

# The meaning of touch and movement senses in the experience of a fair attendee

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<p>The aim of this thesis was to discover what's the meaning of touch and movement senses in the experience of a fair attendee. The thesis was commissioned by the Finnish Fair Foundation and it was part of a larger study about multi-sensory experience which included the senses of sight, hearing and taste.</p> <p>The research methods were planned with the commissioning company and at their request the focus was on the customer's point of view which limited the study to visitors at Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020. The main research question of the thesis was: What's the role of touch and movement senses in the formation of the travel fair visitors experience? The sub-questions were divided into two part: What kind of experience the travel fair was for the visitor and how were the touch and movement senses taken into consideration at the travel fair from a customer's point of view?</p> <p>The theoretical part first presents the background for experiences and how to create them. From there it continues on to introduce the senses of touch and movement, and how those are related to events.</p> <p>The thesis was carried out using the methods of qualitative research which were observation and a semi-structured interview. The material was collected at the travel fair on the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> of January in 2020, by observing the touch and movement aspects of the travel fair, which included photographing and taking notes, and interviewing the travel fair visitors. The thesis was written between February and November 2020.</p> <p>It can be concluded from the research results that both touch and movement senses play a role in the formation of a positive fair visitor experience. Based on the interviews, the stands with activities, where one was able to use their sense of touch, were memorable for the visitors. Futhermore, the interviewees who thought that moving around the venue was easy, found the overall experience to be good as well.</p> <p>The sense of touch can produce detailed, lasting memories and being able to move easily in a venue is important to the success of a fair. However, more creative ways to appeal to these two senses are required and these senses alone are not enough to create a truly memorable travel fair experience, other senses, sight, hearing and taste are required as well.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Fair, touch sense, movement sense, experience, travel	

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# 1 Introduction

This is a research-based thesis which purpose is to discover what's the meaning of touch and movement senses in the experience of a fair attendee. The thesis was commissioned by the Finnish Fair Foundation. The company chose four students to do the research from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and the topics were divided among them into the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and movement. Each student did their thesis independently and in this work the research focused on the touch and movement senses. The reason why more students were included in the study was that the commissioning company would later be able to do a new study about the multisensory experience at fairs and use the materials from this study for it. Also for this reason, the data collection methods were planned with the commissioning company.

At the request of the company, the aim was to focus on the customer's point of view in particular, so the study was limited to visitors to Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020. The main research question of the study was: What's the role of touch and movement senses in the formation of the travel fair visitors experience? The sub-questions of the study were divided into two parts: What kind of experience the travel fair was for the visitor and how were the touch and movement senses taken into consideration at the travel fair from a customer's point of view?

The research was conducted using qualitative methods to get the answers to the main research question and sub-questions. The material was collected at Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020 on January during the opening and closing days which were the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>, by observing the touch and movement aspects of the fair, which included taking notes and photos, and interviewing the travel fair visitors. Things to consider included the props, furniture, fabrics, décor and other physical objects at the event. At the same time the focus was on queues, movement speed and easiness. The interview method was a semi-structured interview and the target group was customers visiting the travel fair. The interviews were conducted near the main exit of the Messukeskus to be able reach the leaving visitors.

The thesis begins with an introduction to the key concepts of the research topic, which are creating experiences, the sense of touch and moving efficiently in a venue. The empirical part of the thesis consists of the implementation of the research, description of the research methods and how the data collection methods used in the research, observation and a semi-structured interview, were carried out at the travel fair. The results and

discussion describe what kind of observations were made at the travel fair and tell about the visitors' experiences at the fair.

I became interested in the topic because experience economy is fascinating itself but additionally, the future of fairs and specifically travel fairs is interesting. At a time when you can find more or less all information you need online what can fairs offer? I have visited the travel fair more than once as a consumer and already knowing the event perhaps made the study more appealing. The research methods were new to me and it felt like I could learn a lot doing my thesis about this topic.

## **2 Creating experiences at a fair environment**

Experiences have been sometimes mixed up with services but they are their own separate economic offering, totally different from services, goods and commodities. This means that, an experience is not some vague offering but as real as any merchandise. Of course, what makes experiences different from other offerings is that they are very personal. Anyone can have an experience if they have been engaged on an emotional level but no two persons can have the same exact experience because of one's own state of mind. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

An experience can involve a product, such as a dinner or a movie but it's always more than just the product. It includes the place, the architecture, other elements like the lighting and the comfort of the seats and so on. Likewise, it can also be that the product is not the actual experience, for example a watch or a bag, but the marketing, the brand, the usage and what it represents that is the experience. The product is simply telling a story and that is the offering the consumer is buying. (Sundbo & Darmer 2008, 1; Jensen 1999.)

Why then experiences are important to take into consideration? One aspect is that there has been a rise in individualism as countries have become more economically developed. People are more self-reliant which makes them more focused on themselves and their own inner influences. Therefore, just fixing issues and fulfilling consumers' needs is not enough anymore. "Toys, luxury, sensation, adventure, excitement, peace of mind, ethics and pleasure – these are the features of a whole new cultural landscape which the products must include in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and which, notably, the service providers have to reconsider." (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.) The wants and needs of consumers have changed and now decisions are made based on feelings as well. Moreover, experiences are the new added value. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

### **2.1 The four realms of an experience**

According to Pine and Gilmore's Four Realms of Experience (figure 1), experiences can be analysed through four sub-categories which are based on customer participation and connection. Participation can be passive or active depending on what kind of experience it is, for instance, an opera-goer who is there to listen to the singing is a passive participant but a skydiver who jumps from the plane is an active participant. Connection instead can be absorptive or immersive, watching television is on the absorption side but watching a movie from a large screen with a surround sound and an audience is more on the immersive side.

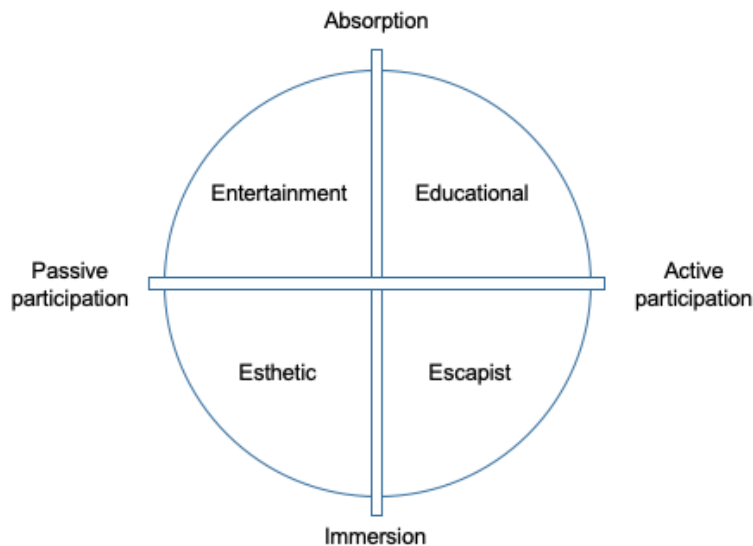


Figure 1. The Four Realms of an Experience (Adapted from Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

The experiences can then be sorted into one of the four sub-categories or realms according to where they fell in customer participation and connection. The realms are entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic. In entertainment dimension persons' connection with the event is more one of absorption and they participate more passively than actively. This type of event can be attending a concert or watching television. Educational dimension is also on the absorption side but participants are more active than passive, an example of this can be attending a language class or a guitar lesson. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

However, escapist realm includes immersive experiences that involve active participation. A person can still learn and be amused but they are more immersed in the experience than before. This experience is achievable by playing in a band or scuba diving, for instance. Lastly, esthetic experience can be achieved if a person is passively participating in the event but they have still more immersive than absorptive connection. Visiting a museum or watching the view of Niagara Falls the can be categorized into this. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

