

MSc in Social Sciences in Service Management

Master thesis

Johan Gerlif

CPR: xxxxxx-xxxx

&

Christian Philip Høyer Lund

CPR: xxxxxx-xxxx

Supervisor: Mads Bødker
Department of IT Management

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Abstract

The global airport industry has seen significant changes within the last decades due to de-regulation and introduction of low-cost-carriers. This change have resulted in the fact that airport passengers have been recognized as influential stakeholders and increased the focus on the airport passengers' experience.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute with an understanding of the concept 'airport passenger experience'. By conducting empirical research as a combination of field interviews in Copenhagen Airport and a focus group interview there have been shed light on this matter from a passenger perspective.

By an empirical research study of the current passenger experience in combination with theories from existing literature the concept of airport passenger experience have been investigated. The thesis have made use of theories within the area of service management (marketing), experience economy and customer experiences. Furthermore, literature in regards of the subject matter airport passenger experiences have also been included to build the theoretical basis for this thesis.

On the basis of the data and insights gained from qualitative field interviews and focus group interview eight recurrent concepts have been brought forth. These have together with experience realms and a proposal of a revised conceptual model of airport passenger experiences contributed with new knowledge in this field.

Some of the most interesting findings that the analysis revealed were the passengers' need for comfortable seating in quiet environment, a wide selection of different shops and bright and spacious airports. Furthermore, by placing the insights from the interview in the context of experience economy it was seen that airport passengers in general prefer aesthetic and escapist experiences. The data analysis also proposed a need for a physiological perspective in the conceptual model of passenger experience creation.

Table of content

INTRODUCTION	5
PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	6
PROBLEM STATEMENT	7
<i>Research question</i>	7
OUTLINE OF THESIS	8
DELIMITATIONS.....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
<i>Passengers' expectations of airport service quality</i>	10
<i>Challenges in passenger terminal design: A conceptual model of passenger experience</i>	12
<i>An airport experience framework from a tourism perspective</i>	14
THEORY	16
THE AIRPORT PRODUCT	16
<i>Airport services</i>	17
<i>Servicescape</i>	19
<i>Ambient conditions</i>	20
EXPERIENCE ECONOMY	21
<i>The four realms of an experience</i>	23
<i>Reflections on experience economy</i>	25
<i>Experiences and experience design</i>	27
PASSENGER EXPERIENCE	29
<i>Perspectives on the airport passenger experience</i>	32
<i>Customer Experience Creation Model</i>	36
SUB-CONCLUSION	44
METHODOLOGY	45
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE	46
<i>Ontology & epistemology</i>	48
RESEARCH METHOD.....	48
<i>Qualitative versus quantitative research</i>	49
DATA COLLECTION.....	49
PRIMARY DATA	50
<i>Field Interviews</i>	50
<i>Planning and reflections</i>	51
<i>Focus group interviews</i>	53
SECONDARY DATA	54
RESEARCH QUALITY.....	55
AFFINITY DIAGRAMS.....	56
ANALYSIS	59
AIRPORT EXPERIENCE CONCEPTS.....	59
<i>Field interviews</i>	59
Respondents' characteristics.....	60
Recurrent themes and concepts.....	62
<i>Focus group</i>	80
<i>Sub-conclusion</i>	84
EXPERIENCE ECONOMY	86
The four realms of an experience	87
<i>Field interviews</i>	87
<i>Focus group</i>	92
<i>Sub-conclusion</i>	94
FRAMEWORK FOR AIRPORT PASSENGER EXPERIENCES	96

<i>Revised framework.....</i>	<i>98</i>
DISCUSSION.....	103
CONCLUSION.....	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	108
APPENDIX.....	113
APPENDIX 1 – VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF AFFINITY DIAGRAM	113
APPENDIX 2 - INTERVIEW GUIDE – FIELD INTERVIEWS.....	114
APPENDIX 3 - INTERVIEW GUIDE FOCUS GROUP	115
APPENDIX 4 – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR AIRPORT EXPERIENCE CREATION.....	117
APPENDIX 5 – CHARACTERISTICS OF FIELD INTERVIEWEES.....	118
APPENDIX 6 - CATEGORIZATION OF ACTIVITIES IN FOUR REALMS OF AN EXPERIENCE	119

Introduction

“The Devil himself had probably re-designed Hell in the light of the information he had gained from observing airports.” – Anthony Price, British Author.

As indicated by the above quote Anthony Price was not a huge fan of airports, but as he wrote this in 1989 much is since changed within the global aviation industry. Forecasts for 2016 expect airlines to serve 3.6 billion passengers (IATA, 2012). Every year more and more passengers will travel through airports around the world to destinations in different countries, regions and cities. The nature of the airport environment implies that travelling through airports will certainly involve some waiting time, unless perfectly planned. Waiting time will vary by time of the year, day of the week and time of the day, but ultimately passengers will have to spend time in the airport before flying out and exploring the world.

The perception of airports can vary greatly from one individual or passenger to another. For some passengers the time spend at the airport is a necessary evil. For other passengers the arrival or departure from an airport marks the beginning or end of their journey and time spend can be understood as an experience in itself. Regardless of how a passenger views the journey he or she will subsequently have had an experience of some kind (Voss & Zomerdijs, 2007). The airport passenger experience is the focus of this thesis and the aim is to determine the airport passenger experience and investigate how positive and memorable passenger experiences are characterized and what components they contain.

Within the last decades deregulation and privatization of international airports have demonstrated a shift in the nature of the global airport environment. This shift has increased airport operators' awareness of the non-aeronautical revenue generated by airport passengers. The approach from airport operators on how to deliver valuable passenger experiences stems from management perspectives and less is known about the passenger experience from the passengers' perspective. Through the creation of more enjoyable, valuable and memorable experiences airport management can encourage passengers to spend more time in airports and thus increase non-aeronautical revenue.

Problem identification

Due to changes of the airport industry the airport experience has since the beginning of the 2000's emerged into an essential concept for airport operators (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). Furthermore, the transformation from service design to experience design has also influenced how today's customers and passengers expect and perceive service offerings (cited from Harrison et al., 2012). On this basis the concept of airport experience has been globally recognized, and the growing emphasis on the concept from airport operators underlines it.

A comprehensive phase of reading through relevant literature on the airport industry and airport experiences has led to the identification of several problem areas relevant for the context of airport experiences, yet one area is of particular interest and also significantly more recurrent than others. This problem area relates to the proposal that the airport passenger experience never has been comprehensively explained or conceptualized (Harrison et al., 2012; Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015; Graham, 2012). A lack of knowledge of how the concept is used within the industry as well as a missing understanding of its fundamental characteristics is the problem area that this thesis will attempt to accommodate.

Various literature, argue that an additional challenge concerns the fact that within the airport industry there exists a tendency to consider the airport passenger experience from a management viewpoint. This is paradoxical considering that nearly all functions of an airport have continuously been comprehensively examined (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). It is assessed that the shortcoming of a determination of the concept of airport passenger experiences, together with the proposed lack of a passenger perspective, is a relevant and meaningful problem area and have been chosen as the focus of this thesis.

The identification of the problems above is the basis for the problem statement and research question presented in the following section.

Problem statement

This thesis will examine the concept of airport passenger experiences and determine its characteristics and components from a passenger perspective. Furthermore, the aim is to understand and identify elements that are important and valuable for passengers when they engage in airport activities. It will be attempted to address the proposed shortcoming of a determination of the airport passenger experience and potentially contribute with new knowledge. The increased focus on the airport passenger experience as well as the proposed lack of passengers' perspective gives reason to obtain more knowledge about passengers and their preferences. This knowledge can potentially be a valuable input for airport operators when managing airport passenger experiences and attempting to increase passenger satisfaction.

The knowledge about passengers' preferences will be obtained by conducting an empirical study. This will be achieved by conducting field interviews at Copenhagen Airport and by performing a focus group interview. This approach will contribute to an understanding of what passengers regard as important and valuable when engaging in airport experiences and furthermore provide the basis for a determination of the airport passenger experience concept.

By establishing a theoretical frame of reference in the problem area and subsequently conducting empirical research this thesis seeks to understand and conceptualize the airport passenger experience.

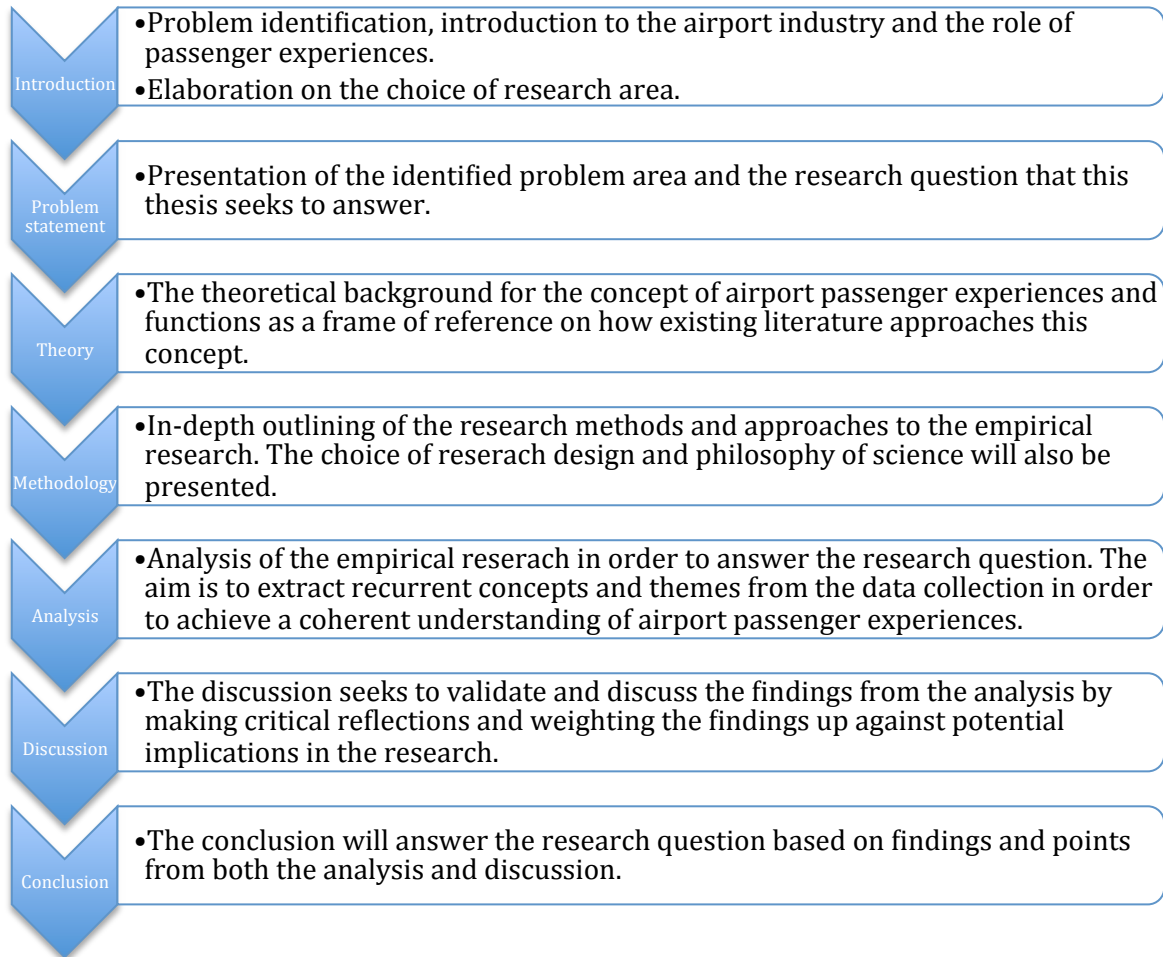
Research question

With the above-mentioned problem statement in mind, the research question that this thesis will address is stated as follows:

What are the key components and characteristics of the 'airport passenger experience' from a passenger perspective?

Outline of thesis

This thesis is constructed as illustrated below.



Delimitations

The focus of this thesis is mainly on airport passenger experiences in the 'airside area', which is the area after conducting security check - yet the activities of check-in and security are included. In regards to passengers the focus is primarily on departing passengers, rather than on the arriving passengers and passengers in transfer. Arriving passengers will presumably spend a very limited time at the airport compared to departing passengers. The goal of arriving passengers is to make it as fast as possible to the baggage belt and pick up their belongings, hence they will not spend much time in the 'airside area'.

Interviews are only conducted in Copenhagen Airport with departing passengers to the Schengen area. This means an exclusion of passengers travelling outside the EU and passengers who are in transfer. By interviewing passengers traveling within the Schengen area the group of respondents has been more homogeneous in regards of demographic and cultural differences, which can have a huge impact on the way passengers regard experiences and customer service level.

As mentioned this thesis' focus is on the passengers' experience from arriving at the airport to their ultimate departure. It is arguable that the airport passenger experience can begin from the moment a passenger leaves his or hers home and it is first brought to an end when leaving the airport at the final destination. However, this broad perspective of the airport passenger experience comprises various elements and factors that are uncontrollable from the individual airport perspective. The focus will solely be on passengers' experience within the physical boundaries of the airport. An airport can be said to be a kind of a "sealed system" because passengers can only move around in predetermined routes within a restricted area. This entails a very concrete and specific study of the experiences within primarily the 'airside area', which is why the phases before and after the airport are disregarded. Lastly, airports are service providers that have multiple customers such as tenants, airlines and concessionaries. The focus here is on passengers (air travelers) the end user of the airports' services, facilities and products.

Literature review

In this literature review academic articles and journals that are assessed to be of particular importance to this thesis will be presented. They are selected because of their relevance to the area of investigation and additionally on criteria such as citing on Google Scholar or specific content related to the problem area written by acknowledged authors within this field of research.

Passengers' expectations of airport service quality

By Dale Fodness and Brian Murray University of Dallas, Irving, Texas, USA (2007)

The article by Fodness and Murray has 119 citing's on Google Scholar (Google Scholar, 2016) and is considered highly relevant for this thesis mainly due to it's research methods.

Both academic and commercial airport researchers are likely to measure service quality by monitoring service performance measures that may or may not be informed directly by passenger input. These measures are often internal (number of complaints, waiting time baggage delivery or check-in) and are useful for benchmarking processes, but at the same time doubtful because they derive from managers instead of passengers and are lacking passenger perspective.

Even when the measures are external and intends to measure attitudes and opinions directly from the passengers, the lack of a systematic understanding of passengers' expectations makes it likely that what is measured is those attributes that are most obvious and easiest to operationalize. The net-result can therefore be misguided and efforts to improve service quality will be in ways that are unimportant for passengers.

Fodness and Murray's article is investigating passengers' expectations of airport quality. The research is conducted via qualitative method and consists of in-depth interviews with airport passengers in American airports, focus group interviews and content analysis of verbatim comments. Through their qualitative research the authors of have identified 65 themes of importance for the passengers. The airport passengers are restricted to be the end users of airport facilities and services and thus exclude airlines, employees, concessionaries and tenants who are also are present at the airport.

The article recommends studying service quality perceptions in a customer-focused manner in order to best determine where and how airport service quality initiatives can make a significant difference to the passengers. This is in contrast to other studies that attribute more

importance or sole importance to managers' beliefs about passenger expectations on airport service and experiences.

The article is offering directions for managers who seek to use service quality as a critical component of their airport's competitive strategy. Furthermore, it is argued that customer-driven service quality enhancements affect not only passengers' perceptions, but also the overall attractiveness of the airport. Allocating the right amount of resources to important factors of airport service quality will increase the likelihood of a passenger to value a certain airport as the better choice over another.

The authors identifies and distinguishes between three dimensions of airport service quality, these are:

1st dimension of importance includes three key elements: Spatial layout and functionality, ambient conditions and signs/symbols also known as the servicescape. Spatial layout refers to functionality and arrangement of machinery, furniture and equipment and the ability of these to perform customer service goals. Ambient conditions are factors that relate to design and can affect people's perception of the environment such as light, noise, smell, temperature etc. Signs and symbols are used to communicate explicitly directions and rules, but also more implicit communication about the psychical environment such as quality of materials and furnishing.

2nd dimension focuses on service personnel and their interaction with customers. The service provider's interaction with passengers generated themes from the qualitative study and identified three factors. The three factors identified to be important for the service encounter are attitude, behavior and expertise of service personnel.

The 3rd dimension is referred to as services; these include productivity, leisure and maintenance. This third dimension emphasizes that the airport experience can be time consuming and that airport customers have to be present at the airport. According to the article the way an airport either facilitates or frustrates customers' use of time can have a significant influence on their overall perception of the airport and their customer experience.

Challenges in passenger terminal design: A conceptual model of passenger experience.

By Anna Harrison, Vesna Popovic, Ben Kraal and Tristan Kleinschmidt (2012)

The article by Harrison et al. (2012) aims at developing a conceptual framework that can help enhance the passenger experience by identifying and understanding requirements from passengers. The article is chosen due to its focus on the significant changes that the airport environment has experienced in recent years. Introduction of low-cost-carriers (LCC) and deregulation have created a shift from the traditional capital revenue from airlines sources, such as extensive use and long-term licensing agreements. As a result of the changing landscape, the authors argue that passengers have to be recognized as influential stakeholders. However, even though there is a rising focus and airport operators are directing more energy towards this area, still very little is known about passengers' needs.

The authors argue that the LOS (level of service) measurements that are used to understand terminal performance will most likely be a representation of airlines and airport operators' understanding of passenger needs, hence this is not representative of the terminal performance and passenger experience from a passengers' point of view. An example of an unrepresentative measurement from a passenger perspective could be a check-in process that lives up to the desired timeframe; however, the experience can be very unsatisfactory for the passenger if greeted by a rude check-in clerk. Therefore, the objective measures will be limited in their ability to understand and capture the bigger perspective of passenger perspective.

According to the article the passenger experience is understood as a subjective experience that is influenced by different factors such as place, time and interaction with others. A proposed definition of the airport passenger experience is as follows "*activities and interactions that passengers undergo in an airport (terminal building)*" (Popovic et al., 2010, p. 2). In this article as opposed to "*Passengers' expectation of airport service quality*" the airport experience is divided into two categories – 'necessary' and 'discretionary' activities.

Necessary activities are all those activities that a passenger must undergo in a predefined order in to board the plane and depart from the airport, these are: check-in, security, customs and boarding. The second category that Harrison et al. (2012) defines is the discretionary activities. Discretionary activities are, in contrast to necessary activities, optional and unordered and consist of larger set of activities, such as reading a book, shopping, resting, grooming or consumption of media e.g. watching TV or listening to music.

Besides grouping airport activities into categories, the article also highlights some important managerial implications and external constraints. These are constraints such as laws and regulations, heightened security of inconvenience to passengers, but also insufficient resources and support from local governments can represent a constraint for airport operators. The conceptual model of passenger experience that is presented by Harrison et al. (2012) groups experiences according to the perspective, explicitly the airport-, passenger-, and public perspective.

The first perspective, the airport perspective represents the staged experience, it is objective and provides the foundation of performance benchmarks e.g. average time to check-in a passenger. Because of the objective nature of this category it will not reflect or effectively communicate the experience of the passenger from their perspective.

The passenger perspective is subjective, and hence different from the airport perspective. The satisfaction of a passenger lies in the difference between the passenger's perceived and expected experience and if the airport is able to meet the expectations of the passenger the visit will be satisfactory. As the article states, the level of satisfaction can be influenced by different factors, for example services that are important to the individual passenger, e.g. finding staff willing to give directions to departure gate.

The last perspective of the proposed framework is the public perspective. The public experience points to what is collected by formal channels and firms surveying aviation and what is more informally collected via social network sites. The authors argue that these channels should not be overlooked in terms of influencing the public experience.

The article and the proposed model for measuring passenger experiences at the airport is outlining the importance for airport operators to focus more on creating relevant and valuable experiences for passengers. Thereby create valuable relationships between airport operators and their customers, increase revenue and provision of superior service. In particular the authors claim that an understanding of the subjective views on airport experiences is necessary in order to understand passengers requirements - from their perspective.

An airport experience framework from a tourism perspective

By Walanchalee Wattanacharoensil, Marcus Schuckert and Anne Graham. September 2015.

Like the previous article, this article by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) provides a conceptual framework of the airport experience from a tourism perspective. The study attempts to explore the components and characteristics of the airport experience and investigate how these can be implemented within the airport industry.

The article presents four arguments to why creating valuable airport experiences are important for airport management:

1. A positive airport experience enhances passenger satisfaction, the potential of future visits, and an increase in reputation.
2. Airport experiences can help increase an airport's non-aeronautical revenue
3. How travellers view their experience also influences their choice of airline and airport, and this also influences the airline's decision to choose an airport as a transfer hub.
4. The airport experience can be used as a key differentiator of airports, especially when there are other key transit hubs in the same region.

The paper uses Verhoef et al.'s (2009) framework where components are grouped into three different perspectives. These are sociological, psychological and service marketing and management.

The airport space that have been characterized as *“a place where the journey begins and ends and makes people start “feeling” like a traveller”* (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). Airport interactions can take several forms, according to the article and they are passenger-to-passenger, passenger-to-airport personnel, or face-to-face interaction and interaction with electronic self-service. Furthermore, the authors have also identified two important concepts that will affect the airport experience. ‘Sense of place’ and culture have been incorporated in to the airport terminal design to reflect the affiliation to the country.

Cultural artifacts, interior design and paintings can all be incorporated into the airport terminal design in order to create a ‘sense of place’ that will enhance the experience for passengers and change the perception of airports as ‘non-places’. Social interaction is according to the authors also an important element of the sociological perspective. The most obvious social interaction is passenger-to-passenger and passenger-to-airport personnel, but also more recent developments such as mobile applications can help facilitate passengers’ airport experience.

The psychological perspective refers to time, space, activities and mobility that are factors that will have an impact on traveler’s state of mind. These factors either cause them stress or relaxation, thus affecting the airport experience. The framework presented in the article divides the psychological dimension into two components called airport anxiety and airport fairness. Airport anxiety can stem from anxiety of missing flight, anxiety from facing restricted and controlled condition from process and personal interaction and anxiety and fear from disruptive situations e.g. weather conditions.

The concept of airport fairness is less researched however the study demonstrates that such a notion exists in airports. The concept arises when passengers experience emotional dissatisfaction that can emerge from overpriced products and services or mistreatment by airport authorities. According to a study by McIntosh et al. (1998), facing stressful situations can trigger stronger feelings of injustice within the airport environment. And lastly, past experiences at airports can also affect traveler’s experiences at the current airport.

The service marketing and management perspective relates to attempts to ensure acceptable service levels by implementing service quality guidelines and enhance customer satisfaction. Generally airports will favor face-to-face service encounters, but on the other hand airports have introduced Self-Service-Technology (SST) and Common Use Self-Service (CUSS) to provide customers with beneficial services.

By providing clear guidelines and links between the three aforementioned perspectives airport operators will know what approach they must undertake in order to deliver services and airport experiences that satisfies passengers and create a competitive advantage for the airport. Because of the importance of this specific article it will be elaborated further on in the theory section.

Theory

The following section will serve as the theoretical foundation for this thesis. The aim is to present and discuss theories and articles that are relevant for answering the problem statement. This section is divided into three parts. The first part presents the airport product and its containing services. The second part presents the concept of experience economy. The third and last part of the theoretical section presents relevant theories and models about the airport passenger experience.

