

LOKU

Building an appetite for cultural curiosity

Master of Art Thesis by Disha Roy & Lisa Lee
Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture



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Printed on: 04 April, 2016

Printed at: Print Lab, Aalto University

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Disha Roy and Lisa Lee



Aalto University

Master of Art Thesis by Disha Roy & Lisa Lee

Graphic Design, Department of Media

Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Supervised by Veronica Fossa and Prof. Zach Dodson

Author	Disha Roy & Lisa Lee		
Title of thesis	Loku: Building an Appetite for Cultural Curiosity		
Department	Department of Media		
Degree programme	Graphic Design		
Year	2016	Number of pages	153
		Language	English

Abstract

This thesis investigates how food can play an important role in inciting dialogue between natives and immigrants of Helsinki. A strong desire to learn about people from different cultural backgrounds can trigger dialogue and empathy. Such an attitude can encourage a myriad of social interactions and is referred to as ***cultural curiosity***. The thesis tries to answer the research question - how might we encourage cultural curiosity and create a shared sense of belonging for the people of Helsinki.

The study follows a User Centered Design (UCD) approach to build a platform to enhance cross cultural interactions. The study begins by engaging and understanding potential user groups through conversations, interviews and workshops. Next, it analyses existing services where food is used as a driver for initiating cultural curiosity. Learnings from the research and analysis were supported with a literature review on related subjects, to identify the problem/opportunity areas. The knowledge gathered serves as a framework for prototyping and testing the proposed service concept: Loku.

The design process culminated in the creation of a digital app which intends to bring people together over complimentary food passions. It taps into existing physical and digital social habits, customizing events to a user's motivation, needs and wants. It addresses specific opportunities identified during the study, namely **1. Tackling stereotypes:** Loku users are represented by their food interests rather than their ethnicity, which can pique curiosity. **2. Cultivating social habits:** Through proactive and customized invitations, Loku can make attending local food events a habit. **3. Bringing multiple stakeholders together:** Loku brings people, markets, kitchens and communities onto one platform in unique ways that encourage collaborations and cultural dialogue.

This study validates that food can be an effective tool to foster cultural curiosity among the focus group of students and young professionals in Helsinki. Further, this concept has the potential to incorporate the needs of a wider user base. To conclude, Loku supports the creation of a shared and rich culture in Helsinki - one meal at a time.

Keywords Cultural Curiosity, Service Design Methods, Food Culture, Digital Service

A vibrant outdoor food stall scene. In the foreground, a woman with long dreadlocks, wearing a brown fur-trimmed coat and sunglasses, is serving a yellow cake to a customer. Another person in a black top hat and green band is behind the counter. The stall is covered with a purple patterned cloth and displays a variety of food items: yellow star-shaped cakes, chocolate cookies, sausage rolls, a large pizza, and several pies. Price tags are visible for items like 'PIPPIN PIKKULEIVÄT', 'LOIHUN LOHIPUROS', and 'KONNUN KASVISPIIRAS'. The background shows other people and a sunny outdoor setting with flowers.

*“Food has a constant
tendency to transform
itself into situation”*

- Roland Barthes

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	15
1.1 Approach and Methodology	16
1.2 Objective and Research Question	17
2. The Big Picture	18
2.1 Food as Facilitator	20
2.2 Effects of Globalisation and Xenophobia	23
2.3 Context of Helsinki	24
3. Research	28
3.1 Service Landscaping and Analysis	30
3.2 Contextual Inquiry: Interviews & Field research	46
3.3 Learning and Insights	66
4. Designing the Service	71
4.1 Design Principles + Design Brief	73
4.2 Service Design Tools	74
5. Service Solution and Testing	105
5.1 Branding	107
5.2 User Interface	112
5.3 Service Walk-through & Participatory Workshop	118
5.4 Validation and Insights	126
6. Conclusion	135
Acknowledgements	138
Bibliography	140
Appendix	142

VOCABULARY

Before we begin our study it is imperative that we define some keywords which will be used frequently in the document.

Local: Oxford dictionary defines Local as “an inhabitant of a particular area or neighbourhood. Originates from late Latin ‘localis’, from Latin locus ‘place’.

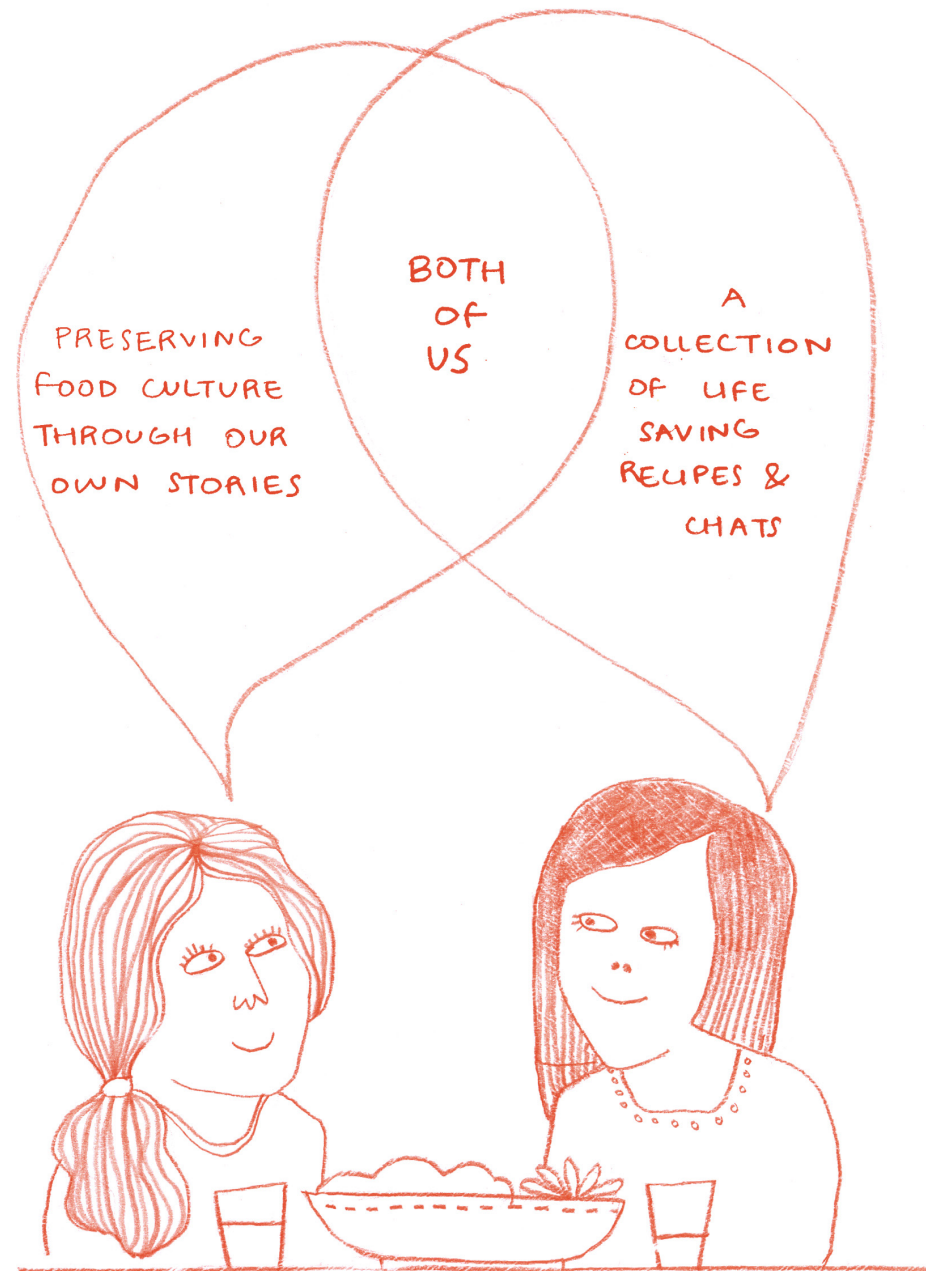
Old local: Term used to address the natives or natural-born citizens of a country.

New local: Term used to address the non-native or immigrants in a country.

Culture: Oxford dictionary defines culture as “the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society”

Cultural Curiosity: A strong desire to learn about and understand a set of shared attitudes, and practices that characterizes particular people or society.

Cultural Champion: A local who shares authentic, personal and passionate stories of their culture within a community, group or platform.



PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Lisa: The idea of doing a thesis on Food came about during a dinner table conversation with my Father. He used to narrate stories from his childhood and in most of them food was the central topic. I wanted to preserve these stories into a tangible form, and share a glimpse of how food played such a vital role in creating strong memories. From there, I began questioning the influence of food and if it can drive people towards a positive change. This thesis is a step towards that goal of uniting Food with Design and to expand my learning about how both can play a role in bringing about positive impact.

Disha: As a student short on money and time, I found myself going back to one recipe for every meal - and getting bored of it. I wondered "if people collaborate and share their one life saving recipe with everyone, we could have many lifesaving recipes and even more new friends." From this thought, I began reflecting on our relationships with comfort foods, recipes and eating habits. This thesis gave me an opportunity to trigger such conversations, and explore how these interactions can change the experience of an international student like me, in Helsinki.

Us: Being from the same city in India and subsequently in the same social circle, we often spoke about our efforts in trying to feel "at home" in Helsinki. Before we arrived in August 2013, we received an Aalto Survival Guide which acquainted us to life, weather, etiquettes and systems of Finland. Upon arrival, settling down was made easy with efficient information kits and orientation programs. Despite this, two years down the road, both of us felt socially isolated and disconnected from the city that was our home. Reflecting on our past experience of student life in India, we realised that lot of our social encounters used to happen over meals and eating with classmates. We spent many evenings with old and new friends from different cities and cultures of our country in somebody's kitchen or at a local eatery. In Helsinki we rarely met our classmates and couldn't afford to eat out frequently. That made us feel detached from the happenings in town. We wanted to reclaim such a space, where we can meet new people inside and outside their homes, and resume the friendly, informal and spontaneous dialogue.

Through hours of talking, dining, drinking and ideation we decided to collaborate and do a joint thesis around our shared motivations and the love for food. We have been collaborating, supporting and learning from each other throughout the thesis process.



Photo taken during the Multicultural Rally, 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

We are 2 amongst the 20000¹ new residents coming to Finland every year, which comprises of students, professionals, migrants and expats. As International students living in Helsinki, for the past three years, we've come to admire and respect the Finnish systems and laws. However, our day to day social interactions prove to be challenging, which in turn hinders our ability to feel a complete sense of belonging in Helsinki. Today, we are also witnessing the largest migration in Europe since World War II, and a parallel rise of Right wing ideologies propagating fierce nationalism.

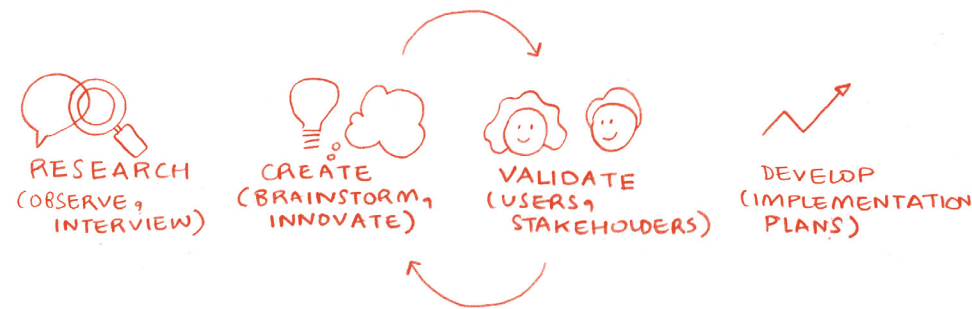
This study explores the current socio-cultural landscape of Helsinki and how food can play a positive role in cultural integration. As Koc and Welsh point out that "Belonging also requires "feeling welcome" in policy, in practice and in everyday symbolism" (2002, p.9). The research will also investigate how design can play a role in encouraging cultural curiosity through the medium of food, in order to build more welcoming communities and create a shared sense of belonging for natives and immigrants of Helsinki.

Firstly, it examines the relationship between natives and immigrants of Helsinki. Secondly, it studies the relationship between the immigrants and food culture. Thirdly, through the analysis of specific case studies, the thesis sheds light on the underlying motivations behind various food concepts, cultural initiatives and collaborative platforms. Finally, by gaining strategic insights from the research and analysis, the thesis proposes a concept for a digital service which will facilitate cross-cultural dialogue through the act of eating together.

We have chosen food to be the cultural vehicle for this process, amongst other factors, like language, sport, music, religion, as it is a shared interest and enjoyed by natives and immigrants alike. Unlike music or sports, food is an opportunity that presents itself as a need twice daily, and leaves more room for conversation. Almost everyone has a willingness to experiment, and an opinion on some aspects of food. Thus, in this manner, the universal language of food creates opportunities towards welcoming multicultural communities.

¹ The Finnish Immigration Service issued first residence permits to 20,709 individuals in 2015

1.1 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY



This thesis is based on the Action Research method and borrows tools that are native to a User Centred Design (UCD) process. According to IDEO, User Centred Design is a “creative way of problem solving that starts and ends with solutions tailored to meet user’s needs.” (designkit.org)

The word “action research” was coined by Kurt Lewin, in 1944. Lewin describes it as “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action” (1946). Similarly, UCD also follows a non-linear and often cyclical process of research, ideation, rapid prototyping and user testing.

This thesis begins with a process of investigation, which ultimately informs the form and nature of the proposed design solution. The iterative nature of UCD supports validation and refinement of ideas along the way, and helps gain a comprehensive understanding of who it is being designed for. The final prototype and proposed design solution: Loku is a service, and stands individually as a design production.

The entire process can be treated as a timeline that reflects our personal journey and exploration of alternative design tools. It can also serve as a case study that introduces Graphic Design students to a User Centred Design Process.

1.2 OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The objective of this thesis is to understand how design can help in making food or the act of eating socially, an effective medium for bringing people together. It aims to start an equal dialogue, so that local and foreign communities will actively participate in building a shared sense of belonging.

The eventual goal of this initiative is to encourage curiosity, and create welcoming and tolerant multicultural communities. The thesis will focus on food culture, people, and experiences of day to day living in a host nation.

Research Question:

How can eating together play a role in encouraging cultural curiosity?

- ***How might we tackle stereotypes and biases of people & cultures***
- ***How might we turn one-off events into a habit***
- ***How might we make new locals feel welcomed***

2. THE BIG PICTURE

This section presents the background and literature on the topics treated in this study. The first half builds the context within which the study has been made. It seeks out to answer why food has been chosen as a medium and a driver for change. The second half lays the groundwork for understanding the political, global and public sentiments, through the effects of globalisation.



