

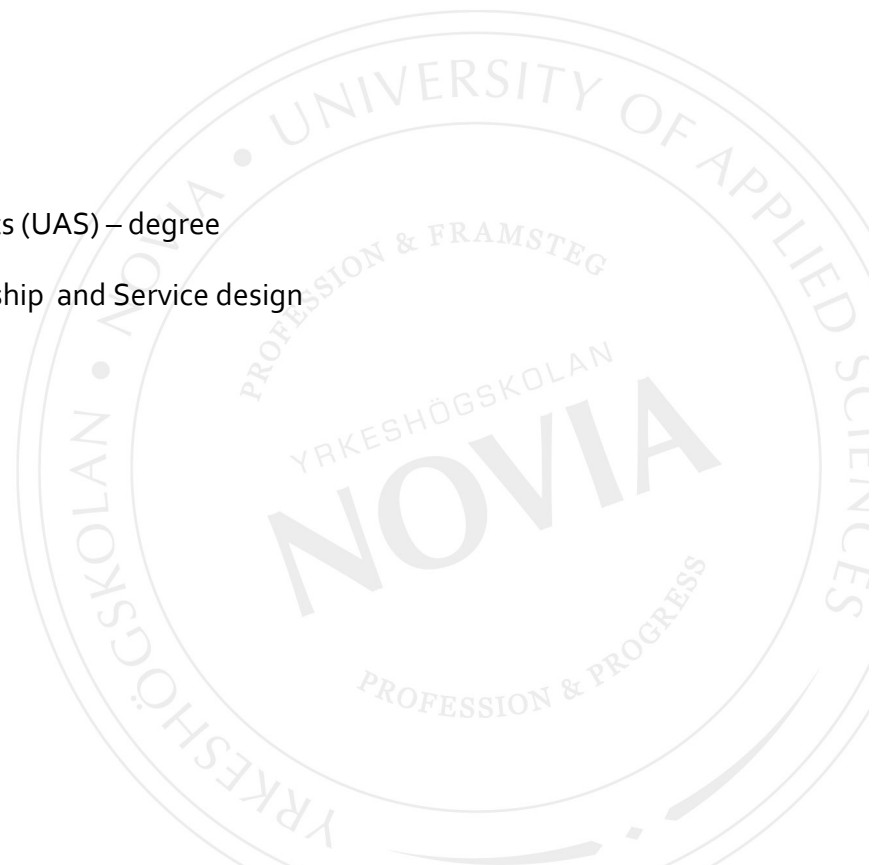
Co-developing the Product Customization Services for Aida Impact

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Abstract

The current environment is immersed in a rapid and continuous change, where companies have to develop or innovate services in order to satisfy the user needs. To reach this requirement, it is important to make the services understandable and easy to purchase. The topic of this master's thesis revolves around evaluating and developing the existing services offered by Aida Impact. The company produces handmade jewelry manufactured from precious and semi-precious materials by immigrant women in its Helsinki based studio. Along with exclusive jewelry, Aida Impact further offers various interactive workshop events and product customization services. These events were designed with an effort to promote social inclusion, brand identification, and overall brand experience. The study focuses on the core elements of an offered service, which is product customization, value co-creation, customer experience and service design process.

The research methods used during the thesis project were a blend of literature study, contextual and in-depth interviews, preparatory research, co-design workshops, brainstorming, prototyping, and piloting. Service design processes and methods have been used to bring a customer-centric view to the service/product. Through the study, I am hoping to confirm that the product-oriented company can develop a profitable business model and promote its mission via co-creative brand services. The outcome of the project is a new service concept, which the company could continue to keep in the assortment or further update it to a final improved version after successful testing.

Language: English

Keywords: Service design, product customization, customer experience, value co-creation, jewelry design.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Objective of the thesis.....	2
1.2	Social enterprise and Aida Impact	3
1.2.1	Project brief.....	6
1.2.2	Research question	9
1.2.3	Outcomes	9
1.3	Frame of reference.....	9
2	Theoretical research	10
2.1	Product customization services	11
2.2	Consumer and service relationship.....	14
2.3	Customer brand experience	16
2.4	Website desirability and usability	18
2.5	Co-creation of value	18
2.6	Co-design.....	20
3	Service design process	21
3.1	Discover current state	25
3.1.1	The five why.....	26
3.1.2	Backcasting	28
3.1.3	Stakeholder map.....	30
3.1.4	Business model canvas.....	31
3.1.5	Interviews	32
3.1.6	Process overview	35
3.2	Defining the research output.....	36
3.2.1	User persona.....	37
3.2.2	Customer journey map	43
3.2.3	Initial service blueprint.....	45

3.2.4	Process overview	47
3.3	Development	48
3.3.1	Concept illustration	48
3.3.2	Prototype	51
3.3.3	Process overview	52
3.4	Deliver	53
3.4.1	Pilot testing	54
3.4.2	Analysis and suggestions	56
4	Evaluation of the process	57
4.1	Conclusion	60
4.2	Ways ahead	62
4.3	Key learnings	62
	References	64

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire: Customer's contextual interview

Appendix 2: Detailed Concept flow

Appendix 3: Customer feedback Questionnaire (Pilot)

1 Introduction

The topic of this master's thesis is to develop the existing services at Aida Impact. The company produces handmade jewelry manufactured from precious and semi-precious materials by immigrant women in its Helsinki based studio. Aida Impact was established with the purpose to support and empower immigrant women through fashion accessory. Later a couple of interactive, customization, and product care services were introduced to initiate brand awareness, customer retention, and engagement. These services were briefly marketed on the Aida Impact website and social media but they were not at the focal point of brand marketing. The project commissioner and founder of Aida Impact, Elina Siira wanted to re-develop the existing service model. She was determined on adapting to the changing trends with an intention of brand development and to spread Aida Impacts brand mission.

On the strategic front in recent times companies are facing the growing challenges of how to attract and retain new costumers when new products and markets are concerned. Domestic companies want to win a strong position locally and internationally by introducing images that offer added value. To create a strong brand, it is necessary to possess expert planning and long-term capital investment. A successful brand is an excellent product or service, with creatively designed and conducted marketing. And thus the project focused on analyzing the existing services offered by Aida Impact, and modifying them based on the user experience and current market need.

The researcher's role as a service designer was to apply service design methodology and evaluate how the end-users perceived the existing service, what they needed, and expected from the company when it came to fashion product-related services. By the end of the project, a modified service concept was co-developed in collaboration with the stakeholders. The final service concept was framed according to the stakeholder needs, piloted and briefly tested and could be iterated in the future. One of the leading idea was reinventing the product customization service model.

In the current fast-paced scenario, where consumers are prioritizing consumption experiences over tangible products. The experience economy is greatly understood and inculcated by the millennial born companies. It has become important to create business models that respond to new shopping behaviors and needs, like the experience before buying or access to an unlimited collection. Through the product customization service, brands add value to the offering in response to consumer's needs and specifications (Hu et al. 2011, 715).

Placing the customers in the center of the design process will lead to a user-oriented service model, which will be profitable for both the customer and the brand. To gain a fulfilling customer experience, it is important to design and continuously develop services that users need. Cited by Yu and Sangiorgi (2018, 40) service development is influenced by product development knowledge and has been treated as a category to be developed and managed like goods.

1.1 Objective of the thesis

The study topic revolves around the relationship between product and services and how the existing brand services can be improved or innovated. This process magnified into the **challenges met during service consumption and overall customer experience at Aida Impact**. The services were evaluated from both user and internal stakeholder's perspective were asked. The researcher tried to find out whether the customer was aware of the services offered by Aida Impact and its brand mission. As well as the customer's response and needs when it comes to the co-creative service model in the field of designer jewelry and their overall brand experience.

Also from the company perspective, it is crucial to design a profitable service model where resources could be used in a hassle-free and (most) ideal way. Through this, the company would be able to **extend the customer portfolio and achieve wider brand identification**. Based on the research, a process concept is illustrated for piloting and further implementation.

1.2 Social enterprise and Aida Impact

A company that is established to produce social good and well being is called a social enterprise. Typically a social enterprise has the aim of solving or developing a new operating model for environmental or societal benefit. Making high profits is usually not the primary motive of these enterprises but accomplishing the mission is the **prime focus**. In recent times the number of social enterprises is rising. Instead of contributing to organizations or volunteering, companies are now expected to actively engage in solving social and environmental problems. Opting for brands that have a kinder and impactful cause is a subtle way to cast a personal vote for change. (Miltton insight VII, 2017.)

Current challenges like climate concern, uncertain political situation, societal changes and demand attention and action. People expect bigger companies to contribute in developing solutions to these in contrast to just high profits. During the survey conducted by Milttons, thousands of Finns, Swedes, and Estonians were asked about what they thought of corporate social statements and the answer was unanimous. Participants said regardless of the region, businesses must communicate their values and engage in social debates to build effective solutions, strengthen links between sectors, quantify and communicate impact. These values should not be restricted to words but implemented in actions. Less than 10% of participants felt companies need not take stand for social issues. The younger generations also expected the corporate leaders to have the courage and contribute towards societal and environmental resilience. (Miltton insight VII, 2017.)

Havu mentioned, "Finnish people expect companies to comment on social issues, in particular climate change, recycling, human and labor rights and pollution in the Baltic Sea. Companies should take a stand on social problems or issues, when they strongly share opinions is what 69 percent Finnish participants felt." (Miltton insight VII, 2017.)

In October 2019 a blog published in Momentum, sustainable fashion is finally gaining pace and growing curiosity among increasingly conscious shoppers, who are looking for ethical and eco-friendly products. Keywords like "sustainable" and "ethical" search had increased by 47%. According to global agencies, fashion companies are not

implementing sustainable solutions fast enough to wipe off the negative environmental and social impacts that come with their growth. This surely calls for attention when it comes to startups and aspiring entrepreneurs as they can adapt to models at early stages.

When it comes to societal challenges, the world is witnessing the largest number of displacements in history. United Nations data shows that 70.8 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution at the end of 2018. Nearly 30 million of them are refugees, and over half of the refugees are minors under the age of 18. According to the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR, the main social problems that the refugee encounters are job market integration difficulties, xenophobia and racism, lack of access to education, and depression and psychological trauma.

One of the biggest obstacles refugees face is the lack of job opportunities in asylum-seeking countries. The project commissioner and founder Elina Siira launched Aida Impact, a social enterprise in 2018 with a mission to integrate and employ refugee women especially mothers, who have had to leave their home countries due to various reasons. During an interview with Meskylä (2018) Siira mentioned, finding employment in a new country without market know-how, knowledge of the local language, or without recognition of the foreign professional qualification is not easy. Out of the entire immigrant groups, refugee women with children are at a high risk of remaining unemployed and Aida Impact empowers these women.

The company offers a range of handcrafted jewelry produced by these women using precious and semi-precious materials. The raw material is sourced directly from suppliers and the products are designed and handcrafted in Finland. The women come from various cultural backgrounds and have other commitments or reservations at times. Thus the company offers flexible working hours for these women.



Figure 1. Making of Aida Impact jewelry (photo:Aida Impact)

In addition to producing precious or semi-precious pieces of jewelry, Aida Impact offered various interactive 'Events' like group or private workshops, pop-up concept store, that is elaborated in figure 2. The concept of Aida Impact events was, brand services that were offered on parallel lines with the jewelry. These services were designed with a purpose to **spread the brand mission** and initiate the social impact dialog. In the leisure/ team-building **workshop**, participants were given a brand overview, followed by co-creative jewelry making session. Participants, engaged in creating their own piece of jewelry under the guidance of Aida Impact employees. These workshops were tailor-made as per the group's specifications. The process flow of **debate** workshops was more or less the same; it focused more on the concept of social awareness discussions and participant interaction. **Pop-up** Shop was the option where customers could order Aida Impact pop-up to exhibit at the private or social program, which is a corporate party, exhibitions, shows, etc. The final category was your idea that was directed towards individual customers, who could book an appointment via shopify and then get **personalized jewelry** designed at the studio. These four completely flexible events (brand services) were offered by the company. The existing brand position was an ideal

opportunity to revive and scale these services up or down. Refocusing energies on brand services was important for relevant lead generation opportunities.

Design customization services at Aida Impact	
<p>1. Create together - Design workshops for groups Would you like to spend a creative moment alone or with your coworkers? Would you like to immerse yourself in the world of beautiful colors and play with materials with the guidance of the AIDA team - and get designer made jewelry for yourself or as a gift? What: Design workshop for groups, leisure or team building</p>	<p>2. Debate together - AIDA contributions Planning an evening with a group of friends or a party at work Do you want to start the evening or morning by exploring AIDA activities, immigration or social entrepreneurship? And head to buy AIDAs for yourself or as a gift. What: Design workshop for groups, Leisure or team building</p>
<p>3. Let's do it together - AIDA popup Would you like to invite us to your studio and shop for a day? At the same time, you can see us making jewelry, we can make your choice of jewelry for you. The AIDA team will guide you through the world of colors and materials. What: design pop-up</p>	<p>4. Your idea Doing something else together? Contact us and let's talk. You can contact us here, for example</p>

Figure 2. Customization workshop services to be developed at Aida Impact

1.2.1 Project brief

While planning a design-led service or product development process a very comprehensible design brief is required. The brief elaborates on challenges and complexities that need to be addressed during the design process. Details regarding the project goal, constraints and timelines need to be stated in the brief along with project outcome and how identified threats are alleviated. A design brief helps set clear limits to the development process and is handled as a process guide for all participants from the beginning to the end of the design process. (Ursula & Kelly 2015,18.)

Along with the jewelry, the brand offers four design services called 'Aida events' as illustrated in figure 2. These services have been offered since 2018 with an idea to spread the brand mission, develop an interactive business model and also to increase customer brand engagement.

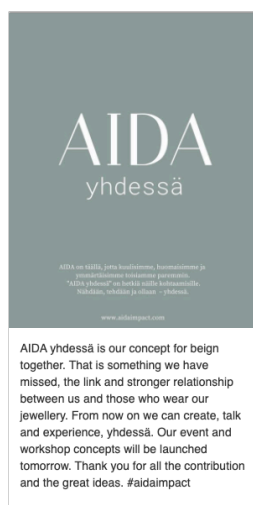


Figure 3. Service events at Aida Impact (Photo: Aida Impact social media)

Being a social enterprise brand, these services act as a platform to voice the social impact related issues, spread awareness and develop an immigrant inclusive society. This makes Aida products not only a piece of jewelry but also a symbol of awareness, responsibility, and inclusion. Thus, engaging the customers in the brand plays an important role.

Since the launch of this service model, the customer's engagement has been limited to purchase of jewelry, said Siira. The marketing of the service has been limited to acquaintances and has mostly been overshadowed by online product sales campaigns. Most of the products were purchased from various channels like brand websites, retail partners or exhibitions. A few clients have got jewelry customized but there has not been a defined process model, mostly need based. The jewelry samples are as mentioned in figure 4. From a marketing perspective, various social media platforms like Instagram and word-of-mouth by customers have been the communications channel when it comes to product marketing.

