

Enhancing Visitor Experience Using Service Design Approach for Museum Sustainability

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Received: 11 January 2024; Accepted: 14 June 2024; Published: 1 September 2024

ABSTRACT

Countries all over the world have recognised museums' functions in showcasing a country's background, historical moments, and significant events where it can provide a fascinating glimpse into its history and tradition, bringing us to the highlights of a country's achievement. As a result, many countries began to develop their museums to be more focused on delivering visitor-oriented services in order to attract more visitors, which is supported by numerous recent studies on the museum and/or visitor experience. Currently, museums are expected to provide better services by providing positive experiences and satisfaction to visitors which may reverberate on the brand royalty, resulting in visitors returning to the museums. These circumstances will offer free advertising through the museum's visibility on the public radar in the future for attracting newcomers. Understanding visitors' visiting styles, behaviours, needs, and motivations is critical because it provides details on visitors' expectations while also understanding the visitor experience, all of which can be aptly accomplished using the service design approach. The foundation of this paper will be a proposed framework for museum experience based on service design, as it is performed using service design tools such as personas and customer journey maps, which will benefit the museum institution by observing visitors' perspectives and thus improving museum services. Finally, it is believed that observing museums' capability as a service provider from the visitors' perspectives while considering museums' intentions will benefit museums in the long run, while also ensuring their sustainability as a major contributing factor to the tourism industry, which is in line with the current consumerism trend.

Keywords: Museum, Service Design, Personas, Visitor Experience.



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1 INTRODUCTION

In recent times, museums have emerged as an asset for countries in Europe and Asia (Ser, 2020), whereas in Malaysia, it only contributes 27.8% to the tourism industry in 2019 (MTPB, 2019). Between January 2019 and December 2019, visiting museums was among the lowest for main tourist activities, down from 30.6% from the same period on 2018 (MTPB, 2018, 2019). However, there was a gain in the first quarter of 2020, it is still among the three lowest activities preferred by tourists in Malaysia (MTPB, 2020b). Despite a slight increase in the first quarter of 2020, it remains one of the three least popular activities among tourists in Malaysia (MTPB, 2020b). When COVID 19 pandemic hit the country and the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) has caused the country to close its borders since 18 March 2020, no more information on the most popular activities among local and

international tourists for the years 2020, 2021, and the first quarter of 2022 can be obtained (MTPB, 2020a, 2021, 2022).

Furthermore, according to the Department of Museums Malaysia (DMM) Annual Report from 2017 to 2019, the number of museum visitors has decreased since 2017 with 3,181,012 in 2017, 2,972,445 in 2018, a 6.56% decrease from 2017, and 2,782,578 in 2019, a 6.39% decrease from 2018. According to the report, the National Museum of Malaysia is one of the topmost visited museums by local and international tourists, but it has seen a decrease in visitors since 2017 (JMM, 2017, 2018, 2019). During the Covid-19 Pandemic, tourist numbers fell even further because of the country's implementation of the MCO in 2020 and 2021 (JMM, 2020, 2021). These figures demonstrate that museums in Malaysia, particularly the National Museum, have lost their appeal to current tourists even before the pandemic outbreak. As a result, it is time for Malaysian museums, particularly the National Museum, to realise their full potential in boosting the tourism sector.

Today, museums all over the world are becoming more focused on providing visitor-oriented services, which is supported by data from numerous recent studies on the museum and/or visitor experience (Liu & Idris, 2020; Lykourantzou et al., 2013; Muhammad Hashim, 2013; Tsiropoulou et al., 2016). Understanding visitors' visiting styles, behaviours, needs, and motivations is critical because it provides details on visitors' expectations while also understanding the visitor experience. Furthermore, museums are expected to provide better services in the future by providing positive visitor experiences and satisfaction, which may echo back on the brand royalty, resulting in visitors returning to the museums, which can offer free advertisement through the museum's visibility on the public radar (Tsiropoulou et al., 2016).

In the current context, museums have evolved from object-oriented, in which the artefacts displayed on the pedestal are believed to deliver knowledge on their own, to more realistic visitors-oriented conditions in which museum management begin to acknowledge the contribution of visitors themselves in the interpretation of the museum's exhibits (Matuk, 2016; Mavragani, 2018; Pirnar & Sari, 2013). According to Falk and Dierking (2013), to achieve a new level of visitor satisfaction in museums, museums must look through the eyes of visitors and focus more on the visitor experience. While Liu & Idris (2018) emphasised the importance of conducting a visitor experience study, which has been overlooked in many previous studies, they used a novel approach that categorises museum visitors based on their motivations and needs. According to Almshari et al. (2019), museums should also provide visitors with personalised interaction and services, ensuring a more inclusive and enjoyable visit for all.

