



# Revisiting customer profiles: A comparative case study of personas of Mall of Tripla

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A persona, or the profile of an ideal customer is a popular and effective tool used by service designers to determine user's needs and desires. For any business, knowing its customer's preferences is one of the most important priorities. However, businesses usually map their customers profiles in their initial stage of formation, thus completely overlooking the fact that the initial customers' profiles may change over time. With that change, the marketing and/or complete business strategy may change as well, and therefore it is important to revisit the customer's profile(s) from time to time.

This bachelor thesis is done as a case study of the Mall of Tripla, located in the City of Helsinki, Finland. The research objective was to identify the similarities and differences of the ideal customer profiles of Mall of Tripla, taking into consideration the initial customers' profiles created prior to the opening of the Mall of Tripla, and the current customers' profiles.

The main research method used in this thesis was the comparative study. This choice of the research method was in direct connection to the case company's wishes, as the Mall of Tripla expressed that they wanted to compare their initial customers' profiles to their current customers' profiles to understand the development and/or changes within their customer base.

The main research question of this thesis was to *identify the profile of the current customers of the Mall of Tripla*, as well as *determining how the customers' profiles have changed over time*. The aim of this thesis is to study whether personas of the Mall of Tripla have changed over time and will they require updating.

The key findings of the study are:

- The Mall of Tripla now has a persona representing the senior visitors, so the study found that the customers' profiles will require updating
- The initial personas of the Mall of Tripla match for the most part with the current personas in terms of demographic and occupation data, as well as reasons for visiting the Mall
- There were no matches with the initial persona representing the tourist customer base, created by the Mall of Tripla. This finding is likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemics and the travel restrictions it brought.

The results of this bachelor thesis will be used by the Mall of Tripla to develop and improve their marketing strategy and update their service concept strategies.

Keywords: persona, comparative study, service design, design thinking



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## 1 Introduction

The case study company of this bachelor thesis is the Mall of Tripla, the largest mall in the Nordics. The Mall of Tripla started to operate and opened their doors to visitors back in 2019, and, prior to their opening, they have created the profiles of their ideal customers. In 2020, the company was interested in finding out *have their customers' profiles changed over time*, and if so, *how have they changed*.

As a serious business organisation, the Mall of Tripla decided to revisit (review) their initial personas, as they were interested in learning whether their business plans and goals truly meet the needs of their customers. To learn more about their current customers, the Mall of Tripla cooperated with the students of Hospitality Management at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Six teams of Laurea UAS students worked on this project and they have created 23 customer profiles of the Mall of Tripla.

This bachelor thesis will be a comparative study of personas of Mall of Tripla, using the initial personas created before the Mall of Tripla was opened and comparing them with the 23 personas created by the students of Laurea UAS.

Similar research about the current customers of the Mall of Tripla was performed by the students of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (UAS), although without creating the personas. However, this research is not a part of the comparative study, but, as per request of the client company, the summary of their findings will be included into this thesis.

To identify and learn whether personas of the Mall of Tripla have changed over time, this thesis will focus on these research questions:

1. *Who/What are the current personas of the Mall of Tripla?*
2. *If personas have changed over time, what are the main differences and compatibilities when compared to the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla?*

Through these research questions, this bachelor thesis aims to investigate the possible change of the case company's personas and recommend the development proposals based on its findings and analysis.

The thesis is structured in the following way:

- the main information about the case company



- the theoretical framework of the persona(s) including the definition and history of persona, its creation process and information on the Service Design
- the theoretical framework of a comparative study as a research method
- the comparative study of the personas of Mall of Tripla including the information on the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla and their current personas
- the conclusions of the comparative study
- the developmental proposals for the case company based on the study findings
- the recommendation for further research
- the learning outcomes.

The persona profiles are a representation of the real people, and they are an excellent Service Design tool used by the businesses to get to know their customers and/or users, to understand their needs and desires, and a tool that can truly help businesses develop further and keep them oriented to their goals.

However, the fact is that the businesses change over time, they are constantly following the new trends and the ever-changing pulse of the modern world to stay competitive. This means that their business models may change, their strategy may change, their marketing may change, the complete offer of the products and/or services may change, the user demographics may change. But, what about their personas? Shouldn't they be responsive to the changes as well? This is what the case company was wondering as well, and this is the purpose of this thesis: to revisit the customers' profiles of the Mall of Tripla and derive conclusions or report any changes that may have happened when comparing the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla to their current personas.

## 2 Case company introduction

Located in Pasila, Helsinki, the Mall of Tripla was opened in the October of 2019, and with a big success. According to data provided by the case company (Tripla presentation), the Mall had 1 000 000 visitors within first 9 days, 2 000 000 visitors within 19 days, and 10 000 000 visitors within 2.5 months since opening.

Mall of Tripla has more than 250 retail spaces, including over 70 restaurants cafes over five floors, which makes it the largest shopping centre in the Nordic countries. Approximately 100 000 people visit the mall daily. (Tripla presentation)

Since the Mall of Tripla is located at the metropolitan heart of the Helsinki, nearby some of the main tourist attractions (e.g., Hartwall Arena, Helsinki Expo and Convention Centre, Olympic Stadium and Linnanmäki), it has a great potential for the customer base growth.

The concept of this largest mall in the Nordics is to be, as stated by the company, “a city within a city” (Tripla presentation), offering a variety of different activities and commodities, featuring cultural highlights (Finnish Music Hall of Fame), business premises, restaurants and coffee shops, retail shops (including Finnish and international brands), indoor sports, healthcare services, modern cinema, a hotel, apartments, grocery shops, amusement park for kids, parking facilities and a public transport hub. The Mall of Tripla is not a typical mall because it also features an underground sports and enjoyment facilities called “down under”. These facilities are equipped with “an eternal summer”: sand, beach, indoor surfing, and a pleasant temperature of 26 degrees throughout the year.

2.1 Mall of Tripla in numbers

- 17.10.2019 The grand opening
- 17.10.2019 - 31.12.2019 The total of 6,4 million visitors
- 250+ The number of retail spaces



Figure 1: Mall of Tripla - Accessibility (source: Tripla presentation)

Energy efficiency has been at the core of the Mall of Tripla ever since it has been built, making it to be an almost a zero-energy building. Water saving, waste recycling, and green roofs are an excellent add-on to the company’s mission of going green and being sustainable.

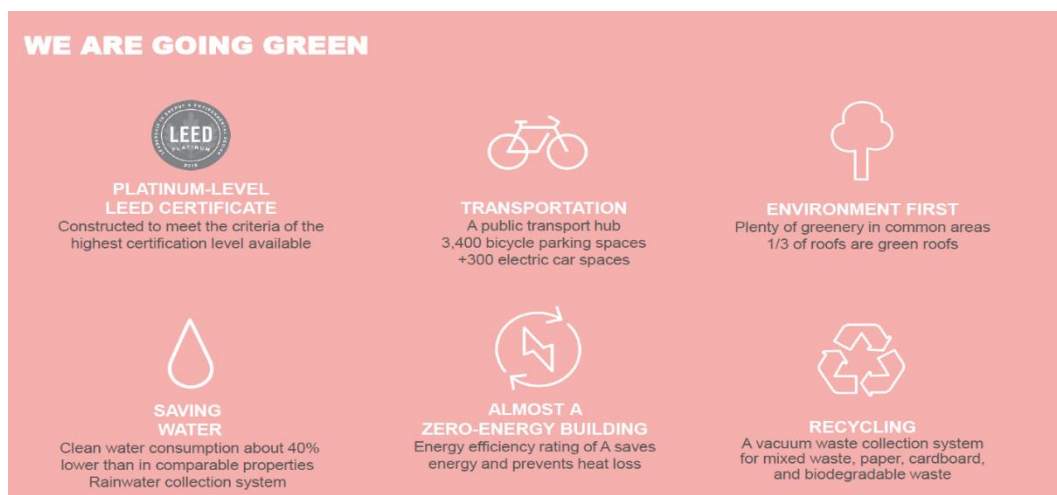


Figure 2: Mall of Tripla - Sustainability (source: Tripla presentation)

### 3 Theoretical framework of a persona

In this chapter a theoretical framework of a persona will be presented. The framework includes the definition of a persona, history of a persona, persona creation process, as well as the general information about the Service Design. The information about the Service Design have been included into this theoretical framework so that the reader can better comprehend the background of a persona, as personas are the tools of the Service Design, and thus inseparable concepts.

#### 3.1 Definition of a persona

Persona or an ideal customer's profile is usually presented as imaginary or a fictional person(s) containing characteristics and emotions of the real or potential customers, based on the data collected via different research methods, traditionally qualitative research methods, e.g., surveys, interviews and focus groups. The very term *persona* implies that the profiles of the customers should be made in a way that will represent their personality, motives, and what drives them, amongst other. Therefore, the goal of the persona is not about simple demographic data collection, but rather to give a concise description of the model of the (potential) user and/or a customer.

"Personas are fictional profiles, often developed as a way of representing a particular group based on their shared interests". (Stickdorn, M. S., Schneider, J. & Stickdorn, M. 2012, p. 172) When we say that a persona is a fictional character, it is important to emphasize that not all persona characteristics are fictional or imaginary. Only certain parts are added to the profile to make a persona more relatable, or livelier. Such data include, e.g., adding name and a picture.

The persona (or an ideal customer's profile, or buyer's persona) is made around the insight into the customer's expectations, goals, concerns and, at last, their decision to buy things they need from the business in question, rather than from the competitors. (Revella, A. 2015, p. xx)

In short, the persona is an archetype of a real customer that helps businesses to understand their customers, gain insight into their needs and concerns, relate to their customers, as well as create meaningful marketing and concept strategies to promote their products and/or services that consumers will want to buy.

A simple search of a persona on Google will result in visual representations of a variety of examples of an ideal customer's profiles. Most commonly, these profiles contain basic demographic data - such as age, income, marital status, education, etc. Although important, these data are far from enough if one aims to relate and really know their customer(s).

### 3.2 History of a persona

User or customer representations are not a new concept. In 1991, Geoffrey Moore identified the term “target customer characterizations” and his definitions set the basis for visualizing and individual customer instead of a whole group of customers. (Pruitt, J., Adlin, T. & Tamara Adlin. 2006, p. 23) The characteristics for visualisation of the customer he proposed in his book *Crossing the Chasm* include personal profile and job description, “a day in a life” concept which implies the dramatization before a product has been bought, statement of a problem or a dilemma that motivated the purchase in the first place, as well as “a day in a life” concept following the purchase. (Pruitt & Adlin, *ibid.*, p. 24)

Couple of years later, in 1995, Lynn Upshaw wrote a book *Building Brand Identity: a Strategy for a Success in a Hostile Marketplace*, in which a term “individualizing the customer” has been used. The purpose of the individualization of the customer was stated to be informative and to “inspire decision making”. (Pruitt & Adlin, *ibid.*, p. 25)

In recent years, in 2002, Sheila Mello wrote a book *Customer-Centric Definition* whose focus was on describing the “process for understanding users’ needs and desires, which is used ultimately for product definition”. (Pruitt & Adlin, *ibid.*, p. 25)

Today, understanding *why* customers buy became as important as *who* is buying. Within defining the market by having the right information and value propositions, the most important thing is accurately recognising the customers’ needs, expectations, and desires in order to fully comprehend what motivates a customer to make the buying decision/purchase.

