

Consumer experience at lifestyle trade fair: study on themed space as experiential context

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Objectives

The objective of this research is to find out what is the experiential context in lifestyle trade fairs targeted to consumers. The research problem of this thesis is how the design of the venues affect the consumer experience. Since lifestyle trade fairs have been studied only from the market culture approach, this study aims to describe the lifestyle trade fair experience and how the themed space with social, physical, and atmospheric dimensions contributes to the experience as experiential context by evoking consumers senses, and emotions, and triggering behavior.

Methodology

Phenomenological paradigm guides the design of this thesis. Market oriented ethnography is the research method applied. The research context comprises of Book Fairs both in Frankfurt and Helsinki. The research material consists of interviews with the fair visitors, participant observations, field notes and photographs taken at both Book Fairs.

Results

This study indicates that the experiential context at lifestyle trade fair comprises of social, physical and atmospheric elements that each contribute to the fair experience in the theme rooms of the exhibition centre. Visitors' emotional arousal is rather low and, in general, the surrounding space is experienced as functional and effective, but not aesthetically pleasing. The behavior of consumers is characterized by both active and passive participation in the form of discovering and exploring. Main disturbing factor at the fair is the clamor created by the crowding and lack of sufficient sound system. Thus, relaxing lounges are highly sought after to balance the over-stimulation of senses characterizing the overall experience.

Keywords *consumer experience, experiential context, themed space, lifestyle trade fairs*

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the topic

With the rise of experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999) the notion of experience has become a key element in understanding consumer behavior (Addis and Holbrook 2001) and led the way to experiential marketing (e.g. Schmitt 1999) and customer experience management (CEM) (e.g. Meyer and Schwager 2007) as **nowadays consumers seek to experience immersion into thematic settings in contrast to consuming products and services** (Carù and Cova 2007). As the experiential contexts are the only manageable element for marketer (Carù and Cova 2007) exhibiting spaces are becoming increasingly relevant within the retail and trade show industry. Especially since the advances of technology are creating new rivals for traditional trade fair formats with virtual trade fair platforms such as Madison Buyer and e-pitti by Pitti Immagine in the fashion industry.

Consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs from the consumer point of view has been studied before only from the market culture perspective started by Peñaloza (2000, 2001) despite the acknowledgement of the influential role context with spatial environment has in experiential marketing and consumption (Schmitt 1999). Therefore, how the experiential consumption with *fantasies, feelings, and fun* (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) and experience in all its dimensions (Pine and Gilmore 1999) take place in a themed environment where curious lifestyle hobbyists gather to spend their free time is an open question. It is thus the question tackled in this thesis.

Lifestyle trade fairs are particularly relevant and meaningful for this research for two important reasons. First, they take place in a built environment that is changeable and designable. Secondly, trade fairs and exhibitions targeted to consumers are important subsector in the experience economy dominating in today's consumer markets. In 2011 there were 22 public exhibition events at Helsinki Fair Center and over 100

events and exhibitions at Messe Frankfurt. Most of the public trade fairs organized both in Finland and abroad fall under the lifestyle category ranging from winter sports to music and fashion. In Finland trade fairs comprise 197 million euros of marketing communications investments and 5,8% of the total expenditure (Finnish advertising council 2011). Association of the German Trade Fair Industry (AUMA MesseTrend 2012) concluded in their MesseTrend findings that, despite the growing uncertainty regarding the economic future, many German exhibitors plan to increase their trade fair budgets in 2012/2013: 30% intending to invest more in trade fairs and 55% the same amount as previous year.

1.2 Research gap

Despite the hype of the experience word in the literature and its relevancy in the events scene, little qualitative research has been conducted on how consumers actually experience events (Holloway et al. 2010), and in more detail, trade fairs targeted to consumers. Consumer experience research on retailing and on both sports and tourism area are abundant (e.g. Peñaloza 1999; Sherry 1998; Arnould and Price 1993) but many other lifestyle-characterized events are lacking qualitative research on the experience side. Studies on lifestyle brands and stores from American Girl to Nike Town (e.g. Diamond et al. 2009; Peñaloza 1999) exist but lifestyle trade fairs in the B-to-C sector from consumer experience viewpoint are scarce. The gap is intriguing as positive customer experience can lead to word of mouth (WOM), loyalty and enhance marketer's bottom line (Maklan and Klaus 2011). However, it is still neglected by many companies (Meyer and Schwager 2007).

Even though retail stores and exhibitions have similarities, both being artificial, designed spaces, what makes exhibitions and trade fairs different from concept and flagship stores, is temporality. In addition, retailers design their own premises and can control the intrusion of competing influences (i.e. other brands) that can disturb the coherence of the experience. Thus, trade fairs and exhibitions provide diverse context for consumer experience.

Previous studies on consumer experience and lifestyle trade fairs (Ahola 2007; Virkkula et al. 2008; Schlobohm 2010) focus on the cultural perspective relying on Peñaloza's model of market culture (2000, 2001), and cultural meanings that are created by marketers and consumers together at the trade fair. As the lifestyle trade fair studies have focused on the market place culture approach, in the retailing side the consumer experience is analyzed in more detail in relation to the surrounding space (e.g. Sherry Jr. et al. 2001; Markkanen 2008) focusing on the affective and behavioral side of the consumer experience from different stimuli to feelings and approach-avoidance behavior.

Based on the previous market culture studies on trade fairs and exhibitions consumers have significant and active role in forming their fair experience and the leisure trade fair market culture that is created through the interactions with their own experience world, the event, other fair visitors and the marketers. On the contrary, studies on retail spaces acknowledge how the surrounding space is contributing to the consumer experience by offering holistic shopping environment catering senses, feelings, thoughts, action, and social cohesion (Markkanen 2008). In fact, the experience boom in the retailing side has led the way to the phenomena of brand flagship stores with Apple being a powerful example.

Furthermore, what the trade fair organizers are measuring and gathering statistics for are not about consumer insight on user experience. Extensive figures on space, exhibitors, and visitor profiles (e.g. FKM Report 2011; Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations 2012) offer quantitative data but they do not help much in understanding the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs and what it comprises of.

Therefore **the research problem** in my thesis is

What is the experiential context at lifestyle trade fairs targeted to consumers and how it contributes to the consumer experience?

The research problem is approached through below described **research questions**

Q1: What are the contextual elements influencing the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fair?

Q2: How are consumer's senses and emotions evoked at lifestyle trade fair?

Q3: How does play characterize consumers behavior at lifestyle trade fair?

The aim of my thesis is to gain better understanding of consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs and, in more detail, how it is influenced by the trade fair space: what are the encounters (i.e. touch points and interactions) at lifestyle trade fairs forming the experience? Hence, both consumer experience and the lifestyle trade fair context are emphasized. Based on the empirical findings from the Book Fairs both in Frankfurt and Helsinki, I conclude with implications on how to re-conceptualize trade fairs to help future marketers create the right environment and setting for consumer experience. In sum, the aim is to contribute what trade fairs could be like in the future.

1.3 Research design

In this study market-oriented ethnography is used as a method of research. The ethnographic research was conducted at the Frankfurt Book Fair on the 10th to 14th of October and at the Helsinki Book Fair on the 25th to 28th of October. In addition, StoryDrive conference gathering professionals from gaming, film, and book industries, was attended 11th and 12th of October as part of the Frankfurt Book Fair program to gain better understanding of the book and media industry, i.e. the context of the trade fairs being studied.

The research material comprises of recorded individual interviews with fair visitors and participant observation. Photographs were taken during the trade fairs and informal discussions held with the exhibitors, journalists, and the visitors at the fairs. The material was collected both at the Frankfurt and Helsinki Book Fairs.

1.4 Focus of the study

Although the consumer's holistic experience includes all the three phases from pre to post experience (Tynan and McKechnie 2009, p.509), the focus of this study is on the consumer experience at the lifestyle trade fair and how the exhibition space contributes to the customer experience as no research was conducted before or after the event itself. The study analyzes the experience from the consumer point of view only, i.e. the book fair visitor. Therefore, marketing and managerial perspectives are not in the scope of this study except in the implications section when discussing thoughts and ideas for the future concept of public lifestyle trade fairs targeted to consumers.

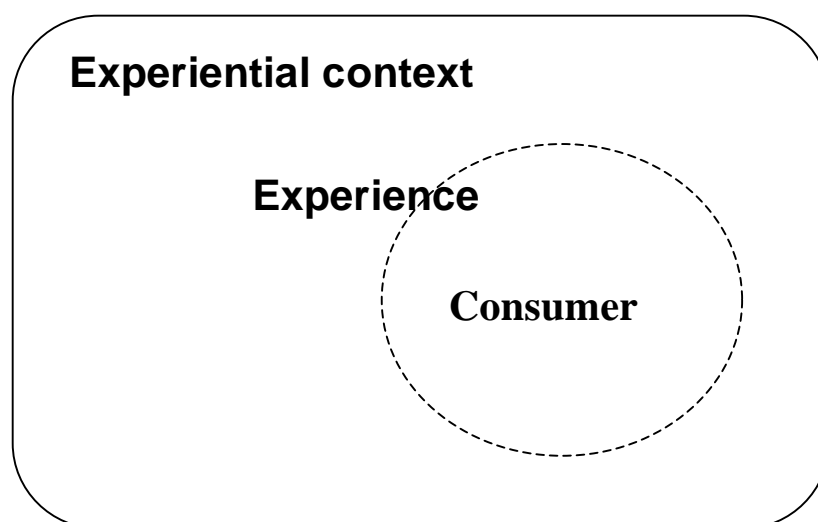


Figure 1 Focus layers of the study

1.5 Structure of the report

The basis for this study is Holbrook and Hirschman's notion of experiential consumption and previous research on themed environments in retail context, as it has not been applied in the event and exhibition studies before. Hence, in the following literature review a definition for consumer experience is first presented and an overview on previous consumer experience research on themed environments.

In the third chapter, the research methodology used in this study is introduced with brief descriptions on the context of the study and on the research material gathered. In addition, the validity, transferability and reliability of the chosen research methodology, market oriented ethnography, is discussed and how well it fits the purpose of this study.

The fourth chapter starts the empirical part of the report by entering the Book Fairs and presenting main findings from research conducted both at Helsinki and Frankfurt Book Fairs. First the experiential context, the themed environment of the fairs, is discussed. Then the surrounding space is further analyzed based on how consumers experience it in relation to three dimensions: atmospherics, social and physical. Lastly, how the being at the Book Fair in its experiential context is displayed by visitors' behavior as discovering and exploring is portrayed.

After going through the findings from Book Fairs both in Helsinki and Frankfurt, discussion and analysis is presented in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter concluding remarks summing up this thesis is portrayed and implications for the future trade fair concept are depicted. In addition, limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.

2 Literature review

In this chapter, first overview of the literature regarding consumer experience is presented and what the term means in this study defined. Further on, as the consumer experience is studied in relation to the exhibition space in this thesis, previous research on experiential context and themed environments is discussed. Based on the consumer experience and themed environments literature the general framework guiding this study is formed.

2.1 Studies on experience

Different types of experiences have been characterized from peak and extraordinary experiences (e.g. Arnould and Price 1993; Carù and Cova 2003; Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993) to flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). However, consumer experience is lacking a clear definition what it actually stands for (Carù and Cova 2003; Gupta and Vajic 2000; Ismail et al. 2011). Consultants and researchers are presenting differing views on consumer experience and what are its types, dimensions and configurations. Hence, drawing from the previous literature on consumer experience, a definition used in this study is presented.

2.1.1 Experience formation

When discussing experiences it is useful to look at the formation first. In considering consumer experience two perspectives of consumer behavior dominate: the traditional information processing, i.e. decision-oriented, and the experiential perspective. In contrast to the cognition, affect and behavior model described by information-processing approach the experiential perspective emphasizes emotions and contextual, symbolic and non-utilitarian aspects of consumption (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). In other words, the experiential view emphasizes the sensorial perception that generates emotions. By sensing the environment humans create a bundle of emotions that lead to experience (Boswijk et al. 2007).

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) refer to hedonic consumption (also referred to as experiential consumption) when talking about experiences – consuming for enjoyment. It covers the **multi sensory, fantasy, and emotive** aspects of product usage that is understood as a subjective, inner kind of phenomena. They describe consumption that seeks fun, amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory simulation and enjoyment, and requires arousal from the consumer (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The multi sensory elements refer to tastes, sounds, scents, tactile impressions, and visual images that can relate to for example history or fantasy imagery, or as later on discussed in the literature review, relate to a specific theme. Fantasy answers to imagination as the hedonic consumption acts are based not on what consumers know to be real but rather on what they desire reality to be. Emotive response includes feelings from joy to rage. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) note that individuals do not only receive experiences in a multi sensory mode but they also respond and react to the stimuli they get exposed, hence, putting interaction at the heart of experience.

In accordance with Hirschman and Holbrook's emotive response, Poulsson and Kale argue, that for an encounter to be labeled as an experience, one or more of the following **sensations and feelings** need to be apprehended by the customer: **personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning, and engagement** (2004). Personal relevance refers to "individual's internal state of arousal, activation, and preparedness to engage in a specific experience" influencing involvement and engagement that respectively affects the quality of the perceived experience. Sensation of novelty requires a change in surrounding stimulus: simply put something being different from before for the consumer. Surprise is the result of expectations versus the event itself; consumer feels surprised if the product exceeds his expectations. Thus, the event itself does not need to be new but the experience with the event yes. As with personal relevance, also learning leads to engagement that is a two-way interaction between consumer and the marketer requiring both consumer input and feedback from the marketer. According to Pine and Gilmore in the era of experience economy mere entertainment of consumers is not enough as the aim should be engagement (1999). In sum, Poulsson and Kale emphasize the affective role of experiences defining consumer experience as a bundle of emotions. The greater the assortment of these sensations, the more intense the experience will be; the five elements work as a checklist for experience creation.

In addition to sensations and feelings, Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1997) defines experiences based on the consumer's mental state, and has introduced the term flow into the experience literature. According to him, optimal experience balances the challenge level of the task with individual's skill level creating in best-case scenario a **flow** experience. In other words, if the individual can find optimal fit between his skills and the demands of the task at hand he can pursue total absorption that Csikszentmihalyi calls flow. Following nine components characterize this experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1997):

1. Clear goals
2. Immediate feedback
3. Balance between challenges and skills (optimal fit)
4. Action and awareness merge (intense concentration)
5. Distractions exclude from consciousness
6. No worry of failure
7. Self-consciousness disappears
8. The sense of time becomes distorted (time flies)
9. The activity becomes "autotelic" (an end in itself, done for its own sake)

When reaching for a flow experience consumer needs to have clear goals and be able to receive immediate feedback during the process. The most crucial condition, however, is the balance between requirements of the task at hand and individual's skill set that should reach optimal fit by not being too challenging or too easy to do. In a state of flow individual has intense concentration and is totally focused on the task. Thus, he does not feel distracted. In addition, individual does not worry about failure and his self-consciousness disappears as he is under intense concentration. Moreover, with intense concentration the sense of time becomes irrelevant and the task an end itself and not a tool for reaching something else.

To sum up, by sensing the environment consumers are exposed to a variety of stimuli that create emotional replies and trigger experiences. Sensations of personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning, and engagement attribute to experiences that by nature are individual and subjective. When compared to products and services, the memorability and personal aspect differ experiences form tangible products and

intangible services (Kotler and Armstrong 2001). As Gentile and colleagues describe (2007):

“The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual).”

2.1.2 Experience dimensions

As the consumer experience defined previously is mainly based on sensing and feeling, Pine and Gilmore (1999) define four types of experiences based on one of the core elements characterizing experiences: interactions, i.e. the consumer interaction and participation level with the environment. Hence, adding behavioral aspect to the consumer experience. *The Four Realms of Experience* (see figure 2) are formed based on individual’s **connection with the environment** (y axis with absorption vs. immersion) and **participation in the experience** (x axis with passive vs. active). In absorption the experience is brought to the consumer and he goes along with the experience whereas in immersion the visitor becomes physically part of the experience. Hence, the realms move from mere listening and watching to immersing oneself in the place itself. Consumer’s passive participation means being only mentally part of the experience and pursuing the observer role. On the contrary, the active participation refers to taking part in the experience physically and even (co)-producing the experience.

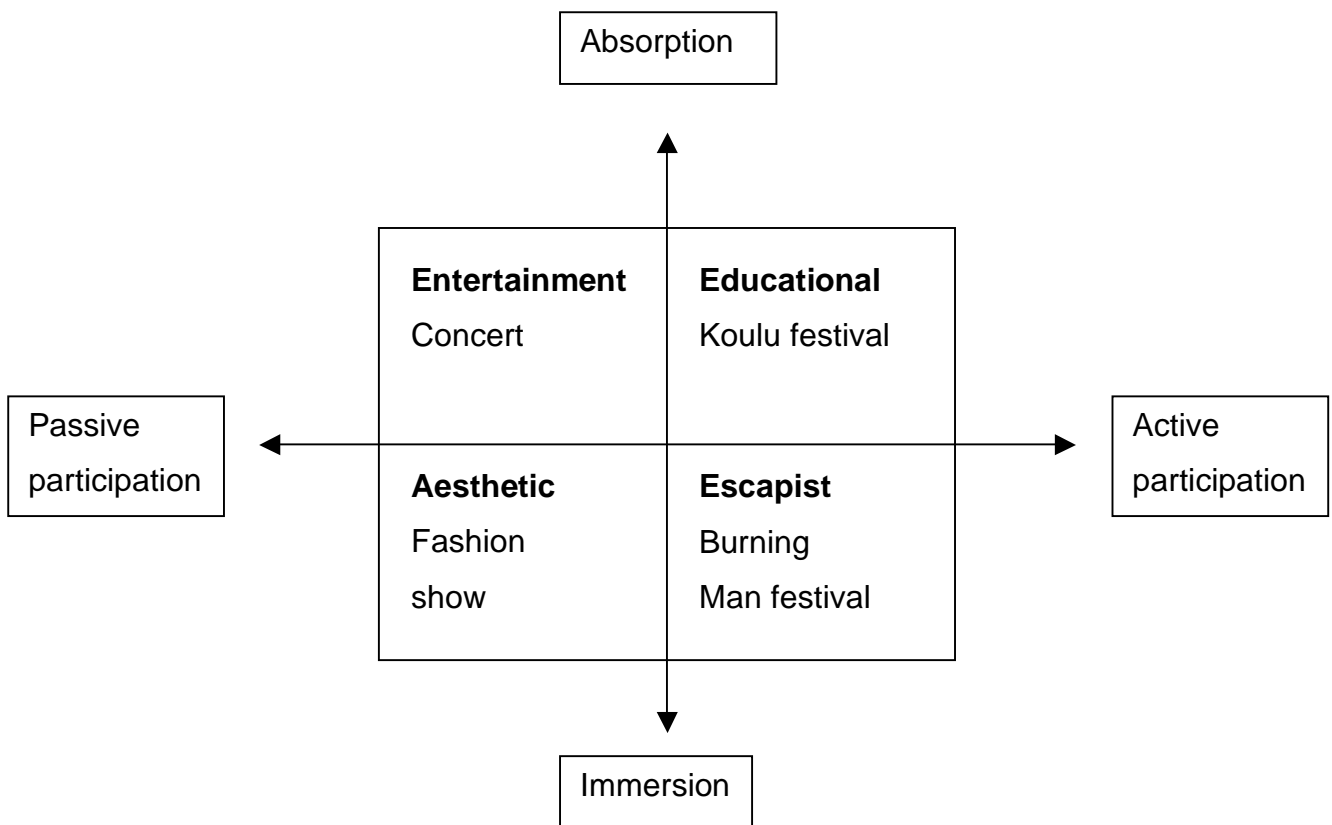


Figure 2 The Four Realms of Experience with Event Examples

Therefore, the four realms formed by the connection with the environment and participation in the experience are entertainment, educational, escapist, and esthetic. The emotions triggered by the environment with consumer’s active or passive participation differ from educational to aesthetic. Customer experience can educate, entertain, and provide an opportunity to display some particular knowledge, values or behavior socially, or offer an escapist, visual or aesthetic encounter (Pine and Gilmore 1998, 1999; Holbrook 2000). The dimensions do not describe in detail the emotions provoked and triggered by the interactions with the environment but bundles them into themes based on the consumer participation in the experience.