Similarly, many studies have suggested that effective exhibition production can affect visitor experience; for example, some museums may not be visited because the presentation of museum exhibition material failed to provide knowledge and a positive visitor experience, forcing museums to reinvent themselves by incorporating new media to attract more museum visitors (Neuburger & Egger, 2017). In addition to the physical service provided by museums, other aspects for museums to consider are service quality and service satisfaction, which is a major factor considered by visitors when selecting destinations (Mavragani, 2018). Thus, Mavragani (2018) emphasised that research on visitor expectations and perceived service offered by museums is also required to determine positive visitors' attitudes towards the institution, their future revisit intentions, and their willingness to recommend to others, all of which can lead to increased museum revenues.

2 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The goal of this research is to determine the strategic approaches that museums in Malaysia should take to improve their current services. This can be accomplished by considering museum services from the perspective of visitors as well as considerations from the perspective of museums as service providers to deliver meaningful experiences through the service design approach. It is critical to establish proper guidelines for local museums to optimise the visitor experience as perceived by its

visitors. Museums must find ways to enhance the visitor experience by developing new methods for interpreting the museum's products, which can be tangible or intangible, by providing entertainment through an increased level of interactivity, and by improving experience (Chan et al., 2019). Without a doubt, museums must become more visitor-centred rather than focusing solely on physical preparations such as layout arrangements and exhibitions detailing (i.e., object-based approach). The visitor-based approach can help museums understand occurrences at museums from the perspective of museum visitors, whether the environment settings are successful or not, and thus reflect on the visitor experience (Lanir et al., 2017). Recognizing visitor expectations and how museum visitors perceive museum services will influence future re-visit intentions and willingness to recommend the museums to another potential visitor (Mavragani, 2018). Finally, it is believed that observing local museums' capability as a service provider from the perspective of visitors while considering museums' intentions will benefit museums in the long run, while also ensuring their sustainability as a major contributing factor to Malaysia's tourism industry, which is consistent with the current consumerism trend.

3 MUSEUM SERVICE DESIGN

Service design has been recognised as one of the best approaches for designing services. It provides tools and procedures that potentially will elevate the visitor experience for museums to be proficient in delivering good services while offering better experiences to museum visitors. According to Bourliou (2020), service design in museums allows us to identify services that can improve the visitor experience by connecting audiences with museum exhibitions and, of course, the museum's services. Furthermore, service design can provide innovative approaches to service providers and service designers to analyse, innovate, and improve services (Frischhut et al., 2012).

Furthermore, to comprehend the visitor experience, museum managements and professionals must first comprehend the visitor's behaviour. Recognizing visitor behaviours allows museum curators to evaluate their work and assess the physical layout, which influences how visitors interpret the exhibits (Lanir et al., 2017). Nowadays, most museum management and professionals recognise the need for improved visitor-centric displays, especially when they have the necessary equipment and technology to do so. Lanir et al. (2017) stated in their findings that while a great deal of effort is put into designing and building the small details for the exhibitions, yet little research has been done on their effects on the visitors' behaviours, which is due to the lack of measuring tools to evaluate how effective their designs are going to be.

Figure 1 shows that there are four iterative stages of the service design which are exploration, creation, reflection, and implementation (Stickdorn, 2018; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011). All four stages are intended to discover and gain insights into service experiences from the perspective of stakeholders by putting themselves in the shoes of customers, employees, managers, or even competitors, where these experiences will be visualised into new ideas and concepts, and finally to implement the new or improved service design to all sections of an organisation (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011; Stickdorn & Schwarzenberger, 2016).