## 2.2 Designing a memorable experience

Pine and Gilmore have also identified five fundamental principles for experience design. First one is theme or theme the experience. A theme that will affect customers is fascinating and concise, so something more than just a marketing tag line and more importantly it shouldn't even need to be expressed in writing. To truly attract the customer, the theme has to push all the staged events and design elements toward a unified story

line. In other words, the theme unifies the whole experience and makes it memorable. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

Harmonize impressions with positive cues is the second one. While the theme is the base, the experience needs to be concluded with lasting impressions since those fulfil the theme. Service providers have to introduce cues that confirm the nature of the experience to the customer to make the desired impressions. As a result, there shouldn't be any inconsistent cues and all of them should reinforce the theme. "It's the cues that make the impressions that create the experience in the customer's mind." (Pine & Gilmore 1998.) An experience can be bad just because some detail like the décor has been uncoordinated or overlooked. Besides, a customer can feel confused if there's any inconsistent or unplanned aural and visual cues. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

Eliminate negative cues refers to just that, positive cues are not enough but service providers must also eliminate all features that contradict, reduce or divert from the theme. So there shouldn't be any meaningless messages but instead instructions that customers require and even then the form of the message needs to be appropriate. One of the easiest ways to turn a service into an experience is by giving awful service. Overserving can also ruin an experience specially if a customer is interrupted, for example, a hairdresser who needs to answer the phone while cutting someone's hair. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

Then there is mix in memorabilia which means items that will be bought mainly because of the memories they convey, a t-shirt from a rock concert for instance. Customers buy these as a physical reminder of the event and experience. This type of item usually sells at a higher price compared to a one that doesn't represent an experience since the price of the item is not too much when compared to the value of remembering the experience. If service providers offer themed experiences with positive cues and without negative cues, customers would actually pay for memorabilia. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

Fifth, engage all five senses means that the sensory stimulants in an experience should amplify and support its theme. The experience becomes more memorable and effective, the more senses there are involved. However, some cues emphasize an experience with a single sense, the effect of impressive simplicity. It's good to keep in mind that not all sensations are good and some combinations also just don't work. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)



## 2.3 A theoretical model for producing experiences

Tarssanen and Kylänen presented the Experience Pyramid (figure 2) that can be used for analysing the experience aspect of various products and entertainment. The model represents the perfect product which means that all the aspects of experience can be found in it. Moreover, it's a tool that helps one to find different attributes and deficiencies in the product which can then be used for developing it in the future. The basic technical features and profitableness are not included in the model which however, doesn't mean that those are not important as well. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

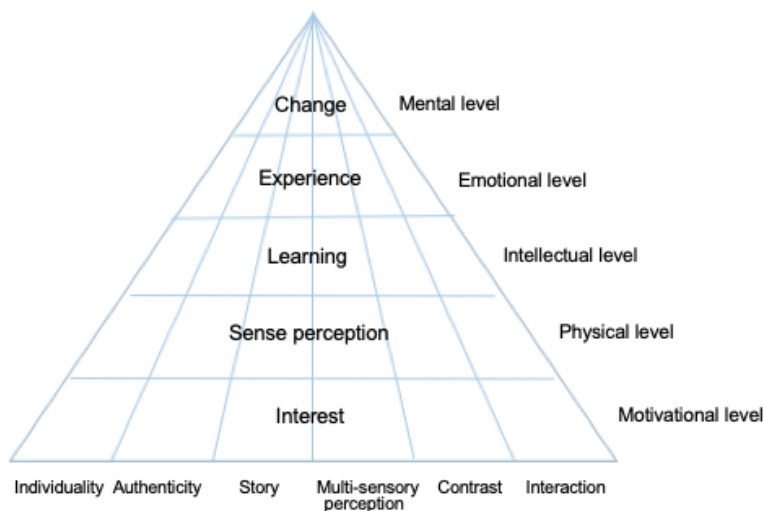


Figure 2. Experience Pyramid (Adapted from Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Experience is examined from two perspectives in the model. The first one being the level of specific product elements and the other one the customer's own experience. The factors influencing a customer's experience are described at the bottom of the pyramid. When these factors are included in the product, the customer is more likely to have a strong emotional experience. To offer something truly memorable, the product needs to affect individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast and interaction which is the reason these elements should be taken into consideration at all stages of the product. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

### 2.3.1 Elements of the experience

Individuality is the first important factor to take into account when planning a product. This means that there shouldn't be a product that is either exactly or even roughly the same. The other way to see individuality is through customer's point of view. When the product feels individual the customer feels special. Customized products respect their preferences and needs. Of course, sometimes a customer can be part of a group but even then they

should feel special since they often have their own wants and needs. The customers have to be given their own portion of activities and information to be able to offer individual experience to all of them, meaning all the customers need to be lead into their own experience. This personalization often however, is expensive even if it's rewarding. Although, this can be helped with pricing the product right, knowing the customers and segmenting the markets to create groups who value similar products. The challenge is to make a product that is easy to personalize but then also duplicate. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Authenticity in this context means the credibility of the product. It can simply mean real or something being what it is claimed to be. Furthermore, it can be recognized as location based customs and motives of the people in that area. An event that from both customers and locals point of view fits into a place is authentic, in other words, credible in the context of history and surroundings. A culture's authenticity isn't related to time even if cultures keep constantly absorbing influences. A local cooked meal is not necessarily any less authentic when it's cooked now to some tourists compared to a family cooking it to themselves a hundred of years ago. If the product resembles customer's perception of the authentic culture enough it is real. In conclusion, the customer defines the product's authenticity and commercial success can confirm that. However, the product should be a natural part of the local identity and based on the culture. It shouldn't offend or take advantage of ethnic communities in anyway. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Story of a product provides the content and connects the experience with reality. Moreover, the story ties together all the elements of experience and gives importance and meaning to it which makes it also the reason for customer to purchase it. The story which the product is based on must be credible and designed so that the details are not in conflict with each other. One way to do this is by making the stories to conclude into the same direction which ensures that there are no conflicts between unlike dimensions of the product. The different factors should be tied together with a theme which transforms the experience gripping and compact. The ideal product has one well scripted theme that helps the group of individuals get into the experiential setting. An attractive story makes customers think about the sensations and situations they are experiencing within the product, and it also promotes the products authenticity. Customer gets the meaning and explanation for their participation from the story. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Multi-sensory perception means that customer should be able to experience the product with all five senses. So it should be visually gripping, audible pleasing, alluring to both taste and smell senses and last but not least, something tangible you can feel. All these

senses should be naturally in balance and intensify the wanted theme and impression. Also the richer the sensory content in the product is, the more likely it will leave a permanent memory. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Contrast means difference from customer's point of view. The product should be different from their everyday activities, something new and extraordinary. The experience of something new makes it possible for a person to see themselves from another perspective. Without the customary habits and limitations of daily life, they can feel free to experience in a different way. The culture and nationality of customer needs to be taken into consideration when generating contrast, since what is unusual for one may be basic to another. Therefore, getting to know various lifestyles and traditions is useful for the service provider. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Interaction refers to the relation between the customer and the possible group that they are in but also to the well working communication with the product and its creators. The feeling of belonging to a collective and that something is experienced together are included in the interaction. Of course, a customer can have a meaningful experience when alone but knowing that there are others experiencing the same product can make the experience different. The customer can get the feeling that the thing they are doing is generally accepted and valued. This gives a boost to their social status by linking the customer more closely with a particular group. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