### 3.3 Service Design and its tools

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, understanding the definition and the importance of the persona cannot be complete without knowing at least the basic principles of the Service Design, as persona is a Service Design tool.

There are numerous definitions of Service Design. Contemporary authors mainly agree on terms such as *evolving discipline*, *interdisciplinary approach*, *cross-disciplinary*, etc., but one definition seemed like a perfect match for this thesis research: “Service Design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for clients and efficient as well as effective for organisations”. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012, p. 23)

In their book *This is Service Design Thinking* (2012, p. 26), authors Stickdorn and Schneider explain the five main principles of service design thinking, and those are:

- *User-centred* - which means that businesses should aim for experiencing their products or services in a way their customers do. This is why it is best to use the qualitative research methods when creating a persona (please see the following chapter);
- *Co-creative* - which means that service design thinking is not limited to one department of the organisation, but rather that all (relevant) stakeholders should be invited and included into the whole process;
- *Sequencing* - which, in practice means that e.g., if a service offered is complex, the service design thinking process implies that it is best to break that complex service into smaller, easier to understand, and more tangible separate processes to be able to understand the customers' touchpoints and pain points regarding the service in question;
- *Evidencing* - this principle of the service design thinking process is sometimes the hardest to complete, as it requires envisioning service experiences;
- *Holistic* - which means taking into consideration an "entire environment of a service". (Ibid, p. 26) The holistic principle of service design thinking is directly connected to a holistic design approach: "Holistic design takes into account the person, (...), the moment, the ethnographic environment, the physical space as well as human behavior and psychology, i.e., thinking, attitudes, emotions, motivations, abilities, triggers etc., and aims to deliver an optimal experience". (Philips, M., n.d., Interaction Design Foundation).

The abovementioned five principles of the Service Design are connected to the five phases / stages of the Design Thinking process. The Design Thinking process is "a solution-based approach to solving problems". (Dam, R.F. & Siang, T.Y. 2020. Interaction Design Foundation) Design Thinking's primary use is in correlation with the Service Design, as it aims to "understand the user, challenge assumptions, and redefine problems in an attempt to identify alternative strategies and solutions that might not be instantly apparent with our initial level of understanding". (Dam, R.F. & Siang, T.Y., ibid.). The five phases of the Design Thinking process are:

- *Empathize* - The first stage of the Design Thinking process implies that a person trying to solve a certain problem should up and foremost have empathy to be able to grasp customers' needs, desires, or expectations;
- *Define* - In the second stage, the observations, and any other information collected during the Empathize stage should be carefully and concisely synthesized to define the core issues of the service / product in question;
- *Ideate* - The third stage of the Design Thinking process is all about producing and providing ideas that might help solve the problem(s) identified in the previous stage. There are numerous techniques that help people generate ideas, and they are usually

implemented within a team or a group of people. In these sessions, techniques like *brainstorming* and writing down the *worst possible ideas* are meant to open people's minds to possibilities and start the creativity process;

- *Prototype* - In this stage, the design team should make a prototype of a service or a product and test it within the team or within organisation. The idea behind the prototyping is to quickly catch the design flaws of the service or a product and fix them. In the persona creation process (described in the following chapter), creating a context for a persona, or a scenario of its usability and interaction with a product or a service, can be considered a form of prototyping as well;
- *Test* - Within the last stage of the Design Thinking process, the product or a service is tested with real potential users and customers. It is important to note that the design thinking process in general is an iterative and a non-linear process, so even during this final stage the design team may uncover new problems by going back to the Empathize stage or to the Prototype stage. (Dam, R.F. & Siang, T.Y., 2020)

Service Design works best via its tools. There are several tools used in the service design process, and all are meant to help the businesses creating new or improving the existing service. Listed below are the most widely used tools:

- *shadowing* - when researchers practically “immerses themselves into the lives of customers, front-line staff, or people behind the scenes (...)” (Stickdorn & Schneider, *ibid*, p. 148)
- *customer journey maps* - a visualisation of a customer's experience through the service's touchpoints followed by the explanations on why the touchpoints happened in a certain way)
- *contextual interviews* - this is an ethnographic type of a research that is usually performed in an environment where the service itself happens. This service design tool uses questions and observation of the stakeholders (customers, staff) to derive conclusions and identify the pain points of the service process
- *the Five Whys* - this tool is used to “explore a specific problem in greater depth.” (Stickdorn & Schneider, *ibid*, p. 159) This means that one problem has already been identified, and it will be used as a starting point for the Five Whys questions. Each new question is derived from the answer to a previous question, which helps to establish links between the problem(s) and possible solution(s)
- *a Day in a Life* - this type of a service design tool is usually visualized in a form of a comic-book, but video and photography are also used. The tool brings deep insights into what a customer is doing within a day, outside the interaction with the service in question

- *personas* - probably the most known and most widely used the service design tool. Personas represent a “particular group based on their interests” (Stickdorn & Schneider, *ibid*, p. 172)

Other tools of Service Design include e.g., the idea generation, the “What if...”, design scenarios, storyboards, service / product prototyping, mystery shopping, etc.

### 3.4 Persona creation process

To create a persona, one must truly dedicate its time to listen and hear their customers. To ‘step into customer’s shoes’, the businesses should learn more than about their current and future customers than simple demographics. For example, questions like how their customers like to spend free/leisure time, what makes them happy, what do they really need (in life and in work), what makes them frustrated, what are their daily routines and behavioural habits, what kind of a person do they aspire to be, what are their spending habits, their life dreams, role models, etc. In other words, businesses should invest time and effort to know their customer on a human level, rather than seeing them as just numbers.

The persona creation process typically starts with a clearly defined and structured or semi-structured research in a form of an interview or a questionnaire. (Stickdorn, M. S., Hormess, M.E., Lawrence, A., & Schneider, J. 2018, p. 51) Researchers usually conduct several in-depth interviews or well-structured questionnaires with customers, employees, or other stakeholders (e.g., suppliers) in order to find out about the customer’s (or other stakeholder’s) needs and expectations or problems regarding the product or a service in question.

The next step is to identify and to carefully plan how to approach the interviewees, e.g., how to greet, will there be some tasks involved, how to end and how much time will this interview or a questionnaire last.

According to Adele Revella, the CEO of the Buyer Persona Institute, conducting in-depth interviews is the best possible research method in a persona creation process, as it enables the business to hear and understand its customers: “Go to the source. Get their story in their own words”. (Revella, A., 2015, p. 52). Revella further discusses that the main purposes of gaining insight into one’s customers are as follows:

- *Effective messaging* - as it is impossible to have effective messaging aimed at everyone, it is best to focus marketing efforts to a certain target group that the business has gained insight into. (Revella, A., 2015, p. 28)
- *High quality leads* - when a business has an insight into their customer, it is possible to focus on creating the products that they will value, present to them what they want to hear, display a product where they are looking. (Revella, A., *ibid.*, p. 28-29)

- *Shortening the sales cycle* - as marketing team of the company gains insight into their persona, they can help the sales team to anticipate the obstacles and, thus, speed up the decision process. Additional benefit here is stated to be as crucial - the closing of the gap between the marketing and sales team of an organisation, which leads to more effective and cohesive team. (Revella, A., *ibid.* p. 29)
- *Resolving Ties between Your Company's Products and Those of the Competition* - gaining insight into a persona of a certain business may result in a new approach to a pricing model. (Revella, A., *ibid.* p. 30)
- *Identifying the buyer type you need to reach and how to reach them* - an in-depth insight into a customer's profile should provide who and/or what triggered the need to solve the problem, who and how affected their choice of solution. (Revella, A., *ibid.* p. 30-31)

After carefully conducted interviews or questionnaires, the next step is to iterate and follow up the process. At this stage, it is important to consult the team whether some data is missing or does the profile created match the real-life person: "The most common pitfall when creating personas is to create 'idealized customers', not customers you will find in reality". (Stickdorn, M. S. et al., 2018, p. 53) If needed, the persona research can be repeated, and useless personas can be discarded at this stage. The personas that are idealized but not realistic may potentially lead to wrongful ideas, concepts and, eventually, a waste of time and money because business might have a wrong strategy that doesn't fit the real target group or market segment: "Personas clearly define who is and who is not the target user (or customer) for the product". (Pruitt, J. & Adlin, T., 2006, p. 18) Additionally, personas created should be engaging and lively, which means that they shouldn't be focused on the demographic data only, but rather mirror the real needs of real people. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012, p. 173)

When connecting these recommendations from experts in the Service Design field, it is easy to conclude that the initial personas of Mall of Tripla, which are further elaborated in chapter 5 of this thesis, are very demographically focused, and don't contain any of the additional features (e.g., needs, desires, personality traits, and so on) that would make them as realistic as possible.

Prior to the last stage of the persona creation process, some service designers recommend that scenarios, or rather possible situations are imagined and described using the persona(s) created. This step should be helpful in getting used to using the persona(s), but more than that, it should trigger the idea creation process, as well as understanding better the use of the product or a service in question. (Nielsen, L. N.d. Personas) This is a very important step in the persona creation process, because it is within this step that the persona uses the



product or a service, and this brings massive value and an insight to the business that is trying to understand the needs of its customers.

However, there are some downsides to creating context or a situation where persona created is in use:

- the context provided may give a false feeling of assurance
- the context provided is biased and/or focused on the unnecessary traits of a persona (Nielsen, L., *ibid.*)

Nevertheless, the service designing is all about using the actual toolkit it provides to meet the customer's needs, so even with the potential downsides of contexts created, it is still advisable to use the persona in the scenario(s).

The last stage of the persona creation is to give it a name and/or a face, which will make it more realistic and relatable.

In summary, the persona creation process should follow these three steps:

- collecting the information that "enables the persona construction" (Nielsen, L. *ibid.*)
- collecting the information that will show emotions of the persona being created, as well as their social and psychological features
- creating a context where the persona created should be used.

It is important to mention that businesses should aim to develop between 3 to 7 core customers profiles (Stickdorn, M. S. et al., 2018, p. 51) that represent the main market segments. This recommendation is in line with the number of personas the Mall of Tripla created prior to their opening (4 personas). Creating more personas than this may lead to confusion of the marketing team, as well as to losing focus.

After a persona creation process is completed, the regular adjustments to the persona descriptions should be made: "There can be new information, or the world could change, and new aspects may affect the descriptions. Decisions have to be made whether to rewrite the descriptions, or add new personas, or whether some of them possibly should be eliminated". (Nielsen, L., *ibid.*)

However, even well-executed personas may not always be useful, and there are several reasons for that:

- the persona(s) profile(s) are not accepted by the leadership team
- the persona(s) profile(s) are not credible
- the persona(s) profile(s) are not well-communicated and explained

- the team does not understand how to use the persona(s) profile(s). (Pruitt, J. & Adlin, T., 2006, p. 39)

Sometimes in practice, the customer's profile may not come from the data, but rather from experience and assumptions, especially if the target group of a certain business is difficult to research and explore, e.g., young children. (Chang, Y., Lim, Y. & Stolterman, E. 2008., p. 440)

To take a persona creation to the next level, an emotional journey as a part of a customer's journey is often considered, as it can further identify the pain points and provide additional insight into persona's point of view. (Stickdorn, M. S. et al., 2018, p. 56)

As personas represent meaningful archetypes of real customers, they are a strong and an effective tool used in assessing the customer's experience regarding the product or a service offered by the business in question. Mall of Tripla was and is well-aware of all the advantages that come from knowing their customer base, and that is why the company decided to revisit their personas: to check if something changed, are their customers satisfied with the services provided and, at last, who are their customers now. The initial personas of Mall of Tripla, as well as their current personas, will be described in chapter 5.