With this project company wanted to **evaluate and further develop the offered services** by application of service design tools while engaging the stakeholders. The tools used focus on finding out how the customers perceive the service model along with customer

overall brand experience at Aida Impact. Based on stakeholder's feedback a new service concept was developed.

The **ultimate goal of this project was to build stronger brand identity, increase customer engagement while developing meaningful processes.** From the product manufacturing perspective, the developed service shall be step closer to create hassle free manufacturing process and optimized brand - resource management when it comes to product customization services. The concept was later tested and depending on the customer response further iterated thus, there were not special budgets allotted to this project at that point of time. The concept was tested between July and September 2020.



Figure 4. Aida Impact Jewelry (photo:Aida Impact)

1.2.2 Research question

The main focus of the research was to understand the consumer's attitude towards product-related services, its effects on their decision-making process and evaluate the current service model at Aida impact from brand and customer perspective. As a consequence, the following research questions were framed.

- i **Why** is there a need to improve the existing service processes at Aida Impact?
- ii **Who** are the consumers of this service?
- iii **What** are the current challenges during service consumption?
- iv **How** can we build an interactive and profitable service model?

1.2.3 Outcomes

Based on the research, stakeholder inputs and co-creational workshops, an enhanced brand service concept was developed. This appeared as a facilitated design process with a process map, for a swift brand and customer interaction.

1.3 Frame of reference

The frame of reference overviews different aspects, interlinked in the study and is illustrated in figure 5. The thesis study commenced by exploring brand ideology and mission, empathizing with current brand challenges, and understanding the importance of existing product customization model, consumer and services relationship, and their online and face to face experiences. Co-creation is a core aspect of service design and so the value it generates is overviewed. Various service design tools are implemented through the study, to analyze from the customer's and other stakeholder's perspectives in the co-design workshops. During the project, it is important to know how customers perceive the offered service and how the brand desires to interact with the customers. The co-design method stays at the core even while elaborating the on concept. Customers purchased through a digital platform as well, so the user concept of website usability and desirability is explored.

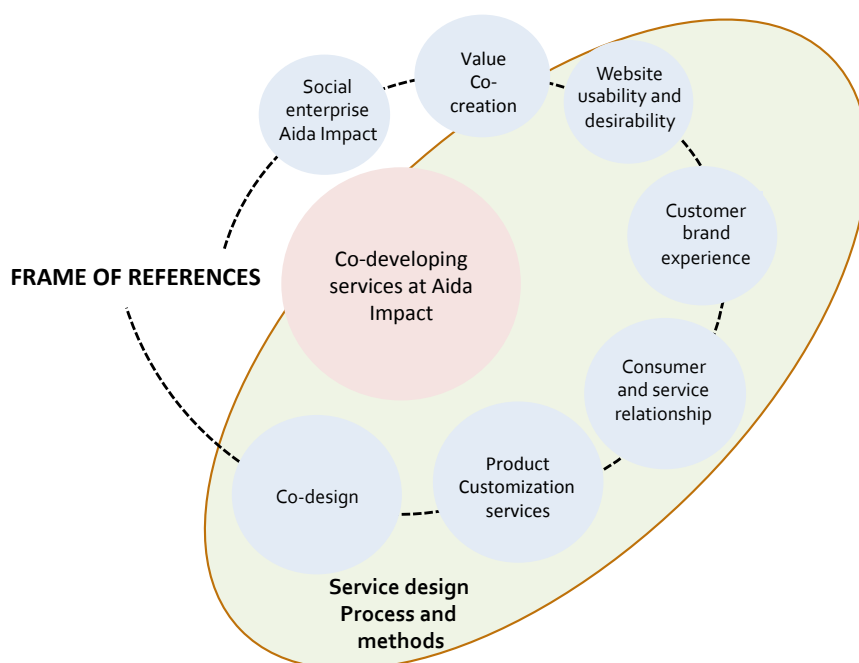


Figure 5. Frame of reference

2 Theoretical research

Theoretically, the thesis is related to exploring the significance of brand services and their key elements. The services offered by a brand are usually add-ons to the core product and cater to a customer in need. Thus, the services should be developed in a more **customer centric** approach. As quoted by Vatter & Jordan (2013), *"brands provide meaning, services provide utility. Combined, they add up to what we call Brand Services, which is a simple service or communication tool offered in addition to the core product or core service and designed to help promote it."*

As quoted by Joel in 2012, *"brands can create a utility. Something that people don't just want, but need. Something that would earn this brands the coveted spot on the home-screen of their consumer's smartphones and tablets. Marketing is no longer just about*

messaging and brand loyalty. Now, brands can provide a high level of utility with real tools that consumers need to enhance their daily lives.”

The designed and developed services and its marketing should create both value for the customer and promote business. The usefulness, usability and desirability factors are considered while service design. Brand communication concerns with the brand promise and its deliverables. Both these approaches combined shape **Brand Services** that cater to the relevant customers while conveying the brand message. (Vatter & Jordan, 2013.)

The service development research revolves around brand services its processes, usability and awareness through novelty. This is done while helping to build a **brand image** that brings out core brand values. Services that are designed must make sense to the customers, who can gain impactful experiences, recommend and re-engage. It is beneficial to involve customers and different influential stakeholders in developing **co-creative** services that are provided by brands. By engaging stakeholders in **co-design** workshops, the designers can discover the participant's unique perspectives and approaches to processes. The following chapters discuss in detail the broader brand service concepts when it comes to the Aida Impact service development process.

2.1 Product customization services

Mass production mainly involves the production of large amounts of standardized products, where customers do not have the ability to personalize or impact the composition of the end product.

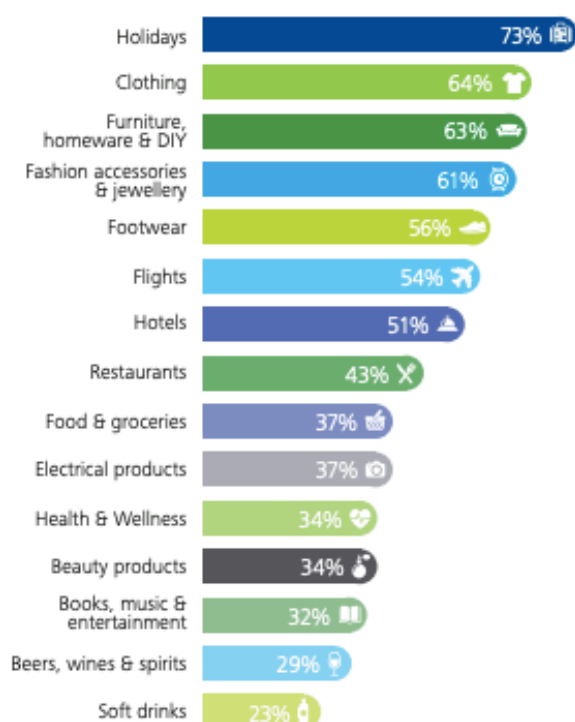
Product customization has recently become an emerging business need as companies have begun to recognize the great importance and benefit of delivering individualized customized products while retaining the advantages of the mass production method. By having a greater focus on customers, companies can use this strategic opportunity to gain a competitive advantage and achieve a noticeable economic value. In their desire to become customer-driven, many companies have resorted to inventing new programs and procedures to meet customer's request. Two concepts that support and complement

each other are uniqueness and sustainability. Uniqueness can be achieved through exclusivity and customization (Segura, 2020).



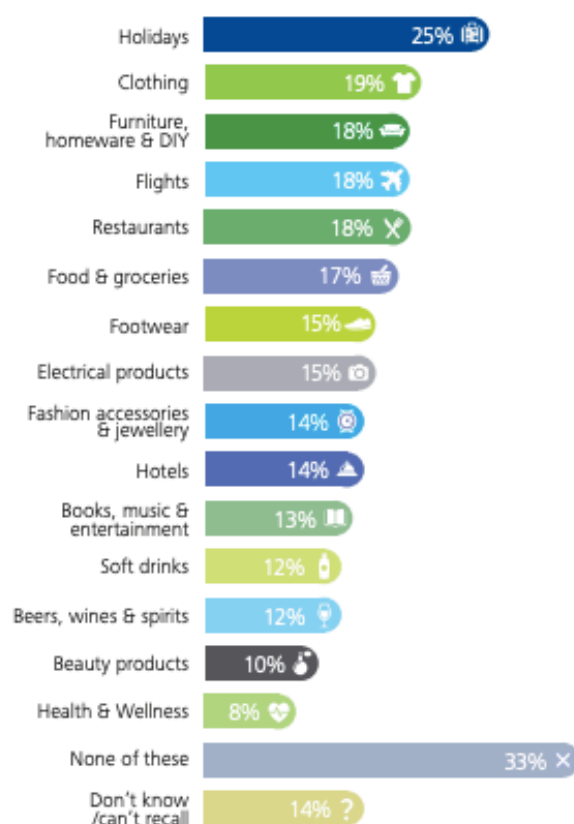
Figure 6. Consumer interests (Fenech & Perkins 2015)

Figure 1. Consumers' awareness of product or service customisation by category



Base: All GB adults 16+ (n=1,560)
Source: Deloitte research (June 2015)

Figure 2. Consumers who have purchased a customised product or service in the past by category



Base: All GB adults 16+ (n=1,560)
Source: Deloitte research (June 2015)

Figure 7. Consumer awareness and purchase (Fenech & Perkins 2015)

According to Burns (2020), there are three main reasons why product customization can help to position a brand in the current competitive market like the exclusive service offered can be charged more, the services act as a conversation starter and spread with word of mouth, the offered solutions increase customer satisfaction.

According to Fenech and Perkins (2015), one in five customers is willing to pay 20 percent more for a personalized or exclusive product. It was an assumption that today's only young shoppers want custom-made or personalized products. Whereas the survey results showed older people were also keen on these customization models. Due to the uniqueness, 46 percent of people during the survey said they can wait longer to get their

product or service. People have a tendency to notice something that is different and a brand's ability to customize or personalize assures customer satisfaction. Exclusive ownership of the product generates a feeling of brand loyalty. In figure 6-7, the statistical data and survey highlights from reports could be studied.

2.2 Consumer and service relationship

Exchange of values is the base for the business-customer relationship and if there is not anything achieved or more that can be achieved from the exchange elsewhere then there is no need to repeat the exchange. Revenue generation is the prime motivation for an exchange through sales while anticipating the use of the product is the motivation for customers. (Gabbott & Hogg 1998, 7.)

A complex range of considerations affects the motivation behavior of both actual businesses and consumers. For business, reducing costs to maximize profits is not the most effective way to consideration with a brand image or customer loyalty. On the other hand, consumers are expecting more than a practical aspect of the exchange. As mentioned by Levy (1959) people purchase not just for what they could do with the product but also what it signifies. Bagozzi (1975) suggested that human behavior is not only about the response to stimuli but more than that, something with purpose, intention, or motivation. Thus any exchange like this comes with social or psychological significance. As a result, it is important to closely understand the customers, their way of viewing the competing products and their values (Gabbott & Hogg 1998, 8).

The term customer is very wide and includes a number of relationships, like buyers and consumers. A wide range of actions and interactions are undertaken when a person or group of people select, buy, utilize and dispose of a service, product or idea and this helps define consumer behavior. Also, various degrees of marketing activities can affect the implication of purchase and re-purchase. Different facets of consumer behavior should be understood to tailor offerings so as to maximize value and encourage purchase behavior. (Gabbott & Hogg 1998,10.) Thus, the background of consumer behavior is worth considering while developing services.

The Elements of Value Pyramid

Products and services deliver fundamental elements of value that address four kinds of needs: functional, emotional, life changing, and social impact. In general, the more elements provided, the greater customers' loyalty and the higher the company's sustained revenue growth.

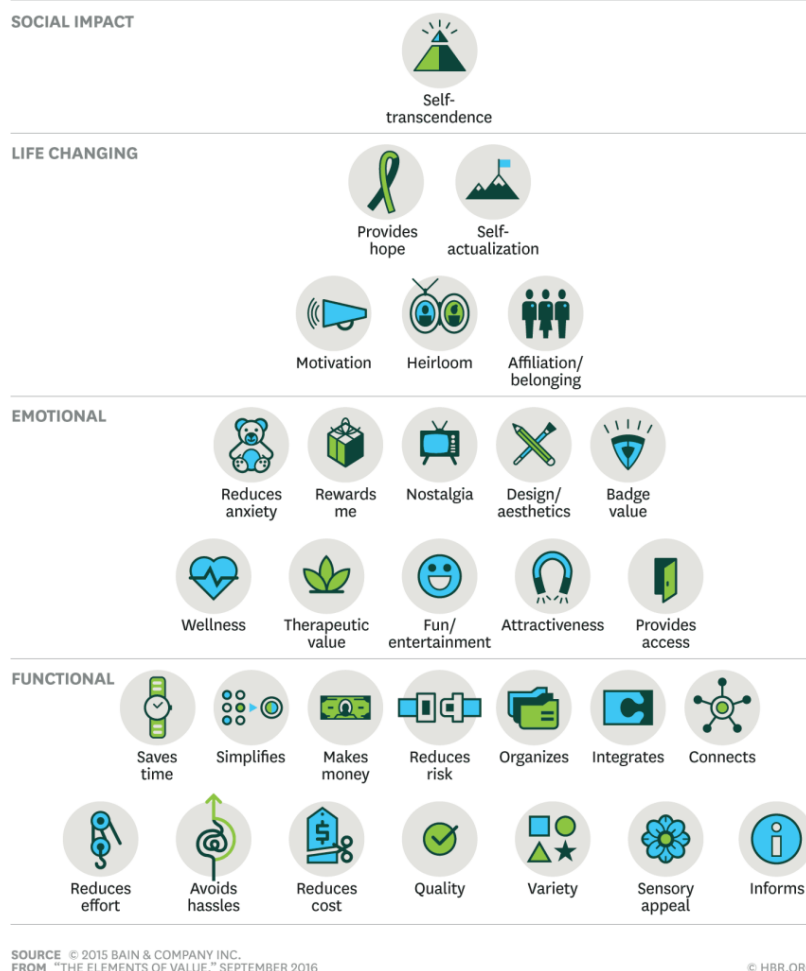


Figure 8. Value pyramid (Bain & Company, 2015)

Inspired by psychologist Abraham Maslow a **hierarchy of needs** was first published in 1943. Marketers then organized his hierarchy in a pyramid as seen in the figure. 8. At the bottom of the pyramid are psychological and safety needs whereas at the top are self-fulfillment and self-transcendence needs. The most popular assumption drawn from this pyramid has been, one cannot attain needs on top until they have achieved the ones below. This is a very practical model where the significant value stays on top. A company

must provide at least a few functional elements of a certain category to be able to deliver higher elements. (Almquist et.al.2016.)

So while coming up with a concept designers must anticipate what might be of value to the customer. The companies that well performed in various elements of value have more loyal customers and the growth of revenue was faster. (Almquist et.al.2016.)

2.3 Customer brand experience



Figure 9. Customer experience review (Martela 2016)

A significant number of resources cannot be used or should not be used by every single company to provide a maximized customer experience in each single customer touchpoint. A company should rather distinctly define the type of value and experiences it can provide its customers, and analyze if it's capable of delivering those (Martela, 2016). In figure 7, Martela illustrates the statistical data shared by various agencies when it comes to customer experiences.