### **2.3.2 Levels of the experience**

The experience evolves from mere interest to an emotionally meaningful experience that can even lead to mental change. In an ideal product all six experiential elements can be found on every level of the experience. At the bottom of the pyramid is the motivational level which simply refers to kindling the customers interest. Expectations for the product are created at this level, such as, the eagerness to experience it. Marketing can be used to let the customer know about the product and this should be done as personally as possible as well as genuinely. For instance, pictures need to be authentic and show what the product really is like. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

On the next level that is physical level, the customer feels their surroundings through their senses which means that the product is tried and acknowledged. The physical senses tell them what they are doing, what is occurring and where they are. The product therefore should be safe and enjoyable, for example, they are not in any danger. Extreme activities are the exception from this since the risk of injury is a part of the experience. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

Third level is the intellectual level which means that the customer now processes the sensory stimuli provided in the previous level. They think, learn and decide if they are enjoying the product or not. It doesn't matter if they unconsciously or consciously learn something new or obtain new information, but it's important they do. This is the last level the service provider can influence because of the subjective nature of experience. Yet, if all the components have been taken into consideration on all the previous levels it is possible for the customer to achieve the emotional level and meaningful experience. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

So fourth is the emotional level, where the customer goes through the experience. Emotional responses are hard to control and anticipate. Although, if both the rational and physical levels operate well and all the elements have been taken into account, the customer should experience a positive emotional reaction like excitement or happiness. It can be any meaningful positive feeling that the customer acknowledges as significant. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

The highest and last level is the mental level. A meaningful experience has left the customer with a powerful positive emotional reaction which may lead to personal change. This can be a change in their state of mind, lifestyle or physical being. The customer feels that they have changed as a person and accepted something new as a part of their own personality or world view, for instance, a new hobby or a way of thinking. Someone who has always valued material things may find new values from a hiking trip. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007.)

### 3 The sense of touch

Many people would probably think that sight is their most important sense but that's only because the sense of touch is so complex it goes unnoticed. However, without it walking or talking would be difficult since the brain would lack the ability to regulate movements based on the sensations that the previous movement produces. Even writing would be difficult since one can't grip the pen too tightly or press it against the paper too hard. It is also needed to detect pain and temperature which for persons own safety are very important. The sense of touch can even create detailed, lasting memories for touched objects, even when a person isn't trying to memorize them. (Hutmacher & Kuhbandner 2018; Selin 2004.)

How the touch sense exactly functions then? There are different sensory cells in the skin. Of these, Merkel's disks are particularly responsive to pushing, Meissner's corpuscles to patting, Ruffini corpuscles to skin stretch, and Pacinian corpuscles to rapid vibration. Yet, they are all activated by contact because of the complexity of the touch sense and the sensitivity of the different sensory cells. From the sensory cells, nerve impulses travel through the spinal cord to the sensory centre of the central part of the brain, the thalamus. From there, the journey continues into the postcentral gyrus of the parietal lobe. The most sensitive areas of the skin, such as the fingers and lips, have the largest representational areas in the parietal lobe. However, the areas may expand or shrink depending on how many signals enter that area. (Selin 2004.)

It is also very different to touch something compared to being touched. When touching someone else's hand, one mainly feels their skin, if it's soft or harsh but they in turn feel the sensations caused by the touch. This is one difference between active touching and passive touching. Active touch is purposeful and therefore, focuses on the properties of the object and the way of touching depends on what one wants to know about the object. Active touching is used for testing things like if the coffee mug is still warm. In contrast, one is subjected to passive touching for example in a full bus. (Selin 2004.)

Often objects are not only felt to recognize them but because one wants to use them. Futhermore, objects can also be used to touch. A distal touch means touching an object through some tangible medium. It is largely based on a sparse, easily accessible features, like material compositions, textures and thermal properties. (Fulkerson 2015.)

### **3.1 Haptic perception**

Many people check their pockets when leaving home to see if they have their phone with them. This touch sensory recognition of three-dimensional objects is called haptic perception. It includes identifying patterns on the skin surface such as texture and edges, and perception of hand positions. People can move their fingers on the surface of the object or hold it in their hands but altogether, body movement and haptic perception are closely linked together. In summary, haptic perception combines different aspects of active touch like movements and sensations of the object as well as the thoughts and feelings about the object. Touching the phone creates a certain kind of sensation but it also makes one recognize that it is a phone and a specific one which leads one feeling that its presence is a good thing. (Selin 2004; Klatzky, Lederman & Metzger 1985.)

Additionally, the haptic perception is based on the forces experienced during touch and because of this it's possible to create virtual, illusory haptic shapes with different perceived qualities which are then used in haptic technology. Haptic technology means any technology that can create an experience through touch sense by applying vibrations, forces or motions to the user. This can be used for instance, to control virtual objects and improve devices remote control. Game controllers and steering wheels are common examples of simple haptic devices. (Robles-De-La-Torre.)

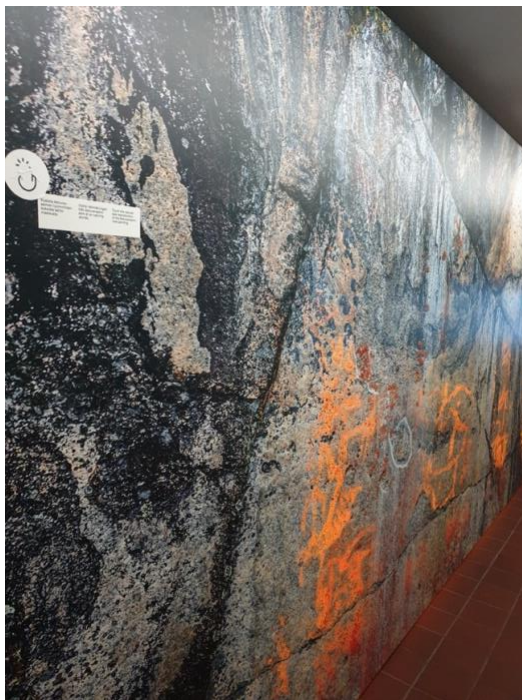
However, this technology could be used for much more complex settings such as surgical simulators. Usually, when a person moves their finger over a sharp edge, both lateral and vertical forces are applied to the skin but the brain can be tricked into thinking it's touching something pointy just by applying lateral forces. This discovery could in the future enable a person to feel pain when touching this imaginary sharp object, though more research needs to be done before that. (Robles-De-La-Torre; Graham-Rowe 2006.)

### **3.2 Engaging the touch sense at a fair**

Touch sense is undeniably tied to our memories so when organizing an event such as a fair, the different aspects of touch offer various ways to create a memorable experience. One way to approach touch is through conventional means, like the furniture and eating utensils. How are the textures, what's the purpose of the furniture and what's the literal feel of the event? Textures affect how the customer remembers an event, it could be something as small as what kind of paper was used in a brochure since different types of paper are associated with different traditions and social significances. Therefore, touching the paper can trigger associated memories. Furniture's purpose on the other hand, can be that customers need a place where they can relax a bit or instead stay alert to learn

something new. Either can be achieved with the right textured and apportioned chair. Also is there a need for carpeted flooring to soften the sounds of walking and provide comfort for feet? So it's important to think about the tactile aspects of the props, furniture, fabrics, décor and other physical objects at the event. (The Trade Group 2019.)

Likewise, an event should get customers or attendees involved hands-on. Product displays that encourage touch and trying out the products are encouraged. The more customers can handle a product, the better they understand it's purpose and how it works. Also installations that appeal to the touch sense like touch-sensitive, interactive screens can be applied instead of just visual ones. This way customers could use haptic technology to physically interact with the event. This makes customers more engaged both mentally and physically which naturally adds interest. Besides, there are limitless ways to connect with customers through touch but it requires interaction in some form. Polls allow an event organizer to ask opinions straight from customers and get live feedback. Apps on the other hand, are useful for fast communication between a customer and an organizer when it comes to agendas, speaker bios, news and really anything that a customer should know. Virtual reality can be used when there are also items provided to touch that correspond with what the viewer is seeing in the headset. Smart phones can be used for most of these examples, which makes the planning easier. (Encore Event Technologies 2018.)