In the entertainment category consumer absorbs the experience through his/her senses in a passive manner. The educational experience, on the other hand, requires consumer’s active participation and has to stimulate consumer mentally and physically (Pine and Gilmore 1999, p.35). The last two dimensions belong to

immersion: aesthetic with passive participation and escapist with active participation. Marketer's role is to provide these experiences (Pine and Gilmore 1998; Schmitt 1999; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) in which customers can participate actively or passively and connect either by being absorbed or immersed. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) the richest experience combines all the four types of experiences from entertainment to escapist. Hence, the ideal spot is in the middle of the figure.

To give examples of the four different experience types in events scene, four events are part of the figure. Although separating events into different categories often tend to be too black and white, these examples are only to give a better picture *of the four realms of experience*.

The Koulu (School) festival organized by the Finnish think tank Demos Helsinki was a festival where people were able to learn from each other by participating in lectures held by individuals interested in sharing their knowledge with others, i.e. learning from people-to-people. The Koulu festival catered as an educational experience as visitors could enhance their skills and knowledge by actively participating in different lectures – leave the event venue with new skills. Another type of event with consumer's active participation is the Burning Man festival organized in Black Rock desert in Nevada. The Burning Man Festival offers escapism to visitors by giving visitors full freedom to express themselves under given theme yearly. It has formed into an anti-market event where visitors can escape the market (Kozinets 2002) as they create a temporary community. Fashion show is an event for presenting designer's new season collection. They offer aesthetic experience with passive participation and immersion as the viewer is only sitting and viewing the collection presented at the catwalk and often enriched by audiovisual cues and strong imagery. Concerts on the contrary provide entertainment where consumer absorbs the surrounding audiovisuals without participating in the creation of the experience itself.

However, as mentioned earlier, the ideal spot is in the middle of the figure 2. Immersive experience combines all the four different dimensions: entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist.

2.1.3 The Experience Pyramid

The Experience Pyramid is a theoretical model created by LEO, Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry. The pyramid is divided into two approaches: customer experience levels and elements of the product. The model presents ideal experience where all the elements and experience levels are fulfilled. It can be used as a tool to analyze and design experiences (Tarssanen 2009). More importantly, however, it contains many consumer experience related elements under one model.

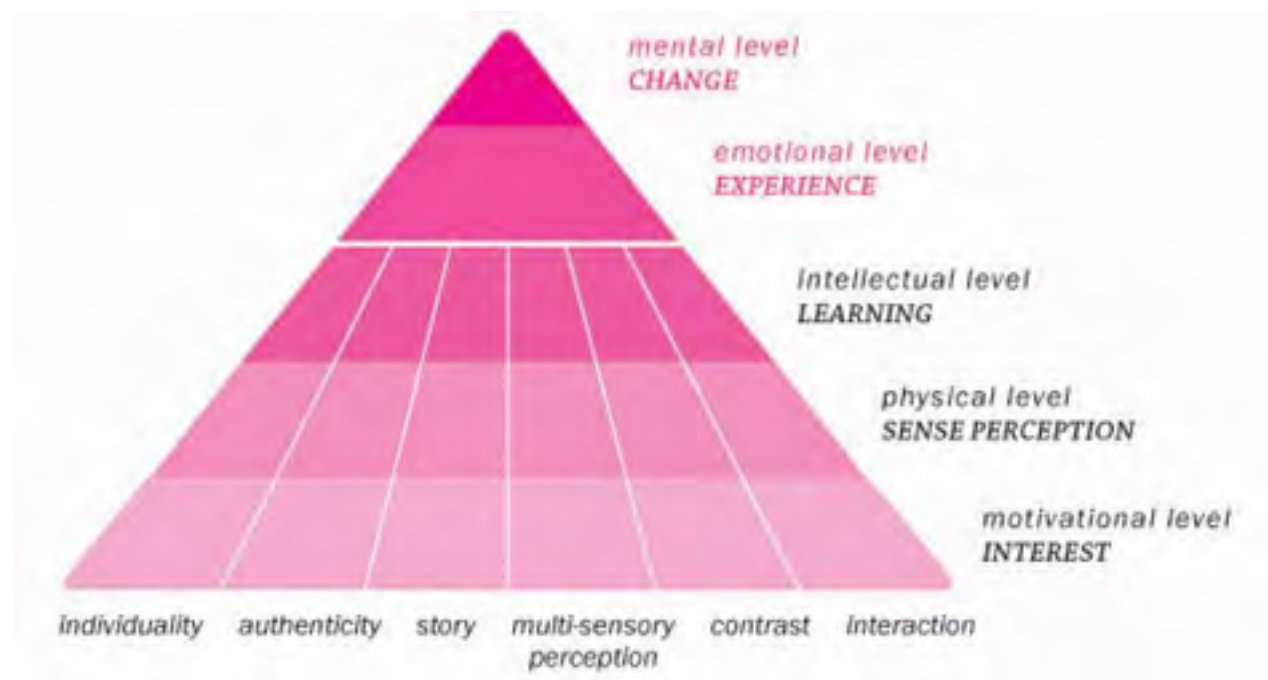


Figure 3 The Experience Pyramid (Source: Tarssanen 2009)

On the x-axis of the pyramid model there are six elements of experience that are considered prerequisites for an experience to occur, i.e. the building blocks of experience creation. **Individuality** refers to both how unique and extraordinary a product is (i.e. novelty) and how customizable it is to each individual's specific needs and wants. **Authenticity** refers to credibility of the product and in the end is defined by the consumer solely. **Story** is closely related to authenticity. It is important to bind the various elements of the product into a coherent story to make the experience catching and attractive. A credible and authentic story gives the product social significance and content. Pine and Gilmore (1999, p.46-55) name it thematizing and

harmonizing. **Multi-sensory perception** means that it is possible to experience a product with as many of the senses as possible. All sensory stimuli should naturally be in mutual harmony, supporting the desired theme. If the various senses are not stimulated appropriately - there are too many sensory stimuli, or they are annoying - the overall impact will suffer. **Contrast** means how different the experience is from the customer's everyday life, from his point of view. He/she must be able to experience something new, exotic and out of the ordinary. **Interaction** translates to successful communication between the product and the ones who are experiencing it, between the customers, as well as between the service providers and the customer. Experiencing something together with others increases the social acceptability of the product. In terms of individuality, personal interaction between the guide and the customer has a decisive role in how well the experience is conveyed to the customer. (Tarssanen 2009, p.12-14)

On the y-axis of the pyramid model are described the customer experience levels starting from raising interest that can eventually lead through sensing, learning, and experiencing to change. The levels are based on the psychological view of human beings operating on four levels: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (LaSalle and Britton 2003) and shares similarities with Gentile and colleagues definition of experience requiring consumer involvement at rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual level (2007). In the Pyramid Model motivational level has been added. According to Tarssanen (2009, p.15) in a good experience all levels are covered.

Motivational level refers to awakening attention and interest. The first level is about provoking mental images and differentiation mainly through marketing that should be personal, genuine, multi-sensory, and interactive conveying the image of out-of-ordinary. On **physical level** the product is experienced through senses. Using the physical senses, consumers realize where they are, what's happening and what they are doing. On **rational level** consumers process the sensory stimuli provided by the environment and act in accordance: learning, thinking, applying knowledge and forming opinions. On the **intellectual level**, individuals decide whether they are satisfied or not with the product while processing learning and skills. **Emotional level** is where the actual experience takes place (see also Hirschman and Holbrook 1982;

Poulsson and Kale 2004). However, it is difficult to predict and control individual's emotional reactions. According to Tarssanen (2009) if all basic elements of the product have been well taken into account, and the physical and intellectual levels both function, it is quite probable that the customer will experience a positive emotional response. On **mental level** a positive and powerful emotional reaction to a unique experience may lead to an experience of personal change, bringing about fairly permanent modifications to the subject's physical being, state of mind or lifestyle. (Tarssanen 2009, p.15-16; LaSalle and Britton 2003, p.9)

2.2 Studies on experiential context

The effect of environment on individuals has been studied in the field of architecture and interior design (Donovan and Rossiter 1982), also known as environmental psychology. Nonetheless, the role of social interaction and physical environment has been recognized in the field of experience design as well (e.g. Gupta and Vajic 2000). As experience is an emotional response to stimuli the environmental context, situation or setting, is one of the factors influencing experiential consumption (e.g. Lofman 1991).

“An experience is a subjective episode that customers live through when they interact with a firm's product or service offer. A firm can therefore offer experiential contexts that consumers each mobilize in order to immerse themselves and thus to (co)-produce their own experience.”
(Carù and Cova 2007)

According to Carù and Cova (2007), the experiential context needs to be simultaneously enclavized, secure and thematized (see also Pine and Gilmore 1999; Tarssanen 2009). By enclavized they mean that the context needs to have specific boundaries letting consumers step out from their daily lives and routines and, thus, forget their worries and hardships as they enter this “separate world”. In addition, the experiential context must be secure and closely monitored making it easier for the consumer to forget the daily concerns and focus on the enjoyable experience. Consumers prefer environments and activities that are controlled and minimize the

risks they take, i.e. they feel secure enough to let “others” take care of them and control of the situation. Last but not least, the context must be thematized (see also Pine and Gilmore 1999; Tarssanen 2009). To express and materialize the theme, or also called as story in the Pyramid Model, companies can use diverse sensorial and imaginary devices to overstimulate consumers and, thus, help them to concentrate and accelerate immersion. Therefore, in this subchapter the themed space as experiential context is discussed based on retail literature and space itself analyzed in more detail according to servicescape and atmospherics literature.

2.2.1 Themed spaces as experiential context



Picture 1 Themed Environment Examples: Cirque du Soleil & Las Vegas Venetian

As Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) started the discussion on hedonic consumption and Schmitt describing consumers as rational and emotional animals (1999) marketer’s answer to consumers seeking enjoyment has been themed spaces that serve multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of human needs and wants. Themed environments have become increasingly important places that cater for consumer’s need for leisure, community, and escapist relaxation (Wolf 1999, cf. Sherry et al. 2001). Also the rising popularity of hedonic consumption (Parvinen Markkinointi&Mainonta 2012) and the “society of spectacle” celebrating the unreal above the real (Sherry et al. 2001) keeps the interest for immersive spaces current.

The line between real and imaginary has blurred (Baudrillard 1988) favoring images, illusions, and simulations. In addition, Ritzer argues that as simulated consumption spectacles are gaining more and more popularity consumption is taking new forms as “infinitely more enchanted, spectacular, and effective selling machines” (2005, p. 207).

Themed environment can be defined as any constructed space, which conveys meaning to consumers through visuals (Gottdiener 1997). In more detail, it concerns spaces that use semiotics in the form of themes to reference a different time or place to the current time and place. Amusement parks are the most obvious example with Disneylands and Wonderlands but other venue types are also taking the advantage of themes in staging experiences. Examples are the traditional world expositions, shopping malls, Las Vegas casinos, festivals such as Burning Man and Tomorrowland, and many flagship and concept stores from NikeTown to American Girl. Also Cirque du Soleil is famous for its spectacular settings with themes created round their imaginative show stories. In sum, themes are applied to diverse settings to offer experiences for consumers as illustrated by the picture examples above.

As the fantasy elements in constructing contemporary retail environments also known as retail theaters have gained momentum Kozinets and colleagues (2002) created a framework that classifies, organizes, and analyzes the cultural associations behind the types of fantasy elements that may be used. Four types of retail themes are suggested by the servicescapes classification of marketplaces, and two dimensions define these types of retail themes (Kozinets et al. 2002). As represented by the horizontal axis in figure X, the first dimension presents how easily the retail theme can be adapted and managed ranging from “natural” to “cultural” or humanly designed and built. The second dimension portrays the tangible or material quality of the retail theme, represented by the vertical axis in figure X, and ranges from “physical” or tangible to “ethereal,” nonphysical or ideational. The intersection of these two axes produces four types of themes that are originally created to present retail formats and to be used in themed flagship brand store planning and development.

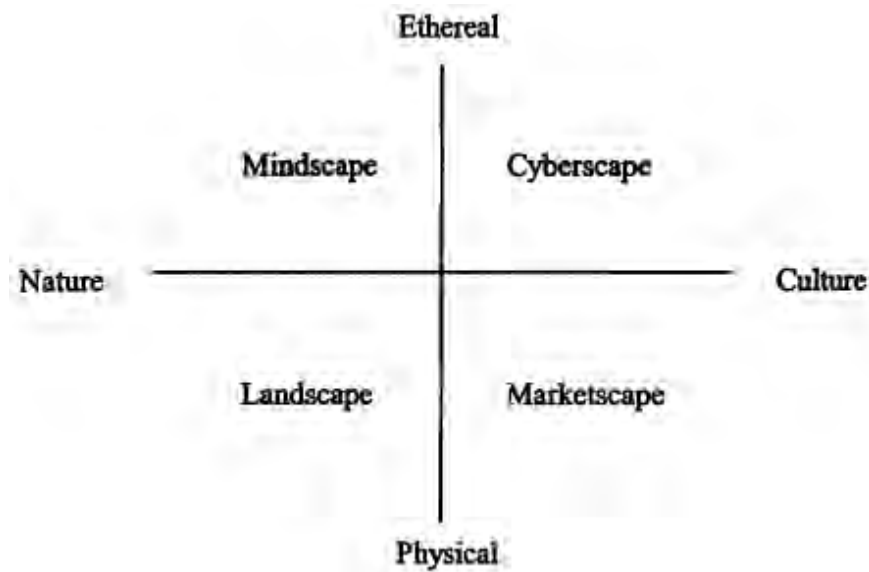


Figure 4 Themes at retail framework (Source: Kozinets et al 2002)

First are landscape themes, which employ associations to, and images of, nature, Earth, animals, and the physical body. An example would be most of the yoga studios offering natural, relaxing environment to practice mind and body. Second are marketscape themes, which employ associations and images of different cultures, man-made places, and buildings emphasizing either local or global cultural themes. An example would be Starbucks. Despite its American roots it localizes its servicescape to a certain extent as entering new markets with different culture, i.e. Asia. Both landscape and marketscape themes depict built environments. Third are the cyberscape themes, which employ associations and images relating to information and communications technology, and often to virtual community emphasizing the current development between clicks and bricks as digital world is blurring with the physical one. Classic examples are videogames and e-commerce websites such as Hay Day by Supercell or the online retailer Zalando that focus on offering primarily online experience. Fourth are mindscape themes, which draw on abstract ideas and concepts, introspection and fantasy, and which are often spiritual or ritualistic in their inclination; they allow consumers to feel a sense of the extraordinary and to lose their sense of time and place in the all-involving state that Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes as “flow”. As opposite to landscape and marketscape themes, both mindscape and cyberscape themes are nonphysical.

Several studies have examined experiences created through interactions in thematized spaces (Maclaran and Brown 2005; Kozinets 2002; Kozinets et al. 2004). These experience environments include varying venues from Las Vegas (Belk 2000) to brand flagship stores Nike Town (Penaloza 1998; Sherry 1998), western rodeo trade show (Penaloza 2000), and sports entertainment complex ESPN Zone (Sherry et al. 2001; Kozinets et al. 2004). Even street art in public places (Visconti et al. 2010) and clubbing environment (Goulding et al. 2010) have been analyzed from experiential viewpoint. These themed spaces in some studies are referred to as retail theaters as they offer staged venues for experiences in contrast to natural settings. Nonetheless, they all emphasize the performative, co-creative, hybrid, and multisensory essence of the experience.

Themed environments follow Pine and Gilmore's idea of creating unforgettable experiences by having one theme and offering supportive cues (1998, 1999). A theme can be described as the main story that guides the design of the experiential context from visuals to décor. Often themed spaces in retailing are referred to as "spectacular retail environments" or "retail theatres" that combine entertainment and stimulation in a staged setting. Since "consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun" were recognized already in the eighties as important consumption category, themed environments offer "commercial control of consumer fantasies" (Gottdiener 1997) by entertaining while promoting consumption. Belk (2000), Gottdiener (1997), Peñaloza (1999), and Sherry (1998) convey that consumers are directed through structured environments, where marketers clearly stage and manipulate consumer experiences.

Therefore, in themed spaces consumer behavior is described as playful (Kozinets et al. 2004). In themed environments playful consumption with "ludic autotely" occurs (Sherry et al. cf. edit. Carù and Cova 2007), meaning consumers play with the marketer's rule, but only to a certain extent. Especially in the case of Las Vegas, as studied by Belk (2000), the playfulness of consumers is characterized by infantilization of the consumer. Consumers experience Las Vegas as a playspace resembling kids experiencing playgrounds as the venue offers easy escape from reality, allowing them to chase excess and test their limits. As Grayson (1999, cf. Kozinets et al. 2004, p. 659) mentions on play and consumption: "The rule-bound nature of play offers consumers paradoxical opportunities to be seduced or be

subversive through rule following or rule breaking, playing along versus playing around.”

As mentioned earlier, interactions lie at the heart of experience (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Successful experience requires consumer’s active participation (e.g. Gupta and Vajic 2000, p. 39) and their emotional arousal (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Instead of being the passive recipient and “intervention” in the service system consumers should be allowed to participate and create their own use environment (Gupta and Vajic 2000). In accordance, what the previous studies on themed spaces and consumer experience share in common is consumers active role, being co-creators. Kozinets and colleagues (2004) argue in their study on ESPN Zone that consumers use the space as a stage on which to perform and co-create the spectacle. Moreover, they argue consumers and producers (marketer) as embedded “interagency” as consumers produce producers’ products at the same time as much as producers consume consumers’ consumption. Considerable freedom is given to consumers who use it to “work within the rules of play, to break other rules, and to create new rules” (Kozinets et al. 2004, p.668). By breaking the rules and making new ones consumers create “metagames”. This view is theoretically consistent with the dialectical relationship between marketers and consumers in the Nike Town context described by both Sherry (1998) and Peñaloza (1999).

In addition, studies on the American Girl Place present similar findings; thematized spaces managed by retailers and service providers might be expected to dominate and constrain but instead they enable co-creation by consumers (Diamond et al. 2009; Borghini et al. 2009). They are only hosting the community of visitors and balancing between rules and freedom in accordance with Carù and Cova (2007) discussing themed environments as enclavized and secure. Details are carefully planned and designed but leaving enough space for imagination and consumers own choreography. Thus it’s about choreographing co-authorship opportunities as the playspace is set for interactions among the consumer, marketer and other players.