The airport product

Halpern & Graham (2013) defines the airport product in its broadest sense as *“a product that consists of the supply of facilities and services offered by the airport to meet the needs of different customers”* (Halpern & Graham, 2013). Many complex dimensions constitute the airport product, because it includes various products and services. Some of these products and services include air traffic control, security and police, ground handlers, as well as check-in, immigration and custom services. (Halpern & Graham, 2013). Furthermore, also infrastructure in terms of car parking facilities, radial roads and train/metro connections need to be considered by airport operators. This makes the airport product a complex one where many of the services are provided by other companies and in some cases, for example

security and immigration, government officials have the responsibility (Halpern & Graham, 2013).

The airport operates both within the business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) segments. The typical B2B product will be between airlines and the airport and the B2C will be the between the airlines' passengers and the airport. Distinguishing between B2C and B2B markets is important when looking at the three product categories that airports are offering - these constitute the core, tangible and augmented product. As this thesis concentrates on the passengers, the B2B elements will not be further elaborated on. Halpern & Graham (2013) define the core passenger product as the boarding or disembarking of the plane.

The activities that enable the boarding or disembarking of the plane are the processes known as the tangible or actual product and includes baggage handling, immigration, information services and CUSS. The third and last part of the airport product for passengers is the augmented product. It is composed of the range and diversity of different shops that the airport can offer the traveling passengers, but also transfer of passengers between gates and loyalty schemes could be included in this category (Halpern & Graham, 2013).

No matter how the airport product is defined and how the different product types are grouped, the characteristics of the individual airport are what make it competitive in the market and attractive to passengers. Within the terminal part of the airport, external factors such as certain requirements from governments have less influence. This means that the airport operator has more of an impact on airside area and therefore the possibility to differentiate themselves even more from competitors. Everything from the type of design and layout of terminals to choices of furniture will be important decisions to be taken by airport operators (Halpern & Graham, 2013).

Airport services

In connection with the above it is clear that an airport is a product involving a lot of different but still related parts and is composed by both tangible and intangible elements. However, at the end of the day airports are service providers. Although there are many varying

explanations of what a service is Wilson et al. (2012) provide an adequate definition *“all economic activities whose output is not a physical product or construction, is generally consumed at the time it is produced and provides added value in forms (such as convenience, amusement, timeliness, comfort or health) that are essentially intangible concerns of its first purchase”* (Wilson et al. 2012, p. 5). Because services are intangible, customers will search for evidence of service in interaction with the service provider. There are three major categories expected by the customer: process, people and psychical evidence (Wilson et al. 2012).

The airport industry has not been immune to the increased emphasis on quality management in many service industries in the 1980s. Although the airport industry was later in adopting many of the principles of quality management, there has since the 1980s been an increased focus on customers (Graham, 2003). Measuring service quality can still cause some problems in many service industries and the airport is no exception due to the uneven spread of demand. A terminal building will look and feel very different in different hours of the day and depending on whether it is peak or off season, this will ultimately influence passengers' perception of airport service quality. Moreover, the airport environment consists of a whole range of different service providers and organizations and as a consequence different bodies may have conflicting views on satisfactory levels of service, this also means that airport operators will have partial control of different service processes (Graham, 2003).

An airport serves large groups of people from different cultures, with different languages and social classes who will have varying views and behaviors. Most of the time the airport offers the same product regardless of the diversity of the passengers, who have different preferences regarding their motivation to engage in activities whereas others want to get through the airport as quickly as possible with a minimum of distractions (Graham, 2003). However, there still exists some form of differentiation most apparent in passengers traveling for business and leisure purposes, respectively. This differentiation is reflected in separate fast track check-in, immigration and customs for business travelers but also lounge facilities are separating services delivered for economy, business and leisure travelers (Graham, 2003).

Different factors are influencing the experience of service among the passengers. Firstly, one of the most important factors is connected to time and efficiency. This is a relevant concern to

passengers because some will be worried about missing their flight if they cannot depend on the time-consuming service processes of e.g. check-in and immigration. Furthermore, passengers are spending a lot of time in the airport servicescape, which makes it an important aspect to airport managers (Fodness & Murray, 2007). According to Graham (2003) the growing attention to airport security has increased due to 9/11, which can also be a stress factor for passengers because of the queuing and waiting connected to this (Graham, 2003).

Secondly, relationships between humans are another important part of how services are experienced by passengers. Here both the service providers and other passengers can impact the way the service is perceived. The face-to-face interaction with staff can form the image of the service encounter, thus it is important (Wilson et al., 2012). Fodness & Murray (2007) argue that airports should have plenty of space to avoid, which can generate a positive experience and create a perception of high quality. On the other hand, overcrowded terminal buildings or desolated areas can influence the experience in a negative way and make the journey less enjoyable.

Servicescape

Now the concept of servicescape and its characteristics will be introduced. Several authors have identified the servicescape as an important part of an airport experience because of its relevance and influence on how customers perceive service encounters.

The servicescape is a major part of the customer experience and provides the evidence of the service. Most of the interpersonal connections between passengers and staff will be in the landside environment where also self-service is becoming more widespread. The airside environment, where fewer personal encounters between staff and passengers take place, can serve as a facilitator for the experience (Wilson et al., 2012). A well-designed terminal building can be pleasurable for both personnel and passengers to work and stay in. On the other hand a poorly designed airport with few signs, bad ventilation and uncomfortable seating will make a dissatisfying experience. Imagine being in a very noisy and worn-down airport where the staff is poorly dressed. This might bring feelings of anxiety and fear about the journey that awaits the passenger, which is a very undesired situation for airport operators (Wilson et al., 2012).

To some extent it can be argued that the servicescape acts as a means of non-verbal interaction. It can impact people's perception about the place and thereby their perception about the product or service that the place is delivering. Clothing and appearance of the airport staff may influence the passengers' perception of the airport in general. Furthermore, the servicescape can also influence emotional responses. Often these emotional responses are unexplainable due the subconscious meanings that people attach to objects, but can ultimately have an effect on the mood and the experience of the individual (Wilson et al. 2012). Furthermore, the servicescape may also influence people in purely physiological ways, e.g. bright lighting or high temperature can cause physical discomfort (Wilson et al. 2012).

To summarize, servicescape and physical surroundings can impact customers cognitively, emotionally and physiologically. Obviously, variations will appear due to individual differences, and temporary circumstances will impact how people will react to a servicescape. Generally distinctions are made between arousal seekers and arousal avoiders who prefer high levels of stimuli and lower levels of stimuli, respectively. But also screeners of stimuli and non-screeners should be paid attention to. While screeners of stimuli will be able to experience a high level of stimuli without being affected, the opposite applies to non-screeners, as they will be highly affected even by low levels of stimuli (Wilson et al. 2012).

As mentioned in the example of a poorly designed airport terminal, the physical surroundings are just like the servicescape influencing customers' experiences. The next section will elaborate on this and provide a more thorough overview of how it relates to airport passenger experiences.

Ambient conditions

The previous section introduced the servicescape and its connection to customers and employees. However, also the physical surroundings controlled by airport operators can improve the customer experience (Wilson et al. 2012). A number of factors play a significant role, e.g. lighting, furniture, art, quality of materials etc. but to ease the understanding all these factors have been categorized in three groups, which will be discussed later since they are vital in an airport context (Halpern & Graham, 2013).

First are the ambient conditions “*temperature, lightning, noise, music, scent and color.*” (Wilson et al. 2012). All parameters can affect how passengers feel, think and ultimately respond to a certain service offered. Second are spatial layout and functionality. Spatial layout refers to how machinery, furnishing and equipment are arranged. This is most important in a self-service environment, since customers will have to perform the service on their own and cannot rely on personnel to help them out. Thus the functionality of these machines is a crucial factor. The third and last are signs, symbols and artifacts that explicitly communicate about the place (Wilson et al. 2012). They may be of significant importance in an airport context because passengers often will be unfamiliar with the specific airport and furthermore, they can help to communicate if a certain behavior is desired or impose rules that e.g. smoking is not allowed. Finally they serve to communicate symbolic meanings or to create aesthetic experiences.

The term *experience* has been used frequently throughout this section, which entails a need for a clarification. In the next section the concept of Experience Economy will be introduced to provide a background for the use of the term throughout the rest of this thesis.

Experience economy

To fully understand the concept airport passenger experiences, experience design and experiences in general, this section seeks to clarify the term and how it will be used in this thesis. It will be defined according to the theory developed by Pine & Gilmore (1999) referred to as “Experience Economy”.

Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that the global economy has continuously developed from an agricultural to a service economy and ultimately into an experience economy. Customers today are not satisfied with buying just an item or a service - they demand something more, an experience, and companies today must design, promote and implement an experience in addition to what they initially are offering. Besides creating an emotional relationship between a customer and a company, the use of experiences is also used to induce products with added value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

A classic example within the experience economy is coffee. Coffee is one of the world's most sold commodities, and from a producer harvests the coffee beans, until the coffee is ultimately sold in a grocery store or in a coffee shop, there is an added value and a major increase in the price (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The price on coffee entirely depends on what one chooses to do with it. Coffee can be turned into one of three different economical products, i.e. a commodity, goods or a service. By turning the coffee into a service and by serving the coffee in a high-class restaurant or authentic coffee shop, where the preparation and consumption are surrounded by a specific atmosphere, customers will be likely to pay a considerably higher price for the product (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

The coffee example can be used to demonstrate that experiences can be used as tools to add additional value to existing products or services. This added value can potentially lead to an increased willingness from customers to pay a premium price given that the customers find the staged experience relevant and engaging. In addition to describing the usefulness and importance of experiences, Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that there are five necessary components that one must be incorporated and interact to successfully create an enjoyable and memorable experience for customers.

Firstly, one must create a theme that is in direct relation to the experience. By creating a well-defined theme, customers will be able to know exactly what to expect, which can help them organize their impressions.

Secondly, one must create impressions by the use of positive signals and it is argued that impressions are essential components of the experience influencing the customer. Furthermore, experiences are something that the customer takes home to fully realize the experience.

Thirdly, one must eliminate all negative signals that may distract or contradict the overall theme. This will contribute to ensuring a coherent and integrated customer experience.

Fourthly, people purchase memorabilia and souvenirs as tangible objects to represent the experiences they wish to remember, and one must make these commodities available for the customers.

Fifthly, a combination of all five components is necessary to support and strengthen the theme and the more the components are included in the experience, the more memorable it will be. These five components proposed by Pine & Gilmore (1999) must always be observed by companies when designing and staging experiences for their customers.

The four realms of an experience

The transition from service economy to experience economy has resulted in higher customer involvement and Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that an experience can engage and involve customers in different ways. The two most important ways are the customers' participation and their connection to the experience. This relationship is illustrated in figure 1.

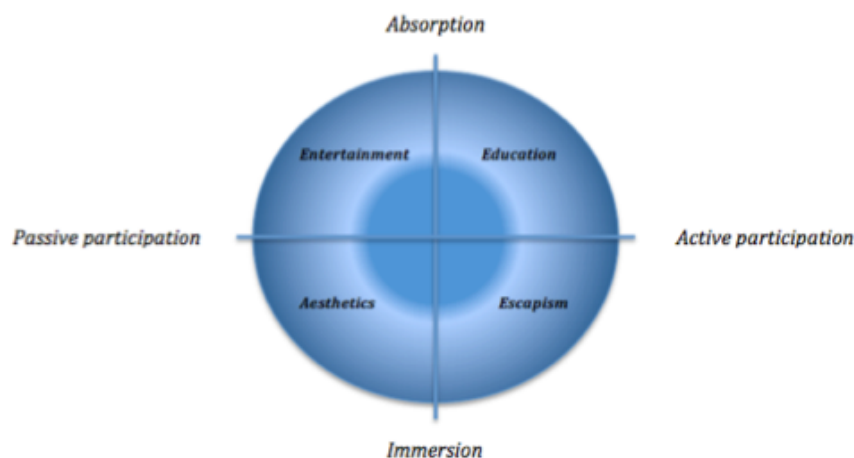


Figure 1. Source Pine & Gilmore (1999)

The horizontal axis refers to the level of the customers', or guests', participation in the experience and the spectrum goes from passive to active. *Passive participation* is when customers are not directly affected by the performance they are witnessing, which for instance could be classical concert where customers are merely observers as members of the audience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In contrast, *active participation* is when the customers are

personally and directly affected by or involved in the event or performance that leads to the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

On the vertical axis is the connection or relationship between the customer and the experience. In one end of the spectrum is *absorption*, which refers to engaging the customer's awareness to let the experience sink into his or hers consciousness (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In the other end there is *immersion*, which refers to a situation where the customer is physically or virtually becoming a part of the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). An example of this relationship is when a customer is watching TV, the experience is absorbed, in contrast to when a customer is involved in e.g. virtual reality games, the experience is said to immerse.

The link between the different dimensions illustrated on the two axes in figure 1 is according to Pine & Gilmore what defines the four "realms of experience". The four realms of an experience consist of education, entertainment, escapism and aesthetics and they are mutually compatible and often mixed to create unique, personal and memorable experiences. To fully comprehend how this can be achieved, it is necessary to determine what each of the realms implies.

Entertainment

The experiences that people generally regard as entertainment is something that occurs while they passively absorb the experiences using their senses. This happens when watching a performance of some kind, listening to music or reading book on one's own initiative (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Education

Educational experiences are about absorbing the events that are currently unfolding, however, there is major difference in terms of the participation. Educational experiences generally require active participation in order to really learn, enhance skills or knowledge, which can be in the form of an engaged mindset when it comes to intellectual learning or the use of the body if it relates to physical training (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Escapism

This realm involves a more significant degree of immersion and engagement in comparison to the previously two realms. When a customer is having an escapist experience, he or she is completely immersed into it, which can therefore be regarded as active participation. An example of an escapist experience is a visit to a theme park or virtual reality and the customer becoming a participant or an actor capable of affecting the concrete activity (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Aesthetics

When having an aesthetic experience the customer is immersed by the unfolding event or the surrounding environment but with no or very little impact on the surrounding environment. Customers engaging in an aesthetic experience have a primary target of being present and an example of an aesthetic experience is visiting a national park. Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that any experience created within an individual's mind is real whether or not the external stimuli are authentic or simulated.

These are the four realms of an experience and Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that the richest experiences contain aspects of all four realms, and companies can increase the sensation of reality by minimizing the boundaries between the different realms. Andersson (2007) argues that experiences cannot be purchased because they only take shape in the mind of the individual. Managers within the experience industry must be able to provide input for experiences that accommodate and fit the needs of customers at a particular time (Andersson, 2007). This may be achieved by combining aspects of all four realms because the nature of the experience will be more diverse and rich.

Reflections on experience economy

Despite the argued transformation from a service economy to an experience economy where businesses such as Starbucks or Build-A-Bear-Workshops really have grasped the experience concept there are still sources of criticism (Zomerdijs & Voss, 2010). Petermans & Van Cleempoel (2009) outlines different points of critique and skepticism towards the concept of experience economy and its view on how companies must act. The authors argue that within the concept of experience economy there should be a distinction between a first and a second

generation (Petermans & Van Cleempoel, 2009). The first generation refers to experience economy as it was originally proposed by Pine & Gilmore in 1999 and the second generation to how it had developed ten years after in 2009 when the article by Petermans & Van Cleempoel was written.

One issue relates to the fact that the first generation of experience economy to some extent dictates a top-down approach by providing customers with a predetermined experience provided by the companies. The argument is that consumers today are engaging in dialogue with companies about what kind of experience consumers desire and therefore they jointly search for the experience that fits both parties (Petermans & Van Cleempoel, 2009). Another issue for criticism is the fact that in the first generation of experience economy by Pine & Gilmore (1999) there is significant company-centric thinking, where companies only share the information they want, which then limits their customers insights and reduces transparency (Petermans & Van Cleempoel, 2009).

It is also argued that the use of experiences has other significant purposes than merely increasing customer satisfaction and strengthening the relationship between customers and companies. According to various authors, the first generation of experience economy was solely focused on companies and their offers, and the use of experiences was merely a tool to generate profits (Petermans & Van Cleempoel, 2009). The first generation was also criticized for not putting the needs and wants of customers in a central position. Moreover, it was argued that there was a failure to see customers as individual human beings with subjective norms, values, life goals who share the wish to play an active role in the customer/company relationship (Petermans & Van Cleempoel, 2009).

Despite sources of criticism it is argued that the second generation of the experience economy focuses on customers' demand, customer relationship management and also co-creation of meaningful experiences (cited from Petermans & Van Cleempoel, 2009). It is the belief that airport operators will have a much greater change of providing passengers with personal and memorable experiences by using the concepts of the experience economy.

With this definition of the concept of experience economy and experiences the focus will now be on their design. In the next section the concept of experience design will be introduced to show how businesses can utilize the concept to create relevant, valuable and memorable experiences for their customers.

Experiences and experience design

Experience design is closely linked to the experience economy and provides an understanding of how to design memorable customer experiences. This section seeks to provide an understanding of how experiences can be designed and the concept of experience design is a tool to accomplish that. An important premise is that designers of experiences must have gained a coherent and in-depth understanding of what kind of experience that their customers are demanding before engaging in the actual design process (Pullman & Gross, 2004).

According to McLellan (2000) the purpose of experience design is to create experiences that are not only functional and fulfill a purpose but also enjoyable, compelling and memorable. Another definition is composed by Newbery & Farnham (2013) who states that experience design is a systematic approach to “*ensure that customers are receiving and recognizing the maximum value in a way that also keeps them engaged with the business*” (Newbery & Farnham, 2013, p.8). Experience design concerns providing adequate levels of quality in customer service during all stages in a particular customer relationship. It is furthermore stated, “*experience design should help customers get more value from the products and services they buy*” (Newbery & Farnham, 2013, p.9).

Pine & Gilmore (1999) states that the best relationship a company can have with its customers is affective or emotional. When the company succeeds in not only satisfying the customer's particular needs but also makes the interaction pleasurable, customers are more inclined to remain loyal to the company (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Another advantage of providing the customer with a pleasurable experience is that the customer to a higher degree will remain loyal to the company even when a mistake or faux pas happens (Pullman & Gross, 2004). Experience design can be summed up to be an approach to create an emotional

connection with customer through thorough planning of tangible and intangible elements of service.

When working with experience design it is essential to have a definition of the term “experience”. Many authors and researchers have composed different definitions, however, because experience design is so intertwined with experience economy, it is relevant to include a definition from this source. Pine & Gilmore (1999) define an experience as a circumstance when a person buys a service, he or she also purchases a set of intangible elements that are handled on his or hers behalf. Moreover, when a customer purchases an experience, he or she is also paying for spending time while enjoying a series of memorable events that the company manages or stages in order to engage him or her personally (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). With this definition in mind it can be argued that these experience transactions take place when a company uses services as the stage and goods as props to create engagement from the customer (McLellan, 2000).

Because achieving positive customer experiences are so dependent on also delivering excellent service, the design of both concepts are greatly intertwined and have many similarities. In the airport context passengers will arguable not end up with a positive and valuable airport experience if there is not delivered adequate service. So to provide passengers with valuable airport experiences, these experiences must also be designed to contain high levels of service.

It is argued that experience design somewhat derives from service design. Service design is characterized by being an overall journey composed of smaller encounters between employees and customers, customers and technology, and technology and employees (Forlizzi, 2010). The design of an experience, as well as the completion of a service, is approached holistically and by improvisation. This means that experience or service designers are not designing concrete experiences or service transactions, but instead creating resources for or tools to establish an experience or the enacting of a service (Forlizzi, 2010). This is done based on the understanding that customers’ own subjective perceptions, actions and beliefs will in the end shape the outcomes (Pullman & Gross, 2004).

Having established the background of experiences by introducing the concept of experience economy and looking into how experiences can be designed by applying experience design, it is appropriate to examine experiences in relation to airports. The next section will address the determination of the airport passenger experience and its pertaining elements and components. The objective is to provide an understanding of the nature of airport passenger experiences and their role in the overall context of the airport industry. An application of two models will be introduced of which one is used to illustrate part of the focus of this thesis and another to explore how customer experiences can be approached.

Passenger experience

The term 'passenger experience' is adopted from existing literature within the airport experience context and stems from the original term of 'customer experience'. The term 'customer experience' is a heavily discussed term and various authors have proposed definitions and arguments for and against the substantiality and usefulness of the term. It stems from literature within marketing, retailing and service management and Verhoef et al. (2009) argues that in order for companies to compete by providing their customers with satisfactory experiences they must coordinate all of the "clues" the customers can detect within the buying process.

With this perspective in mind, the customer experience can be defined as "*the customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or parts 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)*" (as cited in Verhoef et al., 2009, p.32). There are various other definitions of the customer experience yet this one is assessed to be fitting and coherent. An important remark is that this experience is also created by elements that are not under the control of the company such as influence of other people or purpose of purchasing the product. It is argued that the customer experience encompasses the total experience, which also concerns the search purpose, the consumption and the after-sale phase of the experience (Verhoef et al., 2009).

The term customer experience has been increasingly emphasized in recent years however the term is also met with criticism and skeptics that one must be aware of when using the term.

Some of the criticism concerns the proposal that customer experiences and customer relationship management in general has not created the expected levels of value for customers and the expected profitability for organizations (Palmer, 2010). It is moreover argued that the definitions of the customer experiences are often circular in their nature and contributes with very little guidance to how it can be useful for practitioners (cited from Palmer, 2010).

Despite these points of criticism the definition and scope of the term 'customer experience' is adopted in this thesis. Throughout this thesis the term 'passenger experience' will be used to assess and describe the passengers' experience within the airport context. As mentioned previously the term 'passenger experience' has been adopted from existing literature and covers a passenger's overall experience with an airport. In this thesis the airport passenger experience will be approached very purposively with the focus solely on passengers' experience during their time at the airport.

There are several advantages to gain from providing passengers with a good experience and failing to do so may have significant negative consequences. The airport experience for passengers has changed over time, due to changes in the overall landscape for airports, and airport operators must continuously revise and further develop their offerings (Harrison et al., 2012).

As mentioned above the landscape of airports has undergone significant changes in the last forty to fifty years. De-regulation, commercialization and privatization have increased and these three factors have all contributed to the adjustment of business philosophies in all operations of the previously public-owned and strictly controlled airports (Harrison et al., 2012). Because of the growth of the industry and the increased number of airlines, privatization and de-regulation of the industry began in the 1970's and 1980's (Graham, 2003). This de-regulation is expressed in different ways, one of them being airports' detachment from government control (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the introduction of low-cost-carriers (LCC) has resulted in significant changes and that flying is not just a privilege for the wealthy. Now more and more people are able to afford airline tickets, the reason why also airports started adapting their strategies to become

more effective and productive in order to meet the increasing demand of their customers (Wattanacharoensil et al. 2015).

Since the beginning of the new millennium there has been an emerging emphasis on the experience for airport passengers. According to Livingstone et al. (2012) and Harrison et al. (2012) the growing awareness on the airport passenger experience is due to the increasing understanding from airport management that delivering better experiences for airport customers can enhance travel as well as create revenues from non-aeronautical sources. Furthermore, a positive airport experience can help increase passenger satisfaction and in addition influence both travelers and airlines on their choice of airport as transfer hub (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). This situation has also provided airports with an opportunity to differentiate themselves from others especially in areas where airports are located close to each other (Wattanacharoensil et al. 2015). E.g. in Amsterdam Airport the passenger experiences have been taken a step further. An Entertainment and Service manager has been employed to take care of some rather untraditional activities such as actors entertaining passengers in the security area and live music every Friday afternoon (Graham, 2003).

According to Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) the airport passenger experience has never been comprehensively defined, how it is used within the industry and what its key characteristics are. Generally airports tend to provide passengers with an experience based on management decisions, not on insights from the passengers themselves (Kirk et al., 2012). This is problematic because these decisions are significantly affected by the availability of resources and management's interpretation of the ideal airport experience for passengers (Kirk et al., 2012).