It is predominant to convey the promise, experience expectations, and then truly engage the customers in one or two key touchpoints. Its brand experience should be aligned with strategy, one-time value proposition plus customer intimacy. Today, customer experience matters more than ever before. Retail is not only about selling products; it is a

package of experience plus product. **Customer experience** is defined as how a company positively convinces a customer to make a purchase and further promote the brand to others. The adaptation or reinvention of retail is redefined by the relationship between product and customer. As per the forecasters, retailers will shrink physical footprints during the transformation of their brand, for an enhanced experience. The use of digitized tools is determined as a way to enhance the shopping experience while their shop assistants forget to greet and smile. Retailers must understand brand experience is not only about physical store reinvention and updated technology, but a joint venture between people, processes, hardware, and software platforms. So there is a compelling need to re-invent in-store experiences for productive interaction. (Segura 2019.)

A consistent end-to-end **brand journey** must be developed. The organizations that are skillfully able to manage the whole service experience gain profitable rewards like, enhanced customer satisfaction, less disruption, positive revenue, and higher employee satisfaction. They find effective ways to collaborate across functions and levels, this process delivers gains throughout the company. Deciding where to begin the transformation requires both top-down, judgment-driven evaluations and bottom-up, data-driven analysis, to varying degrees while defining the customer journey that matters. These efforts should be considered in parallel while pursuing changes. Once the key customer journey is identified, a detailed examination must be carried out to understand the current performance causes. This would require deep investigative research and process monitoring combined with initial analysis (bottom-up). Significant permutations within the customer journey can be mapped this way as customer experiences will describe it, revealing the sequence of actions they are likely to take. Leaders must avoid the temptation to helicopter in and dictate remedies once a company has identified its priority journeys and gained an understanding of the problems within it. Any solutions (including the ones from outside experts) that don't give employees a big hand in shaping the outcome should be refrained from. Usually, the root causes of poor customer experience always stem from the inside and very often from cross-functional disconnects even if an obvious fix appears externally. (Rawson 2013.)

Some brands are already doing a great job while connecting online and offline through technology, to enable product curation, product presentation and loyalty programs. Through initiatives, brands are telling a story aligned with customer expectations; on concepts like sustainability, transparency, visibility, seamless experience, community engagement. (Rawson 2013.)

2.4 Website desirability and usability

Interaction design foundation (w.y) defines usability as a measure of how a specific user in a specific context can use product/design efficiently, effectively and satisfactorily also, how the target user achieves the defined goal. **Design usability** is measured by the designer throughout the development process, starting from wire framing to ensure optimal usability. This means designers must focus on three particular aspects when it comes to the usability of a website. Users must find the **interface** easy and become proficient while navigating. They should be able to achieve their goals through design. The interface should be comfortable so that the return visits are easier. The usability of design relies on how well its features accommodate user needs and contexts. It is at the time confused with user experience, whereas usability is a component of user experience and comes along with utility, desirability and brand experience

2.5 Co-creation of value

Co-creation is a very core aspect of service design philosophy, it involves various stakeholders varying from employees to customers working unanimously to innovate, develop, or test a service experience (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011,198). Researchers suggest if co-creation is implemented at an early stage of the development process then it can have a long-lasting positive impact. Long-lasting practices developed at the early front end of the design process can have a positive and significant outcome (Sanders & Stappers 2008, 9).

Sanders and Stappers (2008, 15) say, imbibing co-creation into design practice shall lead to various changes, like how we design, what we design, and who designs. This would also affect the methods and tools the co-designer team uses, in their processes.

Sometimes 'users' can play co-creating roles throughout the design process, i.e. become co-designers, but not always. It depends on the level of expertise, passion, and creativity of the 'user'.

It means in co-creational models that customers are part of the whole process like any other stakeholder. They are able to give realtime feedback during the development and ensure a richer value proposition and less customer dissatisfaction. This would benefit the product, the consumer, the organization and also the bottom line. Customer loyalty is encouraged due to such processes and leads towards brand ownership when we co-create value with customers. If a customer feels integral to the creation process, then they are more likely to feel tied to the brand, product, or service. In today's world of online reputation management co-creation leads to greater word-of-mouth marketing and the development of brand ambassadors both of which are necessary. Co-creation ensures the product or service is meaningful to the customer at an emotional, cultural or mental level. It allows the company to keep a tab and can adjust accordingly, provides an organization with more ideas and knowledge upfront so teams are less likely to make major mistakes along the way. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, 6-13.)

"A key element in the practice of product design is to study people and how they use things as a starting point for the creative process. Since users of services are essential parts of the service factory (or more appropriately speaking, the 'service ecology') it is even more important to involve them deeply in the design process." (Løvlie, L 2009)

On a contemporary note Miettinen and Valtonen (2013, 98) mention, consumers co-create value through interaction with producers and other partners. This signifies value does not lie in an object or a single person; it lies in actions and interactions that the resources are supported with. Change in perception of value suggests a change in the way products and services are described. Value can be co-created by exploring new ways of interacting with various actors and generating ideas for new and more collaborative service models, designers can use their skills and methods to accelerate and facilitate interactions. Encouraging organizations to brainstorm in terms of services means

increasing their potential to understand and survey people's needs, the context of value co-creation, its methods and recognize the opportunities of innovation. (Miettinen & Valtonen 2013, 98.)

Successful co-creation involves community; this means a community should be built around a brand or product. A variety of platforms exist for building a community, for example through social media presence, where users can be encouraged to sign up or participate, portal or another tool where online co-creation tasks can be facilitated. As rightly illustrated on the Nike website, the latest trend in marketing and brand development is co-creation. The market place is overcrowded and co-creation is the latest way to get new products and services into the market. It has been embraced as a new powerful tool when comes to advertising, naming, packaging, and promoting a product.

2.6 Co-design

The process of creating with stakeholders (customers or employees) specifically within the design development process to ensure the results meet their needs and are usable is referred to as co-design. Co-design can take place **across the design development process** at any point. The real problem space can be determined early on by involving people with different perspectives early (and often) for advantageous outcomes. (Weiler et. al 2016.)

Co-design supported by creative tools can facilitate value co-creation by helping users to efficiently apply their own resources (Yu & Sangiorgi 2018, 40-58). Sanders and Stappers (2008, 6) refer to co-design as a specific process of co-creation, where its collective creativity of collaborating with designers and also people not as trained as designers working together to develop processes. The process of co-designing stays relevant throughout, starting from discovery until the delivery phase. During the project-planning phase, co-design workshops were planned with the purpose of involving stakeholders to contribute in developing the service concept.

In co-design, the roles get mixed up: the person who will eventually be served through the design process is given the position of 'expert of his/her experience' and plays a large role in knowledge development, idea generation and concept development. The person who will be eventually served (end consumer) plays a big role. Especially while developing knowledge, generating ideas and concepts in the design process and so, the roles get mixed up. During this co-design process, the researcher provides **tools for ideation and expression** to the stakeholders and experts. Design skills are very important in the development of tools, so the researchers and designers work in collaboration for ideation. In fact, the designer and the researcher could be the same or different people. (Sanders & Stappers 2008, 11-12.)

The researcher (who may be a designer) takes on the role of a facilitator in co-designing. During the process, it becomes evident that we need to learn how to offer relevant experiences and facilitate people's expressions of creativity at all levels while acknowledging it. This means encouraging people at all levels, meaning leading one who is on doing the level of creativity, guiding those who are on adapting level, and providing clean slates to those at the creating level through the service design process. (Sanders & Stappers 2008, 11.)

3 Service design process

At the core of the project framework is the Design council's design methodology, **the double diamond** – a visual description of the design process. The double diamond was launched by the design council in 2004 and went on to become the world-renowned process model.

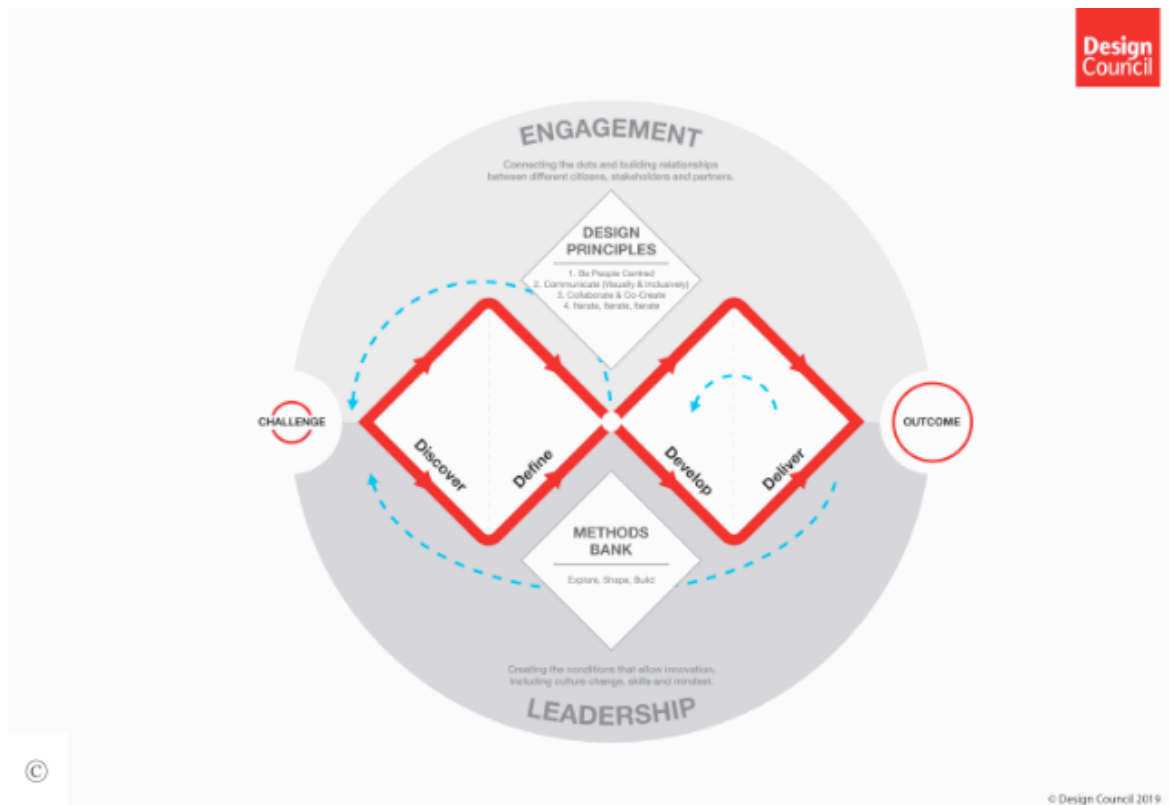


Figure 10. Double diamond process model (Design Council 2019)

The basic elements of the iterative process are exploration, creation, reflection, and implementation. Various frameworks have been developed but fundamentally every design process is approached from this mindset. Repetitive leaps between designing in detail and holistic design are made deliberately during the design process. Every minute detail cannot be considered during the process thus decisions must be made based on the project budget, resources, and commissioners' opinions. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 126-127.)

As illustrated in the double diamond by the Design Council (Figure 10), the process model is divided into **four different phases** namely Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. Through this model, we can overview the opportunities to explore. The process progresses by understanding the needs and possible solutions in the divergent phase. It then narrows down to focus on main objectives by selecting an appropriate solution or direction in the convergent phase. (Ursula & Kelly 2015, 6)

Design council mentions the core principles for problem solvers, along with illustrations. Problem solvers for effective output can adapt these principles. The principles are, **people first**, understand/ empathize with who uses the service, their needs, motivations and goals. Secondly, to **communicate** visually and inclusively. Thirdly **co-create by collaborating**, get inspired and get creative. Finally **iterate**, to continuously try spotting errors to improvise and avoid risks. To create a culture of success, organizations require working together and support people to be part of solving the problem. Along with the process and principles the organizational culture plays a vital role in success. **Leadership** is required for encouraging innovation, building skills and capabilities etc. Projects can be agile and open under a strong leadership, which show results as they progress along the way. **Engagement** of both the provide, the reciever of the idea and other stakeholders is required the design process. That is way building connections and developing relationships while creating concepts is required. (Design council 2019.)

Considering process flow and priciples of double diamond model initial research, design tools and facilitation activities were planned by me as a facilitator and agreed on with the commissioner. Author lead the project and played the role of both a researcher and the designer. The allotted project activities were split into three workshop models, which are later ellaborated. Every session was planned so that there was ample time to brainstorm and maginfy into details. This was the first time service design methdology was applied in the organization. A brief introduction to the project was given to the participants from time to time; this was with an intention to set the right goal during the facilitation. Researcher tried to choose the tools that were engaging, enjoyable, enabling and straightforward for first timers. Also, something that would be handy for the team to utilize for iteration in the future.

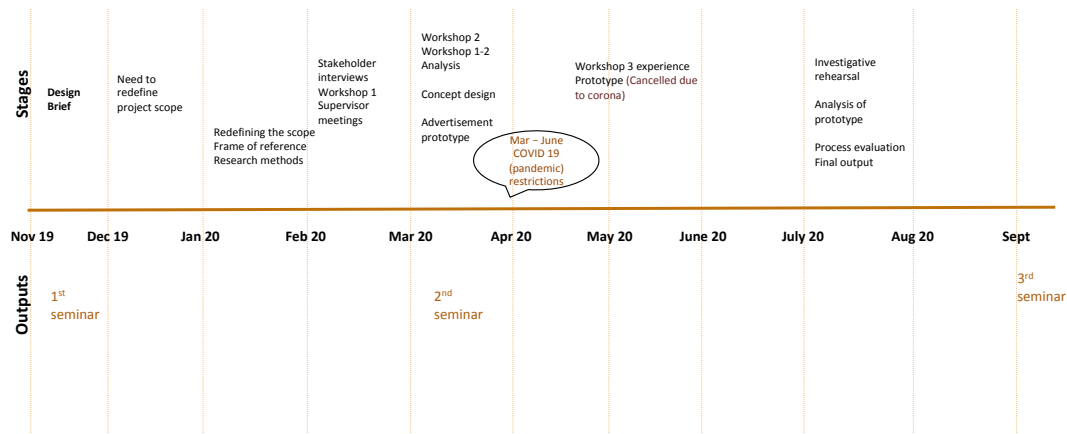


Figure 11. Process timeline

Process timeline (figure 11), after the initial brief in November 2019 a rough process timeline was drawn. The project was estimated to end within 5 months, that is by March 2020. During the month of January 2020 the scope was redefined due to budget and time constraints. The focus was diverted to only developing the existing service model. After re-aligning the scope most of the initial research and workshops were hosted during spring 2020. The final prototype testing workshop which was to be conducted during early summer was rescheduled and later cancelled due to COVID 19 (pandemic) restrictions. Precautionary social distancing measures affected the participation of stakeholders. Participants were reluctant to visit the studio and so were we as the facilitating company. Just after the development phase the process went on hold owing to pandemic restrictions but got back on track once we got grip of the situation. The project successfully ended in August 2020 with effective service and brand design concepts.