Overall, the previous studies on consumer experience in a themed space emphasize the sensory and experiential aspects of consumption. Themed environments cater for

hedonic consumption that immerses visitors into a multi-sensory setting that works also as a playspace for both consumers and marketers.

2.2.2 Space and its elements

Since experiences occur in an experiential context, space and its elements are further elaborated to gain understanding how experiential contexts can be designed and what are the concrete tools available (space elements). Two intertwined streams of research, “servicescapes” and “atmospherics”, help understand the effect of built environments on consumption behavior and in general how consumers experience space and what its elements are.

Drawing on research in marketing, environmental and cognitive psychology, and ergonomics Bitner laid the foundation for the study of the effect of built environments on consumer thought, emotions, and actions by launching the term servicescape to describe the consumer experience of physical space. Recognizing that people experience an environment holistically, he divided the physical setting with environmental stimuli into three dimensions: ambient conditions; spatial layout and functionality; and signs, symbols and artifacts. Ambient conditions comprise of sense provoking stimuli and what are often referred to as atmospherics. Space and function describe how the venue is organized and filled with equipment and furnishing, i.e. interior design. Signs, symbol, and artifacts on the other hand communicate general meaning about the space in the form of graphic design for example by giving directions and rules of behavior (Rosenbaum and Massiah 2011). Overall the physical dimension represents the manageable and controllable elements of the space that can be designed and used as communicative tools and thus, contributing to the experience.

Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory in environmental psychology, Bitner developed a framework and an inventory of propositions for understanding the impact of the built environment on employees, customers, and their interactions. However, later on Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) expanded the servicescape perspective to a more holistic view of the environment catering contemporary notion of experience and its context by including in addition to physical

dimension, also social, socially-symbolic and natural dimensions that affect consumers (see figure 5 above). **Relevant ones for the aims of this study are physical dimension and social dimension and therefore depicted in more detail.**

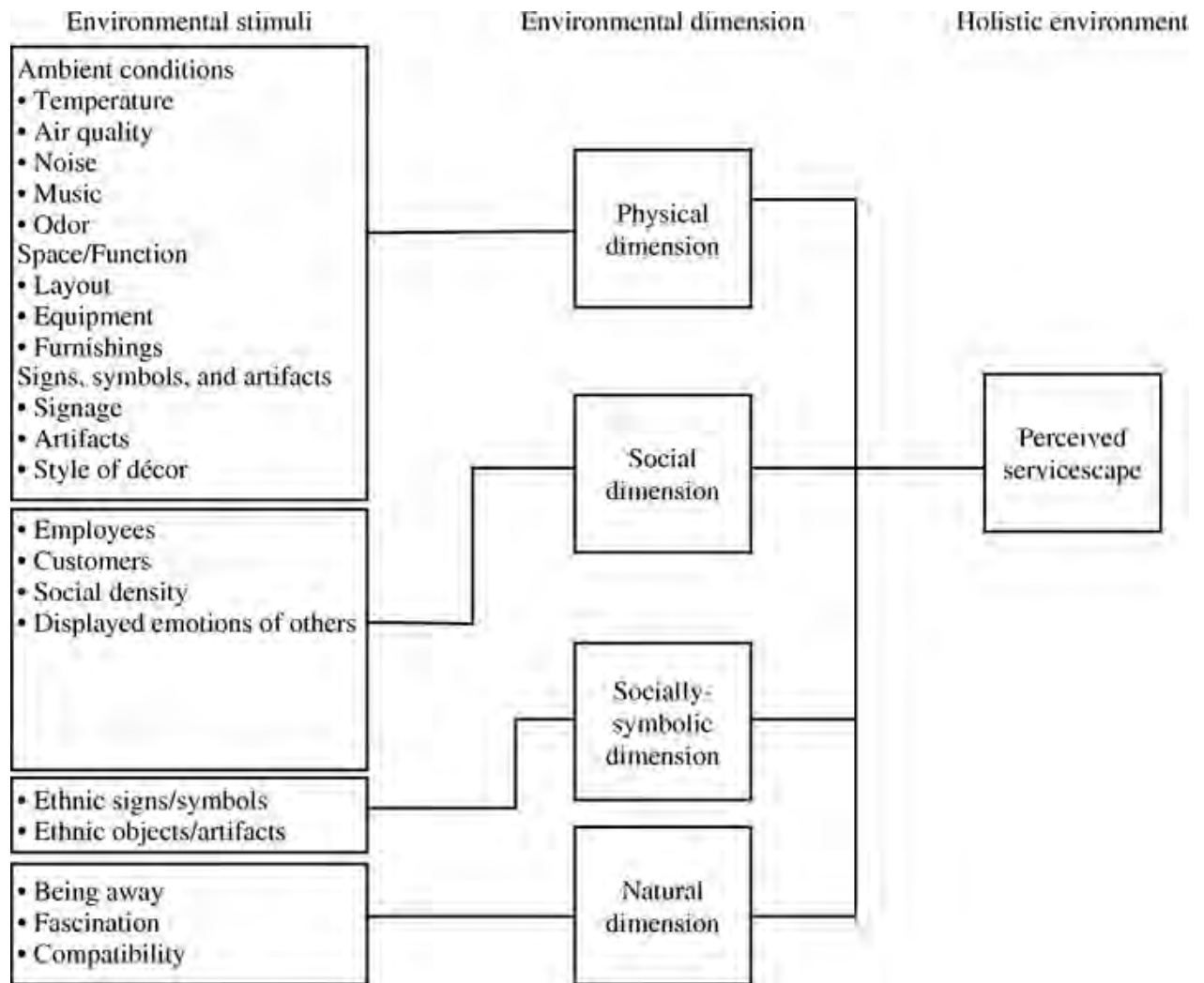


Figure 5 Expanded Servivescape Model by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011)

The **social dimension** of space consists of all the interactions consumers have with other members of the society (Sullivan and Adcock 2002, cf. Bäckström and Johanson 2006) in this study meaning trade fair visitors and exhibitors. Consumers can affect one another either directly or indirectly (Bitner 1992). In addition to the people at the venue the social dimension includes social density and displayed emotions by others (Rosenbaum and Massiah 2011). Social density means how crowded the space is. Rosenbaum and Massiah note that consumers are attracted to a

high social density when the possibility of entering into enjoyable, lighthearted associations with others is part of their goal in the consumption setting. Displayed emotions by others can also provoke different reactions whether the experience is individual or group experience (Rosenbaum and Massiah 2011) by having a more influential role with group experiences. In the case of individual experience such as using an ATM the displayed emotions by others play non-existent part in contrast to dinner gathering.

Social belonging can also be seen as part of the social dimension since experience especially in the case of events as group experience require other “right” consumers at the same location, and at the same time (Mossberg 2003, p.143-144). Social interaction with other consumers and marketer enhance the sense of belonging and help to create a sense of being a group member (Gupta and Vajic 2000, p.39) what Turner (1974) describes as “Temporary sense of closeness” or ”communitas” and Ahola as “corporality” (2007). Ahola extends the mere concept of feeling being part of a temporary community and intermingling with other people to include moving around in the space and sensing the space as a whole adding physical characteristics to social dimension.

The term “atmospherics” on the other hand is credited to Kotler. In the 70’s Kotler (1973) introduced the concept atmosphere in marketing. In some cases he mentioned the place, or more specifically the **atmosphere of the place**, can be more influential than the product itself in the consumption situation. Kotler mainly referred to the aesthetics of the retail environment and the conscious designing of space to create approach-behavior in consumers - in retail context often meaning enhancing buyer probability. Similarly Hoffman and Turley (2002) define atmospherics as “both tangible elements (e.g. building, carpeting, fixtures, and point-of-purchase decorations) and intangible elements (colors, music, temperature, scents) that comprise service experiences”. Ismail et al. (2011) acknowledge that the emotions provoked and the subjective feelings the customer has due to the setting/the atmosphere effect is likely to contribute to the customer experience. A positive atmosphere can lead to approach behavior and a negative atmosphere to avoidance behavior (e.g. Foxall and Greenley 2000; Donovan and Rossiter 1982, cf. Ismail et al. 2011, p. 215).

Consumers apprehend atmospherics through senses (Kotler 1973): sight, sound, scent, and touch. Taste is not included, since Kotler argues atmosphere cannot be tasted. However, Markkanen (2008) mentions that nowadays in modern retailing atmosphere can even be sensed through taste. In fact, both at the trade fairs and in the stores visitors can taste the atmosphere together with scent by walking through the bakery section in the grocery store or tasting new wines and delicacies at Wine, Food and Good Living Fair. Thus, depending from the context taste can prove to be essential ingredient in experiencing the space.

While atmospherics is commonly used to describe intangible elements of the (retail) environment, design is normally applied to signify more tangible elements present in the environment (Bäckström and Johanson 2006) that in the servicescape model represent **the physical dimension** with space and signs, symbols, and artifacts. The atmospherics are focusing more on the abstract, challenging to describe elements of the space. Design, on the other hand, refers to the visual/esthetic element of the space or as in the servicescape model the physical dimension. However, from mere “frosting” of the space, design is expressed through the decoration and architecture and thus expressing the theme of the space.

In retail discussions the design element often relates to the store layout and display (Bäckström and Johanson 2006). Layout refers to the structure of the space and how it is designed to cater people flow. In stores the most typical layout types are grid, free flow and racetrack (Markkanen 2008). In the free flow layout the retail space is literally following free flow pattern whereas, in contrast, the grid layout uses long rows with straight angles. The racetrack is the department store layout that sets consumer on a loop round the space. The display describes how articles are presented in the space.

In sum, based on the previous research from servicescapes and atmospherics the space in this study comprise of: physical, social, and atmospherics dimension.

2.3 Theoretical framework build-up

Theoretical framework consists of both notions of the reality being studied and the ways in which one can study that reality (Alasuutari 1996). The general framework guiding this study is based on previous literature on consumer experience, themed spaces and space with its elements. The general framework used in this study gives a viewpoint and is applicable to a number of cases, whereas the object of study is a particular case, in this study Book Fairs in Frankfurt and Helsinki, whose details can only be given a *local explanation* (Alasuutari 1996).

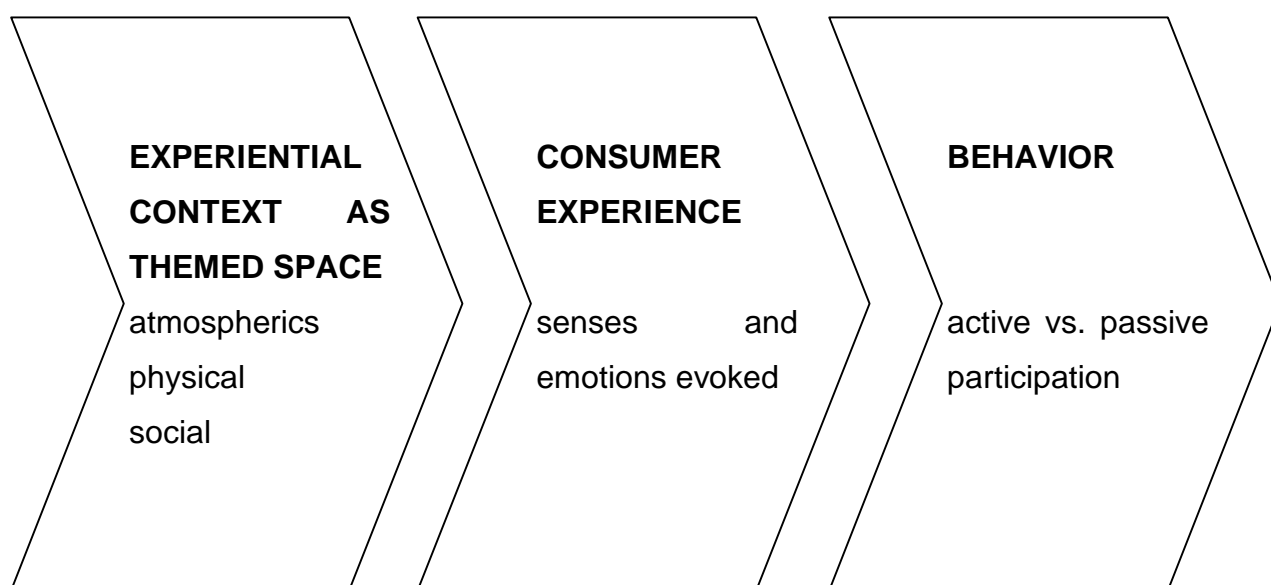


Figure 6 General Framework

In order to study the research problem - What is the experiential context at lifestyle trade fairs targeted to consumers and how it influences the consumer experience - general framework was formed (see figure 6) based on the previous literature. It follows the focus levels of the study: space, experience, and consumer. The general framework is built upon the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) thinking that responds to the notion of experience as interactive event requiring triggering of senses and emotions that eventually lead to behavior. Moreover, it answers to the research questions:

Q1: What are the contextual elements influencing the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fair?

(experiential context as themed space)

Q2: How are consumer's senses and emotions evoked at lifestyle trade fair?

(consumer experience as sensations and feelings)

Q3: How does play characterize consumers behavior at lifestyle trade fair?

(consumer behavior as active versus passive participation in the experience)

The experiential context is studied as themed space with atmospherics, physical and social dimension. Experiences are triggered by stimulation. Therefore, how the themed space evokes sensations and feelings is studied. Lastly how it translates into visitors doing and being at the lifestyle trade fair is considered as in active versus passive participation.

3 Research methodology

In this chapter, the methodology for the empirical part of the study is presented. First, the research paradigm guiding the design of this thesis is presented and the characteristics of ethnography as a method and how it is applied in this study explained. Then, the context and main data sets of the study are described in more detail. To conclude, the research process is portrayed and the validity and reliability of the study discussed.

3.1 Research approach

In the design of this thesis phenomenological, i.e. humanistic, philosophy is applied. Considering the subjective nature of experiences it was considered to fit the best the aims of this study to understand consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs more in-depth as it “stresses the subjective aspects of human activity” (Collins and Hussey 2003, p.53) when describing a social phenomena, such as events. Therefore, in this study the reality (the research context) is subjective and the researcher interacts with the phenomena being studied. The researcher has values that can be seen as lenses through which interpretations are drawn in the research phase, and thus, can affect the formation of findings. To balance this, diverse set of research methods are used to obtain diverse view of the same event.

In sum, in this study the main features of phenomenological paradigm apply from producing rich, subjective data to using small samples. From the phenomenological methodologies “quick and dirty” version of ethnography suitable to the short time frame of trade fairs as case studies was applied and is further discussed in the following chapter.

3.2 Market-oriented ethnography

This research is qualitative in nature. The term qualitative refers to humanistic and interpretive research that aims to understand a lived experience, a phenomenon (Sayre 2001). Thus, it caters well the purpose of this study to understand consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs. The usefulness of qualitative approach for the events area lies in its focus on the setting, the experience and the meaning attached to it (Holloway et al. 2010).

Ethnography is the oldest of the qualitative methods originating from the ancient travel stories of Greeks and Romans. Modern ethnography has its roots in anthropology and later on it diffused into sociology before becoming common in consumer research. The strength of ethnography has been traditionally in making possible to compare what people say and do (interviews vs. observations). As Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) state “ethnography gives priority to observation of behavior in action and relies on verbal reports in interviews for a perspective of action”.

In this study, market-oriented ethnography is applied. It refers to an ethnographic focus on the behavior of people constituting a market for a product or a service (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Therefore, the consumer trade fair experience is analyzed as part of the market place formed by the exhibitors and visitors in an exhibition centre. The market-oriented ethnography has three approaches: macro, micro and meso (Arnould and Price 2006). The meso level approach is applied in this study meaning the focus is on the cultural and social space, not on individual product usage. However, most importantly, Arnould and Price remind “all the approaches recognize that cultural context is not a sort of background factor or antecedent to individual behavior, but a public space in which the individual, his or her social relations, and meanings intersect in a dynamic process of co-constitution” (2006).

According to Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) four features guide ethnographers’ research practice:

- 1) Ethnography gives primacy to systematic data collection and recording of human action in *natural settings*.
- 2) Ethnographic research involves extended, experiential *participation by the researcher* in a specific cultural context, referred to as participant observation.
- 3) Ethnography produces *interpretations* of behaviors that the person studied and the intended audience find credible. People seldom make the systematic connections among their behaviors that are woven into ethnographies as the experience-distant, analytically based, and comparatively informed etic interpretations of the researcher.
- 4) Ethnography involves incorporating *multiple sources of data*. Ethnography uses them to generate varying perspectives on the behaviors and context of interest.

In this study, these four features were used as guidelines. Trade fair visitors were studied in the exhibition environment (see context). Data sources varied from participant observation to interviews, field notes and photographs (see research material). However, considering the duration of fairs being strictly limited to five to four days imposed some difficulties for the full ethnographic immersion into the consumer context. Therefore, quick and dirty approach was applied in this study. In addition, when priority was given to the lived experience of participants the possibility of unexpected directions was acknowledged during fieldwork phase.

As Getz argued in 2008, it will become increasingly necessary to “custom design” highly targeted event experiences, which must be based on greater knowledge of the event experience in all its dimensions. In this study, the market-oriented ethnography was used to create “greater knowledge” of consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs.

3.3 Research context

At events, consumers are immersed in the moment and actively participating in the experience. This offers a different encounter with marketer than other marketing

channels (Pitta et al. 2006). Trade fairs are events with commercial purpose (Pitta et al. 2006) where information on new products and services is gathered under one roof.

The natural setting for studying consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs in this case were chosen to be Book Fairs in Frankfurt and Helsinki. Due to the schedule of the study the research material had to be collected during the first months of fall 2012. In addition, to have an international perspective for the study exhibitions both abroad and in Finland were chosen to attend. For consumers reading is a traditional hobby round the world and has been among the top activities on how to spend leisure time (Statistics Finland: Time use survey 2009). As the previous trade fair studies from consumer perspective covered rodeo, art, boat and travel fairs (Peñaloza 2001; Ahola 2007; Virkkula et al. 2008; Schlobohm 2010), for this study Book Fairs both in Frankfurt and Helsinki were chosen for research context.

Both Book Fairs are described in more detail in the following two sections.

3.3.1 Frankfurt Book Fair (Messe Frankfurt)

Frankfurt Book Fair is the world's largest book fair organized by Messe Frankfurt each year in October. The fair has a long tradition dating back from Gutenberg's printing



invention. Nowadays, it gathers professionals from book and media industry (publishers, booksellers, agents, teachers, film producers, etc.) but is also open for private visitors, the public, during the weekend. The fair comprises of over 7,000 international exhibitors and around 3,000 events in and outside the exhibition site ranging from readings, discussions and panels to performances. The Frankfurt Academy hosts professional training for trade visitors with conferences and seminars, including the StoryDrive conference that was attended, connecting publishers around the world. At the StoryDrive conference industry professionals from movie director and producer Stephen Daldry to Sir Richard Taylor from Weta Workshop gave new, and international, perspective to the whole industry behind the Book Fair context.

Each year the Frankfurt Book Fair has its guest of honor; in 2012 it was New Zealand showcasing its creative diversity in literature, art, dance and performance. In 2012 the spotlight in general was on the field of children's and young adults media.