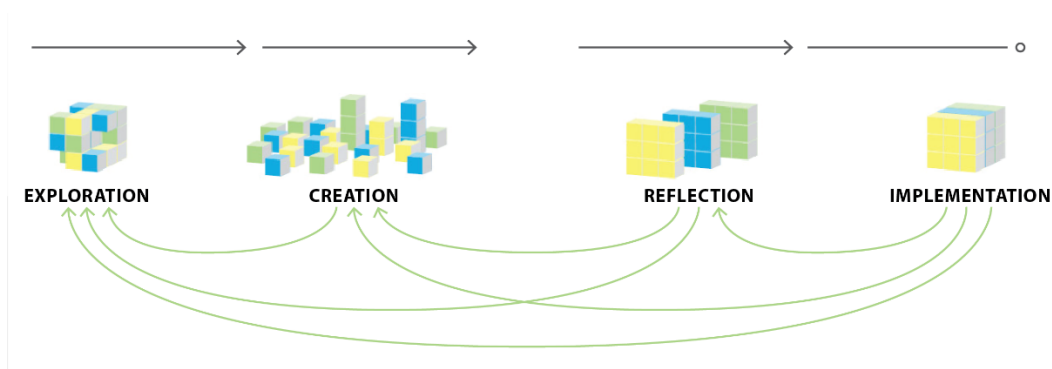


Figure 1 Four iterative stages of the service design thinking
(Source: Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011)

This approach has been described as an iterative process aimed at identifying design flaws and making improvements to ensure that the intended customer only receives feasible services with positive experiences. In the context of museums, this iterative approach ensures the sustainability of local museums by making necessary improvements to service design, resulting in a memorable and enhanced visitor experience for museum visitors. Many tools have been identified for each stage of service design, including service safaris, customer journey maps, shadowing, personas, idea generation, service prototype, desktop walkthrough, storytelling, service blueprint, and business model canvas, to name a few (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011).

3.1 Museum Personas Based on Falk’s Identity Related Motivation (IRM)

Museum visitors come from various demographics, psychographics, and behavioural segmentation. In other words, each museum visitor has different characteristics, motivations and behaviour that influences their experiences when visiting museums, making each visitor experience highly personalised and unique (Falk & Dierking, 2016). Personalization research can improve museum visitor knowledge by designing services with appropriate content adaptation, allowing for improved visitor experience (Mokatren et al., 2019). One of the techniques to personalize museum experience is by adopting one of the service design tools, i.e., to create ‘personas’ based on types of visitors (Liu & Idris, 2020).

Personas in service design refer to a fictional profile, often created to portray a particular group based on their shared interests, that represents a character with which clients and design teams can interact (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011). Service providers can gain further understanding of customer demographics and preferences by producing personas cards to represent market segments as shown in Figure 2. Museum visitors can be categorized using Falk’s identity related motivation (IRM) where they can play the role of one or more of the following five categories which are (1) explorer, (2) facilitator, (3) experience seeker, (4) professional/ hobbyist, and (5) recharger. To better understand each type of visitors: explorer are those who are curiosity driven with a generic interest in the content of the museum, facilitator are those who are socially motivated, experience seeker are those who are motivated to visit because they perceive museum as an important destination, professional/hobbyist are those who feel a close tie between the museum content and their professional or hobby, and lastly, recharger are those who are primarily seeking to have a contemplative, spiritual and/or restorative experience (Falk, 2016).



Figure 2 Personas card for museum visitors

Personas created based on Falk’s IRM can represent a personalised experience for many museum visitors (Falk, 2016; Mokatren et al., 2019). According to Almshari et al. (2019), museum visitors can be classified based on two key triggering features, namely their motivations for visiting and the perceived success factors that contribute to their museum experience. These visitor clusters correspond

to both Falk's visitor categorization and a classification of exploration styles, indicating that these two aspects can serve as reliable indicators to identify museum visitors' personas, which will facilitate in the design of museum services. This approach is expected to assist in the identification of museum visitors' personas solely based on available information, without the use of any other data or prior knowledge about the visitors.

Museum experience involves period before the visit, during the visit and after the visit (Falk & Dierking, 2016). Allegedly, museum experience begins before visiting the museums, i.e., pre-visit, and prolonged after they leave the museums, i.e., post-visit, while the during-visit occur when they are in the actual museum environment (Falk & Dierking, 2016; Liu & Idris, 2020). This paper will merely discuss enhanced visitor experiences using service design approaches such as personas, service safaris, customer journey maps, and service blueprints; thus, the terms 'visitors' will be used mostly where we will be focusing on museum visitors during-visit experiences as this will directly involve museum physical settings' services within the museum actual environment.

3.2 Proposed Framework for Visitor Experience During Visit

Based on Falk & Dierking (2016), visitors often explore the exhibit in various sequences when visiting a museum. For instance, some visitors begin at the first exhibit and work their way through the museum until they reach the exit, others choose to skip certain exhibit that do not capture their interest, and some even begin at the exit and exploring in a reverse order. These patterns of museum exploration are influenced by multiple factors, including museum visit frequency, their expectations, and their knowledge and experiences that they already have prior their museum visitation (Almeshari et al., 2019; Falk & Dierking, 2016). Hence, for service design to work properly, one must first study and observe these exploration styles prior to designing better services that can enhance visitor experience.