3.1 Discover current state

At the beginning of the project researcher has mainly focused on discovering; gather information and understanding the company's mission, vision, products and services. Appropriate research methods and design tools were selected that resonated with situational needs. The researcher began by identifying the problem, opportunity, or need to be addressed as well as defined some of the boundaries of the solution. The researcher was working, as a buying consultant for Aida Impact, thus a lot of time was not spent on doing preparatory research and was aware of certain brand details. Exploration was done using mostly qualitative methods and involved both engaging with end-user and analyzing wider trends. The gathered research data was shared with the commissioner and utilized during the rest of the design process as a guide and inspiration. Tools used to diverge were, stakeholder interviews, business model canvas, backcasting, 5 Whys.

The first co-design workshop was hosted (illustrated in figure 12) in the initial phase of the project with the Aida Impact founder. During the three-hour workshop, the group tried to magnify into challenges and map how the company could overcome the roadblocks using tools like 5 why and backcasting. A small activity was conducted where Siira defined an ideal Aida Impact customer in one word. Group then, had a discussion about the market scenario, stakeholders and retail partners. In the last leg of the workshop, the initial business model canvas was roughly sketched and later developed by the researcher.

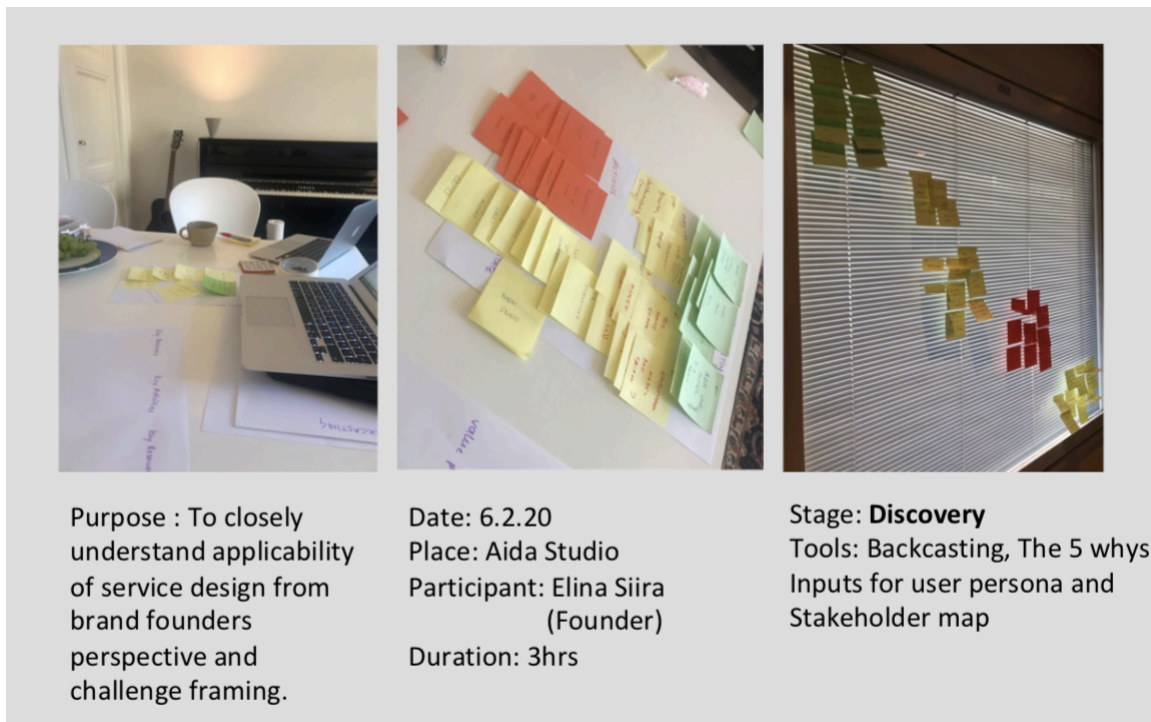


Figure 12. Co-design workshop 1

3.1.1 The five why

The chain of questions used to uncover the motivation and which are also the main cause are highlighted using the five why tools. The five why is useful in gaining a quick understanding of the tangled situation and provoke those in the question go deeper in explaining and also understanding the problem. This tool can be used in various different circumstances of exploration. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011,166.)

The founder of Toyota Industries, developed the 5 Whys technique in the 1930s and it became popular in the 1970s, Toyota still uses it to solve problems. The tool rather than solutions gives counter-measures. An action or set of actions that seek to prevent the problem or challenge from arising again is a counter-measure, while a solution may just deal with the symptom. The problem is prevented from recurring with the robust counter

measure. This tool is implemented for troubleshooting, quality improvement, framing the problem, and solving it. (Mind tool, w.y.)

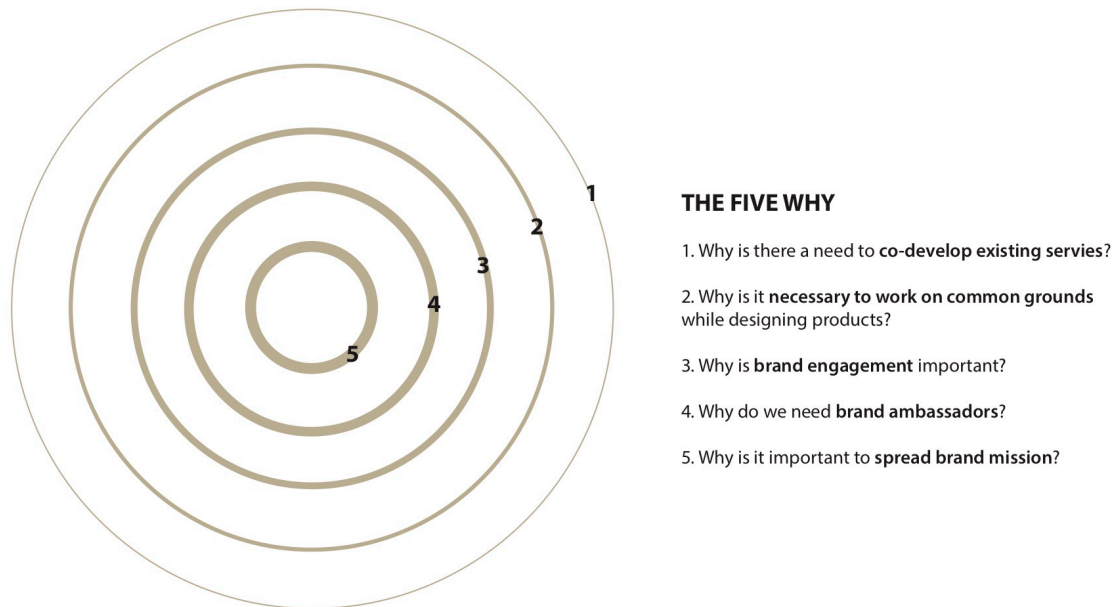


Figure 13. The Five why canvas

When an offered service is not functioning as expected this tool can be used. There was a wide array of design possibilities during the initial stage, and there were continuous changes in scope. It got difficult to understand exactly why we wanted to run a service design project. It was clear that the company needed process development but using this tool we could introspect why through co-design? Researchers intention behind asking five times why as mentioned in figure 13, was to understand the purpose behind by company was initiating project based on the service design approach. The process result pointed towards the motive and the reason why this project was initiated. This helped to set the tone right since the beginning. As the service design approach was a completely new concept to the organization, researcher could get on board the internal team with this tool.

The group could agree that this project was very important from the brand development perspective. The root purpose of the process development project was revealed, when asking "why" produced no more useful responses. Group felt an appropriate counter-measure or process change should be developed. That's when next tool of backcasting was implemented.

3.1.2 Backcasting

Backcasting is a method that starts with defining the future vision and then moving back step by step identifying and listing various factors that affect or trigger the change and finally connecting the future scenarios to the present day and moving towards the set goal one step at a time. This activity can compliment prototyping, as a useful way to quickly break open and sketch out ideas. The method supports strategic design projects, where multiple products or people are involved and also to test assumptions.

During the first workshop with Siira, backcasting was facilitated for brainstorming developmental process strategy. This was a part of the co-design activity after the participant was introduced to service design methodology and the five whys. As mentioned in figure 14, the group started by listing the ideal future state one year from the given time and came back to the current state, actions, opportunities, and challenges using different coloured post-it notes through the timeline. As a facilitator, the researcher supervised as well as monitored the time. The method was a good starting point to introduce design thinking in Aida Impact. It was observed that Siira was focused on aligning internal organizational processes, business sustainability and transparency. The company was eager to expand while strongly holding to its core mission. The group could also validate why further development of brand services was required when it came to business expansion.

The output of this process was much organizational oriented, as the end customer was not involved in the co-design task. The researcher felt a holistic solution could be developed if more stakeholders and users are involved in the process.

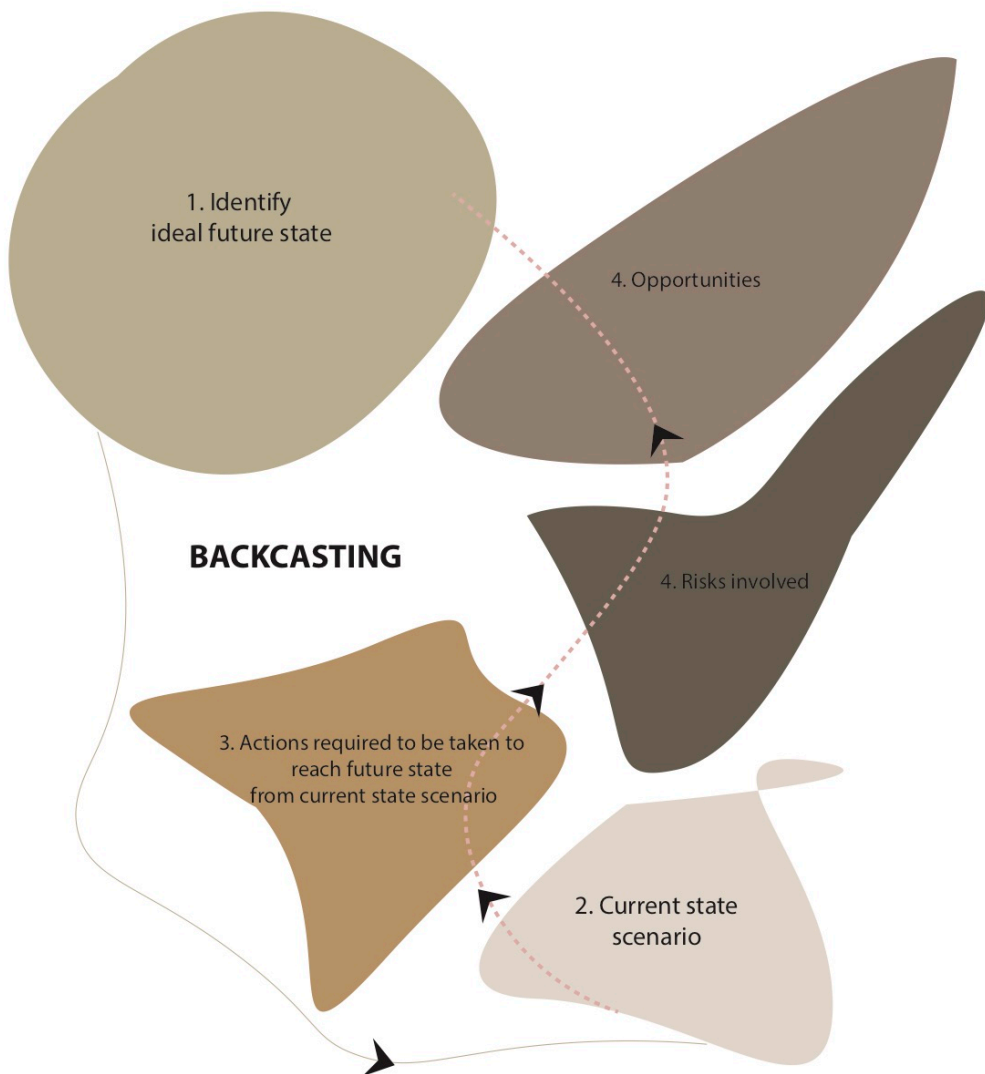


Figure 14. Aida Impact organizations backcasting canvas

3.1.3 Stakeholder map

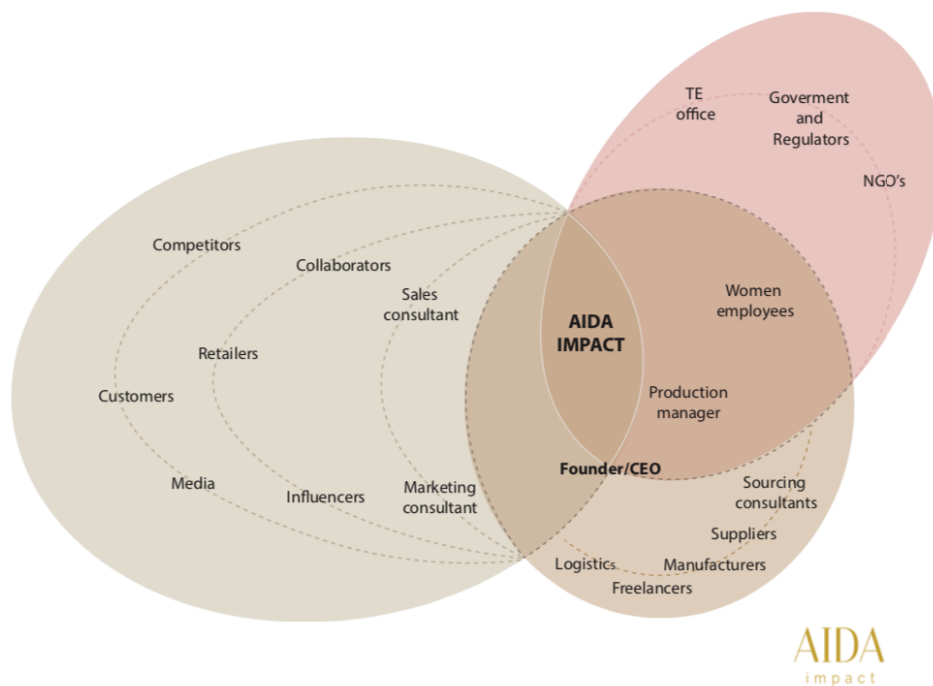


Figure 15. Aida Impact Stakeholder map

Various stakeholders involved in the organization or service experience are illustrated in the stakeholder map (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 59). Based on the research work and Siiras inputs, a list of stakeholders was made. A visual representation of organizational stakeholders was drawn, see figure 15. By doing this interplay between the various key partners were be identified. The map illustrates the intertwined structure of the Aida Impact business. The researcher divided the stakeholder map into three different clusters, which are further categorized into internal or external stakeholders depending on the roles and their contribution to the brand. The complex situation around the service and the actor's effect on service perception can be visualized (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 151). The map enabled the design team to remove or add certain stakeholders during the redesigning process (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 59). Even though it is a startup level company from the stakeholder map researcher could visualize the spread of stakeholders who might or might not be interlinked professionally, starting from

NGO's to the fashion retailers. Depending on this canvas, the researcher picked the relevant stakeholders that could potentially contribute to the co-design project.