Picture 1. Rock painting (Karvonen 2020.)

Activities can however, be something completely different as well. In the National Museum of Finland, there is a painting (picture 1) that actually is a screen and when you touch it, it lights up. Visitors are encouraged to interact with it with a small text saying: “touch the natural size reproduction of the Astuvansalmi rock painting”. There is also a room with pictures and artefacts of various animals that have had different meanings in Finnish mythology. Next to the pictures is a button which when pressed one can hear the sound the specific animal makes and it plays in the whole room.



Picture 2. Haptic technology (Karvonen 2020.)

Lastly, a visitor can put their hand into a scanner (picture 2) which then shows their own hand in the screen above. There are five real rings that the visitor can see through a glass and because obvious reasons nobody can try them actually on but instead, they can try any of them virtually and see what the rings would look like if they wore them. Furthermore, they can also move their hand and the hand moves the same way in the screen so, you can look at the ring from many different perspectives.



## **4 Moving efficiently in a venue**

For big events such as fairs it's crucial to keep customers safe, organized and moving efficiently. This of course includes various elements like the layout and design of the venue, the signage strategy and the way crowd control is managed on a broader scale. There are many benefits when it is handled the right way, including happier customers. People for instance, usually don't like to queue for too long or preferably at all. But the benefits aren't just for the customers. A well-organized event eases stress of the staff which granted, elevates morale. Happier customers also use more money so it improves sales too and by tracking customers, marketing can be optimized by placing displays in the areas that get more traffic. The best example of great customer flow management is of course Disney. Their parks have tens of millions of visitors and still they are very subtle with crowd control. They have the Fastpass system which allows these pass holders to get on a ride queue that goes faster, posted wait times and in-line entertainment. All of these things add to the experience as a whole and make it just that much better. (Lavi Industries 2020.)

### **4.1 Customer movement tracking**

There are many different measures that can be taken to track the movements of visitors or customers. Depending on the area and size of the event of course, an event organizer can utilise smartphone signals which can be built into a heat map showing where people are walking the most or they can use an app that can lead visitors to the items they are looking for but at the same time while they have access to location information, the organizer can see what they are looking for and where they are going. In addition, there are companies that can detect phone's Wi-Fi signals and use it to track a visitor's movements through the area, they even offer real-time analytics which can be used to determine if some display is working or not. (Lutz & McConnell 2013; The Atlantic.)

Another option is to use Bluetooth beacons which allow smartphones and other devices to execute actions when they are nearby a beacon. There needs to be a compatible app or operating system to make it work. Then it can be used to track visitors, discover the device's location or trigger a location based activity like a push notification with a promotion. The location itself can be very specific even a piece of furniture. This technology enables that an app can give directions to displays in the event venue, suggest complementary items and provide reviews. Although, it's good to remember that there is a fine line between being annoying and useful. Pushing too many promotions for example, will certainly be on the annoying side and what happens then is that the visitor will turn off the notifications or delete the whole app. (The Atlantic.)

At least year 2015 the travel fair did have an app, where visitors could find, for example, a fair guide and a map. From the fair guide, the visitors were able to pick up the program numbers and exhibitors of interest which could also be marked as reminders. Furthermore, the app also provided information on the opening hours of the fair and for example, the location of the nearest café or ATM. With the aid of Beacon technology, the app also helped visitors to find the most interesting offers as well as to take advantage of coupons and benefits. (STT Viestintäpalvelut Oy 2020.)

The exhibitors were also able to target their messages separately to professionals and consumers. This was achieved by asking the visitor if they were a professional or a consumer when downloading the app. However, the possibility of personalization could be utilized even more widely, for example, by asking visitors more details and targeting the content displayed to them on this basis. For exhibitors, beacon technology was an opportunity to gain visibility at the fair more widely and to ensure the reachability of their own messages. The information it produced could have been used in the planning and implementation of after-sales marketing and in measuring the success of participation in travel fairs. (STT Viestintäpalvelut Oy 2020.)

## **4.2 Crowd control management**

Optimizing wayfinding is an important aspect when it comes to handling a crowd. Clear markers and signage ease navigating and help to avoid bottlenecks especially in stairs, gates or corridors. Visitors obviously need to know where to go and how they can get there. It's essential to use simple language and short messages so that the customers can find their way around the venue fast. When it comes to text in signs, large, bright and clear is what is needed. Consistency is critical as well since it helps to reduce confusion. To make things even easier, it's a good idea to map out areas for the visitors and guide them on their way, for example floor stickers can be utilized to provide visual clues. In addition, having an access to maps, it could be an app, a printed brochure or a sign, helps visitors to find alternative routes. A part of wayfinding is also to tell customers where they are not allowed to go. This can be done by using walkways and marking off-limit as well as established areas. (Lavi Industries 2020.)

Queueing is more or less an everyday experience but some lines are handled better than others. Furthermore, it is possible to skip the physical queue altogether. Virtual queuing enables customers to be somewhere else while waiting. There are different ways to do this, customers can schedule appointments from home and then receive service when they arrive or they can register from the venue and receive a notification of their place in

line while waiting wherever they want to. Other option is to make the queuing a better experience by having in-line entertainment but in the end most people just want shorter waiting times. (Lavi Industries 2020.)

Sometimes there might be a need to block some area off because of safety, repairs or cleaning and then it needs to be marked clearly. There has to be a clear alternative route if it is a major passageway or if it is a facility like a restroom there has to be another option for it. Different barriers stop people from getting past but they also allow placing a signage that can be used to apologize for the inconvenience or point customers another way. Fencing can be also used to keep emergency access routes clear. When it comes to safety, keeping the pathways clear of obstacles and making sure all walkways are well lit is crucial. (Lavi Industries 2020.)

## 5 Research methods and implementation

The commissioning company is The Finnish Fair Foundation which promotes Finnish business life, different industries and expertise. The foundation supports research activities aimed at building an understanding of the diverse business implications of trade fairs and, on that basis, creating guidelines to support the management of trade fairs. Through research collaboration, the aim is to produce research-based and commercially profitable proposals for The Finnish Fair Foundation and organizers serving the Finnish business community. Furthermore, the foundation grants scholarships and prizes from which the most well-known are the Kaj Franck Design Prize, the Habitare Design Competition Award, the Out of Love for Books Award, the Young Designer of the Year Award and The Finnish Excellence Award. (The Finnish Fair Foundation.)

This thesis uses qualitative research which involves a wide variety of traditions, approaches, and methods of data collection and analysis to study phenomena, humans and their life. Some of the different data collection methods are interviews, letters, biographies, observation and diaries. The data sizes are relatively small and textual instead of numerical. In addition, instruments use a flexible interactive style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions which are open-ended ones. The analytical objectives are to describe variation, relationships, individual experiences and group norms. Some other characteristics of qualitative research are having no experimental setups or hypothesis, building theory from the data and creating a narrative format. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006).

The commissioning company had chosen qualitative research methods for the thesis that were observation, more specifically ethnographic research, and semi-structured interview. The material was collected at Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020 on January during the opening and closing days which were the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>, by observing the touch and movement aspects of the fair and interviewing the leaving fair visitors. The company had a clear vision about what they wanted and that was to focus on the customer's point of view. They also had instructions for the observation and ready-made questions for the interviews. Furthermore, this study is a part of a larger research which includes the senses of sight, hearing and taste. All the materials, conclusions and results of the thesis were to be given to the commissioning company so they could use those further on to improve the customer experience at the fairs.