#### 4 The research method

Comparative analysis or a study is "common research method with outstanding merits and with a widespread application" (Azarian, R., 2011, p. 1) This research methodology is widely used in numerous scientific fields - from social to natural sciences. By using the comparative method, one is able to better understand and gain knowledge about the certain topic by explaining the differences, and the similarities between two or more, small or large phenomena, e.g., nations, cultures, quantitative and qualitative data etc. This research method helps with establishing the relationship between the two or more phenomena, as well as with drawing legitimate conclusions about them.

##### Types of Comparative Research

According to Tilly (1984, p. 82), there are four types of comparative analysis:

- individualizing
- universalizing,
- variation-finding
- and encompassing.

Individualizing as a type of comparative analysis implies that a small number of cases is taken as a comparison base, to truly understand the peculiarities of each case. This method includes describing fully the characteristics of each case being studied and thus, helps with the gaining wider knowledge of the topics being studied and compared.

Universalizing as a type of comparative analysis aims to establish that each phenomenon being compared in essence follows the same rule. By using this type of comparative research, fundamental theories are being developed, e.g., theories of social revolution.

Variation-finding as a type of comparative analysis aims to “establish a principle of variation in the character or intensity of a phenomenon by examining systematic differences between instances”. (Tilly, 1984, p. 82). This means that by using the variation-finding, logical differences between the two or more phenomena are established, e.g., studies on origins of dictatorship and democracy.

Encompassing as a type of comparative analysis “places different instances at various locations within the same system, on the way to explaining their characteristics as a function of their varying relationships to the system as a whole”. (Tilly, 1984, p. 83) This implies e.g., the comparison of children behaviour depending on their order of birth.

This thesis will focus on the individualizing as a type of comparative analysis.

It is to this date unclear when the comparative study became a research method, but most of the scientists agree that this research method has been in use for a long time (Bukhari, Syed Aftab Hassan, 2011, p. 1). Globalisation and the development of the information technologies in the modern times has impacted on the expansion of the use of this research method, as more and more quantitative and qualitative data became widely available.

When using a comparative study as a research method, one is able to clearly identify different aspects of the problem in question: “Comparative study helps to define the organization structure of the subjects as well as give the differential points between the subjects matter. (Ibid, p. 3) Additionally, the advantage of a comparative study is that it includes different time frames, which is crucial for this bachelor thesis completion, given its title and purpose.

#### 4.1 Styles of a Comparative Study

The nature of a comparative study implies that objects or specimens being compared are similar in some respects, while they differ in others. It is precisely these differences that are

the base of a comparative study. There are two different styles of a comparative study (Rautio, 2017):

- descriptive comparison
- normative comparison.

Descriptive comparison is focused on, as the name implies, describing and explaining the objects or specimens being compared. This type of comparison avoids generating changes in the objects being compared. (Bukhari, Syed Aftab Hassan, 2011, p. 5)

Normative comparison aims to evaluate, to point out the “best among the alternatives being studies” (Rautio, 2017). This type of the comparison is used when the aim of the research is not just to detect the differences and similarities between the objects being compared, but also “to improve the present state or to help improving or developing similar objects in the future”. (Bukhari, *ibid.*, p. 5)

This thesis’s focus will be on using the normative comparison as a style of a comparative study.

#### 4.2 Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of this thesis’ study is the choice of the research method. Like all individual research methods, a comparative study also has its limitations, and one of those is, e.g., that it is more time-consuming than the research that is not comparative. (Shahrokh, Z.D. & Miri, S.M., 2019, p. 13).

Additional limitation is the number of cases being studied (23 personas vs. 4), which is far from a proportional sample, as random sampling within comparative study is not sufficient, and the data needed is not always available for all the cases.

Other limitations of this study include the uncontrolled data collection process, i.e., the teams of students of Laurea UAS used different research methods when collecting the data: some teams used observation, others did not; some teams used structured and semi-structured interviews, others used questionnaires. Amongst those teams that used the same research method, e.g., questionnaires, their research questions were quite different. This type of uncontrolled data collection process may lead to inconclusive results (which may further lead to a biased approach to the research) as students may choose poorly formulated or less important questions to ask. Additionally, their sample size also was different when they used the questionnaires as a research method. It would have been a better performed

project overall if students have had a more structured approach to the research, agreed on the same research methods, sample size, questions, etc.

A general limitation of a comparative analysis is that this research method allows the application of the theory, but the testing of it is rarely possible. Thus, only limited generalizations as findings are possible.

#### 4.3 Overview of the research process

As a single-case study, this bachelor thesis combines several qualitative research methods, on top of the main research method of comparative analysis.

The research process for this thesis started with the study of the company documentation and provided company presentations. Literature study and data collection on the topic of persona(s) was followed by the studying the documentation on the research completed by the students of Laurea UAS and Haaga-Helia UAS.

The literature study has been crucial in understanding and learning about the persona, and how they are used in Service Design. The theory framework has helped greatly with forming the overall image on the importance of the persona as a Service Design tool that can be used in practice by any business.

The research approach for completing this thesis overall is both deductive and exploratory.

Deductive research approach implies deducting conclusions from premises (Dudovskiy, J., n.d.). The main advantages of this research approach include explaining the causal relationship between concepts and a “possibility to generalize the research findings to a certain extent”. (Dudovskiy, J., n.d.)

Exploratory research implies that the researcher starts their research with a general idea and continues to use the research to identify and issues (QuestionPro, 2021). The goal of such research, as the name implies, is to explore the problem, understand it in depth, and, possibly, lay foundation for future research.

## 5 Personas of the Mall of Tripla

Assessing the needs and desires of a diverse customer base, such is the customer base of Mall of Tripla, is not an easy task. Given the fact that the Mall is visited by different age groups,

people of different backgrounds and preferences, personas (as a collection of different characteristics) of Mall of Tripla are quite diverse as well.

Prior to their opening in 2018, the Mall of Tripla has completed their own research and created their fictional ideal customer's profiles. In total, four personas were created, mostly based on the purpose of their visit to the Mall. The Mall of Tripla then divided their potential ideal customers into following groups:

- the commuters or the public transport users: estimated at 47 million / year (Tripla presentation)
- the locals or people living within 2 km from the Mall: estimated at 70 000
- employees and students within the Pasila area (where the Mall is located): estimated at 80 000 people
- the leisure-time visitors: estimated at 3.8 million / year

It is important to mention that the initial Mall of Tripla personas are made as an estimate of people using their services or visiting the Mall by the year 2025. The methods used when creating these initial personas were a combination of a qualitative and quantitative research, as stated by the company representative, Ms. Hanna Heikkinen who I warmly thank for her kindness, understanding and cooperation on this thesis.

### 5.1 The initial personas of Mall of Tripla

Here are the four initial / original personas made by the Mall of Tripla in 2018 (Tripla presentation), presented individually:

#### **Camilla the Commuter**



Camilla is a commuter using the public transport five days a week from Vantaa to Helsinki via Pasila. She particularly likes the convenience of grocery shopping at the Mall of Tripla during the week, and during the weekend she finds the Mall to be a great place to meet friends and relax. From the picture chosen to represent this persona archetype, it is easy to conclude that Camilla has children.

\*It was estimated that 47 million people a year will be using the public transport. (Tripla presentation)

### Rami the Resident



Rami is local living in newly built apartment in Pasila area. He is an IT consultant that Rami works as an IT consultant in Pasila. Rami has a family of four and he thinks that the Mall of Tripla is a great place to spend a Saturday with the family, stacking up on household items, eating out and going to the cinema.

\*It was estimated that 70,000 people will be living within 2km from the Mall of Tripla. (Tripla presentation)

### Emily the Employee



Emily is a real estate agent at the agency at the Tripla complex. She enjoys lunch time at the Mall because it offers her a variety of choices. Emily appreciates all of the different venue options for her and her team for after-work activities.

\*It was estimated that 80,000 employees and students will be present in the Pasila area. (Tripla presentation)

### Vincent the Visitor



When Vincent visits Helsinki, he usually stays at the new hotel at the Tripla complex, because he values its location. Vincent's interests local design and gastronomy, and Mall of Tripla caters many of his needs.

\*It was estimated that the number of visitors will be 3.8 million per year. (Tripla presentation)

The above-described personas helped the Mall of Tripla to shape their marketing strategy and business goals upon opening. However, creating personas isn't something that should be done once - it is an iterative process that should be revisited regularly: the recommendation is to revisit personas yearly or at least every 1-4 years. (Salazar, K., 2016) The reason for this is that businesses change over time, their business models change, their product or service range changes or possibly even the whole business concept. As personas are a snapshot in time, they need to be constantly updated to follow the ever-changing business world or a simple change of the initial customer base, e.g., the expansion of it. Therefore, it is very important to monitor the potential changes in the customer base, update the initial personas regularly, or create completely new personas if needed, so that they best reflect the target group(s).

### 5.2 The year of disruption

In 2016, a projection study was made by the Mall of Tripla regarding the frequency of visitors, as well as their reasons for visit in 2020. These were the main findings of that study:

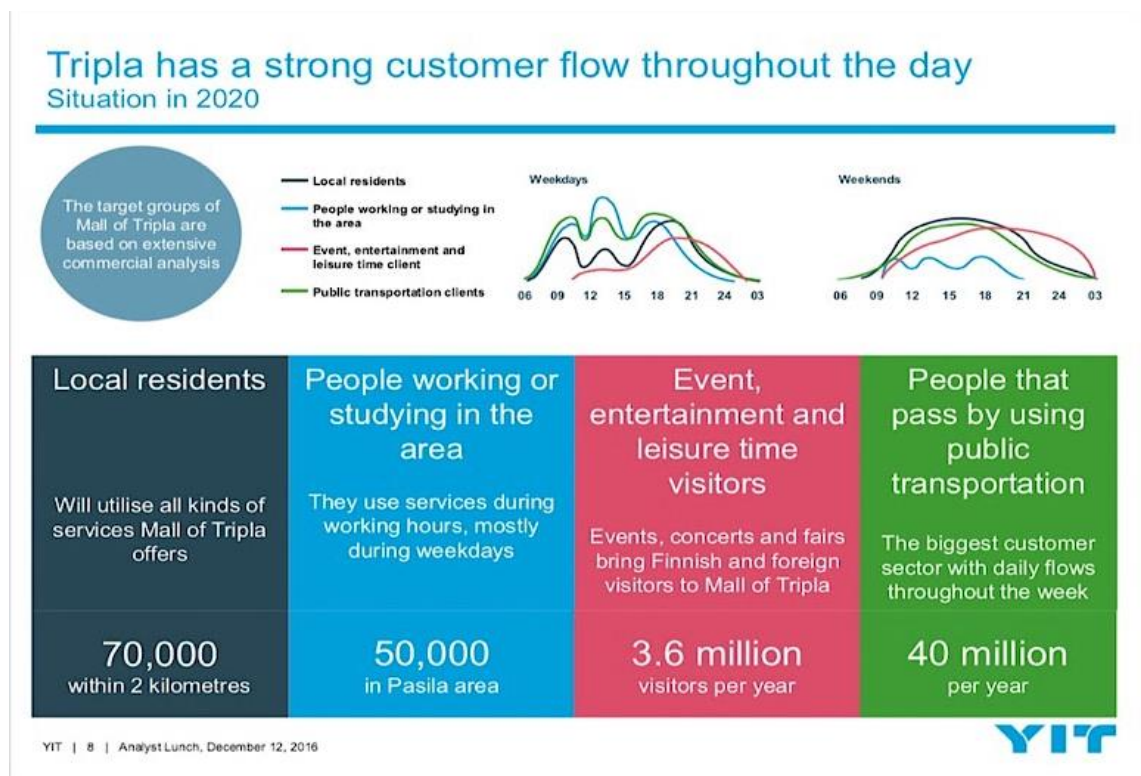


Figure 3: Mall of Tripla - The customer flow study - prediction for 2020 (source: Tripla presentation)



As seen from the figure above, it was estimated that in 2020 local residents will count around 70.000 visitors, people working or studying within Pasila area will count around 50.000 visitors, leisure-time visitors will count up to 3.6 million per year, and the commuters will make the biggest customer segment with around 40 million per year.

