



## **Advertising in Helsinki Airport – Possibilities and Pain Points**

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## Abstract

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<p>As air travel is picking up after the pandemic and is expected to be back to pre-pandemic levels by 2025, should these years leading to it be used as a time to develop and invest in the things that benefit all shareholders. One of these is airport advertising which is yet not so widely researched topic but has much potential to be researched to understand the customer journey and its pain points and possibilities in the future. The author of this thesis wanted to conduct research to be used as inspiration for developing new campaigns or planning for improvements to the existing ones in the future.</p> <p>The theoretical framework was created by analyzing existing research from different parts of the globe and most of the sources used were focused on airport advertising as it has many characteristics that make it unique compared to other out-of-home advertising platforms. It represents needed definitions of the topic for a wider understanding. Research methods used included making a SWOT analysis of advertising in Helsinki Airport, presenting insights that were presented in the knowledge base and creating a Passenger Journey map through Helsinki Airport where all the potential advertising spots and the attention span of those locations was assessed.</p> <p>The results, such as the uniqueness of an international airport environment as an advertising field and the differences between business and leisure passengers will be presented in the final section of this thesis. Improvement proposals, like updated MyFlight service and special offers for transfer passengers will be included in the chapter, too. The chapter is finalized with reliability assessment and final learnings from this process for the author and with the list of sources used.</p>
<b>Key words</b> Airport advertising, Out-of-home advertising, Helsinki Airport

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The author of this thesis has been working at Helsinki airport for about a year being employed by two different companies. During her time working, and as a passenger in Helsinki airport she noticed the different advertisements all around the airport and started to wonder about their positions, the reasoning behind certain advertisement campaigns, and some creative solutions behind them. She started to pay more attention to those and became more interested in the topic and through all this, the idea of writing a thesis about this topic came.

## 1.2. Objectives

Objectives of this thesis include studying and observing the full potential of airport advertisement and gathering them into this thesis that can be used as a general introduction to the effectiveness of airport advertising and potentially get new inspiration and improvement ideas from it. Therefore the main source for conducting this research was data collection from existing data sources and using different tools, such as SWOT and therefore coming up with new innovative ways airport advertising can be even more effective in the future. The research from this thesis seeks to analyze the airport passenger journey and therefore track all potential advertisement points on it, and the ideas created have been based on those and on the authors' own empirical research. Objectives such as recognition of an advertisement and remembrance of it have also been discussed and those are part of the research, the author wanted to find answers to. Additionally, the author wanted to find out the ways airport advertisement is such a special field of advertisement.

As the topic is generally wide, it was important to make some limitations to it to have more defined and precise final results. When defining the main factors and deciding on the subtopics that should be left outside of this research, the author decided to leave out the language of the advertisement campaigns. A discussion on whether an international airport is required to have all its signs (advertisement included) in its official languages or if English is enough. With Finland having two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, that is not much spoken or understood outside of it and its neighboring countries, this discussion is still ongoing and will not add much new information to this report. An added part to the language discussion is, that the language spoken by passengers has switched due to Russian airspace being closed and therefore Helsinki not having any Russian transfer passengers, as well as by the lack of Chinese tourists both arriving and transferring through Helsinki. Another aspect this thesis has not discussed is the success of a certain

advertisement campaign, as some products advertised at the airport are services and they cannot be purchased on the spot, so the passenger might just get the idea of a need while at the airport, but the actual purchase decision is made later on. The same goes for products, as a passenger might see an advertisement for a new perfume in Helsinki airport, but decide to purchase it first when arriving back to Helsinki from their holiday.

Factors that have been covered in this thesis include passenger profiles, such as their nationality, level of wealth, and interests. New ideas regarding sponsoring and location-based marketing have been discussed as well as creating applications to boost sales and promote products onto the ones already existing and to the ones that could potentially be created in the future. The thesis also discusses innovative ways to receive data that could showcase new trends on potential customer groups and what sort of marketing techniques are especially effective in the airport environment.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Thesis**

In 2022 Helsinki airport had 12,9 million passengers (Finavia 2023) and this large number puts a big value on the advertising possibilities in such an international environment. As European passenger numbers are rising yearly after COVID-19 and are expected to be back to pre-pandemic level by 2025 (Eurocontrol 2023) other stakeholders of airports must be prepared for this. One of these stakeholders in Helsinki airport is Finavia, a Finnish airport operation company. They have outsourced their advertisement to a company called Clear Channel. More about them and about the research they have conducted to have data for their potential customers later.