Apart from personas, this study utilizes shadowing, service safaris and customers journey maps as service design tools to examine visitor's experiences during the exploration stage of their museum visit. These tools enable a comprehensive observation and analysis of visitors' interactions with museum services and its environment, as well as identifying touchpoints along the way. Shadowing enables observing and tracking visitors over time to gain a better understanding of their actions, thoughts, emotions, and motivations. Other service design tools such as service safaris allows client to understand the customer common needs while customers journey maps capture the customer's viewpoint and highlight opportunities for redesigning the museum services by identifying their intended or unintended affordances (Kara et al., 2015; Reason et al., 2016; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011).

Within the context of this study, shadowing and customer journey maps for museum services provide a broad overview of the factors that influence the visitor experience constructed from the visitor's perspective. Personalizing the map by to cater specific types of museum visitors can make an immersed visitor-focused experience. Referring to Stickdorn & Schneider (2011), customer journey maps that is designed based on personalised character can offer a heightened empathic engagement to the newly created made-up journey. This led us to adopt another service design tool, personas, as to represent the types of museums' visitors to personalise the customer journey. By identifying and engaging with each persona derived from Falk's IRM, service designers can gain different perspectives on museum services, allowing them to develop new or enhanced museum services that can cater to various types of museum visitors, ensuring a positive visitor experience.

Figure 2 is a proposed framework adapted from Enninga et al. (2013), illustrates the museum during-visit service design map. This map depicts the progressions of an iterative process in service design, including start, research, concept, and result, as well as directing us to where the visitor context and visitor experience overlay within the map. It is also mapped to the four stages of service design, namely exploration, creation, reflection and implementation (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011). During the research stage, museum aims and visitors research must be attained together considering service design approach must consider both the relationship between service providers, which is museum, and

customers, which is visitors, to improve overall services. As a result, museum commitment must be obtained during this stage as well, which are given by museum curators and management. Visitors' research is conducted by looking into museum visitors' contexts, it includes personal, social, and physical contexts, and additionally, service design tool, i.e., museum personas, are determined during this stage too.