3.1.4 Business model canvas



Figure 16. Business model canvas

The tool is used to describe, analyze, and design a business structure on the canvas as mentioned in figure 16. This large table is divided into nine sections, each representing a block on the successful business model canvas (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 212). A business model canvas was created to describe the concept and its value from the service provider and the customer's perspective. It helped to map areas of risks and opportunities for the offered product/service. The canvas is drawn from the inputs and feedback of the internal stakeholders during the research phase. The value proposition lists the unique selling proposition of an offered product or service and how it distinguishes them from the competitors. It narrates the unique selling point of the brands offering and what makes them different from their competitors. Various customer segments and target groups are listed in the customer segments that have

similar needs and traits. The ways through which customer interacts during different stages, from identification until consumption in the customer lifecycle are listed as channels. These channels could be online or offline. The description could be a bit vague but describes the relationship an organization makes and retains with the customers; it also depends on the company mission and culture when it comes to the block of the customer relationship. The processes implemented and actions executed in backstage are included in key activities. The people, types of equipment, resources required for execution are the key resources; it's not the whole list of inventory but important items irrespective of which company cannot function. Key partners are the ecosystem in which the company operates including stakeholders like suppliers, manufacturers and strategic partners. The base of the canvas represents the cost structure that is, fixed and variable costs incurred by the company. This block is connected to the upper 7 blocks of the canvas. The final block i.e revenue streams shows how the business generates income from various sources. It specifies how much each customer section pays and its effect on overall revenue and this block is also connected with upper block number seven of the canvas. The purpose to implement this tool was, to give clarity to the organization's core aim while identifying weaknesses, strength's, etc. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 76- 79.)

3.1.5 Interviews

Interviews as a method for service design builds an understanding of the interviewee's life and thoughts (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 121). The most important tool in the discovery phase was interviewing, it marked as the actual starting point of the project after the commissioner's brief. A combination of contextual and in-depth interviews was used depending on the stakeholder.

The contextual interview is a method for collecting qualitative data that helps researchers to learn about particular experiences, expectations, products, and ideas from different stakeholders. These can be used to sketch the personas, customer journey maps, service blueprints, and give overall validation of processes. Thus, contextual interviews were conducted with stakeholders, who were directly relevant to the research question. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 122.)

In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way where the interviewer has set certain targets or structures but is receptive to any ideas or thoughts that may come up during the interview unexpectedly. Interviewing can appear to be an easy option to gather information, but one must stay alert in the situation to ensure to capture what cannot be foreseen. What quite often happens in an interviewing situation is that the interviewee's actions in real life are perceived differently compared to their answers. Thus if possible it is useful to combine interviews with other supporting methods, such as observation to have a more realistic picture of how people behave. During the project, five Aida customers, one potential customer, the company founder, and two employees were interviewed. The interview approach differed for internal and external stakeholders. The researcher used the contextual interview method for internal stakeholders and one potential customer plus an in-depth interview approach for external stakeholders. Each customer interview lasted a maximum of 30-45 minutes and was hosted on Google hangouts. The founder and employees were interviewed at the Aida Impact studio and one potential customer was interviewed at a coffee shop. The customer experience interview was divided into three main phases i.e personal introduction, about Aida impact services, and about Aida Impact product experience, the questions are listed in appendix 1. During the introduction phase, the focus was to learn closely about Aida's impact customers, their likes, dislikes, motivation, and background. The information gathered was utilized while drawing a user persona. In the next phase researcher tried to know how much the customer knew about Aida Impact and its offerings, how easily can they navigate through the website and company's social media platforms, what do they perceive especially in the 'Event ' section. The interviewee tried to know customers' opinion on the website, and social media usability and desirability. The inputs were marked as a guideline during the design process. Online and offline brand experience inputs were used to create a customer journey map and drawing the initial service blueprint. In the final phase of the interview, the discussion revolved around the purchased Aida impact products and jewelry customization experiences if any. Various touchpoints and pain points were identified during the discussion. The

customer experience feedback was presented to the internal team during the second workshop. Some important customer quotes are mentioned in figure 17.

I cant see any constructive details about
Service on social media or Aida Impact website

Do I have to pay extra? I was not aware of services,
what do event mean?
How does this function?

Will be nice to try making own design

Can you share event photos? I would like to know more about the
makers than discussing and debate.

I like the idea of co-creation

Can I come in small group or alone? I would like to gift myself customized
earrings on my 30th birthday
Would that be feasible?

Events, what? I wish I knew about it

The products are so well made,
I like the quality. I love the brand mission

Figure 17. Customer Quotes

During the initial interview with the founder Siira (2019), the researcher tried to understand mainly the company vision, mission, the current design challenges, why these challenges existed and her plans to tackle them. In the later session, they only spoke about the four interactive customization services company offered and how they operated from lead generation until final consumption. Group also discussed the incurred organizational pain points while facilitating those services. Siira also mentioned her concerns that came along with the customization service model. For example, the interactive DIY workshop would require continuous design assistance as customers (who are not professional craftsmans) would be making it themselves. The final finishing of such products would vary, leading to unfinished appearance to the end product in most cases. Concern was these products could potentially raise product durability concerns, directly impacting the brand image in long term. The interactive events needed much more planning and investment, of time and resources. Currently, the processes were

designed and delivered on a demand base. All the previous customization workshops and events were promoted via word of mouth and there were no leads generated via the website or social media. The company did not have a specific target customer. The jewelry customization workshop and events listed on the website were going unnoticed. As per Siira, these event services were a potential channel to be developed.

3.1.6 Process overview

The research data serves as the foundation for developing a new service model prototype. Based on research output usability improvisations of web store shall be suggested to develop better orientation and wireframe. Simultaneously, the data would act as a starting point to visualize personas, stakeholder maps, customer journey maps and initial service blueprint. These tools would guide the design team to identify ideation process challenges and opportunities. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 114.)

3.2 Defining the research output

Relevant possibilities identified during the discovery phase were primarily synthesized. During the defining phase, the focus was drawn back towards the ultimate end goal of the design process. A clear creative frame was created that elaborated fundamental design challenges. Problem statements are constructed after analyzing the research data and ideas brainstormed initially. They are then aligned with brand objectives and processed for implementation. The define phase of the double diamond model gave a clear scenario of problems to be solved during the process. Specific tools that were used to illustrate this convergent phase are user persona, customer journey map, service blueprint.

The Co-design workshop, as illustrated in figure 18 helped stakeholders to share their personal service experience as well as visualize desirable service scenarios. This approach facilitated participant's engagement in the design process with an intention to improve creativity problem-solving skills.

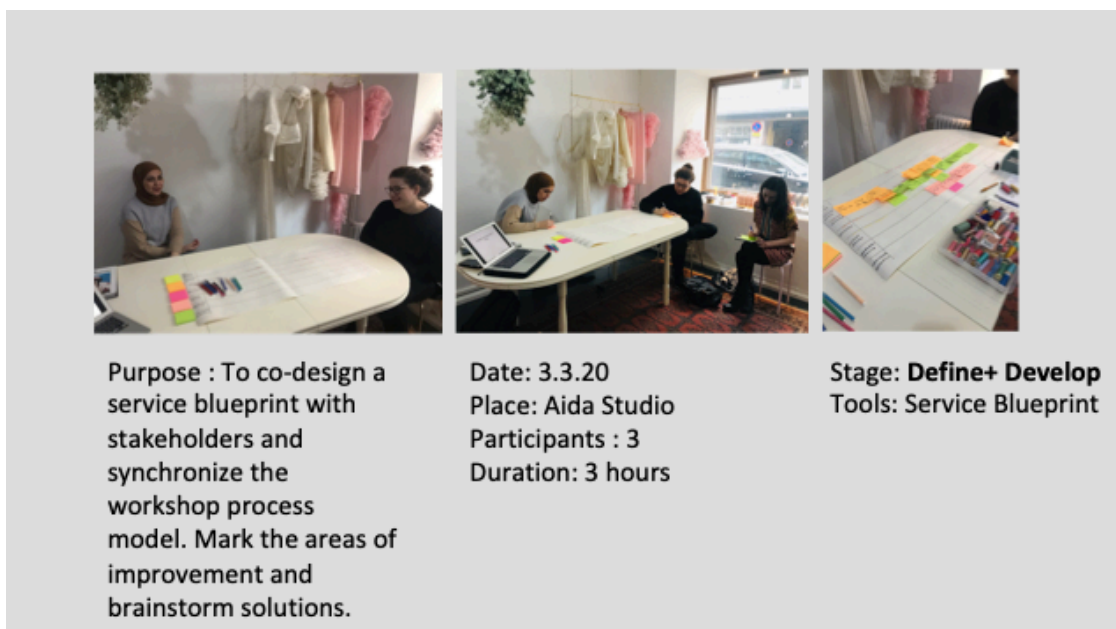


Figure 18. Workshop 2

3.2.1 User persona

Personas magnify into particular behavior, the motivation of customers and it helps to empathize with the focus group and create solutions around the challenges (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 128). Every business has a similar aim and thus competitive advantage is decisively based upon understanding the buyers better than other competitors. This helps a business to offer the products the customer wants, and lead the market (Gabbott & Hogg 1998, 7).

Personas were created based on the data triangulation method i.e. customer interviews, the output from internal stakeholders first workshop and brand research. As per Gabbott & Hogg (1998, 7), sectors concerned with the creation, communication and delivering value, modern marketing has in advance identified the importance of how and why the consumers purchase. By recognizing the process of how value is achieved, a product or service can be offered that potentially attracts the customers.

Through the research, five potential customer personas were designed namely, Bride to be/host (fig.21), fashion enthusiast (fig.22), Conscious (fig.19), Activist (fig.23), Artist (fig.20), using the data triangulation method. The key attributes were that the average buyers were women scaling from mid-twenties to sixties and mostly Finnish nationals who were socially, environmentally conscious and with an eye for design. Prime identifiers used while creating the persona for Aida impact were occupation, motivation, buying habits, frustrations, social media, services when it comes to leisure and shopping.

Conscious



Photo by Gabb Tapic from Pexels

Bio

Hardworking professional, juggles between various jobs and voluntary activities. Completely aware of recent market trends and is keen on healthy living and responsible buying. Purchasing only sustainable products is not her priority but quality matters most to her. Trusting the source of her products to be ethical and responsible is important, has not customized her accessories yet but would be keen on making a pair for her on birthday and also interested to indulge in creative workshops with work colleagues.

Goals

Support local businesses
To be strictly within budgets
To purchase quality products from trusted sources
To become a better shopper and, reduce my negative impact to a minimum

Motivation

Community support and involvement
Slow fashion and healthy living

Influences

Social media
Local events
Environmental and ethical responsibilities of seller

Frustration

Long and lengthy shopping processes
Lack of transparency, bad quality and no repair facilities
Most conscious and sustainable brands were not very affordable, or not easily accessible

Figure 19. Conscious - Customer persona

Artist



Photo by Thu Ngo from Pexels

Bio

A design professional making her living by selling fashion goods and practices film making as passion, keen on expressing through creativity. She is particular about minute details and works hands on in every thing she takes up. The design of a product is as important as the quality of materials used to make them. Her style is more timeless designs that make sense and accessories that could be worn on multiple occasions. She purchases fashion products from various sources mostly online but prefers to customize designs if possible. Some designs could be customized for her design collections or media projects. She is creative and influential!

Goals

Wants to collaborate with local creatives to expand
Develop own design brand
Make inspiring documentaries

Motivation

Helping local artists
Purchasing unique fashion products
Expanding the business and getting recognition

Influences

Social media
Fashion bloggers and runway trends

Frustration

Lack of aesthetic appeal in fashion products
Bad quality
Not being able to find the products/ materials she wants
Lack of options

Figure 20. Artist- customer persona

Bride to be/ Host



Photo by Снежана from Pexels

Bio

A professional working in a corporate field desires wedding of her dreams. She likes sustainable lifestyle products as a shopper and mindful retreats to unwind. Plans things ahead of time and makes it unique and special. Tries to accommodate a lot of activities in a busy day. She is a micro manager and go-getter!

Goals

Flawless execution and process
 Unique and design with a story
 Needs assistance to narrow down ideas
 Value for money
 Possibility of selecting materials and design alterations
 Design that compliments occasion

Motivation

Jewelry with purpose
 Handmade and personalised
 Good quality
 Unique

Influences

Friends and colleagues
 Magazine
 Design publication
 Social media blogger
 Bridalwear boutique

Frustration

Lack of options
 Forgetting big picture while designing details
 Lack of time

Figure 21. Host/bride-to-be - customer persona

Fashion Enthusiast



Photo by Asa Dugger from Pexels

Bio

She is a traveller and a blogger, who loves to interact with people. Works in a tourism company. She likes fashion and stays on top of trends. Quickly adapts to the changes and enjoys outdoor activities. Has an eye for the details, and likes to explore different regional designs. She is bold and fun loving

Goals

Get on top of the trends, dress and appear fashionable
 To get more tech savvy
 Hassel free shopping
 Needs information and goes by brand appeal
 Experience minimal distraction
 Swift online purchases
 Hopes not to sacrifice style over options

Motivation

Design
 Brand image
 Quality
 Pre-sale options

Influences

Fashion blogs
 Social media
 Magazines
 Pop-up events
 WOM

Frustration

Unappealing website and
 overload with irrelevant information
 Not finding right product
 Bad quality and lack of care instructions

Figure 22. Fashion enthusiast - customer persona

Activist



Photo by Daria Shevtsova from Pexels

Bio

Strongly places her values and beliefs wherever she has a chance, works in an organisation that supports unemployed people. She is progressive, well informed and spends her time and money wisely. Is into creative writing and enjoys writing blogs. Loves exploring art and culture in leisure time. Takes prides in supporting the ethical brands and companies. Fair wages and human rights are at the core while making any decision. She is strong and sensitive!