The main research question of this thesis being; what's the role of touch and movement senses in the experience of a fair visitor, the data collection methods are justified. The

question is based on the customer's experience and opinion of the fair, and therefore the methods of qualitative research are best suited for this study. In addition, the sub-questions are: What kind of experience the travel fair was for the visitor and how were the touch and movement senses taken into consideration at the travel fair from a customer's point of view? Consequently, the objective was to provide answers to all of these questions.

### **5.1 Semi-structured interview**

Interviewing is one of the most used methods of data collection. In the interview, the researcher and the interviewee discuss in a structured or broad way, issues that fall within the research topic. The interview is thus used to obtain research material, which is then to be analysed and interpreted. Interviewing isn't a flawless method, it's good to take into account, for instance, different sources of error caused by the interviewer and the interviewee. Other issue is that the interview may be used as a research data collection method without questioning its suitability for the research topic. The interviewer's behaviour and expressions, as well as other characteristics, play a role in the formation of the interaction situation. In an interview, social skills are needed but of course the interviewee also has a role to play, for example, the age of the interviewee has a significant effect on the interview and its planning. Finally, there are several types and methods of interviews. One of the most commonly used classifications is based on how fixed and structured the interview is, in other words, how much freedom is given to the interviewee and how accurately the interview questions are asked. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

In a semi-structured interview, the questions are pre-designed and the same or approximately the same for all interviewees, and there are no answer options but open-ended questions. Also, the questions are often asked in the same order, though by some definitions the order can be varied, and there is a clear framework even though it is a more flexible interview type. There is no completely unified definition of the implementation of semi-structured interviews and practically, a semi-structured interview is sometimes referred to as a thematic interview. Reason for this can be for example, if there are specific questions about specific themes but the interviewer does not necessarily use exactly the same questions with all interviewees. A semi-structured interview is suitable for situations where information on specific issues is wanted and it is therefore, not necessary to give the interviewees a lot of freedom in the interview situation. It is useful in matters that have been studied relatively little as well. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

## **5.2 Conducting semi-structured interviews at the travel fair**

The interview framework was done by the commissioning company, who had planned and prepared the questions beforehand. The questions were open-ended so that the travel fair visitors couldn't really answer just yes or no, and so they needed to provide a little bit more information. Also, this allowed the visitors to answer more freely about what they had experienced. The first three questions of the interview were about the experience as a whole and sort of eased them into the next ones since the last two questions were more specific. These questions were about touch and movement senses, and also less direct and more about intuitive. All in all, the purpose was to get the visitors to answer spontaneously and honestly. The interview questions can be found in the appendix to this paper (appendix 1).

The interviews were conducted at Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020 on January during the opening and closing days which were the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>. The target group was customers visiting the fair and the idea was to get a wide group of people to answer, for instance, from different age groups. Furthermore, exhibitors were not interviewed because they weren't viewed as customers. The time for the interviews was chosen to be at 2 pm on both days since the aim was to interview visitors leaving the fair and around that time people started to slowly leave the venue. The interviews were done near the main exit area of Messukeskus, which is also known as the southern entrance, for this reason as well. The interview questions were printed on a paper so that the answer could be written straightaway and if some visitors didn't want to be recorded on tape, there was always the paper. And as it happened, not all of the interviewees were happy to be recorded so some of their answer were just written down. Additionally, the estimated age and gender of the interviewees were marked but no other information was collected about them. Altogether 20 interviews were needed, which meant that on both of the days 10 interviews were conducted. However, since this thesis is part of a bigger study, there were altogether 36 interviews done by other researchers, though the last questions were about their topic and therefore, not useful for this study.

## **5.3 Observation**

Observation is used either independently or, for example, as a support to an interview. We observe different things on a daily basis, but scientific observation isn't just looking around randomly but observing systematically. The advantage of observation is that it provides immediate and direct information about the activities and behaviour of individuals and groups. It also allows access to the natural environments of events and can be used to examine situations that are difficult to predict or change rapidly. It can be used to find

information related to events, behaviour or physical objects. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

Futhermore, observation can be divided into participatory and non-participatory, direct observation. In the former, the researcher plays an active role in observable activity, while in the latter, the researcher remains an observer. There is also variation in the observation technique, it can be systematic and standardized or non-systematic. However, no matter the observation technique, the objectives of the observation must be defined and specified and the accuracy required of the observations must be decided. In order for a researcher to have an accurate idea of what their observations actually say, they must have background information on the subject that the observation itself does not directly indicate. Another difficulty in observation may be that the researcher is emotionally committed to the group or situation being studied and thus undermines the objectivity of the research. In addition, sometimes it is difficult to record the observations immediately, in which case the researcher has to record the observations after the situation. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

Ethnography is the unifying term for various studies approaching culture from within, in other words, it examines the cultural phenomenon from the point of view of the subject of the study. The researcher seeks to view, describe and understand the phenomenon they are studying by participating in the daily lives of people living within it. Additionally, the research method is based on a diverse observation of the people and the environment. The priorities of an ethnographic research strategy can range from approaches that take distance from the researcher's own cultural-related reactions and take the attitude of an external observer in the group and the environment, to an approach that is empathetic to the researcher and in which they are intensively involved with the target group. (Jyväskylän yliopisto 2015.)

#### **5.4 Conducting observation at the travel fair**

The aim of observing was to collect rich and accurate material from Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020 on the same days as the interviews were conducted. On both of the days the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>, the observing lasted for two hours, so altogether four hours were spent on it. The observation started on both of the days at 12 pm and it was done by going around the different sections of the fair. Additionally, since the target group of this research are the customers, the observing was done from their point of view. This meant not seeing the venue beforehand and experiencing the event as any customer would.

However, because of the topic of this thesis, the focus was to observe how the travel fair felt like and how it was to move in there. Therefore, it was important to concentrate on the sense of touch and movement, and even block other sensory stimulus as well as possible. Closing one's eyes every now and then, wearing earplugs and actually touching different objects helped to achieve that. The commissioning company had made the instructions for the observation and those were to take notes, photos and videos of the event but more importantly of the details, like materials, activities, queues, furniture, anything really that would be useful later on.

## **5.5 Data analysis**

There are really no technically applicable tools available for the analysis of qualitative data. Instead, there are different perspectives and approaches that can be used to systematically review the material. In content analysis, the material is examined in detail, looking for and summarizing differences and similarities. It is a textual analysis that looks at materials that are already in textual form or modified to be such and the aim is to form a concise description of the phenomenon under study. This connects the results to the broader context of the phenomenon and to other research results on the topic. In the beginning, the research material is first fragmented into small parts, then conceptualized and finally reorganized into a new entirety. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

Themes or key topics, are most often formed on the basis of material by searching the text from interviews, answers or writings for combining or differentiating factors. Thematic analysis is often used for thematic interview material since the discussed themes are often found in all interviews in different ways. Moreover, the material can be organized by themes after transcribing. Coding can be used to form themes, for example, simply marking the same topics with the same colour can help to find unifying aspects from the material. In addition, when the material is organized according to themes, one can gather under each theme the sections where the specific topic was discussed in an interview. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

In this study, content analysis was used to analyse both the observational data and the interviews. Notes, images and videos taken at the travel fair were used in the analysis of the observation material. All of the interviews were done in Finnish. The interviews were transcribed by first listening to the recordings and then writing them down while picking up all the most important details. However, things like breaks and sighs were omitted from the transcription of the interviews, as the focus of the analysis was not the language, but the summation of the most memorable things and experiences related to their travel fair experience. A total of 20 interviews were transcribed and to make the results as



comprehensive as possible additional 36 interviews from other researchers were included in the analysis of the interviews. From those 15 were about the sense of hearing and 21 about the sight. Thus, in the end there were total of 56 interviews but from those only the answers about general experience of the travel fair were taken into account.

