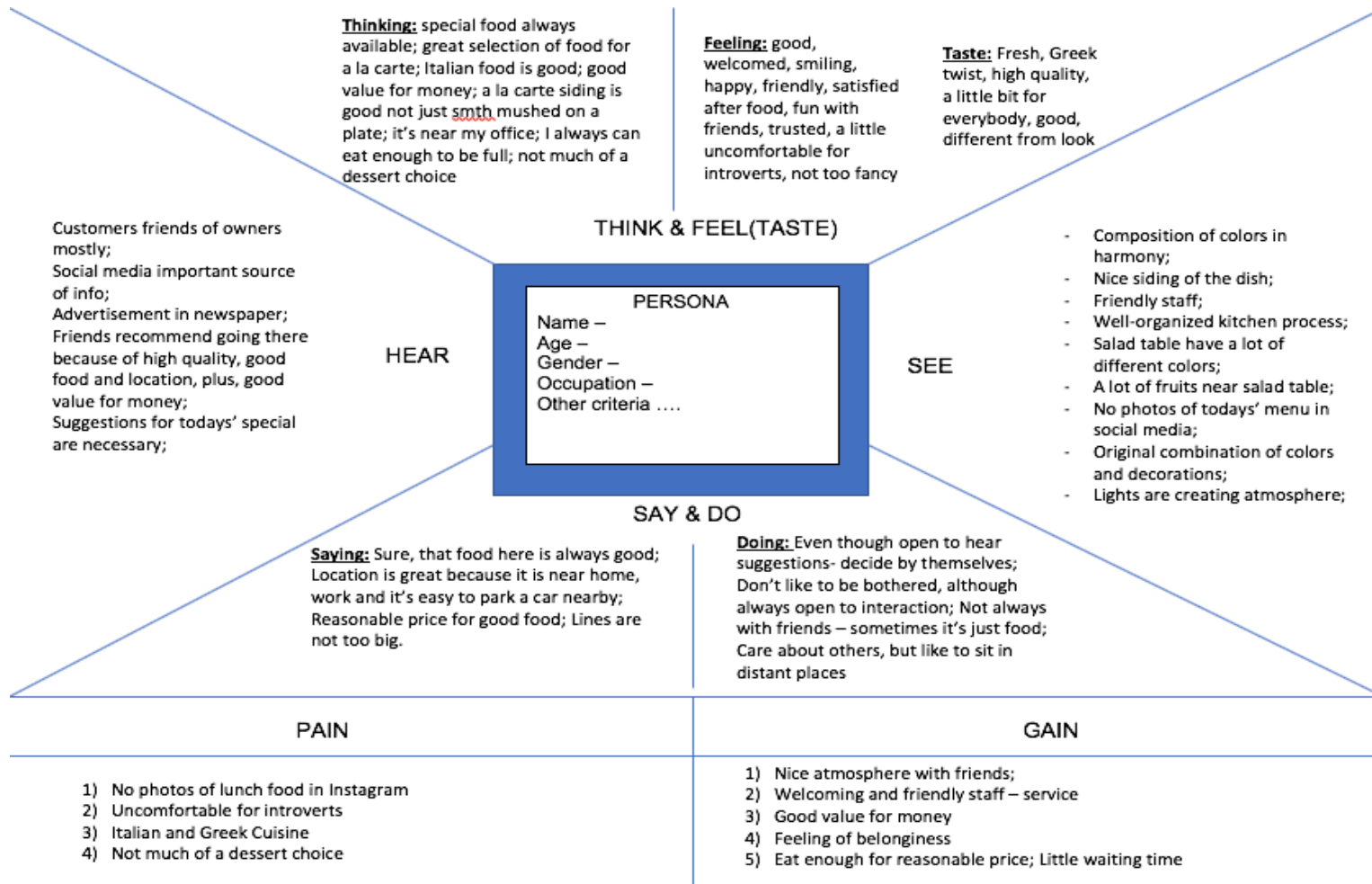
Q9: Can you describe the ideal place to have lunch? Or to eat somewhere? Maybe you have memories of that place?

Answer: The ideal place for me is when I can trust this place. When I go to the place, I know the food is always good. It doesn't matter, which food is it. And other thing, as I said I'm big eater so that I need to make sure that meal is big enough. In some places, you know, it's just a tiny food for the same price. For me, the price for the meal and quality of the meal are matters. I like the dessert if there's dessert. It's nice. Sometimes, I'm having lunch with my friends few times in a week, so we can always track the menus. The dessert is the main thing so that we can choose specific restaurant. The dessert is important. But is also like atmosphere and staff, you know. The girls really nice. They chill, you know 😊 There's no line, I don't like waiting too much so... The work of kitchen is good – the food keeps coming. It is the place where foods keep coming so there's no waiting. That's nice. Those kinds of things are important for me. And I often eat with my friend and other customers are not big deal for me.

Q10: When you order a food in the restaurant or buffet. Would you like to get some suggestions from waitresses, or you usually do it by yourself?

Answer: I make the decision for myself, but I like it when the waitress is talking. To hear suggestion, it's nice but it's not necessary, you know. It's all good. It depends. When I'm ordering food it's not so important, but for example wine is more important. I trust the waitress what she or he says. If this good wine in their opinion I can take it. But food I will take according to my taste.

Final version of the empathy map



The persona of millennial in restaurant VINO

PHOTO OF PERSONA



PERSONA NAME: Antti

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Age: 31

Occupation: Middle class

Location: Finland, Mikkeli

Income: not less than 3400 euros

Gender: Male/Female

Education: Bachelor's degree

CHARACTERISTICS:

Technologically savvy, Open-minded, Reasonable, Honest, Individualistic

GOALS:

To buy services that are good value for money
 To feel that they belong to this place
 To shorten waiting time in line
 To feel welcomed
 To have a place to come along with friends
 To satisfy their hunger
 To sit in rather intimate or isolated places from others

Motivations:

Incentives- **Achievement**
 Fear Power
 Growth **Social**

FRUSTRATIONS (CHALLENGES):

- 1) Bad value for money; 2) No isolated place for one person or company; 3) Narrow choice in dessert menu; 4) Italian and Greek cuisine could be more present; 5) No photos of today's menu in social media

Characteristic quote: «I think it is good value for money, for lunch time it is really good, but you can come in the evening, this is high class but not that fine dining, when I came here, I thought that it is comfortable to be here.»