Goals

Contribute positively to the society
 Have a voice and make a difference
 Purchase with purpose and stick to the budget
 Fair wages and ethical products
 Bold and multi-functional designs/materials

Motivation

Social impact through design
 Empowerment
 Encourage fairness

Influences

Blogs
 Websites
 Twitter, Facebook
 Google search

Frustration

Inequality and injustice
 Lack of social responsibility
 Lack of transparency and information

Figure 23. Activist- customer persona

3.2.2 Customer journey map

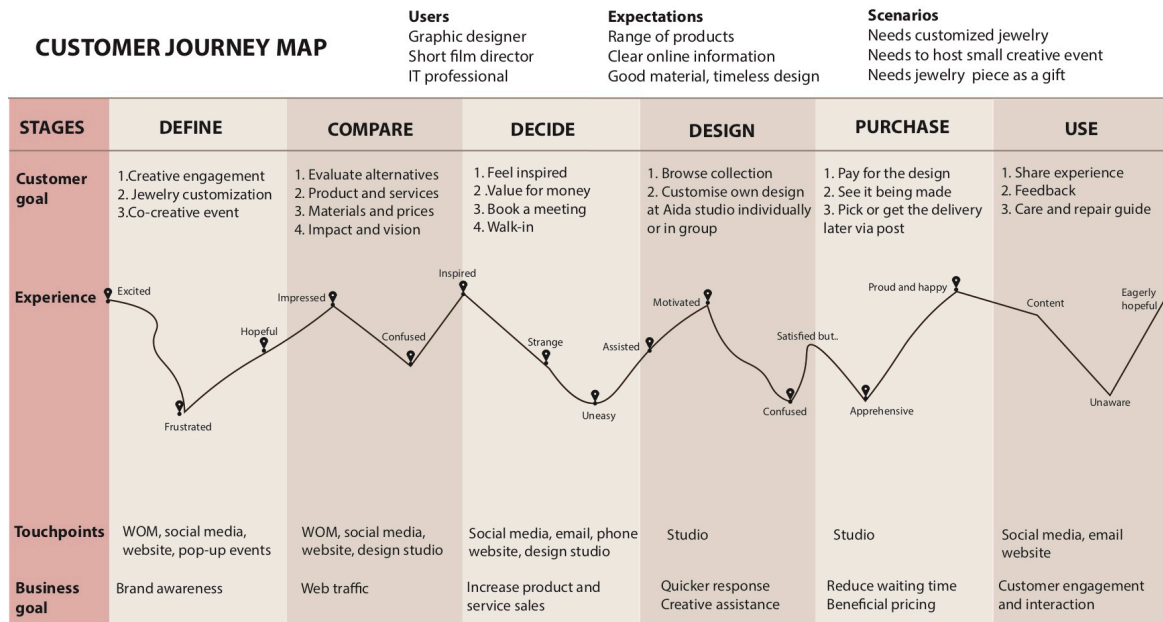


Figure 24. Customer journey map

This human-centered tool includes all the key steps of the experience the customer had during brand interaction (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 44). The touchpoints where the customer has interaction with service are mainly marked in the journey map and its crucial to identify these points. These identified touchpoints are further defined using customer insights, as shown in figure 24. A visual representation of overall experience helps to facilitate empathic engagement which most journeys are made of (Stickdorn, Schneider.2011, 158-159). The customer's pain points can be identified in this map and potential solutions, opportunities of improvement can be explored. Journey maps can be used to visualize even potential future experiences as well as customer challenges (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 44). While choosing the customer journey map as a tool it was critical to think about what we wanted to achieve from it. In our case the tool was used during the defining stage, to help visualize and clarify customers' experience in the current state service scenario.

If we think about a routine service event, a company, which manages a complete journey, would not only like to do its best with single purchase errors but also try to understand the broader reasons and address the root cause for the drawbacks. They would also create a loop to continuously improve the interactions upstream and downstream in the specific scenario. (Rawson et.al. 2013)

The sketched comprehensive customer journey map consisted of journey stages, customer goals, experiences, and also organizations' goals and experiences. It helped to further manage customer experiences that elaborated on the pain points, motivations, and how customers felt through the process. Attention was paid to encompass all the elements that have business impact. The idea was to include the organizational side as well while mapping and framing of interactions on the canvas. This would be further magnified and split elaborately in the service blueprint. Internal, as well as external stakeholders' inputs from initial research, were used to create the customer journey map. Based on the customer interviews the frame of the customer journey map was designed. The identified touchpoints were a good starting point to learn how the brand and customers have interacted through the given stages. The interactions were mostly through website, social media platforms, design studio, email, pop-up events. The customers narrated their experiences on the variously identified touchpoint, along with the occurring actions and experiences.

The customer journey map helped to identify the gaps within the service, also gave an overview of the service sales funnel, and highlighted the areas of opportunity where service could be potentially re-designed. The observation was, it was not most of the touchpoints that needed to be improved. It was the onboarding process as a whole that had to be redesigned. Most service encounters were positive in a narrow sense; employees professionally resolved the issues and orders at hand. The brand demanded a method of managing its service operations to retain the customer on the purchase journey loop when it came to product customization services.

Drawing observation on existing research was sufficient to identify the most significant journeys and the pain points within and the specific service shortcomings that damage customers' experience. After the identification of the key customer journey, the details

were compared with the current service performance. The mapped journey also highlighted situations where the customer decided to discontinue the purchase or was just unaware of the whole process.

Thus the tool can be embedded into operating models in four ways like identifying the journey they must excel in, understand how the organization is currently performing, build cross-functional processes to re-design and support journeys, inculcate cultural change and continuous improvement to sustain the initiatives at scale (Rawson et.al. 2013).

3.2.3 Initial service blueprint

A detailed illustration of user journey and representation of different touchpoints, channels of communication, user actions, front stage, and backstage processes are made in the service blueprint (fig. 25). The blueprint acts as a guide to everyone involved in the process of delivery to understand their roles so the consumer has a coherent experience. During the process of service design and innovation, a blueprint is a tool used to overview and visualize the complete experience. It helps to identify the areas that need to be rectified and prototyped. While actual testing, the prototype blueprint communicates the service as a whole to the organization who is delivering it and also users testing it (Ursusla & Kelly 2015, 19.) It helps in gaining a bird's-eye view of how the different elements of the service align to create value (Line 2017).

A blueprint prototyping workshop was conducted at Aida Impact Studio during the defining phase of the project with stakeholders. The goal of the blueprint workshop was to discuss how the service could be delivered in an optimal way and if the stakeholders involved were aware of their roles and contributions to the processes.

Group used the tool of **service role** play for drawing the blueprint where each stakeholder played a particular character like customer, frontstage employee and backstage employee. The participants were given a situation where the customer desired to plan a bachelorette evening with four friends who wanted to create exclusive jewelry (customization workshop) for the wedding party. The facilitator gave them 15 min to

write their course of action from beginning to the end on the post-it notes. Then they were asked to stick those notes in their respective line of actions. Once the notes were up on the canvas group tried to enact the scene. While the participants enacted facilitator connected the dots of workshop process flow starting from lead generation to service consumption. After the elaboration group discussed the challenges incurred and highlighted the areas of improvements.

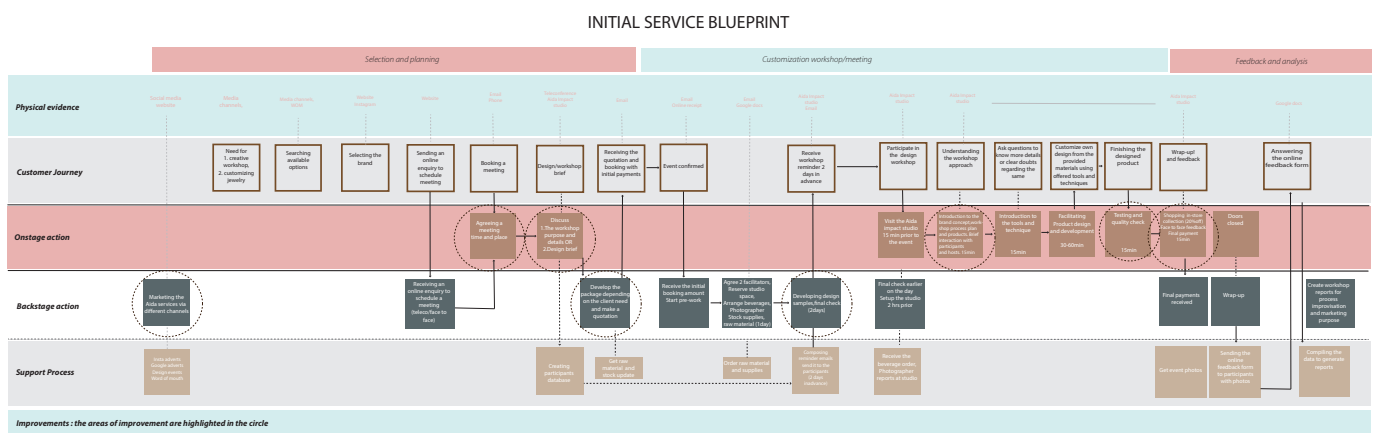


Figure 25. Initial service blueprint

From a customer, perspective the group tried to analyze how the customer navigated through the service from start to end. Like, the interactions that took place at various touchpoints and, how well the service was perceived through communication channels. From an internal stakeholder perspective, the group discussed varied areas of improvement like marketing of the service, time, resource and project management. During the customization workshop, the customers (who are not trained designers or craftsmen) were making the products themselves and so quality assurance remained the main concern. Group felt the urge to highlight the brand promise of the durability of products. Planning tailor-made services around every customer inquiry from scratch, training the customization workshop participants, designing consultation and quality check were major concern areas. These services were offered with a vision to spread the

brand mission while enhancing the overall brand experience. The participants strongly felt the service processes had to be realigned and communicated through proper channels. The group was also able to nail down a few good improvisation concepts, brainstorm and even challenge those suggestions during the second co-design workshop. This workshop got the process very close to the final concept creation as the researcher was able to get inputs from multiple sources.

3.2.4 Process overview

During the discovery phase researcher was able to mainly visualise research data, illustrate the user personas and customer experiences. The team could give structure to the complex information, identify the patterns and existing gaps in the data. Visualization helped to gain empathy towards the people who were subjected to the research and deepen the understanding of the topic. (Stickdorn, M et al. 2018, 111). Group agreed to the complexity of the situation that required solution.

3.3 Development

During this stage, a concept was sketched and a solution was designed. The most important activity during this development phase was brainstorming and idea generation. Specific tools used to diverge included, concept illustration using moodboard and prototype testing. A co-creative workshop for an investigative rehearsal of prototyped service and experiences was planned with the initially interviewed customers, at the Aida Impact studio. Through the iterative rehearsal, session researcher wanted to view participants in the in-store service scenario and evaluate the process flow. Observation of practicalities during implementation like space utilization, service management, marketing and communication directly from the customers during this workshop had to be made. Outputs from the workshop would have been valuable while iteration of the developed service concept.

3.3.1 Concept illustration

Product customization has become widely feasible in recent years due to fast-paced technology and digitalization. A lot of brands worldwide are giving the option to alter the design specifications. Keeping that in mind while synthesizing the research and its outputs, the researcher developed a moodboard, see figure 26. A collage that helps to visualize and communicate intended design direction is called as a moodboard ((Stickdorn, et. al 2018, 239). The images to built the collage were gathered from the Aida Impacts archive, webshop and social media. The selected images were the ones most relevant and influential during concept design. Based on the earlier research, the focus was on how well the design will flow in context; either online or in-store. That means, to pay attention to the process as 'a whole' while keeping the approach simple and consistent. Key points were highlighted on the moodboard, for inspiration and guidance with the purpose of creating a clear understanding of users and organizational goals. A concept model was created where users felt immersed and in control of product/service while the company acted as a facilitator of customized jewelry. The project commissioner also gave creative inputs and we had to re-consider the practicalities and budget while brainstorming.



Figure 26. Moodboard

After the amalgamation of the earlier processes and in close collaboration with the group, the researcher came up with the concept of Pearl Bar at Aida Impact, illustrated in figure 27. This concept compressed the earlier offered services into one. Irrespective of the purpose or number of people, the service offered and the process was standardized and compressed as one. The researcher suggested to re-align the marketing and communication of the service online by making it more visual and interactive so the customer feels on-board with the customization process. The in-store pearl bar process plan is illustrated (figure 27) along with the website template listed in appendix 2. The suggestion of theme, information alignment, visualization and interactive process flow was made.

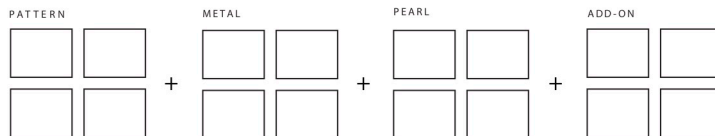
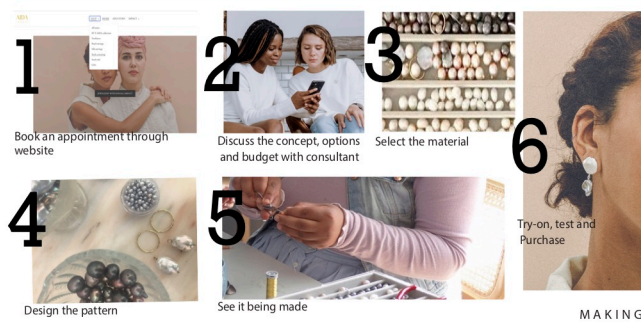
EXPERIENCE THE PROCESS OF MAKING
 CUSTOMIZE JEWELRY
 AND CHERISH THE PRECIOUS PIECE

PEARL BAR

Pull up a stool. Lets discuss patterns, concepts, materials and create a perfect piece of jewelry from ethically sourced fresh water pearls. It could be just for fun or to celebrate a big or small event of life, a precious accessory goes a long way.
 Lets design for uniquely you, at our Aida Impact Pearl Bar!

Every client need is different and thus every experience is unique but one thing is for sure, you will leave with a creation of your choice.
 Come solo, bring your friends or family we have ample for all!

HOW IT WORKS



WHAT WE OFFER!

BOOK A TIME

Treat yourself or bring a friend and take away a beautiful piece of jewelry

BOOK NOW

GIFT CARD

Do not worry about sizes, patterns or colours. Gift cards give freedom of choices. Surely they would love it, gift them what they really want!

BUY NOW

HOST A PARTY

Birthday part, bachelorette, corporate event or team building we have it sorted for you

BOOK NOW

COLLECTION

At AIDA Impacts Pearl Bar health and safety of our employees and guest is important to us. With an effort to contain Covid-19 situation we are available only by prior appointments for group size of not more than 4 people.

Figure 27. Concept Illustration

3.3.2 Prototype

Prototyping starts with the context of how the developed service concepts will be experienced digitally and physically (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 212). The service **advertisement prototype** was tested at an event hosted by Supercell where Aida Impact had a pop-up store (March 2020). Siira showed the advertisement to people who did not know about the project to collect feedback. As per Siira, people who visited the pop-up were curious about the concept. They wanted to know more information about this service. Some suggested it would be a great idea to explore creativity and unwind.

Following this verbal feedback on the concept, the researcher had then scheduled a co-creation workshop to test the prototype closely with end-users. This was scheduled in the first week of April 2020; it had to be canceled until further notice due to the global crisis and restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The in-store experience prototyping was planned to, create and compare feasible options and, get on the spot inputs from stakeholders. This method uses prototypes that allow people to act in the way they would act or use a thing they would use in future service, in that way experience it themselves (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 227).

Due to the lack of clarity and increasing uncertainty caused by the COVID-19, the project went on stand-by during that phase. Events and group gathering with a maximum of ten individuals were permitted then. Even though it would have been possible to host a small group workshop meeting, socializing with strangers was not recommended. Even people were reluctant to host and participate in such events. Thus, the group decided to test the prototype internally once the restrictions imposed had eased off. Group met at the Aida studio in July 2020.

After a brief discussion around the concept, the researcher ran an **investigative rehearsal** with Siira, group enacted the in-store service scenario from the moment the customer arrives until he/she leaves. At every stage, comments were made to get a deeper understanding of motivational and physical levels. Group reviewed the effect of each change and explored the alternatives. Even though the prototype testing didn't

require any extensive planning it provided good pointers for future iterations. The researcher illustrated the final service blueprint (figure 26) for the Aida Impact pearl bar based on the investigative rehearsal. Improvement suggestions were marked in the final blueprint for future iterations.