Most passengers are in a positive mindset when traveling, therefore brands have a high chance of reaching concentrated people who are more welcoming compared to their everyday lives (JDCe-caux 2018). After being through check-in, baggage drop, and security control, passengers have often plenty of “dwell time” to spend and therefore they can pay attention to their surroundings more than in their everyday lives. Some passengers might also be looking forward to spending their last local currencies before boarding so they do not need to pay high commissions for a currency exchange company to exchange them back to their local currency. Inspiration regarding what they should purchase can be seen in surroundings such as the windows from closeby stores and commercials, too. Ethnographic research conducted by JCDecaux in 2005 analyzed that passengers have an average of 90% ad awareness at the airport, and they stated this could be regarding the excited state many people have when traveling, regardless if for business or leisure.

Air passengers hold a lot of purchasing power which makes them an attractive target group for media buyers (marke 41 2019, 19). When GDP rises, passenger volume rises too due to greater

consumer confidence and more disposable income (Graham & Halpern 2013, 32) and this will also be reflected in the consumer behavior of passengers and therefore airport advertising is a field that many companies should invest in. This thesis will contribute as a common knowledge source of airport advertising and can serve as a knowledge base for future research regarding the topic.

#### **1.4. Structure of the Thesis**

After Chapter 1, Introduction where the background information and objectives of the thesis were displayed Chapter 2 offers the theoretical framework through academic research and articles that help the reader to gain a greater understanding of the topic and showcase what sort of sources the author has been using to gain their information they base their own ideas on.

Chapter 3 seeks to answer the research questions based on the literature and other sources used as well as to understand possible new ideas and pain points of airport advertising through the Customer Journey. Additionally, in this chapter, a SWOT analysis will be presented to understand the different characteristics of this very unique field of advertisement.

Finally, in Chapter 4, the author presents the results of the research and ideas for future improvement to have more effective advertisements. The author will reflect on their journey throughout the process of writing this thesis and assess the reliability of this thesis as an academic text.

#### **1.5. Clear Channel**

Clear Channel Finland, a nationwide outdoor advertising company that is part of Clear Channel Outdoor Holdings, Inc., one of the world's largest outdoor advertising companies (Clear Channel 2023) is the company that operates the advertisement campaigns at Helsinki airport and therefore is an important shareholder of this thesis and could additionally benefit from its results. Helsinki Airport and its operator Finavia has outsourced advertising for Clear Channel and they then choose who gets the campaigns and help the companies create the most suitable campaigns for the airport environment. Clear Channel Airport Insights Study is a research where nearly 2000 U.S. frequent (more than three trips in a past year) air travelers were surveyed with a 15-minute online survey. These numbers give insights into why airport advertisement is so important and what sort of results investing in it could mean for companies. In the survey of frequent passengers, 83% said they noticed airport advertising, 55% recalled airport advertising and 49% acted after seeing an advertisement at the airport. The most popular action was conducting an online search with 61%, and 51% visited a website (Nielsen for Clear Channel 2023).

Heartbeats concept with the slogan “from mass media to personalized outdoor advertising” was created to make advertisers and media buyers be able to purchase and design their advertising more conveniently. It means profiling passengers depending on their characteristics, such as their departure times helps with this. Through this concept, media buyers can purchase even hourly visibility for their campaigns and those can be targeted to suit the target group they want to attract. This could mean in the evenings when business passengers arrive, a taxi commercial with instructions on how to reach the taxi stand.

Based on the analysis Clear Channel has received from a survey commissioned from Taloustutkimus, the commercials displayed at Helsinki airport match well the passenger profile the survey provided. Highly educated people who are interested for instance in self-development, so having advertisement of ebook providers make sense. Interests included travel, reading books, local and domestic issues, science, and studying. Other interesting facts included that 70% of passengers own the apartment/house they live in, and 34% own more than one car. According to Taloustutkimus's research, 44% of travelers taking part in this survey were saying they were in a position of procurement (Clear Channel 2018).

## 2 Theoretical Framework

The thesis was conducted as an extensive literature review by using existing research data, academic publications, and other sources to gather all the needed information to offer the reader a wide knowledge base of the topic. The knowledge base additionally offers the reader more justification on why the author chose this specific topic and explains all the needed methodology to proceed with the thesis. The author additionally went through many websites and some annual reports of important shareholders to have more touchpoints and to get a classified framework to use as a basis for this thesis.