The result of this lacking definition is that the airport passenger experience remains subjectively interpreted and unsystematically understood (Wattanacharoensil et al. 2015). This is in sharp contrast to many other functions within airports, which have been standardized, studied, planned and also regulated. This clearly underlines the need for further investigation of the airport experience concept. A number of authors have, however, researched the topic and provided useful findings that serve as theoretical background.

An airport experience can be defined as the “*activities and interactions that passengers undergo in an airport (terminal building)*” (Popovic et al., 2010, p. 2). This definition can be broken down into two broad categories:

- 1) Necessary activities, i.e. all activities that are necessary in order to board the plane (check-in, security, immigration, baggage drop).
- 2) Discretionary activities, i.e. all other activities taking place in the airport and not connected to the necessary activities (shopping, dining, strolling around).

Popovic et al. (2010) estimate that passengers spend 80% of their time in airports with discretionary activities and only 20% with necessary activities. In this thesis the focus is primarily on discretionary activities, however, both sets of activities are included in order to achieve a holistic understanding.

The passenger experience, like any other human experience, is perceived subjectively and influenced by the context in which it takes place (Harrison et al., 2012). Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that an experience lingers with the customer - passenger in this case - past the time of the event, which ultimately means that a passenger experience is actually a relationship with the experience provider, rather than a basic interaction (Harrison et al., 2012). With this perspective in mind, there is an even bigger need of urgency to provide a great experience for passengers due to the value added from a positive experience and the potential financial gain. In this context the passenger experience is a relationship between the passenger, the airport and its operators. This relationship is formed over time through different activities and interactions between the passenger and the airport (Harrison et al., 2012).

Perspectives on the airport passenger experience

Looking at the airport passenger experience from multiple perspectives can contribute to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept. To make a clear definition of the concept, its characteristics and elements, it is important to understand the perspectives of all involved parties in the airport passenger experience. It is evident that the passengers' perspective is different from that of the airport operators' and a common understanding can contribute to increasing the quality of the airport passenger experience.

This section will present a conceptual model for passenger experience, which is introduced with the purpose of illustrating different important aspects of the airport passenger experience as well as focus points. The model illustrates the different perspectives from which the airport passenger experience can be seen and furthermore outlines the different kind of experiences that constitutes the overall experience. The model below is composed by Harrison et al. (2012) and like Pine & Gilmore (1999) they argue that an experience - passenger experience in this case - is subjective and varies depending on the perspective from which it is being assessed. This particular view on the passenger experience is the foundation of the model that offers an overview of five different types of experiences related to the overall passenger experience (Harrison et al., 2012). This model was originally developed for passenger experiences in terminal buildings but it is assessed that the model also is applicable in the context of airport passenger experiences.

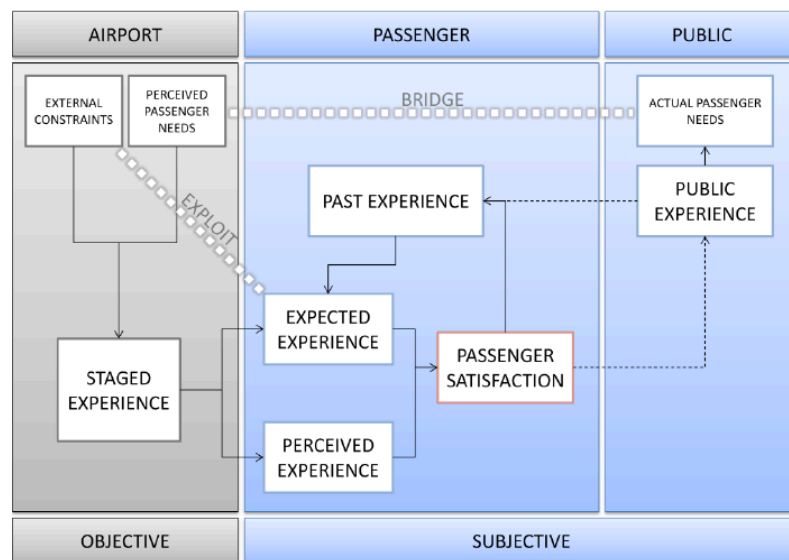


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Passenger Experience. Source Harrison et al. (2012).

The model breaks down the airport passenger experience into five different types: 1) staged experience, 2) past experience, 3) expected experience, 4) perceived experience and 5) public experience. The model furthermore categorizes the experiences according to the perspective from which they are viewed, which results in the perspectives of the airport, the passenger and the public. As illustrated in the model the different types of experiences are inter-related and to provide an in-depth understanding of the model, the different perspectives of experiences are described in the following sections.

The airport perspective

The passenger experience from the airport perspective is presented as the *staged* experience. This particular experience is objective because it generally forms the basis of employee performance benchmarks, which for instance can be baggage-delivery time or average time for passenger check-in (Harrison et al., 2012). These benchmarks are measured across the aviation industry and provide an objective examination of time and space as well as satisfaction of passengers in a particular airport.

The objectiveness of the staged experience is a solid starting point for airport operators when planning, designing and evaluating the airport experience, but the objectiveness can, however, also be the cause of challenges for the management (Harrison et al., 2012). The staged experience is typically an objective reflection of the passenger experience and does not take information or passenger input into account, and airport operators must be aware of this point of difference when analyzing the outcomes of the objective benchmarks (Harrison et al., 2012).

The passenger perspective

The passenger perspective consists of three essential experiences and in sharp contrast to the perspective of the airport, the passenger perspective and experience are subjective, and all passengers can have different experiences based on various factors. According to Harrison et al. (2012) the passenger experience is a culmination of prior experiences consisting of both first hand experiences and experiences told by others as well as their own expectations and actual perceptions while the experience is unfolding.

The *past* experience represents the relationship between the airport and the passenger and is based on direct, repeated interactions in combination with opinions by others, which for instance could be “word of mouth” (Harrison et al., 2012). Furthermore, the *past* experience is directly linked to passenger satisfaction because it functions as the basis for personal expectations and has the power to influence other passengers’ choice of travel (Harrison, et al., 2012).

The next experience within the passenger perspective is the *expected* experience, which naturally represents a passenger's subjective expectations of a given experience. The crucial part of the *expected* experience is not necessarily coherent with the *staged* experience, which is provided by the airport (Harrison et al., 2012). The *expected* experience is constructed by a passenger's *past* experience and the dynamics of the experience offering itself (Harrison et al., 2012). An example is passengers' expectations in relation to security processing and Harrison et al. (2012) explain that these expectations will be based on what passengers have experienced in the past and by what they ascertain in the actual situation.

The last experience within the passenger perspective is the *perceived* experience. This experience represents the passenger's interpretation of a particular experience at a given time and it is both subjective and dynamic (Harrison et al., 2012). The *perceived* experience is influenced by various elements such as artifacts at the airport, services and the airport itself (Harrison et al., 2012). The service level is essential for the *perceived* experience because according to Norman (2009) negative experiences, such as a flight delay, is perceived more negatively if the airport service is poor (cited from Harrison et al., 2012).

The public perspective

The *public* experience represents the collective subset of passenger experiences that is recalled after the event (Harrison et al., 2012). This *public* passenger experience is recorded or measured in different ways either through official aviation market research companies or informally through e.g. social media (Harrison et al., 2012). Despite being an informal channel to collect information or opinion, the airport industry cannot disregard the importance of social media due to their power to influence the public opinion. Both positive and negative stories about experiences can rapidly be told and shared on social media and potentially go viral (Harrison et al., 2012).

Summary

This concludes the description of the three perspectives in the conceptual model of passenger experience. As illustrated in the model, passenger satisfaction is based on the difference between the passenger's *expected* and *perceived* experience (Harrison et al., 2012). Regardless of any objective measures within the *staged* experience (e.g. check-in time at security) if the

passenger's expectations are met, he or she will be satisfied with the experience (Harrison et al., 2012). This will of course also work the other way around. A passenger might pass through security within the expected time, but a negative element such as a poor service from the airport staff, may result in dissatisfaction, as the overall expectations are not met. This effect on the *perceived* experience will naturally have an impact on the overall passenger satisfaction level.

This conceptual model is useful to gain an understanding of where the different types of experiences takes place as well as the nature of the experiences and how they are interrelated. The application of this model is a great way of illustrating the airport, passenger and public perspective, however, it is missing the ability to determine the components and characteristics of the airport passenger experience. The next section will present a model that goes beyond merely illustrating the perspectives of the airport passenger experience and can be used to make an in-depth examination of the nature of the concept and its characteristics.

Customer Experience Creation Model

To present some of the most significant components and characteristics of the airport passenger experience, a conceptual model of customer experience creation composed by Verhoef et al. (2009) will be applied to complement the use of the previous model developed by Harrison et al. (2012). This particular model is introduced because it can be used to determine characteristics and components of the airport passenger experience. An illustration of the model can be found in the appendix.

This section will introduce the features of the model and its sub-sections with the purpose of providing an understanding of how the model functions and how and why it will be applied in the analysis section. The introduction of the model in this section is based on a revised version to focus on the airport experience from a tourism perspective. Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) adopted the model in their study and used it as a conceptual framework for airport experience creation.

The model of passenger experience creation is originally designed to create holistic customer experiences in retail enterprises. The model is, however, assessed to be relevant and

applicable in the context of airport passenger experiences. The model builds on different components with the mentioned focus on retail enterprises yet a large number of these components are easily adaptable to the airport industry and its characteristics. According to Verhoef et al. (2009) the model is relevant to use for three reasons:

- 1) The model derives from research on customer experience and is furthermore based on concepts like marketing psychology, social contexts and service management
- 2) The purpose of the model is to examine and understand the customer experience as a holistic concept where the focus is on the customer experience management by the service provider.
- 3) The model includes thorough outcomes for experience responses in form of cognitive, affective, social and physical responses from customers about the service provider.

The fundamentals of the model with its approach to experiences are what make it applicable. According to Verhoef et al. (2009) an experience is also created of elements beyond the control of the retailer or service provider, i.e. the subjectivity and different perceptions of each customer or passenger. This view on experiences is very much aligned with the views previously presented in this thesis and form an overall coherence. As mentioned in the introduction to the model, the components and elements included are originally aimed at retail enterprises, the reason why there is a need for a revising of the model. Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) have proposed a suitable perspective.

In the revised version of the customer experience creation model composed by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) a tourism perspective has been applied, yet the model distinguishes between tourism-related components and main components in relation to the airport experience, which makes the use of the revised version relevant. Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) have grouped the proposed components into three perspectives, i.e. a sociological, psychological and a service marketing and management perspective. The perspectives are based on where the knowledge is introduced in the literature the authors have used.

In the following an in-depth outlining of these perspectives and components and how they relate to the airport experience will be presented. The proposals to what elements and

components that constitute the airport passenger experience stems from both the authors of the model as well as other relevant literature within this field of study.

Sociological perspective

The sociological perspective is included in order to understand the airport experience and different authors and researchers have examined this perspective. Previously airports were merely seen as a transit spaces for passengers embarking and disembarking airplanes on their way to their destination, however, some authors started arguing that airports were more than that. They claimed that airports were the place where a journey began and ended and furthermore the place where people began to “feel” like travelers (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Within the airport space there are different sociological aspects in relation to interactions between people, and these interactions between people can take different forms e.g. passenger-to-passenger, passenger-to-airport staff or face-to-face interactions vs. electronic interactions at self-check-in services for instance (Kirk et al., 2012). The authors of the model argue that there are two key sociological concepts that can affect the passenger experience: *sense of place* and *social interaction* and states that airports aim to project a *sense of place* where passengers can spend time by engaging in attractive and meaningful activities and where the airport can present its identity. *Sense of place* has also influenced terminal designs and the use of culture within the airport space, which has ultimately transformed airports from being a non-place to a place where meaning can be assimilated (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Sense of place is an important element because according to Popovic et al. (2010) airports are what create a traveler’s first and final impression of city or country. It is furthermore argued that a pleasant airport experience encourages spending and influences future travel plans (Popovic et al., 2010). This is additionally supported by Yeh & Kuo (2003) who argue that the passengers’ overall airport experience has a significant impact in promoting or discouraging future international tourism or business activities in a given country. This is one additional argument for the increased focus on passenger satisfaction and experiences from airport management (Yeh & Kuo, 2003).

Steadman (2003) defines *sense of place* as being composed by three underlying elements, which are the physical environment, human behaviors and social/psychological processes (cited from Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). These three elements create the meaning and attachment of a 'place' and in an airport context, the physical environment is generally used to enhance identity of the place, whereas the two other elements are more complex and harder to observe. The physical environment typically consists of interior design, cultural artifacts, mural paintings and local or national brands and all of these elements are applied to enhance the feeling of the place, which in many cases are directly related to the culture or location of the airport (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Social interaction, which is the other aspect of the social perspective, can contribute to the construction of an experience and the psychological aspects of individuals should be included in this context (cited from Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). An important and emerging form of social connection is the airport's online social forums where passengers can gather information or receive updates on the status of a particular airport. These may increase the quality of the passenger experience because passengers can be updated on their flight schedule or a potential gate-change, and recent years' massive development in mobile applications and social networks have taken social interactions to a new level (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Through the use of social media passengers can upload and share photos about their airport experiences and this new form of social interaction is considered an important phenomenon (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). The use of online platforms and technology in general is supported by Fattah et al. (2009) who argues that all airports should use Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies to enhance the airport passenger experience. In their article about "Smart Airports" it is argued that if airports use the latest technology then passenger touch points will no longer be defined by key information interchanges such as check-in, boarding or security (Fattah et al., 2009). It will instead result in persistent connection with the passengers along with real-time communications, which will allow airport stakeholders to engage passengers with relevant information (Fattah et al., 2009).

Psychological perspective

The psychological perspective of the passengers is similarly essential for the airport experience and may be influenced by several different elements. Activities, mobility, time and space are all elements in the airport space that to some extent can affect passengers' state of mind both positively and negatively. According to Livingstone et al. (2012) this influence can result in either relaxing the passengers or cause anxiety or stress.

Passengers feeling anxious are a complex problem faced by the entire airport industry and has been subject of extensive research because of its negative impact on the passengers, both physiologically and psychologically, (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). It is evident that anxiety is a negative influence on passengers' experience and because of terrorist attacks, primarily 9/11, regulations have been enforced internationally, which presumably causes travel-related anxiety to increase even more. This is of course a very complex challenge to address because airport operators, while trying to reduce passengers' anxiety, must at all times comply with the latest international security regulations.

The periods immediately before 'necessary' activities such as check-in, security or boarding is where passengers experience the highest levels of stress and anxiety (Livingstone et al., 2012). However, when passengers have completed these activities and can begin to engage in 'discretionary' activities these negative emotions will generally be replaced by positive emotions such as excitement and anticipation (Livingstone et al., 2012).

In the revised version of the customer experience creation model the authors focuses on two different components, anxiety and fairness, which they describe as the psychological perspective. There are different reasons why anxiety can be provoked. It can be provoked naturally for personal psychological reasons such as the fear of flying or situational reasons such as bad weather conditions, fear of missing the flight, loss of baggage or due to highly controlled and strictly regulated conditions in personal interactions with security enforcement and immigration (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

The ability of airport operators to provide positive experiences for passengers is linked to their ability of effectively addressing passenger anxiety. This can be addressed in a number of different ways, yet Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) argue that the management of an effective

system, the ability to provide excellent customer service and create a sense of calmness can contribute to the positive experience.

The component of fairness can be more complex to assess due to different subjective perceptions of fairness amongst passengers. However, the lack of meeting passengers' expectations of fairness can be critical and are in need of management's attention as well as further research according to Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015). Their research showed that passengers would strongly express their dissatisfaction once they felt they were part of an unfair experience and particular issues such as overpriced products and services, mistreatment by airport authorities and uncomfortable conditions within the airport were recurrent issues (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

The psychological perspective of the airport experience furthermore includes the past experience according to Pine & Gilmore (1999) and Harrison et al. (2012), and Verhoef et al. (2009), who originally composed the customer experience creation model. The model proposes that past airport experiences affects a passenger's current experience. Verhoef et al. (2009) argue that the past airport experiences can include both experiences from the airport from which the passenger departed and experiences from completely different journeys in the past. With this in mind it can be said that the perception, which a passenger brings along from one airport, directly influences expectations and perceptions of airport experiences to the next (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Service marketing and management

In order to create positive airport experiences an essential element is of course a high level of service. Providing passengers with a great service experience can enhance the passenger satisfaction and thereby the overall airport experience. Previous studies of airport service levels have mainly been focused on operational standards based on objective measures such as queuing time or service processing time (Liou et al., 2011). They do conversely argue that this focus has shifted towards a more passenger-orientated perception, which is highly relevant in today's very competitive air transport market (Liou et al., 2011).

According to Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) there are several service marketing and management-related aspects to be found within the airport space, which serves to enhance the passenger experience. Service encounters are essential for airports in order to ensure a positive passenger experience as they can be the basis for building a relationship (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). Moreover, the use of servicescape can influence the nature and quality of these passenger and employee interaction (Bitner, 1992).

Despite the value of personal interactions, airports have introduced more and more SST for passengers. SST allows passengers to e.g. check-in, print boarding cards or board the aircraft without assistance, which empower the passengers to take control, offer more convenience and potentially prevent service failures due to human mistakes (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). SST is substituting human interaction and offers different advantages as mentioned above, however, Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) argue that SST is more frequently applied in airports and countries, where salaries are high. The increased use of SST has also been examined by Harrison (2015) and she argues that the broad goals of SST and automation are also to reduce the time and space required to process each passenger through a terminal.

Another aspect of the perspective to consider is co-creation. It relates to the airport experience and affects it because the passengers take up the role of value creators once they have participated in a service transaction (cited from Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). Co-creation of value can be evaluated by four different elements, which is SST, social network forums, social media sites (e.g. Facebook or Instagram) and airport leisure activities offered by the airport (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

In general it can be said that the airport functions as a service facilitator that provides service facilities or resources for passengers to use and thus co-create value from it. The last elements within this perspective are commercial and retail. As mentioned previously many airports are generating large parts of their revenue from non-aeronautical sources, which means that passengers must have the opportunity to shop (Halpern & Graham, 2013). This need for passengers to generate revenue entails that airports must include retail stores and commercial activities within the airport space. It is proposed that because of the strong

interrelationship between shopping and airports, airport management no longer consider the transportation of passengers as the solely purpose of an airport (Geuens et al., 2004).

Summary

The purpose of this in-depth presentation of the model is linked to the future use of the model in the analysis. The primary data collected through both field study interviews with departing passengers at Copenhagen Airport and the focus group interview will be applied in the model in the analysis section. This potentially entails a need for a further revision of the model depending on the outcomes of the data analysis that will be presented later on in the analysis. The Customer Experience Creation Model provides a relevant and applicable basis for the outcomes of the data analysis and the aim is to examine how the findings from the primary research can be transformed into concrete components within the airport passenger experience. This can potentially result in new components or perspectives within the model, which furthermore enables a deeper analysis of the airport passenger experience and how the quality can be increased.

The analysis will present a further revised version of the model specifically designed for this thesis in order to help answering the research question. Some of the existing components and elements may be included due to their relevance for the overall airport passenger experience, which is the reason for including a thorough presentation of the model in this section. The model will contribute to an in-depth examination of what an airport experience is comprised of and how it can potentially be further developed or improved in order to increase passenger satisfaction and strengthen relationships between passengers and airports.

The use of the model enables an analysis based on a theoretical foundation to secure the validity of the outcomes. Furthermore, continuing and further developing the work by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) provide an excellent opportunity to compose well-founded results and to potentially shed new light on the concept of passenger airport experiences.

Sub-conclusion

The first topic presented was the airport product and services, the servicescape and its physical surroundings. In this section it was established that airports are service providers that offer various products and services to a wide range of different customers. It was additionally established that airports operate within both the B2B segment as well as B2C segment and this distinction is important when determining the three product categories that airports offer to passengers, i.e. core, tangible and augmented products each having significantly different characteristics.

Lastly the concept of servicescape was introduced as a mean of non-verbal interaction between passengers and the airport. It was concluded that servicescape and physical surroundings could influence passengers and their airport experience on a cognitive, emotional and physiological level, which emphasizes the importance of these concepts. In relation to the term experience, the subsequent section introduced the concept of experience economy. This section proposed that the service economy has transformed into an experience-focused economy where companies must find new and more engaging ways of differentiating themselves from competitors. This can be achieved by providing customers with engaging and memorable experiences that will ultimately increase the value of a company's core products and create a positive and loyal relationship with its customers.

The concept of experience design was introduced to provide an overview of how experiences could be utilized to increase customer satisfaction. Experience design was defined as the practice of designing products, services, events and environments that all focus on the quality of the customer experience. Ultimately it was argued that service and experience design are two highly interrelated concepts and the section included a comparison of the two concepts in order to point out their prominent characteristics.

The last part of the theory section dealt with the airport experience. The section introduced the background for the increased focus on airport passenger experiences due to changes in the airport industry in terms of passengers becoming a larger and steady source of non-aeronautic-related revenue. Several theoretical sources were presented to support the

speculation that the airport passenger experience is generally lacking a clear definition and determination of its characteristics as well as knowledge about passenger needs.

The first step in accommodating the challenges presented above was the determination of the airport experience as the activities and interactions that a passenger is exposed to during his or hers time in an airport. The activities mentioned were additionally categorized as either necessary activities or discretionary activities. A model illustrating the perspectives of the airport operators, passengers and public on the airport passenger experience was introduced. The model served as a tool to outline the different types of experiences that comprise the overall passenger experience and provided an understanding of how the different types of experiences were interrelated and influenced each other.

Finally, the theory section presented the customer experience creation model, describing its fundamental purpose before revising and applying it in the analysis. A thorough presentation of the revised version was introduced to provide an understanding of how the nature and characteristics of the airport passenger experience potentially look like. The model divides all the assessed components into three individual perspectives consisting of a service marketing and management perspective, a psychological perspective and a sociological perspective.

This sub-conclusion leads to the methodology section. Theory and concepts presented in the methodology section serve as the basis for conducting the analysis as well as the reference framework for generation of the problem areas and research question. The methodology section will provide an understanding of how the authors have conducted their research.

Methodology

The aim of this methodology section is to provide the scientific background for the viewpoints of this thesis. Furthermore the methodological section will clarify the methods applied to answer the problem statement. Hereby the reader will get an understanding of the methodology and the advantages and limitations that may be connected to this specific scientific approach. The methodology section will also provide the reader with an understanding of how the authors of this thesis view the world and the reality in relation to

the composition of their research. The first element in this methodology section is a presentation of the philosophy behind the science perspectives applied in this thesis.

The methodology section will moreover contain a thorough outlining of the research methods applied in the collection of data. The primary data collection consists of two different techniques, i.e. field-interviews at Copenhagen Airport and a focus group interview with seven participants. The methods used to analyze the data gathered from both field interviews and the focus group will also be presented in order to demonstrate how the outcomes were obtained. Attention should be paid to the fact that references to source errors are included in the thesis to highlight potential sources of such errors and in order to demonstrate how they have been accommodated with the purpose of creating valid research results and conclusions from the analysis.