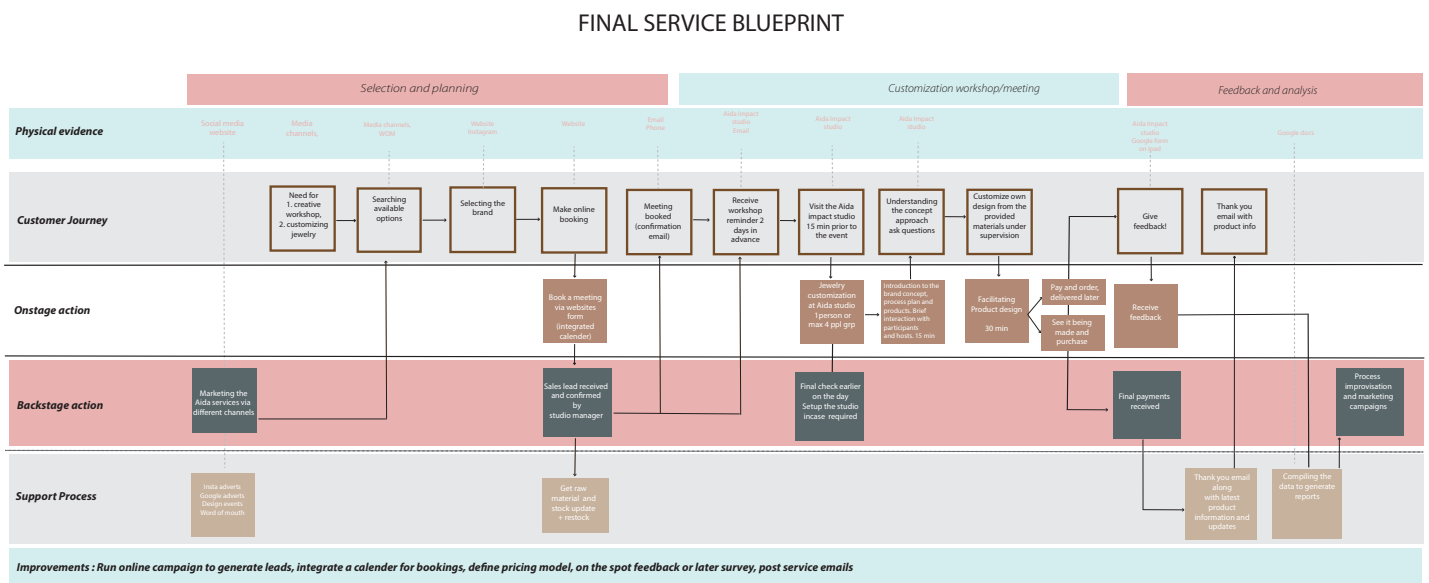


Figure 28. Final blueprint

3.3.3 Process overview

It is necessary to deeply investigate in this stage and ensure if the right things are done and aimed output is achieved. Designers are fast at making assumptions which are visible or tangible. Tools like prototyping help make stakeholders tacit knowledge explicit (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 251). It was observed that a new way of working directs towards a strong commitment to finding solutions, these solutions can be conflicting to the traditional organizational methods. The increased usability and customer interactions after the adaptation of new processes can be seen as benefits in later phases. For the company, it is also very important to create the right environment like space to work, access to prototyping facilities where design teams could work. A combination of internal as well as an external team member is important and beneficial but the right

balance needs to be found (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 251). The researcher was not able to test the prototype with end customers, the validation from advertisement prototype and investigative rehearsal proved beneficial.

3.4 Deliver

The final stage of the design process is the delivery phase. During this phase, the resulting service was finalized based on reviews received. It was important to highlight that implementation of developed service concepts demanded change and a few basic principles of **change management** would have to be considered at this point. Implementing change depends on the fact that the management is convinced of the service concept and does not move away from escalated problems during implementation. The previously developed business model canvas was re-visited to evaluate the changes the new service concept brought to the business. Alterations were made in the category of key activities, customer relationship, customers, revenue streams and the **final business model canvas** was delivered for reference. (figure. 29)

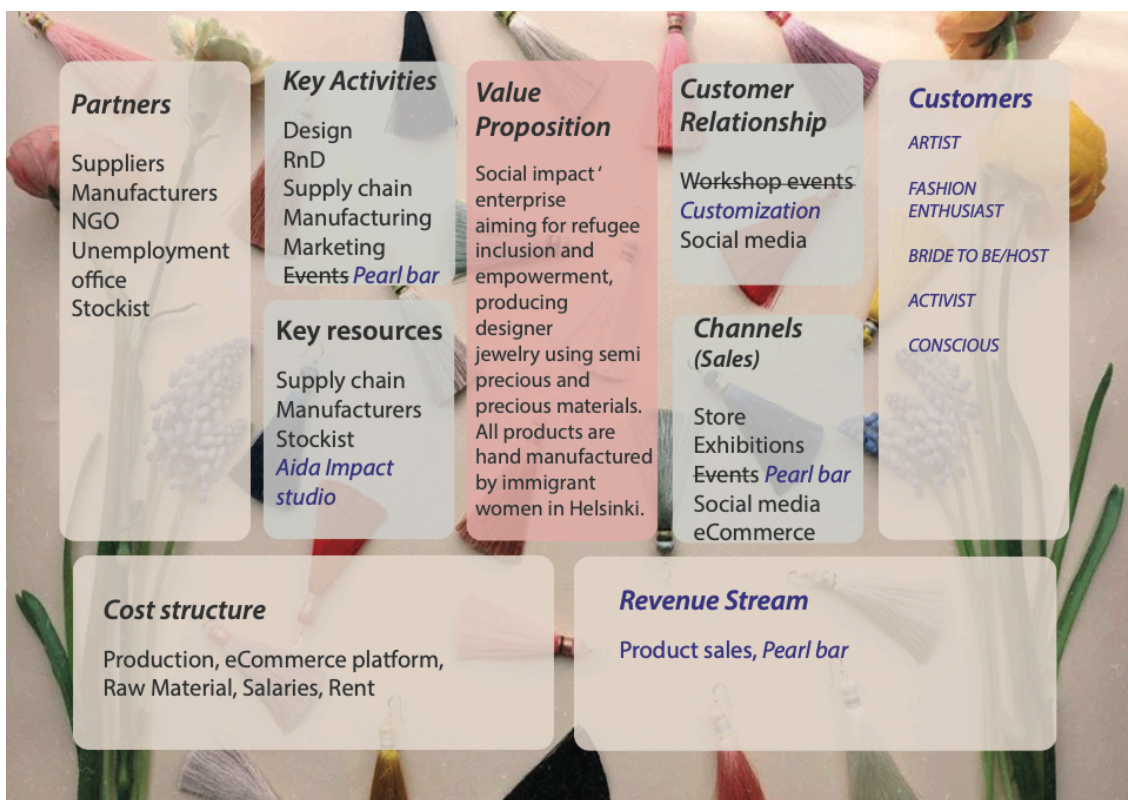


Figure 29. Final business model canvas

3.4.1 Pilot testing

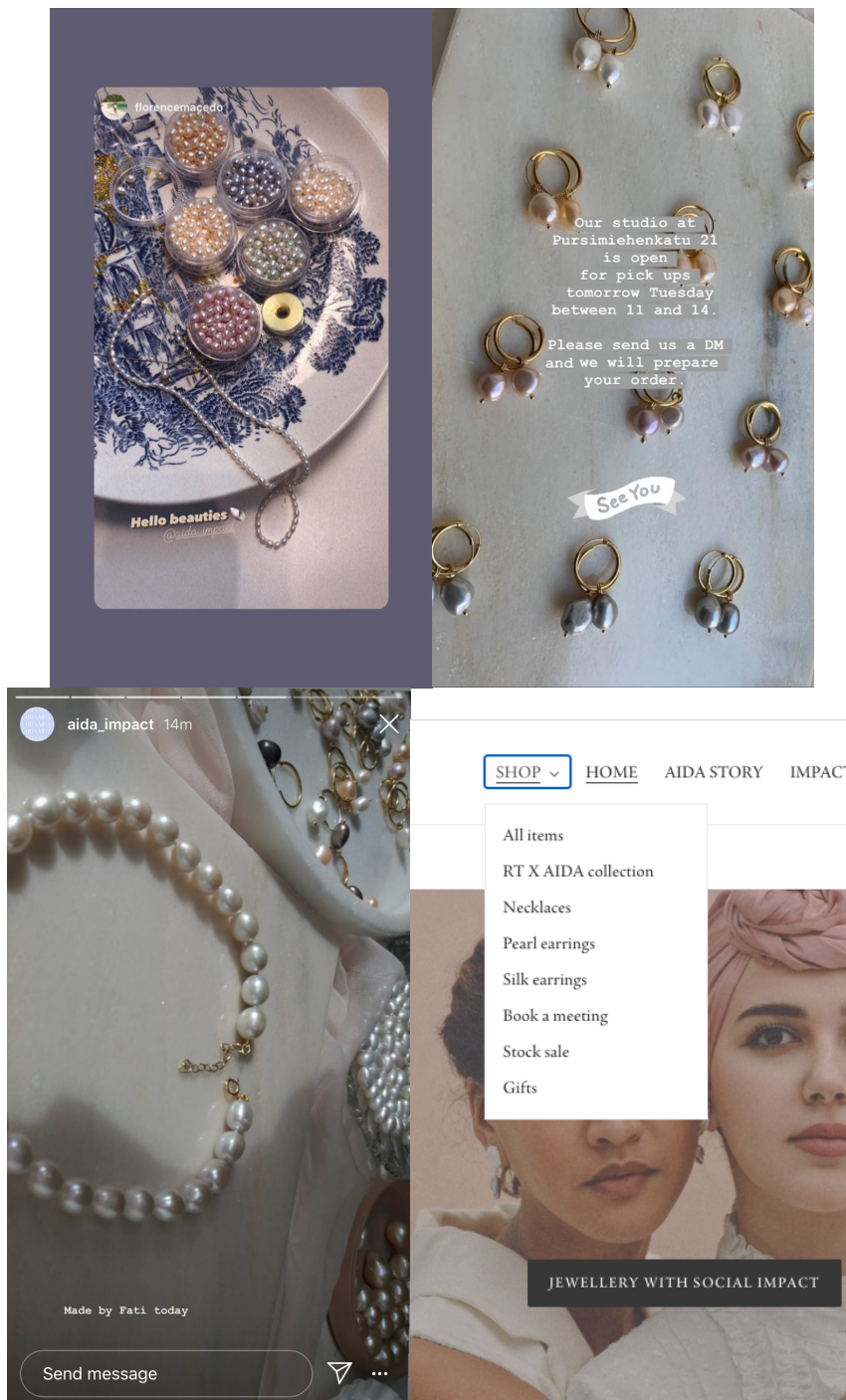


Figure 30. Service promotion (Photo: Aida Impact webshop and social media)

An inherent part of finalizing the design is testing. Conducting the pilot tests at the early stages helps to avoid challenging scenarios and tests an organization's readiness to manage the change.

At this stage, the first version of the Pearl Bar service was pre-launched on the company's social media page. Service dialogue on its marketing front was re-structured and re-defined on the host website Shopify as per the user feedback. Even though the prototype workshop was canceled developed service concept was integrated, it has been up and functional at the Aida Impact studio. The commissioner Siira decided to run the pilot in-store from July to September 2020 and gather feedback from the customers from time to time. Customization is doable in-store exactly as illustrated in the concept design.

The social media marketing content can be viewed in the figure 30 where, the service was advertised. Even during the pilot service could be availed via sending an inquiry, social media platforms, or walk-in. It is fair to say that if the customers are informed of the service with book an appointment and walk-in, the service should be working satisfyingly for now. A few in-store customization assignments came in through word of mouth. It was thoroughly managed by Siira and hosted at Aida Impact studio. There have been growing customer inquiries this season even though there wasn't any official launch but just social media promotions to test with. A new launch would, however, be very welcome but it is up to Siira to decide whether this service will fly in the future and would it be further developed, by integrating new and easily accessible technology.

The whole point of making a test like this was to find out what to change in the service and how to make it better and more usable for customers. There are no results as of now on how it would be used by the customers trying to connect through the website. Researcher felt there is a wide array of development when it comes to web platforms. The customization model is not set up online as yet, the company would need its own website to integrate and scale-up such service, from where author saw it. As soon as the number of assignments grow, creating the digital platform to work will be essential to arrange. On the other hand now customers can know about the offered services by scrolling through the hosting Shopify website and can book an appointment there.

Researcher was able to get feedback from a customer based on the developed service model. They felt the website looked a bit more in sync than previous but could still be more interactive and visually appealing when it came to communicating services. Social

media platform was the place where the customer got most of the brand updates and felt it was a convenient channel. The in-store customization experience was as described in the concept, very straightforward without much fuss.

The customer enjoyed the one on one session and was able to gather the necessary information related to the materials, design, and making. The customer made the pair of earrings for personal use but was interested in trying out Pearl Bar with a group of friends on a special occasion. She also felt the product customization would be expensive but was surprised that the service cost the same as the ready products. The customer mentioned repeatedly that it would have been also nice to interact with the artisan women but didn't have any other suggestions when it came to in-store service. *"I was happy to see the jewelry being made in front of my eyes by the artisan lady, Elina Siira helped me to make the right combinations"* - Quoted by customer.

3.4.2 Analysis and suggestions

A clear message of the service was that it needs to stand out on the website and its social media platform. The set objective was achieved, as the new service concept and its communication plan were sketched and tested in-store with customers. The service is up and running at the Aida Impact store and customers can make an appointment or walk-in to the store to get their designs customized.

The factors affecting the experience in the current market scenario were captured and suggestions were made to the commissioner accordingly. Also, how customers experience the initial service, was recognized through co-design and observation. However, the service was launched ahead of prototype workshop and feedback, leaving some ample room for further development.

The question, how well the customer's requirements can be met from the company's point of view and how the company's internal process is supporting that, was answered through interview and final service blueprint.

The internal in-store process of the service is smooth and as soon as the number of assignments grows, arrangements should be made to pump up internally capacity and even externally sourcing. The improvements indicated by the test users could be finalized and the marketing project could be started to get fresh client leads. How profitable this extra business will be, remains to be seen.

"The future is co-Collaboration, co-creation, coordination, combined skills to generate hybrid projects: beyond 'open innovation', the future is about multiplying the capacity of businesses so that new products and services can emerge and stimulate a new economic force of energy." (Cornella , A 2013)

Brands have lost millions of euros due to the COVID 19 and had to direct their strategy toward online platforms to keep the business afloat. The main challenge is how this affects consumer behavior and impacts the business. Digitization plays an important role here while understanding the new sales opportunities it brings. Being a start-up is a great advantage; we can compete on price as start-up are more flexible than larger companies. The transformation should start from a vision, aligned with the strategy by defining future capabilities, operating model, and organization (capabilities, workforce, platform, ecosystems for logistics, manufacturing, etc).