Photo taken during the Multicultural Rally, 2015

2.1 FOOD AS FACILITATOR

“If you really want to make a friend, go to someone’s house and eat with him..the people who give you their food give you their heart.” - Cesar Chavez

The above reflection by Chavez echoes the fact that food not only provides a rich glimpse into various cultures, but also facilitates a strong informal push for a dialogue between people. Changing food habits transform people’s social and personal identities. Although this change is quite evident in cosmopolitan societies, the need for a dialogue has become more complex and challenging. Therefore, the goal for this thesis is also to create awareness through the medium of food, as a way to build friendly bond amongst people in relation to each other’s cultural practices and facilitate cross cultural dialogue.

The experience of food is unique to every individual, and yet it embodies entire cultures. As stated by Fischler, “Food is absolutely central to our sense of identity as we are constructed biologically, psychologically and socially by the food we incorporate into our bodies” (n.d. p. 275–292). In this way, food & how we eat is the most prominent manifestation of us, and our culture.

WE ARE...
HOW, WHAT,
WHY, WHERE,
WITH WHOM, WHEN
... WE EAT

As expressed by Amy S. Choi, “Food feeds the soul. To the extent that we all eat food, and we all have souls, food is the single great unifier across cultures...” (2014, TEDx). Additionally, our diverse cuisines are a vital facet of our culture that is widely celebrated. Evidence of celebration is in the streets of every cosmopolitan city in the world. Everyday, we experience an amalgamation of cultures in the smells of the eateries we pass by, or the flavors we taste.

As a facilitator, food falls second to language as the best communicator of oneself. One of the most common ways to communicate through food is in the construction of personal identities. As Barthes (n.d. p.23-30) states “what we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it, who is at the table, and who eats first, is a form of communication” that defines us. To illustrate this point, let us consider some examples. In traditional Indian families, it is customary for the patriarch to eat with other men in the household first, followed thereafter, by the women in the family. These are non-verbal ways in which people create, share and transform meanings in cultures. Another culture that affects personal identities is the food industry and related consumer habits. For instance, concepts like Entomophagy, the Slow Food Movement and Urban Farming can be labelled as food trends but they are raising awareness towards the breakdown of the traditional food industry. Hence, food functions as a means of symbolic communication, second only to language, by which people construct, influence and share interpretations with each other.

Apart from bringing people together, food can also bust stereotypes and irrational views, which are often the result of media influences. An example of this is the Conflict Kitchen Project. Conflict Kitchen operates as an International pop up restaurant which serves ethnic food from countries with which the United States is in conflict. By using the ‘social relations of food’ they stimulate a dialogue between general public about countries, cultures and people which the public might have only heard about through the media or political headlines. Conflict Kitchen successfully delivers the other side of the story by printing interviews of citizens from the conflict nation on their food packaging.

According to us, this brand of social activism, where food is seen as a tool to bring about a change in the socio-economic and political imbalance, may fall under Food Activism. Counihan and Siniscalchi (2013), talk about the ‘scales of activism’ which starts with local engagements, then national actions and finally transnational networks. Food activism is seen as an ‘umbrella concept’ within the field of ethnography, food anthropology and social activism. In conclusion, food can act as a facilitator in order to negotiate the complex socio-economic relationship within the cosmopolitan society.

Food Design

The paradigm of Food Design is fairly recent, but the design aspect within food or what can food do is an age old discussion. Marije Vogelzang, a Dutch Designer, sees Food Design as part of a larger discipline of Eating Design.

“Food Design is the actual and literal design of food where food, as matter and thus material, is being designed. This could be to enhance the eating experience, but it could also be to communicate an ideology or to fight food waste. Food design is an important part of Eating Design. Eating Design is the practice of designers working on the subject of food. The outcome is not necessarily the material of food. It can also be a system or a service. Eating design covers a large field connected to science, psychology, nature, culture and society.” - Marije Vogelzang (2008)

It has been brought to the limelight as a clear field of study in itself by anthropologists, academics and designers alike, to scientifically document the process of how we grow, consume, behave, believe or react to food.

The attitudinal change towards food has led to the emergence of Food Design as an independent discipline. The International Food Design Society (IFDS), founded in 2009 by Dr Francesca Zampollo, proposes six sub-disciplines of Food Design:

(ifooddesign.org)

Design With Food: The design process that melts, blows, pulls, foams, mixes and reassembles food as a raw material, transforming it to create something that did not exist before in terms of flavor, consistency, temperature, color and texture.

Design For Food: The design of food to be mass produced

Food Space Design or Interior Design For Food: The design of all the products useful to cut, chop, mix, contain, preserve, store, cook and present food

Food Product Design: The design of objects inspired by food

Design About Food: The design process of food spaces considering all the characteristics of the cooking and eating environment, such as interiors, materials and colors but also lighting, temperature and music, as well as the employees clothing and behaviour towards the customers

Eating Design: The design process for any eating situation where there are people interacting with food

Food has changed its role from a necessity to a consumer product (Guixé, n.d.). But for us, Food Design is about studying and observing the cultural experiences around food. It is more than just the packaging, shape, taste or the color. The geography plays a very important part in what type of food is available in different regions, but how we create meaning out of the ingredients and associate certain cultural beliefs, is what we find interesting. In extension to what Guixé believes, we are of the view that beyond a consumer product, food has taken a more proactive role in defining our actions and social behaviour. In this sense, the outcome of this thesis may fall under the category of Eating Design, as stated by the IFDS.

2.2 EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION AND XENOPHOBIA

Cultural dialogue is an integral part of today's cosmopolitan society that exists in a flat world. Its rise is driven by globalization, which defines identities, behaviour and habits of the new and local cultures. According to Beck (2000, p.18), the "clash of cultures and nationalities", is the hallmark of a cosmopolitan outlook. This means that there is an exchange of contradictory but mutual dialogue between 'the new' and 'the local'. Hence, one may not exist without the other.

However, the resurgence of nationalism in Europe, and in other parts of the world, has challenged this mutual dialogue, leading to a xenophobic attitude. As cited by Beck (2000, p.28), "Michael Billing, a British sociologist defines this xenophobic phenomena as 'banal nationalism' which he explains as "unconsciously [...] renewing [the] national identity and demarcating it from others through a host of everyday routines". Banal nationalism can occur due to the exposure to foreign ideas or goods which may provoke the invention of traditions and codify existing practices as a standard.

In contrast to Billing's 'banal nationalism', Beck talks about 'banal cosmopolitanism' in which nationalism can take a back seat through global phenomenon and occurrences. He explains this by giving an example of pop, rave, television, internet and food, which has a strong influence on the youth culture. Thus, globalisation not only interconnects political boundaries but the quality of the national social and civic behaviour.

One of the most influential factors through which people define their identities is food. But how does identity change with the change of space? According to Koc & Welsh (2000, p.1) "identities, are not fixed social constructs, but constructed and reconstructed within given social formations reflecting the existing and imagined structural constraints and lived experiences of subjects." Although, food is a key element to any culture, people adapt to culturally appropriate diets with the change in their local surroundings. Thus, it leads to reconstruction of food habits and eventually their identities. Koc and Welsh talk about a research project conducted by Welsh and associates (1998) which examines the changing food habits amongst three different ethnic groups in Toronto. According to the study these habits are dependent on the distance, time, and affordability of culturally appropriate food items. Food choices, like other cultural claims, offer insights on how people shape their identities and conform to one another.

"Food is an important contributor to both the displaced individual's and group's collective sense of identity".

-Ann Allen

These changes may be adaptive in nature but they reflect a broader cultural perception and leads to a multicultural or a cosmopolitan society.

In conclusion, food can serve as an effective medium towards building a healthy cosmopolitan society by opening a channel of communication between 'the new' and 'the local'. Understanding culture through food is an interactive process which needs documentation and sharing. Ultimately, it gives us a peek into new traditions, rituals and habits, which enhance our way of living and thinking.

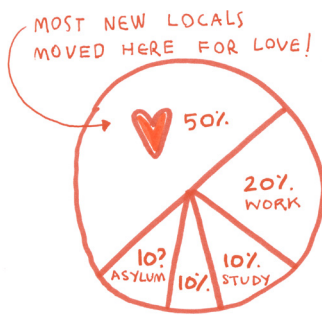
2.3 THE CONTEXT OF HELSINKI

In recent times, the attitude of native residents towards immigrants has become central to a heated political debate in Helsinki. In August 2015, Olli Immonen, a member of the newly elected True Finns Party promised to "fight until the end for our homeland and one true Finnish nation". His sentiments were widely condemned, most noticeably at the 'We have a Dream' anti racism rally attended by over ten thousand people (Helsinki Times, 2015). These events highlight the need to investigate the perception that immigrants have a negative impact on culture.

Most hostility towards immigrants is rooted in the widespread notion that they are poor, uneducated people who burden the native taxpayer's resources. Interestingly, refugees who are dependant on local resources form only 10% of the immigrant population. A recent study by Statistics Finland (Yle, 2015) revealed that 50% of foreign nationals relocate to Finland for love. Another 30% comprises of highly qualified professionals or students - who have a positive impact on the Finnish economy. Since half of the total number of immigrants settle in the Helsinki region, the capital is most strongly impacted by a change in social and cultural trends.

Of these changes in cultural trends, immigrant food culture is one of the most visible. In all parts of the world, a rise in the number of immigrants impacts the food culture positively. As Sutton states "sharing food is one of the most basic ways that shared community and identity is created" (2013, p.346). Helsinki is no exception to this, as the number of ethnic eateries is increasing hand in hand with the percentage of immigrants.

This power of immigration to enrich food culture is illustrated particularly well by Ravintolapäivä - a concept conceived in Helsinki which is now the biggest food festival in the world. It's founder, Timo Santala elaborates "it is a global movement of people wanting to have fun and build communities around food and share new experiences..." (2014, Nordic Horizons). The primary reason these 'new experiences' and the success of Ravintolapäivä comes from seasoned travellers and immigrants sharing exotic and ethnic food at their stalls.



Not only does food enrich the culture and trends of a city, sharing food is a robust tool for positive integration. As Immanuel Kant memorably said, "If you break bread with each other, you cannot break each other's neck". In other words, sharing a meal with someone facilitates an informal dialogue which is an integral part of building relationships. This type of integration is recognized by the policy makers of Finland and is recommended as a tool for cultural integration.

In order to further encourage cultural integration, a Finnish - Swedish publication was established, titled The Tool kit for Promoting Good Relations (2015).

"With the expression 'Promoting Good Relations we refer to measures for the prevention of xenophobia and similar forms of intolerance, or measures that promote equal opportunities, cooperation and positive interaction, or encourage positive attitudes between different population groups.'" - (Good Relations Tool kit, p.4)

It aims to identify ways to prevent intolerance by promoting good relations between people from diverse backgrounds. While validating the tools for good relations, the team organized an event called Food and Talks - an informal dinner and discussion between immigrants and locals. The report also states, "the relaxed atmosphere and private settings helped the participants form a more heterogeneous view of each other and to reduce prejudices on both sides" (Good Relations Tool kit, p.22-23). From these findings, we can conclude that eating together has proven to be a reliable tool for integration and conversation in the local context too.

Despite identifying food as a tool for positive integration, it is a challenge to bring people from different cultures and routines together. The diverse tastes, food rituals and social etiquette make it difficult for people to explore new cultures. We experience comfort in what is familiar to us. Unsurprisingly, this leads to segregation of communities.

A diversity of cultures can easily lead to segregated communities where people have little contact with those who are different. This isolation feeds stereotypes and negative attitudes. (Good Relations Tool kit, p.7). We thus need to find ways to motivate people to step out of their comfort zones, and only then can we work towards a shared sense of belonging.

DOMAINS OF GOOD RELATIONS ADOPTED FROM THE GOOD RELATIONS MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK.

According to the Good Relations Measurement Framework (GRMF), the four domains of good relations are attitudes, personal security, interaction with others, and participation and influence.

1. ATTITUDES

Attitudes towards others are the essence and core of good relations. According to the Good Relations Measurement Framework, “some types of (positive) attitude are necessary for good relations to exist”. The GRMF suggests that the way in which people perceive others and believe that others perceive them affect “whether people attend public events, join community organisations or communities of interest or participate in political parties, and how they perceive their relative levels of power and influence compared to others and how they react to this”.

2. PERSONAL SECURITY

Personal security, both emotional and physical, is the second domain of good relations. The GRMF claims that “the extent to which individuals [...] feel safe in a variety of public spaces is a good indicator of their level of perceived personal safety, and this in turn affects their behaviour and ability/opportunity to interact with others”. According to the GRMF, negative attitudes “can sometimes lead to outright hostility and aggression and can in turn lead to a number of different types or kinds of reactions, including [...] an avoidance of interacting with others in public places; [or] altered behaviour in public places.”

3. INTERACTION WITH OTHERS

Interaction with others provides one of the most fundamental measurements of good relations. The GRMF suggests that “a lack of interaction with a diverse range of people can lead to segregation in communities. If such segregation becomes entrenched and results in groups of people leading ‘parallel lives’, where people have little or no contact with those who are different from themselves, this can lead to a lack of understanding, perpetuate stereotypes and result in negative attitudes towards others and therefore ‘negative’ [...] relations.”

4. PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

Finally, the level of participation, experience of having an influence and opportunities to do so provide the fourth domain of good relations. The GRMF proposes that “participation is one of the outcomes of people’s experience of good relations. A person living in a place where he or she feels welcome, where attitudes towards them are positive, where there is a high level of emotional and personal security, and a high level of interaction, is more likely to participate in community activities and events”. The GRMF claims that it is important to acknowledge that “some kinds of participation can lead to conflict and tensions”.

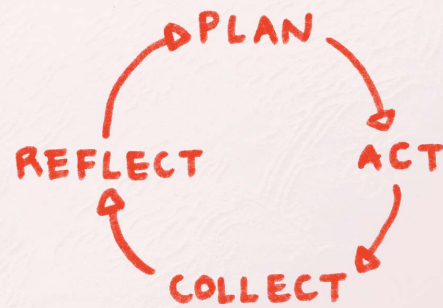
CHAPTER CONCLUSION:

To conclude, food can perform the multiple roles in positive integration of multiple cultures in Helsinki. Firstly, it can be a visible and pleasurable representation of the various cultures that exist in this city. Secondly, food can become an incentive or motivation for both native and immigrant populations to come together for an informal dialogue and interaction. Finally, it can become a tool to define the new hybrid cultures that emerge from these positive interactions. Ideally, these new cultures will create a shared sense of belonging for people and positively impact Helsinki’s socio-economic future.

From here on, we will refer natives as Old Locals and Immigrants as New Locals.