Philosophy of science

When conducting a qualitative investigation, several methodological questions arise, and it is of great importance to reflect on and consider which philosophy of science the authors of this thesis have chosen to follow. A qualitative investigation can have different purposes (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). The purpose of this investigation is, however, to elucidate a phenomenon in its complexity where the assumption is that the phenomenon does not exist in the world as an independent matter, however instead as a partially created phenomenon, due to the way the authors of this thesis are describing it (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

Within philosophy of science the concept of *perspective* is used to capture the various fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as knowledge interests that the authors of this thesis apply as the underlying base (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). In their work on philosophy of science Justesen & Mik-Meyer (2010) apply three different perspectives consisting of realism, phenomenology and constructivism. The standpoint within philosophy of science chosen by the authors of this thesis has consequences for the practical completion of the investigation, from the development of problem formulation, research questions, approaches to data collection to the data analysis itself (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

According to Justesen & Mik-Meyer (2010) a philosophy of science's perspective refers to the fundamental understanding of the world and an acknowledgement of the theory it is built upon. In this thesis the phenomenological perspective has been chosen because of its roots in social sciences (cited from Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). The phenomenological approach is connected to an interest in understanding social phenomena from the participants' own perspectives and describes the world that the informants experience based on the assumption that the important truth is what the participants understand (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010).

From the phenomenological perspective the objective is to achieve 'thick descriptions' which are rich descriptions of the experienced reality (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). From the 'thick descriptions' obtained via the qualitative interviews, generalizations and creations of 'ideal types' have been used to understand the reality that airport passengers are experiencing. The phenomenological offset in this thesis has interest in subjective actions as well as the meaning, which actors attribute to certain actions. The aim for the authors of this thesis is not to identify and explain causal correlations but to interpret, understand and standardize subjective meanings (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

The phenomenological perspective embraces different directions. In this thesis the authors have chosen an empirical phenomenological approach, which is characterized by operating at two separate levels. The first level concerns understanding the participants, or passengers, in this case and their reality or experiences in an airport context (Nygaard, 2012). The second level concerns the reflection upon this understanding and subsequently putting it into perspective. The overall goal of the empirical phenomenological approach is to interpret the descriptions and insights from the respondents and to categorize them into either a theoretical or an empirical perspective (Nygaard, 2012).

This entails that the descriptions and insights from the passengers are not the goal in itself but a mean to achieve a reflection. Ultimately this leads to gaining reflective knowledge of the original insights from the passengers (Nygaard, 2012). The authors will use this knowledge to understand and see the passenger insights in a new perspective, which will contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon "airport passenger experience".

Ontology & epistemology

Two concepts frequently used in philosophy of science are ontology and epistemology.

Ontology covers the study of *being* and applies to the question of how the authors interpret the nature of the world (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). Ontology also deals with an ambiguous and socially constructed reality, which means that the interpretation can potentially vary across cultural, social or historical contexts (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). In short, ontology revolves around how the authors view the particular part of the world they have made their domain of investigation (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. Epistemology deals with the possibilities of how knowledge can be produced in the domain of investigation and focuses on questions such as the status of the knowledge gained (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). Also validity of realizations and the question of - and potentially how - the subjectivity of the authors plays a role in the recognition process is addressed (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

In the phenomenological perspective the assumption is that reality is ambiguous and socially constructed with several realities (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). In regards to subjectivity, the phenomenological perspective acknowledges context and subjectivity as conditions of investigation that can either can be excluded or ignored (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

Research method

The goal of this thesis is to perform an exploratory research and generate limited generalizations on the basis of the interviews conducted and therefore the authors have chosen an inductive research approach. The inductive research approach is characterized by taking its offset in observations or measured characteristics of individuals and thereby detects patterns or regularities that can form conclusions or theories (Blaikie, 2009). Conclusions that are drawn from matters not examined will be constructed through generalizations from matters that have been examined (Blaikie, 2009).

The focus of this thesis is the airport passenger experience. Therefore the thoughts, views and characteristics about passengers' airport experiences have been collected. The results from the interviews will be used to form limited generalized conclusions about the subject matter

(Blaikie, 2009). However, it is important to highlight that the descriptions produced through the inductive research strategy are limited to time and space and thus not universal laws.

Qualitative versus quantitative research

Different research philosophies and approaches are naturally linked to different methods of data collection. A quantitative research approach is typically aimed at determining how one thing or variable affects another within a certain population (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). This is done by quantifying the relationship between the variables that the researcher are measuring and can be done by using statistical methods. Quantitative research methods typically consist of objective measures, the use of a deductive approach and focus on numbers (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

In this thesis a qualitative approach is used because of its relevance as well as association with both the phenomenological research philosophy and the inductive approach (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). In qualitative research the aim is to develop an understanding of the context in which a phenomenon or a certain behavior appear. Furthermore, the focus is mainly on experiences and emotions and is thorough in its nature because it encourages participants to introduce or recollect concepts of importance from their perspective. Qualitative data is usually presented in text-form and provides a deeper and richer representation of people's experiences, attitudes and beliefs (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008).

For the collection of primary data an interview guide was developed to find answers to the relevant questions. Before the final interview guide was developed, two pilot interviews were conducted.

Data collection

The data collection for this thesis has included both primary and secondary sources. The primary data collection consists of field interviews at Copenhagen Airport and a focus group interview. In order to be able to answer the research question, also secondary data sources have been used, e.g. academic articles, books, theories and web-sources considered relevant for this thesis. Academic articles and books have constituted the main part of the secondary data collection and will be used in combination with collected primary data. This mixture of qualitative and quantitative data is chosen to improve the research design by ensuring that

limitations from one form of data will be out-weighed by the strengths of the other (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The aforementioned mixture of data, in combination with data from a large number of resources, has been selected to ensure a holistic view, while providing an adequate depth to the research and answering of the research question.

Primary data

Field Interviews

The field interviews were conducted by the authors of this thesis in Copenhagen Airports. Passengers were interviewed one-on-one and the authors had in advance developed a semi-structured interview guide consisting of 13 questions all related to airport passenger experience. The interview guide can be found in the appendix.

The aim of the semi-structured research interviews was to gain an understanding of and uncover themes in the world of the interviewed and was chosen as the main method for gathering primary data for the analysis. The interviews were conducted on the notion that it was not a trivial conversation nor a closed questionnaire (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010). Before the interviews were conducted relevant information about the airport industry in general, and airport experiences in particular, had been collected. As mentioned previously, the goal of the interviews conducted in the airport was to get comprehensive and detailed information, in other words: quality was valued over quantity. The research used non-probability sampling and it was attempted to get a fairly representative sample group consisting of women, men, and both older and younger passengers and with different travel purposes.

Two pilot interviews were held before the field study in Copenhagen Airport to investigate if the questions developed by the authors were easily understandable, if they needed to be changed and to get general feedback on the proposed questions. The pilot interviews gave positive feedback and it was decided to stay with the original interview guide. The interview guide, a semi-structured interview, contained questions regarding the subject matter, the 'airport passenger experiences', to be investigated by the authors of this thesis. The semi-structured interview form gave room for the authors to ask the interviewed passengers to elaborate on or provide more details about certain themes that were of importance to them.

This provided a situation where the authors were open to suggestions about themes and subjects that the interviewed passengers wanted to talk about (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010).

Furthermore, the qualitative interview provided information about the demographics of the respondents, their reason for travelling and general views of the experiences that they engaged in at Copenhagen Airport. To the extent possible it was attempted not to bias the research by asking leading questions, however, in a few instances specific questions were asked to reveal more about a particular theme that was of importance to the respondents. In the interview situations one common method to make the interviewed passengers to think deeper and elaborate on their thoughts was simply to remain silent and thereby invite them to reflect and thoroughly consider the questions asked. Hence, leading questions were eliminated and the authors were able to get unbiased answers not influenced by the interviewing author.

Planning and reflections

Copenhagen Airport was chosen as the location for the collection of the primary data. The choice of location was based on the assumption that passengers would have their memories of airport experiences “fresh in mind” and because they were present in the investigation environment. Copenhagen Airport consist of two terminal buildings, terminal 2 and 3. In 2015 Copenhagen Airport served 26.6 million passengers of which 94 % were international travelers and 6 % domestic travelers (Key facts & Figures CPH airport, 2015). The qualitative data collection took place over a two-day period in collaboration with the Management of Copenhagen Airport. A total of 24 interviews with different passengers were carried out: 14 interviews on the first day and 10 on the second. All interviews were conducted face to face in Finger A and Finger B area, respectively.

This area is known as the ‘airside’ area and is located after the security processing. In order to get access to these parts of Copenhagen Airport, a “havne ID-kort” (airport ID card) was acquired via the Management of Copenhagen Airport. Furthermore, a meeting was held two weeks prior to the start of the interviews with the Head of Commercial Excellence (Marion Lobedanz Witthøfft) and the Service Excellence Director (Stine Ringvig Marsal). According to Halpern & Graham (2013) the location where a survey takes place is highly important. The

gate area was chosen over the terminal building because passengers tend to be more relaxed in this area as they have then completed and gone through the potential anxiety provoking activities of check-in and security (Halpern & Graham, 2013). Furthermore, most passengers have made their retail purchases and engaged in many different airport activities at this stage.

Passengers lounging in the gates have in most cases nothing else to do but waiting for the departure of their flights and this made them more willing to engage in interview activities. The fact that the research had to be done in the airside environment complicated the process, because of the thorough security checks that had to be undertaken before the authors could gain access to this area. The qualitative data collection in Copenhagen Airport took place at the same day as bombs struck Brussels Airport, Zaventem (22.03.2016). This resulted in higher security levels and may have had unconscious effects on people's emotions, however, only one of the interviewed subjects mentioned the terrorist attacks during the interview.

It was chosen to use two full days to conduct the interviews as the volume and characteristics of passengers will vary with e.g. time of the day (Halpern & Graham, 2013). In the two Fingers, A and B, both domestic and international flights arrive and depart, however, the research was limited to only international flights within the Schengen area and consequently all passengers travelling outside the Schengen area were excluded. This decision was taken to get a reasonably homogeneous group of passengers. All interviews were recorded via microphone connected to an iPhone 6 for the authors to concentrate on the interview process and not having to take potentially inaccurate notes during the interviews.

Passengers were asked 13 different questions. First they were asked about more general and personal questions such as age, occupation but also gender for segmentation purposes. Passengers were asked about the purpose of their travel – either business or pleasure. Passengers were also asked how many times a year they travel by plane again for segmentation purposes to investigate if it was possible to identify particular patterns.

Focus group interviews

In addition to the semi-structured interviews with passengers in Copenhagen Airport, a focus group interview was conducted. According to Kvale (2010) a focus group interview generally consists of 6 - 10 people, guided by a moderator. The role of the moderator is to guide the discussion among the participants and to ensure that the group reflects upon the relevant themes and subjects. Furthermore, it is also the role of the moderator to ensure that each person is participating on equal terms with the others and to prevent individuals within the group from dominating the discussion. The purpose of the focus group interviews was the same as with the semi-structured interviews, i.e. to gain important insights of the informant's viewpoint within the research area (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010). However, since the field interviews revealed eight recurrent themes another purpose of the focus group interview was to get elaboration on these themes.

Focus group interviews are well suitable for explorative research within a new or less researched field, because conversation among more participants can bring spontaneous, expressive and emotional views to the table compared to individual interview situations. The goal of the focus group interview was not to make the group agree on or present specific solutions but rather getting different views on the different issues (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010). The concept of 'focus' is an important trait to the focus group method. The interaction among the group members is based on the focus of one or more themes that the moderator has decided. As opposed to the interviews in Copenhagen Airport, the focus group interview was not conducted in a "natural environment" (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

The focus group was held in a group room at CBS where all participants were seated around a large table. The moderator was placed at the end of the table so all the participants were able to properly see and hear him. The focus group consisted of seven participants with six men and one woman and an age-span between 18 and 34 years. A more even distribution of gender would have been preferable but unfortunately participant no. 8 – a woman – cancelled her participation on the day of the interview. The authors strived for a wide age-span, which was not fully achieved either. Despite not fully meeting the predetermined criteria, the dataset collected from this focus group is nevertheless assessed to be satisfactory and useful for further analysis.

Focus groups can be used to investigate important or topical issues in greater detail. But there are also pitfalls in the use of focus groups. The comments do not come from a representable sample group of all kinds of travelers. Furthermore, participants in the focus group may be more motivated to express extreme views because stronger feelings will be attached to these experiences. However, it is still an approach that can identify potential strengths or weaknesses affecting airport experiences (Graham, 2003).

Secondary data

In order to answer the research question also secondary data sources have been applied. For this thesis the secondary data consists of academic articles, books, theories and web-sources that are considered relevant. Academic articles and books have constituted the main part of the secondary data and will be used in combination with primary data to create a more robust platform for the analysis. Secondary data is mainly in relation to the theory section where various theoretical concepts are introduced.

When relying on secondary data there are certain aspects that the authors of this thesis must be aware of. According to Blaikie (2009) the use of secondary data is often referred to as secondary data analysis and it is common for various data sets to be archived and made available for other researchers to use. Despite the several advantages associated with secondary data such as savings in time the researcher must also beware of certain disadvantages. The most apparent disadvantage is the fact that previous research is very likely to have been conducted with both different purposes and research questions (Blaikie, 2009). Moreover, the previous research can potentially have been carried out based on different assumptions that are inconsistent with the current research. There can also be challenges in relation to the previous research being outdated or its quality can be difficult to assess (Blaikie, 2009).

These challenges are obviously something any researcher must take into consideration. It is essential to always apply source criticism when using and analyzing secondary data in order to ensure high level quality and validity. The secondary data used in this thesis has been approached with a critical mindset, due diligence and has been assessed as high quality, relevant and valid data sources.

Research quality

Quality criteria are used to assess whether a research project has a high scientific quality. While researchers generally agree that it is meaningless to conduct scientific research if criteria are not pre-defined for assessing and evaluating the research, there are many different ways to assess value research. In order to improve the quality it has been discussed how to distinguish the good from the better qualitative research (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). However, two criteria are more frequently applied than others in qualitative research, i.e. validity and reliability.

Validity is most important in qualitative research and refers to the validity of the conclusions that are descended from the research. Furthermore, validity concerns whether the findings of the study actually provided insights into the research question and to what extent “*we are measuring what we claim to be measuring*” (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). Because the sample group of the interviewed subjects in Copenhagen Airport included both gender and different age groups, the external validity is strengthened. However, a more mixed distribution of gender and age would have been preferred for the focus group.

Reliability has to do with quality of measurement and refer to how well the research methods are defined so other researchers in principle can reproduce the research conducted. These quality criteria are traditionally applied in the quantitative research where they take the offset in natural science. They have to be understood in the broad sense, which means that also interviews and observations can be assessed using these criteria (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). However, Blaikie argues that the “*character of qualitative research means that researchers will inevitable give something of themselves into the research process and, hence, into the outcome of the research*” (Blaikie, 2009,p.207).

Furthermore, effectiveness of the field study and focus group relies on the questions asked and the role of the researches. If questions are designed in the wrong way, they will produce incorrect results, so the design of the questionnaires required substantial work and critical assessments. The pilot interviews allowed the authors of this thesis to practice their interview techniques to avoid asking leading question and thereby eliminating bias. Furthermore, the

field interviews provided the authors with important insights to take with them to the focus group interviews.

There will always be a number of limitations to be considered in connection with research when the aim is to make generalized conclusions. In this particular research the results may be affected by the size of the sample group but also that data was collected in a single location (Copenhagen Airport). Even though the subjects interviewed in the field interviews constitute a reasonably broad and diverse group it is assessed that the research would have benefitted from a repeated approach with involvement of more respondents and an increased number of different airports.

Affinity diagrams

According to Kvale & Brinkman (2010) content analysis is a technique to describe qualitative data and to manifest the content and intentions of a message. By using categorization, the meaning of longer statements stemming from interviews will be reduced to fewer and simpler concepts and themes. Through categorization of the qualitative interviews conducted in Copenhagen Airport, the authors of this thesis have been able to group the collected qualitative data into concepts (Kvale & Brinkman, 2010). Grouping the data provides a better overview and eases the process of finding relevant similarities, differences and themes in the interviews. In relation to content analysis, affinity diagrams have been used to sort out the structure and interpret the qualitative interview results.

An affinity diagram is a hierarchical visual presentation of data and especially suitable when larger amounts of data must be analyzed, as in the case of verbal data gathered from semi-structured field interviews and the focus group. The affinity diagram technique identifies issues and insights across all interviewed passengers by capturing notes that represent the customers' recorded data (Holtzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2004). The affinity diagram was used to organize and group the data from the field interviews and a fast and efficient way to identify concepts and themes from the whole data population.

If very large quantities of data have to be analyzed it can be productive to include people with interest in the project and understanding of the data, however this was not possible, so the

authors had to build their own affinity diagrams (Holtzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2004). However, an affinity diagram is a group process that relies on inductive reasoning and can be defined as a method to organize both the individual interpretation sessions, the semi-structured interviews in Copenhagen Airport and the focus group interview into a wall-sized hierarchal diagram and to group the data into key concepts under labels that represent the passengers' needs (Holtzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2004). The affinity diagram enables the authors to group the common issues, themes or concepts and the overall scope of the passenger insights.

The use of an affinity diagram provides different advantages, one being the process of making the diagram to show common issues, distinctions and needs without losing the aspect of individual variation (Holtzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2004). Furthermore, the use of an affinity diagram is also relevant when the need for gaining a group consensus exists. The authors can in commonality listen and digest the data to reach a common coherent understanding of the key concepts or issues revealed from the data. The affinity diagram method was used in two particular situations: in the analysis of the field interviews and in the focus group analysis.

To fully comprehend how this method was used in practice, a description of the procedure will follow. There are different ways of approaching the affinity diagram and it can be done manually or semi-manually supported by a computer program designed for affinity diagrams. In this case the authors developed the diagram manually due to the relatively small data population consisting of 24 passenger interviews of varying length. Before initiating the development of the affinity diagram different materials had been acquired. A group room at CBS was used due to the need for a big room with large wall space to suspend the diagram. Other materials such as Post-It notes, pens and a whiteboard were available and to ensure a proper sound quality a loudspeaker was connected to the smartphones that had recorded the interviews and subsequently played.

The procedure was to play the interviews according to the sequence in which they were recorded in the airport. An interview would be played over the loudspeaker and while the authors were listening in, they would individually write down their notes. If one of the authors identified a concept, theme or an issue of relevance from the interview, he would make a note

for his personal pile of notes. It is of importance to highlight that the authors noted the same theme or issue once per interview. If an interviewed subject mentioned the same theme several times, it would only be noted once in order to compose a 'weighed score' and compare the substantiality of the themes with each other. There are a number of built-in sources of error related to this, however this approach will nonetheless contribute to a more genuine reflection on how "important" each theme was according to the respondents.

This procedure was repeated for all the recorded interviews. An essential guideline dictates that the authors during this phase were not allowed to communicate because it is necessary for each of the authors to make individual assessments of themes, issues or recurrent notions without the influence of the other author (Holtzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2004). By respecting this guideline the authors will also gain a more nuanced insights into and interpretation of the data.

Following the intensive listening to all the interviews, the categorization of all notes was initiated. The construction of the diagram constituted a procedure where the authors would take turns in placing notes from their personal pile on the wall. Notes with related content would be casually placed next to each other in order to create subgroups. Every single note would be placed on the wall even if it was similar to many others or completely different from the rest. This allowed the authors to gain an overview of the most recurrent concepts (Holtzblatt, Wendell and Wood, 2004).

This procedure continuously revealed coherences and concepts, and when all notes were placed on the wall, communication between the authors was again allowed. The next step was to discuss how the diagram had developed and if any surprising patterns or themes had emerged. The emerged subgroups were then discussed and organized to establish clarity on the number and content of the various groups. The different subgroups were subsequently organized in different columns and moreover given a relevant heading indicating the concept of each particular subgroup. The authors now extracted the most recurrent concepts and themes identified by the passengers interviewed in the airport. The procedure described was utilized in the same way in the analysis of the focus group interview.

The overall goal of creating the affinity diagram was to ultimately identify and categorize the insights from the interviewed passengers in the airport. These insights would serve partly as the foundation for the focus group interview and as a source of valid conversational topics for the participants within the focus group. By taking this approach the authors were able to collect a wide spectrum of passenger insights and subsequently, through the data analysis, narrow it down to concrete concepts. Through the focus group interview these concepts or themes could now be further examined and analyzed. The findings from the affinity diagram will be presented in the analysis.

Analysis

The analysis of the collected passenger insights, the characteristics and components of the airport passenger experience and a revised version of the conceptual framework for creation of airport experiences will be presented in this section. The findings in this analytical section will contribute to providing an understanding of the nature of airport passenger experiences. The analysis will be divided into different sections consisting of the analysis of the affinity diagram developed from the field interviews in Copenhagen Airport and an analysis of the focus group interview. The subsequent section will seek to identify and categorize the activities that the passengers prefer to engage in, by introducing concepts from experience economy in order to investigate potential common characteristics or coherences among these activities. The final part of the analysis will present a revised conceptual framework for airport experience creation, which has been revised based on the findings from the previous parts of the analysis.

Airport experience concepts

Field interviews

This section will focus on presenting the passenger insights that were collected through interviews with travelling passengers in Copenhagen Airport. As mentioned in the methodological section this primary qualitative dataset has been analyzed through the use of an affinity diagram to provide a thorough overview of the findings and where the goal was to extract recurrent concepts or themes expressed in interviews with passengers. Before

presenting the findings from the analysis, the characteristics of the subjects interviewed (respondents) will be described.

Respondents' characteristics

This qualitative field interview dataset consisted of 24 participants all interviewed in Copenhagen Airport. The overview of the interviewed subjects in the charts below shows diverse profiles with only few characteristics, i.e. purpose of travel, nationality, number of annual flights and age. Because the aim of the interviews was to obtain qualitative insights into the participants' perspectives on the airport passenger experience, it was assessed that there was no need for further profiling or segmentation of the participants.