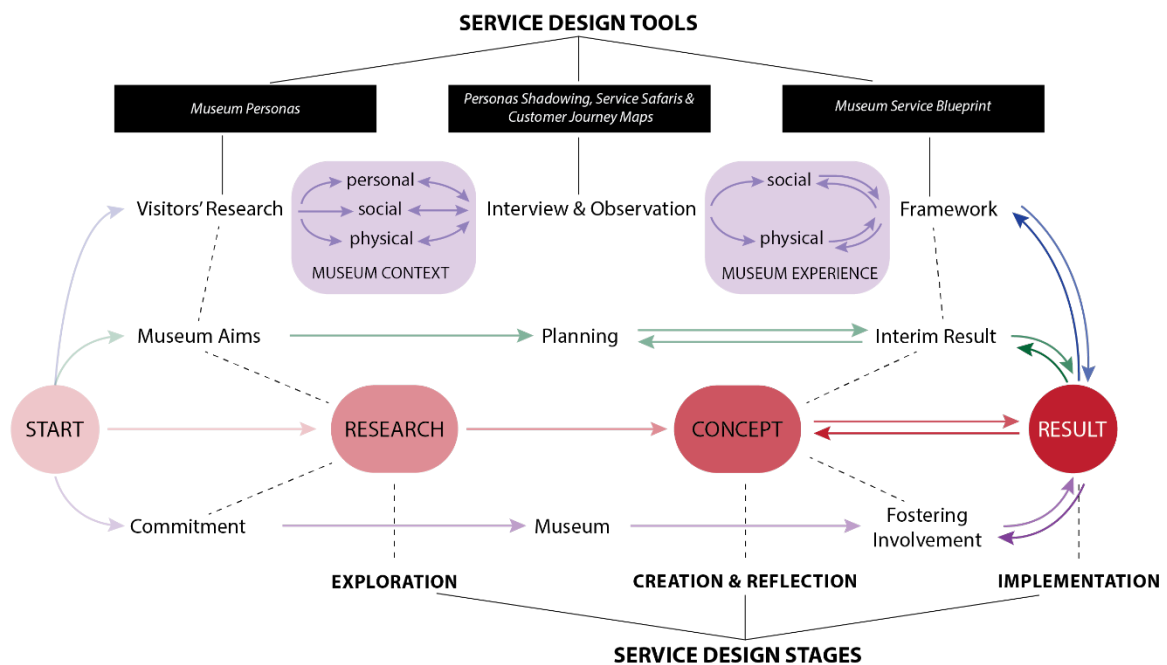


Figure 3 Museum during-visit service design map

Hence, all these processes during research stage are moved forward to planning, for museum aims, and interview and observation, for the visitors' research. The interview and observation utilize another two types of service design tools, namely shadowing and customer journey maps. It should be noted that, in addition to shadowing and customer journey maps, there are numerous other service design tools that can be used during the exploration stage Stickdorn & Schneider (2011). This proposed framework will only determine issues and aspects that can improve and enhance visitors' experiences from social and physical contexts, as personal context is the only factor that museum's management and service designer cannot change.

During the concept stage, a framework is built using another service design tools from the create and reflect process, i.e., museum service blueprint, based on the previously determined outcome. By fostering involvement from museum management, this blueprint can be determined as an absolute result for the museum service design that can enhance visitor experience, or it can only be considered as an interim result. Since service design is an iterative and non-linear process, it is possible to return to the planning stage and repeat the process until a satisfactory result is achieved. However, the process should not go in circles but should constantly move forward (Stickdorn, 2018). Finally, when reaching the result stage, museum management and service designers can assess the effectiveness of their enhanced service design through long-term studies to evaluate the outcomes by utilizing surveys and making informed decisions regarding potential future iterations such as going through the process again, which is the worst-case scenario, or else in different aspects that can also contribute to the enhancement of the museum services such as branding and marketing.

4 DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A museum during-visit service design map for investigating museum visitors' experiences is proposed based on personas and a process-based framework, which can assist in improving museums' services by observing visitors' perspectives. This framework is expected to provide valuable insights into visitors' experiences, allowing for further exploration and improvement. Personas can be employed as service design tools by categorising museum visitors into five groups based on Falk's IRM, namely explorer, facilitator, experience seeker, professional/hobbyist, and recharger. Consequently, employing a user-friendly and accessible tool to identify museum visitors' personas would facilitate and speed up the selection of personas in museum studies Almeshari et al. (2019).

In today's context, the adoption of technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR) poses new challenges for designers and service providers. While Flach et al. (2017) believes that to provide enriching experiences, designers should investigate the affordances of the product, which in this case is the museum's services, where the affordance construct can bridge the gap between the users' point-of-view are aligned with the product perspectives. Therefore, designers need to guarantee that integrating technology such as AR, VR and MR in the museum will be a success by enhancing engagement while preserving authenticity, thus offering meaningful affordances to the visitors (Matuk, 2016). As a result, any new studies on museum services or museum AR should prioritise visitors' perspectives over product perspectives to gain deeper insights into visitor experience. The use of technology, such as augmented reality (AR), as a novel tool, can assist museums in providing up-to-date, high-quality services and a diverse range of exhibitions. Consequently, this can encourage repeat visitors and recommendations of their positive experiences to others, ensuring museums' long-term growth.

5 CONCLUSION

This study proposes on how museum managers, curators, and designers can use service design approaches to create improved and enhanced service design that cater to museum visitors' satisfaction. The aims are for museums to understand their visitors' needs and motivations to align their services and collaborate with service designers to improve the visitor experience. Museums can fulfil their roles and capacities by interpreting visitors' needs and motivations and then implementing the suggested visitor experience enhancement strategies. This, in turn, will attract more local and international tourists to visit museums, resulting in increased visitor numbers. Therefore, evaluating museums' effectiveness as service providers from the perspective of visitors, while keeping the museums' aims in mind, is expected to yield long-term benefits. To summarize, the pursuit of museum sustainability requires an innovative mindset that seeks to modernize the traditional approaches and embrace forward-thinking strategies. As a result, it will transcend the museum, i.e., an old institution, and support their sustainability as significant contributors to the thriving tourism industry, aligning with the prevailing consumerism trend.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No acknowledgement to anyone is necessary.

FUNDING

No financial aid was received.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ana Baidza binti Abu Bakar, as the main author, played a pivotal role in conceiving and designing the study, and writing the manuscript. Muhammad Zaffwan Idris, as the corresponding author, made significant contributions to the manuscript by providing critical revisions and valuable feedback.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interests.

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