"What tomorrow's world will look like depends to a large extent on the imagination of those who are just now learning to read."

- Astrid Lindgren

About third of the events were geared towards professionals in 2011 (Fact & Figures, The Frankfurt Book Fair 2011 in numbers). The percentage of international exhibitors has been over 50% the last several years. In 2011 it was 58%. For years the Frankfurt Book Fair has attracted on average 280,000 visitors. Also the ratio between visitors and trade visitors has been about the same year after year. The percentage of visitors (not trade) was 38% in 2011. As the numbers show, the Frankfurt Book Fair lures more trade visitors by being the biggest market place for licensing in the world.

3.3.2 Helsinki Book Fair (Finnish Fair Corporation)

Helsinki Book Fair is also held annually in October but in a smaller scale compared to the Frankfurt Book Fair. The Helsinki Book



Fair comprises of over 1,000 performers of artists, politicians and scientists and almost 700 different program events. Exhibitors are around 300 and on their own stands they are organizing around 300 program events. The focus is on books, writers and readers. Guest of honor in 2012 was Hungary.

On the contrary to the Frankfurt Book Fair, in Helsinki other fairs were bundled together under the same roof. In the same space as the Helsinki Book Fair, and at the same time, was arranged Helsinki Music Fair, ArtForum and Wine, Food & Good Living exhibitions. In addition, the Helsinki Book Fair was open for public all the four days and not targeted so clearly to trade visitors as in Frankfurt. In 2012 the number of visitors was 71,500, whereas in 2011 it was 80,851.

3.4 Research material

Most common data sources in ethnography are participant observation and interviews (Arnould and Walledorf 1994; Holloway et al. 2010). Although the aim of ethnography is to study people in natural setting interviews are not naturalistic. However, verbal reports supplement observational data when interpreting the data. Both semi structured interviews and participant observation were used as research material. The research material with recorded interviews, informal discussions, participant observation and photographs was gathered from Frankfurt and Helsinki Book Fairs in October 2012.

The Frankfurt Book Fair was a five day fair open to trade fair visitors during the week and to public during the weekend. Hence, interviews were done during the weekend. However, the fair was visited every day to gain as extensive view of the event and its visitors as possible.

The Helsinki Book Fair, on the other hand, was a four day fair open to public every day from Thursday to Sunday. The event was participated every day and interviews were scattered between Friday and Sunday. In Frankfurt interviews were held in English and in Helsinki in Finnish. Hence, the visitors at the Helsinki Book Fair could respond in their mother language and in Frankfurt not.

Not forgetting the visual nature of the Book Fairs, and the focus of the study on consumer experience in relation to the space, also photography was used for participant observation. Photographs offered a different, interpretive, view to the trade fair experience capturing still moments of consumption and of space design and layout. They also catered as a reminder when analyzing the experience after the trade fairs.

Research material altogether:

- Pictures: 273 in Frankfurt and 72 in Helsinki
- Interviews: 31 recorded with 62 persons

- Observations: 24hrs in Frankfurt (excluding 2 day StoryDrive conference)
20hrs in Helsinki
- Field notes
- Observation diary
- Brochures

3.4.1 Interviews

The aim of the interviews was to reveal how the Book Fair visitors describe, explain and assign meaning to their event experience and what it comprises of. Therefore, semi-structured interview was chosen as a method for the interviews to keep the questions as open ended as possible and descriptive in nature, keeping the interview relaxed, comfortable and overall atmosphere conversational rather than questions and answers session. Themes and questions were planned in advance (see appendix 1 and 2) but they were re-designed in every interview situation according to the answers received and how the interview started rolling. In addition, interviews were adjusted according to the time limit at hand as some of the visitors were busier than others and time at the fair seemed precious for the visitors.

Number of interviews recorded was 13 in Frankfurt and 18 in Helsinki. However, the number of people being interviewed was 29 in Frankfurt and 33 in Helsinki. In sum, 31 interviews were recorded with total of 62 persons being interviewed. Some of the interviews were held as one on one sessions but most of them were with two or more people being interviewed at the same time. All the recorded interviews were later transcribed.

People were selected to the interviews randomly but the aim was to gather a diverse group of people. Interviewed visitors ranged from couples and friend groups to seniors and families, mothers and daughters. Interviews were located in different parts of the exhibition space, both inside the different halls and also outdoors in Frankfurt where there was a central piazza between the halls. People participated in the interviews most willingly when they were sitting somewhere and having a break from walking around in the exhibition space. Round the stands and aisles visitors were

often too busy to stop as they were focused on seeing what is going on at different stands, exploring and searching. Also most of the interviews were located in places where the noise and clamor was not as disturbing as near to the biggest stands and stages and close to the biggest crowds.

In addition to the recorded interviews with private visitors during the public fair days, informal discussions were held among exhibitors (CERN, Mondadori, Rovio), StoryDrive conference participants, journalists at Helsinki Book Fair and with varied visitors on the way traveling to and from the exhibition space. The discussions were not recorded but written down in the field notes.

Even though the Frankfurt Book Fair is renowned as international trade fair, language barrier proved to be a challenge when recruiting visitors for the interviews as majority of the visitors during the public fair dates proved to be from Germany. Moreover, visitors were not eagerly willing to stop their tour at the fair or interrupt their coffee break for long. Hence, all the interviews were kept short ranging from 10 to 30 minutes. In addition, some of the most insightful discussions were held not during the recorded interview sessions but after the recorder was switched off and in the informal discussions with journalists and friends.

Questions related to the space and visitors' emotions and feelings were challenging and also surprising to many of the interviewed. They did not seem to have paid much attention to the surrounding space before the question was presented. When visitors were asked to describe their feeling and sensing in the exhibition space, answering proved to be difficult until some adjective examples were thrown in the air. The visitors' focus of attention was on the books presented and on the amount of people.

3.4.2 Observations

Participation is the key in observation (Sayre 2001). Ethnographers observe actual people behavior in real time by recording the particulars of naturally occurring behaviors and conversations (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Participant observation provides access to complex behaviors of consumption and, therefore, is central to data

collection in market-oriented ethnography (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). In this study “participant as observer” approach was used where researcher joins in the events and activities (Sayre 2001), riding along the trade fair with other visitors. Hence, in addition to walking around the stands and halls, author discussions and panels were participated and few workshops tested when trying to live the Book Fair experience as a private visitor. Aim of the observations was to reveal meanings and behaviors people might have difficulties to express verbally in the interviews, or might not even understand or admit to exist (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994).

Spradley’s framework for participant observation is applied to the event context (1980). The framework accounts for the cognitive, affective and conative elements of the event, which are the thinking, emotion and behavior that are linked to it.

Spradley’s framework for participant observation:

- *Space*. The event location
- *Actor*. The person in the event setting.
- *Activity*. The behavior and actions of those in attendance.
- *Object*. The items located in the setting.
- *Act*. The single action.
- *Events*. What is happening (in the period post, during, pre)
- *Time*. Time frame and sequencing.
- *Goal*. What participants are aiming to achieve.
- *Feeling*. The emotions of participants.

The above framework was used as a template for the study of the Book Fairs in Helsinki and Frankfurt. However, as Alasuutari points out “different theoretical and methodological perspectives to the data should keep the researcher’s eyes open to all kinds of observations instead of narrowing his or her vision” (Alasuutari 1996, p.375). “The Field worker relies entirely upon inspiration from theory (Malinowski 1922/1961, p. 9, cf. Alasuutari 1996, p. 375).”

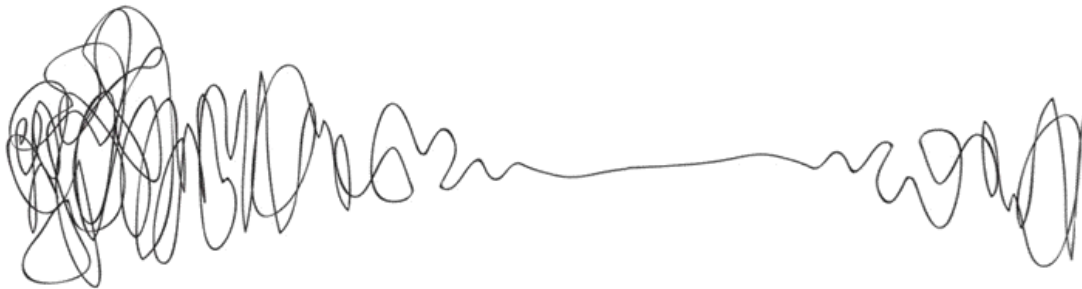
Not forgetting the visual nature of the trade fairs, and focus of the study on consumer experience in relation to the space, also photography was used for participant

observation. Photographs offered a different interpretive view to the trade fair experience. In addition, after the fair the photographs worked as a reminder of the different observations and what was going on at the trade fair.

At the Frankfurt Book Fair both trade and public days were participated and observation data gathered. Days from Wednesday to Friday were limited to the trade visitors and weekend reserved for the private visitors. In addition, from Thursday to Friday, the StoryDrive conference gathering professionals from across the media industry was attended. In Helsinki the observation data was gathered during the public trade fair days.

Participation at the event space with its design, displays, visitors and exhibitors, together with the interviews with consumers and observations of their behaviors were valuable sources of information guaranteeing multiple sources of data. All the observation data was gathered and recorded in the field notes.

3.5 Research process



Picture 2 Research process (Damien Newman Design Squiggle adjusted)

The research process started with problem definition. Once the research gap was found around the theme in regards to consumer experience and lifestyle trade fairs I was able to familiarize myself with previous studies and the project was kicked-off. Theoretic foundation was built based on previous studies on consumer experience, experiential nature of consumption and how consumer experience had been studied in trade fair and retailing environment. As the previous studies on public trade fairs

focused on the market culture viewpoint by Peñaloza, literature from the retailing side was also used for background research and to form general framework for this study. From the phenomenological methodologies market-oriented ethnography was chosen as a research method suitable for this study.

The research material was collected through interviews and observations at both Frankfurt and Helsinki Book Fairs in October 2012. The interview themes used are stated as following:

- basic info
- space (general, spatial and multisensorial features)
- halls (themed zones)
- stands and personnel
- other fair visitors
- events and activities
- Book Fair

The interviews with the fair visitors were supplemented with further observations regarding consumer behavior and photographs were also used in order to create a better picture of the field. The interviews were recorded and the observations gathered to the field notes and diary. Also the informal discussions among visitors, exhibitors, and journalists, contributed additional insight to the recorded interviews with private visitors.

After collecting the research material started the analysis of the qualitative data. For analyzing the verbal data thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis is a process of coding (Sayre 2001) where a theme is a pattern found in the information to organize and interpret it.

The interpretive process:

- Coding
- Codes and other data: convergences, disjuncture
- Tropes, comparisons: perspectives of and in action, comparing interview and observation data

- Identifiable themes, presenting important cultural constructs

The interpretive process started with coding, i.e. detecting words and sayings that were commonly repeated in the visitor interviews. After going through the interview material and spotting repeating elements, the interview material was compared with observation data consisting of field notes, observation diary and photographs. This phase is also referred to as triangulation of data (Holloway et al. 2010).

The final, identifiable themes found from the research material are presented in the findings section in chapter four. Comparing the data sets, and how visitors' interview replies were in accordance with the observation data gathered, formed final themes describing the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs. Visitor replies were mainly in line with the behavior observed at the Book Fairs but also disjunctures were spotted. The photographs added a more visual viewpoint for examining the experiential context and helped remembering details about the fairs afterwards.

After the analysis phase iterations were made regarding the research problem and questions. Different elements influencing consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs were mapped into themes. The themes were space with atmosphere, social, and physical dimension, and how they influence consumer sensations and behavior. Based on the analysis and findings opportunities for enhancing the experience were detected. The report concludes on discussion (chapter 5) and concluding remarks with implications for the future concept of trade fairs (see chapter 6).

3.6 Validity, transferability and reliability

Validity commonly refers to the accuracy of the findings: how true the claims are in the study and how precise are the interpretations (Moisander and Valtonen 2006, p.24). The use of triangulation within a method (observations and interviews) is the source of ethnographic validity (Fetterman 2010, cf. Holloway et al. 2010). To get as rich and diverse picture of the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fair multiple sources of data were used. The research data comprised of both observations and

visitor interviews supplemented with field notes and diary that were updated during the fair dates. In addition pictures were taken.

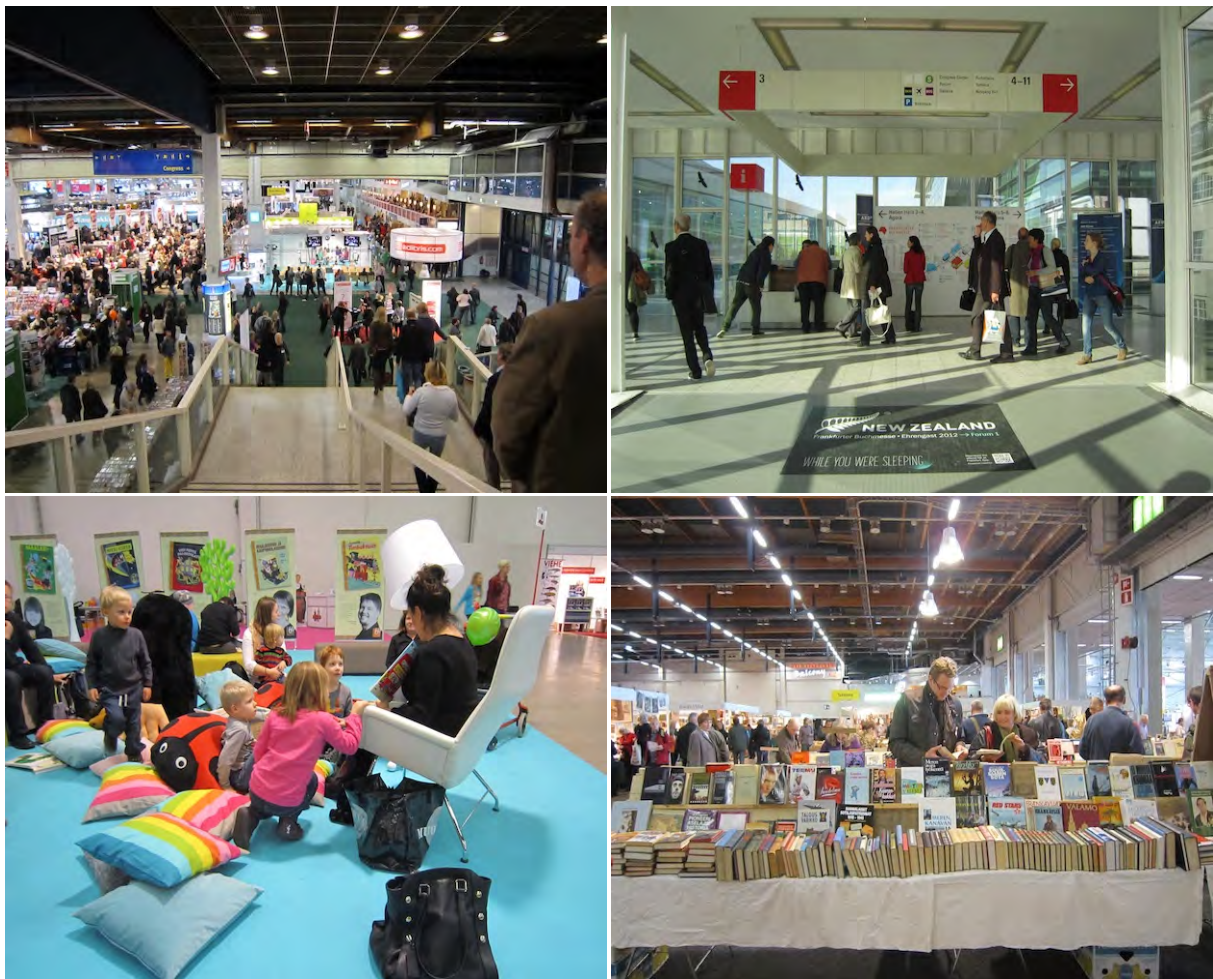
In qualitative research validity, also referred to as generalizability, is a problematic concept, according to some authors, since the research tends to focus on a single case or setting and no two social contexts are ever identical (Hirschman 1986). Therefore, transferability is preferred to generalizability. Ethnographers suggest that comparable settings are likely to produce similar data and theory-based generalization can be achieved “involving the transfer of theoretical concepts found from one situation to other settings and conditions” (Holloway et al. 2010, p.81), i.e. in a phenomenological study it is possible to generalize from one setting to another (Collis and Hussey 2003). The challenge is the main characteristic of experiences being personal and existing in the minds of the consumer. However, as Tynan and McKechnie (2009) remind, many consumption experiences are shared rather than individual in nature, often co-created (e.g. Björner and Berg 2012). In this study the Book Fairs are only the research context for studying the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs in general.

Reliability refers to the consistency, stability and repeatability of research findings and this is an inappropriate criterion in qualitative research as social situations are not replicable (Holloway et al. 2010; Collis and Hussey 2003). However, in order to meet the demand for reliability the research process was kept transparent and a systematic and rigorous approach used when conducting the empirical part (Moisander and Valtonen 2006, p.27). All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The field notes and photographs were gathered daily.

4 Findings

In this chapter the Book Fair is entered and findings from research presented. First the themed environment and the atmosphere of the trade fairs both in Helsinki and Frankfurt are analyzed and how they contribute to the consumers experience discussed. Then after analyzing the physical dimension and atmosphere of the space the social dimension of trade fair context is presented. Lastly the concrete outcome of the experiential context is explored: what describes consumers doing and being at the trade fair.

4.1 Physical dimension and use of themes



Picture 3 Entering Frankfurt and Helsinki Book Fairs 2012

When entering the exhibition space consumer steps into a venue resembling an airport in Frankfurt. Long tunnel hallways with escalators and shuttle busses are connecting visitors between different halls. Halls have high ceilings and long aisles full of stands. The space consists of six halls, cafés and restaurants, gift shops and even small supermarkets, ice cream booths, and a big outdoor piazza rounded by the halls. The exhibition space covers around 169,000 sqm with 7,300 exhibitors from about 100 countries. To give a picture of the scale, one hall with two levels occupies approximately the size of eight football fields. In sum: the exhibition space is huge.

Indeed, most of the visitors felt overwhelmed by the size and scale of the event; many remembering it is the biggest Book Fair in the world in the case of Frankfurt Book Fair and at Helsinki Book Fair recognizing it as the biggest in Finland. Words big, huge, and spectacular came across in many discussions when observing the space. Although the size and scale is significantly different between the Helsinki and Frankfurt Book Fairs (58,000 sqm vs. 169,000 sqm) the overwhelming feeling of the amount of books, people and content around visitors was apparent at both fairs. Instead of six halls, Helsinki exhibition center offered two halls full of different stimuli. However, more amazed about the hugeness and bigness of the event were visitors in Frankfurt. As simply put by one of the visitors:

R: "It's just huge, the whole building and everything. Pretty amazing."

At the Book Fairs the variety and richness of content surrounding visitors was apparent. Room was left for marking new discoveries: books, information, and inspiration. A lot of information from different exhibitors was displayed for visitors to see and learn about.