## **6 Research results**

Of the interviews, 20 focused on the sense of touch and movement, and out of 36 interviews which were done about sight and hearing, the interviewees general experience

of the travel fair was taken into account. Although the intention was to get answers from a wide variety of people, about 65% of the answers were from women. However, the interviewees ages ranged from 16 to 75 years old, which provided more variability.

When observing, the purpose was to focus on the touch and movement senses at Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020. For the sense of touch this meant paying extra attention to the props, furniture, fabrics, décor and other physical objects at the event. The movement part on the other hand, meant focusing on queues, bottlenecks, movement speed and easiness.

### 6.1 Touch sense at the travel fair

Studying how the touch sense was taken into consideration at the travel fair was done by observing. The ground was a hard concrete floor but a lot of carpets were used which made walking softer and nicer. The materials were kind of the same however and the only difference was that they were in different colours. Example of a different type of carpet usage was in the Aurora hut stand area, where they had a white fluffy carpet which reminded snow (picture 3).



Picture 3. Aurora hut (Karvonen 2020.)

There were many different types of chairs, some really cosy and comfortable, and some more hard to the touch and not really designed for resting which were in front of the stages. In addition, at the fair there were quite a lot of props but those seemed chosen more because of their visual appeal than touch appeal since it didn't feel like one was supposed to touch them (picture 4).



Picture 4. Props (Karvonen 2020.)

Some products were out and displayed in a way that a visitor could touch and try them themselves. One stand had a back bag that a visitor could try on and then guess how much it weights, another one had a huge wooden bear statue and once again a visitor could guess how much it weights and for guessing the closest to the right answer they could win a price. Both of the activities encouraged the customers to touch their products. Futhermore, Aurora huts had one of their huts at the fair (picture 3) and visitors could go inside it.

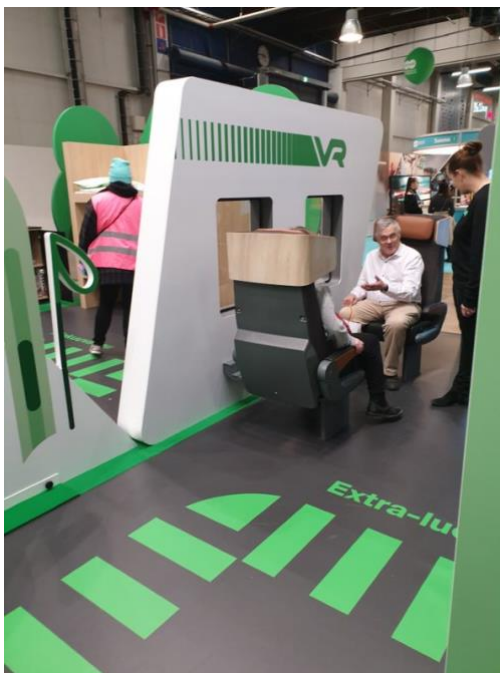


Picture 5. Moomins and the Baltic sea (Karvonen 2020.)

Moomins and the Baltic sea had a small room (picture 5) where one went inside through a fringe door that basically invited people to touch it. At the venue in Messukeskus there is a climbing wall which wasn't exactly part of the travel fair but it was open for use. For children there was a playground with foam blocks that they could move and build things with. Also there was a pin art wall at one Estonian collaboration stand which anyone could try (picture 6) and at another stand that was promoting geocaching one could actually try it, since they had a box filled with sand and an object was hidden inside it. At the best of Finland side of the fair, there was a map on the wall where visitors could mark with a pin where their own summer cottage was located. Additionally, VR Group Oy had planned their stand in a way that one needed to walk a specific marked route (picture 7) and on the way there were examples of chairs and beds that they have in their trains and people could try them.



Picture 6. Pin art (Karvonen 2020.)



Picture 7. VR Group Oy stand (Karvonen 2020.)

At the travel fair there were obviously a lot of lotteries so if one wanted to join they needed to either touch a pen or a screen to write their information. Another form of a lottery was a fortune wheel and a person obviously needs to touch it to spin it. At the travel fair there were leaflets given out to the visitors. The paper of those seemed to be either regular print paper or little bit waxier than that, making neither that special.

Quite many food stands had some free samples and a customer could therefore touch and taste the food they were interested in before buying it. Many if not all of the stands understandably offered disposable utensils. Those can feel a bit cheap but on the other hand, using biodegradable utensils also tells that the exhibitor cares about the environment.

## 6.2 Moving at the travel fair

The walkways were sort of marked because of the carpets that were covering the floor, if you followed the carpeted way you were able to go around the venue (picture 8).

However, some smaller aisles were left without carpets so in order to see everything the visitor needed to explore the area more. Some stands had bigger signs and more known logos that helped with the navigation as well. On the other hand, the smaller stands with smaller signs were at times more difficult to find.

Futhermore, there were destination signs guiding the way to a few points of interest and for example, the sun and sea common area of sunny vacation destinations had a giant balloon that a customer could see from a distance and head towards. Additionally, there were couple of screens that had a map of the whole area and the same map could be found in the event leaflet so with some effort anything could be found.



Picture 8. A main walkway (Karvonen 2020.)

When walking around the venue one needed to sometimes slow their pace especially at the main walkways since it could get little crowded from time to time. But if someone

would have been in a hurry, by taking a bit different route this could be avoided. All in all, moving from one place to another was easy. Some queues were formed at the stands having for instance, fortune wheels or food but those weren't extremely long. It was good that the food stands were in their own area so the few queues didn't block any walkways. In addition, there weren't any obstacles or other possibly dangerous objects like cables on the walkways.

### **6.3 The travel fair as an experience**

The answers to the interview questions were categorised into the general experience of the fair and the most memorable experience at the fair. Besides these there were two more categories about what people remembered touching and how they had experienced moving in the venue. Lastly, the interview had two questions that weren't that straightforward, the last two questions, and those were categorized as well into what kind of gift the travel fair would be like and what kind of animal the travel fair would be.

Most of the visitors thought that the travel fair was a good experience overall. Based on the answers, the fair offered new information about different destinations and inspiration where to go next. Some visitors came to the event already having some destination or experience in mind that they would like learn more about and were happy when they got that. It was also mentioned that the selection of exhibitors was diverse. Interesting offers were a positive factor for many and for some the reason why they came to the fair. The program was said to be interesting as well and thus made the experience better. Other thing that was mentioned often was that the atmosphere at the fair was good. Additionally, people came to the event to meet acquaintances and friends, and to find associates. Worthy of notice, is the fact that most of the visitors had been to a previous travel fair but a handful of newcomers did all mention that they were happy with the fair.

Some visitors also thought that the experience was kind of neutral, not that good but not bad either. Few visitors mentioned that the event was too similar to the previous ones but others thought that the previous travel fairs had more diverse departments and programs. One interviewee said when talking about different stands that: "Last year, similar places had sombreros, sand, tigers and more, now the exhibitors were also in the attitude that the same is not available." Some negative comments were that Aurinkomatkat, Finnair and Ikaalinen were missing from the fair, and that the focus was too much on domestic traveling. Other remark was that even though ecology is a trend it wasn't much brought up. There were also mentions that there weren't enough leaflets and other free merchandise.

The most memorable experiences or things that stuck with the visitors were multiple and those included an Aurora hut glass igloo, an old motorcycle from the Estonian department, Haaga-Helia's stand, Tallink Silja's two store terrace, different dance and music shows, various parts of the venue like Asian and African destinations, Lapland and some other Finnish destinations, good food, different competitions and lotteries, by land stage that was decorated in a fun way and Estonia as a partner country.