There is no doubt that the year of 2020 has been extremely disruptive and filled with uncertainty, for both personal lives and businesses. Our behaviour changed dramatically with global lockdowns and social distancing being the most used preventive measures against the COVID-19. Our living rooms became our offices, restaurants and gyms, a setting that has impacted and / or completely changed our habits and routines.

With the slow opening of the services as the cases of newly infected started to decrease, this question arose: how have the abovementioned behavioural changes and imposed restrictions impacted the buyer's behaviour, needs, expectations, and decision-making processes?

The real impact of the COVID-19 pandemics is yet to be seen, but it was precisely in the year of pandemics, the year of disruption, that the Mall of Tripla decided to revisit their personas. The company collaborated with the students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences (UAS) and the students of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (UAS) to learn more and understand better their current customer base.

Comparing of the findings of students of Laurea UAS with the initial personas created by the Mall of Tripla prior to their opening, as well as summarising the findings of research completed by the students of Haaga-Helia UAS will be presented in the following chapter.

## 6 Findings of the students of Laurea UAS

Six teams of Hospitality Management students of Laurea UAS were researching the current customer base of Mall of Tripla, their buying behaviour and preferences. The data were gathered using different research methods: interviews, questionnaires, and observation. The personas made based on those data by each team of Laurea UAS students will now be further elaborated and compared to the initial personas created by the Mall of Tripla.

### 6.1 Team "Best of the Best"

The first team of students of Laurea UAS, named "Best of the Best" has used interview as their research method and managed to collect data from 2.11.2020 - 15.11.2020 from 28 randomly selected visitors of Mall of Tripla, aged between 18 and 65, out of which 19 were female. Interestingly, the highest age group of respondents who frequent the Mall of Tripla

are between 25 and 34 years of age. Based on their occupation, most interviewees were students (15), and the 9 out of 28 interviewees said that they visit the Mall on a monthly basis. Their research also found that 27 out of 28 respondents would like to visit the Mall again, and all the respondents found the Mall to be easily accessible.

The main reasons for visiting the Mall were found to be restaurants and grocery stores. The team created three different personas based on the data collected - **Sirkku the Senior**, **Peetu the Businessman**, and **Isabella the Exchange Student**.

Sirkku the Senior




*"Life is too short for a boring life!"*

- Retired
- Lives in Huopalahti
- Married with her second husband
- No own children
- Treats her husband's kids and grand-kids as her own

- Visits the Mall of Tripla multiple times per week, thinks Tripla is her second living room
- Often for lunch with the ladies, also for hobbies and activities
- Comes by train as her apartment is close to the local railway stop
- Likes that Tripla is easily accessible also for her friends around the city
- Average visit around two hours
- Tends to buy something every time
- Gives the Mall of Tripla 5/5 stars and high recommendations
- Wishes to see Tokmanni there some day
- Is planning a staycation in the suite of Sokos Hotel
- Already taking imaginary holidays by having a fancy cocktail in the Surf House and enjoying the heat
- Plans to take the grandkids to the indoor playing arena next time they visit

Figure 4: Sirkku the Senior persona (source: Presentation of the “Best of the Best” team)

## Peetu the Businessman



"No rest for the wicked!"

- In his early 30s, single
- Lives currently in Vantaa
  - Plans to buy an apartment in Pasila
- Sales manager (BBA)
  - Office located in Vallilla
- New start-up entrepreneur

- Passes through Pasila few times a week when commuting
- Has lunch in Tripla once a month, pleased with the variety of restaurants. Sometimes stops for an afterwork beer with co-workers
- Does grocery shopping closer to home, other shopping online
- Plans to buy an apartment in Pasila within a year
- Region well connected to the city centre, newly built houses
- Close proximity to the central park for running
- All the essential services located in the Mall of Tripla
- Recently started a business with his friends, wishes to be full-time entrepreneur in the future
- Interested in shared office spaces in Tripla
- Applying for master's degree in service desing
- Saw an advertisement of beach volley and surfing facilities in Tripla, plans to go there with the boys
- Thinks it will make good content for his social media channels

Figure 5: Peetu the Businessman persona (source: Presentation of the “Best of the Best” team)

## Isabella the exchange student



- An exchange student from Italy
- studying Aviation Business at Haaga-Helia
- Hobbies consist of cooking, painting and playing tennis
- Isabella prioritizes herself that's why she tries to make time for things she loves to do each week.
- moved to Pasila since it was more convenient for her because her university is in Pasila.
- Got an apartment through HOAS.
- She has a spacious and unique apartment with her two close friends.
- Isabella visits Mall of Tripla in her leisure time and for the supermarket.
- Goes to mall of Tripla 3 times a week, average time spent in Tripla is about 2 hours.

Figure 6: Isabella the exchange student persona (source: Presentation of the “Best of the Best” team)

Based on the findings of the first team of students of Laurea UAS, some compatibility but also some differences were noticed when compared to the initial personas of Mall of Tripla.

Compatibility features:

- commuters
- gastronomic offer and grocery shopping
- working-age population was dominant
- great location
- planning a stay at the hotel in Tripla complex

Differences:

- female dominated population of visitors
- mostly students
- persona representing the senior population

**Conclusion:** Based on this team's findings, gender should be taken into consideration when creating and/or updating the marketing or a business strategy of Mall of Tripla. Perhaps more services catering men's needs are a next step to expand the customer base, as well as reconsidering the customer pool of senior population.

## 6.2 The team "Dream Team"

The second team of Laurea UAS students, named the "Dream Team", used interviews and observation as their research method for creating the Mall of Tripla personas, in total five different ones. This team of students has interviewed 15 visitors of the Mall, and they observed the customers and workers on the different levels of the Mall of Tripla.

The team's interview questions were basic demographic data (age, gender, occupation), which services of the Mall the visitors use the most, as well as what is the basic reason of their visit. No specific data on the gender ratio were provided in their team report.

The personas the second team of Laurea UAS students created all love to visit the Mall in their leisure time, and they are **Emily the Employee**, **Lydia the Student**, **Pekka the Senior**, **Matt**, and **Juho and Sofia** who represent an entity, an archetype of a family persona:




## Emily

- Emily is a 43-year-old woman
- She is sociable, sophisticated, intelligent, balanced, and athletic
- She works as a professor in Aalto University
- Emily goes to the gym "Fitness24Seven" three times a week in Mall of Tripla
- She lives in Kuusisaari
- Emily wanted a gym close to her house as well as her job so that she would be able to balance both and go several times a week
- She goes out for dinner with her family on the weekends

Figure 7: Emily the Employee persona (source: "Dream Team" presentation)

## Lydia



**Age:** 18  
**Occupation:** Student  
**Family:** Mom, Dad, Brother  
**Location:** Pasila, Helsinki, Finland  
**Hobby:** Writing a diary

"A girl should be two things - who and what she wants!"

Ambitious
Friendly
Social media user

### Goals

- Graduate from Helsinki Business College
- Enjoy her free time with friends

### Bio

Lydia is an extrovert and open minded young student.

She enjoys her spare time by spending time with friends.

She passes by Mall of Tripla everyday as she goes to school and comes home from school.

As her hobby she likes to write a diary to get her thoughts out.

Lydia also likes to do her shopping in the Mall every now and then and finds it convenient as it's close by where she lives!

### Life goals

School

Friends

Social

### Personality

Friendly  Unfriendly

Thinking  Feeling

Sensing  Intuition

Figure 8: Lydia the Student persona (source: "Dream Team" presentation)

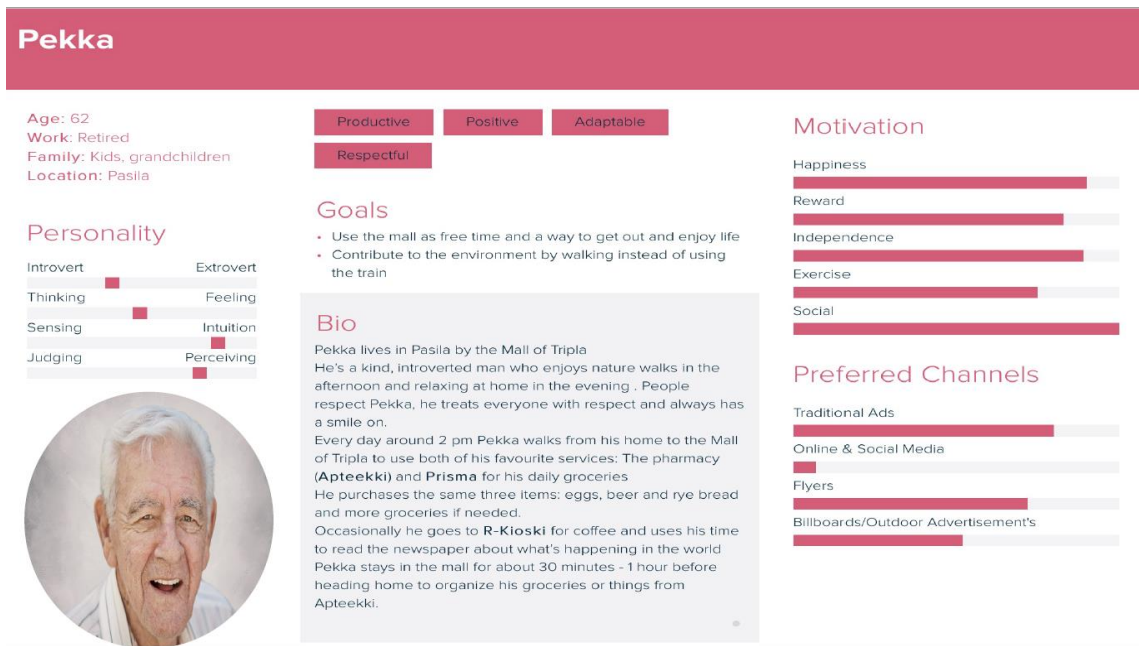


Figure 9: Pekka the Senior persona (source: "Dream Team" presentation)