More than seven thousand exhibitors took part in the Frankfurt Book Fair 2012: big publishing houses, smaller independent ones, makers of illuminated manuscripts, calendars, comics, cookbooks, art books, children's books, postcards, erotica, not to mention Amazon, Kobo, Samsung, Sony, Rovio, and Nintendo. The range of exhibitors reflected the situation of the media industry in general as it is going through a transition towards interactive media.

At the Helsinki Book Fair the range of exhibitors was also a diverse group of over 300 publishers but the smaller publishers present at the fair seemed to lure visitor's attention. From the Book Fairs visitors could find publishers and books that were not present in their local bookstores. Thus, finding something that was not available and possible to acquire otherwise except at the Book Fair, presented as one of the benefits of visiting the fair according to the visitors.

R: "If you go in the bookshop, in some bookshops, it's always similar books you get today. And here you have the chance to discover many more books for publishers we don't have in our bookshops in Heidelberg."

To the abundance of content contributed also bundling of other fairs under the same event as was done in Helsinki. It gathered visitors of both pro and against it. Some mentioned it being a nice add-on to the Book Fair while others not really understanding how they all fit together and the whole exhibition getting too big. Thus, others enjoyed first going around in the Book Hall and then paying a visit in the Food, Wine, and Good Living hall full of different food samples from different countries, stop for a while in an art gallery and test some new music instruments out of curiosity. However, some visitors were mentioning that it started to get too tiring as the amount of information mounted making it difficult to handle under one event. The big and spectacular had its limits as information overload.

Therefore, the amazement of big and spectacular and the abundance of content was also experienced as anxiety of missing something and made it challenging to focus. As later on discussed spaces for resting and relaxing proved to be highly important for escaping the hustle and bustle.

R: "There's always busy everything. So after a while you get a bit, it's too much, too many influences. So you need to, need to rest somewhere. So very many things and you have to decide where to go first and what really interests you. You have to be influenced when you come here."

4.1.1 Rational setting for stories and emotions

Visitors were feeling amazed about the size and scale of the event but otherwise in the visitor replies; the exhibition space was considered as functional and effective. Not cozy, beautiful or aesthetic, but a functioning space for trade fairs and exhibitions. Words like “cubic” and “industry hall” were used to describe the space. Moreover, as detailed descriptions were asked about the space in question, also the concerns were about the functionality of the location. Thus, although the theme of the fairs, books, tends to cater for imagination and emotions, the space where the event was organized was experienced as rational in contrast.

As Messe Frankfurt organizes yearly the biggest fairs in the world and also exports some of the concepts abroad, many details have been considered carefully in the space. Basic amenities like big bathrooms, cloakrooms, and moving around in the space were thought through as none of the interviewed visitors seemed to be bothered of the basic supplies. Basic needs were covered. Same case was in Helsinki, as none of the respondents seemed to be missing any of the basic amenities. Nonetheless, although the space was functioning, many visitors longed for coziness in the space. Visitors mentioned missing sofas and big cushions to make the fair experience more comfortable and cozy.

R: “It's not like a library, it's bit more like, it's, more like big book shop really. I would say, or market place. Not a library, it's not a, comfortable.. I think the book halls, high rooms and, there's a lot of people. Libraries are quiet and this is, sometimes it's very loud I think, busy, noisy.”

R: “More corners, with cushions or something like that..”

Since visitors were missing coziness in the exhibition space, words like gloomy and cement came up when talking about the Book Fair setting. Often the question received a laughing reaction because visitors did not know how to describe the space in a positive manner. However, although many visitors experienced the space as ugly

and unappealing industry hall, it did not seem to bother their Book Fair experience because they did not pay much attention to it. The focus was on the books.

R: "Main thing is that the books are displayed and that the presentations have good spaces."

R: "I think it doesn't really need decoration, this exhibition space. Because it is not really the main point this exhibition space, these books are."

R: "I don't think that an average person who goes around pays much attention to it, they are interested in the products and especially in the samples. So I don't think most of the regular people pay much attention to the visual side of the stands."

In addition, the layout of the exhibition ground full of booths in lines and crossed with corridors resembled the grid layout of stores. Thus, contributing to the rational and effective feeling of the space as it resembles of discount and hypermarkets.

The visitors at the Book Fairs appreciated clarity and feel of space. The wide corridors with colored carpets were recognized by the visitors and supported navigation within the space together with big signage. Although crowded especially in Frankfurt, the wide aisles between stands aimed to keep people moving and if the visitor saw something interesting he could step out from the aisle and visit a stand. As the event gathered book enthusiasts, many visitors valued if books were displayed clearly so that one could get an overview of the different publishers and their offerings first and then decide to take a closer look if he saw something interesting and worth stopping.

As the visitors were mentioning mainly functional aspects of the space they recognized when something was not working in the space. On the contrary to Frankfurt where all the hall floors were covered with carpets, both at stands and at the aisles, in Helsinki hard betony floor was a common sight. As trade fairs and

exhibitions are about walking, it meant unpleasant experience for visitor's feet. Choosing comfy shoes did not help when the floor was hard betony.

High ceilings created an open and airy feeling to the space in the biggest halls. The roughness of the exhibition space was covered on the ground level with different stands having their own distinctive designs but the upper half of the space had not been planned. The space was only half designed. Even though some of the stands reached high heights with their bookshelves they did not cover the reality of the ceilings and cement walls.

R: "Well it's not especially beautiful here when you look at the ceiling, there goes pipes and wires, but rarely, less you look at there when you have this here."

In sum, consumers experienced the space of the Book Fairs as rational even though the theme of the whole fair was about stories that catered visitors' thirst for imagination and emotions. The experience of the space (the physical dimension) stayed in a rational level. The space was experienced as functioning and effective industry hall. The lack of coziness was bothering fair visitors but they were also pragmatic about it. Visitors had a clear perception what exhibition centers tend to be like.

R: "Well as a complex I think it looks sad but on the other hand it is an exhibition center so what can you do, I mean it is what it is."

4.1.2 Being in a maze – stepping into the known unknown

R1: "So you go around and you don't know where you are.

R2: And how you get back to the starting point [laughs].

R1: Yeah. And you look around and there are only books, books, and more books."

Even though the ground plan of the exhibition halls with the grid layout resembled the New York street system with streets and avenues, visitors experienced it more like a maze and labyrinth. However, the maze had also familiar elements that made the experience at the fair more easygoing. Visitors were stepping into the known unknown where both new and familiar space elements were mixing and also having previous trade fair experience played a part.

As most of the visitors being interviewed were not first timers at the Book Fairs, or had visited other lifestyle trade fairs, many of them mentioned enjoying the familiar elements of the fair and the exhibition space making their experience more easy going. Visitors recalled in which locations publishers usually had their stands and where the different stages, toilettes and other amenities are. The main ground plan stays the same year after year helping the navigation in the space and making the overall experience smooth.

R1: “Yeah they are usually in same locations. Or pretty so, not so, everything is not totally new but this system is pretty familiar, that..When this is so massive you don’t immediately drown in here but you know there is that and there are the comics and here are these..

R2: Yeah and it’s nice that these stay the same, cause this is anyway pretty big thing..”

Although the ground plan of the exhibition space stays the same year after year, some minor changes appear in the ground plan and where individual stands are located. Hence, a bite of difference in the space is offered to the visitors. Thus, it is not only the books, or product level offering in general, changing every year at the Book Fair. The visitors recognized the exhibition space expansion with new hall, or new theme sections, e.g. new Travel Gallery at Frankfurt and music section in Helsinki, for the fair and relocations of publisher stands. It is interesting that no one mentioned individual stands having changed design wise, only the locations.

In addition to the stand locations and some changes in the ground plan, the Book Fairs have not changed much over the years according to the visitors. Most of the visitors did not recall major changes between different visit years at the Book Fair. The

obvious one for many was just that the books are different every year. However, visitors seemed to enjoy it when most of the trade fair experience stays the same year after year and only the product offering displayed changes. Only few mentioned they would change something in the fair concept or at least it was very difficult to imagine. Most of the visitors seemed to be happy as long as they can have their annual fall tradition doze of new books and literature.

For the first timers the event seemed more confusing and stressful as they did not know the space beforehand and everything was new. First time visitors at the Book Fair did not know how to move and coordinate in the exhibition space and finding something specific they were looking for was challenging and often created feelings of frustration. Some of the first time visitors came with a friend who had been to the fair before or they had heard stories from someone who had been to the fair.

R: "Maybe that the area here is so wide, and when this is for me the first time that I'm here, so it's difficult for me to perceive the environment here, I would be all the time lost without Tuija."

However, whether visitors were first timers or not, navigation in the space proved to be challenging. The enjoyment of exploring round the stands and booths turned into frustration and annoyance as it got crowded at the fair.

R: "Well, how can you feel in such a big crowd? You feel lost, you see? And I often lost my way this time. All the other years I think it was easier."

In fact, the main challenge for navigating in the space, in the maze, was the amount of people. When it got crowded in the halls visitors could not see clearly anymore where they were going and what was next to them as the only thing they could see was people, people, and more people. Although the exhibition space was covered with big signage in every hall entrance and between the aisle crossroads, the number of people made it challenging at times to spot them however big and clear they were.

In addition to big signage, maps were located in the halls on pillars and once visitors entered the Book Fairs A4 paper version of the map was the first thing on their hands. Nonetheless, as most of the getting lost was caused by the crowding, no one was pulling out their maps in the crowd or seeing any map boards close by then.

When talking with the info desk employees at the Frankfurt Book Fair, they mentioned most common questions being related to trying to find something in the space and not being able to find it. Whether it was about searching for a specific publisher stand, stage or something to eat, visitors seemed to have challenges when they wanted to find a specific location in the space in contrast to just “walking around” and seeing what is going on. However, often the answer to visitor questions at the info desk was similar to “it’s next to you on the right side”.

Hence, the abundance of people created a foggy type of blur where visitors seemed to walk in. It made concentrating at times challenging. However big and clear the signs were they could not spot them, and most importantly, even if something they tried to find was next to them.

R: “Today it’s, very full I think, too much people and, you don’t have the time to look, really, what you’re interested in, because the crowd is too much, I think.”

R: “Yes. But because, here are too much people I think it’s sometimes very, sometimes difficult to take a closer look to things.”

In sum, the ones spotting familiarity in the experience based on their previous fair visits could feel better control of the visit and enjoy the visit in the maze more in contrast to the first time visitors. Balancing new and familiar elements in the space proved to make a difference for the fair experience. However, even though the ground plan with stands and stages is often the same year after year, as the amount of people mounted up, people started to feel lost at the exhibition and it was difficult for them to focus.

4.1.3 Halls as theme rooms with distinct atmospheres

At the fair level the Book Fair had its own theme but more detailed sub themes were present at hall level when visitors were walking around the exhibition center. The halls were divided into different themes according to publishers' country of origin or story type (fiction, non-fiction, travel, etc.). The most crowded hall in Frankfurt was number three dedicated to German publishers from fiction and non-fiction to gourmet gallery and tourism representing the biggest publishers in Germany and the most popular and anticipated books. In Helsinki there were only two halls, one representing mainly the Book Fair and another one dedicated to the Food, Wine and Good Living fair being organized at the same time. Hence, in Helsinki the two separate halls were also presenting two different fairs complementing each other.

The physical space was almost the same in every hall but still as the halls are filled with diverse content they end up being different with distinct atmospheres. The visitors, the exhibitors and the products displayed varied according to the theme of the hall. For example in the most popular hall in Frankfurt, where fiction and non-fiction were presented with most of the best sellers, colors and fantasy elements were used extensively in the visuals according to the books being presented. In contrast, there was a hall dedicated to education, where new digital solutions were presented with iPads and screens and scientific information highlighted. The different theme halls lured also their own visitor profiles to the halls. In sum, different halls with different atmospheres created variety to the exhibition space.

R: "Very easy to change this place. Like, there are different halls, but when you go through one hall, it looks never like another hall. Like, when you look around, there are different walls and bookcases and everything. So it changes the atmosphere."

Visitors could choose between the halls where they want to go based on their own interests and where they felt comfortable. From manga to education themes, visitors were lured accordingly offering differing experiences.

R: "Yeah, in some parts they are more business-like, and it doesn't, I don't feel comfortable there, because it's not my area."

Although one theme was dictating the participant list for each hall, the variety of visual language made it sometimes confusing for the visitors. At a stand level every unit had their own design creating at a hall level an experience of garish mix of colors, shapes and forms. Hence, the clarity and spaciousness appreciated by the visitors was at times out of reach.

In addition to the variety of visual language in each theme hall, the variety of exhibitors was confusing to visitors as well. Although the Book Fair guests were excited about having many books around, it created confusion when they saw something that did not fit into the theme of the whole trade fair. For example at the Helsinki Book Fair, one of the interviewed mentioned she did not understand, why Nanso stand is at a Book Fair or how well does Music Fair fit with books? As mentioned earlier the bundling of themes created contradictive response among visitors. Contradictions in the themes created confusion, as they did not fit consumer's view of the theme.

R: "I was a bit wondering since over the years the Book Fair has expanded to include other stuff as well than just books. So this year again, I got confused as I noticed at some stand something, that in my opinion doesn't relate to books."

However, its own clear theme was created by the guest of honor New Zealand having its separate pavilion at the Frankfurt Book Fair. With the New Zealand pavilion the use of one theme and keeping the whole package coherent was easier than with the other halls full of exhibitors with diverse stands. The New Zealand pavilion set itself apart from the rest of the halls, and was the most popular one among visitors.



Picture 4 Multisensory Visuals at the New Zealand pavilion

New Zealand was the guest of honor in 2012 at the Frankfurt Book Fair. With own pavilion New Zealand (NZ) offered a stark contrast to the rest of the fair environment. They had their own theme: bringing the literature world of NZ to the Frankfurt Book Fair. With own separate pavilion the theme with all its cues was coherent as no other exhibitors with varying visual language were in the same space. The space set itself apart from the rest of the fair offering visitors a place for relaxation and escapism.

NZ pavilion was designed to remind an island that arises in the middle of the hall under a seemingly infinite starry sky. Large screens were positioned in the middle accentuating the displays with images and film sequences (see the picture 3). In the big screens 20min show reels were projected to illustrate the literature history of New Zealand combined with a live actor performance and a poem reading under a falling rain. The pavilion setting reminded of an immersive movie experience. As the NZ pavilion organizers mentioned the experience was designed to be “thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking”. Indeed, all the human senses were covered in the pavilion and visitors recalled the experience as enjoyable, stimulating and memorable.

Books on New Zealand were displayed in the pavilion as well. Hence, the experience was not only based on listening and watching but visitors could visit the small huts filled with books hanging from the ceiling and get a copy of NZ literature in their hands. Compared to the fair environment, the huts provided a quiet, a rather hidden corner, for glancing through books and see what the far off place, New Zealand, is like.



Picture 5 Book display at the NZ pavilion

In the middle of the island, close to the big screens people were more immersed in the visual experience of the pavilion. On the sides of the space individuals took observer roles and focused on taking pictures of the space itself that was not spotted happening anywhere else in the fair environment.

Black curtain divided the space between the island and the stage where visitors could listen and watch New Zealand-related events from poem readings to dance performances. As the space was divided, the sounds did not echo as badly as in the halls and in the darkness visitors could focus without distractions on the presentations held on the stage.

NZ pavilion was immersive experience combining digital with physical space and catering a full array of human senses. Sounds combined with video and live performance created stimulating experience for visitors. The atmosphere of a remote island location and being in the wilderness was the aim of the space and successfully implemented. Visitors enjoyed the quietness and silence of the place. After the clamor of the exhibition halls, visitors felt like they could really enjoy themselves there. The smoothing effect of hearing the sound of rain was apparent.

Creating mysterious and floating experience was the aim of the designers (press conference notes) and especially the word “mysterious” was repeatedly heard in visitors’ comments. As the space was totally black, only the moon and stars, and their reflection on the water, worked as lights. Feeling of escapism was reached in the space with Samoa dancers, live actors and hearing of Maori language. Visitors felt like visiting a remote island far away, just like New Zealand is.

The only challenge with the NZ pavilion was its popularity. All the visitors who wanted to experience the design and immersive environment of the pavilion could not make it inside the pavilion. Visitors had to wait and queue to get in, and the queue was not short. Many visitors wanted to visit the pavilion but they simply did not have the time for it or they were not willing to queue for so long.

The NZ pavilion was the only space spotted at the Book Fairs that took advantage of design and a theme in creating a memorable and multi sensory experience for the fair visitor. The use of both digital and physical elements emerged into one coherent experience where details were considered carefully. Feelings of enjoyment and relaxation were reached as visitors sensed like they were visiting some remote island location, forgetting the hustle and bustle otherwise dominating the fair experience.

4.1.4 Stands with physical and digital displays letting visitors to touch, see, listen and do



Picture 6 Digital and physical displays inviting visitors to explore

Stands with different colors, shapes and design filled the halls of the exhibition centers in Frankfurt and Helsinki. Books and authors were the focus of attention in most of the stands. Many digital platforms for audio books and games were in use as well but, at least still, the books and authors were the ones getting people moving.

In some of the stands setting for reading was brought to the visitors with bookshop style format or with more individualistic library rooms having comfortable armchairs fitting the book theme of the fair. Design language was similar to bookstores as stand walls were covered with bookshelves, and an info/cashier desk positioned in the

middle. People concentrating on reading were not bothered; they were left alone wandering in the book world. With the bookstore type of stands also cafés with own personnel were catering visitors. Hence, visitors could prolong their stay at the stand with a cup of coffee and a snack. These spots catered as a chance to take a break, relax and rest for a while.

When people were at the stands they had a book in their hand and they were all in silence focused on the books. Touching and glancing through the pages to have an overview of the book was seen at every stand with visitors. Some of the stands were offering armchairs for visitors making it possible to take a closer look at the books, especially in Frankfurt.

R: "It's really different, I like it, I found book, and.. I need a break and so I could get book and sit and read it."

Going through the digital libraries of iPads and e-book devices or listening to audio books with earphones offered a different method for exploring at the Book Fair. Compared to the majority of stands letting visitors to have a book in their hands, engaging visitors through digital devices did not receive as curious response as the traditional versions of stories. People were keen on physically exploring the books by feeling the paper between their fingers and seeing the new publications before they hit their local bookstores.

The chairs and sofas at stands were highly used by visitors. Demand for reading corners where one could relax and get immersed in the book's world was clear especially in Helsinki where the stands were focused more on shopping only.

R: "They (exhibitors) decide on their own if they want to have reading space. If they want, chairs or something.. If there could be some place, which doesn't belong to these.."

In fact, demand from reading corners even to hidden corners was apparent as visitors seemed to miss quietness that could only be found from the New Zealand Pavilion

where several relaxing space elements were used from rain fall sounds to soft, dark lighting.