3. RESEARCH

In order to engage actively with users and identify opportunity areas, the research phase of this study follows Action Research Method. Action Research can be defined as a “reflective process of progressive problem solving” aimed at producing “practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday context of their lives” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p.2). Moreover, according to Reason and Bradbury “theories which contribute to human emancipation, to the flourishing of community, which help us reflect on our place within the ecology of the planet and contemplate our spiritual purposes, can lead us to different ways of being together, as well as providing important guidance and inspiration for practice.” In order to include other practitioners, using methods such as “questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies” may increase engagement (Evans, 2010)



This research method complements the aim of our study and facilitates the understanding of the user comprehensively. The first phase of the research consists of a service benchmarking and analysis, followed by questionnaires, and contextual inquiry. Based on the contextual understanding of the target users needs and opportunities from the first phase, the second phase explores initial ideas in the form of design interventions. Finally, the research synthesizes strategic insights to form the design output.



Photo taken during the Multicultural Rally, 2015

3.1 SERVICE LANDSCAPING AND ANALYSIS

This chapter starts with a case study analysis, conducted in order to investigate services that use food as a driver for cultural curiosity. These services are existing platforms or businesses which successfully use food as a medium for raising cultural curiosity, and facilitate face to face interactions. Landscaping and analysing existing services not only validates eating together as an effective tool, but also highlights needs and opportunity areas.



“I believe eating and sharing new cuisine is a catalyst for the sort of conversations that can lead to deeper understanding and cross-cultural empathy.”

*Illah R Nourbaksh,
Carnegie Mellon
University, (qtd. in OPEN
Magazine, July 3 2010)*

CONFLICT KITCHEN

Location: Pittsburgh; Creators: Jon Rubin, Jon Pena and Dawn Weleski
www.conflict-kitchen.org

What is Conflict Kitchen?

Conflict Kitchen is a take-out restaurant in Pittsburgh that serves food from countries that USA is in conflict with. The restaurant rotates countries periodically, in relation to current geopolitical events. During this time the kitchen hosts events, performances, discussions about culture, politics and issues within the focus region.

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

Most people might be unaware, uninterested or simply uncomfortable with the thought of having a conversation about politics. The ethnic food from an “enemy state” becomes a pathway to creating a positive and comfortable space where general public comes together to talk and share stories. For example, a sandwich wrapper includes interviews with Iranians on subjects ranging from culture to politics. Personal perspectives and experiences provide a fresh point of view, and people keep coming back for more food and conversation.

Key Takeaways:

The branding strategy for Conflict Kitchen creates a very interesting and memorable visual narrative which is consistently applied to packaging of food and digital collaterals. Since the concept has its roots in political conflict, it may be limited to an audience who may have strong political affiliations, interests or awareness.



Photo taken on Ravintolapäivä 2015

Johanna Mäkelä,
Professor of Food
Culture, University of
Helsinki (qtd. in Hels-
ingin Sanomat,
Jan 3 2012)

“Restaurant Day is a prime example of how food can give birth to a new type of communality.”

RAVINTOLAPÄIVÄ

Location: Worldwide, founded in Helsinki, Creator: Timo Santala
www.restaurantday.org

What is Ravintolapäivä?

Ravintolapäivä, or Restaurant Day is the world’s largest food carnival, where anyone can open a pop-up restaurant for a day. Every three months, thousands of people participate in organizing and visiting one-day restaurants.

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

The main motivation behind the idea of Ravintolapäivä is to enjoy new food experiences and common living environments together. People get to try cuisines or home made recipes that they might not have tasted before. Food becomes a representation and celebration of the cultures that co-exist in cities.

Key Takeaways:

Ravintolapäivä is inviting for participants who sell and buy food alike. It is a well organized and adaptable concept which has become an international brand that does not require extensive management. It is a celebration of cultures and people in a city, but can easily be corrupted by big caterers and monetary motivations. It is not designed to encourage conversation between people.



Image by New York Times

“Building trust is what we need in society. Sharing a meal is food culture at it’s finest. And having fun is never a bad idea.”

Ebba Åkerman
unitedinvitations.org

UNITED INVITATIONS

Location: Stockholm, Creator: Ebba Åkerman
www.unitedinvitations.org

What is United Invitations?

United Invitations is about food, language and social interaction. A dinner ambassador (volunteer) matches locals and immigrants, who live fairly close to each other, to share a meal at one of their homes. This is a gesture to make new locals feel welcomed by their neighbours and into the host society. The founders of United Invitations believe, that “by saying, “welcome, dinner is served!” you can let someone who has already been let into our country into our society as well.”

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

Ebba Åkerman says “any two people should be able to find something to talk about for one dinner.” These dinners are a convenient and fun way for participants to start an informal dialogue and a new life with each other.

Key Takeaways:

United Invitations is a warm welcome into somebody’s home. It also encourages people, across the world, to use the same formula and organize their own welcome dinners. However, it may not stand out as a unique initiative, and may need a boost from media coverage to sustain itself. Most importantly, people who participate in such events are those who are already receptive and welcoming of immigrants. Thus, it may not necessarily reach out to people with prejudices in order to change their point of view.



Image captured on YouTube

*Man at Dinner Party,
Come Dine with Syria
(YouTube, June 04, 2015)*

“What a lovely reason to get together! Remember Syria, have some fun. Enjoy some food and make some money for Syria. It’s better than just putting money in a box.”

COME DINE WITH SYRIA

Location: UK, Creator: humanappeal.org
www.humanappeal.org.uk/comedine

Human Appeal is a UK registered charity and a company, working towards delivering aid and development programs across 25 countries.

What is Come Dine with Syria?

Come Dine with Syria is a viral fundraising campaign created by Human Appeal. It encourages people to talk openly about the Syrian crisis and share different points of view, over a meal. The host cooks a meal using the ingredients of the Syrian food aid parcels and invites friends for dinner. By participating, a host can gain awareness and empathy about the ongoing conflicts in Syria, whilst raising money to help displaced families in desperate need. The value of the meal is then donated to raise money for food packets. At the end of the dinner, the host nominates a guest to be the next host.

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

By sharing a meal, people come together in a social atmosphere and talk about the events in Syria. Often, one or more guests are Syrian nationals. In this manner, participants develop a sense of solidarity and empathy towards people displaced within Syria.

Key Takeaways:

Come Dine with Syria is a good example of viral peer to peer campaigning. It may be highly motivating to be nominated by a friend to host the next meal, after having participated in a dinner. Although participants are encouraged to reflect, but if a guest lacks an in depth knowledge on the situation in Syria, it may not lead to any new awareness or insight.



Image by Let's Eat Together

“Welcome to the Let’s Eat Together Community!”

Fb/letseattogether

LET’S EAT TOGETHER

Location: Helsinki, Creator: Timo Santala
www.facebook.com/lets.eat.together

What is Let’s Eat Together?

Let’s Eat Together is a facebook group through which users can invite friends and strangers to share a meal or get an invitation from others in the Helsinki area.

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

In this initiative, food is the primary reason for people to get together. A host may invite friends and strangers to try her/his new recipe, a favourite coffee shop, or to a Sunday picnic. Organising an event by choice, inviting people and then sharing a meal taps into existing social habits and adds value to them.

Key Takeaways:

It is a novel food concept for the city of Helsinki. But Facebook as a platform does not facilitate much interaction as there may be more people willing to be guests rather than host. People may not generally step out of their comfort zone and proactively look for new experiences or widen their social circles.



Image by Tea With Strangers



Image by Social Kitchen

TeawithStrangers.com

“Everyone is interesting! But you don’t discover that when you’re staring at a screen.”

TEA WITH STRANGERS

Location: USA, Creator: Ankit Shah
www.teawithstrangers.com

What is Tea with Strangers?

Tea With Strangers is a community organization which aims to make cities feel more like neighbourhoods by breaking social barriers between strangers. By understanding “strangers”, one may feel a lot more comfortable. Tea with Strangers is about initiating and bringing back the value of a conversation.

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

In this initiative, food or tea is the by product of strangers getting together. Every time a user hosts a tea time, they practice being inclusive, attentive, and curious without inhibition.

Key Takeaways:

It is a good platform to meet new people and form new connection with no strings attached. The messaging on the website is fun and engaging and the strong novelty or curiosity factor motivates people to join. Hosts are highly motivated and maybe the cultural champions of their neighbourhood.

“All people have power. Unless we exercise our power, it abuses us.”

The Overtakers
valtaajat.fi/

SOCIAL KITCHEN

Location: Helsinki, Creator: Jyrki Tsutsunen and Jaakko Blomberg
www.valtaajat.fi/socialkitchen/

What is Social Kitchen?

Social Kitchen is a pop up restaurant run by unemployed and marginalised people in the city of Helsinki. Together with chef Jyrki Tsutsunen and Jaakko Blomberg, the participants organise pop up restaurants in different locations and with different themes.

How does food encourage cultural curiosity?

In this initiative, food acts as a service and does not encourage cultural curiosity directly. The pop up restaurant helps the participants regain their pride and gives them the confidence to function in their day to day lives. For the patrons it is a social tool where they initiate polite conversation with their dinner partners for the evening.

Key Takeaways:

Food is used as an activism tool in order to engage the marginalised people of the society. It relies heavily on donations by the patrons and people who share the same goal. It focuses on the esteem needs of the specific user group. Sporadic events and no long term engagement might prove to be its weak point.

SWOT ANALYSIS

First, a SWOT Analysis method is used to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for each service individually. This gives a good overview and creates an understanding of each case study and highlights the strong points and challenges.

CONFLICT KITCHEN

STRENGTH

- Clear idea and concept
- Strong branding that can be adapted to new collaterals and applications
- Use of collaterals and brand to tell stories
- Memorable packaging which draws media attention and coverage
- Extends the debate beyond the restaurant

OPPORTUNITY

- Easy to adapt idea, and scalable
- Experience can be adapted digitally into stories, such as Humans of New York

WEAKNESS

- Requires a high volume of research, content creation and design
- One Nation as central focus

THREAT

- Conversation is rooted in conflict, and may get dominated by heated political discussion.

RAVINTOLAPÄIVÄ

STRENGTH

- Self organised and voluntary - low investment
- No imposed rules and regulations for the day
- Independent hosts branded strongly
- Repeats at a set pattern
- Exposure to a variety of cuisines
- High monetary incentive

OPPORTUNITY

- Easy to adapt idea, and scalable
- To create interactions and businesses for the months between the Ravintolapäivä events
- A platform for more experiments around eating

WEAKNESS

- Often motivated by monetary gains
- Cultural interaction may get neglected
- No guidelines or suggestions within the brand emphasising a cultural exchange

THREAT

- Big food chains and trucks, defeats the purpose of the festival
- Cases of racism or segregation may go unseen
- Personal connections may get lost with increased commercialization

UNITED INVITATIONS

STRENGTH

- Simple and easy to follow template
- No rules and regulations
- Repeats at a set pattern
- No set template of what to talk about

OPPORTUNITY

- Easy to adapt idea and scalable
- Nudges to motivate participants more often
- Plugging into existing platforms where people are eating together
- Testimonials to make the event viral

WEAKNESS

- No collaterals and brand elements
- Many different identities/ names
- Needs media and publicity to keep momentum
- Requires participants to remain motivated and proactive at all times
- Appeals to those who are already tolerant

THREAT

- Can get lost among multiple similar initiatives
- Can lose its relevance with time with loss of media hype

COME DINE WITH SYRIA

STRENGTH

- No material investment
- Nominations may spread awareness virally
- Trusted distribution channels (for donations)
- Low threshold for getting participants
- Starts a dialogue around the crisis, at dinners
- Awareness about Syrian food culture
- Asks the user to be proactive

OPPORTUNITY

- People’s need to get involved
- Dining activity makes the task appealing, easier and incentivised
- Scalable

WEAKNESS

- Unlikely in-depth discussion about the crisis
- High chances of “us” donating to “them”
- Visually misleading campaign branding

THREAT

- Dependent on public tide of sympathy
- Campaign may go unnoticed
- The digital appeal of #
- Sharing can be stronger than physically nominating 1 person at the dinner

LET’S EAT TOGETHER

STRENGTH

- Very low threshold for participation
- Taps into our social habits, like creating Facebook events and networking online
- Free to administer and maintain
- Adaptable to a person’s interests and motivations.

OPPORTUNITY

- To strike a balance with habits and behaviours on the one hand, and challenge comfort zones on the other

WEAKNESS

- Does not challenge comfort zone
- Lopsided demand makes the group inactive
- External motivation or nudges for people to host events and call guests
- Low marketing
- Depends only on word of mouth

THREAT

- People don’t push the envelop with whom they invite
- Facebook platform: can get lost amongst other social pages

TEA WITH STRANGERS

STRENGTH

- Self organised and voluntary
- No strings attached
- Independent hosts
- Good for tourists and new locals
- Quick and easy
- Tea is a good tool- gives the impression of informality

OPPORTUNITY

- Easy to adapt idea and scalable
- Can be plugged into a tourism platform
- A local integration guide
- Can translate itself into different scenarios apart from tea

WEAKNESS

- No shows
- No sign ups for a hosted tea event
- Can lead to awkward interactions
- No way of vetting people in the platform
- Can turn into a large group

THREAT

- No visible gain for the host
- Monotonous
- Comfort in familiarity

SOCIAL KITCHEN

STRENGTH

- Dedicated patrons
- Opportunity for people to regain pride and confidence within the society
- No limit towards contribution for the food
- Well established chefs
- Exciting food themes
- Social in a way that strangers eat together

OPPORTUNITY

- Can be a workshop format
- Needs visibility
- Involving the help in more ways than just behind the kitchen

WEAKNESS

- Heavy investment in terms of setting pop-up restaurant
- No shows
- No monetary gain for the help
- Interaction b/w patrons and others are less
- Requires more effort to get the marginalised people on board

THREAT

- Addiction
- Laws against hiring people who may not have had clearance form the government

	CK	RP	UI	CDWS	LET	TWS	SK
FACE TO FACE DIALOGUE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
LOW THRESHOLD FOR PARTICIPATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
ADDRESSING STEREOTYPES	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
VISIBLE BRAND & RECALL VALUE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SCALABILITY	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
VIALE BUSINESS MODEL	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
MONETIZATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Effective ● Partially Effective ● Not Effective

INDICATORS:

- 1. Face to face dialogue:** Does this service encourage dialogue?
- 2. Low threshold for participation:** Is this service easy to adopt and use?
- 3. Addressing Stereotypes:** Does the service encourage a critique of biases and stereotypes?
- 4. Visible Brand & Recall Value:** Is this a memorable brand with a communication strategy?
- 5. Scalable:** Can this service be easily adapted to other locations?
- 6. Viable Business model:** Does the service have a business strategy that can sustain itself?
- 7. Monetization:** Does the service entail the use of money for transactions?