### 2.1. Wilson & Till Study

Pioneering research about airport advertising effectiveness was a field study conducted as ethnographic research on person-object interactions done by observing over 3000 passengers at New York LaGuardia Airport in May 2005. Findings include that passengers were most likely to notice advertisements away from security control as usually after the security control passengers want to orient themselves and find their departing gate (Wilson & Till 2008), before focusing on other things like observing their surroundings closely and having the so-called dwell time. After the security control passengers also tend to reorganize their belongings after removing them for the security control, so making sure there are enough packing areas right after security control as well as having enough signs after the security control to keep the passengers calm and collected, helps. The place where passengers noticed the advertisements least was at the gate with 10%. Usually, at this point, passengers are already looking at boarding the plane or while waiting for their turn, they are reading, talking on the phone, or working. A good location for advertisements at the gate area is above the eye level of passengers as otherwise it is possible other passengers block the view towards them. Their research stated that passengers traveling alone pay more attention to the advertisements than people traveling with someone or in groups (Wilson & Till 2008).

They also noticed that if a certain location is more congested, passengers pay more attention to the surrounding people than to the surrounding advertisements. They also noticed that departing passengers pay more attention to advertisements than arriving, probably because arriving passengers are in a rush just getting out and therefore the only waiting they need to do is at the baggage claim, which usually has many ads for them (Wilson & Till 2008).

In the second study, they measured recognition of the advertisements passengers had passed by at the airport concord area. They asked passengers to recognize the advertisement they remembered they had seen during their visit. They also placed some pictures of advertisements that did

not exist in the airport area to filter out any false positives. One characteristic they noticed affected the result was the frequency of how often a passenger travels through the airport. If a passenger had traveled often in the past month, they recognized the advertisements more. Advertisements on the corridor had more ad recognition than the ones right after security control (Wilson & Till 2008).

The final part of their research was regarding recall. The research was conducted in two parts, as unaided recall without any tips on categories of advertisement they had gotten across with, whereas on the other part they received aid on their recall meaning they were given different product categories as an aid to help them remember some of the advertisements they had come across with. Recall rates were quite low, but the characteristics increasing were odd shapes or sizes. Having advertisements with less than 12 words also increased the recall as well as anything that was travel-related which assisted passengers with ad processing as the location of the place they saw a specific ad was related to their current situation. The final thing they pointed out was that most passengers did not spend more than a couple of seconds viewing the airport advertising, so it is important to have quite short messages on display as passenger attention span towards the ads is very short (Wilson & Till 2008).

## **2.2. Advertising**

Advertising is a marketing tool that can be used to showcase products or services a company has to offer to its potential customers. Out-of-home advertising, or OOH advertising, is advertising that reaches the consumer while they are outside their homes. One form of it is DOOH, digital out-of-home advertising that includes different LED screens that display the advertisement (International Conference on Inter Disciplinary Research in Engineering and Technology 2015, pp 92-95). One difficulty regarding airport advertising and any sort of OOH advertising is, that the point of purchase is not often the same place as where the advertisement is located (Communitas 2024, pp 109).

Ways to increase the desire and motivation towards a product or a service should be reinforced in multiple phases. This could mean having the same advertisement campaigns running for long enough times that most of the passengers would see the same commercials when departing and arriving, though a study conducted in 2005 in New York LaGuardia Airport noticed that departing passengers pay more attention to advertisements than arriving (Wilson & Till 2008, pp 65). This is due to the fact, that departing passengers have more dwell time and arriving passengers do not really have any reason to wait around, unless in a queue for border control or when waiting for their luggage at the arrival hall. Therefore a better way to increase repetition could be to the same advertisement being displayed in multiple different locations throughout the hallways of the airport. With the airport having its own advantages for advertising, such as it being a great place to

organize even extravagant campaigns due to the high level of security that prevents thefts and vandalism (Airport Marketing Institute s.a.), it does have its disadvantages too. This includes all the surrounding sounds and other stimuli such as people running because they are in a rush, which can distract passengers. This is not an issue only for airport advertising but for all kinds of OOH advertising, as those can be seen as places with high-distraction level (Communitas 2014, pp 109).

### **2.3. Market Segmentation**

Airport marketing segmentation means dividing the total market into segments of potential customers with common characteristics and needs. Offering a heterogeneous product for all groups is not sensible, so it is important to pick certain variables that a company wants its target audience to have. Different variables include price sensitivity which can be expected to be higher at the airport than in other locations and product and quality preferences (Graham & Halpern 2013, pp 52).