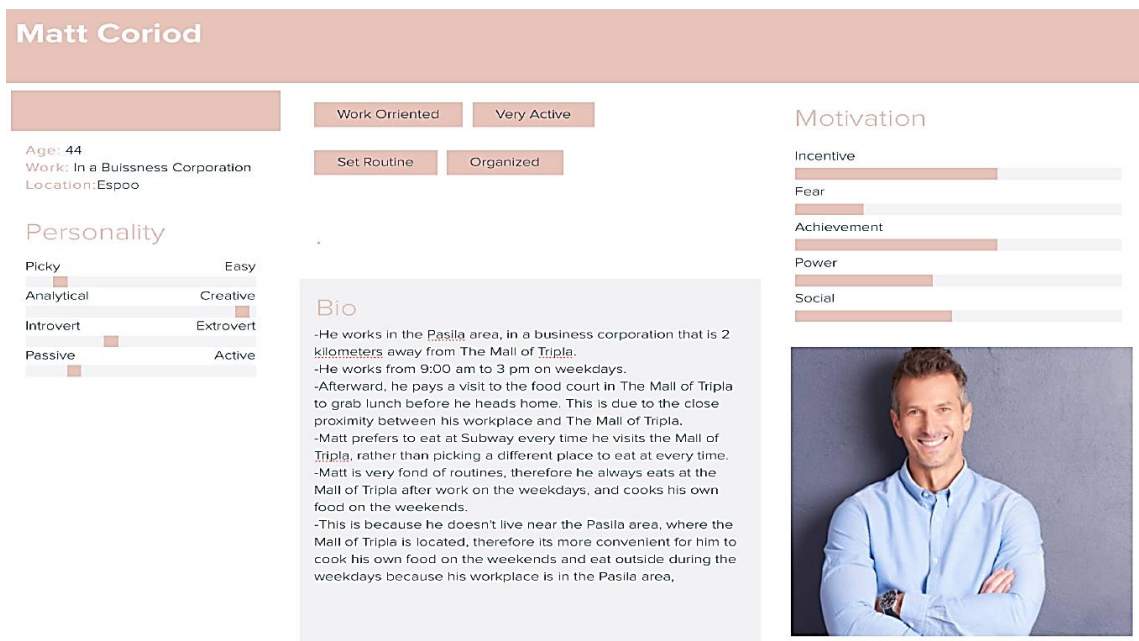


Figure 10: Matt persona (source: "Dream Team presentation)

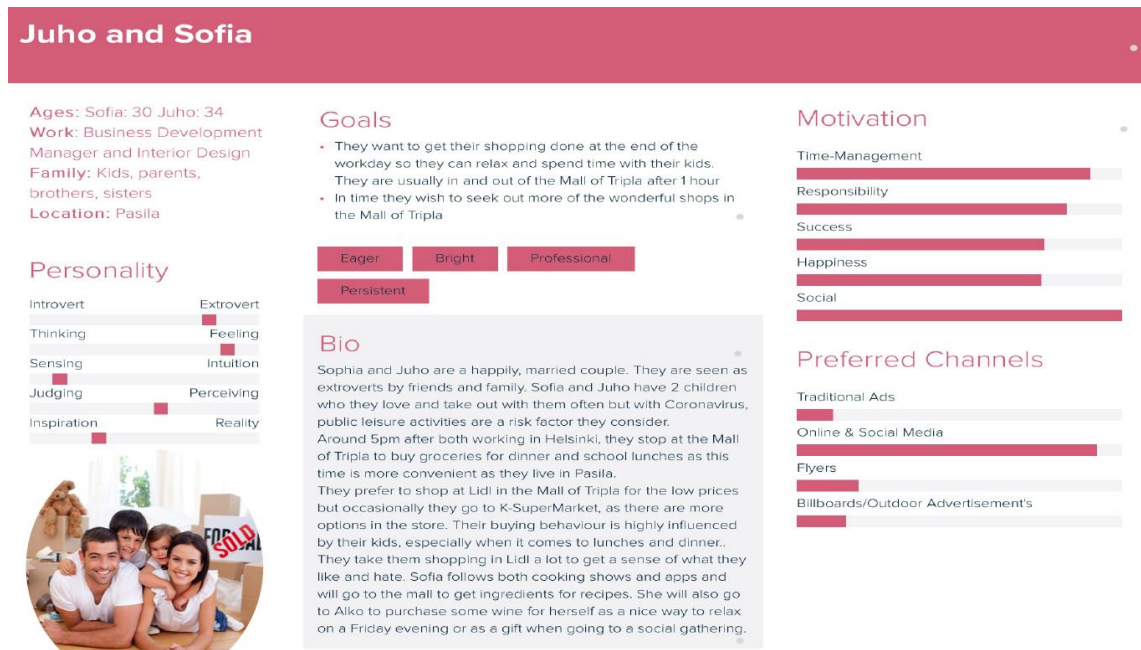


Figure 11: Juho and Sofia Persona (source: “Dream Team presentation)

Here are the compatibilities and differences found when comparing the initial personas and the personas created by the second team of Laurea UAS students.

Compatibility features:

- local residents visiting the Mall for leisure time
- commuters
- restaurant visitors

Differences:

- families with children
- persona representing the seniors

**Conclusion:** Social factors such as families with children should be taken into consideration by the marketing team of Mall of Tripla, e.g., promoting the family days on weekends.

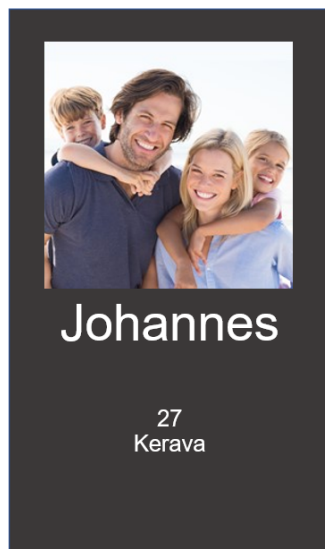
### 6.3 The team “Girl Power”

The third team of students, named “Girl Power”, collected their data using a face-to-face questionnaire with visitors within the Mall, and the passers on the train station in Pasila, Helsinki. The interviews were completed between the 5th of October and 7th of October.

Eleven interviews were conducted in the train station and nine interviews were conducted in the Mall's shopping and restaurant area, a total of 20 interviews. Additional observation of customers was also conducted on different days and times.

This team's focus when collecting the data was also on the demographic status of the visitors (age, gender, employment, family status), with the addition of questions such as e.g., the reasons for visiting the Mall, the amount of time spent at the Mall, and their opinion on the variety of shops and services at the Mall.

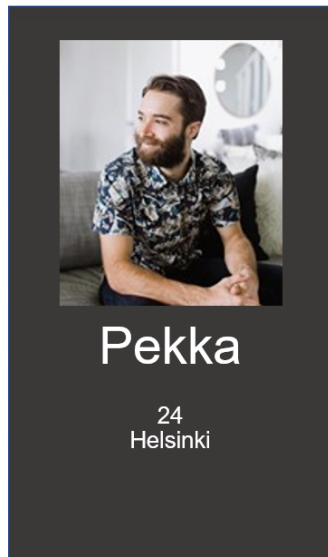
Based on their data, this team has created a total of five personas (3 out of 5 are female personas) - **Johannes, Pekka, Minna, Maija, and Henrik**:



- Lives in Kerava with his wife and two kids
- Works as a plumber
- Travels by car
- Visits Mall of Tripla every two months with wife and kids when visiting family in Helsinki
- Shops for electronics and high quality clothing
- While his wife shops, Johannes takes the kids to Hop Lop for 2-3 hours

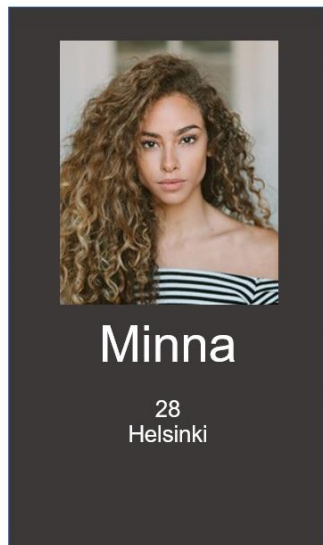
Figure 12: Johannes persona (source: "Girl Power" presentation)





- Lives alone in Helsinki and works part-time as a graphic designer
- Is a student at Aalto University
- Walks to Mall of Tripla for groceries whenever he has time
- Single: takes dates to restaurants
- Meets with friends in the restaurants one to two times a month
- Eco friendly, does not shop for clothes

Figure 13: Pekka persona (source: “Girl Power” presentation)



- Lives in Pasila with boyfriend in a new apartment and works in marketing
- Visits Mall of Tripla almost daily, weekdays walks for lunch and gets groceries by car on the weekends
- Also visits to shop for high end fashion and visit fitness and beauty businesses
- Enjoys decorating their apartment so often shops for home décor

Figure 14: Minna persona (source: “Girl Power” presentation)



Figure 15: Henrik persona (source: “Girl Power” presentation)

Here is how these personas match the initial personas of Mall of Tripla.

Compatibility features:

- restaurant visitors
- employed working-age population represents the majority of the visitors
- local residents
- grocery shopping and leisure time

Differences:

- cosmetic services emphasized
- the lack of tech stores emphasized
- the lack of home stores emphasized
- eco/sustainable lifestyle

**Conclusion:** The next developing step for the Mall of Tripla when it comes to addressing the needs of different customers and attracting mostly men among the respondents, additional tech stores are an idea worthy of consideration.

#### 6.4 The team “Paw Patrol”

The fourth team of students of Laurea UAS, named the “Paw Patrol”, has collected their data using the interviews, surveys, and observation as their research methods. The data were collected between the 27<sup>th</sup> of September and 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2020.

To best understand the visitors and the participants of their research, this team of students asked questions such are: Describe yourself in three words, what are three funny facts about you, can you describe the atmosphere in the Mall of Tripla in a few words, as well as the demographic data.

Based on their findings, this team has created three different personas - **Jani**, **Martti**, and **Jaana** (visualisation of the personas was not provided by this team).

**Jani** is a 20-year-old student who enjoys playing the guitar and being with friends. Atmosphere in Tripla is modern and fresh which makes it more appealing to him. He comes to Tripla to shop for basic necessities such as groceries and clothes. He is athletic and active. Currently his reason for visiting is to do groceries. If there was one store that would make him come to Tripla more often for store it would be for sport clothing related stores.

**Martti** is a 67-year-old retiree. He lives close to Mall of Tripla. He is very active and athletic but during COVID-19 most of his athletic hobbies are cancelled. Fortunately, he can still ride his motorcycle. He comes to do groceries in Tripla but doesn't really want to spend more time than its necessary. Maybe he would stay here longer if there were more household appliance stores.

**Jaana** is a 34-year-old mother that lives in Tampere and came to Tripla by train. She likes to support Finnish services and products such as Fazer and Marimekko. She works as a florist and on her down time she enjoys spending time with her family and friends. She loves taking her two dogs on long walks often. This is her first time at the mall of Tripla as she heard about this place from her friend who has visited the mall herself multiple times in the past. Mila came here because of a specific shop but ended up spending four hours there as she eats at the food square and finished off by shopping. Mia finds the atmosphere at the mall of Tripla to give the perfect energy to motivate her into visiting all the shops and cute cafes. She is tired because of all the shopping she had done today but excited because she had many good findings.