SEVEN POINT ANALYSIS

The observations from the SWOT method are used to compare and analyse the services together. The markers for this second analysis is based on the indicators specifically created for, and relevant to the aim of the study.

Here, the analysis shows ways in which each of these case studies facilitate cultural curiosity, while also making their services viable. Some of the services involve monetary transactions - such as Ravintolapäivä for payments and Come Dine With Syria for donations. Others, like Let's Eat Together or Tea With Strangers allow users to choose whether they want to use money, or barter services etc. Conflict Kitchen actively curates conversations around cultural stereotypes and biases, while United Invitations does not guide the nature of interactions or conversation. Let's Eat Together depends on word-of-mouth publicity, while Social Kitchen depends more on media attention to spread the word about their service.

Key Takeaways:

By creating this matrix, we can identify opportunities and prioritise our goals. Almost all these services are scalable and facilitate face to face dialogue successfully. However, users may not find these services easily amongst the sea of other similar initiatives, and might not be keen enough to participate. This presents an opportunity for the study to find ways in which people can be motivated to access and use such services more effectively.

3.2 CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

The primary goal of field research is to gain knowledge about the local practices as well as understand the needs and motivations of possible users and stakeholders. The first part presents the results of a semi-structured questionnaire sent out to potential users. In order to reduce variables and focus on a user base we relate to personally, we sent the questionnaires to two groups - Indian Nationals and International locals in Helsinki.

The second part covers the main findings obtained from interviews with key food culture advocates - grocers, asylum seekers, students, restaurateurs, policy makers etc. Consequently, in order to validate our findings and initial ideas, we conducted cultural probes in various spaces and events.

Through these conversations, we observed and understood their frustrations and motivations. The chapter ends with a summary of possible routes for the design output.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

The questionnaire aims to find the general opinion on cultural interaction between the locals, expats and the Indian community. One questionnaire is directed to non-Indians, while another to Indian nationals living in Helsinki.

For non-Indians, the multiple choice questions range from whether or not they have visited the Indian Market, to how non-natives can feel at home in Helsinki. There were 29 responses from people with different cultural background and professions. Some answers support and validate the assumptions of the thesis. For example: Recipes and in store recommendations would encourage users to frequent the Indian Market. The responses also presented new information. For example: for a question about what Indian food ingredients are usually stocked in their kitchen cabinet, responses indicate that most of non-Indians have cooked with Indian ingredients before. Almost everyone replied openly to the question of stereotyping cultures and how they want people to perceive them and vice versa.

In the questionnaire for Indians living in Helsinki, we aimed to learn about how integrated the participants felt into the Finnish culture, and if they faced any challenges in their day to day lives. Some questions asked them to rate situations based on the level of difficulty. For example when asked to rate the challenges of living in Finland, most of the answers ranged from difficult - manageable.

Key Takeaways:

The responses validate the absence of a proactive social platforms to immerse one's self into another foreign culture. Facebook, Meetup and Couchsurfing were named to be the popular services to meet new people through a common interest. However, all these platforms may cause information overload, thus making it difficult to find suitable happenings and sort through other unrelated events.

..THINGS THAT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL MORE AT HOME IN HELSINKI..

Male, 34, Indian

“More multicultural everything. More diverse restaurants/coffee shops that don’t adapt their recipes to Finnish taste. Affordable prices so that it’s possible to go out more often.”

Female, 44, British

“Engagement in Finnish communities. Discovering points of similarity rather than points of difference. Sharing information about their culture with others.”

Female, 24, Italian

“Small things that you don’t find on visitfinland.com! Underground scene, anecdotes from the past, a recipe, being involved in recurring traditions, a special place for someone..”

Male, 34, Indian

“There should be an Indo-Finnish society. Orientation of Finnish culture. Indian journals in Finland.”

Male, 29, Indian

“More vegetarian food. More variety of cheaper Indian food. More opportunities to meet Finns and people from other Nationalities through food.”

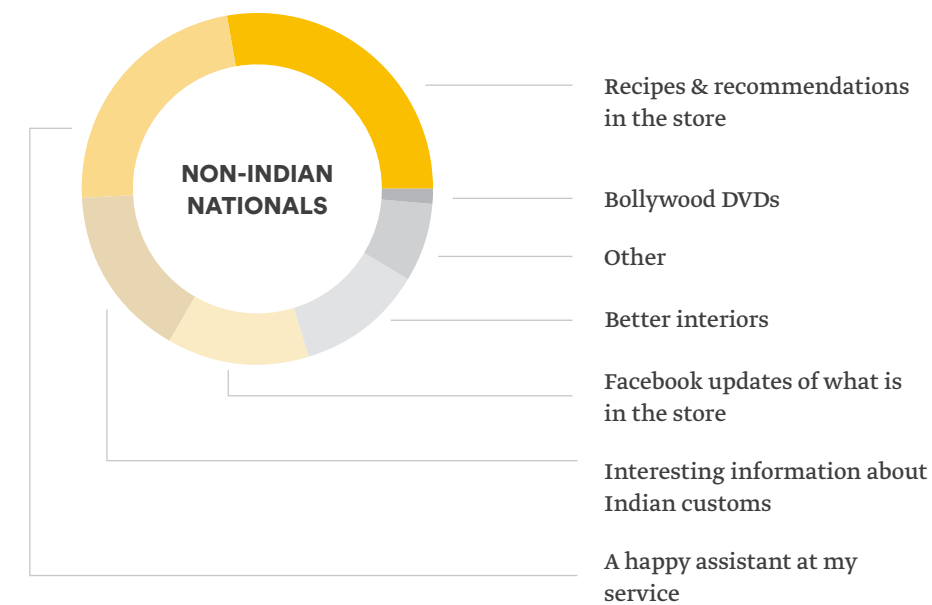
Male, 28, Indian

“Better/easier access to street food. Different ways to socialise. The sense is that non-Indians don’t hang out cheaply enough..it takes some time before one does home things..certain amount of time, effort and money has to be spent at bars, events before anything more personal happens.”

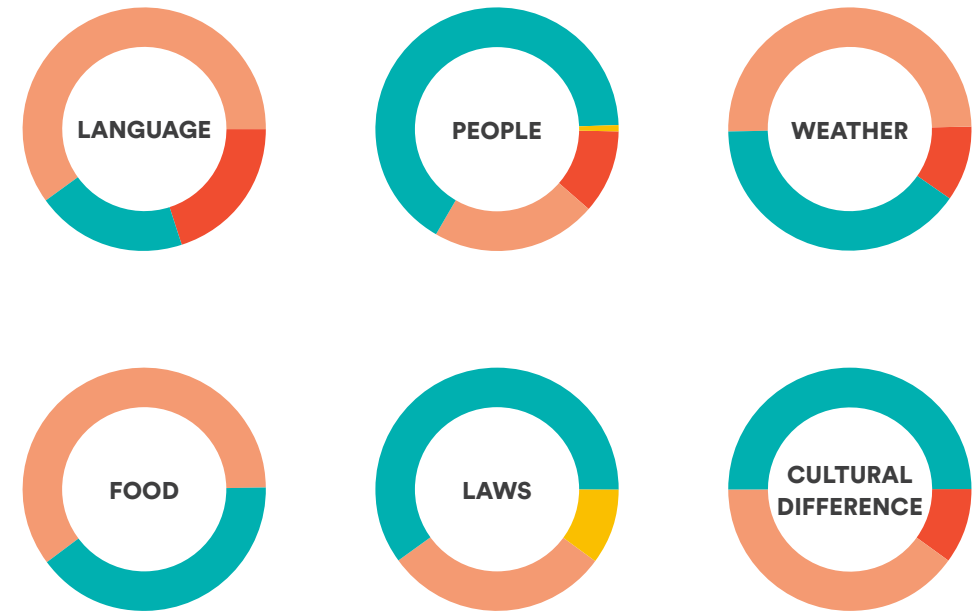
THE BEST PLATFORM FOR CULTURAL EXCHANGE?



WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO VISIT THE INDIAN STORE MORE OFTEN?



RATE THESE CHALLENGES OF LIVING IN FINLAND?



● Easy ● Manageable ● Difficult ● Almost impossible

An excerpt from the questionnaire directed towards Indian nationals living in Finland. In general, responses range from manageable to difficult in terms of the challenges of living in Finland.

For the full questionnaire see Appendix

INTERVIEWS

ADVOCATES

INITIATIVE

SOURCE OF MOTIVATION

PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Timo Santala
Head of Food Culture Strategy,
City of Helsinki

Co-founder of Ravintolapäivä

To build a vibrant food culture in Helsinki.

Less successful effort - Let's Eat Together, where people can invite strangers for a shared meal via a Facebook group. The primary reason for its failure was a lopsided demand - with many people wanting to sign up for dinners, but not enough people posting invitations.

Timo emphasised on the need for nudges in such endeavours, without which these activities lose steam. His thoughts on nudges made us recognize the importance of a self sustained systems and equal participations and dialogues from both parties.



Jaakko Blomberg
Co-founder & Producer of Yhteismaa ry

Co-founder of Social Kitchen

Fight against any form of "social exclusion".

The participants of Social Kitchen may not be the most reliable as it is mostly based on a strong intrinsic motivation for self betterment.

In this case food is used as an activism tool to bring people together and work towards a positive cause. Conflict Kitchen takes the same approach, the agenda for which is to break stereotypes and generate positive impact through workshops and conferences whereas Social Kitchen is a local solution to a global phenomenon.



Pekka Niskanen
Media artist, video and filmmaker

Maker of the documentary film "Laoufi"

"Injustice is always relevant." Emphasised that food is a way of showing respect towards a culture.

"Until recent times, in Helsinki, food has been more about survival and health, and less about pleasure. We are now experimenting with food trends, in contrast to Paris which continues to celebrate its rich culinary traditions, instead of chasing trends."

Niskanen reflected on the difference between the eating culture in Helsinki and Paris. He also emphasised on the importance of talking about any form of injustice happening towards immigrants.



Pranuthi Muggalla
Medical researcher, Doctorate Student at University of Helsinki

Food enthusiast

Uses her culinary skills as a way of socialising and interacting with people. She takes up a lot of catering gigs and actively participates in food festivals. Given the opportunity, she likes talking about the stories behind Indian food traditions.

"Even if I learn the language, I won't have people to talk to"

The most interesting insight we got from talking to Pranuthi was that she believes that learning Finnish will not help her with social interactions. Despite having lived here for many years, she did not feel a strong sense of belonging to Helsinki.



Amal Laala
Socially engaged artist






Co-creator of Our Stories = Our Cuisines

Organises cooking and storytelling workshops. She told us about the Finnish services such as language classes, Friend of an Immigrant Mom etc. which help foreigners integrate them into Finnish culture.

She pointed out that Finland has great information systems, laws and social services. However, interacting with people is difficult, which hinders complete integration.

By talking to her and other students working in this space, we observed that workshops require a lot of effort to organize and advertise. In comparison events that are periodic or consistent (like Ravintolapäivä,) are more successful.

INTERVIEWS

INDIVIDUAL	INITIATIVE	SOURCE OF MOTIVATION	PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	KEY TAKEAWAYS
 Store Staff <i>Indian Market, Helsinki</i>	Co-owner of Indian Market, Helsinki	To provide Indian and Nepalese food ingredients to the community.	On one hand, the store owners said that people here are “clever enough” to Google all their doubts and thus do not require assistance from anyone. On the other hand, the questionnaire for non-Indian nationals revealed that having someone to guide them in the store would prove to be more usefful.	We identified this as an opportunity for us to use the ethnic stores as a way for new locals in Helsinki to introduce their culture to an old local of Helsinki.
 Shamala Dasari <i>Food entrepreneur</i>	Owner of Sham’s Kitchen food truck	Introduce Helsinki to South Indian delicacies.	The process of starting a food business is long and tedious, due to the high hygiene and food safety standards issued by the City authorities. This may discourage independent entrepreneurs.	Shamala further validated our belief that food is a great conversation starter and a catalyst for cultural curiosity. We observed that, similar to the staff at the Indian Store, Sham’s Food Truck did not have any visual communication strategy or branding to support their product.
 Indian-Bengali Families <i>Dependents & Working professionals</i>	A family get together	Friends to call family.	Comfort in familiarity may not lead to cross cultural dialogue.	Our assumption about the feeling of boredom and isolation within the family’s social circle was unfounded. However, we also noticed how comfortable they were, surrounded by people and a culture that was familiar to them. Each family attending this party was from Bengal, an eastern state in India, speaking their regional language and having a regional cuisine.
 Activist <i>Multicultural Rally</i>	Participant at the Multicultural rally	In response to the Finns party member Olli Immonen’s comment on Facebook, 15000 people attended the Meillä on unelma (We Have a Dream) rally at Kansalaistori (Citizens’ Square) opposing racism and hatred in all its forms.	An imminent threat to the basic human right to a fulfilling life. According to her cross cultural dialogue and multi culturalism was secondary.	We spoke to an activist who was of the view that Olli Immonen’s comment was a blow to basic human rights. She told us that the rise of Right wing ideologies was becoming more acceptable because by tolerating racism, it is giving the unnecessary space for these ideologies to grow and spread.
 Finnish Family <i>Multicultural Rally</i>	Participants at the Multicultural rally	Support the dream of a vibrant multicultural Helsinki.	Issues of racism and discrimination needs to be spoken about in public and people need to come forward to voice their opinions.	The Finnish family told us about the various support groups for Finnish and immigrant mothers, an initiative from the Child Welfare Services in Helsinki. She told us that they interact with immigrant mothers through play groups on a daily basis.