### **2.4. Location-based Marketing**

Location-based marketing, which can also be called proximity marketing, is a marketing tactic that uses a person's physical location to be able to target them with personalized messages. It uses location data to do so and through it, the whole passenger experience can be improved by providing personalized updates and tips based on real-time locations and interests (Bragg 26 May 2022).

### **2.5. Research from Germany**

Media Frankfurt is the biggest merchant of advertising spaces in German airports, and they have created innovative tools, such as Digital Airport Walk to accommodate the questions and concerns their potential customers might have regarding airport advertising. The company shared some of the main findings from the Digital Airport Walk and other surveys online on their own website and through interviews with different marketing institutes and online magazines. In collaboration with MediaAnalyzer GmbH, a marketing research institute, Media Frankfurt created the Digital Airport Walk. The idea is that the application displays a simulation of certain companies' screen advertisements and the targets are then observed and interviewed regarding the needed results. In the research, they put the test subjects through the whole customer journey of the airport from arriving by taxi all the way to the gate.

Out of 100 test subjects 62 remembered seeing a commercial from Audi and they recalled the feelings they got from this commercial being elegance and luxury (HORIZONT July 2019). They can

measure brand recognition, recall, and first impressions and even track targets' attention span when observing their eye movements. aka identifying parameters for the impact of digital advertising. They did the same research on a control group and the test group to see the number of false positives so they could take that into consideration. With this tool, it is possible to track brand awareness, brand image, and consumer acceptance. For the future, they are stating that concepts like anonymized Wi-Fi trackers and airport apps could act as new and innovative data sources.

The founder of the Airport Marketing Institute AMI wrote an article describing some of the characteristics of a typical passenger in German airports mentioning an interesting point, which is that as airports have plenty of business travelers, airport advertising is one of the most potential ways to reach these passengers. They often have high purchasing power and can make big and influential decisions therefore these people are usually busy and do not have time to sit in front of a television watching series and commercials. In Munich about every two-thirds of passengers are traveling for business, whereas in Frankfurt, one of the world's busiest airports the number is over a third. They also stated some of the characteristics of leisure passengers include anticipation and excitement and that they are most likely to pay attention to the stores and advertisements that are around them (Airport Marketing Institute s.a.)

Media Frankfurt survey found that passengers perceive advertisements in the airport as more exclusive compared to other sources of media. They also explained that it is easier to organize extravagant campaigns in the airport environment as it is a very controlled environment with a high-security level, so the risk of vandalism and stealing is lower and therefore it is possible to bring out a whole car in display or showcase expensive jewelry. Airports are a good location for trying out new innovative ways of advertising.

### 3 Research Methods

In this section the author represents how the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter is implemented in the current airport advertisements at the Helsinki airport and additional research data has been used, too. New methods such as SWOT and Passenger Journey mapping have been introduced as well to give out a picture of airports as an advertising field in general and the potential areas of it.

#### 3.1. SWOT Analysis Method

SWOT analysis is a framework that can assist when analyzing and identifying some of the challenges a company might have by taking into consideration strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. SWOT helps a company or in this case, a marketing enterprise to see the big picture and therefore be able to recognize where they might need improvement and for instance in what kind of campaigns or target markets they should be investing in (NP digital s.a.).

Some of the greatest strengths of advertising in Helsinki Airport include its unique environment with lots of international passengers who are financially able to spend money on things like traveling, so likely additionally on other services and things that they see in advertisements. A further factor is that a growing number of people, currently 39% (marke 41 2019, 47) use ad-blockers on their mobile phones and computers, but OOH advertisement is a form of advertisement that a person cannot block themselves from seeing. Furthermore, with such a large number using ad-blockers people are not as sensitized towards commercials anymore and therefore they might be more accepting of them, as they do not see them as commonly anymore. The high level of security especially on the security-checked site of the airport offers a safe environment for media buyers to pursue even more extravagant advertisement campaigns. Airports are perceived as a high-flying lifestyle that represents luxury and spoiling yourself, so this image represents the brands that have commercials at the airport. Unique airport context adds perceived brand value (JCDecaux 2017). Pushing brand awareness is one of the advantages of an airport as a marketing environment. (marke 41 2020, 47)

Some weaknesses in airport advertising include that it is a high-distraction environment with so much happening around at all times, such as people physically lining up in front of the advertisements on the walls and therefore blocking the view, announcements made on the speakers, passengers rushing to make it to their flights and other things to pay attention to such as planes and bypassing people. As Wilson & Till pointed out in their observations, most passengers only paid attention to advertisements for 1 to 3 seconds so the attention span is very short.