The visitors didn't always remember what they had touched at the travel fair but after some thinking most of them identified some objects which were pens, leaflets, fortune wheels, food, other people, the fringes in the sea pavilion, the glass igloo, a duvet cover, papers, a pin art wall and a rocking chair. However, about the easiness of moving around at the fair people were able to tell a bit more. Most of the people found walking around the venue easy and were happy with it. There were few opposite opinions that pointed out that there weren't enough signs which made finding things harder, some of the visitors felt that the place was too crowded, the routes seemed somehow unclear, the small stands were unnecessarily close to each other and at times one could lose their sense of direction.

For the question, if this fair was a gift box, how would it feel and what would it contain, the travel fair visitors had some interesting answers (appendix 2). They were supposed to answer without thinking too much and be as spontaneous as possible. This question was aimed at the sense of touch to get an idea what kind of overall feeling the visitors had been left with. Almost all of the visitor thought that the gift would feel hard. Few also added that it would be heavy and big. When it came to the contents of the gift there were different ideas that included a gift card, leaflets, food, tickets, offers, lotteries, wool socks, surveys, candies, a puzzle, plastic toys, a trip, something experiential and a surprise.

Other question that was meant to be answered spontaneously was: If this fair was an animal, what would it be? This question was meant to reflect how the visitors had experienced moving in the venue and the travel fair visitors had some very different answers that included both native and foreign animals, fast and slow animals, and animals that can be seen as interesting and boring (appendix 2).



## **7 Discussion and conclusions**

The purpose of this thesis was to find out the answers to the questions: What's the role of touch and movement senses in the experience of a fair visitor, what kind of experience the travel fair was for the visitor and how were the touch and movement senses taken into consideration at the travel fair from the customer's point of view? This section of the thesis evaluates the key results and considers the success of the research as well as one's own learning during the thesis process.

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be stated that the majority of visitors were satisfied with their travel fair experience. According to the visitors, the fair had a versatile selection of destinations and companies as well as information about them, which is why they thought that the fair was a success. The experience of course was greatly influenced by the visitors own expectations and interests. Some visitors wanted to get inspired at the fair, while others attended due to their own particular topic of interest. The visitor's fair experience was positive if these expectations were met.

The fair was also something different from people's everyday activities and there is no other similar event which must have a part in the reason why people enjoyed it. Adding a story to the travel fair might be an idea worth trying, since it would make the experience more coherent and give importance, and meaning to it. Every year there is a different theme or partner country so that could be used for the story.

The visitors who were not completely satisfied with their experience, all mentioned that few companies that were supposed to be at the fair weren't there. These included Finnair and Aurinkomatkat, and it can be concluded that perhaps some visitors came to the fair because of these particular companies. In general, visitors participate in the travel fair to get easily a lot of information and in the hopes of some good offers (Rittichainuwat & Mair 2012). Often it's also difficult to get face to face service instead of online service, which is possible at the travel fair and some visitors did mention that.

### **7.1 The role and implementation of touch sense at the travel fair**

As it has been mentioned before the touch sense is tied to our memories (Hutmacher & Kuhbandner 2018). However, visitors at the travel fair mentioned many things that were most memorable to them that had nothing to do with touch sense. Lapland section of the fair was mentioned often because it was visually appealing and the same could be said for instance, about the different dance shows. The results of the interviews show that the stands that focused on visuals were well remembered by visitors.

However, it could be because of the complexity of the sense of touch that people don't pay attention to it (Selin 2004). While conducting the interviews it was clear that it took time for people to remember what they had touched. Also the things they did mention included a lot of objects that they were actively touching like pens, therefore passive touching such as simply bumping into another person was not mentioned at all. Yet, the travel fair visitors did comment touching for instance, a glass igloo which was located in the Lapland area and perhaps it was one of the reasons why many found it a memorable part of the fair.

On the basis of the observation results, it can be stated that the travel fair was appealing to the touch sense to some point. There were various activities like raffles, competitions, fortune wheels and a climbing wall which all involved the sense of touch. In addition, those were often mentioned in the interviews as the objects visitors remembered touching. The furniture choices also felt thought out for example, there were many different chairs depending on what was needed and the fabrics were pleasant.

However, the décor overall and the props, for instance, weren't planned most often the touch sense in mind. Touch sense is also a bit trickier sense since people may be used to just watching things because often objects are not to be touched. This leads to the matter that in order for people to dare to touch things, they may also need to be encouraged to do so with the right cues. One museum for instance, had a sculpture that was warm to the touch and there was a sign that told it could be touched. Of course, at the travel fair every stand decides themselves what they are going to do and put out for people to experience which makes the event a bit different.

The purpose of the interview question, which asked the visitor to describe what the travel fair would feel like if it was a gift and what would be inside of it, was to get the most spontaneous answer possible from the visitor. The answer could be utilized in the analysis of the visitor's perceptions and experience of the fair. The answers varied a lot but most agreed that the gift would feel hard and it would contain either a trip to somewhere, a meal, offers or other benefits. Maybe the overall feeling what the customers were left with was that the fair felt hard. This could mean that the things they touched were mostly hard or the event wasn't soft in other ways. The things they imagined inside the gift were possibly wishes, things they thought would be nice to get or something that described the event itself.

Based on the results, the touch sense plays a role in the formation of a positive fair visitor experience, however, since there weren't that many activities or other physical elements that were clearly aimed at appealing to the touch sense it's hard to say to which extend. Therefore, more creative ideas including the sense of touch could still be applied to the travel fair. An art gallery for instance, had a button next to every painting and a visitor was able to give a like to the painting by pressing it. One event had huge soft and fluffy dices that a visitor was able to throw and play with. What's clear however is that the touch sense alone is not enough to create a memorable experience but other senses, sight, hearing and taste should be used as well. The richer the sensory content in the event is, the more likely it will leave a permanent memory (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2007).

## **7.2 The role and implementation of movement sense at the travel fair**

For big events such as fairs it's crucial to keep customers safe, organized and moving efficiently (Lavi Industries 2020). Based on the interview results, most of the travel fair visitors thought that moving around the venue was easy and they didn't really have any other comments about it. Worthy of notice is that for them the overall experience of the travel fair was positive as well. However, few did mention some shortcomings when it came to wayfinding which were not having enough signs and that the routes were unclear. During observation this was also noted, a little bit clearer markers and more signage would ease navigating around the venue. Maps of course were really helpful, but guiding the visitors on their way from one place to another, could be useful and decrease the confusion on where to go next. This year the travel fair didn't have an app but it could be used for that purpose among other things.

Other negative factors mentioned were that at times it was getting too crowded at some points of the venue and there were some queues, as well as some smaller stands which were unnecessarily close to each other. Based on the results from the observation, no big crowds were noticeable, but since the observation was done at specific time, it was possible that there were more people at the travel fair at some point. Also the queues that were seen during the observation were not that long but obviously most people don't like to queue so it was only natural to come up. Regular queues perhaps could be altogether avoided, for instance, if the food stands would have buzzers to let people know when their food is ready or by having a queuing number one wouldn't have to wait in a line.

As for the stands that were too close together, no observation was made about the problem but naturally, when designing the layout of the travel fair it's important to take these kind of issues into account. Stands that had no proper room to move in between

could possibly be a safety hazard. In addition, no dangerous obstacles or, for example, cables running across a walkway were noticed during observation.

The purpose of the interview question, which asked the visitor to describe what animal the travel fair would be, was to get as spontaneous answer possible from the visitor. The answers varied a lot and only animals mentioned more than once were a fox, a horse and a peacock. Few of the interviewees did say that they picked some animal because they might have seen one at the fair. Despite that, it can be that the animals actually represent how the visitors experienced the travel fair. For instance, choosing a peacock can tell that the travel fair was colourful or a horse can portray that moving around the fair was swift. If the answers are interpreted through the sense of movement, more than half of the answered animals can be said to be fast and the rest slow. Slow in this context means being considerable slower than a human running. This can mean that most of the visitors thought that moving in the travel fair was fast and therefore easy.