CULINARY TRIP THROUGH INDIA - MENU
 OF A GENERATION - BRANDING OF ETHNIC
 STORES (ON GOOGLE MAPS) - COLLECT
 ANECDOTES ON CULTURE CLASH - SHARE
 A DABBA - EATING TOGETHER ON SKYPE -
 ONE POT COMFORT RECIPES - CULTURAL
 CHAMPION WALKS - FOOD HACKS - DIARY
 OF A POTATO - FOOD AS A PERSONA - FOOD
 AS A NEUTRAL VOICE OF REASON - THE
 CLICHED INDIAN: SHOW FOOD VARIETY AND
 EATING HABITS LABELLED BY THEIR CULTURE -
 LIFE SAVER RECIPES - A WHITE TABLE: A
 NEUTRAL SETTING WITH 1 THING HIGHLIGHT
 ED - JUXTAPOSE SOUND, CUTLERY, VISUALS -
 WRITING ANALOG STORIES AND RECIPE
 LETTERS - OPEN / COMMUNAL KITCHEN: MAKE
 YOUR OWN RESTAURANT - CHANGE DONATION
 TO BARTER - PHOTOS COMPARING KITCHENS
 OF PAST AND PRESENT - PODCAST RECIPES
 THAT MAKE YOU CURIOUS - DISCUSS
 STEREOTYPES VIA FOOD METAPHORS: INTER
 PRET A SHY PERSON / HAPPY PERSON /
 NOISY PERSON AS FLAVOURS AND TURN
 PEOPLE INTO RECIPES - AN ALGORITHM
 THAT TURNS PEOPLE INTO RECIPES SO THAT
 THEY ARE WHAT THEY EAT - RECIPES BASED
 ON AN IMMIGRANT'S SEVEN SINS - FOOD
 IS CULTURE: SHOW THAT FINNISH FOOD
 FLAVOURS MIRROR THEIR ETIQUETTE; HUMBLE
 SIMPLE FELLOW - DIGITAL TRENDS AND
 VOLUNTARY WORK AROUND KITCHENS, LIKE
 SEVA IN INDIAN TEMPLES - WEIRD/AWKWARD
 QUESTIONS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM -
 FOOD DELIVERY PLATFORM BY WOMEN:
 TACKLING BOREDOM, DIGNITY AND PAVING
 NEW LIFE - FOOD THAT TALKS BACK TO
 YOU WHILE YOU EAT / CONNECTS 2 PEOPLE
 EATING SAME FOOD AT THE SAME TIME

FIELD RESEARCH

In order to test some initial ideas in our target user's social world, we conducted a few design interventions consisting of contextual observations, inquiry, and design probes. These were conducted in different events, platforms and spaces: Indian Market, Ravintolapäivä, Let's Eat Together and Refugee Centre.



Ravintolapäivä, 2015



Multicultural Rally, 2015



Afternoon with kids at
Metsälän vastaanot-
tokeskus, 2015

Refugees welcome din-
ner, Miestentie 3, 2015

Cultural Probe at the Indian Market

Branding within the ethnic stores did not represent the country or the community. So, we thought ethnic stores could become a viable touch-point for cultural immersion. Though people perceive India as a colourful and culturally rich nation, the stores seems a bit questionable or odd for people to venture into. Using India in Helsinki as a pilot space, we spent some time around the store. We observed that there was no assistance, signage or visual guides for what to do or buy in the store.

In an interview with the owner of the store, he said “Finns are smart enough to google whatever they want to know.” But in interviews with people from different nationalities, they said “a little help or cues for what to get would help me not feel lost or confused.”

We realised that there was room for some intervention and therefore, we tried small nudges to enhance the experience in the store. For this, we designed a poster intended to share interesting Indian food etiquette, stories or similarities, with the shoppers.

Key Takeaways:

Although we thought it would be a good idea to put up a poster, there was no way of finding out if it had any impact on the customers. Once we spoke to the store manager, it became clear that customers only came in with the purpose of buying ingredients and seldom paid attention to printed matter on walls and doors. In order to grab their attention a combination of both digital and analogue solution had to be thought of.

Refer to the Appendix for the poster



Indian Market,
Hakaniemi, 2015



Interaction with Asylum Seekers

1. Refugee center afternoon with kids - sweets and treats

In July 2015, we joined members of the International Association for Migration who were hosting an event for children at a Refugee reception centre in Niittylänpolku. Participating in this event gave us an opportunity to observe the space and interact with asylum seekers directly.

We felt that the space was uninviting and unemotional, with barbed wires running along the boundary walls. Most of the communal spaces were occupied by men, and there were no children playing outdoors until our event began.

Once we began interacting with the kids and their mothers, we did not require a common language to communicate. We talked about film stars, food in the kitchens, social media, weather etc. Iraqi and Finnish mothers bonded over their children.

While their application is in process, asylum seekers have no access to integration services offered by the Government authorities. For almost the entire time (often for over 1 year) they are solely dependent on the system, without much freedom to move around or explore. They expressed to us that even though they felt relieved to have escaped conflict, they still felt like they were in a limbo.

Afternoon with kids at Metsälän vastaanottokeskus, 2015



Image taken by Katju Aro for the Welcome Kit Project, Aalto University.

2. Refugee Dinner

Our experience at the asylum center (Metsäläntie 4) and the current political climate of Europe motivated us to explore this user group further. Over the next 3 months, we interviewed asylum seekers who are now residents of Finland, groups at the reception centers, administration and social workers who are managing the asylum & immigration process.

We first spoke to Boodi Kabbani, who arrived from Damascus and settled in Espoo in 2014. After 1 year of waiting and going through 5 interviews, he was granted the refugee status in Finland. Boodi's initial reaction to the news was "Oh my God, the North Pole!". He packed his life in a bag and flew to Helsinki. Though he received a warm welcome from social services and was given a comfortable accommodation, he felt extremely lonely. He never saw his neighbours, felt frustrated, and was unable to feel at ease for a very long time. Eventually he met a Finnish acquaintance who introduced him to social groups and activities.

From this interaction we learnt that even though Boodi had arrived to Helsinki under very unique and difficult circumstances, his experience of settling into the city was not different from ours. We could relate to his appreciation of the systemic conveniences of Helsinki on one hand, and the social isolation on the other. This means that a solution designed for the inclusion of asylum seekers can also cater to voluntary and temporary immigrants like students, and vice versa.

At a reception center in Punavuori, we spoke to Ali & Peyman who had arrived from Iraq recently. Talking to them reaffirmed the fact that though their primary needs of safety, security had been addressed, their secondary needs were being neglected. They felt that they lacked a sense of purpose,



Refugees welcome dinner, Refugee Welcome Gift Project, Aalto University, Miestentie 3, 2015

and were overwhelmed by the feeling of alienation and boredom.

Using our insights of food acting as a tool for cultural dialogue, we inquired about any provisions to involve the residents in kitchen tasks. We were informed by the reception centre administration, that protocol and regulations would not allow them to cook.

Though we were unable to tackle these bureaucratic challenges, we could still test if eating together could create a cultural curiosity and comfort. The outcome was a dinner organized by Aalto students in the Miestentie campus. 10 International students invited 20 asylum seekers from Iraq. To make the cooking process as informal and engaging as possible, we arranged ingredients and tools to bake Pizzas, and encouraged everyone to customize their own and share it with everyone. This was a successful effort, as it made the students and asylum seekers mingle, converse and work as a team. We also discovered that one gentleman was a chef before he was displaced, and he was thrilled to demonstrate some tips with us!

Key Takeaways:

Once again, cooking and eating together became the catalyst for conversation. Due to the bureaucratic challenges, we did not take the asylum seekers as our core target user. But at the same time, a lot of their experiences complement ours as new locals, and has thus influenced our final design outcome.



Let's Eat Together

From our conversations with Timo Santala (refer to page 52) and analysis of Let's Eat Together (refer to page 40), we deduced that there was a clear imbalance in supply and demand, since more people wanted to attend dinner, and few wanted to host. Thus, instead of setting up our own event we decided to host a dinner and invite strangers from the Let's Eat Together community.

We put up an event description requesting cultural champions to join us for dinner. A cultural champion is a person well versed with her/his native culture. The host was to be a cultural champion from India, and would cook a traditional meal for the guests.

Key Takeaways:

Contradictory to our expectations, there were no sign ups for the event. Although the exact reason is unknown, we felt that our event description might have been overwhelming. For our interventions here on, we did not emphasize on any expected skills or cultural knowledge from participants.

Event Invite on Let's Eat Together

Search for people, places and things

LOKU Edit Profile

MY EVENTS

- 28 Upcoming
- Subscribed
- Past
- Create

Feed your cultural curiosity

19 SEPT Let's Eat Together With Cultural Champions

Public · Hosted by Lisa Lee and Disha Roy

Details

The Match Box Project is looking for 4 Cultural Champions to share an Indian meal with.

A Cultural Champion is a person (bordering on neophilia) belonging to a different culture or nationality, who gives a personal view and taste of their own diverse cultural backgrounds. Someone who isn't shy about talking about their differences, similarities through any means possible. All in all a really swell person. So if you have something new to share with us about your culture, through drinks, candies, desserts, dance moves or just plain interesting stories, we would love to have you over as our Champion guests.

On the menu: We will be serving a popular North Indian vegetarian cuisine called 'Rajma Chawal' - Kidney Beans cooked in Indian spices, served with rice and a side of sweet yogurt and pickle. We want this event to be full of stories, cultural anecdotes and enthusiasm.

If you think you're one of our cultural champions then send in your

GUESTS

1	5	1
interested	went	invited



Ravintolapäivä, 2015



Ravintolapäivä

Ravintolapäivä is a day when people are out hunting for food from all over the world. It seemed like a good opportunity for us to reach out to people and gather insights. We set up an Indian street food stall three goals in mind. Firstly, to talk to people about their preferred platforms for social interactions and cultural exposure. Secondly, to test the concept of Do-it-Yourself packages of food, so as to introduce people to new ingredients and how to use them. Thirdly, we tested if we could take money out of the equation and get people to trade food from their stalls for the food we offered to them.

When we asked people about preferred platforms for socio - cultural interactions, their answers ranged from social media platforms and professional networks to travelling and experimenting with cuisines. For example, a couple that visited our stall were on a mission to try out foods from as many different countries as possible on that particular day.

For our second idea - the Do-it-Yourself packaging, we did not have the opportunity to observe people's response. Although our packaging did attract people, we underestimated the crowds and overestimated how much time a person would spend at our stall. Thus, we were unable to validate how appealing cooking instructions and culture stories would be to a user.

Our final experiment, barter, yielded the most surprising results. We carried trays of our snack and lemonade from stall to stall asking people if they wished to trade food for food. This attempt was extremely successful, and we found that the price was not important factor in the trade. Almost everyone was willing to exchange a dish from their stall for ours, which made us realise that people's motivations at Ravintolapäivä may not purely be monetary.

This experiment proved Hann and Hart's point that "relations marked by the absence of money are the model of personal integration and free association, of what we take to be familiar (home)" (Hann and Hart 2011: 171).

Key Takeaways:

Of all our ideas, bartering food for food generated the most enthusiastic response. As we experienced previously with our Let's Eat Together event (page number), people are not intrinsically motivated by cultural information. Once again, we understood that in order to excite people, the emphasis should be on a culinary experience rather than sharing cultural trivia.



3.3 LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS

Through the action research and interactions with potential user groups and stakeholders, we validated some of our initial assumptions and gathered new insights. These learnings were categorised under five strategic insights. We used these strategic insights to identify a viable target user, context and the most important challenges to be addressed.

1. COMFORT IN FAMILIARITY

Both old and new locals are more comfortable in social circles with people who have cultural backgrounds and habits similar to their own. Even on platforms such as Let's Eat Together, people make new connections, but usually with others from very similar cultural backgrounds. As observed at the Bengali Birthday Dinner (refer to page 52), new locals too, prefer to be isolated from Finnish culture rather than stepping out of their comfort zone.

Opportunity: As stated by The Good Relations Tool kit (refer to page 26), this behaviour can lead to stereotyping and segregation of communities. Thus, our first opportunity is to counter stereotyping.

2. LACK FOR PROACTIVE SERVICES

User groups such as new students are keen on finding new friends and experimenting with activities. Most of this information is accessed through Facebook or other similar social networks. However, after some time, people find it exhausting to search and go for events that often turn out to be uninteresting. The new locals also become conscious of their disproportionate dependence on the Finnish classmates and the old locals of Helsinki.

Opportunity: Currently, a majority of the onus is on the motivation of new locals to create social connections. The challenge is to balance the effort three ways between the old locals, new locals and a service that connects them to each other.

3. NEED FOR EMPHASIS ON SECONDARY NEEDS

While the most basic needs of new locals are well taken care of, their secondary needs are neglected. Finding accommodation, opening a bank account and getting paperwork done are easy and efficient in Helsinki, but meeting people and making friends is difficult.

Opportunity: This is a challenge specifically relevant to social practices and norms that are distinctly different from the ones in Finland. It creates an opportunity for us to design a service that encourages and supports social needs.

4. SPORADIC INTERVENTIONS AND EFFORTS

During our research, we found many activists who run workshops, exhibitions and short term events that tackle issues related to integration and culture using food as a tool. We learnt that organising such events need a lot of planning and resources, but they do not always have a long term or widespread impact.

Opportunity: Keeping this in mind, we aimed to design a service that can be revisited by people and help create a habit of cultural curiosity.

5. POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION AMONG FOOD & CULTURE ACTIVISTS

One of our most encouraging learnings is the sheer volume of entrepreneurs and students who are doing their bit in food activism. Be it Froodly, that reduces supermarket food wastage, or Ravintolapäivä where anyone can set up their own restaurant - there is no shortage of valuable and unique initiatives. However, often these activists are not aware of each other's work.

Opportunity: If we can create a platform where these players collaborate and support each other, there will be room for bigger conversation and great ideas. One such example is when Froodly collaborated with Ravintolapäivä to give out free ingredients for restaurants to use in their kitchens. Instead of re-inventing the wheels, we wanted our solution to allow and increase access to these other artists, foodies and activists.

POSSIBLE ROUTES AHEAD

1. COMMUNITY BASED PLATFORM FOR CULTURAL PARTICIPATION
2. REDESIGN IMMIGRANT WELCOME MATERIAL
3. STEREOTYPE BUSTING GAMES
4. FOOD WALKS WITH CULTURAL CHAMPIONS
6. FOOD DELIVERY PLATFORMS BY ASYLUM SEEKERS
7. FOLLOWING STORIES AROUND ONE INGREDIENT
8. A BARTER FOOD COMMUNITY

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

During the field research we immersed ourselves into the local food community by conducting interviews with various food culture advocates and by participating in existing practices or events. The knowledge gathered from these experiences resulted in gaining key strategic insights leading towards the development of a design output.

The interviews were a juxtaposition between the literature and the current local context. In relation to the existence of the global trend of grass-root food movements, we think Helsinki is still at the brink of such a trend. Thus, it seems to be the opportune moment for us to conduct this study and develop a solution towards building welcoming communities. Furthermore, the motivational aspects found when conducting the interviews (section 3), such as the lack of a cross cultural platform, difficulty in breaking the ice with the locals due to a language barrier and the search for the feeling of belongingness as frequently cited by the new and old locals including the activists, presented a clear need and an opportunity area. Therefore, this falls in alignment between the literature study, the global service landscape and the context of Helsinki.