Finnair is an airline that is known for their short connection times and of course in the situation where there are no queues anywhere and everything goes smoothly, this is very convenient for the passenger. Those benefit the passengers as not many people prefer to wait at the airport for longer periods of time, but the short connecting times have their downsides. The author often saw passengers being very stressed when queuing at passport control as they had very short connecting times between their flights, and those passengers missed all the possibilities Helsinki airport would have had to offer them. Not only would this give passengers more time to explore and get inspired by the advertisement placed all around the airport, but it would also act as a great promotion for Helsinki airport as advocacy is seen as one of the key marketing trends for airports (Pal 10 June 2013). Helsinki airport does offer great experiences for their passengers, such as Santa Claus's cottage and Maja Living room. Those could be sponsored by certain companies so that when passengers take pictures of these quite unusual sights at the airport, the company would get an endorsement too.

Opportunities for airport advertising consist of things such as technological development, such as being able to use moving images and sound to catch passengers' attention. On OOH advertising 3D advertisement has already been introduced and could offer great opportunities for airports as well, as they would enhance the lavish image people have of airport advertisement and would additionally be quite easy to produce in an airport due to the security level. Advertisements can be created to target a special market segment, such as B2B decision-makers of companies by having the advertisement out on the times these passengers are known to be traveling, as well as by having the advertisement in locations such as close to the business lounges. A high level of passengers traveling through Helsinki are business travelers and therefore a possibility for advertising includes targeting these B2B decision-makers.

Helsinki Airport acts as an operating base for many different kinds of airlines, such as low-cost carriers like Norwegian, and full-service carriers like Lufthansa. There are also many charter airlines flying from Helsinki, as well as regional carriers operating domestic routes. This means that Helsinki Airport is perceived very differently by these different passenger groups. With marketing segmentation companies interested in advertising in Helsinki airport can pick which sort of group they want to target and have as their potential customers (Graham & Halpern 2013, 52). This acts as a benefit for the advertisers, as Helsinki airport has such a versatile group of passengers, and practically the low-cost carriers usually use certain gates (5-19) so this can be taken into consideration when thinking of the positioning of a certain ad.

For almost two million passengers Helsinki acts as a transfer airport (Finavia 2023) and all these passenger groups have their special characteristics and needs, also when it comes to them as a

target of an advertisement. Before COVID-19 hit, transfer passenger statistics in Helsinki airport were even higher and this meant that the advertisement especially in the Non-Schengen area of the airport was created to accommodate passengers from Asia. Finland's geographic location enabled them to offer the fastest connections between Asia and Europe and this was Finnair's cornerstone of their business strategy (Finnair 2020).

When a passenger connects to an airport Wi-Fi they sometimes have to watch a 20-second advertisement from the sponsor of the Wi-Fi before gaining the connection for a limited time. In the author's own experience, this does not feel very practical as the passengers' focus span is already on the Wi-Fi and the reasons why they want to connect to it instead of the ad, so why not instead ask the passenger to give out their email or phone number and few minutes after they have entered the Wi-Fi, they would receive a discount code to a store at the airport or a promotional message from the sponsor of the connection.

Technical difficulties could be seen as a threat, but both for that and the low chance of vandalism at least they would be noticed quickly and actions could be taken fast. Values, such as beauty standards differing from one place to another could be seen as a threat or a difficulty in an international environment like an airport. For instance, in Asian cultures being pale is seen as a beauty standard whereas in the Western world being tanned shows that one has had time to travel and lay at the beach. A further threat is the fact that Helsinki Airport has been facing lots of queues at its security control and if a passenger is waiting in line for long periods of time, they miss all the advertisement and shopping possibilities of the airport as they will need to rush to their gate.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique environment</li> <li>• International audience</li> <li>• No ad blockers</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Perception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distractions</li> <li>• Short attention span</li> <li>• Short connecting times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological development</li> <li>• 3D campaigns</li> <li>• B2B, as many business leaders travel for business</li> <li>• Diverse passenger profile</li> <li>• Transfer passengers</li> <li>• Wi-Fi sponsorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical difficulties</li> <li>• Vandalism</li> <li>• Values and cultural differences</li> <li>• Long queues at the security control</li> </ul>

Figure 1. SWOT of Airport Advertising in Helsinki Airport

### 3.2. Data Collection Method from literature

Even with the Wilson & Till research from the year 2008 being one of the only wide researches done regarding airport advertising, some things have surely changed over time with one of them being mobile phone usage. In the research, they pointed out that the passenger group paying the most attention to advertisement were solo travelers, but as almost everyone has smartphones these days this is probably not true, as people have their phones as distraction. (Wilson & Till 2008)

Being creative and having an almost art-like advertisement increases the brand appeal, which can increase the recognition by a third. The same goes for surprising installations that can stay in people's minds and create discussion amongst passengers even later on (Karim November 2022). Therefore, investing in bigger campaigns or for instance having promoters handing out products to try on in Helsinki Airport could be a good investment for a company that wants to stand out. Modern-looking installations can also be seen as factors that could increase the brand appeal.