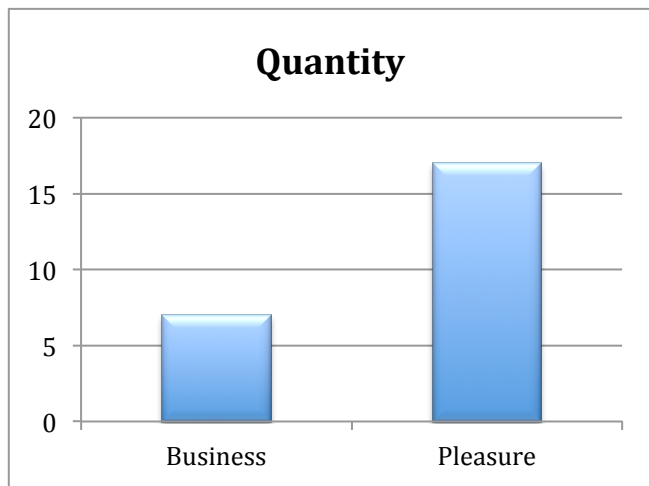


Chart 1

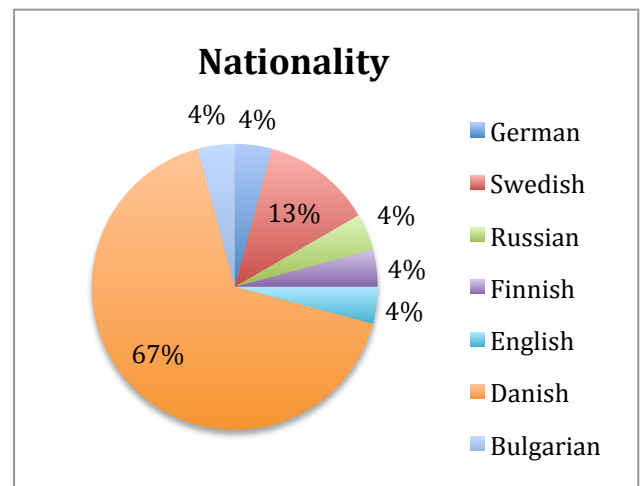


Chart 1

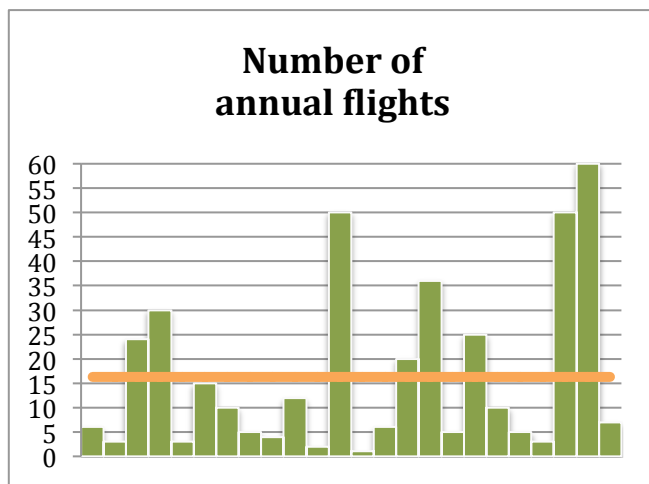


Chart 3

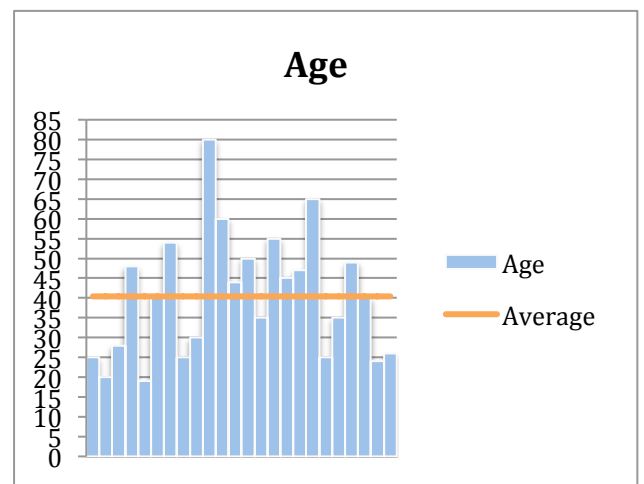


Chart 4

As the interviews were conducted in Copenhagen Airport, a large amount of the respondents were Danish yet other nationalities were included. The distribution of nationality of the respondents can be seen in the chart 2 and show that seven different nationalities were interviewed. The authors discovered a tendency that Danish passengers would intentionally or unintentionally use Copenhagen Airport as reference frame for their reflection upon the airport passenger experience. However, the diversity in nationality made the data more nuanced, as the inclusion of other nationalities is assumed to broaden perspectives on airport passenger experiences. The above-mentioned tendency is relevant to investigate further in the study of airport passenger experience and will be a recurrent element in the analysis as well as in the discussion.

The distribution in number of annual flights is broad amongst the respondents. A few were traveling once or more than once a week for business purposes, and these respondents account for the highest numbers of annual flights. The other end of the spectrum was a retired elderly lady who only flew once a year. Between these two extremes there is a fairly even distribution, however the high extremes significantly affect the mean. A mean of 16,3 flights per year is very high, however the numbers indicate that they represent a broad and multifarious group of respondents in terms of air travel frequency. The number of annual flights is assumed to affect the respondents' experience with and knowledge of the aviation industry and airport passenger experiences. A multifarious group of respondents is again favourable because their view on the airport passenger experience will then reflect different levels of knowledge and experience.

The age distribution amongst respondents is equally broad. The youngest respondent was 19 years of age and the oldest 80 years. The effect of the age distribution on the outcomes of the analysis is questionable yet it is argued that a heterogeneous distribution contributes to a more multi-faceted overall perspective on the concept of airport passenger experiences. Finally there was an even distribution in terms of gender, i.e. 50% females and 50% males, which constituted a balanced group of respondents.

With this brief overview of respondent characteristics, the focus will now shift to the analysis of the affinity diagram and the following section will give an overview of the themes and

concepts identified through the field interviews and provide thorough descriptions of each of them.

Recurrent themes and concepts

As previously mentioned the ultimate goal of the affinity diagram was extract recurrent concepts, themes and issues expressed by the passengers during the interviews in the airport. The analysis of the interviews and the building of the affinity diagram revealed several recurrent concepts. The authors were able to categorize eight main airport passenger experience concepts consisting of one or more themes to be discussed later on in the analysis of the focus group interview. The eight concepts were:

- *Time*
- *Information and signposting*
- *Space & lay-out*
- *Physiological perspective*
- *Activities*
- *Emotions*
- *Human interactions & service*
- *Airport design*

With the identification of the above eight concepts, the relationship between them will now be discussed. By counting the number of notes on each concept, it is possible to calculate the “weighed score” of each concept. From the affinity diagram process, a total of 358 notes from the 24 interviews were grouped in the eight individual concepts. The concept with most notes attached was the physiological perspective where 78 notes referred to themes or issues linked to the physiological perspective, which made this concept the most significant one.

The total number of 358 notes is a compilation of the personal notes by the two authors as mentioned in the methodological section about the affinity diagram, which means that the number of notes pertaining to a specific theme is potentially doubled as both authors may have written a note on that particular theme. This is, however, not assessed to be a decisive matter because all themes have been approached in the same way and will therefore not influence their individual weight and thus the results.

Each concept is covered by all the notes taken in relation to this specific concept.

Subsequently all categorized notes were again compiled in subgroups or themes as they will be referred to going forward. For example, comments about seating and the need for a fitness room are all part of the 'physiological perspective' concept. Subsequently they are categorized under the themes 'seating' and 'resting and wellness'.

A first review of these eight recurrent concepts reveals that there are both tangible and intangible elements of a cognitive, physiological, social and emotional nature. In the following each of the recurrent concepts and its subjacent themes will be described in detail with tangible and concrete examples of how the passengers expressed their viewpoints, beliefs or feelings about that particular concept. Finally, when all recurrent concepts have been presented, the authors will summarize how the findings in this section will be used in the analysis at a later stage.

Time

Time is an integral part of all comments related to efficiency and speed but also comments on the number of hours before departure the interviewed subjects prefer to be in the airport. 27 out of the 358 notes made in the affinity diagram process contained comments about time which equals 7,5 percent of the total number of notes. Even if time was not the most recurrent concept, there were tendencies and interesting comments to be deducted from the interviews. One important finding is how long time prior to departure passengers arrive in the airport. This is a decisive assessment, as it will ultimately determine how much time passengers spend in the airport.

There was an overrepresentation of respondents who mentioned that they arrive in the airport one and a half to two hours prior to departure. In general this was due to the importance of making the flight and the fear of missing it. One passenger stated that it was almost a learned trait and part of her upbringing: *"I aim to be here two hours before, it's such an old thing from my parents - if they say you have to be here two hours before I'll be here 2 hours before"* (respondent #5 – response translated by the authors). All quotes to follow have been translated by the authors. This behavior – to arrive well in advance – was shared by another passenger: *"My mother has always told me I had to be in time – so I am here 2 hours before at least"* (respondent #9). The

two quotes suggest that there are specific rituals and traditions connected to travel and to the airport, a theme that will be addressed later on in this analysis.

Another significant trend related to the time concept was stress, anxiety and fear of missing the flight, but also the fear of unpredictable queues in check-in and security. Especially speed and efficiency was important to many respondents: *"The most important for me is the queues. It is a huge source of irritation if I have to wait too long in queue – waiting time is wasted time"* (respondent #23) another passenger said: *"I am uncertain of how long time to use through security and how long to wait in queues"* (respondent #19). For many passengers it is obvious that there is a lot of uncertainty which influences how long before departure they arrive in the airport. The fear of being stressed by waiting time leads passengers to arrive well in advance to make their flight.

A few of the 24 respondents, however, took the opposite approach in relation to waiting time. This small group wanted to arrive as late as possible in order to reduce their total time in the airport. In general business passengers seemed to value their time more than leisure passengers who considered their time in the airport as part of the journey. One passenger who travelled for leisure purpose said: *"If it's business I'm here 45 minutes before, if its leisure I'm here one and a half hours before"* (respondent #3). The same passenger added that he enjoyed being in the airport more when he had his family with him; when on business it was a matter of transportation only. Others had very different reasons for coming late. One passenger said: *"If it is possible I will come to the check-in as late as possible. I don't like to spend so much time in the airport because everything is so expensive"* (respondent #17). Although this was not a common theme among the passengers, it is interesting to note that some, due to the price levels alone, will arrive as late as possible.

In general there seems to be consensus that you must make sure to arrive well in advance for the departure of your flight. This is first and foremost to reduce own stress level but also in respect of other passengers and airport staff. One passenger said in relation to queues and waiting time: *"I fully understand the need for security control for example, but some passengers get upset because they have to be checked, but you have to understand the situation that we are in – it is not the good old days anymore"* (respondent #7). This view is shared by the majority of the respondents.

Summary

Passengers value a quick and efficient path through the airport but still respect the nature of the airport environment and understand the conditions that they are subjected to. From the interviews it is evident that time and waiting time are not the most important factors to passengers compared to other concepts. It was clear that there are differences between passengers travelling for pleasure and passengers traveling for business, one of them being that business travelers in general wanted to spend less time in the airport compared to passengers traveling for leisure purposes.

Information and signposting

Information and signposting were primarily mentioned when respondents were asked what they found most important during a stay in an airport. The possibility to easily find relevant information and well in advance prior to an activity was highly important for a large number of the respondents, because it was directly linked to how their experience in the airport would unfold. Within the information and signposting concept two recurrent themes were identified, i.e. the quality of information and the signposting/visibility.

The quality of information refers to both the amount of information which the airport provides for their passengers as well as to how adequate it is. The perceived quality of information was also influenced by the speed by which it was delivered. If information was received in a timely manner, it would influence how the rest of the airport experience would unfold because it was related to the respondents' sense of safety and anxiety. Several respondents mentioned that being well informed about their gate and when to go there would influence which activities they would engage in and how much they would be able to enjoy them. Furthermore, the degree to which they felt well informed would directly influence and reduce travel related stress or levels of anxiety.

The quality of information also related to informing passengers about events, such as a flight delay, but also to adequately accommodate the entailed doubts that such an event would potentially trigger. Respondent #5 said: *"Information is great if you are informed about a flight delay and the reason behind it – it really makes a huge difference on the stress level"*. This supports the position that provision of adequate timely information can influence passengers'

anxiety or travel related stress. Another theme identified within this concept was signposting and visibility. This referred to how easily passengers could find their way through the airport.

An airport's ability to equip the physical surroundings of the terminal building with visible and easily understandable signposting was also mentioned by the respondents as an important element. It is evident that passengers frequently departing from Copenhagen Airport found this less important because of their familiarity with this particular airport. Because 68% of all the respondents were Danish, Copenhagen Airport is presumably the airport that they usually depart from, which made this theme less pronounced compared to the quality of information theme. However, some respondents expressed that signposting became an important feature when attempting to navigate through airports they were unfamiliar with. Respondent #17 stated that: *"I don't think about it - only if I am at an airport where I have never been before, then I might ask staff for directions"*. New passengers arrive at new airports every day, which is why the theme of signposting is important.

Summary

The concept of information and signposting revealed two subadjacent themes, i.e. quality of information and signposting. Both themes are assessed to directly influence travel related stress and anxiety. Providing passengers with adequate information well in advance to activities such as boarding will influence their airport experience positively. It was shown that the respondents' choice of activities, overall satisfaction and comfort were influenced by the degree of information received. This finding corresponds with findings made by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) and their case study in Hong Kong Airport. They found that providing passengers with up-to-date technology and reducing the amount of inadequate information ultimately helped to reduce passengers' anxiety.

Space and layout

The third concept is space and layout and consists of themes that are impacted by the servicescape. This includes ambient conditions such as lighting, sounds, temperature and other things that can affect passenger's psychical wellbeing. Moreover, also notions about airport design and aesthetics proved to be important to passengers.

In relation to ambient conditions the most frequently noticed theme was light. From the field interviews it became evident that especially light was important to airport passengers, and how bright and inviting the airport is will impact the emotions of the passengers. In relation to the terminal design of Copenhagen Airport one passenger said: *"Its nice that the room has a high ceiling and you feel that you can breathe. It is a cozy airport I must admit"* (respondent #4). Another passenger had a similar impression and said: *"It is a pleasant environment to be in. It is spacious and bright which I think is nice"* (respondent #15).

All respondents, who regarded design and layout as important factors, preferred airports that were bright and spacious and many used Copenhagen Airport as a prime example of a well-designed airport. One passenger stressed this even further: *"You could say that the typical American airport has carpets and is very dark, it is not that exciting if you have to spend some hours there"* (respondent #18). The above quote supports the statement of the previous respondent and shows that passengers value bright airport buildings with high ceilings over the opposite. Some also said that the temperature of the terminal was important but compared with the focus on lighting it was important only to very few passengers.

70 out of the total of 358 notes were related to space and layout equivalent to 19,5 %. 36 out of the 70 notes were about design and aesthetics, making that the most important theme under space and layout. In this category it is evident that Copenhagen Airport was used as the point of reference. Generally the respondents perceived Copenhagen Airport as a well designed airport for the above reasons. Moreover, many passengers said that they had never thought of the actual design of airports but mentioned that it might be because of the good design and aesthetic expression of Copenhagen Airport. Only one female passenger said that design was not of importance to her at all: *"Design is not important to me, I don't pay attention to that"* (respondent #15).

The group of respondents was to a certain extent divided into two main categories: those who thought design and layout were important and those who did not, with an overweight of passengers who found these parameters important. One of them said: *"It is a unique experience to come here (Copenhagen Airport) it has a retro feeling with wooden floors, but at the same time it is super modern. It is the dead right combination and makes the experience way*

better" (respondent #12). Another passenger supported this view by saying: *"I have been to many airports and I think that Copenhagen is... it's typical Scandinavian design, which I love. It is very beautiful"* (respondent #9). The respondents may have been biased because they were Danish and in Copenhagen Airport and in general considered it their "home airport". It may therefore be argued that the comments in this category potentially would have been very different if passengers were interviewed in another airport.

None of the respondents mentioned display of art or similar as being important, the same is true for cleanliness with one exception. Only one passenger said: *"Sometimes the cleaning is insufficient. It is today for example"* (respondent #1). Since this was a unique case it could be argued that either the passengers do not pay much attention to the cleanliness of the airport or that airports in general are so clean that people take it for granted.

Summary

When evaluating the space and layout category it is conspicuous that the majority of the respondents mentioned that an airport should be bright, spacious and high-ceilinged. One way to accommodate this is lots of glass that provide a natural light in the terminal building, which was also favored by the respondents. The actual airport design was a theme that people at first did not care much about, but as they were allowed time to think about what airport design meant to them, many of them used Copenhagen Airport as a prime example of a well-designed airport. Finally, only one respondent mentioned cleanliness of the airport as being important to her.

Physiological perspective

The physiological perspective was the concept that the respondents brought into focus most frequently and generated 78 notes out of the total of 358, corresponding to 21,8% of the total number of notes from the affinity diagram process. Because of the importance attributed to this concept and that it is comprised of seven subadjacent themes with different weight attached, the themes are displayed as follows:

- *Quiet area (11 notes)*
- *Seating (23 notes)*
- *Children's area (9 notes)*

- *Space per passenger (10 notes)*
- *Exercise (6 notes)*
- *Personal care (8 notes)*
- *Resting and wellness (11 notes)*

The numbers in brackets above show the distribution of the 78 notes within the physiological perspective. The questions that generated focus on the physiological perspective, and its subjacent themes, were mainly what the respondents preferred to do after passing through security. Questions were about what they would like to do in case of a three hour delay and if they missed anything that could improve their overall airport passenger experience. The next paragraph will highlight the most important of the subjacent themes.

A number of the respondents were interested in designated quiet areas. They expressed that an airport is a hectic and noisy place and a quiet area could function as a comfortable place to either relax with leisure activities or handle job-related tasks. In most airports there are lounges for frequent flyers or for members of different loyalty programs, however a need for quiet areas or zones where ‘ordinary’ passengers could enter free of charge was identified. One of the respondents said: *“A good lounge is very important to me in order to get a little peace and quit to be able to work or read a paper without all the noise that exists in an airport”* (respondent #22).

The most addressed theme was seating. It soon became evident that nearly all respondents regarded the possibility to have a seat as the precondition for doing other preferred activities such as reading, using an iPad or drinking coffee. The possibility of having somewhere to sit is considered a kind of “base” from where the passengers could engage in activities and especially afterwards return to and relax. The need for comfortable seating was to some passengers the single most important issue. One respondent said: *“What is most important is to find a place where we can be, sit down and relax until our flight departs”* (respondent #2).

Another interesting finding was that several respondents highlighted that the majority of all seats was dedicated or linked to shops, restaurants or bars, which means that passengers have to purchase particular products in order to be allowed to sit down. This is exemplified in

statements such as: *"There is a lack of places to sit without having to purchase something"* (respondent #10) and *"There is a very limited amount of seats available - most of the seats are the places where you are forced to buy something – and on top of that you have other people standing around and taking up all the space"* (respondent # 15). The 'free' seats in the airport are mainly located at the gates, which means that passengers to a certain extent are isolated from the areas that offer purchase opportunities. This challenge of seating impacts both themes of quiet areas and general seating. This may constitute a implication for airport operators because airports are counting on passengers as a source of non-aeronautical revenue (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015). However, if airports provided more 'free' seats in the less isolated parts of the airport, it might increase passengers' willingness to purchase.

A third theme identified within the physiological perspective was space and the amount of space per passenger. An important issue raised by the respondents was the negative impact on the airport experience due to too many passengers on too little space. One respondent said: *"If there is a lot of people and it gets crowded it will just result in a stressed atmosphere"* (respondent #5). It is inevitable that in certain periods during the day there will be more pressure on the airport capacity, nonetheless it is still influences the passengers' experience. One respondent said: *"If you come in on a Friday night, all the gates are crowded, there is a million people – it really depends on what time during the day you arrive – it does make the experience less comfortable"* (respondent #4).

The findings related to the negative impact of limited space per passenger are consistent with the conclusions made by Harrison et al. (2012). The data presented in their article about terminal design illustrates the implicit linkage between the amount of space per passenger and the level of service and comfort. The finding that a crowded place due to too many passengers influenced the passenger experience negatively was therefore not surprising and the next theme of resting and wellness provided interesting insights.

When the interviewed subjects were asked if they missed anything when they visited airports, a tendency appeared. Several of the respondents expressed that they would prefer the possibility to lie down and rest, sleep or get massage in the case of long stopovers in connection with long-haul flights. They expressed willingness to pay to be able to lie down or

to rent a bed. One passenger said: *"In the case of long stopovers it would be nice with a place to lie down and have a rest, really to lie down and sleep – I think that is missing"* and continued: *"A sleeping quarter or dormitory would be great and then people wouldn't be sleeping on the floor"* (respondent #21).

Other respondents took this physiological comfort perspective even a step further and expressed a demand for recreational activities such as massage or exercise. This was again primarily in relation to long stopovers and one respondents said: *"It would be great with some wellness or massage facilities if you are going on a long journey – then it would be awesome to get a neck-massage"* (respondent #1).

The last concept to be addressed under the physiological perspective is children's area. Some respondents expressed a wish for a stronger focus on activities for children *"It would be good if there were a place where you were allowed to scream and shout and play with some Lego bricks"* (respondent #4). Another respondent supported this view and said: *"Perhaps there could be something more for kids out here, just a place with a drawing table or something like that"* (respondent #19). However, it was not only families with small children who considered a children's room an advantage. Four respondents without children had comments on the matter and expressed their views in relation to seating space and the need for relaxation *"I have seen some airports where they have a playground, I actually believe that would be a hit, it should be something that a Danish airport excelled on"* (respondent #3). A young female respondent expressed some irritation over kids in the airport when she said: *"I might be nice if those with kids could be somewhere else"* (respondent #4).

Summary

The concept of the physiological perspective turned out to be the most substantial of all of the eight concepts. The reason for this concept to be considered the most important is that respondents, when asked what they preferred to do in the airport, highlighted their basic needs such as sitting down or not feeling that the airport was crowded. In regards to seating, it became clear that to many of the respondents the possibility to find a seat was a precondition for engaging in other activities. It is assessed that before passengers can fully engage in activities, they must have their basic needs covered and for many of the

respondents these basic needs related to sitting down, not feeling that the place was crowded or that they would be able to sit in peace and quiet.

An airport typically has a hectic, energetic and noisy atmosphere and the findings in the theme of quiet areas showed a need for passengers to be able to sit down and relax in quiet areas or silent zones such as the ones in trains. This would provide the passengers with the possibility to choose which part of the airport environment they would like to be a part of.

Activities

The concept named activities is related to what kind of activities passengers prefer to engage in when they have checked in and passed security check and find themselves in the airside environment. All respondents were asked what they prefer to do when they have passed security and to imagine that they had to wait for three hours due to a flight delay and what activities they would then like to engage in. These two questions made people think of different activities. To the first question most respondents answered what they would usually do after security and answers were trivial. The second question forced them to think more out of the box and of what their preferred activity would be, which generated less trivial answers to what activities could be of interest in an airside area.

The first interesting finding was that airport passengers have a considerable need for coffee. Out of the total of 24 interviewed subjects, 6 mentioned that they wanted a cup of coffee at some point in time before their departure. To compare, no one mentioned that they needed something to drink for example, and only one passenger mentioned that he liked to have a beer before departure. One passenger expressed how he enjoyed having coffee in comfortable surroundings: *"I like to find a nice café or restaurant to sit down and have a cup of coffee before my plane departs"* (respondent #20). Other passengers with strong preferences for caffeinated drinks said: *"I always have a cup of coffee in the morning"* and *"I spend most of my time drinking coffee, reading a book or watch people passing by"* (respondent #3, respondent #5).

When asked about the imaginary situation of having to spend three hours in the airport due to a flight delay the respondents' answers and suggestions were more diverse. A few respondents also expressed a need for more recreational activities such as a massage or

exercising. One respondent addressed both issues and said: *"Sometimes I have thought that if you have 3 to 4 hours of waiting time it would be great with a fitness room. When you have spent 10 to 12 hours on a plane it would be great to move about and maybe have a massage. You could easily have some sportswear in your bag if you knew it in advance"* (respondent #23).

In terms of motivation to shop, most respondents would only use the stores if they were bored in the airport and favored the opportunity to browse different shops. One respondent said: *"There are many different places to shop and in that sense there is entertainment enough, or enough to do if you have plenty of time here"* (respondent #19). This quote summarizes the general view on shopping in the airport among the respondents from the field interviews. However, one passenger mentioned that airports often offer the best of local luxury products: *"If I need champagne or foie gras I buy it in Charles de Gaulle and if I need caviar I buy it in either Sankt Petersburg or Moscow"* (Respondent #12).

The comment that airports should offer local products and "display" the country where it is located is a recurrent theme among those respondent who talked about shopping motivation. An example, a Swedish lady noted that she liked shops such as Royal Copenhagen to be present in Copenhagen Airport. Another respondent also liked the selection of different offerings in Copenhagen Airport and said: *"It is important that you can get good food and that there is many different offerings and they have that here in Copenhagen"* (respondent #10).

Furthermore, two passengers had interesting insights into the pricing of products in the airport and the tendency was that the airport is too expensive. *"The airports should be better at offering more things at better prices - everything is too expensive in airports"*. The same respondent also addressed a paradox: *"I always find it funny that when you go through security you have to give your water up, and then there are shops where you can buy water on the other side"* (respondent #16).