The local food initiatives and events cover a wide range of ideas and concepts and may have small sporadic effect in different areas but the number of participants in the one-off event is low. According to us, advocates with similar intentions may benefit from each other if given the right platform to collaborate. Helsinki thus proves to be a solid ground for small alternative food movements, which seem scattered, but can be made virtuous through collaborations and partnerships. As Nicholas Toretta (2014, p.91) rightly observes in his study about grass-root practices on sustainability, that the local actors through their local initiatives may be labelled as “early adopters” of global practices and events. The main challenge for which is to reach a wider audience.

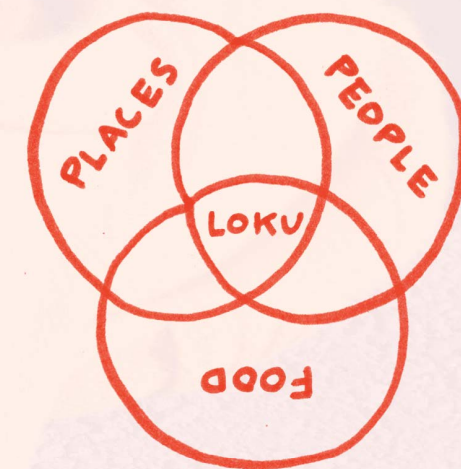


Photo taken during the Multicultural Rally, 2015

4. DESIGNING THE SERVICE

This section presents the development of the design brief and the subsequent design output. The aim is to create a viable concept for “a proactive platform for new and old locals to interact”.

It starts with defining and presenting the design principles which emerged from the research insights. It is followed by complementary research as part of the design process which includes benchmarking, stakeholder mapping, personas and customer journeys.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. BOTTOMS UP APPROACH: PEOPLE PUSH POLICIES

2. FACE TO FACE INTERACTION

3. SIMPLE, FUN, ENGAGING

4. DESIGN FOR CURIOSITY: HIDE, NOT SEEK

5. DESIGN HABITS

4.1 DESIGN BRIEF

In order to process all our research findings and design a service, we found it essential to articulate our primary goals and desired outcomes. The Design Brief helped maintain a clear focus through the long process of mapping the service, identifying our core user group and branding.

What: A service for bringing together different stakeholders involved in different food and cultural practices in Helsinki.

Why: To build welcoming communities and propagate cross cultural dialogue.

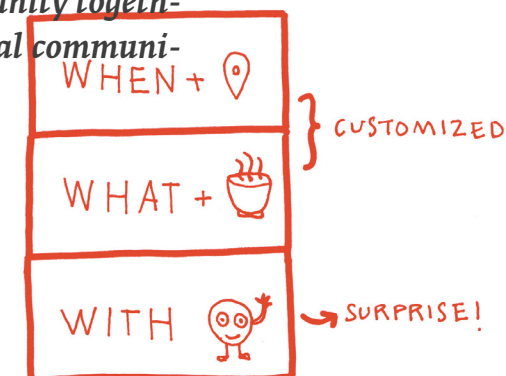
Who: Old and new locals of Helsinki comprising of students and professionals.

How: By inviting users to local food events and happenings through a simple and easy to understand process.

WHAT IS LOKU?

Feeling at home begins with knowing the city, having friends to call family and the food that you love. Loku is an online service which combines all three to find you ideal places and people to share a meal with offline, in Helsinki.

Loku is the only platform that facilitates interaction between new and old locals through various food experiences, in order to build a welcoming community together, in an era of world citizenship and global communities.



4.2 SERVICE DESIGN TOOLS

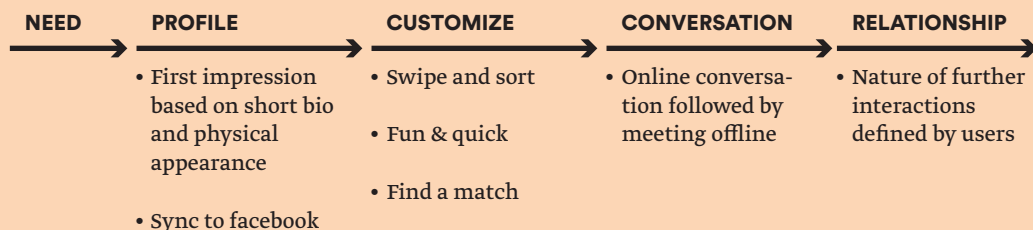
Service Design is a holistic way for a business to gain a comprehensive, empathetic understanding of customer needs. - Frontier Service Design, 2010

Using service design tools helped us iterate and refine our service offering. First, we benchmarked social applications to study trends and behaviours. Next, we mapped all partners and stakeholders who would be involved in the working of Loku. We created Personas followed by Experience Journey tool to understand and empathize with our core users. We applied these learnings to create a Customer Journey and Service Blueprint. Finally, we created Wireframes in order to prototype and test Loku.

BENCHMARKING SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

For the generation of millennial where social networks and digital experiences are the new norm, the need for human connection has become ever so important. Services like Tinder, OKCupid and Rendezwho are designed to facilitate such an interaction, with people working long hours, living far away and with limited social circles.

Siddharta Lizcano, author of Frog Design Tech Trends points out that human connection is gradually turning into a commodity and companies like WeChat are at the forefront. Tim Dowling- an author for the Guardian, suggests that “people’s desire for uncomplicated relationships rather than loneliness”, could be the reason behind the popularity to treat friendship as a service.



The User Experience of Tinder creates steps towards meeting a stranger.

We benchmarked some of the apps which facilitate such interactions, in terms of the user experience and how they become a part of our habits. For example, we studied the User Experience of Tinder, since it effectively creates simple steps towards building the comfort and confidence towards meeting a stranger. Complementary to its aim, the visual representation of the person is of primary importance on Tinder. Loku on the other hand aims to counter stereotypes, and thus needs to recreate the same comfort towards meeting a stranger, without revealing visual or ethnic identity.

Another online dating app named Grouper builds on the shortcomings of Tinder. It tries to eliminate awkwardness by allowing groups of friends together. These pairs (of three friends each), are also matched to an event - such as a class or a dinner. Loku also aims to use food events as a motivation to meet new people.

In terms of interacting with a stranger, we benchmarked Rendezwho - an application that connects a user to a stranger for life. Though they may never meet their partners, they can however, communicate via play-lists and gifs. The app intends to make a user feel curious about a stranger. Loku wants to create a similar feeling of curiosity, but will also follow up with facilitating face to face meetings soon after.

We benchmarked Airbnb for its value proposition of making people feel at home anywhere in the world. Airbnb is an online market for renting and letting accommodation. By creating a culture of inviting people to live in their homes, instead of staying in a hotel - Airbnb elevates the experience of being a local.

Finally, we identified the services that use learning algorithms to cater to a user’s choices and wants. Foursquare converts user data and reviews to recommend places, such as restaurants for outings. By creating these customized suggestions, it reduces the effort required on a user’s part to actively look for new experiences. Spotify takes customization to the next level by curating weekly mix tapes based on the listener’s history to offer new music. Consistent user satisfaction with this feature is an example of the technological ability to ensure accuracy and great quality in what we discover.

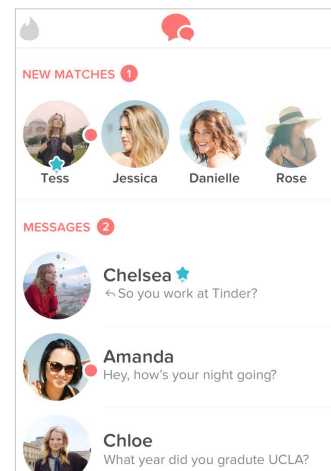
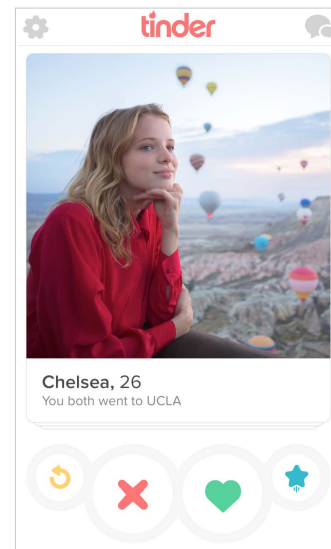
Key Takeaways:

This exercise of benchmarking services gave us an understanding of the current trends and digital habits. We mapped how Loku can use technological intelligence to pave the way for the ultimate goal of comfortable, curious and vibrant interactions between old and new locals.



TINDER

For its user experience



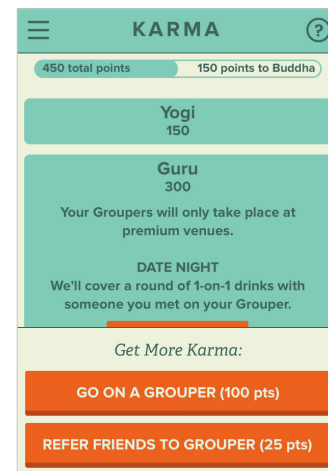
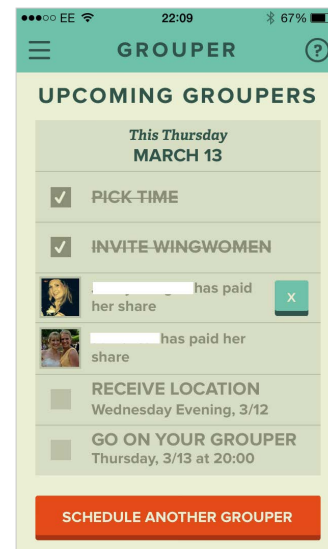
Screenshot of Tinder app as shown in mobile-patterns.com

"Tinder is how people meet. It's like real life, but better."

- Tinder.com

GROUPER

For its comfort & curiosity



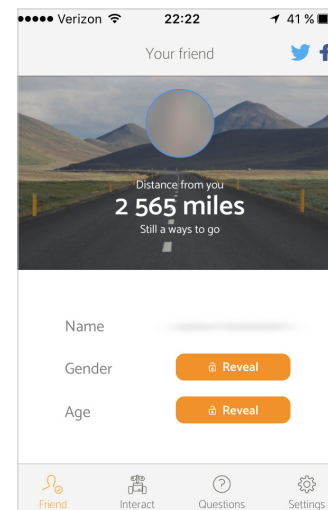
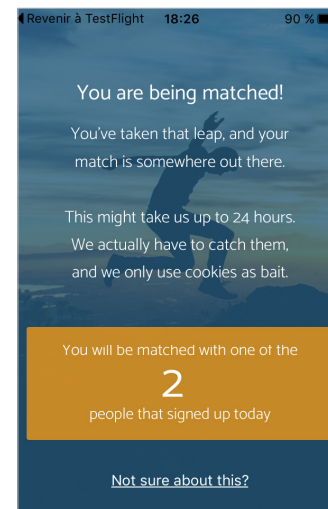
Screenshot of Grouper app as shown in mobile-patterns.com

"We built an app for all the people who, like us, are tired of playing games, and simply want to meet great people."

- Grouper.com

RENDEZWHO

For its curiosity probes



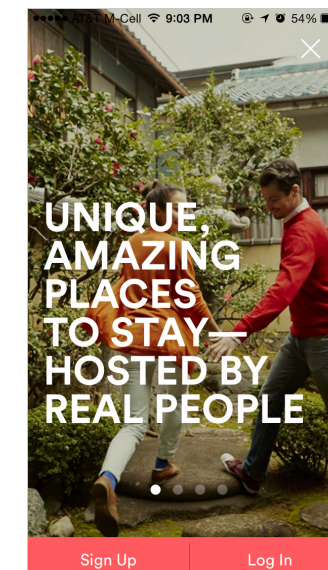
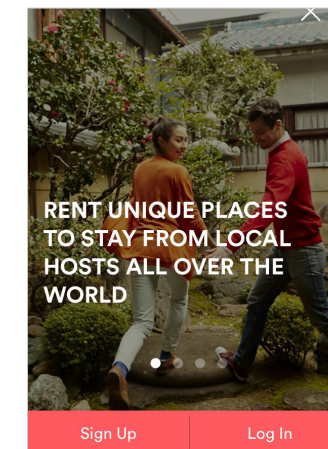
Screenshot of Rendezwho app as shown in mobile-patterns.com

"Quite simply the purpose is to make a friend you wouldn't have otherwise made."

- Rendezwho.com

AIRBNB

For the value proposition



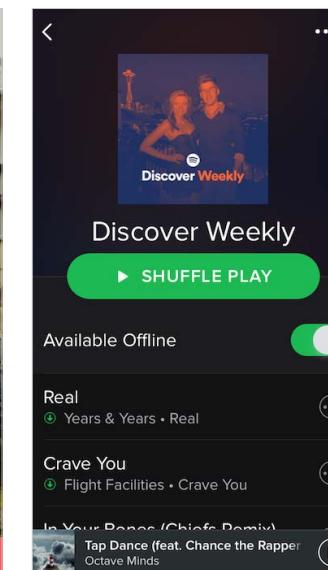
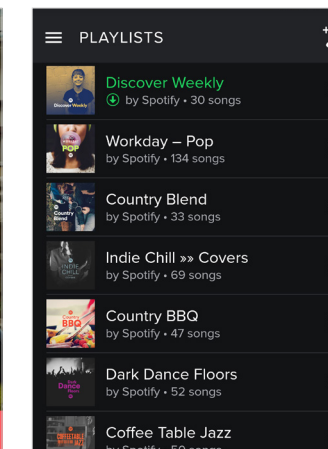
Screenshot of Airbnb app as shown in mobile-patterns.com

"Feel at home anywhere you go in the world with Airbnb."

- Airbnb.com

SPOTIFY

For its algorithm



Screenshot of Spotify app as shown in mobile-patterns.com

"It's scary how well Spotify Discover Weekly playlists know me. Like former-lover-who-lived-through-a-near-death-experience-with-me well."