Making confident statements in the commercials and having a strong presence and displaying competence increases the trust a company receives from its customers. This applies especially to finance-related campaigns (Karim November 2022). An example of a commercial like this is a currency exchange company's advertisement where they state that every four out of five purchases abroad is paid by cash recommending passengers to therefore change into the local currency already at the airport.

An effective advertising technique is repetition, which is well-suited for airports with long corridors and many screens. Having the same commercials pop up in many locations of the airport, and maybe additionally in many different airports worldwide. Many of the advertising packages Clear Channel offers their media buyers include more than one screen in one location, and therefore Helsinki Airport has many advertisements on display in multiple locations. Advertisements with more than one appearance were noticed more than twice as likely in the recognition study at LaGuardia Airport (Wilson & Till 2006). A meta-analysis conducted on the most effective frequency of advertising stated that "in an experimental setting maximum attitude is reached at approximately ten exposures" (Eisend & Schmidt 2015). An additional fact is, that the longer time a passenger spends at the airport or how frequently they travel, the more they get the repetition that way.

### **3.3. Passenger Journey Map Method**

Customer journey mapping is a tool that helps a company to identify customers' needs, problems, and engagements in a visual way. With this "walk in customers' shoes" the company can recognize the pain points and the possibilities for improvement. Deloitte has created a Passenger Journey Map that the Marketing journal *marke 41* has analyzed to point out all the touchpoints where airport advertising can be used, and in this subchapter, the author will explain those to be able to understand the quite homogenous passenger journey of an airport passenger. Regardless if a business passenger or not, for most passengers, the journey is very similar which can be challenging for advertising, but as targeting certain groups or even a certain flight is possible, is segmentation possible even through this journey (*marke 41*. 2020, pp 65). As this thesis is about Helsinki airport, the author guides the reader through the passenger journey in this exact airport.

Already when driving to the airport, regardless if with public transport or with a private vehicle the passenger faces big advertisements outside of different parking halls or on the bus terminals' electric screens. Once they arrive inside the departure hall, the modern Helsinki airport displays bright screens with switching commercials of different travel agencies and airlines. Most of these advertisements are located well above the eye level, high up by the roof in big screens which is the most

noticeable location for advertisements in the airport (Wilson & Till 2008). While arriving, seeking the check-in counters and machines and the bag drop passengers are most likely at least somewhat distracted as they want to get through these phases quickly. If the departure hall is crowded and they see long waiting times at the security control, this will increase the distraction and stress for the passengers. Through the level of stress being somewhat high for most passengers at this point, the anticipation is additionally high and through this passengers are most likely paying attention to their surroundings to make sure they are not missing anything important and also admiring the last moments in Helsinki.

The security control has sponsorships for the priority security control and for the family lane, otherwise, it has no advertisement. For this location and for passport control, even though the waiting times in these locations can be long, there are no advertisements displayed on them which is interesting as in the Non-Schengen area the security control for transferring passengers does have a big commercial on top of it, so maybe for the departure hall the reasoning behind not having any advertisement is logistical, whereas in the passport control it could be a legal reasoning. Generally, security control is a high-stress level situation due to waiting times and as the rules are different in different airports, the passenger might be confused about why they do not need to remove their shoes in Helsinki when they had to do so when departing from their home airport. The increased level of security and many officers observing screens and scanning passengers are other factors why the perception of surroundings is quite low (marke 41. 2020, 67).

After the security control, both for transfer passengers and passengers on their first flight, the passengers are greeted with big commercials of switching topics, usually money transfer companies or Finnish insurance companies. Other topics the author has often noticed in Helsinki Airport commercials include jewelry, cosmetics, cars, and taxi services. On this point passengers are usually still distracted by the security control and are re-organizing their luggage, making sure they have everything, and are maybe upset by having to throw away a liquid if transferring and using the old security control machines. Therefore the perception is at a medium level (marke 41. 2020 67). Usually, at this point, passengers are looking to purchase snacks and drinks for their flight and explore the shopping opportunities the airport has to offer. This naturally varies depending on the time the passenger has, if they are running late they will just run directly to their gate trying to catch their flight.