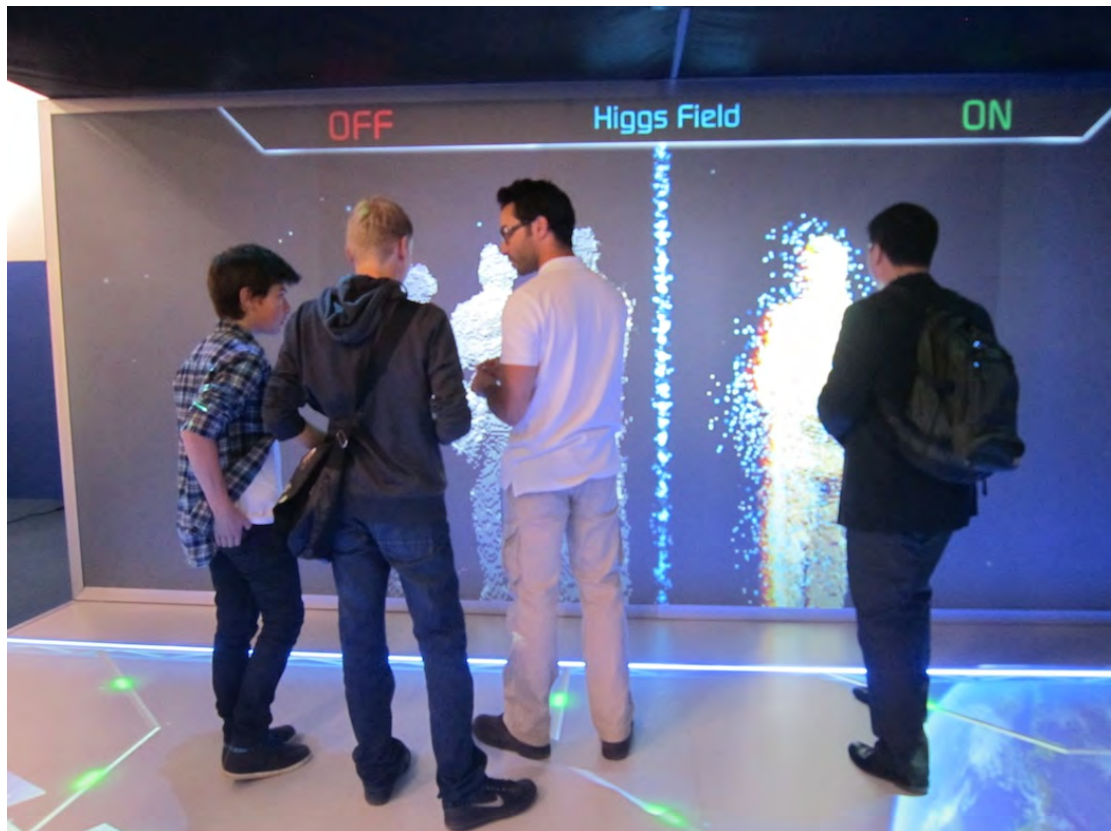
In addition to having a café at the stand, bigger ones like Paschen Literatursalon invited visitors to browse and explore the German Book Prize authors with a stage dedicated to readings and literary discussions in a relaxed atmosphere. Die Welt, a German newspaper, held another type of stand where a DJ booth was located in the center and staff members giving away headphones for listening the music anywhere in the same hall. Exhibitors made an effort to differentiate themselves from one another and to reach visitor's attention.

People at the stands were focused on books and based on the books being displayed many visitors decided to enter or skip. Some of the visitors were just glancing through the different books and literature but more common was seeing visitors truly focused with a book in their hands, thus, highly interested in the product itself being displayed. It was the book piles that invited visitors to explore and search.

R: "Here there is not that phenomena, what is at some fairs, that prices are screaming, that you would be doing some discount shopping, in here the stuff is screaming. That's nice. That they let customers get to know it and then..that the fair stands..There is some variety. Then you look at something, what do they have here.."

Some of the exhibitors offered also engaging activities for visitors meaning the stand did not consist of only product displays, i.e. book piles on sale. Hence, it was not only what visitors could see but also what they could do at the stand contributing to the fair experience. Especially for the kids some of the exhibitors had realized to organize something to do and received enthusiastic response from them as they were not afraid of trying out stories in new formats. The stands aimed at kids and youngsters included games and other interactive elements. For example Rovio Entertainment held a drawing session for kids and a treasure hunt for gathering stamps from different subcontract publishers inviting visitors to play.

Some examples of the engaging stands at Frankfurt Book Fair were CERN and 3D Cyber Classroom that did not lure only kids and youngsters to play but adults as well. At the CERN stand visitor could get an inside look at the CERN control room via live circuit. The CERN particle accelerator and the newly discovered Higgs particle were also presented at the stand. As one of the stand staff members mentioned, most of the people visiting did not know about Higgs before. At CERN stand visitors felt amazed and were having fun with trying it out and experiencing how the Higgs particle behaves when energy creates mass. It seemed like magic for the visitors when observing their reactions and face expressions as they tested the Higgs field. The staff was also passionate about their work and highly helpful, eager to explain to the visitors what Higgs is all about and how it works.



Picture 7 CERN stand engaging visitors to try and experience

Another engaging stand was the 3D Cyber Classroom. The interactive space demonstrated the potential of modern technology and related content by offering visitors the chance to put 3D glasses on and visit a cyber classroom lecture. Live and

in person visitors could try out and experiment what the future of classroom might be like. Only by taking part in the 3D classroom could the visitor understand and experience how it works and feels like. The new technology amazed visitors as they took part in the experiment that was something totally new to them. It was something that they had not experienced before or did not even know existed.

In addition to technology focused stands and exhibitors targeting to kids, Gourmet Galley by Miele with a full-equipped kitchen was a hotspot in the exhibition space both in Helsinki and Frankfurt. The kitchen offered cooking demos with well-known chefs showing their skills in the kitchen. In the surrounding area visitors could discover latest titles focused on cooking, food and epicurism, and get decoration ideas from designed theme tables. However, the main attraction in the gourmet zone was the kitchen where an array of international recipes was presented to viewers. At the Gourmet Gallery people were focused on listening and looking at what the chefs were doing in the kitchen. All the seats surrounding the kitchen were filled with anxious and curious listeners.

Watching the cooking show was not only passive as waitress made rounds every now and then offering samples of the food being made. The viewer could even smell the food with all the different flavors and ingredients being part of the recipe. The static theme tables next to the kitchen stage were not getting any attention. Visitors were enjoying the interactive nature of the Gourmet Gallery kitchen setting. Although a host was asking questions from the chef, viewers were mainly interested in the chef's sayings and doings, and getting to taste the food after listening, smelling and looking. Only thing missing from a full course dinner experience was the social interaction among viewers. In the Gourmet Gallery, it was the food bringing people together.

In sum, the stands had realized to offer visitors the chance to switch between active and passive participation letting them both see and listen but also try and do and therefore get multiple senses stimulated. Visitors could either focus on seeing and glancing through the vast amount of books, follow interviews taking place at small stages at the stands, or get involved in workshops and try out, or even taste and smell, new products. In addition to traditional trade fair behavior of viewing new products

and information, getting the chance to try and do seemed important and, above all, more engaging for visitors.

4.1.5 Relaxing and escapist lounges crucial

As mentioned previously, inside the halls some of the stands were managing their own cafés in Frankfurt and offering visitors the chance to sit down and have a break. In addition, the Book Fair organizers had their cafés with big PAUSE signs reminding visitors to have breaks while walking around in the halls. Also outside the halls, in the connection hallways, there were restaurants serving warm food in addition to smaller Carte D'or ice cream and pretzel booths. At the Helsinki Book Fair cafés and restaurants were found both inside the halls and in a separate food court. Despite the variety of pause points, spaces for relaxing and taking a break were highly sought after.

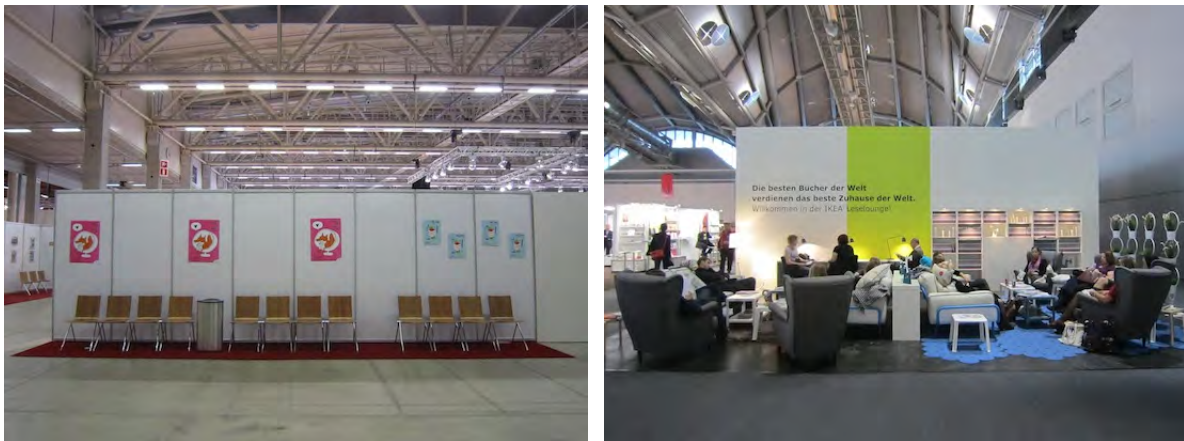


Picture 8 Visitors creating their own pause points

Even though in every hall there were several pause points, cafés held by the Book Fair organizer and also at individual stands, they required buying something. Seats and chairs tended to be more cozy ones at the cafés than the ones being offered at the sides of the halls or in the hallways. In addition, although there were many seats there were also many people. Hearing visitors' comments when finding a place to sit "finally", "great", "huh" indicated how sought after the free chairs were. Some of the visitors even raise their legs on benches to get the blood circulation moving the other

way. Therefore, visitors also created their own pause points: sitting corners for resting and having a pause from endless walking. The halls' corners and floors were working as resting places. Visitors were not shy about sitting and having a break in spots not designed for it since the need for taking a break and just relax for a while was urgent.

IKEA lounge was the only public place with soft sofas and armchairs free for anyone to use with no strings attached and also highly popular (see picture above). The IKEA lounge also offered a more cozy and comfortable option for taking a break from walking when compared to the seats offered by the Book Fair.



Picture 9 Helsinki Book Fair chairs vs. IKEA lounge

At the Frankfurt Book Fair also massage points were offered and located in different halls for helping visitors to relax from long walks in the exhibition space. In the afternoons, the massage points were highly used for quick relaxation and to give extra boost for continuing the day at the fair.



Picture 10 Massage point offering quick relaxation

In addition to having the chance to rest and take a break inside the exhibition space, in the middle of the exhibition area in Frankfurt there is a piazza surrounded by the main halls. The big open-air piazza provided visitors the chance to go outside, catch fresh air after wandering in the crowded halls and chill out in hammocks and fatboys (see pictures 11 and 12).

Cafés with terraces were catering to lunch seekers, and lawns and benches under trees on the sides offering relaxing areas for eating also own packed lunch. Not to forget the opportunity to talk with friends without the clamor of the halls. People seemed relaxed when walking around the outdoor piazza. It offered a different environment compared to the traditional trade fair halls inside: no tight corridors full of people and struggling with the heated air temperature. Visitors interviewed at the piazza mentioned they preferred staying longer time outdoors and occasionally visiting quickly the halls before it started to feel too hot and crowded again.

The piazza did not only offer a space for having a break for lunch or similar but also the possibility to stay in an active mode. At the piazza visitors could try out traditional New Zealand handcraft or go listen to book readings. Also a stage dedicated for the guest of honor's performances was located in the middle of the piazza. Dancing Samoans offered a dance show daily with audience getting excited about the music

and rhythms. The audience was one big sea of mobiles, cameras and iPads taking pictures and videos during and after the show. The dancers received a celebrity like respond from the Book Fair visitors, as after the show many were curious to have individual pictures with them. Same enthusiastic respond from the audience was rare among other events during the trade fair as they provided the opportunity to just watch and listen different speakers that followed the standard interview format repeating itself at many stands.



Picture 11 Visitors relaxing outdoors



Picture 12 Visitors chilling on fatboys and hammocks

In addition to the big piazza, also long balcony terrace along the hall 3 catered for escaping the clamor of the fair, smoke a cigarette, make a phone call or just grab a coffee, chat and watch what is happening at the piazza. Hence, escaping the clamor and crowd inside the most popular hall was made possible on both ground and second floor.

R: "If you go inside, it's very hard, there are so many people you can't really move forward. It takes a long time to come from A to B but, outside here it's okay, it's nice."

In sum, a variety of pause points were offered to visitors and they were highly sought after as visitors wanted to escape the heat, clamor, and crowds dominating in the halls. Some visitors combined the sitting break with eating something, either in the cafés or having their own packed lunch they had carried with them from home. Similar outdoor area was not present at the Book Fair in Helsinki. Hence, the chance to go outside, grab fresh air and escape the clamor of the exhibition halls was not possible. The variety of pause points and escapist lounges was not as rich in Helsinki as in Frankfurt.

4.2 Atmospheric dimension

R: "It's so good atmosphere here, the best fair that there is because compared to for example Travel Fair or others in here there is the great atmosphere, over there on the Book Fair side. The bookshelves and the books and then the authors."

Many respondents characterized the Book Fair having a distinct, own atmosphere and some of the interviewed even mentioned the atmosphere being one of the key aspects they enjoyed at the fair; the core of the event. It was something visitors could not find from their local bookstores or from other fairs. Visitors wanted to experience the feeling of being at the Book Fair and be part of the Book Fair atmosphere.

At the Book Fair the atmosphere comprised of an array of senses and feelings provoked in response to the surrounding environment. Both tangible and non-tangible elements were tackled when discussing the Book Fair atmosphere with the visitors. However, it was challenging for the visitor to identify in detail what formed the atmosphere. Often the easiest to detect in the space, the physical dimension, especially books, was mentioned but while observing and listening to the replies also other people at the fair proved to contribute to the atmosphere of the space. The atmosphere varied between the different theme halls as described previously but also the atmospheres between Helsinki and Frankfurt were different (relaxed vs. hectic).

Between the Frankfurt and Helsinki Book Fair a clear difference was in the atmosphere descriptions and comments as the scale and amount of people was very different between them. In addition, since the Frankfurt Book Fair is international the atmosphere experienced by visitors reflected this. At the Frankfurt Book Fair many respondents were enjoying the international atmosphere as the event gathered exhibitors from all around the world. Visitors could experience literature from exotic countries with stands presenting varying literature cultures from Arabic countries to New Zealand. When visitors were stepping into the international publishers hall, foreign languages could be heard and seen, even spoken. Hence, one could experience entering an adventure of exploring international literature. Thanks to the foreign publishers being present at the fair eager students of foreign languages could have the chance to speak them as well and get to know the literature better. Hence by being surrounded with stands presenting exotic countries and hearing different languages contributed to the international atmosphere.

In addition to the international atmosphere, visitors in Frankfurt were using words like “hectic” and “busy” to describe the atmosphere. With a big fair comes a big amount of people. Thus, visitors could not avoid the crowd and being part of it. The clamor being present at both fairs also contributed to the hectic and busy atmosphere as it was challenging for the visitors to find a place of quietness.

On the contrary, at the Helsinki Book Fair, visitors were repeating words like “calm” and relaxed round the Book Fair exhibition ground when defining the atmosphere. People were walking slowly between the aisles and also the amount of people was smaller compared to Frankfurt. The readers gathering at the Book Fair appreciated when they could walk in peace between the stands, spend time focusing on the books and not being confronted by any pushy salesmen. None of the visitors seemed to be in a hurry when observing their walking around in the space, although stopping for an interview for a while was experienced too time consuming.

Despite feeling being part of a relaxed atmosphere many related the event to a market like atmosphere. The liveliness and busyness was apparent at both fairs. The grid layout with stands displaying their offering resembled a market. Moreover, since buying was possible every day at the Helsinki Book Fair, shopping was apparent and also vividly marketed at stands with big discount signs.

Many respondents mentioned that the people gathering at the Book Fair contributed to the atmosphere: fans of literature and stories

R: “Well its somehow, probably these people is one thing, people interested in literature, they are more calm maybe and..Then also those book shelves [laughs], nice book shelves and arm chairs.”

and the way they were seeing others behave:

R1: “Well yeah it is important (people around you) and in a way it infatuates you (hullaannuttaa).”

R2: “Yeah, yes.”

R1: “You get really excited, even though you think you are not going to buy anything. But yet you end up buying.”

R: “Very un-Finnish happy and talkative everyone there so that is pretty

fun.”

The amount of people or the way they looked and behaved made a difference to the atmosphere. The variety of visitors from kids to older people and from varying nationalities gave the event democratic and demotic atmosphere, easily approachable and accessible feeling.

Also the scent of books was recognized by few visitors in Helsinki and played a part in setting the atmosphere for the Book Fair. One of the interviewed mentioned the smell of old books at the antiquarian section. It was different from the majority of new books covering the exhibition halls with the scent of print ink.

R1: “Then there is the smell of old book.

R2: Yes, just a while ago when we were walking here, we came to the antiquarian section, then I said to Eeva that now it starts to smell like dusty books (or old books).

R1: New books smell always like print ink and then those, those smell a bit of dust..”

In sum, the atmosphere was created in the interactions between the visitor and the space with physical and social dimension. Hence, both tangible and intangible elements were forming the atmosphere but the role of people and how they behave proved to play surprisingly big role, as they were also the most vivid part of every hall and grabbed visitor’s attention at once. The atmosphere crystallized the event and what it’s like to be there, and why consumer wants to be there.

R: “Yeah and the whole package really, the whole package with small details effects it that you want to be, you want to get that feeling for a while, be part of it.”

R: “...This gives me also something since I come here every year again.

Of course you can get cheap books but those you can find other where as well. It's not only the books, I have to admit."

4.2.1 Stress, crowding and clamor disturbing visitors

Of all the senses being catered at the Book Fairs the one that ended up creating annoyance and disturbance was sound and the lack of good sound system. During the Book Fairs as an observer you got used to it but later on when going through the recorded interviews from the fairground you noticed immediately how evident clamor is. Even though interviews were recorded in different parts of the exhibition space, the clamor was following. In addition to the voice recordings, also visitors felt disturbed by the clamor in their replies. It was tiring visitors and making it difficult to concentrate.

R: "Because it's, it's a little bit of stress, you see? Because actually you can't really concentrate on the books, persons. All the noise is around you and it's just to get an overview, so."

As the space was big both in Helsinki and Frankfurt with halls full of exhibitors and long list of events going on simultaneously on different stages, the sounds were mixing. The open space with no divides between stages close to each other made it difficult to separate sounds. The space was reverberant, as all the different sounds were resonating. Depending on the area of the exhibition space the clamor level varied from decent to terrible.

R: "Decent however. But when you have many interviews, talking at the same time, so that is something that could be a bit, you don't necessarily need so many of them."

R: "[laughing] Well what can I say..Last year I think I skipped the event

because for my taste this fair has become too big and too noisy. Its not good that this expands too much..Then its so big job to go around. And then as there is the Music Fair with music shows that just create noise. The clamor is disturbing.”

Since the clamor was always on and was something visitors could not just switch off when walking around the fair area, visitors started to feel tired and search for a place to sit that was not close to the stages and to the noisiest centers. Most of the chairs and seats were located in front of the stages but seating spots were also set on the sides of the halls where it was quieter. In addition, in Frankfurt there were the outdoor piazza and the NZ pavilion helping visitors to escape the clamor for a while.

However, even though visitors could at times escape the clamor by heading to the sides or outside the exhibition center it did not remove the disturbing effect it had on the consumer experience at the fair. The space was filled with sounds as stages had interviews and panels and 300,000 to 70,000 visitors were in the same space.