- Horwitz, Dave (Dave_Horwitz). 27 Oct 2015, Tweet

FOURSQUARE

For the proactivity



Screenshot of Foursquare app as shown in mobile-patterns.com

"Foursquare is all about helping you find the places you'll love, anywhere in the world"

- Fourquare.com

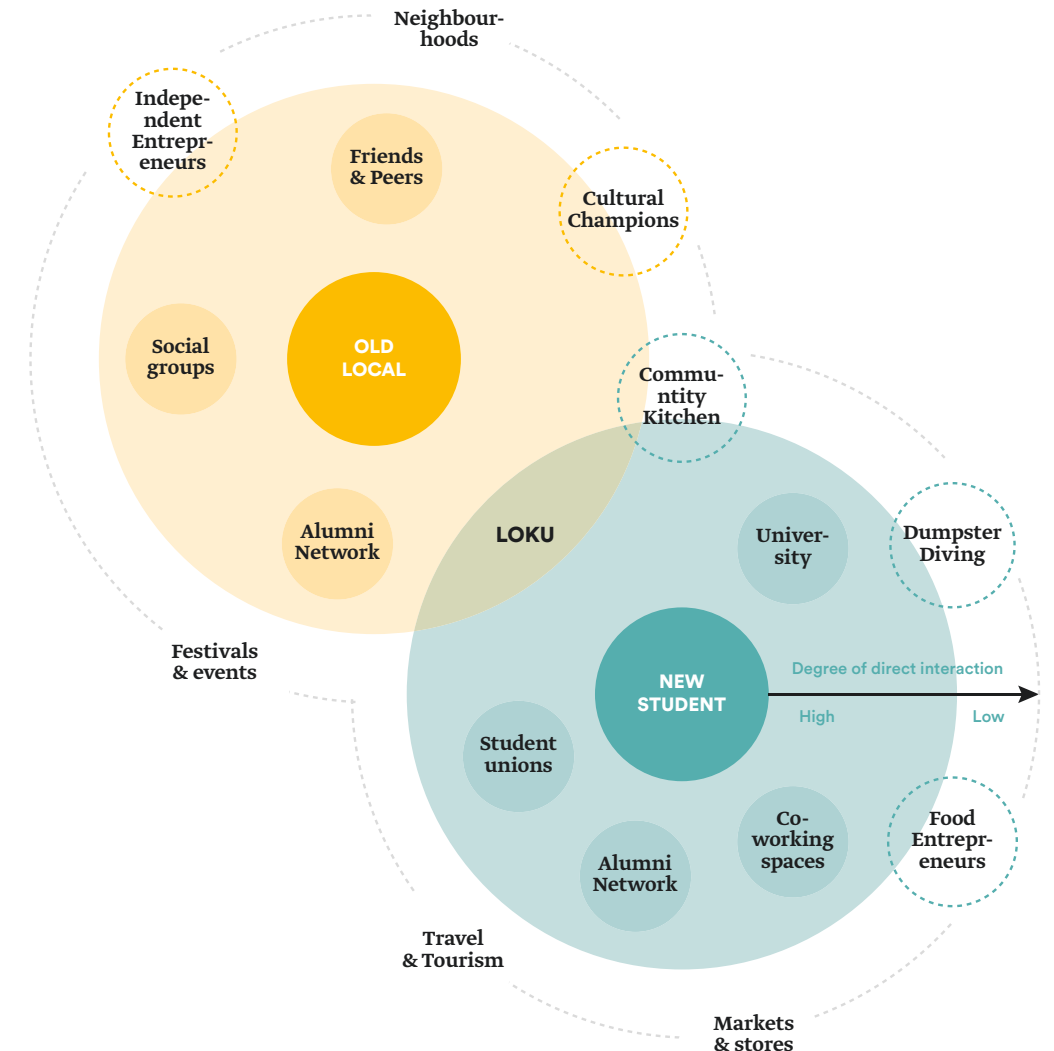
STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Before designing any service, it is imperative to understand who it is being designed for. This exercise helps in understanding who the key stakeholders are, where they come from, and what are they looking for in relationship to the service. Fictional profiles or personas help us further visualise their relationship to the service and each other. Each of these represent a character with unique traits and needs.

Personas helps distinguish between different stakeholders and their perspectives. First, we identify the relevant groups, organisations and people. Second, the insights gathered from the interviews help us understand their motivations. Third, the degree of influence and relationship each stakeholders may have on the core user is visualised.

Key Takeaways:

The stakeholder map for Loku represents students, professionals, bureaucrats, food retailers and other stakeholders. We identified possible partners within the University - like AYY, Alumni Networks, Kipsari etc. Loku can channel their efforts towards welcoming students onto one platform. We can also bring the old local closer to the new local by partnering with festivals like Ravintolapäivä, community kitchens, grocery stores etc. Additionally, both the old and new locals can use Loku to introduce tourists to Helsinki. In this manner, influential organizations such as Aalto University and the City of Helsinki can support and partner with Loku.



YOUNG STUDENTS
PROFESSIONALS
CULTURAL CHAMPIONS
AALTO WOLVES



COMIC BOOK STORE
K MARKET
AFRO ASIAN MARKET
CAFE REGATTA
FRODDLY
VISIT HELSINKI



ALUMNI KIPSARI
TUTORS MEDIA FACTORY
STARTUP SAUNA
AYY TOKYO




FEDERICO ALDEBRANDI

24 years old, First Year Student in New Media at Aalto University

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE

- Wants to know more about Helsinki as well as he knows Milan
- Would like to taste and learn how to cook new cuisines and dishes
- Thinks its a good way to meet new people

LIKES

- Wants to know more about Helsinki as well as he knows Milan
- Would like to taste and learn how to cook new cuisines and dishes
- Thinks its a good way to meet new people

REASONS TO NOT ENGAGE

- Shy and uncomfortable around strangers
- Have few friends to cook and hangout with on weekends

DISLIKES

- Shy and uncomfortable around strangers
- Have few friends to cook and hangout with on weekends

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OR DAILY ROUTINE

Wants to know more about Helsinki as well as he knows Milan. Would like to taste and learn how to cook new cuisines and dishes. Thinks its a good way to meet new people.

'..I want to know more about the underground scene that I may not find on visitfinland.com..'

'..Am not in love with Finnish food, but I can create something to suit my taste..'


TARA MALHOTRA

28 years old, Artist

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE

- Been using Loku ever since she got to Helsinki
- Loku helps in hosting events.
- Find it useful to stay in touch with people she meets here

LIKES

- Painting
- Writing
- Travelling
- Experimenting with new recipes and visiting food markets

REASONS TO NOT ENGAGE

- Does not get invited often as she would like to be and people cancel attendance last minute
- Thinks that it is not always necessary to keep inviting new people only through Loku

DISLIKES

- Chores
- Bland food
- Cold weather

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OR DAILY ROUTINE

Has close friends from India and meets husband's colleague often Since she is social and active, she has made many friends.


AKSELLI VUORI

30 years old, Fourth Year Student in Graphic Design at Aalto University

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE

- To meet new people and share cultural knowledge
- Desire to learn new recipes and eat good food
- Has a limited social circle
- Has not been outside Finland, so its a good way to meet people from other countries

LIKES

- Music
- Reading
- Politics
- Science
- Old video games
- Sauna

REASONS TO NOT ENGAGE

- Not present in the right networks on FB, Meetup, Couchsurfing etc.
- Comfortable with the social circle at present
- Requires extra time and effort
- Have few friends to cook and hangout with on weekends

DISLIKES

Planning

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OR DAILY ROUTINE

Spends most of his time in school surrounded by classmates Lives in a apartment with his girlfriend. Parents visit often.

‘I want to meet people from different cultures..’

‘I want to make the city of Helsinki more vibrant..’


ANNA NIEMINEN

38 years old, Food Entrepreneur & Activist

MOTIVATIONS TO ENGAGE

- To make Helsinki culturally more vibrant
- Promote food concepts and various sustainability concepts
- Talk to more food entrepreneurs and connect them with others

LIKES

- Travelling
- Reading
- DJ
- Cooking
- Wine Journalism
- Photographer

REASONS TO NOT ENGAGE

- Requires extra time and effort
- Feels that there are enough social networking sites

DISLIKES

- Lack of more cuisines in Helsinki
- Bad wine

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OR DAILY ROUTINE

Co-workers and entrepreneurs. Travels a lot. Shares a flat with her boyfriend. Surrounded with artists.

EXPERIENCE JOURNEY

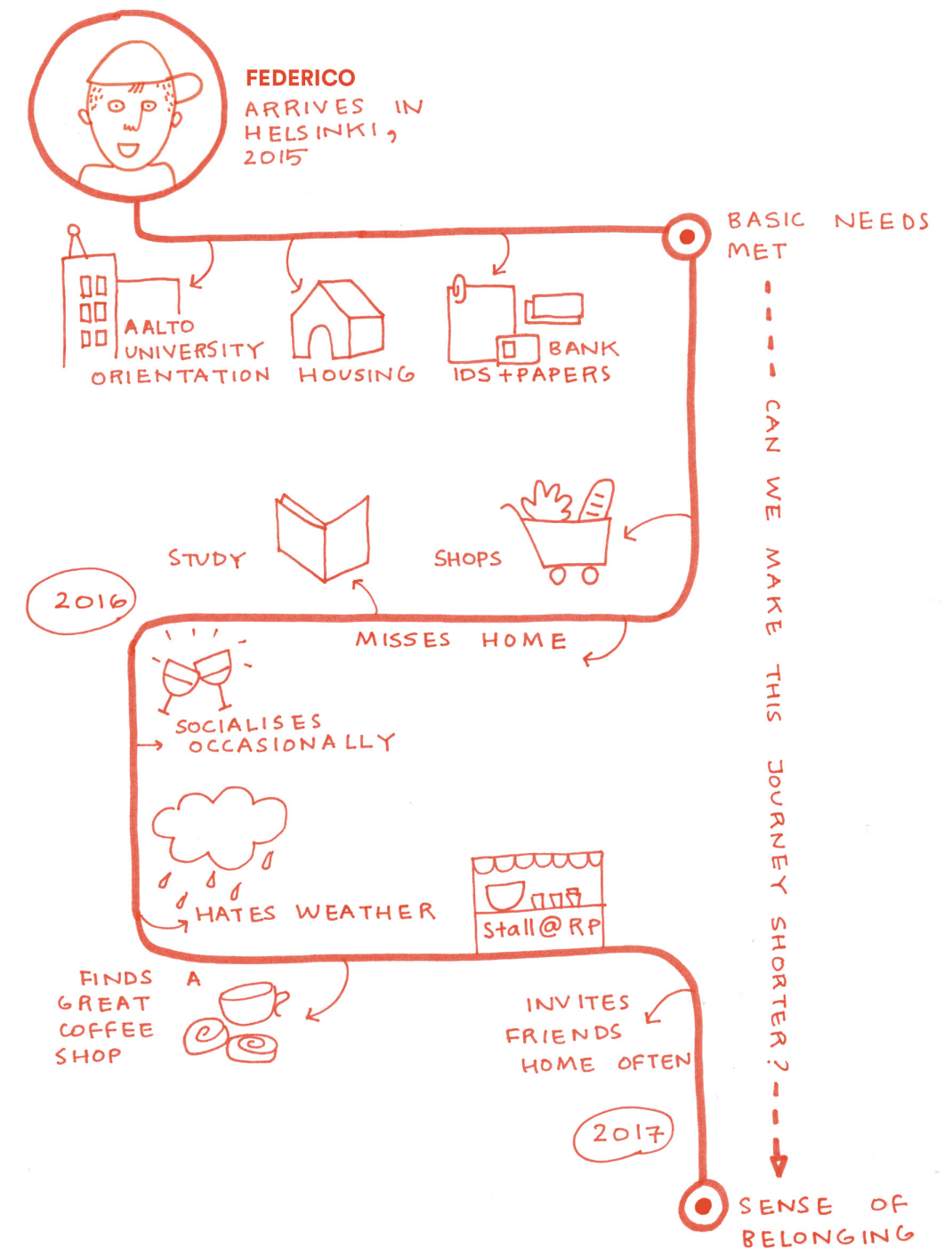
After the persona study, we visualised the experience of our target user: new students, through a journey map. This helped us in studying the behaviour and interactions across channels and touch-points and come up with opportunity areas within the journey. The aim of this exercise was also to generate empathy for the core user through the means of storytelling. Furthermore, the experience journey helped us synthesize the key insights into a customer journey model for Loku.

Key Takeaways:

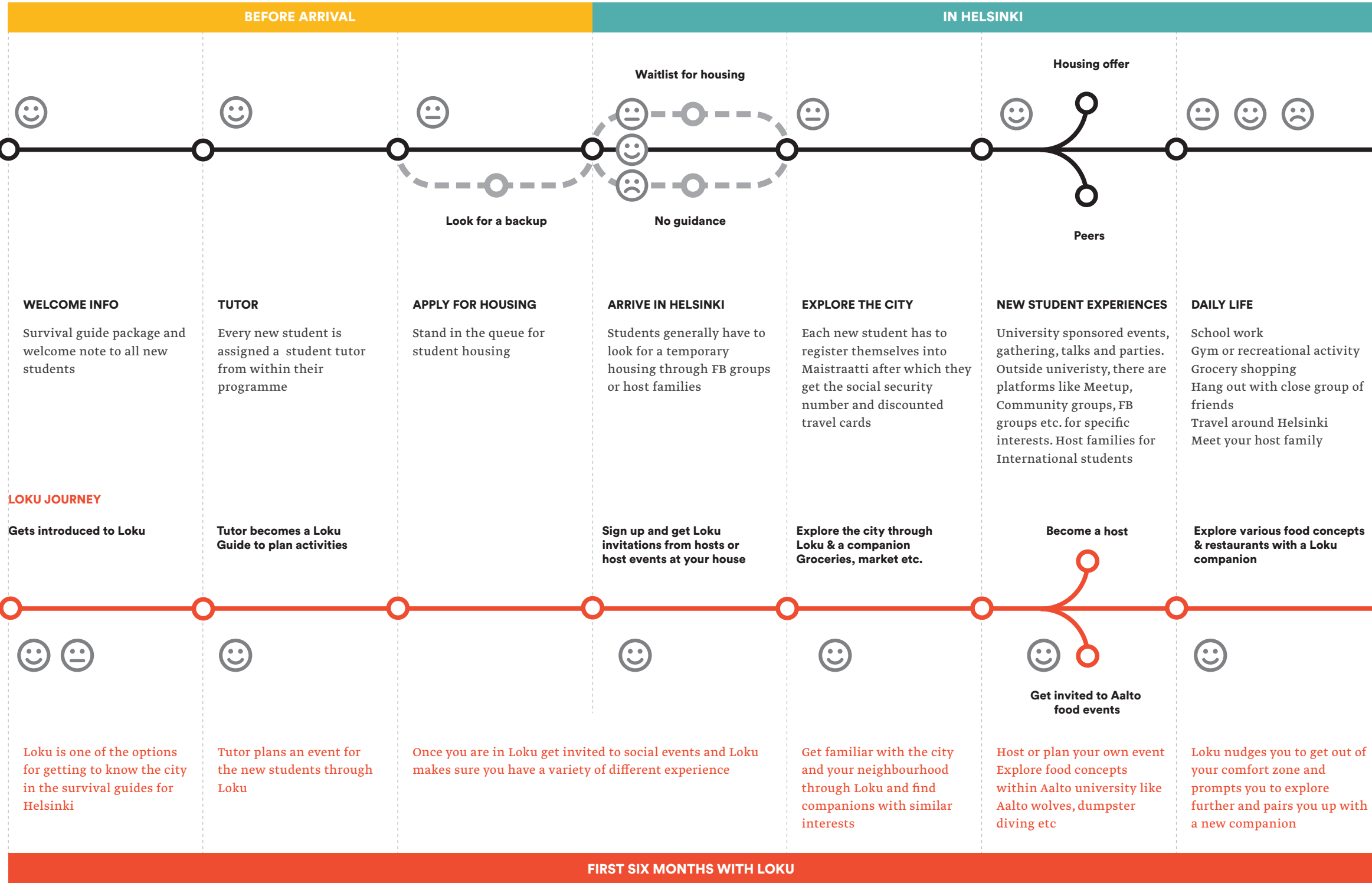
Loku can be introduced to a new student along with the information package provided by the University, even before she/he arrives in Helsinki. It can also help student tutors plan welcome activities for the new students.