When waiting at the gate area to board the plane usually somewhere, again at eye level, there are some advertisements displayed that passengers can watch while waiting, as well as in the tube and in the buses that take the passengers to their plane. Some innovative advertising locations the author has observed in the Helsinki Airport gate area include phone charging stations and power

outlets that are sponsored by Fortum, a Finnish power company. On average passengers spend around 30 minutes at their gate before boarding which gives the media buyers a great chance to invest in advertising in this area. Of course, distraction exists, such as bypassing passengers but for instance the gate announcements are only made locally at Helsinki Airport so this lowers the amount of distraction. When the boarding starts the attention span lowers and most passengers just want to board the plane as soon as possible. Boarding groups and what documents are needed at the gate increase the stress and usually passengers have the feeling of urgency and need to rush in order to make their flight.

Once landing back in Helsinki and heading towards the arrival hall there are usually very current advertisements displayed for passengers, such as hotels in Helsinki, prepaid SIM cards, and taxi companies. They can be located for instance on top of the baggage belts which is a good location as passengers often have time to spend in this location, but they are distracted as they are seeking for their baggage belt and their own belongings. Even with the distraction being there, the well-strategically placed advertisements and current topics can wake the attention of the passenger before exiting the baggage claim area. Having an emotional factor creates interest in the ad (Karim November 2022) and it should also boost remembrance. This can be seen for instance in Finnair's advertisement at the arrival halls of Helsinki airport, where they state "Welcome to Finland. Welcome home." This creates the feeling of belonging to a passenger.

When looking through this passenger journey the author thinks that Helsinki airport has succeeded quite well in matching the situation a passenger is in the moment to the advertisement they are being displayed at that very moment. Ideas for improvements would include having the passenger flow as smooth as possible without any congestion so that this does not stress passengers and therefore they have more perception towards their surroundings.

**Fig. 1: Passenger Journey Map**

Figure 2. Passenger Journey Map (Deloitte s.a.)

## 4. Conclusion

Characteristics of a successful airport advertisement include the right placement that will depend on the target audience, such as depending on wanting to attract Asian transfer passengers or arriving business passengers. Airport advertising has many great possibilities that other OOH advertisement platforms do not have, such as the level of security and the number of business passengers traveling even weekly through it.

### 4.1. Results

One of the characteristics that make Helsinki Airport such a unique advertisement environment is the international atmosphere of an airport. Especially with Finnair's reputation as a transfer airline means Helsinki Airport is a very international airport with many different passenger groups. Often when passengers walk through the terminal, they admire the modern architecture and they also see all the advertisements that are displayed around the terminal on big or small screens. This is additionally due to the fact that Helsinki has so many different airlines operating from it, and those passengers do have different desires when it comes to advertisements. It can be challenging having national carriers and low-cost carriers operating from the same gates, but with the possibility of Clear Channel offering even hourly visibility of a certain advertisement, those different groups can be targeted accordingly and separately from another. Most of the screens in Helsinki Airport are digital and therefore can be changed easily to match the passenger profile of a certain flight arriving or departing from a gate, which is a huge advantage for Helsinki Airport as an advertising environment. With the airport being so modern and roofs so high in many locations, they truly attract passengers to view everything they see, especially the Non-Schengen area is so wide it rarely is congested that would block the view for passengers. All these things can be seen as an advantage for Helsinki Airport and will most likely be the kind of airports there will be more of in the future.

As stated in the SWOT analysis, many passengers are traveling for business and they might get inspired by their surroundings while traveling and therefore develop new ideas for their companies that also benefit the media buyers. Many of the passengers are in leading positions in their work life (Finavia s.a.) and therefore they have both the purchasing power of the things they are being advertised to and the influence to create even B2B co-operations based on the commercials they have seen at the airport. The dwell time passengers have at the airport at many points throughout their customer journey makes them more accepting of their surroundings as they have time to pay attention to them. The dwell time is a mutual concept for both business and leisure travelers though maybe business travelers tend to spend theirs in lounges rather than in the gates. Some special characteristics of leisure travelers are, that they are more anticipated and excited and they

are most likely to pay attention to the stores and advertisements that are around them (Airport Marketing Institute s.a.). Helsinki has many great displays of advertisements, such as big bright screens and if there ever is a technical issue, they are being fixed very quickly and efficiently. The content of the advertisement meets often the point where the passenger currently is while seeing the advertisement, such as taxi commercials towards exits and currency exchange right after security control, where the currency exchange company is practically located. The perception towards their surroundings and where most commercials are displayed have been well considered, and different techniques such as repetition have been used to increase remembrance.