Based on the results, being able to move efficiently and with ease at the venue plays a role in the formation of a positive fair visitor experience. Consequently, when moving in an event is difficult, it can affect negatively to the whole experience but when it works people may not always realize to pay attention to it. As in this case, no fair visitor mentioned that moving was easy until they were asked about it. On another note, movement can be something else than just walking and in some events the organizers have had, for example, slides that the customers could use instead of stairs or a small train that takes people around the venue. Virtual events on the other hand, offer limitless ways to move around. All in all, more creative ways for moving would be fun to see in fairs as well.

### **7.3 Success of the study**

The research process started with the commissioning company at the end of 2019 and the Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020 was already in January. This left a short time to get familiar with the research topic and the research methods. Having more time to prepare for the data collection could have been beneficial for the results even though, for instance, interview questions were ready in time.

Validity expresses how well the research method used in the study measures what it intends to measure. Validity is good when the research target group and questions are correct. Reliability, on the other hand, asks whether the test used to collect data produces accurate results. In this context, accuracy is defined by consistency, for instance, the results would be the same if another researcher did the study using the same methods. (Hiltunen 2009.)

The interview situation was new to me so I was a bit nervous and it was in general, challenging to get as comprehensive answers as possible from the visitors. The interview questions used in the study could have been more precise which might have made the interviewing easier. Also perhaps there wouldn't have been need for my own questions attempting to lead the interviewees to answer more extensively. In addition, the last interview questions proved to be difficult for some interviewees to answer. This led me to explain the questions better for the interviewees which was not desirable. Furthermore, the fair exit was a bit challenging place for an interview, as visitors might have been in a hurry to leave the fair. Of course, people who already had seen most or all of the fair made the best group to interview. However, this could affect the validity of the answers, as there is no certainty as to whether the interviewees would have answered in a similar way without the hurry.

Data saturation can be used to measure the adequacy of qualitative research. There is enough data when the same answers start to repeat themselves and the new answers no longer bring new information (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniikka 2006). It can be noticed that similar responses began to recur from the interview materials. However, new things would have probably still emerged if even more interviews had been conducted because the experiences of all visitors are always different. All in all, the 20 interviews conducted, in my own opinion, seem sufficient enough for the commissioning company to utilize.

Despite the difficulties, the research can be considered reliable. The aim was to get spontaneous high quality answers instead of a large quantity with well-thought out answers, and that was accomplished. A semi-structured interview did leave room for wider range of opinions and experiences from the visitors compared to a structured interview for example. The reliability of the observation is increased by the fact that notes and photos were taken. Especially the photos can be used to look at the phenomena objectively and the observations can be reviewed afterwards when the analysis is done.

The potential ethical risks of the research should also be taken into account. The ethical problems in research can be divided into two categories. The first category includes issues related to subject protection and research data acquisition. The second category includes cases that refer to the researcher's responsibility for the applications of research results. Carrying out research specifically on humans requires the researcher to follow good research practice. If the researcher uses well-standardized data collection methods, potential ethical issues in the research design are however predictable and can even be resolved in advance. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniikka 2006.) For this thesis there

were no major ethical risks since no personal data was collected about the interviewees and the travel fair visitors were not the subjects of the observation. In addition, the topic of the research and therefore, the results are not something one can use in a questionable manner.

The aim was to collect as much valuable material as possible from the observation and the semi-structured interviews for the commissioning company to utilize. However, at the same time, the purpose was to get answers to this thesis research's main and sub-question. All these goals were met therefore; the research can be considered successful.

#### **7.4 Own learning**

Overall, doing this thesis was challenging and time consuming but a big learning experience for me. This is the most extensive study I have done so far and the research methods and the data analysis were completely new to me. Also I think I got the most challenging senses out of the sight, hearing, taste, touch and movement senses because to these senses people don't pay that much attention in the end. Furthermore, I had two different senses, touch and movement, instead of one and I needed to take into consideration both when doing the study. While, observing it was sometimes difficult to focus on two different aspects of the fair but luckily the senses had some limitations at the fair compared to, for instance, sight, which had overwhelmingly much material to choose from.

The research process itself started with the commissioning company on a short schedule at the end of 2019 and the material for the study was collected already in January during the Matka Nordic Travel Fair 2020. I hadn't even finished my plan for the thesis before that and just tried to read as much about the topic before it, and learn more about the methods that had chosen for the data collection. Having more time would have probably been beneficial for the observation and the interviews situations.

I began planning the theoretical part later in the spring after the travel fair and found it quite difficult at first. I wasn't sure how to approach the topic or decide what I should include in it. Also the effects of covid hit somewhat hard on my own life as well which made writing the thesis harder. However, slowly the theoretical part started to construct and I had a better vision for it. At this point, it was already the end of summer and I really needed to speed up my pace which is exactly what I did. The help and advices from my supervisor supported the process a lot. I felt successful even though it took some time for me to finish my thesis. I definitely did learn about time and project management which are skills I will surely value in work life.

Finding good source material for the theoretical purposes turned out to be a bit challenging as well. Touch and movement senses especially in an event context seem not to be that often researched. Also the libraries were closed for some time because of the covid situation which added some struggle to the process. Nevertheless, I tried to find new and reliable sources online which I think I managed to do. When I had more material the writing naturally became easier as well. In the future, I hope the things I have learned while writing this thesis will be useful for me and if not I still learned a lot.

For me the most interesting part was conducting the research at the fair but also then later on analysing them. The most challenging and time consuming part of the thesis was the theoretical part but analysing the results took also good amount of time. There was quite a lot of material when you take in account all of the students who did their thesis for the commissioning company. There was a common platform where all of the transcribed interviews, photos and videos were uploaded. Also based on this, there should be enough material for the commissioning company to use further on in their other study. Of course, hopefully this thesis will be helpful as well.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1. Interview form**

#### **Touch and movement senses**

Write notes on paper as accurately as possible, including a rough description of the respondent (age group, gender, etc.)

1. How do you feel now? (a sum of the experience)
2. What did you get out of the fair? (opening of the travel fair bag?)
3. What was memorable? What do remember touching? How you moved?
4. If this fair was a gift box, how would it feel and what would it contain?
5. If this fair was an animal, what would it be?

## Appendix 2. The answers to the 4<sup>th</sup> interview question

If this fair was a gift box, how would it feel and what would it contain?

How the gift box would feel like?	What would it contain?
-	A gift card for an overnight stay at a hotel and a dinner, some cultural experience
Hard, heavy	Leaflets
Hard, smooth	Food, a lunchbox, a menu
Hard	One-way ticket to Vladivostok
Hard	Tickets, offers
-	Lottery
Hard	Wool socks
Different materials	Surveys, sweepstakes, candies
Big, heavy	Plastic toys
Hard	A puzzle
Big, hard	There would always be a new package inside until there was candy in the smallest one
Hard	A trip
Hard	Offers and benefits
-	An experiential gift
Hard	A happy nice gift
-	Wool socks
-	A surprise
Hard	Tickets for the travel fair and meals
Heavy	A trip to somewhere

### Appendix 3. The answers to the 5<sup>th</sup> interview question

If this fair was an animal, what would it be?

Fast animal	Slow animal	Times mentioned
A fox		2
An elephant		1
A bear		2
A Saimaa ringed seal		1
	A panda	1
A tiger		1
	A tortoise	1
	A peacock	2
A nettle butterfly		1
A hyena		1
A crocodile		1
A horse		2
	A sloth	1
	A chameleon	1
A monkey		1
	An earthworm	1
	A wombat	1
A lynx		1