4.3 Social dimension

R: “Human beings by nature are gregarious. We like to gather at marketplaces and here we get a wide array of inspiration.”

R: “I love books, I really, my third time here. I like the stories, the emotions. And friends of mine wanted to go here..”

In this chapter the social dimension of the space is further analyzed and what is its role in the consumer experience at the Book Fair. The lifestyle trade fairs gather people sharing the same interest for a long weekend under one roof. In the case of Book Fairs, visitors shared the passion for reading and books. As mentioned earlier, when people were asked to describe the space many started looking around and describing the amount of people, i.e. the social density. Although atmosphere was

seen important and core of the whole Book Fair, the social dimension proved to be even more so.

4.3.1 Gathering with friends and familiar faces

R: "He just told me to come and then I, I just looked up the dates."

R: "I'm here because of the mangas. I love mangas and I wanted to cosplay something and to see other cosplayers and meet some friends."

R: "Hmm. Yes and last year here I was with different friends on different days because you don't have enough time to see them otherwise anymore..So you meet them here in this event..And what else..Yeah we both have also our own routes because we are interested in our own things."

R: "And now it happened that I got also a free ticket, because I work there so it was nice to come with a friend since she also had the weekend off. It's nicer to come with a friend than walk around alone here. Much nicer."

Although the passion for books and reading was clearly the most popular answer for describing what made visitors interested in the Book Fair and finalized the decision to pay a visit, also noticeable was that most of the visitors were coming with someone to the fair, not experiencing it alone, and wanted to meet up with other likeminded people. By coming with someone, and not alone, the experience was simply "nicer" as mentioned by one of the interviewed. Nicer translated into having someone to travel together with to the Book Fair, someone to walk with around the fair and comment on the books being displayed and author interviews being listened to. In sum, visitors enjoyed sharing the experience with someone they knew.

For many the Book Fair catered as a reason to arrange meet-ups with friends as they otherwise see each other rarely. Common sight was also mothers and daughters

coming together for the Book Fair and even whole families with kids – Book Fair connected and gathered a wide variety of people. Teenagers and young adults were the only category showing a minority presence at the Book Fair reflecting the worry of the whole publishing industry on kids not being into books anymore. The visitors being interviewed at the Book Fair also missed the younger generation and those youngsters who had come to the Book Fair felt they were underrepresented.

R1: “Very difficult. But we are, there are not many youngsters like us, and..

R2: Who look normally. [laughs] Who are not dressed like some manga or anime characters. So, it’s kind of awkward.”

Especially visitors, who had been to the Book Fair before, often several times, looked forward to seeing familiar faces. It was part of their Book Fair experience to meet up randomly with familiar faces and speaking acquaintances, exchange few words with them. These were people they only met at the Book Fair annually or then at other Book Fairs in other cities (e.g. Turku).

R: “As a bookworm the hobby is a bit so that you read by yourself and then, its nice to meet other people in Finland who like reading as well.”

R: “I come here always very willingly. This is nice hanging around time with mum and somehow to just be here is nice. And also when you get back home with all the delicacies and good books.”

R: “Even though Helsinki is full of food, the Food Fair is nice when it gathers people.”

Hence, it was not only familiar space appreciated among visitors but also the chances of having familiar people around, and people that share the love for books.

4.3.2 Events and workshops as hotspots for social interaction

R: “A lot of talks, I think it’s really interesting. So you have time to, take a picture or photo of, the authors and so. Then you get the chance to talk with them.”

Both Book Fairs offered a vast array of events from passive performances to active workshops. Most common ones were the author interviews followed by a book signing possibility (see picture below).



Picture 13 Author interviews and book signings luring fans

The panels and discussions on different stages evoked visitors’ emotions from laugh to sad. People were following and emphasizing when authors were reading short caps from their novels, engaging into the stories being heard by presenting authors. In the audience, laugh and smile was spotted. People were immersing themselves into the story being heard. Mobiles were left alone. When sitting in the audience the visitor could take the passive role and just listen and watch.

For book signing publishers had reserved own spots in their stands. The pattern was always the same: after the author interview, the author moved to the book-signing desk as the next author in line was already waiting for his spotlight turn. Visitors queued calmly to get their books signed with acknowledgements. Important part of the book signing was exchanging few words with the authors. For example with the

Madventures Riku and Tunna some visitors shared their own travel stories and how they have been following and influenced by Madventures' adventures. The author interviews offered a chance for the visitors to see their favorite authors live.

R: "Yes it is pretty nice to get to say thank you for the good reading experience."

A very different event was Thomas Lange drummer workshop that was part of the Music Fair held in collaboration with the Helsinki Book Fair. In the workshop fair visitors could see, ask and learn tips from the drummer guru. As the artist stated in the beginning of the workshop, in addition to playing "we can talk about music". The audience comprised of music enthusiasts who envied his skills and talent.



Picture 14 Workshops activating visitors

Hence, offering events of different kind from workshops to interviews requiring both passive and active participation from the consumer catered as not only entertainment but also hotspots for social interaction among authors and fans and among visitors. As

otherwise visitors tended to stay with their friends and family, the events let visitors to interact, ask questions and share opinions with their favorite authors and also with other visitors working as “breaking the ice” platform among visitors. From shorter interviews to two-hour workshops consumers could take the passive role and just absorb or take active role and get hands-on.

4.3.3 Cosplayers adding new social element to the experience

In the servicescape model social dimension was considered to include people, social density and emotions of other people but based on the Frankfurt Book Fair research one distinguishable element was forming the social dimension of the space as well: not only the emotions of other people but in more detail, what they are wearing.

In general visitors were describing the people at the fair as heterogeneous but a distinguishable group of people in Frankfurt was the cosplayers. The cosplayers had a distinct, visible, part of the consumer experience at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Their presence created a colorful and vibrant atmosphere to the fair (see picture 16). They also gathered a lot of attention as many non-cosplayers wanted to take pictures of them. Cosplayers surprised many visitors as they walked around the space and could spot geishas, hobbits, and others alike. At times, they seemed to steal the show from the Book Fair itself. Also the friendliness and sharing among cosplayers influenced other visitors as well since they were the only ones breaking the ice between visitors. They took advantage of the gathering of like-minded people by admiring and commenting each other’s dresses, taking pictures together and even sharing their contact info for keeping in touch later on after the Book Fair.



Picture 15 Cosplayers a visible part of the experience in Frankfurt

4.4 Discovering and exploring as play

After looking at the space and its elements (physical, social, atmospheric) and how themes are forming in the trade fair environment, how visitors described their doing and being at the trade fair is further discussed. Visitors seemed to adapt the “going with the flow” mentality when walking around the exhibition area without any special expectations or route planning. They were tuned into the mode of discovery and exploration creating mixed feelings among visitors from anxiety of missing something to the joy of searching and being exposed to new information.

4.4.1 Vague expectations and planning on the go

R: “I didn’t have expectations on this one. I have been to those Book Village Days (Kirjakyläpäivät) in Sysmä when there is always, is it in the

beginning of July, and there are these same antiquarian sellers and others so I thought of course this is in a bigger scale but nothing else.”

Many visitors set themselves in the exploration mode by arriving to the Book Fair without any special expectations or pre-made plans. The only expectations that arose from the interviews were seeing new books and authors, and maybe bumping into familiar faces. Depending on the authors being present each year, sometimes there were ones visitors really liked and had read a book from. Thus, they expected to get a book signed or to meet the author in person. With rather minimal expectations visitors just showed up and did not expect to experience anything special.

However, even though visitors did not mention in the interviews having special expectations most of the visitors came prepared to the fair: prepared to carry shopping or borshure bags and wearing comfy shoes. Hence, they were ready to find new books and walk around the different stands and booths.

R: “I usually end up carrying so much stuff that I prefer taking my backpack and bag with me and put them there.”

In addition to not having any special expectations prior to the Book Fair, most of the visitors had no clear schedule or plans for the visit either. Thus, there was room for getting exposed to something by chance. Visitors seemed to coin the fair with experiencing something unexpected and unplanned.

R: “No, no there was nothing like that. Just what comes around and pops out, I’m interested in that. I’ve been doing volunteer work for 16 years for the Turku Book Fair. Here I just come to see and receive what comes to me, I’m too tired of planning ahead that I would go and listen to some specific writers.”

R: “I don’t really plan much, I just come here and then see what happens.”

R: “Often you just come here like heh heh, what do they have here.”

R: "...when you come without any preplans you get those pretty nice surprises."

Many respondents from the Helsinki Book Fair mentioned they had read through the program brochure before entering the fair. Beforehand only few had taken a detailed look at the program on the website and no one mentioned checking the social media channels from Pinterest to Facebook. The Book Fair websites catered mainly as a source of address. An exception was the cospalyers in Frankfurt who had created their own Facebook group for the event among friends.

Surprisingly many were visiting the fair spontaneously. Few had decided no later than in the morning coffee table that they would visit the Book Fair. Others had arranged meet ups with old friends and hence reserved the dates earlier on. However, even though knowing of coming to the Book Fair early the visitors still preferred to just come to the fair without any expectations and plans.

As most of the visitors could experience the Book Fair the way they preferred, the only exception were visitors with kids. They did not plan or schedule their visit based on the event calendar or their interest but based on their kids' needs and wants. If the child saw something interesting and stimulating at a stand, it was a place for stopping. If the child was sleeping, it gave a chance for the parent to do something she wanted, i.e. listen to the interviews which otherwise proved to be challenging. Hence, areas for kids to play and events to take part were highly valued by the parents.

In sum, visitors enjoyed when they could just come to the Book Fair and see what comes to them. Scheduling the time at the fair with specific milestones was not part of the experience. Most of the interviewed did not follow their time usage at the fair or the schedule of the events. It was considered too restricting. Going with the flow was preferred.

4.4.2 “Walking around” at the fair

People walked around in the space rather slowly waiting to see something worth stopping. Visitors did not seem determined on going to some specific location or stand. This was also apparent from the interview answers as many were repeating to just “walking around” and looking, waiting to discover new books from the book piles and from the lofty bookshelves of the stands. The walking around was part of the exploration at the Book Fair.

Although visitors enjoyed just “moving around” they also liked to keep moving forward. Despite the relaxed or hectic atmosphere (Helsinki vs. Frankfurt) visitors were not pleased to stop their route at the Book Fair for a long time when I tried to recruit people for the interviews. In addition to finding it difficult to stop for a while for an interview, visitors also had difficulties to stop for the events. The vast array of events put the visitors in the tricky situation of having to choose. For many the number of exhibitors with different stands was prioritized and the time spent at the fair was not enough to stop and listen some author interview. As there was so much to see at the Book Fairs, it required making choices when walking around the exhibition. Visitors had to focus based on their own interests and skip everything else.

R: “Pretty much moving all the time so that I get to see almost everything here. There are so many things here that you don’t feel like stopping for one spot too long.”

R: “No, no. I don’t feel like sitting and listening to those writers. Even though they are interesting but not today, not today because there’s so much everything else here.”

The main factor influencing visitors “walking around” was other people in the same space. Visitors seemed to behave like doves in groups reacting to others movements. As it got crowded in the aisles, even though they were wide, people started turning around as they saw the amount of people stating out loud “OMG”. Hence, people avoided too crowded spots whether it was at a stand or a whole hall.

R: “Yeah it might happen so that there you see a queue and you decide let’s go that way.”

R: “We are good at navigating in the crowd (väistöpujottelussa).”

Therefore, stands tended to lure visitors in waves. Empty ones stayed un-entered until one curious entered luring other visitors to join. Stands without any consumers hanging around were often left like that; people continued walking pass by without stepping in. Thus, at the stands the challenge was managing the amount of people. Either there were too few or too many of them. Visitors felt frustrated as the cashier queues and people groupings were forming around the book piles they wanted to touch and see. The social density of the space influenced visitors “walking around”.

The walking around and “seeing what comes to me” mentality of the visitors reflected how they enjoyed taking the passive role when being at the Book Fair; especially the older generation in contrast to younger ones who preferred action and doing. As one of the interviewed mentioned:

R: “So I enjoy all these kind of stuff mainly probably because.. Whether they are fairs or theater or whatever, I can take the passive role, I can just be and see what is being offered to me. Cause normally I have to be the one thinking of how do I do this and that, that is my job.”

4.4.3 Reading and buying

R: “Book Fair is not about dreaming like Travel Fair and others as here you can also buy something.”

The next step for exploring from mere “walking around” was reading and buying. A distinct difference also between the two fairs was the shift from reading to buying mentality that was present in the space as well. Most of the visitors had come to the fair to buy books for themselves or for Christmas present in Helsinki where hence the stands were full of book piles and big cashier and discount/offer signs presented

clearly to the visitors. On the contrary, in Frankfurt books could be bought only on the last trade fair day and therefore the cozy armchairs and sofas offered to visitors at stands were much more common sight and highly used for reading and glancing through the books.

In Helsinki visitors appreciated that every day books could be bought. Visitors could take something with them to home as a souvenir and not return to home empty handed. Hence, in Helsinki visitors were determined shoppers. They had come to the Book Fair for the cheap discounts and for buying Christmas presents. Also the results from TNS survey stated that three out of four visitors bought at least one book (Finnexpo press release).

Many mentioned they could buy even more books but as they “had only two hands” to carry them home with, had to limit themselves. Some had been prepared with back bags or even with small trolleys. Visitors even planned their route at the fair so that first they walked around to get an overview of everything that is presented and then before leaving making “buying round”.

4.4.4 Engaging competitions and free samples

Unlike in many other type of consumer trade fairs competitions did not play a major role at the Book Fairs. Visitors were not lured into the stands by competitions but by books.

R1: “With competitions it happens that after about ten years of participating in them you end up just having email full of spam. So I’ve started to skip all the competitions.”

R2: “I’m so lucky that I never win anything so I know it’s not worth participating. Its waste of time.”

However, it depended what kind of competition was in question. Traditional competitions requiring just filling out a form were not seen valuable. Engaging and

playful competitions on the other hand were experienced as fun and feelings of delight occurred when winning or receiving something surprised visitors.

R: "There was this competition where you had to guess how big, or tall, the book pile was. I think it was fun, that you get to do something as well and not just look at books and so on. I think its good. And then you also got a small 5€ gift card which was nice."

The same engaging method was used for getting free samples. The exhibitors did not distribute much free stuff straight away but often required the visitor to first do something. For example in order to receive a yo-yo visitor had to play hopscotch. Although the first reaction was resentful as many visitors were used to getting samples for free and straightaway, the method proved to be successful and gathered interested people around the stand. Visitors with friends gathered round the game ground and had fun while playing it, forgetting the whole yo-yo in the end.

Having one sponsored bag where the consumer could collect candies and brochures was common sight among visitors, many of them even being prepared with back bags and bigger handbags of their own. Everything distributed for free from candies to brochures and bags were popular and highly sought after by visitors. Especially the youngsters were thrilled about the free candy. Although the hallways and stands got crowded people were willing to wait and queue for getting their own piece of bag to collect. As many exhibitors mentioned, for the last day they did not even have anything to distribute and often new exhibitors in Frankfurt are warned about everything collectable disappearing from the stands.

Hence, even though visitors were mentioning competitions and free samples not being important the behavior observed showed otherwise. However, the samples and free candy was only getting attention during the fair. Most of the brochures collected during the visit did not carry value later on as many interviewed mentioned they just end up with the trashes. Even if the consumer carried it all the way to home, they often tended to stay unread.

5 Discussion and Analysis

The aim of this study was to gain better understanding of consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs and, in more detail, how it is influenced by the trade fair space. Hence, the research problem was:

What is the experiential context at lifestyle trade fairs targeted to consumers and how it contributes to the consumer experience?

As discussed in the very beginning of this study in the literature review, consumer experience was recognized to cover both emotional and behavioral aspects (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Poulsson and Kale 2004; Pine and Gilmore 1999) and emerging in experiential context (Carù and Cova 2007). Thus, the general framework and research questions focused on three blocks: themed space, experience with senses and emotions, and behavior. When portraying the consumer experience, multi sensory, fantasy and emotive elements were observed and how connected consumers are with the environment and the level of their participation in the experience discussed. The research problem addressed above was tackled through the following questions:

Q1: What are the contextual elements influencing the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fair?

(experiential context as themed space)

Q2: How are consumer's senses and emotions evoked at lifestyle trade fair?

(consumer experience as sensations and feelings)

Q3: How does play characterize consumers behavior at lifestyle trade fair?

(consumer behavior as active versus. passive participation in the experience)

To follow the research questions and general framework guiding this study focusing on experiential context - consumer experience – consumer behavior levels the discussion and analysis chapter is further divided into three chapters. Hence, each level is discussed starting with the experiential context and ending with consumer behavior question.

5.1 Contextual elements influencing the consumer experience at lifestyle trade fairs

The concept of experience relied on Hirschman and Holbrook's notion of multi sensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of product usage describing consumption that seeks fun, amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory simulation and enjoyment, and thus requires emotional arousal from the consumer (1982). Lifestyle trade fairs and exhibitions cater for consumers drive to experiential consumption but how did the environment support all the above-mentioned characteristics of experiential consumption?

The main challenge with trade fair context in experience formation proved to be the fact that visitors experienced the surrounding space rather rational in contrast to aesthetically pleasing. However, for decorating the venue to fit the lifestyle feature of the event both Helsinki and Frankfurt Book Fairs were taking advantage of themes. The main theme of the Book Fairs followed marketscape characteristics (Kozinets et al. 2002) as the venue was humanly designed and built, physical space. The main theme at the fair level was books that relate to stories already. In addition, sub themes were used for different halls as categories of different story types (international, education, fiction, non-fiction, etc.) that hence worked as theme rooms with different atmospheres created by their own physical and social dimensions. The use of themes helped visitors immersion into the space and experience something different from their everyday life.

However, even though the use of various themes was experienced as refreshing and adding diversity to the overall consumer experience, it added confusion as well. In trade fair and exhibition context the consistency of having one theme and offering supportive cues to create unforgettable experiences (Pine and Gilmore 1998) proved to be challenging. Even though one theme was dictating the participant list for each hall the variety of visual language with diverse stimuli made it sometimes confusing for the visitors. Moreover, the abundance of stimuli translated to exhaustion and tiredness as visitors felt over stimulated by the amount of information.

The atmosphere varied depending on the theme of the hall and also between the two Book Fairs. In accordance with Hoffman and Turley (2002, p.35) holistic view atmosphere comprises of both intangible and tangible elements that varied between the halls. The large scale of the building, diverse carpeting between Helsinki and Frankfurt from hard betony floor to direction giving colored carpets, book shop style fixtures and point-of-purchase decorations at the stands, cafes, and reading lounges (mainly in Frankfurt) all contributed to the atmosphere of the event. Furthermore, the intangible part of the space with colors, music, temperature, and scents contributed to the atmosphere.

In general, from the consumer point of view it was challenging to describe what the atmosphere consists of, even though it was mentioned to be the core of the whole event and main reason for coming; why visitors wanted to be part of Book Fair. According to the findings from Ismail and colleagues (2011) in the leisure industry atmospherics link to the experience has indirect effect and is supported by this study: indirect as a background setting element but influential. Nevertheless, the physical content of the space, especially the books and stands with bookshop style format, were highlighted in the interview results but while observing and listening to the replies also other people at the fair proved to contribute to the atmosphere of the space. How the other fair visitors looked and how they behaved played a part in setting the atmosphere. In accordance with Kotler's original thoughts on the power of atmospherics in the retail environment (1973), the atmosphere contributes significantly to the customer experience also in lifestyle trade fair context.