#### **4.2. Solutions**

Ideas for improvement include perhaps assessing some of the current companies that are being advertised at the airport, such as any companies that are only known for Finnish passengers. In such an international environment international companies could have bigger potential reaching new customers and receiving attention from bypassing passengers. The author did not find many new potential spots for advertisement, as the current ones are creatively placed and therefore the only place where advertisement could be added would be the security control, but due to the current state of it with long queues media buyers might not be too keen on being on display in such a location.

Finavia offers the passengers of Helsinki airport the possibility to receive email updates on their upcoming flights through a service called MyFlight. This information includes gate announcements, times of boarding, and other important factors the passenger needs (Finavia 2023). Ideas for future advertising purposes regarding this service would be to use location-based technology (Vollmer S. 2007) such as sending passengers discounts on the stores based on their real-time location. For example, when a passenger is 50m from a store they would receive an exclusive discount to that store via their airline's app or through the MyFlight service Helsinki airport currently offers. Currently, this service is implemented as email updates, but with an application, the airport could track passengers' movement throughout the airport and offer them these up-to-date updates. When this kind of offer is combined with updates regarding when the boarding starts, would this offer passengers a good possibility to physically see the same place when their boarding is taking place and be able to decide to go shopping during the time they have.

An added benefit would be, that if a passenger has their application in a specific language, the commercials and discounts they will receive would be automatically in the same language and therefore they would certainly understand them, as only English or Finnish-speaking commercials might be ignored by the passenger if those languages are not the ones they know very well.

Therefore a big part of the commercials in the airport might be fully ignored by a big group of potential customers. The same could be implemented in other advertisements of the airport too, such as for the commercials that are on the floor level for the passenger to be able to select the language of the commercial on the screen.

Hopefully in the future when things go back to normal, Helsinki airport will have more commercials in Chinese and Japanese to catch those passengers' attention while they transfer through Helsinki. Other ways to get those passengers' attention could include sending information regarding the shopping possibilities in Helsinki airport to tour operators, as these passengers often travel in groups. The group could be offered even a private shopping tour or an assistant to help them with tax refunds. Dubai International Airport offers special promotions for their transfer passengers (Graham & Halpern 2013, 58) and Helsinki Airport could offer their media buyers the possibility to promote their products for discounted prices exclusively for transfer passengers. A challenge in this one is, that the products purchased would need to be located in Helsinki Airport which limits the possible offering.

### **4.3. Reliability of the research**

As the topic of airport advertisement has not been researched that much in the academic literature, plenty of further research will be needed in the future. The author believes it also is a field that will be researched more in the future as understanding customer behavior and being able to produce as memorable and effective advertisements as possible are the end goals of any company that is investing in advertising. As most of the sources used for this research are especially about the airport environment, the findings should be limited to the airport environment as it has its own specialties compared to other OOH advertising fields. To create more credibility the author would have wanted to include a section about airport advertising history but there was not much information regarding the topic.

### **4.4. Assessment**

The main motivation behind this certain topic was to learn more from it and to use both the existing knowledge learned from Haaga-Helia, and the many sources used while researching this topic. Additionally, it was to graduate from Haaga-Helia as the author had their last courses this Fall semester of 2023 they wanted to graduate on time. The idea and the beginning of research started at the end of July of 2023 so the whole project took the author around four months to complete. Researching and finding sources of this quite a niche topic were the most time-consuming tasks, but

luckily the author ended up finding many enough with the help of using some sources in German. The time the writing took was within the goals both Haaga-Helia and the author themselves had set.

The skills needed to write this thesis included a wide knowledge of the topic, so the author researched a lot of literature, articles, and research data regarding airport advertising, marketing, and consumer behavior. The main competencies the author developed through this process included data processing, and marketing insights and these already help her in her personal life as she recognizes different marketing techniques on all OOH advertisements around her.

Her previous work experience did not help much besides giving the idea to the thesis and she had had multiple chances to see the switching advertisement campaigns taking place in Helsinki airport for about a year. In the future, she is hoping to be employed within marketing so the benefit for future employment possibilities is hopefully therefore greater.

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