4 Evaluation of the process

The thesis project kicked off intending to develop service at Aida Impact that directly affected overall brand experience and interaction. The group started with an idea to develop customer's online user experience as well as in-store experience of the product (jewelry) and its services (customization). Due to the limited time frame, budget constraints, and supervisor feedback, the researcher had to narrow down and redefine the project scope during the first phase of the project. Thus, the project pace reduced in the beginning. Once the scope was re-define, the process got back on track. The group re-aligned and we decided to focus only on a specific category, which is in-store jewelry making service events offered at Aida Impact.

For the framework author has concentrated researching on brand ideology, mission and vision, empathizing with current service challenges, understanding the importance of product customization, consumer and services relationship, customer experience elements like usability, and desirability. Customization services are co-creative and they are integrated with the purpose of value co-creation, this directly impacts customer's brand engagement and desirability. Thus, the concept of value co-creation was studied. The double diamond process model was followed through the co-development project. Even though the model was pretty straightforward, towards the end I felt the process looked more like a design squiggle, one that accurately conveys the messiness and uncertainty in the creative process as illustrated in the following, figure 31.

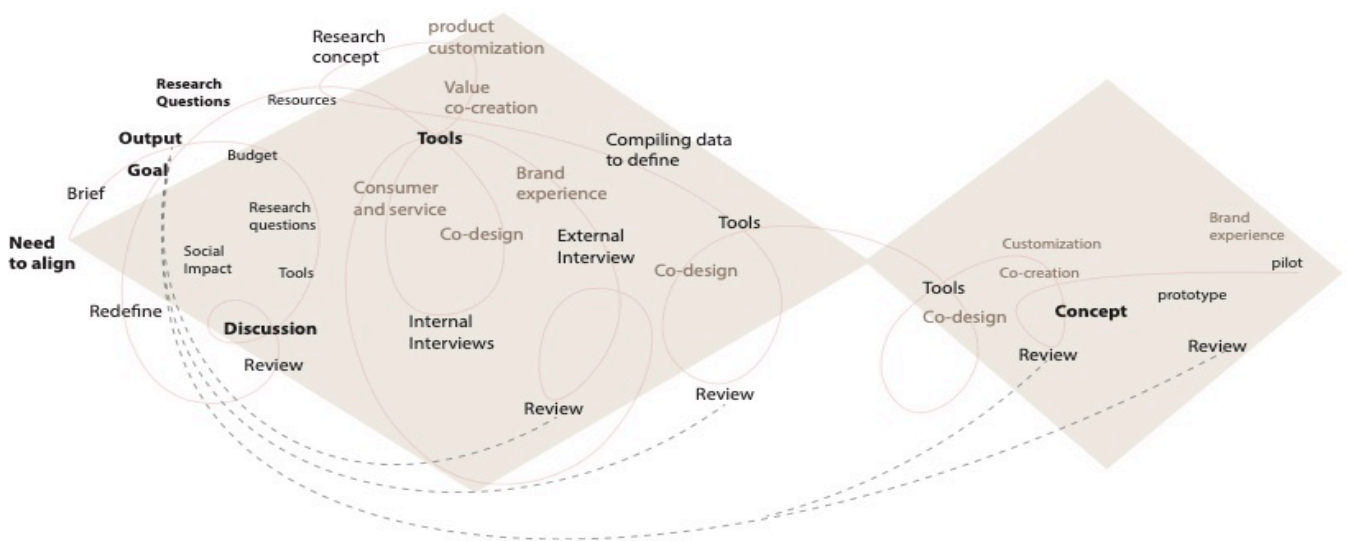


Figure 31. Process evaluation canvas

Through the process author has implemented versatile methods like preparatory research, interviewing, and co-design to understand the current state of the offered services. Employee and customer perspectives remained at the focus. The inputs from interviews were large, and interviewees were chosen mainly from existing stakeholder

groups. The commissioner and employee were actively involved in the definition of the thesis topic, research, and development process. The group was also able to align the strategies and magnify into the core value propositions during the co-design workshops. The tools like the five why and backcasting mentioned in chapter 3.2 were highly appreciated by the team.

The service concept was developed after identifying the customer personas, which the researcher felt, was very important when it comes to designing a product or a service. Based on customer interviews researcher was able to sketch the customer journey map and later produce a blueprint during a co-design workshop. The group had marked areas of improvement and discussed their concerns around those pain-points. All these factors were summed up when the concept was sketched; a moodboard collage that was developed was referred for generating ideas.

The researcher wanted to test the prototype in a workshop that would have been hosted at Aida Impact studio but it had to be canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions. This was another factor that slowed down the process and the group started hovering on how can we test real-time. After a brief discussion around the concept, the researcher ran an investigative rehearsal with commissioner Siira. The rehearsal went well but still, real-time customer feedback was needed and we decided to launch the pilot of this concept in-store. Group still had a few concerns when it came to internal co-ordination and time management yet, went with the gut feeling of iteration on the go. The researcher felt to think the impact from the COVID-19 and uncertainties were the factors that affected the decision-making at that time.

The concept was advertised only on social media platforms and through word of mouth; there have been a couple of service sales since July 2020. The idea has been well perceived. The customers appreciated the concept of co-creation, transparency, and simplicity in the process. As the pilot would be running at least until the end of September 2020 the gathered customer feedback can be used to further iterate the service model. Due to time constraints, the researcher did not investigate how the

services could be further developed in the digital context. Based on the research, an ideal page layout/communication plan option was presented. This was to make sure the customer stayed in the purchase cycle and has enough desirable elements to stay onboard of the buying processes. Even if the concept cannot be applied online now, it is functional in-store at the given moment. As a follow-up, the author recommends Aida Impact to explore ways to further enhance online service options by integrating a calendar that works in sync, inquiry forms as presented in appendix 2. This would be crucial for service management when leads are generated via the website. There was no budget allotted for this project, so it demanded some extra co-ordination. Definitely, there is a growing need to develop a customization service model when it comes to fashion accessories. The needs vary and offering the right blend of experience plays significant role in customer decision-making. Involving customers in the service design process is vital especially when it comes to co-creative service models. The author suggests Aida Impact should consider monetizing on this segment and to keep iterating the model with closed collaboration with stakeholders even after this project ends.

4.1 Conclusion

During the masters thesis researcher evaluated and developed already existing services that were briefly communicated only on the Aida Impacts webpage. These were marketed under the title of 'Events' that was subdivided into do it yourself (DIY) workshops, personal jewelry customization, discuss and debate workshop and Aida Impact pop-up. The visual content of the event services was not shared on the webpage or social media platform. Even during the research, it was concluded that most of the stakeholders were unaware of this kind of service offered at Aida Impact.

The researcher was able to conclude that customers and internal employees were eager to get on-board for the service development project. The group estimated that the right blend of service design tools could be beneficial to develop a co-creative service model. In close cooperation with the Aida Impact customers and employees, the researcher was able to achieve the initiated output. Theoretically, the author explored the interlinked key concepts that impacted the development of the brand service model. Product

customization and co-creation stayed the guiding principles through the thesis process. The researcher was able to validate why is there a need for value co-creation if brands need to stay afloat the market competition and spread its impactful mission. Especially service design opened a totally new way to work that company could apply in any future projects. There were specific questions that the group tried to solve through the design process.

Questions researcher asked through the service development process were:

- i. Why is there a need to improvise the existing service processes at Aida Impact?
- ii. Who are the customers of this service?
- iii. What are the current challenges during service consumption?
- iv. How can we build an interactive and profitable service model?

Through the research and co-design workshops, the author was able to find answers to the above questions and redesign the concept model. The researcher concluded that it was not necessary to market services as 'Events', the title misleads the potential customer. The customers and internal stakeholders were not ready for the tedious, explanatory, expensive, and unstructured workshops, which were limited to a few customer segments. Through the discovery phase co-design workshop, the author found out the reason behind why is there an urgent need to develop services in close collaboration with stakeholders. Using the data gathered researcher was able to frame who would be the potential customers of the service. Five potential customer segments were developed, for whom marketing strategies and campaigns can be designed. The researcher could define the current service challenges through the co-designed customer journey map and service blueprint. The customer's overall service experience was visualized. Seeking these entire valuable inputs an enhanced, visually interactive, and functional concept was developed and was tested.

It was concluded that developed service offers usefulness, creates awareness through novelty, and at the same time builds a reputation that brings brand core values to the

forefront. Instead of just mere promise through campaigns customers can see it being delivered. By being useful the brand service is relevant to both customers and other stakeholders. The positive and interactive experience the customer gathers through the service helps to build an impactful relationship. The concept implementation remains for the commissioner, to decide. As per the feedback the company is eager to scale, at least the in-store customization option.

4.2 Ways ahead

A summary of the current state was created in chapters 3.5.2 and 4 to show where the development process stopped, where the current company service was and what issues are still to be tackled in the close future when it comes to this project. The company aimed to grow steadily and add more products to its categories in the near future, which would support, empower and reflect inclusiveness. The company is still in a start-up phase and therefore service success is dependent on the skills and knowledge from the creative team, which is growing. Founder Siira is motivated to develop the brand with the core mission of employing more immigrant women. The company is determined to add more members to the team during the year 2021. Currently, the customer base is narrow and more should be gained via active digital marketing to strengthen the customer base. New Nordic customers can be targeted. Developing its own web platform can boost online stores and sales. That is when customization could be possible through the new service/distant product design platform. A commercially boosted model means more brand awareness and more work opportunities for immigrant women. While keeping the quality of raw materials optimal, the service model needs to be transparent for retaining and catering the target customer base.

4.3 Key learnings

Through the research process, the theoretical part is kept relevant, clear and limited to the project goals. There were many service design tools implemented in the initial discovery phase for validation. As per the researcher, using fewer options would have

paced up the time-consuming process if the output gained from even the tool was similar. The researcher also felt engaging people with different perspectives in early-stage (and often) could have helped determine the service issue faster. This could have possibly derived quicker solutions. It could be challenging to involve multiple stakeholders in the development or innovation projects, but through guided facilitation, all can co-develop in sync. The co-design approach was applied during the project but there is a need to bring the different people and organizations together to get a full picture of the opportunity landscape and to co-create new solutions.

Thesis writing is an intricate process compared to the practical on-field knowledge implementation and thus time-to-time literature check on applications like Grammarly is recommended. Service designing is indeed an iterative process and there is always something that can be made better so, the concept illustrated will also keep evolving.

For researcher, the concept of utilitarian marketing and its relation to brand services remains to be studied. Last but not least this project would not have been possible without the extended support of commissioner Siira and the Aida Impact employees, their support and contribution is highly appreciated.

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List of figures

Figure 1. Making of Aida Impact jewelry (photo:Aida Impact).....	5
Figure 2. Customization workshop services to be developed at Aida Impact	6
Figure 3. Service events at Aida Impact (Photo: Aida Impact social media).....	7
Figure 4. Aida Impact Jewelry (photo:Aida Impact)	8
Figure 5. Frame of reference	10
Figure 6. Consumer interests (Fenech & Perkins 2015).....	12
Figure 7. Consumer awareness and purchase (Fenech & Perkins 2015).....	13
Figure 8. Value pyramid (Bain & Company, 2015).....	15
Figure 9. Customer experience review (Martela 2016).....	16
Figure 10. Double diamond process model (Design council 2019)	22
Figure 11. Process timeline.....	24
Figure 12. Co-design workshop 1	26
Figure 13. The Five why canvas.....	27
Figure 14. Aida Impact organizations backcasting canvas	29
Figure 15. Aida Impact Stakeholder map.....	30
Figure 16. Business model canvas.....	31
Figure 17. Customer Quotes.....	34
Figure 18. Workshop 2.....	36
Figure 19. Conscious - Customer persona	38
Figure 20. Artist- customer persona.....	39
Figure 21. Host/bride-to-be - customer persona	40
Figure 22. Fashion enthusiast - customer persona	41
Figure 23. Activist- customer persona	42
Figure 24. Customer journey map.....	43
Figure 25. Initial service blueprint	46
Figure 26. Moodboard	49
Figure 27. Concept Illustration.....	50
Figure 28. Final blueprint.....	52
Figure 29. Final business model canv	53
Figure 30. Service promotion (Photo: Aida Impact webshop and social media)	54
Figure 31. Process evaluation canvas.....	58

Note: Figures listed above without reference name are illustrated by Amruta Shingte

Appendices

Appendix.1

Questionnaire: Customers contextual interview

Platform: Google hangout

Duration:30-45min

- Introduction to the project objective
- Discussion about the customer's background and interests
 - i Do you know about Aida Impacts business concept?
 - ii Are you aware of Aida impact services?
 - iii Were you able to get enough information regarding our services on the website or other communication channels?
 - iv How has your overall user experience been?
 - v What was missing?
 - vi Did you receive the product in defined time frame?
 - vii What about the pricing?
 - viii Any improvement suggestions?
 - ix Will you be interested to customize and what factors would you consider while doing these kind of purchase?
 - x How often do you buy jewelry for yourself or as a gift?
 - xi What kind of material do you prefer?
 - xii While purchasing jewelry what criteria do you normally look for?
 - xiii What is the major pain point while purchasing jewelry online?
 - xiv How often do you buy jewelry online? Budget?

Appendix: 2 Detailed Concept flow



GIFTING OPTIONS

E-Gift card

Delivered instantly,
Printable if you prefer to hand deliver

To-.....

From-.....

Amount-.....

Receipients email-.....

Message-.....
.....

Physical gift card

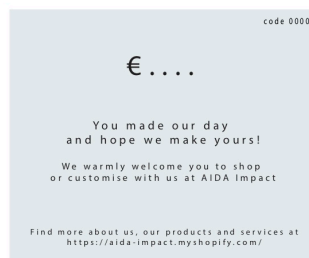
Standard gift card,
Shipped by mail,
4-5 days delivery within Finland

To-.....

From-.....

Amount-.....

Message-.....
.....



REDEEM YOUR GIFT CARD

SHOP FROM OUR COLLECTION

COLLECTION

BOOK A TIME

Treat yourself or bring a friend, customize and take away a beautiful piece of jewelry

HOST A PARTY AT PEARL BAR

From birthday, bachelorettes to corporate events we have customizable event options for you. To host an event at AIDA Impacs pearl bar tell us more about the event/occasion



Details of the host

Name
.....

Email
.....

Mobile
.....

Occupation
.....

Additional info
.....
.....
.....

**Number of
Guests (Max 4 people)**
.....

Type of event/occasion
.....

Preferred date
.....

**Is the date
flexible?**
.....

SEND REQUEST

Appendix 3: Customer feedback question (Pilot)

Customer feedback questionnaire to validate the developed in-store service:

1. What do you think about this product/ service?
2. What do you think you can do on this kind of service?
3. On what occasion would you use it?
4. Who do you think this is this for?
5. Is there anything it resembles to? If yes, what?
6. What doesn't make sense here?
7. Was there anything that surprised you? If yes, what?
8. Was there anything you expected to find that was not there?
9. What was difficult or weird about this task?
10. What was easy about this task?
11. Did you find everything you were looking for?
12. What didn't look the way you expected?
13. Do you feel this service is easy to use?
14. What would you change in this service?
15. How would you improve this service?