In addition to the atmosphere, the social dimension of the space proved to be a key player in shaping the fair experience. Meeting other people at the fair was key goal of the visitors and they wanted to share the experience with friends or family. Consumers came to the Book Fair with someone, as they wanted to share the experience with their friends or family and not experience it alone. For many friend groupings the Book Fair was an event, a reason, to meet up with old friends or to do a trip with the family. Since reading is inherently lonely the Book Fair visitors appreciated having other book enthusiasts round them. For the book enthusiasts it was comforting to see other bookworms at the Book Fair. The social interaction enhancing the sense of belonging to a community with shared interests was apparent in this

study and supports previous research on travel and boat trade fairs (Schlobohm 2010; Virkkula et al. 2008) that fall under the lifestyle category.

From the feeling of being part of a temporary community (Turner 1974) the social dimension with density and emotions of others also contributed to the experience. Crowding was experienced negatively when it made moving in the space challenging and increased the noise level. From being a static social context surrounding visitors at the fair, the amount of people, or crowding in particular, affected visitor's movement in the space or as Ahola referred to it as "corporality" (2007). Most of the visitors avoided stands and places with too many people, hence having a significant effect on their route at the trade fair.

Interestingly, the social dimension was the main attention grabber for many visitors. The way visitors behaved and presented themselves in the space added a new element to the social dimension defined by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) comprising only marketer, consumers, social density and displayed emotions of others. This finding highlights the visual role individuals in a space have.

In sum, instead of tackling the space and its dimensions as elements contributing to the experience they proved to be intertwined together influencing one another and overall together influence the experience as the experiential context. The lifestyle trade fair and its experiential context is thematized social space where the physical and atmospherics work as supportive elements.

5.2 Consumer senses and emotions evoked at lifestyle trade fair

As experience emerges in emotional level and according to Poulsson and Kale requires sensations of personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning, and engagement, the experiential context should cater for senses and emotions. In other words, customer's involvement at different levels from rational, emotional, sensorial,

physical, and spiritual (Gentile et al. 2007) should be present based on the previous research.

First of all, there is no significant evidence confirming the existence of flow. Feelings or sensations of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) were not identified among visitors although the setting offered by NZ pavilion reached it close. The sense of time was blurring with many visitors when they stepped into the Book Fair but surrounding clamor and abundance of content and people was disturbing and as mentioned previously by one interviewee made it difficult to “take a closer look at things”. However, despite Csikszentmihalyi (1990) view of optimal experience as flow, optimal experience in lifestyle trade fair context does not necessarily require flow.

Indications of spiritual (Gentile et al. 2007) or, as Tarssanen (2009) describes, mental level meaning personal change by the consumer experience were not spotted in this study. Nonetheless, from the different senses and emotions categories mentioned in the literature review, the sensorial level was highly stimulated and partly even overstimulating in this study context. Thus, relaxing and escapist lounges were highly sought after to balance the hectic and busy atmosphere otherwise dominating the halls.

The lower levels of the Pyramid Model (Tarssanen 2009) working as pre-requisites for experience to emerge with the motivational and physical levels were not lacking. For some coming to the Book Fair was a yearly tradition. The mere interest to the main theme of the fair drove visitors to the spot and few mentioned about advertising neither online or offline as word-of-mouth was preferred and remembered. Moreover, for many whether actually highly interested or not of the event the use of it as a reason to meet up with friends or family members was common highlighting the social dimension of the overall experience. Consumers wanted to share the experience with someone.

Even learning describing the intellectual level of the Pyramid model could be spotted among visitors as some of the competitions and workshops required a more active approach from the consumers. In addition, novel products that could not be spotted from local bookshops were displayed to consumers to learn and hear about.

In sum, overall the lower levels of the Pyramid Model (Tarssanen 2009) with motivational, physical, and intellectual were distinguishable and especially sensorial level highly stimulated. However, the emotional level where experiences emerge was rather weak and thus the top level with mental change out of reach. From the senses emphasis now characterizing the lifestyle trade fair experience more focus should be placed on emotions. In other words, by diminishing the negative effect of visitors' over-stimulation, which covers both visual and sound clamor, more enjoyable experiences could be offered to consumers.

5.3 Playful consumer behavior at lifestyle trade fair

In the previous research on themed environments the consumption has been described as playful (Kozinets et al. 2004). However, even though consumers had the chance for taking active and co-creative role while exploring the Book Fair, the fun and playfulness characterizing previous themed environments being studied seemed dominate the behavior of the visitors as discovering and exploring.

The play in lifestyle trade fair context translated into exploring and discovering at the Book Fair, in the Wonderland of Books. It consisted of both active and passive participation. Visitors had active role in creating their own experience by getting engaged with the activities and events offered. Switching between passive and active mode was apparent as visitors enjoyed taking the role of passive observer who can just walk around and see what comes to him. Hence, both passive and active participation characterizing Pine and Gilmore's experience dimensions (1999) were spotted to form the Book Fair experience as exploring and discovering.

Already in previous research trade fair experience has been described as co-created among visitors and exhibitors (Peñaloza 1999, 2000, 2001; Ahola 2007) acknowledging the influential role the consumer itself has on forming the experience. Therefore, it was surprising how spontaneously and with minimal expectations visitors arrived to the venue and once entering the fair started to just walk around and wait to see what comes to them. Hence showing the powerful role marketer has on

setting the stage for the experience and how it can be designed or in other words: manipulated.

As Carù and Cova (2007) state, besides being themed experiential context, the setting needs to be enclavized and secure. When discussing playfulness in themed environments the rule bound nature has been recognized as one element enabling consumers to feel secure enough and trust the marketer and the venue designed by others. Therefore, the feel of control was present as visitors enjoyed when they could spot familiar elements in the floor plan and location of stands and also people around them. Balancing between familiarity and novelty in the space and offering both physical and digital opportunities to play was crucial in offering an environment that invites visitors to explore and discover.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Concluding remarks

This thesis has continued the discussion under *The Experience Economy* hype that has stretched to experiential consumption and marketing. To gain better understanding of consumers' lifestyle trade fair experience and the experiential context it is surrounded with this thesis contributes to the previous studies of trade fairs and exhibitions with its consumer point-of-view and focus on the experiential context as a themed space with physical, social and atmospheric dimension.

The research problem - What is the experiential context at lifestyle trade fairs targeted to consumers and how it influences the consumer experience- was investigated by applying market-oriented ethnography as a research method. Research context included Book Fairs both in Helsinki and Frankfurt to gain diverse view for the same lifestyle theme, the world's most global and popular hobby: reading. Data collection covered observations during the private visitor days, visitor interviews, photographs and field notes ensuring comprehensive mix of information for analyzing, coding, and themazing the data.

This study indicates that the experiential context at lifestyle trade fair comprises of social, physical and atmospheric elements that each contribute to the fair experience in the theme rooms of the exhibition centre. Visitors' emotional arousal is rather low and, in general, the surrounding space is experienced as not aesthetically pleasing but functional and effective. The behavior of consumers is characterized by both active and passive participation in the form of discovering and exploring. Main disturbing factor at the fair is the clamor created by the crowding and lack of sufficient sound system. Thus, relaxing lounges are highly sought after to balance the over-stimulation of senses characterizing the overall experience.

In today's retail and events environment however experiential they are customers have many attractive alternatives for using their leisure time. Therefore as Sherry and

colleagues state (2001) with retail theatre that in this study relates to the exhibition venue, it is not “pay to play but to pay to stay”; staged to create desires to enter, stay, and return. To answer this challenge, in the following chapter implications to the future trade fair concept are discussed and limitations and future research ideas portrayed.

6.2 Implications for future trade fair concept

Firms can create and manage experiential contexts, not experiences (Carù and Cova, 2007). Therefore, in this chapter managerial implications for improving the trade fair concept are discussed. As Jonathan Gottschall mentioned in the StoryDrive conference:

“Stories bring people together. They work as a social glue”.

The human need for meeting people at marketplaces and immerse into stories, whether in the form of reading a book or stepping into a thematic setting, is not vanishing. What will change is the space and context we design around the experience. As Deenah Vollner (The New Yorker) wrote in her review on the Frankfurt Book Fair, the book is in transition, but so are trade fairs and exhibitions: “Though there might not always be a market for paper books, there will always be a market for stories. I’m excited to play them.” Stories are taking new forms when the line between digital and physical is blurring and so are experiences.

The need to physically meet is not disappearing and trade fairs, among other events, the arena that can still offer physical presence and gather consumers together under one roof. In this study the physical presence of other visitors, the social dimension of the fair space, proved to be the strength of trade fairs and exhibitions and add its own element to the atmosphere as well. However, to further the sense of belonging to a temporary community and gathering of like-minded people digital and virtual technology makes it possible to engage visitors much longer than the two to five face-to-face days of traditional trade fairs and thus helps in the community building around the trade fair theme. This can offer a beneficial add-on to the consumer experience by

continuing the experience after the physical trade fair experience in the online sphere. For the event organizers it offers insightful data collection pool making it possible to iterate and make adjustments to the trade fair concept based on consumer insight collected online.

Currently the technology discussion on trade fairs is focused on shipping the fair to virtual but another relevant option is to bring technology to the exhibition space. As was spotted at both Book Fairs, the younger generation was already keen on testing digital displays and exploring the gamification of the traditional book product, adding to the playful nature of consumption in themed environments. However, from the mere platform usage, technology should be used for the space design purposes. For example visual projections could be used to bring the themes and stories alive and visible to the visitors and thus enhance the immersion into the setting as was showcased already in the New Zealand pavilion at Frankfurt Book Fair. This could enhance the aesthetic appeal of the space from industry hall to a more inviting venue.

The blurring between digital and real-life experiences is happening and already recognized by the retail industry where technology is seen as in addition to; not a substitute to meeting physically. For example In 2011 The Future Laboratory and Campaign launched a prototype during the London Design Festival in their Sweet Shoppe project. The installation was created to appeal to the consumers of the future “who will have no recollection of life without the Internet, will not distinguish between real and digital worlds, and will seek experiences that seamlessly integrate the online and the offline”. This is only one example of the emergence of need to combine online and offline but they rely on the same concept of experience as this whole study: on hedonic consumption where the acts are based not on what consumers know to be real but rather on what they desire reality to be (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

The Book Fair should be a place where stories come alive. However, nowadays it tends to be too rational as it is experienced as functional and effective. The Book Fair visitors are beloved friends of stories and therefore the fair experience should cater better their thirst for stories by taking advantage of thematic settings. Using visual storytelling in the exhibition design by stimulating senses and creating emotional

connection to the environment should be the focus of the trade fair experience planning in the future. To minimize the overall “noise” comprising of senses being over stimulated the use of themes at hall level with design guidelines could help creating a clear and harmonistic experience for the visitors. Visual and sound clamor could be better controlled.

In fact, one clear factor disturbing the fair experience was the clamor indicating that the sound system in the exhibition halls should be planned more carefully. Currently the lack of sound system is exhausting visitors and makes focusing difficult. Despite the large scale characterizing many trade fairs and exhibitions by dividing the space differently or diminishing the number of events running simultaneously and too close to each other the hearing sense of visitors could be more gently stimulated and thus enhance the consumer experience.

In addition to better sound system, the visitors missed coziness at the trade fair. Relaxing and escapist lounges for taking a break from the hustle and bustle otherwise dominating the fairground were highly sought after. Therefore, the number and design of these relaxing lounges should be enhanced as they play crucial role in the overall experience and how enjoyable it turns out to be. Whether the lounge was sponsored or not (i.e. Ikea in Frankfurt) did not make a difference as long as visitors could experience a moment of quietness and relax.

As the movie director Stephen Daldry mentioned in his interview at the StoryDrive conference the future is about live events and interactive not reactive storytelling, i.e. emphasizing the co-creative element. During the trade fair visitors enjoyed switching between active and passive participation: getting hands-on at time and later on sipping coffee and listening to a writer interview. Engagement of the visitors was core of the exploration and discovering at the trade fair, and hence, also in the future the setting offered to consumer should provide the opportunity to take both active and passive role and switch between them in fun and playful way.

6.3 Limitations

Since the focus of this study was on the consumer experience at the lifestyle trade fair pre and post experience were not examined and therefore making it challenging to create a holistic view of the consumer experience. The fair visitors were interviewed at the spot and not contacted before/after the Book Fairs. Hence, understanding of other than prior expectations and what consumers believe they will remember afterwards were not gathered for this study. As the interviews were conducted in visitors' mother language in Finland and in English in Frankfurt part of the interviews might have been lacking in-depth insights due to the lack of language skills of the visitors.

In addition, even though attending two fairs sharing the same theme in Helsinki and Frankfurt extended the research time and scope both of the fairs were only set for few days. Therefore, traditional longitudinal study characterizing qualitative research was not possible. Some scholars prefer longitudinal research approach for consumer experience studies and it is also the characteristic of ethnography. Due to the time constrain of the fairs and visitors it was challenging to collect long interviews with the consumers affecting the richness of the data.

6.4 Ideas for future research

This study has examined the experiential context at lifestyle trade fairs and how consumers experience lifestyle trade fairs as themed playground. For future research it would be beneficial to do a longitudinal study covering also the pre-and post-phases of the experience that were not possible in this study due to the time limits of the project. This would give a more thorough mapping of what comprises the lifestyle trade fair experience, and furthermore, what are the implications to retain visitors.

In addition, another interesting research gap not being tackled in this study would be to further analyze the power of physical presence in traditional trade fairs by comparing research findings with a netnographic study on virtual trade fairs that share

the same event type but the physical versus online presence offers diverse experience setting. Currently studies on virtual trade fairs are lacking as the whole event format is still finding its form. However, this would help in diversifying the traditional trade fair concept and create unique experiences that cannot be found online.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1 Frankfurt Book Fair interview questions

Basic info

1. Where are you from?
2. Age? Occupation?
3. What kind of interest you have for Frankfurt Book Fair? Hobby? Profession?
Or out of curiosity visiting? (any special interest for books, film, media, games, education?)

Space (general + spatial and multisensorial features)

4. How would you describe the environment here at the exhibition space?
5. What does the exhibition space look like to you?
6. How do you sense and feel the space?
7. Would you describe something in the space as especially nice or something annoying, irritating? Is something about the space bothering you?
8. Could you describe something in the space that grabbed your attention?
(stimulated in particular)
9. How would you describe your moving around here in the space?
10. Do you find the space easy to navigate? (Is there room for surprise and exploring? Feel of control?)
11. Has there been something memorable, or surprising, in the space?
12. Where in the space have you spent most of your time here? Why?
13. How would you describe the general atmosphere here at the Book Fair?

Halls (how are zones, themed halls, experienced)

14. Where in the different halls here have you been?
15. How would you describe the different halls in the exhibition space?
16. How have the different halls been different?

Stands & personnel

17. What are the different stands you have been to so far?
18. What did they look and feel like?
19. What did you do there?
20. Did you talk with the stand personnel? What did you talk about?
21. How would you describe the stands presented here?

Other fair visitors (how does the visitor see others in the space)

22. Did you come here alone? Or with a friend, family, etc.?
23. How would you describe other people attending this fair?
24. Have you been talking with other fair visitors? What were the discussions about?

Events & activities (inside & outside the exhibition space)

25. What have you been doing here so far?
26. Have you participated in some of the events organized by companies?
Discussions, presentations, etc.?
27. Have you tried or seen something new here?
28. What have you learned here?
29. Do you feel the event as entertaining? How do you feel entertained here?
What makes you feel entertained here?

Book fair (expectations, experience)

30. What do you want to see and experience at the Book Fair?
31. What are you looking for from Frankfurt Book Fair?
32. How did you decide visit Frankfurt Book Fair?
33. What kind of expectations did you have prior to the event?
34. What or who made you get excited about this fair in particular? Why not visit some other fair?
35. Have you visited other fairs before? First time at Book Fair?
36. How would you describe your experience here so far?
37. Have you enjoyed your time here?
38. What would you tell about the Book Fair to your friends?
39. What do you think you will remember from this Book Fair next month?

Technology (Online vs. offline experience)

40. Have you used the Book Fair website before coming here? How would you describe the website? What did you do at the website?
41. Have you checked the FB, Twitter, Youtube or Pinterest profiles of Frankfurt Book Fair? How would you describe them? What did you do with them?
42. Have you used the mobile app before or now at the fair? How would you describe the app? What did you do with the mobile app?
43. How would you describe the online/mobile experience compared to the fair experience itself?

8.2 Appendix 2 Helsinki Book Fair interview questions

Perustiedot

1. Mistä pain tulit messuille? Pitkän matkan päästä?
2. Ikä? Ammatti?
3. Mikä kirjamesseissa kiinnostaa? Miksi tulit vierailemaan? Uteliaisuudesta, kirjojen ystävä, työn puolesta?

Kirjamessut

4. Miten päädyit tulemaan kirjamesseille? Mistä kaikki alkoi?
5. Kuka tai mikä sai sinut innostumaan juuri näistä messuista?
6. Millaisia odotuksia sinulla oli koskien messuja?
7. Mitä haluat nähdä ja kokea täällä?
8. Miten kuvailisit messukokemusta tähän asti?
9. Mitä luulet muistavasi messuista palatessasi kotiin? Mitä kerrot tuttavillesi?

Messukeskus

10. Miten kuvailisit ympäristöä täällä?
11. Miltä messukeskus näyttää sinusta?
12. Miltä sinusta tuntuu olla täällä?
13. Osaisitko kuvailla jotain mikä messuilla on ollut erityisen ärsyttävää tai kivaa, hauskaa?
14. Onko jokin erityisesti herättänyt mielenkiintosi? Pysäyttänyt?

15. Onko tilassa helppo liikkua paikasta toiseen?
16. Missä päin tilaa olet viettänyt eniten aikaa? Miksi?
17. Miten kuvailisit yleistä ilmapiiriä messuilla?

Hallit

18. Missä eri halleissa olet ollut?
19. Miten kuvailisit niitä? Ovatko olleet erilaisia? Miten?

Ständit

20. Millä eri ständeillä olet ollut? Miltä ne näytti? Mitä teit niissä?
21. Miten kuvailisit ständejä täällä? Inspiroivatko? Ovatko viihtyisiä?
Houkuttelevia?

Muut vierailijat

22. Kenen kanssa tulit messuille?
23. Miten kuvailisit muita vieraita täällä messuilla?
24. Oletko jutellut muiden vierailijoiden tai ständiläisten kanssa? Mistä?

Tapahtumat ja aktiviteetit

25. Mitä olet tehnyt messuilla tänään?
26. Oletko osallistunut joihinkin messun tapahtumiin?
27. Oletko kokeillut tai nähnyt jotain uutta, erilaista?
28. Koetko messut viihteellisiksi? Mikä tekee niistä viihdettä sinulle?

Nettisivut

29. Oletko vierailut kirjamessujen sivuilla?
30. Miten kuvailisit nettisivuja? Mitä teit nettisivuilla?
31. FB?