Here is how compatible and different their personas are when compared to the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla:

**Compatibility features:**

- modern design and nice atmosphere are valued
- groceries shopping
- commuters enjoying the great location and a transport hub
- leisure time with family

**Differences:**

- personas would like to see more of household appliances stores
- male personas are emphasizing the lack of sports equipment and clothing stores
- Martti is a persona representing the senior visitors of the Mall

**Conclusion:** Most of the characteristics of the initial personas can be found in the personas created by this team of students as well. Their male personas are noticing the lack of sports equipment and clothing stores. Once more, the persona representing the senior population is present.

## 6.5 The “Team Orange”


The fifth team of students of Laurea UAS, named “Team Orange”, has collected their data and created their personas based on the interviews with 20 visitors of the Mall. The interviews were completed between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2020.

Their questions to the visitors revolved around demographic data (age, gender, occupation), as well as the reasons for visiting the Mall and what are they missing (what services they would like to have available). Based on their data, “Team Orange” has created three personas: **Sanna, Julia and Martin.**

Here are their visual representations:

**Julia**

**Female**  
**Age, 15**  
**Student**  
**Helsinki**



**BACKGROUND**

15-year-old and a student in school which is nearby. She lives in Helsinki. During her leisure time, she goes to Tripla several times a week because of her school's short distance. It is convenient for her to walk together with her friends to Tripla.

**INSIGHT**

She goes shopping at her favorite shops such as Hennes & Mauritz as well as New Yorker. She prefers to buy inexpensive clothes, and as well she finds lovely clothes from those stores. She described The Mall of Tripla as a cool and safe place.


**HOW SHE DESCRIBES THE MALL OF TRIPLA**

Julia says that she can find everything necessary for her, but she wishes to have a Tiger shop to find items for arts and party decorations. One restaurant that she loves is missing – it is McDonald's as she loves their food. Besides, she wishes to have a place where she could hang out with her friends, like a customer lounge area after her sad experience of being evicted.

Figure 16: Julia persona (source: “Team Orange” presentation)

**Martin**

**Male**  
**Age, 40**  
**Worker**  
**Helsinki**



**BACKGROUND**

Martin is a 40-year-old and an IT employee. He lives in Helsinki with his family. He visits the Mall of Tripla by car quite a few times a week.

**INSIGHT**

Usually, he goes to Tripla with his family to buy groceries from Prisma hypermarket, and while his wife is shopping, he goes to the barber. He thinks that trendy architectural design and spacious surroundings make him a little complex, but he is still comfortable to find all the things he needs or wants.

**HOW HE DESCRIBES THE MALL OF TRIPLA**


He says that Tripla is an enjoyable place where to spend time with his family and friends. And there is only one thing that he thinks is missing – Library. As he loves to read books and magazines, it would be perfect place for him to take some own time.

Figure 17: Martin persona (source: “Team Orange” presentation)

## Sanna

---

**Female**  
**Age, 50**  
**Worker**  
**Helsinki**



**BACKGROUND**

Sanna is a 50-year-old woman, and she works at a restaurant in Helsinki. She lives in the city of Helsinki. She likes to visit The Mall of Tripla at weekends a few times a month with her friends.

**INSIGHT**

When she comes to Tripla, she usually goes shopping for daily used clothes and makeup. She likes to spend time with her friends and family, and she thinks that from Tripla you can find something for everyone at once. After shopping, she likes to eat lunch with her friends and family at one of her favorite restaurants. She usually spends quite a long time at Tripla.

**HOW SHE DESCRIBES THE MALL OF TRIPLA**

She describes Tripla as a very big, modern, and attractive shopping center. Where she found everything that she needs. Only one shop that she likes is missing, and it is a Zara clothing shop.

Figure 18: Sanna persona (source: “Team Orange” presentation)

Next, let’s see how compatible their personas to the initial personas of Mall of Tripla are.

Compatibility features:

- students and working-age population
- residents of Helsinki
- groceries and clothes shopping
- great architectural design of the Mall
- leisure time with family and friends
- excellent restaurant experience
- great location of the Mall and it is easily accessible

Differences:

- Their male persona Martti expressed his need for library services within the Mall, which is a cultural and educational proposition worthy of attention.
- Persona Sanna expressed the need for the clothing shop of the brand Zara.

**Conclusion:** the personas the “Team Orange” are matching the initial personas of the Mall for the most part. There are no visitors from other cities of Finland or other countries, but that is understandable given the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances.

## 6.6 The “Team RAJ”

The sixth team of Laurea UAS students, named “Team RAJ”, has collected their data on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2020 at the Mall of Tripla using the observation, online questionnaire, and interview as their research methods. In total, this team of students

has completed nine face-to-face interviews (5 female and 4 male interviewees), fifteen observations and 42 answers from their online questionnaire. When compiling their data gathered from these different research methods, “Team RAJ” created four personas that represent the most common visitors and buyers of Mall of Tripla. In their study, this team was focused on demographic data, why they visit the Mall, as well as which means of transport are they using to get to the Mall. The personas created by this team are: Milka, Jere, Tuuli, Mark.

## MILKA HAAPANEN

- 18 years old female student
- Lives in Pasila, near Mall of Tripla
- Hobbies: volleyball and gym
- Usually walks to Mall of Tripla or uses public transportations
- Visits Mall of Tripla 4-5 times a week
- Uses Mall of Tripla’s restaurants, grocery stores, gym and goes to Down Under to play beach volleyball
- Favorite food: sushi




Figure 19: Milka Haapinen persona (source: “Team RAJ” presentation)

## JERE ALHONSALO

- 35-year-old father in working life
- Lives further away from Mall of Tripla: Espoo.
- Goes to Mall of Tripla by train
- Visits Mall of Tripla 5 times a week (travelling to work)
- Uses services like transportations, sometimes shopping and restaurants
- Hobbies: outdoors, shopping and movies
- Favorite food: Indian and Mexican



Figure 20 : Jere Alhonsalo persona (source: “Team RAJ” presentation)

## TUULI MUTANEN

- 32-year-old hotel manager
- Lives in Pasila, near Mall of Tripla
- Hobbies: tasting different foods
- Goes to Mall of Tripla by car or by foot
- Visits Mall of Tripla 2-3 times a week
- Buys her weekly groceries from Prisma and often visits Ruohonjuuri
- Favorite food: nothing specific, likes different cuisines

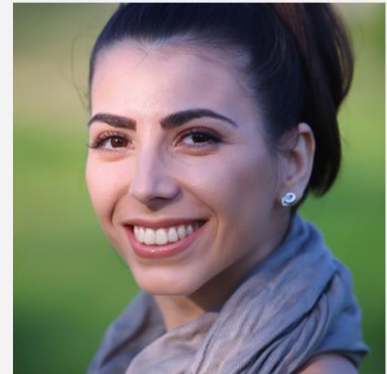


Figure 21: Tuuli Mutanen persona (source: "Team RAJ" presentation)

## MARK SIMANOVSKIY

- 21 years old university student
- Lives in Kallio
- Goes to Mall of Tripla by tram
- Visits couple times a month
- Goes to Mall of Tripla with his friends to have drinks or to eat
- Hobbies: football and gym
- Favorite food: Thai and sushi



Figure 22: Mark Simanovskiy persona (source: "Team RAJ" presentation)

The following are the findings from comparison of this team's personas to the initial personas of Mall of Tripla.

Compatibility features:

- commuters
- students and employees
- local residents



- grocery shoppers
- leisure time at the Mall
- valuing different restaurant options

Differences:

- no matches with the initial persona of Mall of Tripla named Vincent. This is probably due to the pandemic circumstances and the lack of tourist travel in general.

**Conclusion:** Interestingly, this team's personas match the initial personas of Mall of Tripla almost to the fullest. Additionally, this team's personas, just like the initial ones, don't have a persona representing senior citizens. According to this single team's research, the assumptions made by the Mall of Tripla about their customers via their initial personas were proven to be quite accurate.

## 7 Conclusions

All the main findings and conclusions of the comparative study of personas of the Mall of Tripla will be presented in this chapter.

### 7.1 Main findings of comparative study of personas of Laurea UAS students and the Mall of Tripla

The main research questions of this thesis were:

1. *Who/What are the current personas of the Mall of Tripla?*
2. *If personas have changed over time, what are the main differences and compatibilities when compared to the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla?*

Upon analysing all the results combined from the findings of Laurea UAS students, several things regarding the personas of the Mall of Tripla are concluded. When generalizing the current situation of the customer's profiles, which is what the findings of the comparative study are normally providing, the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla match for the most part with the personas created by the students of Laurea UAS.

The main finding of this study is noticed when observing the expansion of the customer base: three out of six team of Laurea UAS students had created a **persona representing the senior visitors of the Mall**. Contrary to the initial personas of the Mall of Tripla that represented only the working-age population, their customer profiles are now expanded to the third-age

population as well. Having a third-age persona emerging from this research proves that the personas of the Mall of Tripla have changed over time and require updating.

Here is why a third-age persona is an important finding for the case company:

- As ageing population expansion is the phenomena that can be seen in most of Western countries, the businesses should be able to grasp the economic potential of the senior citizens. In a recent study published by Tilastokeskus Finland (2021), the wealthiest households in Finland were of those belonging to people aged 65 - 74. This is a very important data that the case company should carefully consider when creating and designing new services. Ageing citizens of Finland have time and they, according to these data, clearly have money. The consumer potential of this population is massive and should be an important factor in marketing and service concept strategy of the case company. The same study points out that **in Finland there are over 2.2 million citizens over 50 whose individual net worth is 160.000 euros.** (Tilastokeskus Finland, 2021)
- This conclusion of the comparative study led to further research of the ageing population phenomena in Western countries, and eventually, to the term *Silver Economy*: “Europe’s population is ageing as a result of falling birth rates and higher life expectancy, which will bring a number of challenges but also represents an important economic opportunity for Europe’s businesses. Older citizens are increasingly shaping economies, constituting a large and growing segment in many areas of consumption, and the expansion of this demographic is expected to boost demand in many sectors.” (European Commission, *The Silver Economy*, 2018, p.3)
- The European Commission study (2018, p.5) summarized its findings on the Silver Economy in Europe and its potentials into this graph:

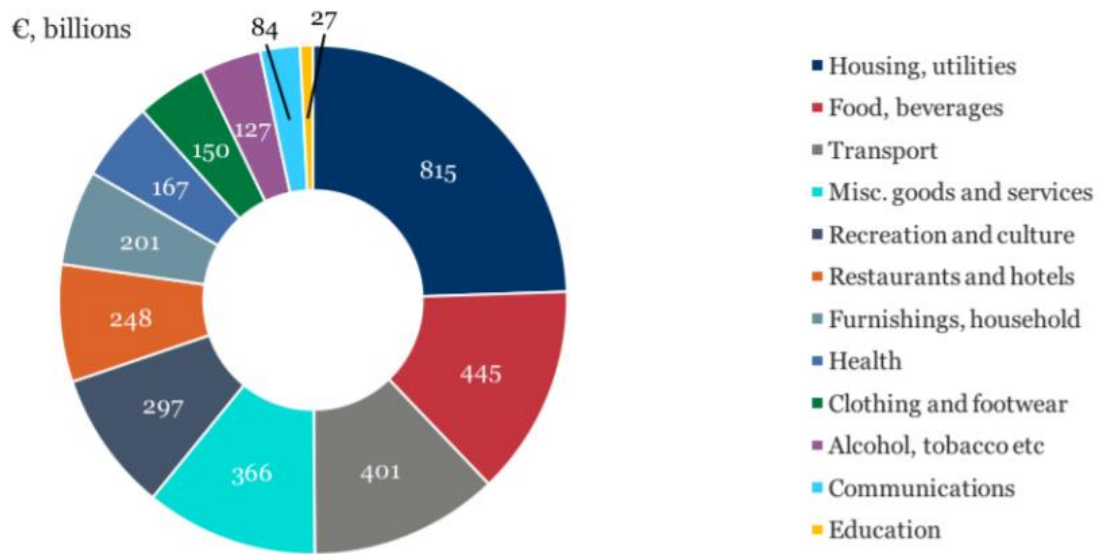


Figure 23: Distribution of private consumption expenditure in the European Silver Economy, 2015 (source: European Commission, The Silver Economy, 2018, p. 5)

- Another important information for the case company is the population of Finland projections. As seen from the Figure 24 (Statistics Finland, 2021), the population aged 65 and over is only expected to grow in the future.