The last finding in relation to activities was the need for entertainment. Especially the opportunity to be able to log on to a free Wi-Fi network was important for many passengers regardless of their purpose of travel. There was also an overrepresentation of respondents who wanted to read compared to those wanted to watch a movie for example.

Summary

In general passengers appreciate when there is a wide selection of choices. The provision of a large selection of shops, restaurants and different activities to engage in, offer airport passengers the opportunity to shape their own airport experience. No themes were mentioned by all the respondents, however to be able to exercise and free Wi-Fi were emphasized. Moreover, the interviews suggest that in terms of activities and to a certain degree there is a ritualized relationship with the airport. This ritualization is strongly connected to certain consumer behaviors, e.g. having the time to enjoy a cup of coffee, which was mentioned in many interviews. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that drinking coffee was mentioned by a large number of the respondents and regarded of superior importance compared to other beverages.

Emotions

The concept of emotions refers to the different types of emotions that arise in the passengers in connection with their airport experience. The most frequent emotions that respondents associate with the airport experience are 'excitement' and 'stress and anxiety', which are the basics of the concept of emotions. The respondents would typically mention emotions in relation to questions on how long time prior to departure they would arrive in the airport, how the airport personnel affected their experience and how they usually felt when being in an airport.

The first theme identified was excitement. It was primarily passengers travelling for leisure purposes who expressed excitement due to being in the airport. The excitement was mainly deriving from the upcoming journey they were about to start, yet the feeling of excitement would start already in the airport. This finding indicated that numerous respondents viewed their time in the airport as a part of the overall journey and it was assessed that there is a relationship between the airport passenger experience and the beginning of the passengers' journey. This is supported by a respondent who said: *"If the airport experience is good then the journey automatically gets better – if it is not stressing and you are able to calm down, the experience will be better"* (respondent #20).

Another interesting finding was that some of the respondents recollected past airport experiences to describe why they were excited about coming to the airport. They would rely on memories or past experiences to explain why they had certain preferences, expectations or how the ideal airport passenger experience would be. This finding is highly relevant in relation to the proposals developed by Harrison et al. (2012) and their conceptual model of the passenger experience presented in the theory section. This model illustrated and stressed the importance of the *past experience* and how it would affect the passengers' *expected experience*.

Where excitement can be linked to the more positive end of the emotional spectrum, the situation is markedly different in relation to stress and anxiety. Despite categorizing excitement as an independent theme under the concept of 'emotions' it is still linked to stress and anxiety and one respondent directly said: *"I am excited when I have to fly but also very tense because you have to be there on time – you are worried if the flight is getting cancelled"* (respondent #7). So even if passengers may be excited about arriving in the airport, the excitement can quickly be replaced by stress and anxiety if the experience does not turn out as expected.

When the concept of emotions was identified, it quickly became evident that there was an uneven distribution of the subjacent themes: 9 notes linked to excitement whereas 34 notes linked to stress and anxiety. Stress and anxiety mainly correlated to the respondents' choice of how long time before departure they would arrive in the airport. The main reason for arriving two hours before departure was to reduce stress and anxiety associated with the check-in or security process, fear of arriving too late and potentially missing the flight. This question generated answers such as: *"I always arrive well in advance because I don't want to feel stressed"* (respondent #10) or *"I am aiming at arriving two hours prior to the departure because then everything will work out and you will then be on the safe side"* (respondent #12). Further elaboration is presented in the 'Time concept' section.

The question how the respondents felt during a stay in the airport again revealed that stress and anxiety constitute a major part of the emotions linked to the airport passenger

experience. Fear of missing the flight is the primary reason why the respondents could experience stress and anxiety.

Summary

The concept of emotions revealed recurrent themes; excitement and stress and anxiety. Excitement is assessed to be closely linked to the passengers' anticipation about the final destination but in several cases there was a tendency that respondents considered the airport experience part of the journey which made them feel excited. The quality of the airport passenger experience would in many cases influence how the respondents rated the beginning of their journey.

Stress and anxiety were the most important themes within the concept. These emotions were primarily caused by the fear of missing the flight or the flight being cancelled. No of the respondents mentioned security or fear of flying as a factor that could activate these emotions. It was evident that early arrival to the airport prior to the respondents' time of departure had the overall purpose of reducing travel related stress and anxiety. It is concluded that as soon as the procedures of check-in and security were completed, the respondents could start engaging in and enjoying their preferred activities. The reason why check-in and security procedures were sources of stress and anxiety to the respondents is their uncontrollable nature seen from the passengers' perspective. Irrespective of previous experiences with airports and flying, no one can control unforeseen circumstances that cause extra waiting time or system failures.

Human interactions and service

In relation to interaction with airport service personnel in security and check-in, comments from the interviews revealed that the respondents had a positive attitude towards airport staff. Out of all the 24 interviewed subjects not a single one expressed negative thoughts about airport staff in general. The respondents were, however, very aware of the fact that service personnel could help to create a better experience. One respondent said: *"It feels like they are very skilled and professional which makes the whole experience better when you feel taken care of"* (respondent #9). Another passenger also commented on the role of the airport staff and said: *"It is always nice with smiling personnel, then you'll feel welcome"* (respondent

#3). Only two respondents had examples of isolated instances from the past where they had experienced bad service encounters in an airport, but in general they were satisfied with behavior and delivery of services by the staff.

Furthermore, comments from the interviews revealed that airport staff could have a tendency to limit stress and anxiety if they are providing good service with energy and a personal drive. When respondents were asked how airport personnel could affect their airport experience, one of them said: *"Politeness means a lot for the general experience - if people are impolite or stressed it will most certainly be annoying but if they are friendly and calm I feel less stressed"* (respondent #5). Another passenger said: *"The staff lets you think that everything is under control, I think that's important"* (respondent #13). According to above quotes, airport staff also contributes to make people feel secure in the airport environment. It may be assumed that if the airport staff is confident and calm, it will spread to the passengers and vice versa.

In contrast to the positive attitude towards airport service personnel, some of the respondents seemed annoyed by other types of passengers or situations in the airport. They were primarily kids and families with kids, but also overcrowding at the gates all of which some highlighted as factors that could potentially reduce their positive attitudes towards the airport and their overall airport experience. From the interviews it is obvious that overcrowding evokes stress and irritation. *"If there is a lot of people and it is very packed, the atmosphere just becomes more stressed"* (respondent #5). Also in relation to how other passengers can affect the airport experience the same respondent said: *"It has a lot to do with the time of day, if you come on a Friday night and all gates are crowded - there is a million people"*.

Out of the total 24 interviews only one explicitly said that other passengers could give them a better airport experience. Other passengers were, however, also mentioned in a positive way: it is enjoyable watching other people and the diversity of passengers in the airport.

Summary

That all personnel interaction was done with professional courtesy and that service delivery by the airport staff was done with a smile were recurrent observations by many of the

interviewed subjects. The interviews highlighted the importance of well educated staff and what it means to passengers. If the staff delivers their services with energy and a smile, the chance is that passengers' positive attitude towards the airport will increase. The impact of other passengers was more blurry and not an aspect that preoccupied many of the respondents. The few who mentioned that other passengers affected their experience were in general most concerned about other passengers taking up too much space and overcrowding the gates and terminal buildings.

Airport design

The concept of airport design refers to the respondents' attitudes towards the overall layout and infrastructure of the airport. The majority of the comments to this concept was about the size of the airport, which is why 'airport size' has been made a subadjacent theme within this concept. Comments about airport design and size were primarily generated from the questions about how the respondents felt when they were in an airport, what the design and layout of the airport meant to them and if there were certain airports they preferred or disliked.

In general the comments by the respondents about the significance of the size of the airport were that the larger the airport is, the more stress and anxiety they felt. Some of the respondents that in their experience smaller airports were more efficient and provided an overall higher quality of service. It quickly became evident that the majority of the respondents disliked large airports and one respondent said: *"I prefer smaller airports, it is easier to get around and it doesn't take so much time from the arrival to the entrance of the airplane"* (respondent #17). Another respondent mentioned that, *"An airport should not be larger than you are able to walk around by foot"* (respondent #6).

Above responses relate to the convenience aspect of airport size. Other respondents mentioned the size as a decisive factor for their perception of the airport and its atmosphere. One respondent said: *"I don't like the Frankfurt airport, it is just huge – it was big and did not feel cozy"* (respondent #8). An interesting finding was that a small number of the respondents said they would avoid airports because of their size and one respondent explained it in the following way: *"Today I have chosen to fly to Munich instead of Frankfurt, because Frankfurt is*

enormous and they take you on a long walk under the ground – it is an airport that I simply attempt to avoid because of its size” (respondent #14).

In relation to the infrastructure of airports one respondent made an interesting comment. It was not surprising that passengers do not wish to walk long distances, take a bus or train between airport sections but another aspect of the airport design turned out to be interesting. One of the respondents said that he was extremely dissatisfied with being “forced” to go through tax-free shopping areas or other shopping activities. He argued that the airport intentionally placed tax-free areas right after security procedures to ensure that all passengers have to go through that area. He said: “.....*then you are forced through tax-free – I really think it is imprudent and really not okay*” (respondent #22). This supports respondents’ dissatisfaction with being encouraged or forced to purchase products in the airport. It is a delicate issue and a complex dilemma for airport operators to deal with as passengers are source of revenue and they must be encouraged to spend money.

Summary

The concept of airport design mainly relates to size of the airports. There was consensus among the respondents that size of airports influenced their perception of the airport and more importantly their experience in the airport. Respondents preferred smaller airports and felt that larger airports caused higher levels of stress and provided lower levels of convenience and service. The comments about the size of airports did not lead to a clear conclusion on the ideal size of an airport, however several respondents once again used Copenhagen Airport as an example of the ideal size and Frankfurt and Paris Charles de Gaulle as airports that are too big.

The finding that passengers have preferences and feelings attached to the size of airport are consistent with Graham (2014) and her findings. In the literature about airport product there is a proposal by Graham (2014) that there is an upper limit to how large airports can become in terms of generating profits. This is linked to the comments of the respondents’ that airports can become so large that the size negatively influences the service level and thus their experience.

Focus group

In this part of the analysis the eight concepts will be presented based on conclusions from the focus group interviews. The purpose of the focus group was to gain additional insights and potentially new perspectives on the eight concepts that were identified through the affinity diagram process. Due to the nature of the focus group and that “only” seven participants attended, it is obvious that fewer comments and insights were collected compared to the field interviews. Furthermore, some questions generated longer discussions where all participants actively participated whereas other questions were of less “interest” to the participants. Because the same questions were asked to the focus group as to the respondents in the field interviews, there was established a solid basis of comparison. The findings from the focus group would be relevant to further examine whereas they shed new light on the concepts or merely supported the findings from the field interviews.

The weight and the emphasis that the participants from the focus group put on the concepts would differ compared to the findings from the field interviews.

Time

In regards to the concept of time, all participants from the focus group preferred to be in the airport about two hours before departure, which supplemented the findings from the field interviews. The main reason was that they all primarily travelled for leisure purposes. Furthermore, the reasons for arriving in the airport two hours prior to departure was the fear of missing the flight. Rasmus said: *“I agree with the two hours. If everything goes as planned you will have plenty of time – if not you will still make the flight”*. Edith mentioned that she tried to be in extra good time when she departed from an airport that she was not familiar with and Akseli agreed and said: *“I have the impression that you have to be there (ed. in the airport) in even better time if you have to travel longer”*.

Also other considerations impacted the decision on how early the participants would arrive in the airport. One was if they had luggage to check-in, in which case the participants in general preferred to be earlier in the airport. Other considerations were the time of the day or time of the year they were travelling.

Info and signs

Information and signs were a more important concept in the focus group vs the field interviews. The main part of the participants considered information and signage insufficient and as Akseli said: *"I use information and signs a lot and think about how it is displayed and designed. It's better to have one too many than one too few – and always in English"*. Not only the design of signs and information seemed to matter for the focus group participants. Also the places where signs and departure/arrival tables were positioned mattered. Edith felt that in the dining and shop areas there was often a lack of information and suggested that restaurants should display more information *"about flights and such"*. In relation to this Nicolai suggested that there should be more flight information *"prior to entering the shop areas – normally you get information on the other side of these areas and then you are suddenly in a hurry"*. Christian said that he often had difficulties finding an area where he was allowed to smoke within the airside environment, if it was even possible at all.

Space and layout

In the focus group there was consensus that ambient conditions mattered even if this concept generated relatively few comments and seemed of less importance to the participants. The ambient condition that mattered most to the participants was lighting. Lighting should be bright and the ceiling should be high and as Nicolai said: *"I prefer natural light over florescent lamps"*. This point of view was supported by all participants in the focus group. Moreover, there were among the participants in the focus group a general agreement on that bright and spacious airports were preferable, exactly as was the case with the field interviews. There was also similarity in what the two types of interviews revealed in connection to bad airport design. Here once again, darker airports with carpets was less favored, Akseli pointed out that it gave a *"tunnel like feeling"*.

A theme that in contrast was substantially emphasized was design and aesthetics. The focus group provided a few new perspectives on this theme. Frederik contributed with a comment in connection to the idea of making airports recognizable and memorable, *"I have just been to Rome and Barcelona airport within the last half year and I can't remember any of them. I think that's very telling that you can have an airport that is so anonymous that you can't remember it"*. The fact that one airport does not stand out from the other can cause a problem for airport

operators and should be noticed. In general, comments from the participants suggest that airports, by making only the slightest changes in design or architecture can be made more memorable, hence making airports succeed in delivering a memorable experience.

Physiological perspective

The concept of the physiological perspective was not as expressed by the focus group participants as it was by the respondents in the field interviews in Copenhagen Airport. Between the two datasets there were to high degree coherence on the importance of this concept yet one theme was by the focus group given a lot of thoughts and the discussion revolved around the possibility to sleep inside the airport. Cubes or sleeping capsules were concrete suggestions from one of the focus group participants supported by the rest of the group. All participants agreed that it might improve their airport experience especially if they had to stay in the airport overnight. A few participants also mentioned the need for quiet areas, but the significance was not as pronounced as in the field interviews. Furthermore, also the possibility to exercise was mentioned by Frederik who said: *"I would be willing to pay to take a shower or get a day pass to a fitness room in the airport"*.

Activities

With a few exceptions, the activities of importance to the focus group participants were the same as those preferred by the respondents in the field interviews. Nicolai said that there should always be electronic products available because you would often need an *"adaptor or a charger for your phone"*. The participants valued (free) Wi-Fi, a broad selection of shops and the opportunity to buy coffee was again the most significant activity for the focus group participants. Free Wi-Fi was preferred as a good activity to kill time. A broad selection of shops was valued even though it was generally agreed among the participants that airport shops are often too expensive with lots of luxury products targeted towards wealthy people and too few offerings for ordinary passengers. In terms of restaurant offering the participants preferred cheap and healthy food and there seemed to be an agreement that healthy food offerings were often hard to find compared to the traditional fast food chains. Frederik said that the reason why he preferred healthy and nutritious food was *"because if you have to go on a long flight you won't get enough food to feel full"*.

Emotions

As described above all of the focus group participants normally travelled for leisure purposes. A relationship between their emotions and the purpose of travel was detected. The participants felt happy, enthusiastic and excited because they were going on holiday. Only one participant had other emotions connected to the airport. Edith often felt nervous, not because of the airport itself which she considered pleasant and nice, but because of her fear of flying. In contrast to this Nicolai shared: *"I love flying so I'm always happy and excited"* and related the airport to something really good, he appreciated to be present in the airport environment and continued by stating: *"I associate it with something positive to be in an airport"*. In general both respondents from the field interviews and participants in the focus group had strong emotions about airports. No one expressed that it was insignificant or unimportant to them. Moreover, it was evident that there were significantly positive emotions connected to participants' 'home airport' which was also the case for the respondents in the field interviews in Copenhagen Airport and slightly less positive emotions towards foreign airports.

Human interaction and service

The attitude towards airport personnel was in general positive. A few of the participants mentioned that they did not think about airport personnel at all and Akseli said: *"I don't use them for anything"*. One new finding in comparison to the field interviews was that airport personnel in some instances could make the participants feel anxious, especially in the security procedure. Edith said: *"now I am thinking of New York - if you look at them in the wrong way I am afraid to be accused of something"*. Edith was afraid of flying and the statement made above may seem a bit exaggerated, but it indicates that a specific concern may potentially influence another emotionally.

In contrast to the notions about foreign airports and the anxiety that they could provoke, the participants agreed that they all preferred Copenhagen Airport, which made the participants relax and this was partly due to the airport personnel. Edith explained why she felt that way: *"In Copenhagen Airport there are signs all over saying 'World's Best Security - it makes me feel calm'"*.

Other people's presence in the airport was important to the focus group participants. This was especially in connection to bottlenecks in the security area or before boarding the plane where other passengers could provoke resentment. Furthermore, other passengers' lack of understanding in certain situations could frustrate the participants. Frederik said: *"When you are in a place where everyone have to go through the same places, some people are walking around with blinkers on their eyes. I always try to be as effective as possible"*.

Airport Design

In contrast to the respondents in the field interviews, the focus group participants did not have a direct preference for the "smaller" airports. Again a relationship between Copenhagen Airport and the participants was identified, i.e. a preference for Copenhagen Airport, but it was not, however, connected to the size of the airport. The preference for Copenhagen Airport was among other things due to its architectural construction with wooden floors, high ceilings and bright natural light (ambient conditions). Frederik also made a comment on the design choices of other airports that supported what the other participants had said about Copenhagen Airport: *"the architecture of the airport is important – I like the one in Bangkok - the departure terminal is big and bright and with high ceiling - its very beautiful"*. These two characteristics (bright and high ceiling) that Frederik highlights for Bangkok Airport are consistent with responses in the field interviews and focus group's views on good and important airport design characteristics.

One last prominent finding from the focus group was the "the storytelling" of the airport. Participants felt it was important and preferred if airports operators made the airport reflect the destination image to a higher degree. Reflection of the destination image can be done through various initiatives, both display of art and symbols, but also by having shops that represent the country in which the airport is present.

Sub-conclusion

The first part of the analytical section presented the findings from the affinity diagram process. The affinity diagram was applied in order to identify, categorize and subsequently extract recurrent concepts from the interviews with passengers in Copenhagen Airport. The

outcomes of this approach was an identification of eight recurrent concepts consisting of one or more subjacent themes. The concepts identified included different parts of the airport passenger experience and were based on the respondents' insights and perspectives on the elements that they considered important.

The second part of the analysis presented the outcomes of the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to gain a more comprehensive and general dataset and to do a triangulation of this empirical study of airport passenger experiences. Furthermore, the focus group was established to gain further understanding and potential elaborations of the identified recurrent concepts from the field interviews. The outcomes of the focus group showed an assessed overall consistency with the findings from the field interviews. Some of the concepts were addressed in more details in the field interviews compared to the focus group and vice versa, but no concepts stood out with remarkable differences in opinions or importance between the two.

The first part of the analysis featured in-depth presentations of each concept and its subjacent themes both in connection with the field interviews in Copenhagen Airport and the focus group interview. The eight recurrent concepts were identified based on a subjective content analysis - the affinity diagram - yet the findings are in general consistent with arguments, findings and proposals presented in the theoretical section. This leads to the conclusion that the findings in this part of the analysis are valid and reflections of the theoretical background that was presented earlier in this thesis. It is worth mentioning that it was not an aim in itself to reproduce findings by other authors, yet this consistency between the findings in this thesis and findings from theory supports the reliability of the results.

Findings such as the respondents' dissatisfaction with seating possibilities, how strongly stress and anxiety are associated with the airport experience and the perception that the size of an airport can negatively influence both passenger-convenience and service levels are assessed to potentially have substantial impact on and implications for airport operators.

The next section of the analysis addresses the activities that passengers prefer to engage in during their stay in an airport. Because the majority of the activities in airport passenger

experience is decided by the passengers themselves, it is relevant to examine the different kinds and common characteristics of these activities. In order to do this, the 'four realms of an experience' from the experience economy will be used as a tool to compare and categorize the different activities.

Experience economy

Some airports offer extraordinary experiences such as a band playing live music, an art museum or a yoga room. These kinds of activities are not what most people associate with an airport but reality in Amsterdam and San Francisco International Airport (Yardley, 2015). The following section aims to identify the most preferred and important activities for the interviewed airport passengers and categorize them according to Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four realms of an experience. The categorizing of the activities will be done on the basis of the data collected from the field interviews with passengers in Copenhagen Airport and from the focus group interview.

Airport management has acknowledged that the opportunities to develop airports can deliver unique experiences for airport passengers (Kirk et al., 2012). The aim of this analytical section is to clarify and get insights into activities and experiences that are potentially more preferable to airport passengers than others. By grouping the activities according to the four different realms of an experience it will be possible to identify what kind of activities that airport operators should emphasize in order to improve the airport passenger experience. The identification of preferred activities was done by using the affinity diagram method, this time with the sole purpose of collecting comments on activities.

As stated by Popovic et al. (2010) passengers in an airport are subjected to 80% 'discretionary' activities chosen by the passengers themselves and depending on the amount of time they choose to spend on these activities. Due to the influence of these activities on the airport experience, it is relevant to examine what kind of activities that passengers prefer and potentially identify common characteristics, which can be achieved by categorizing the characteristics under the four realms of an experience presented by Pine & Gilmore (1999).

The four realms of an experience

Respondents from both interview methods were free to mention as many activities as they wanted and preferred to engage in. All comments about activities in the airport have been taken down, counted and grouped under the four realms. The insights and viewpoints on activities from the field interviews will be presented as the first element in this section followed by the outcomes of the focus group. The purpose is to summarize the preferred activities from both interview methods and to examine a potential coherence or difference between them by grouping responses from both types of interviews under each of the four realms.

The questions that generated most comments in regards to preferred activities were *“What is most important to you when you are in an airport?”* *“What do you prefer to do when you have passed security?”* and *“Imagine that you have to wait for 3 hours due to a flight delay. What would you prefer to do?”*. But also questions regarding preferences or dislike for certain airports also made passengers think of past experiences that were either good or bad. Especially those who had positive past experiences would highlight certain activities from particular airports that they missed when visiting other airports.

When deciding which comments and activities to group under a certain realm, the authors have to thread carefully, as the various activities could potentially be included in more than one realm. However, the authors have attempted to argue why one realm have been chosen as more appropriate than another throughout this section. This section is structured in such a way that the four different realms will be presented in the order of the importance expressed by the respondents, first from the field interviews and afterwards from the focus group.

Field interviews

The table and chart below outline the nature of and how the respondents' preferred activities have been arranged under the four realms of an experience. As the table clearly shows, the majority of the activities are grouped under the realms of aesthetics and escapism. The number next to each activity refers to the amount of time, which was allocated to that particular activity by the respondents. The following sections will present an elaboration of

each realm and its activities and moreover a justification for why the activities have been placed grouped under that particular realm.

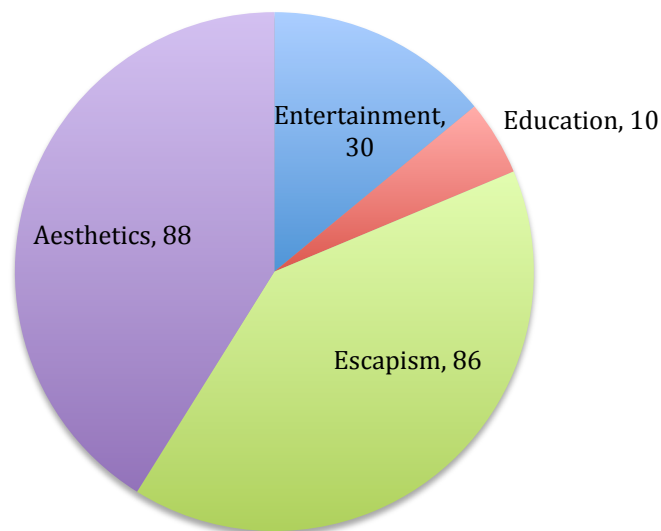


Chart 5

Aesthetics

As shown in the chart above, the most frequently mentioned is the aesthetic realm, with 88 mentions of activities that fit into this specific realm. The aesthetic realm refers to the atmospheric and the mood of the physical environment and most of the mentions in this category are mentioned in relation to passengers' need to relax and stay in a calm environment. This need is expressed by a Swedish woman who said: *"I wish there were more seating spaces that were located in a quiet place, I think that's a general lack"* (Respondent #10).

Respondents also said they enjoyed to simply just watching the surroundings in the airport and for example sense the atmosphere, watching the planes arrive and depart or generally look at the design of the airport. One respondent said that he liked to take photos of the planes. This 'mention' has also been included into the aesthetic realm. Because taking photos has very little impact on the surrounding environment and requires active participation, it has been chosen to include this activity under the aesthetic realm.

Another perspective of the aesthetic realm, with 12 mentions, was the need to lie down and sleep. Sleeping is one of the activities which is difficult to group under one of the four realms.

From the airport passengers' point of view it was, however, a theme that was important and could potentially improve the overall airport passenger experience. It has been chosen to categorize it as an aesthetic experience due to the fact that people who take part in an aesthetic experience are only *being* present. Furthermore, individuals engaging in aesthetic experiences are not *sensing, learning or doing* 'anything', and sleeping is closely related to relaxing. Thus it has been grouped under this realm (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

One respondent said that if she had to spend several hours in an airport or had a layover: "*It would be nice if there were a place where you could rent a bed – just something cheap so you don't need to go to a hotel*" (Respondent #14). Besides those experiences related to sleeping or relaxing, a few interviewed subjects also mentioned that they would prefer a place to get fresh air. This quote came from a respondent when asked about preference if the plane was delayed or cancelled. "*When you spend so much time here, what is necessary is a place to go outside and get fresh air*" (Respondent #17).

Finally, the need for or importance of having a broad selection of shops to browse was central to a number of the respondents. These individuals did not express a willingness to purchase products in the different shops, but described the activity more like 'window-shopping'. In other words, it is necessary to distinct between passengers who want to shop and those who just want to browse the stores. The reason why the comments about 'window-shopping' or browsing have been included in the aesthetics realm is that 'window-shopping' only requires passive participation compared to shopping/purchasing that requires more active participation.

Escapism

The second most mentioned realm of experiences was escapism. According to Pine & Gilmore (1999) an activity can be grouped in the escapism realm if it has the characteristics of active participation and customers/passengers should be immersed into the experience. The escapism realm has 86 mentions, almost as many as the aesthetic realm, but compared to the other two realms, entertainment and education, are overrepresented. The activity in this realm with most mentions is food and drinks. In the field interviews there were 46 mentions of food and drinks. This makes it the single most mentioned activity and must therefore also

be regarded as the most important activity to the respondents. As mentioned earlier, many respondents thought it was important to have a coffee before their flight, but also other activities that implicate active participation were frequently mentioned.

One of these activities is the wish to have a fitness room or a place to exercise. One passenger said: *“I love to work out, so if I had the opportunity to go to a fitness room and get a shower afterwards I would definitely do that”* (respondent #23). Another passenger used his past experiences as a frame of reference and said: *“In Japan and the USA more and more places are starting to have fitness centers - that is actually fine”* (respondent #18). In addition to the above, parents also called for a place where small children could have the opportunity to play during longer stays in the airport. One passenger thought that giving kids the opportunity to play was one area where Copenhagen Airport ought be one of the best.

The escapist activity of shopping was also addressed by many of the passengers and was mentioned 14 times. This may appear to be a relative small number, however, the fact that shops of different kind are present in almost all airports may be an influencing factor, even though passengers take them for granted (Geuens et al., 2004). Furthermore, in general people predominantly expressed the need to browse shops and not a concrete wish to purchase something in particular and those who did, mostly talked about food and drinks. Yet, one passenger said: *“For once I used my time to shop around a little bit, normally that rarely happens”* (respondent #18).

Entertainment

The third of the four realms is the educational realm. In order for an activity to be grouped under the educational realm, customers/passengers have to be passively absorbing the activity of others (e.g. going to the theater), however in an airport context other examples will apply. The entertainment realm was mentioned 30 times in the interviews with passengers in the airport and the majority of these mentions were about the use of electronic devices and reading for pleasure. When the respondents said that reading was an activity they liked to engage in, it was often in connection with having a cup of coffee as well. From most of the interviews it seemed that coffee and reading went hand in hand.

The use of electronic devices is also included in the category, entertainment. Some passengers simply just said that they liked to use their phone and some were more specific and said that they used their phone for listening to music. One respondent said: *"I'm using my phone - can I do anything else?"* (respondent #8). This suggest that this respondent was dissatisfied with the activities that airports provided for her.

Comments about WiFi have also been grouped under the entertainment realm. When passengers are granted access to WiFi in the airport, they will have the opportunity to go online, surf the internet and entertain themselves with movies, small games or reading the news. WiFi was mentioned by four respondents. One mentioned the opportunity to have free WiFi as the most important part of his airport experience: *"If I don't have access to WiFi my experience is very limited, it's the only way to stay in contact in an international environment, unless you want your phone bill to run wild"* (respondent #12). One aspect that most of the respondents, who mentioned WiFi, had in common was that they took free WiFi for granted and had little understanding for airports that do not provided this free service.

Education

The fourth and last of the four is the educational realm. This realm was the least mentioned realm by the respondents in the field interviews. The characteristics of the educational realm are that people are absorbing events that are unfolding and requires their active participation. This realm is underrepresented compared to the three others. Even though there may be a lot to learn in an airport, only five respondents mentioned activities that belong under the education realm. The first activity mentioned is information. Respondents expressed the need for relevant and easily accessible information from either staff or screens that would display the information they needed. The reason for categorizing information as an educational experience is that passengers will acquire skills or knowledge when searching for information.

As to the importance of the information and the aspect of educational experiences one respondent said: *"It is important that information is accessible"* (respondent #8) and another said: *"I really don't care about design and stuff like that, but information is important"* (respondent #5). By providing adequate information to passengers, both the type of

information that they can find themselves and the type that requires staff intervention, it is likely that passengers will experience the airports as less stressful and enjoy their stay to a higher degree.

In all field interviews there only two respondents mentioned a need to work in the airport. A passenger expressed this want in this way: *“The most important is that I can work out here, it is super important to log on and start working”* (respondent #6). Working has been categorized under the educational realm due to the fact that passengers most likely will acquire new knowledge when they are doing job-related activities. The few mentions of work related activities may be due to the distribution of the respondents’ purpose of travelling. Only eight of the respondents were travelling for business whereas 16 were travelling for pleasure.

Focus group

The activities preferred by the participants in the focus group interview will be presented and discussed in this section. Due to the nature of the focus group interview, it is very difficult to assess how the participants valued the different activities and the importance each of them associated with the activities as the participants potentially influenced each other. For example, when Edith said that *“restaurants should display information”* and the other participants agreed, it is impossible to determine if they would have mentioned it, if Edith had not. Despite this dilemma it is assessed that the participants in the focus group were able to express their individual preferences which means that the nature and amount of activities identified can still be compared to the findings from the field interviews.

Chart 6 shows the categorizing of the activities preferred by the participants from the focus group. Consistent with the results shown in the charts from the field interviews, the realms of aesthetic and escapism are the most pronounced. There is, however, one difference, i.e. the realm of escapism covers the largest part of the activities preferred by the participants in the focus group. With that said there is still an overall correlation between the categorization of activities in the two datasets.

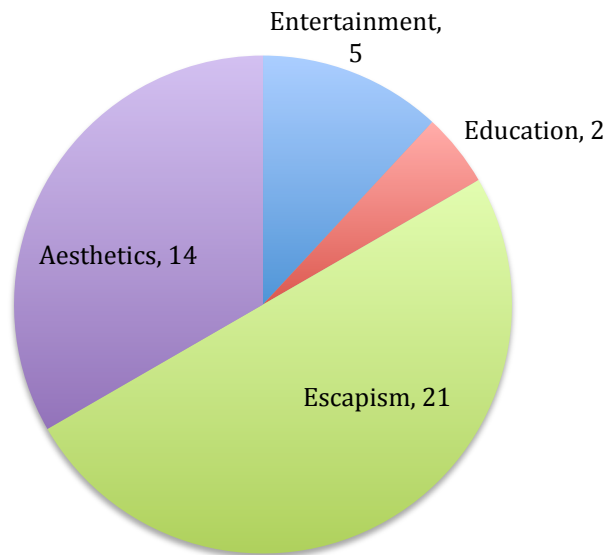


Chart 6

Escapism

In regards to the escapism realm the preferred activities were buying food and drinks, shopping for tax-free and other items such as a magazine for the trip. The importance of coffee was once again mentioned in many cases as a ritual before departure. Nicolai said: *"I like to come in the morning, sit down and buy a cup of coffee and a bun with cheese"*. Some of the new suggestions that came up were hairdresser, manicure and a smoking area/room.

Another finding from the focus group interview was the desire for a place to sleep in the airport. There was consensus in the group that airports do not prioritize sleeping and resting facilities for their passengers. Edith said: *"They should have those cubes in the airport – if you have five hours that you just need to kill"*. There was also consensus that sleeping and resting facilities would be welcomed as a good service, especially if overnight stays in the airport became necessary, which could make the experience more tolerable. Edith elaborated on her suggestion and said: *"I'll like to pay a fee for using some extra services or amenities as long as it's not way more expensive than normal"*. This is in fact already a service provided by Narita Airport in Japan (Narita International Airport, 2016) where tired passengers can book a bed and take a shower in the airport – a great initiative to increase the passenger experience in alignment with what the interviewed subjects and the focus group brought forward.

Aesthetic

In relation to the second most mentioned realm, the aesthetic realm, the focus group participants came up with new suggestions and examples of what they enjoyed and valued in an airport. The respondents in the field interviews mentioned seating space and resting

opportunities as an important aesthetic experience, however this was not mentioned to the same extent in the focus group. One of the new suggestions from the focus group was the display of art, which is a classic aesthetic experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In general there was consensus in the focus group that exhibition of art was important and would help passengers remember airports. Display of art was not mentioned by a single respondent in the field interviews.

Entertainment

The entertainment realm is ranked as second least important to the participants in the focus group interview, exactly as was the results from the field interviews in Copenhagen Airport. Likewise, the use of one's own electronic devices was one of the entertainment components, together with the opportunity to visit a cinema, were recurrent themes. Furthermore, Rasmus said: *"In Brussels they have an hour of free WiFi if you register via Facebook, you need to share some information about yourself but I think that's a fair deal"*. Once again there where correlation between the two data collections as the most important activity within the entertainment realm was WiFi also for the focus group participants.

Education

As shown in the chart, educational experiences were the least mentioned realm by the participants in the focus group interview. A possible explanation may be that when people are going on holiday they do not see a need to acquire new skills and knowledge. Educational activities or experiences imply an engaged mind to be able to learn. The findings suggest that people may have their minds set on other events for which reason the educational realm is underrepresented in both the focus group and the field interviews.

Sub-conclusion

After having used the affinity diagram to process all of the field interviews and the focus group it was possible to compare the findings and there was identified a noteworthy degree of correlation between how the field interview respondents' and focus groups participants' preferred activities could be categorized according to the four realms of an experience. Across the interview methods it was evident that the aesthetic and escapism realms were by far the realms where the most activities could be categorized under. Though one slight difference

concerned that activities identified from the field interviews were largely categorized under the aesthetic realm whereas the focus group's activities was largely under the escapism realm.

With that said, when looking at the difference between the amount of activities from the field interviews that were categorized under the aesthetic realm and the escapism realm there is minimal difference. This leads to the overall assessment that across the two dataset the most common realm is the escapism realm. This entails that the most preferred activities are constituted of common characteristics from the escapism realm, which are broadly defined as active participation and being immersed. These characteristics indicate that passengers prefer to be active when being at the airport and the activities reflecting this characteristic were primarily shopping for food and beverages or consumer products in general.

The aspect of being immersed is considered to relate to the airport environment. A lot of the preferred escapist activities concerned the purchase of food and beverages with the intention of consuming them while observing and enjoying the surroundings. This can be linked to being immersed into the experience, which in this case is being an active part actor within the energetic and dynamic airport environment.

Because the aesthetic realm was nearly as substantial as the escapism makes it necessary to also include its characteristics in the overall assessment of the activities. Despite being in contrast to each other in regards to participation, the two realms are still similar in regards to immersion. This can be used to determine that passengers are not interested in activities that entail absorption but rather immersion, which plays a dominant role in the escapism and aesthetic realms.

To conclude this section the illustration of the four realms of an experience will be presented, though this time in the context of how the airport passenger experience can be placed according to the results from the analysis. The analysis of the four realms of an experience has resulted in the following figure where the green spot represent the airport passenger experience from the findings

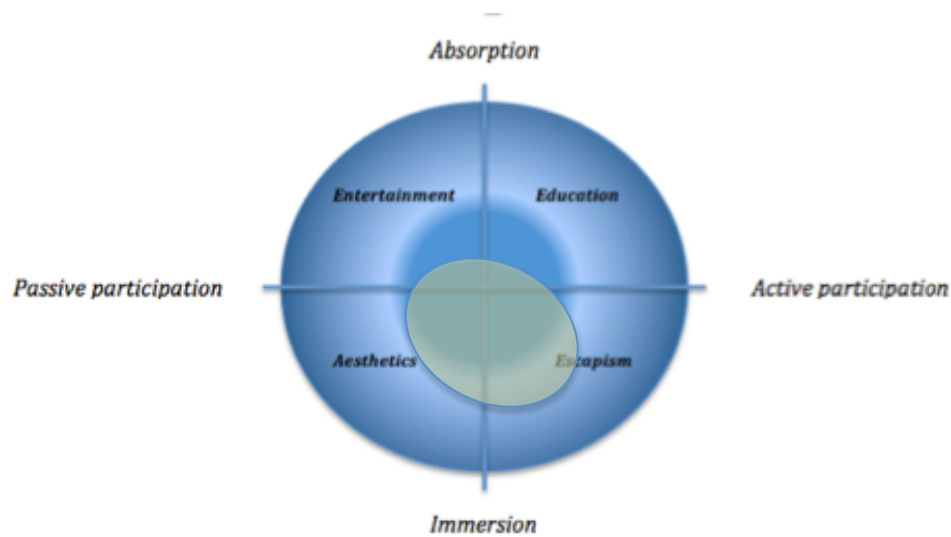


Figure 3. Adopted from Pine & Gilmore (1999).

Based on the preferred activities the airport passenger experience is predominantly comprised of the escapism and aesthetic realms. Because the datasets showed some activities under the entertainment and education realms they are also slightly represented in this figure. This determination can contribute to an understanding of the airport passenger experience and the use of the four realms of an experience has identified broad common characteristics in regards to the discretionary activities that passengers prefer to engage in.

Framework for airport passenger experiences

This section will present a revised version of the proposed conceptual framework for airport experience creation by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015). Their version of the framework was thoroughly described in the theory section and the following presentation will be a representation of the empirical findings and function as a further revising of the conceptual framework by the authors of this thesis.

The revised framework is a tool to visualize the determined key components and characteristics of the airport passenger experience, from the passengers' perspective. The objective is to incorporate the identified concepts and subjacent themes from the analysis for the authors of this thesis to produce a concrete proposal to how the airport passenger experience can be understood from a passenger perspective.

The themes incorporated in the revised framework will be placed under the perspective with the highest degree of relevance. This entails an assessment of how each specific theme affects the airport passenger experience from either an emotional, sociological, psychological or

physiological perspective. A difference between the two versions of the models derives from the interpretations of the overall perspectives. In the original version the perspectives were based on where the nature of knowledge was introduced in the literature that authors, Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015), used to design their framework. In this version the perspectives are used to illustrate from which perspective the subjacent themes are affecting the airport passenger experience. They also serve as way of grouping the themes together to make a clear overview of the framework's components.

The most significant modification in the revised framework is the addition of a fourth overall perspective. Because of the substantial attention from the respondents to the concept of the physiological perspective and its underlying themes, it has been decided to include this concept as a new perspective in the framework. An illustration of the revised framework can be seen in figure 4.

This development of the framework is done based on the assessment that the framework in its original form did not address themes or components from a physiological perspective. It was furthermore assessed that the original framework was not designed to embrace this new perspective, and the attempt to compress the physiological themes into the three existing perspectives would have resulted in the perspectives consisting of themes with extremely diverse characteristics. Furthermore the perspectives would be less concrete and therefore, in order to create coherent perspectives, it was relevant to expand the framework to include a fourth perspective.

Due to the great emphasis on the physiological perspective identified in the analysis, together with the framework's purpose of outlining key components of the airport passenger experience, it is necessary to create the framework as coherent and transparent as possible. The inclusion of a fourth perspective adds value to the framework with well-arranged and understandable perspectives that represent the airport passenger experience.

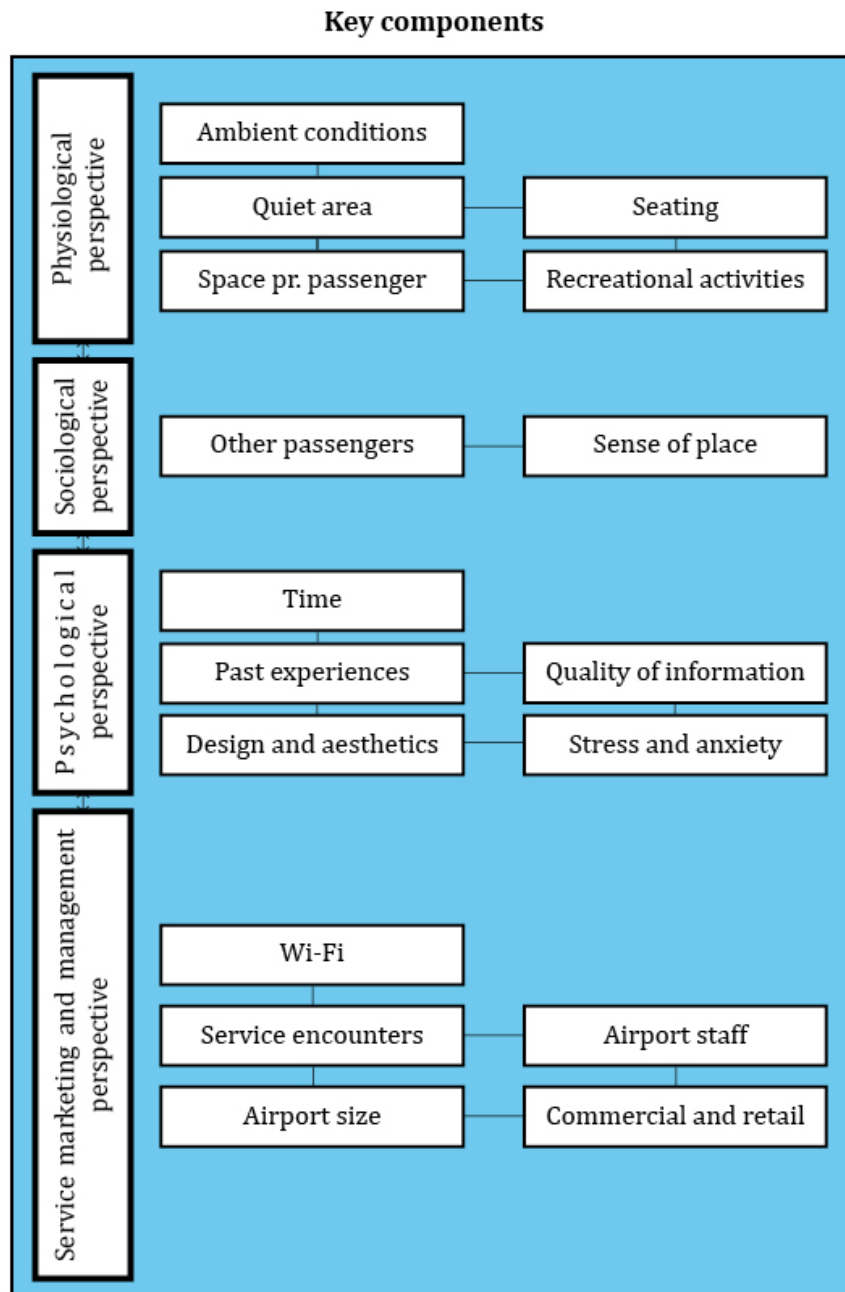


Figure 4. Revised framework for airport passenger experience.
Adopted from Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015)

Revised framework

As shown in the revised framework, it consists of four perspectives and 17 underlying themes. Some of the themes within the framework remain from the design by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015) because of their applicability in this new version as well. The perspectives and themes in the revised version of the framework for airport passenger experience creation have been selected based on their representation in the findings from the analysis. There is a difference

in the substantiality of the four perspectives due to the different themes they cover. Furthermore there may be a significant difference in how broad the subjacent themes are. Thus a review of the four perspectives is necessary.

Similar to the presentation of the original model in the theory section, each perspective will now be described. This time the perspectives contain the findings from the analysis of the field interviews and the focus group interview.

The first perspective to be described is the new, added physiological perspective.

Physiological perspective

This perspective consists of five subjacent themes and has been added to the revised framework because of respondents' significant emphasis on this perspective. The field interviews ranked the physiological perspective as the most emphasized concept among the eight overall concepts from the affinity diagram, and this emphasis was additionally supported by the insights gained from the response shared by the participants in the focus group. The themes in this perspective are ambient conditions, quiet area, seating, space per passenger and recreational activities.

This perspective represents all the identified themes that affect the passenger experience from a physiological perspective. The physiological perspective and its subjacent themes were identified to be of great importance to the respondents and for many of them a precondition for engaging in other activities. Recreational activities are activities that were desired by the respondents such as massage, wellness, exercise and resting or sleep. Recreational activities have been condensed into one independent theme because of the great emphasis that the respondents attributed to how positively these activities could influence their airport experience. This theme was included because of its distinction from other "classic" airport activities and furthermore because it is assessed to add a new dimension to the airport passenger experience.

The themes of seating and quiet areas were emphasized by the respondents, wanting to be able to choose for themselves how "involved" they would like to be in the airport environment. The airport is a hectic and energetic environment, which many of the

respondents appreciated and found fascinating, however it was also clear that they strongly preferred the opportunity to be able to retreat to quiet and calm areas. The possibility to find a seat away from the commercial areas or being able to sit in quiet areas or lounges without being charged were essential for many of the respondents for various reasons;. One reason being the option to engage in other activities such reading, using own electronics or simply just relaxing; another the respondents' possibility to create their own experience by choosing either engagement in the dynamic airport environment or to distance themselves into quiet areas to work or have a private moment.

Space per passenger and ambient conditions were also affecting the airport passenger experience physiologically. Especially ambient conditions were mentioned to influence the passengers physiologically, and designing spacious airports with natural lighting, high ceilings, fresh air and a minimum of carpets would contribute to make the passengers feel comfortable physiologically.