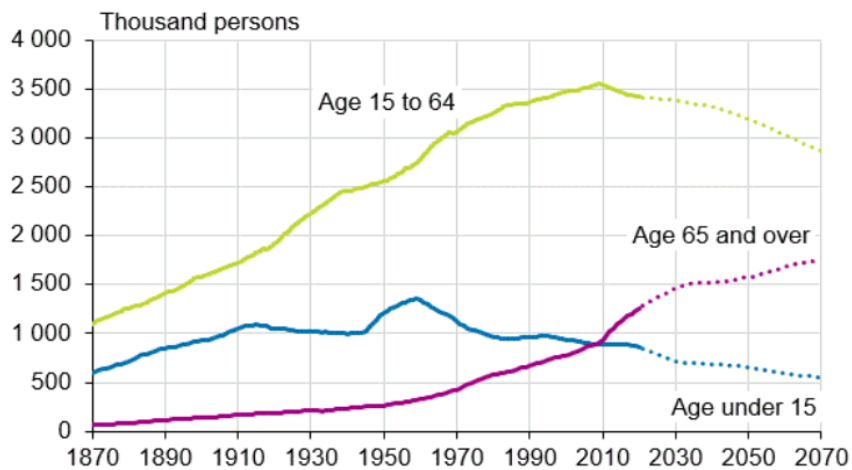


Figure 24: Population of Finland projections (source: Statistics Finland, 2021)

As far as the rest of the personas created by the Laurea UAS students go, as stated in the beginning of this chapter, they are matching with the initial personas of the Mall in terms of

demographic data, reasons for visiting, as well as in the sense of what they value the most within the Tripla complex.

However, there were no matches with the initial persona of the Mall of Tripla named Vincent. This persona was created to represent the potential of the tourists and their buying behaviour, but, probably due to the pandemic circumstances that led to the lack of the tourist travel in general, the students of Laurea haven't created a single persona with the tourist background.

Additional value for the case company that came from this research and listening to their customers are propositions like library, sports equipment and clothing stores, as well as the tech stores. These are certainly attention and consideration worthy.

## 7.2 Summary of findings of students from Haaga-Helia UAS

This part of the thesis is reserved for summarizing the main findings of the study performed by the students of the Haaga-Helia UAS. These students were collaborating with the Mall of Tripla in the beginning of 2021, and their research was focused on learning more about the customers of the Mall, their backgrounds, needs, thoughts, reasons for visiting the Mall, what is the best thing offered by the Mall, what they value the most, etc. Their findings were based on the responses of a representative sample of 208 persons, and this summary will enable the case company to know their customers even better and, possibly, open-up to the new ideas and propositions provided by the real customers of the Mall.

The students of Haaga-Helia UAS were collecting the data on the customers of the Mall between 14th and 25th of January, 2021. (Tripla kävijätutkimus, 2021) The aim of their study was to collect data from the buyers, not from the people who simply "hang-out" at the Mall. Their main research method was a structured interview with prepared questions, and they were performed face-to-face and by phone. However, they had printed versions of their questions as well, for the people that wanted to fill those later. In total, these students managed to collect the data from 100 respondents within the Mall (majority near the grocery shops), and 122 respondents via the phone interview.

When it comes to the background profiles of the respondents, most of them were coming from the 35-45 age group (22%), with 52% of the respondents living within a walking distance from the Mall, and mostly women (no data on the percentages regarding male and female population of visitors were provided by this research).

**Fascinating 56% of the respondents were full-time employees, while the next big group of the respondents were coming from the seniors (16%).** The research of students of Haaga-Helia UAS only confirms the main conclusion of the comparative study of this thesis: the

third-age customers should be part of the marketing and service concept strategy at the Mall of Tripla.

Most of the respondents visit the Mall alone (51%) or with the family (24%). Since the majority of the respondents were local residents, it makes sense that in the research it has been found that most of the visitors come to the Mall by foot (39%), and by bicycle (26%).

As previously mentioned, the study was done with the buyers only - 39% of the participants said that they spend on average 21-50 €.

When asked how many times per week they visit the Mall and how much time do they usually spend there, 28% of the respondents said to visit the Mall around 3-5 times per week, with 39% of the respondents spending between 1-2 hours per visit at the Mall.

Speaking of reasons of visiting the Mall, most of the respondents were visiting the Mall for grocery shopping and for shopping of other items. In general, the respondents were very pleased with the Mall, especially the cleanliness, safety and the atmosphere, with 67% of the respondents saying that they find the Mall to be good, and 27% of the respondents find the Mall to be very good. However, some of the respondents were not pleased with the clarity of signage system, as well as the lack of elevators and confusing instructions within the elevators.

In the study, the participants were asked to say what they find the most important thing to be for them when it comes to the Mall, and the majority of them responded that they value the numerous quality shops and grocery shops - Prisma and Lidl (other than these, diversity of restaurants and coffee shops were highly valued as well). The participants of the study highly appreciated the parking places and an easy access to the Mall in general with the car.

Since the purpose of the study was to better understand the customers of the Mall, the students of Haaga-Helia left an empty line when they asked the respondents what they are missing at the Mall and which shops they would like to have on top of the existing ones. Fashion stores were at the top of the list here, especially stores like Samsøe Samsøe, Levi's, Bershka... Specialty stores mentioned were hardware stores, bookstores, eastern shops (Japanese, oriental), Tokmanni, tech stores (mostly Gigantti, Power) and Yliopiston apteekki. Some respondents mentioned that they would love to have a sauna and an indoor or an outdoor pool available as well. To improve the sustainability of their consumption, the respondents emphasized that they would like to see stores such as UFF and FIDA at the Mall, or some other flea market. Flying Tiger of Copenhagen, restaurants serving domestic food, McDonald's, KFC, Turkish restaurant, Lush, Sephora, Sokos, furniture stores, were also commonly mentioned by the participants.

An interesting idea came from one of the participants who said that they would like to have a free common space that would be used to do something useful for the community. A dedicated free space for e.g., art, music, and education would be an excellent way for the Mall to promote its brand and to give back to the society.

As previously mentioned, the study was done with the buyers only. 39% of the participants said that they spend on average 21-50 €.

For more detailed graphs of the findings of the students of Haaga-Helia UAS please see Appendices.

Overall grade that the respondents of this research gave to the Mall of Tripla was Good (67%):

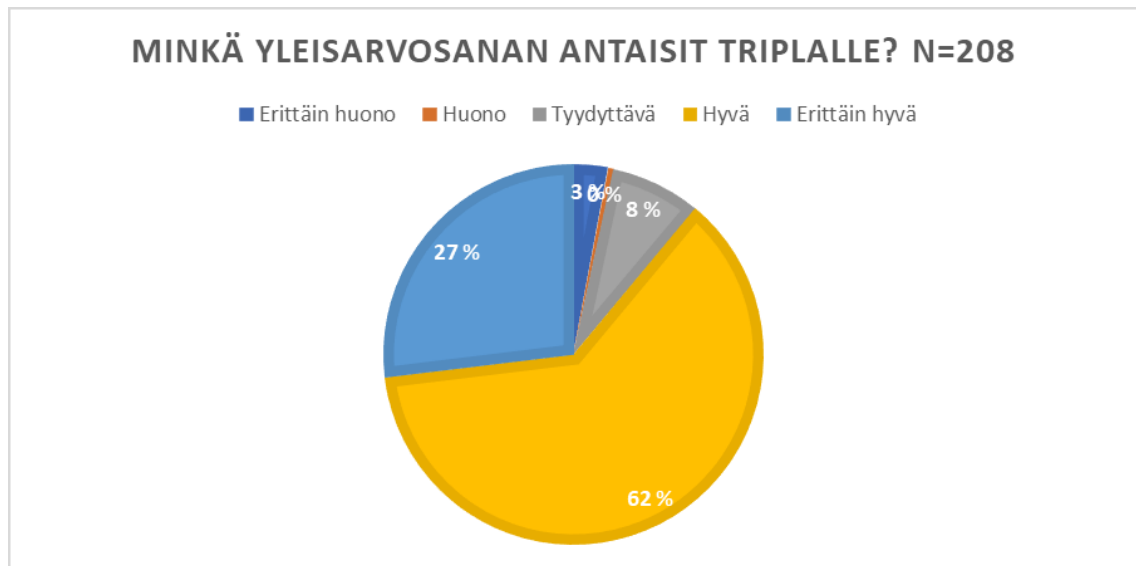


Figure 25: Overall grading of the Mall (source: Tripla kävijätutkimus presentation)

### 7.3 The developmental proposal for the Mall of Tripla in a nutshell

Based on the findings of the comparative study presented in this thesis, the following are the developmental proposals for the case company:

- The customers of third age should be included into the strategy and marketing concept of the Mall of Tripla; An easy start with learning about their needs and preferences would be organizing the focus groups;

- The case company should consider accommodating the preferences and needs of the male customers by expanding the services and store availability connected to e.g., tech and sports stores;
- The case company needs to improve the signage system within the Mall by making it simpler and clearer;
- The case company should consider creating a free space that will be of use to the community, e.g., for arts and crafts or pop-ups to support small business owners;
- The case company should consider bringing some of the desired shops and services (e.g. fashion brand Bershka and a library) to the Mall in order to expand the customer base.

#### 7.4 Recommendation for further studies

As market and everyday life are ever-changing, perhaps the time has come to also change our approach to the persona profiles. Their value has been discussed throughout this thesis, but the data collection is the part that I would like to suggest further studies on.

In the era of digitalization, and with a disruption such as COVID-19 that changed the buying habits of the customers, i.e., the fact that many have adopted the online shopping habits, and that the businesses are constantly trying to improve their online presence, are the traditional research methods of data collecting on personas outdated? The newer research data imply that: “In 2021, fifty-seven per cent of Finns aged 16 to 89 had bought something on the Internet in the past three months. **The number of e-shoppers is growing strongly only among persons aged 65 or older**; among those younger than that, the vast majority repeatedly buy goods and services online.” (Tilastokeskus Finland, 2021)

Would the data collection from an analytics tool be enough to know our current customers, as these tools, such as Google Analytics, also provide a variety of information on the customers (age, gender, location), or even more - as it is also possible to see at which step does the customer give up on buying the certain item(s), quickly notice the trends and behavioural patterns, as well as the social media channel preferences - which would help businesses to target the certain channels and engage with their customers? Best of all, this way the businesses would save time and money, as these tools are automatized, and the custom reports are easy to make.

Is it time for a digital persona profile?

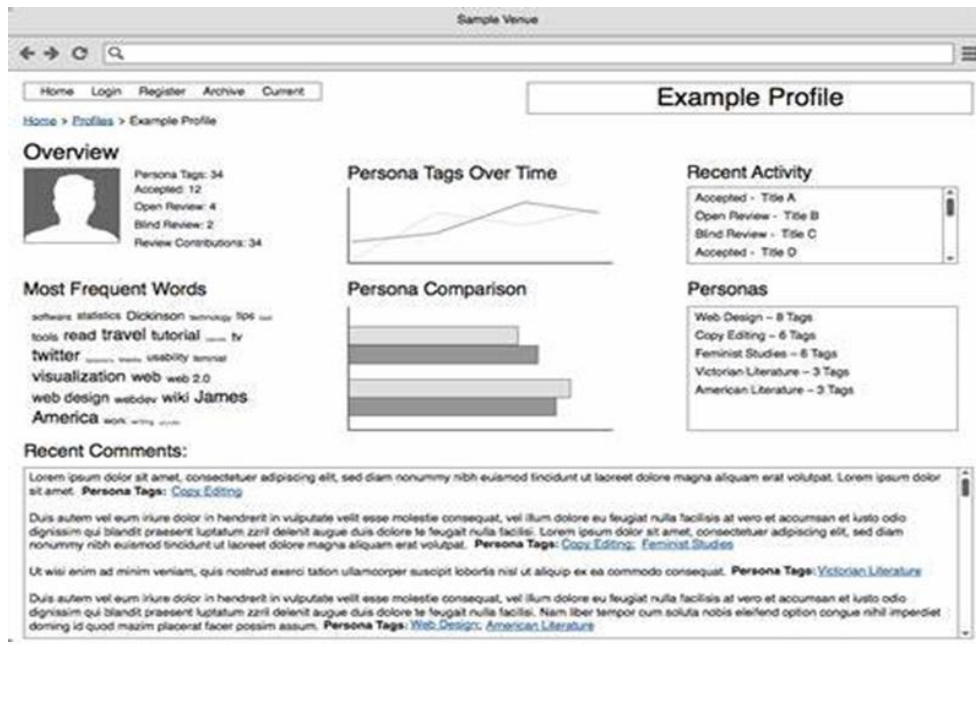


Figure 26: An example of a digital persona profile (source: licensed under CC BY-SA)

## 7.5 Learning outcomes

There have been numerous learning outcomes of this thesis, and they are all very beneficial when it comes to my personal and professional growth.

Having a big company, such as the Mall of Tripla, as a case company for my thesis research paved the path to learning about the concept of the mall as a company, its organisational departments, sustainability goals as part of their CSR strategy, as well as their marketing strategy - online and offline, and created excellent opportunity for networking and meeting people from the industry.

Learning about the theoretical background of the persona meant deepening of knowledge about Service Design and its concepts in general. Now, I can with confidence say that I truly understand the purpose of the personas. A big part of the Service Design is the data visualisation, and learning how to visualise the customers' profiles has been crucial for understanding the personas in general as well.

The literature study has enabled me to identify and grasp the main concepts of a comparative study as a research method as well. Without understanding the principals of a comparative study, it would have been impossible to recognize, outline and derive meaningful conclusions for the case company.



The knowledge gained through this thesis research and soft skills such as communication skills (through interaction with the client and my thesis mentor) and presentation skills (through my thesis defence), have been learning outcomes that I will always carry with me, especially now as I enter the professional life in Finland.

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## Unpublished

### Presentations of students of Laurea UAS:



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GirlPower\_FinalPrese  
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PawPatrol\_FinalPrese  
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### Presentation of the students of Haaga-Helia UAS:



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### Presentations of Mall of Tripla:



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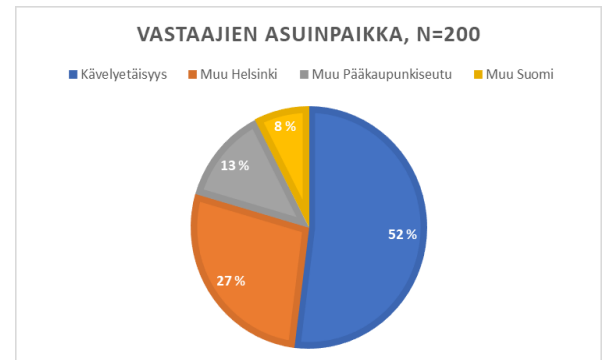
Appendix 1: Background profiles of the respondents.....

Appendix 2: Reasons for visiting the Mall .....

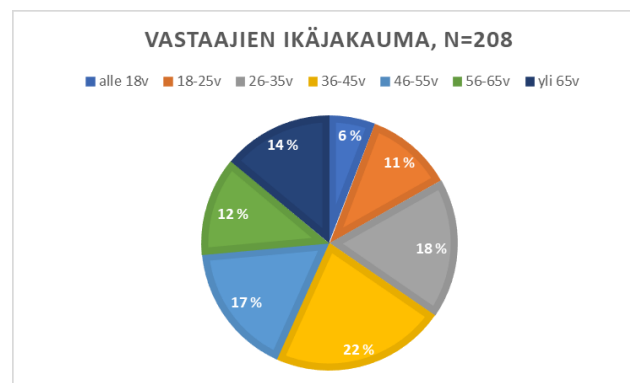
## Appendix 1: Background profiles of the respondents



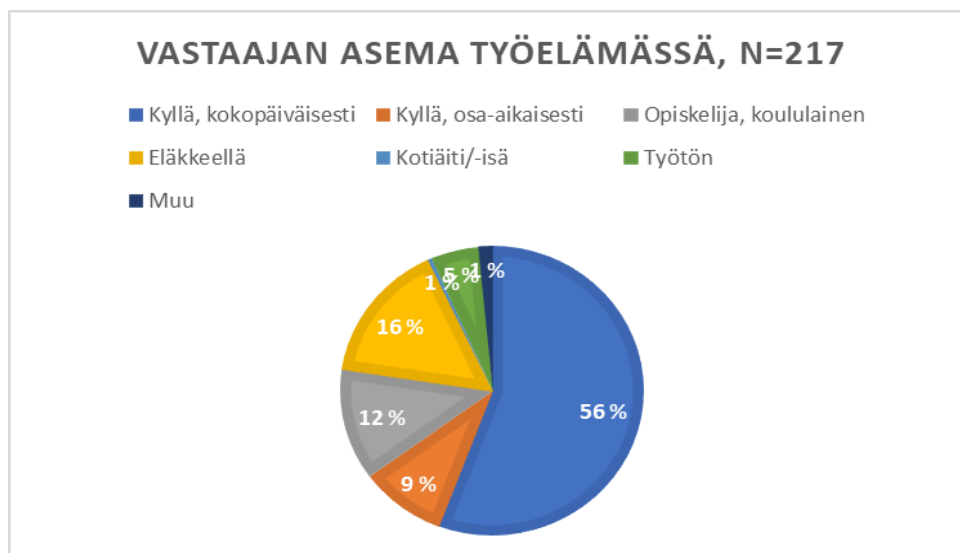
Gender distribution of the respondents



Place of residence of the respondents



Age distribution of the respondents

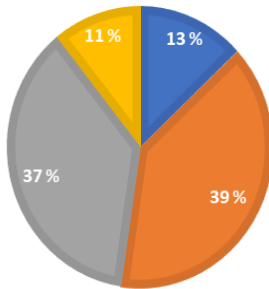


Employment status of the respondents

## Appendix 2: Reasons for visiting the Mall

### KUINKA KAUAN ARVIOT KÄYTTÄVÄSI AIKAA TRIPLASSA TÄLLÄ KERTAA? N=214

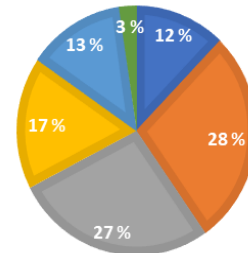
■ Yli kaksi tuntia ■ 1-2 tuntia ■ 30-59 minuuttia ■ Alle 30 minuuttia



Time spent at the Mall

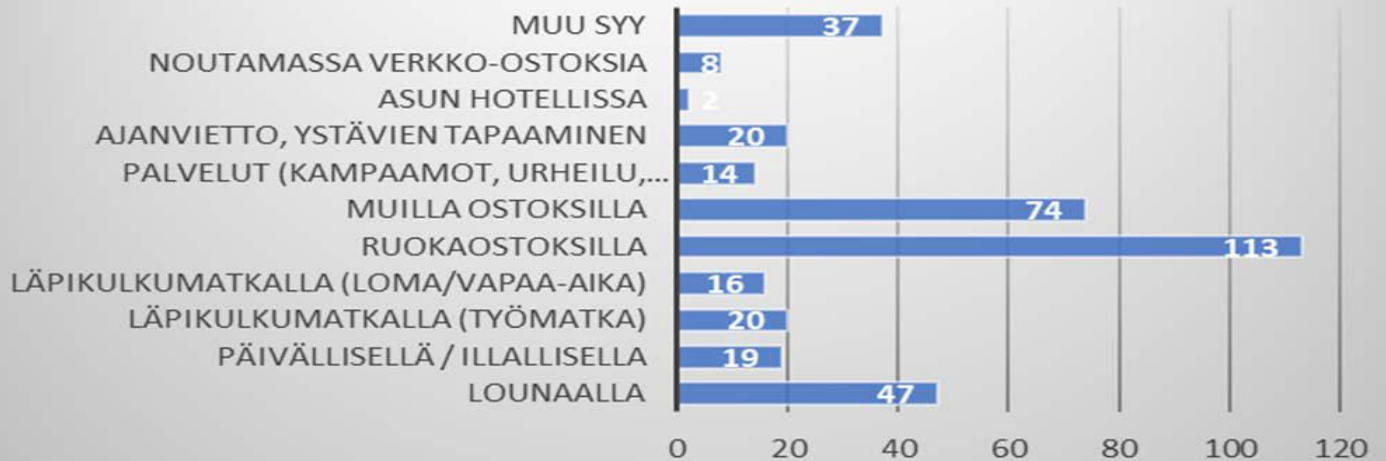
### KUINKA USEIN KÄYT TRIPLASSA? N=221

■ Päivittäin ■ Noin 3-5 kertaa viikossa  
 ■ Noin kerran viikossa ■ 1-3 kertaa kuukaudessa  
 ■ 1-3 kertaa puolessa vuodessa ■ Kerran vuodessa tai harvemmin



Visit frequency of the respondents

## Mistä syystä olet nyt Triplassa? N=370



Reasons for visiting the Mall

\*Other (37), Picking-up order (8), Staying in a hotel (2), Meeting friends (20), Hairdresser and sports (14), **Shopping** (74), **Grocery-shopping** (113), Leisure-time (16), Passing through (20), Dinner (19), Lunch (47).