Sociological perspective

The two themes that constitute this perspective according to the findings in the analysis are other passengers and sense of place. The influence of other passengers was presented under the concept of 'human interactions and services' and the respondents associated the presence, behavior and number of other passengers as significant influencers of their airport experience. Other passengers were primarily associated with a negative influence on the airport experience, often, however, a subsequent result of airports failing to meet other basic requirements such as places to sit, proper amount of space per passenger or management of waiting time and long queues.

Sense of place refers to passengers' perception of the airport and how the airport projects or reflects the country in which it is located. Respondents from the field interviews as well as participants in the focus group mentioned this as an important factor. In the focus group interview an example from Gatwick Airport in London was mentioned. In Gatwick Airport there are pictures of the British Queen as a welcoming gesture. This contributed positively to that particular respondent's sense of place and airport experience. The positive effect of providing passengers with a sense of place can moreover be used as a tool to make the airport

passenger experience memorable. This is supported by one of the participants in the focus group who said; *“I have just been to Rome and Barcelona airports within the last half year and I cannot remember any of them. I think that’s very telling that you can have an airport that is so anonymous that you cannot remember anything”*.

This last quote illustrates that airports, in order to create memorable experiences, must provide passengers with more than their core products and services. It is assessed that providing a proper sense of place can contribute positively to passengers’ perception of an airport and a better chance of imprinting a positive memory of the airport experience in the mind of the passengers. The ability to provide an airport with an “identity” is considered a crucial element in creating memorable experiences. Otherwise passengers will consider airports as merely a transit space or a non-place (cited from Wattanacharoensil et al., 2015).

Psychological perspective

The psychological perspective has been revised to contain five themes: time, past experiences, quality of information, stress and anxiety as well as design and aesthetics. Some of the themes can arguably be placed under other perspectives, yet they are placed here because of their influence on the airport passenger experience from a psychological perspective. Time was included under this theme due to the respondents strong linking of time and stress/anxiety and how the two themes influenced each other. The same applies to quality of information, which also directly influenced travel related stress and anxiety.

Design and aesthetics could arguably have been included under the theme of ambient conditions within the physiological perspective but is assessed to be better fitting in the psychological perspective. Design and aesthetics were identified as a theme that affected the respondents psychologically, initiating a process of contemplation about the airport that ultimately contributed to shape their perception of it. This cognitive process is the reason for placing it under this theme.

This previously presented quote from the focus group is used to illustrate the effect of design and aesthetics. When the participants were addressing this theme they stated that: *“What stands out will take your focus, everyone knows how airport looks, but if you incorporate art or*

something like that it will make you think of something else. It will make your experience better and you remember the airport". Design and aesthetics can contribute to an overall positive perception of the airport as well as influence passengers' perception of the airport's service level and functionality.

Based on the theory of 'servicescapes', Wilson et al. (2012) argued that a well-designed airport can contribute to a pleasurable experience for passengers. It was also argued that the opposite, i.e. a poorly designed and dirty airport, could affect passengers' feelings about the journey ahead. The use of design and aesthetics can thereby become an influencing factor on the airport passenger experience from a psychological perspective.

Service marketing and management perspective

This perspective includes five themes, i.e. Wi-Fi, service encounter, airport staff, airport size as well as commercial and retail. Wi-Fi was a recurrent theme for the respondents and was considered a basic service offering that airport nowadays must provide for passengers without charge. The provision of free Wi-Fi was seen as tool to engage in other preferred activities such as using smartphones, iPads or laptops for business or leisure purposes, the reason for placing the theme within this perspective. Furthermore, if airports wish to provide passengers with state-of-the-art digital or online services, as proposed by Fattah et al. (2009), they must ensure high quality Wi-Fi connections so international travelers at all time can gain access and thus value from these offerings.

Service encounters are linked to the service level and have been included because of their substantial influence on the airport passenger experience. Service encounters serve as 'touch points' between the passengers and the airport and can be physical locations with human interaction as well as SST. Human interaction is primarily interaction between passenger and airport staff, and the need for professional, high-level service in this context was emphasized by the respondents from the field interviews as well as the focus group. Therefore the role of airport staff it has been addressed its own individual theme.

The potential influence of airport staff on passengers' airport experience was mainly psychological. The attitude and level of service from the airport staff can contribute to either

increase or decrease travel related stress and anxiety. It was evident that the staff's ability to act with professionalism, energy and to demonstrate full control of a given situation had a positive and calming effect on the passengers, in itself not a surprising finding, but the reasons why and how it affects the airport passenger experience are relevant to emphasize. The discovered link between stress and anxiety and the airport passenger experience calls for attention to provision of professional passenger service experiences. Especially for necessary activities such as check-in or security procedures where passengers arguably may feel most stressed or anxious.

The last theme within this perspective is commercial and retail. The opportunity to shop or merely browse through different stores was a highly valued activity for the majority of the respondents. The possibility to purchase food and beverages was additionally emphasized by the respondents and there was often different traditions or rituals related to this particular activity. Passengers can use commercial and retail to shop for specific preferred products or as a mean to spend time while waiting for their flight to depart. It has been placed as a theme in the service marketing and management perspective because it is considered a fundamental component within the airport passenger experience.

Discussion

This analysis shows what are important to airport passengers. The findings presented can contribute to the understanding of what type of themes, experiences and perspectives that passengers value to be part of their airport experience. Furthermore, it gives some concrete suggestions to what components that constitute the airport passenger experience, suggestions that can be valuable for airport operators. On the other hand this study must also be considered in the light of its limitations.

Data was collected from passengers in Copenhagen Airport and from Danes in the focus group. Because of the environment in which the interviews were conducted, together with the composition of respondents and participants, Copenhagen Airport was frequently used as a frame of reference to express attitudes about e.g. airport design or human interaction and

service. There were hints towards a tendency where participants expressed their “general” views on the airport passenger experience based on their past and current experiences in Copenhagen Airport.

The data collection suggested that there were very strong attitudes and emotions were connected to Copenhagen Airport and it was the preferred airport for many respondents. It can be discussed if it is possible to determine the general airport passenger experience from conducting research only within one airport, however, that the data collection took part in an Copenhagen Airport is considered a strength. In retrospection it would have been preferred if the data collection were performed in different airports with more field interviews and more than one focus group. It can be argued that these findings, to some degree, are more reflective of an airport passenger experience in Copenhagen Airport than a universal airport experience. If the data collection was conducted in multiple airports it is likely that fewer comments and thoughts would have been based on Copenhagen Airport. This would have contributed to a determination of a more general airport passenger experience.

In general the field interviews contained richer data than the focus group. If the researchers had been more experienced in arranging focus group interviews the data might have been enriched and revealed more interesting results.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the concept of airport passenger experiences from the perspective of the passengers. It has been suggested that despite an increased focus on the airport passenger experience, there is a shortcoming in the understanding of the concept which is still managed by airport operators without major involvement of the passengers. With this problem area in mind, the aim has been to gain a coherent understanding of the concept through qualitative insights from passengers in order to define the concept from their perspective.

This thesis started by asking the following research question: *“What are the key components and characteristics of the ‘airport passenger experience’ from a passenger perspective?”*. The

components of the airport passenger experience are determined to be the eight recurrent concepts identified through the analysis of the field interviews. These components were identified by gathering qualitative insights directly from passengers to achieve a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives. The *characteristics* of the airport passenger experience were defined as active engagement in activities that allowed the passengers to become immersed into the experience. Finally the revised framework summarized the empirical findings and presented the authors' proposal on the *passengers' perspective* on the concept of airport experiences.

In conclusion, the analysis has answered the research question covering three different aspects:

First, the analysis of the field interviews revealed eight recurrent concepts and these concepts are assessed to be the key components of the airport passenger experience and reflections of what passengers consider important. The physiological perspective concept was particularly emphasized. The concept covered themes such as seating, quiet areas and recreational activities. Themes within this perspective are considered preconditions for engaging in other preferred activities. The identified dissatisfaction with lack of free seats is assessed to be a implication for airport operators because it results in passengers locating themselves away from the consumption and shopping areas. The concept of emotions revealed that stress and anxiety are associated with the airport passenger experience and that a reciprocated relationship exists between this component and others such as past experiences, time and quality of information. Passengers emphasized strong preferences for natural light in terminal buildings together with high ceiling and a spacious layout. From the analysis it became evident that design and aesthetics are instruments to create a 'sense of place' and ascribe an "identity" to a given airport. The analysis also revealed a demand for more untraditional airport activities such as sleeping facilities, exercise options and wellness.

Secondly, by applying the four realms of an experience from the experience economy, it was possible to categorize the preferred activities across the two datasets from the field interviews and the focus group. The results showed that escapist experiences with characteristics of active participation and immersion were preferred among airport passengers. This entails that the most frequently mentioned activities were shopping for food

and beverages as well as for general consumer products, which are “classic” airport activities. A strong preference for activities of an aesthetic nature was also revealed. It can be concluded that passengers overall favor activities that result in some degree of immersion. It is proposed that this may be due to high levels of stress and anxiety and therefore immersing or relaxing activities are preferable to mitigate these negative feelings. These immersing and relaxing activities were mainly identified as shopping and consuming food or beverages while gazing at the dynamic airport environment, supporting the link between the realms of escapism and aesthetics.

Thirdly, the framework for the airport passenger experience creation was presented and revised in order to summarize significant findings from the analysis and to introduce the passengers’ perspective on the airport experience. The revised framework composed by the authors of this thesis represents a more comprehensive understanding of the passengers’ perspective. It accounts for both their primary physiological needs as well as more complex psychological and social components and elements from a service perspective. The addition of the physiological perspective contributes to the framework’s reflection of the passengers’ basic needs and thereby creates an overall sense of coherence. This framework approaches the airport passenger experience from an overall perspective and does not suggest concrete guidelines to how the specific components can be approached or managed, yet the model is considered a comprehensive contribution to the understanding of the passengers’ perspective based on the empirical research. Airport operators can gain value from the framework because of its ability to identify key components, themes or issues and to highlight how and from what perspective they affect the airport passenger experience.

The recommendations presented in this thesis are that significant value can be gained from providing passengers with positive and memorable airport experiences, not just from the passengers’ perspective but also from the airport operators’ perspective. The findings in this thesis conclude that passengers view the airport as an important location and integral part of their journey - and as much more than a process step. Passengers ascribe emotions and value to their stay in the airport, which can be used to co-create memorable experiences.

Experiences can furthermore serve as a way of ascribing an “identity” to an airport, thus

creating a sense of place, which will allow airports to differentiate themselves and imprint their offerings in the mind of the passengers.

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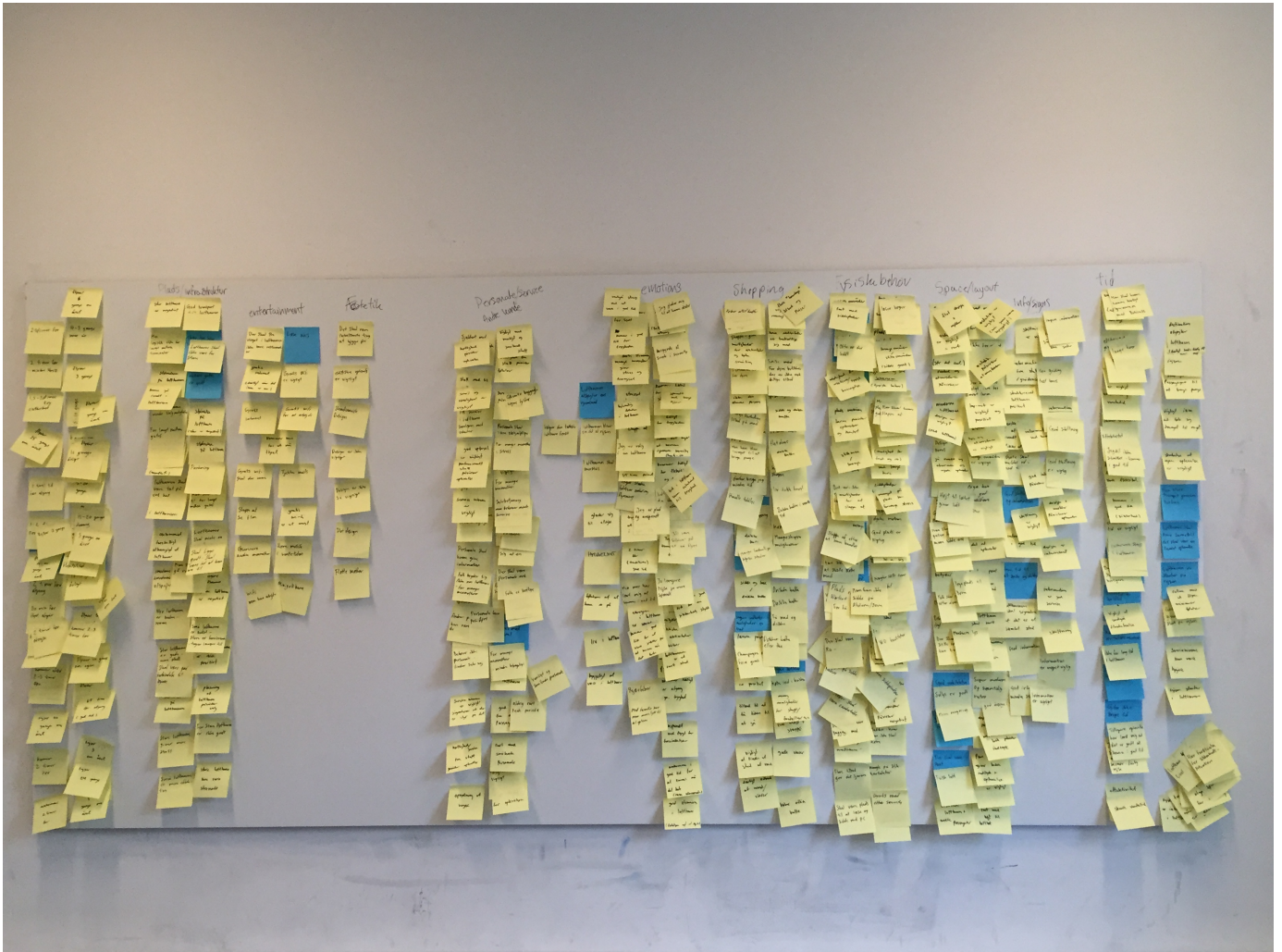
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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Visual presentation of affinity diagram



Appendix 2 - Interview Guide – Field interviews

Interview Guide

My name is: Johan, Christian

We are students from Copenhagen Business School who are currently doing a research project on airport experiences and customer service in the airport.

Would you like to participate in a short interview?

Thank you for taking part in this short interview. The topic of this interview is on airside airport experiences – the area after you have been through the security check. I will be using a tape recorder so I can listen to the interviews afterwards. Is that ok with you? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Name:

Gender:

Occupation:

Age:

1. How many times during a year do you usually travel?
2. What is most often the purpose of your air travel? Business or pleasure?
3. When you travel, how long before your flight departs do you prefer to be at the airport?
4. How does the behavior of the airport personnel affect your experience?
5. How do you usually feel when you are at an airport and have to travel?
6. What is most important to you when you are at an airport?
7. What does design and layout of the airport mean to you? Smell, colors, art, music and space etc?
8. What do you prefer to do when you have passed the security check?
9. Imagine that you have to wait three hours, because of a flight delay. What would you like to do?
10. Do you miss anything when visiting the airport that could help improve your passenger experience?
11. How do other passengers affect you experience?
12. Is there a certain airport that do prefer over others? Why?
13. Is there a certain airport that like less than others? Why?

Appendix 3 - Interview guide focus group

Focus group - Interview Guide

Welcome. Today's topic for this focus group interview is airport experiences.

The result generated from this focus group will be used to analyze the relationship about airport customers and their experiences in the airport.

You are selected because we believe that you can provide us with important insights to this subject.

Guidelines

There are no right or wrong answers. But we expect that you will have differing views.

We are tape recording the whole interview, so one person speaking at a time please.

You don't need to agree with each other, but please respect each other.

Please talk to each other and feel free to bring up your considerations and thoughts this is the reason that you are here.

I will be the moderator in the conversation and I will be the assistant.

Role of the assistant:

Take notes and deal with recording equipment.

Guidelines for moderator and assistant:

Use open-ended questions, what, where and how?

Use "think-back" questions: Take people back to an experience.

1. How many times during a year do you usually travel?
2. What is most often the purpose of your air travel? Business or pleasure?
3. When you travel, how long **time** before your flight departs do you prefer to be at the airport and why?
4. How do you usually feel when you are at an airport and have to travel?

- Any particular **emotions**?
5. What is most important to you when you are at an airport?
- Do you have any particular **physiological needs**?
6. What does design and layout of the airport mean to you? Smell, colors, art, music and space etc?
- How do ambient conditions affect you? (**physical surroundings**, light, music, sounds or colours)
7. What do you prefer to do when you have passed the security check?
- What kind of **activities** do you prefer to engage in?
8. Imagine that you have to wait three hours, because of a flight delay. What would you like to do?
9. Do you miss anything when visiting the airport that could help improve your passenger experience?
10. How does the behavior of the airport personnel affect your experience?
(**service**)
11. How do other passengers affect you experience?
(**human interactions**)
12. Is there a certain airport that do prefer over others? Why?
13. Is there a certain airport that like less than others? Why?

Appendix 4 – Conceptual framework for airport experience creation

Composed by Wattanacharoensil et al. (2015)

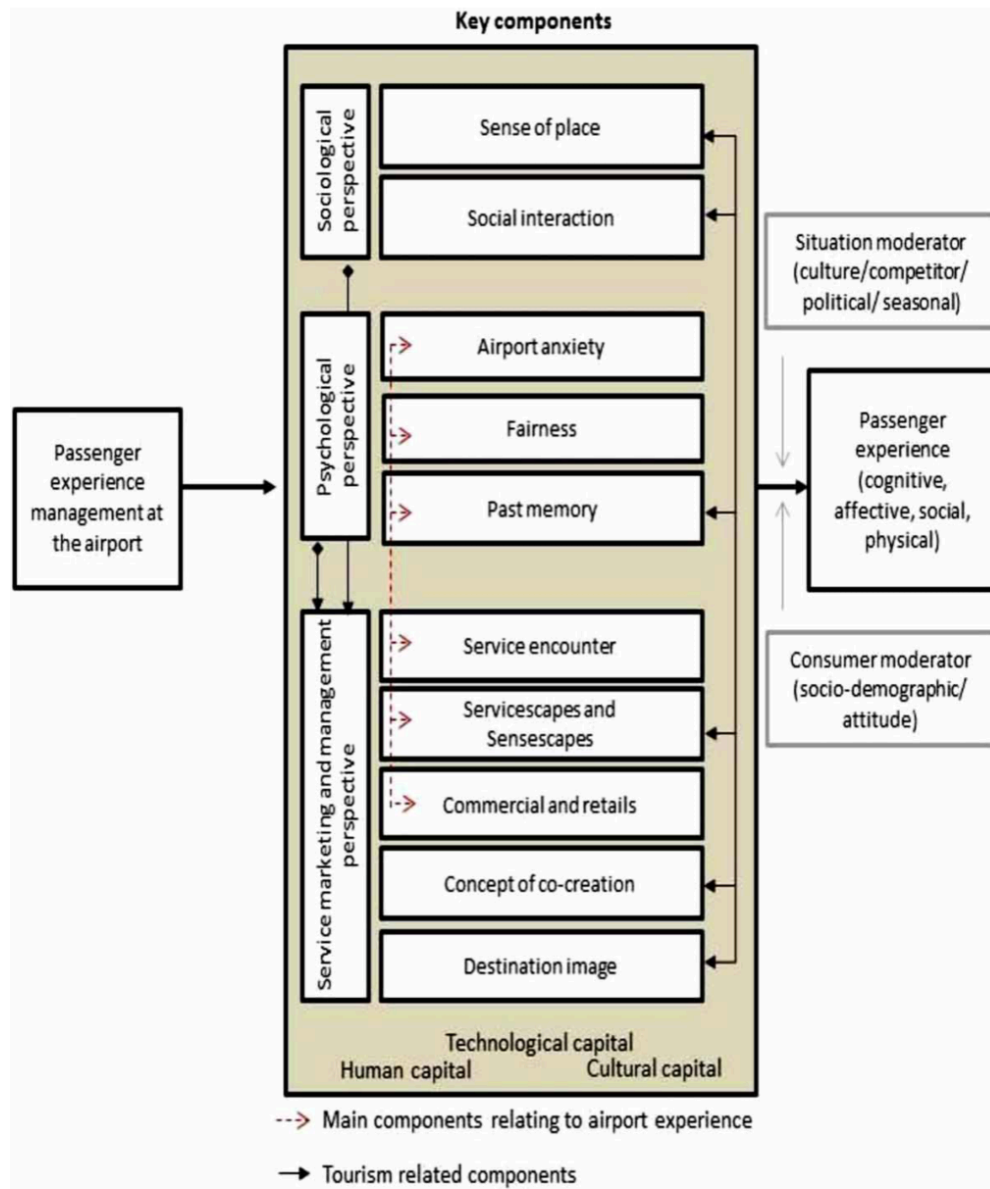


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework for airport experience creation.

Appendix 5 – Characteristics of field interviewees

Gender	Age	Nationality	Purpose
Female	25	Bulgarian	Pleasure
Female	20	Swedish	Pleasure
Female	28	German	Pleasure
Female	48	Danish	Pleasure
Female	19	Russian	Pleasure
Female	41	Danish	Pleasure
Female	54	Swedish	Pleasure
Female	25	Danish	Pleasure
Female	30	Danish	Pleasure
Female	80	Danish	Pleasure
Female	60	Danish	Pleasure
Female	44	Danish	Pleasure
Male	50	Swedish	Business
Male	35	Danish	Pleasure
Male	55	Danish	Pleasure
Male	45	English	Business
Male	47	Danish	Business
Male	65	Danish	Pleasure
Male	25	Danish	Pleasure
Male	35	Danish	Business
Male	49	Danish	Business
Male	40	Danish	Business
Male	24	Finnish	Pleasure
Male	26	Danish	Business

Appendix 6 - Categorization of activities in four realms of an experience

Field interview

Aesthetics	Escapism
<i>Relaxing (26)</i>	<i>Shopping (14)</i>
<i>Observing (10)</i>	<i>Wellness (8)</i>
<i>Lounge (6)</i>	<i>Playground (4)</i>
<i>Sleeping (12)</i>	<i>Exercise (12)</i>
<i>Outside area (4)</i>	<i>Food & Drinks (46)</i>
<i>Browsing shop and surroundings (8)</i>	<i>Minigolf (2)</i>
<i>Quiet area (22)</i>	
88	86
Entertainment	Education
<i>Electronic devices (8)</i>	<i>Information (6)</i>
<i>Reading (12)</i>	<i>Working (4)</i>
<i>Cinema (2)</i>	
<i>Wifi (8)</i>	
30	10

Focus group

Aesthetics	Escapism
<i>Relaxing (3)</i>	<i>Shopping (5)</i>
<i>Observing (2)</i>	<i>Wellness (3)</i>
<i>Lounge (2)</i>	<i>Smoking (1)</i>
<i>Sleeping (2)</i>	<i>Exercise (1)</i>
<i>Browsing shop and surroundings (5)</i>	<i>Food & Drinks (11)</i>
14	21

Entertainment	Education
<i>Electronic devices (1)</i>	<i>Information (2)</i>
<i>Cinema (1)</i>	<i>Working (1)</i>
<i>Wi-Fi (3)</i>	<i>Seeking information (1)</i>
5	4