Upon arrival, students can use Loku to find new experiences best suited to their needs and wants. This can help them feel more comfortable and get to know the city, people and culture of Helsinki more efficiently.

Loku also provides the option for new students to host dinners, where they can share food and experiences from their culture with new friends. In this manner, Loku can speed up the process to feeling settled in Helsinki.



EXPERIENCE JOURNEY OF A NEW STUDENT



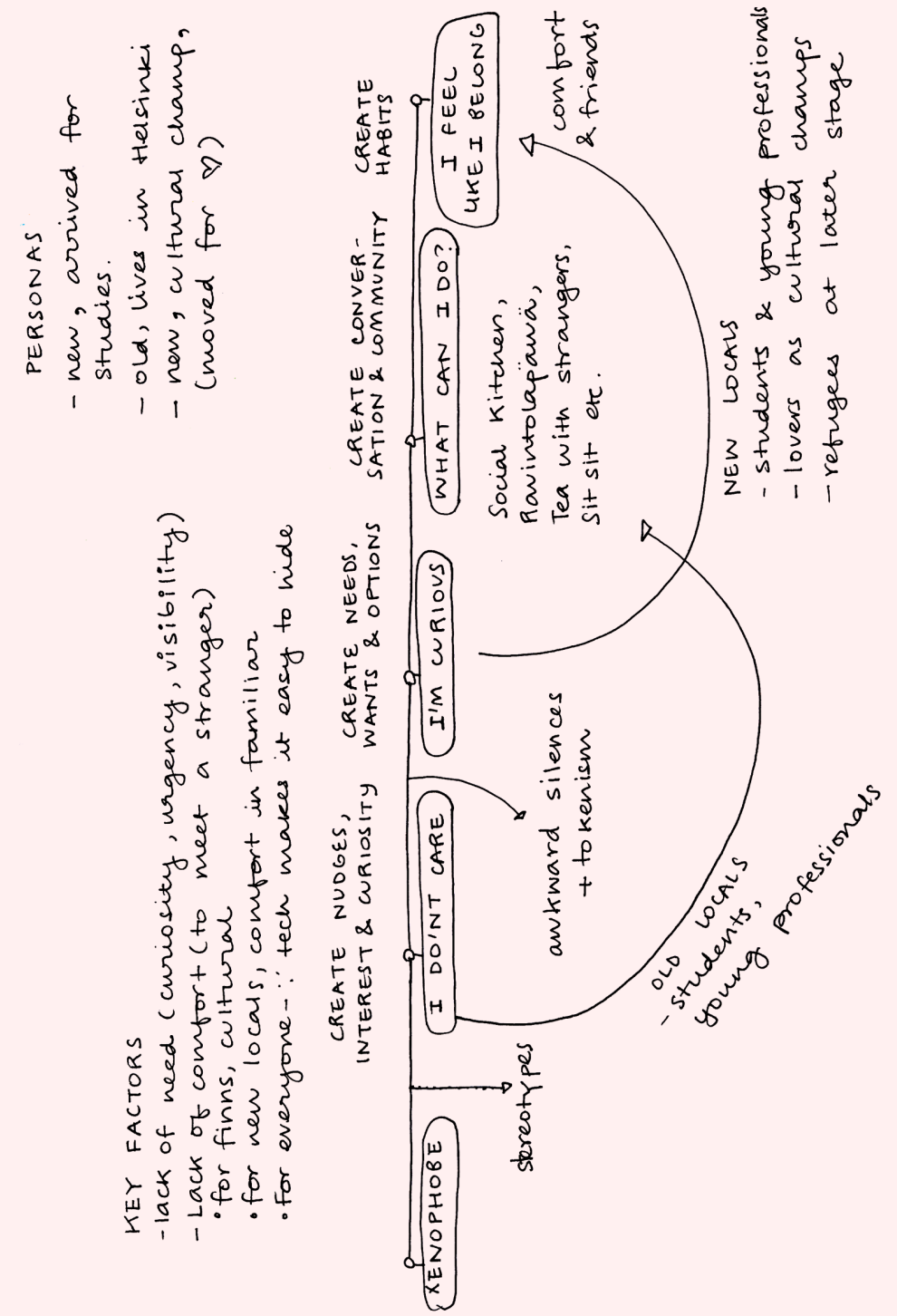
CUSTOMER JOURNEY

A narrative was created around a user's engagement with the digital and analogue touch points, in a sequential order. For Loku, touch points such as signing up and participating in the activity are plotted to understand the nature of interactions.

Key Takeaways:

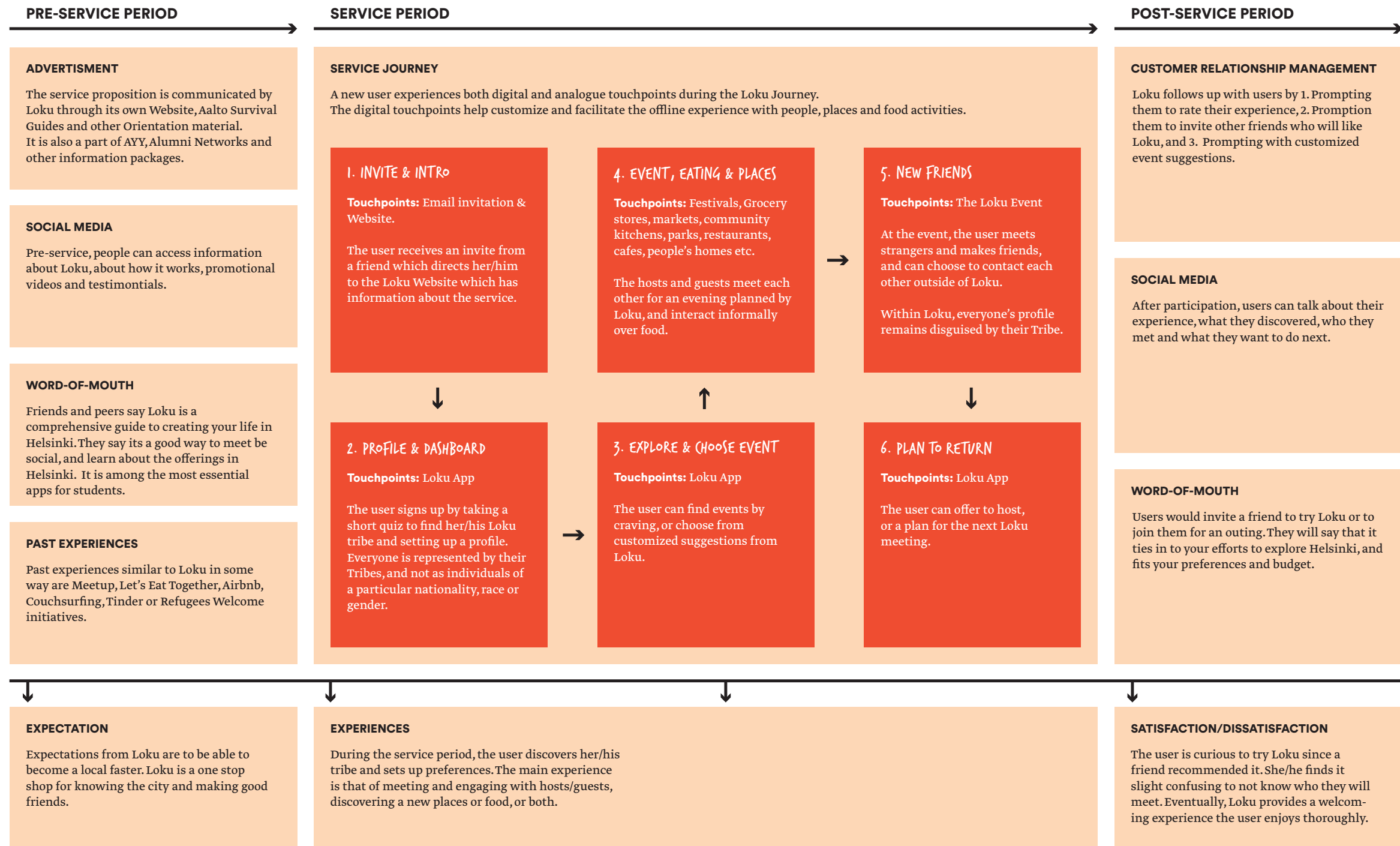
Prior to using the service, a user may hear of Loku from the University and also at touch-points like cafés, stores and orientation programs. However, the main recommendation for Loku will come from word-of-mouth from friends. We can weave this opportunity directly into the service by the means of an 'invite based' sign up process.

The core expectation from Loku is that it helps students in becoming a local faster. While using the service, the student needs to feel curious about who she/he will meet, and yet should feel comfortable during the experience. This comfort level must be tested with users, to ensure that students are willing to return to Loku regularly and eventually become hosts who will welcome tourists and new locals to Helsinki.



THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY CANVAS

PERSONA: New Local | SERVICE: Loku



SERVICE BLUEPRINT

Next, we set out to examine and break down the complex interactions between stakeholders and their service experiences into individual steps, through a service blueprint. The blueprint allowed us to visualise the delivery of Loku's unique service through touch points across channels and factor in both digital and human interactions like service employees that will impact the user directly.

Key Takeaways:

Potential partners such as AYY, Alumni Networks etc. are working towards assisting students in settling into Helsinki. By tapping into their services and motivating old locals, Loku can create a wide pool of options for new locals to choose from.

The digital application can help match new students to exciting events, and enable people to meet face to face and build friendships in informal spaces. Partners like Design Factory and Media Factory can provide such spaces for eating together.



THE SERVICE BLUEPRINT

SERVICE: Loku

	AWARE (TRIGGER)			JOIN			USE			CONTINUE			RE-ENGAGE		
USER JOURNEY	Survival guide package & welcome note to all students	New students assigned tutors	Receive invite from student tutor	Watch how it works video	Join and create a profile Find a Loku Tribe	Invited for an event or activity	Check details and accepts	Meet and engage with other users		Exchange contact outside Loku	Rate experience Invite a friend to Loku	Become a host	Invite others to join	Search events by craving	Prompts for other events
PHY. EVIDENCE	Welcome email Aalto welcome package	Programme Orientation	Email Website Mobile App	Website / Mobile App				Loku spaces		Website / Mobile App					Notification from Loku Email/web-site/mobile app
INSIGHTS	Scattered & passive information	A need for a proactive service	Avoiding stereotype and biases		Setting stage for an equal dialogue	Getting people out of their comfort zone	Need for welcoming communities	Enabling face to face interaction	People comfortable in groups			Matching people to the right information			
FRONT STAGE		Student Tutor						Loku host + Loku guests		Loku guests					
BACK STAGE	University contact Loku about the new students	Student tutor sends Loku invite to new students						Services and stakeholders (Food concepts, stores, community kitchens)			Improve customisation for users			Update events in database	Sort through user preferences
SUPPORT	Promotion Branding	Database system	Branding					Services and stakeholders (Food concepts, stores, community kitchens)			Ads Prompts	Prompts	Database system		Prompts

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

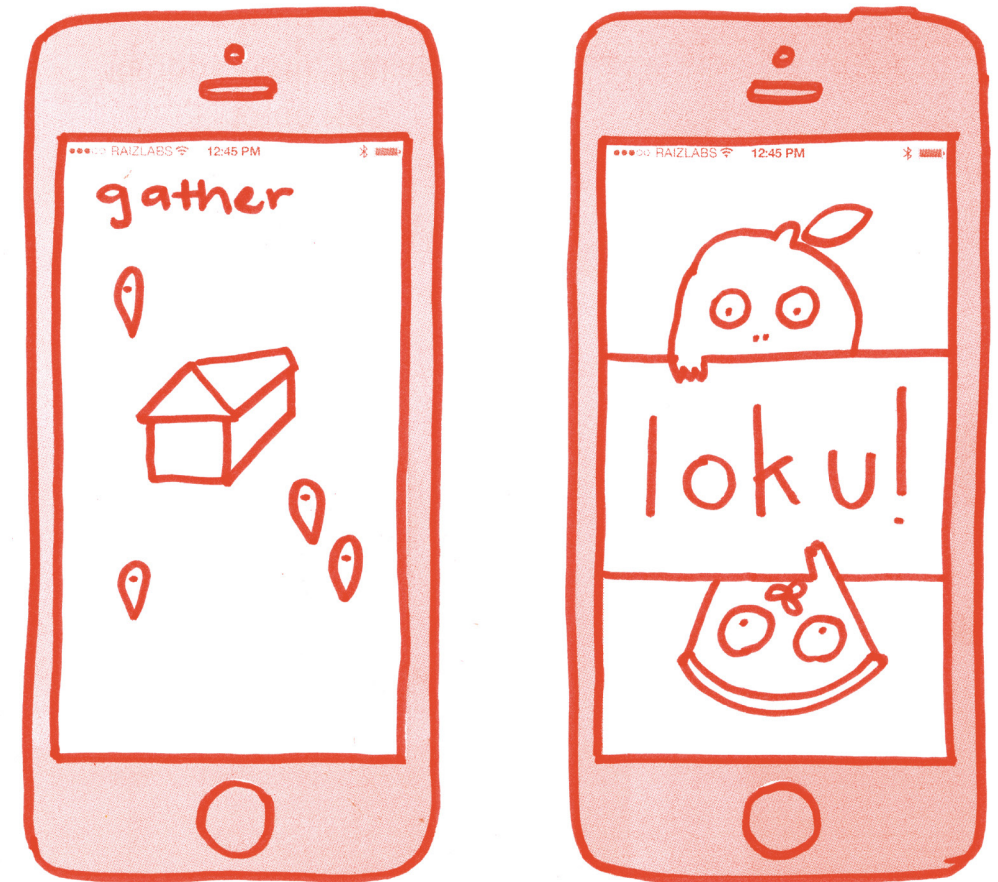
According to Paul Kahn, as cited by Pinyarat (2012, p.72) information architecture can be:

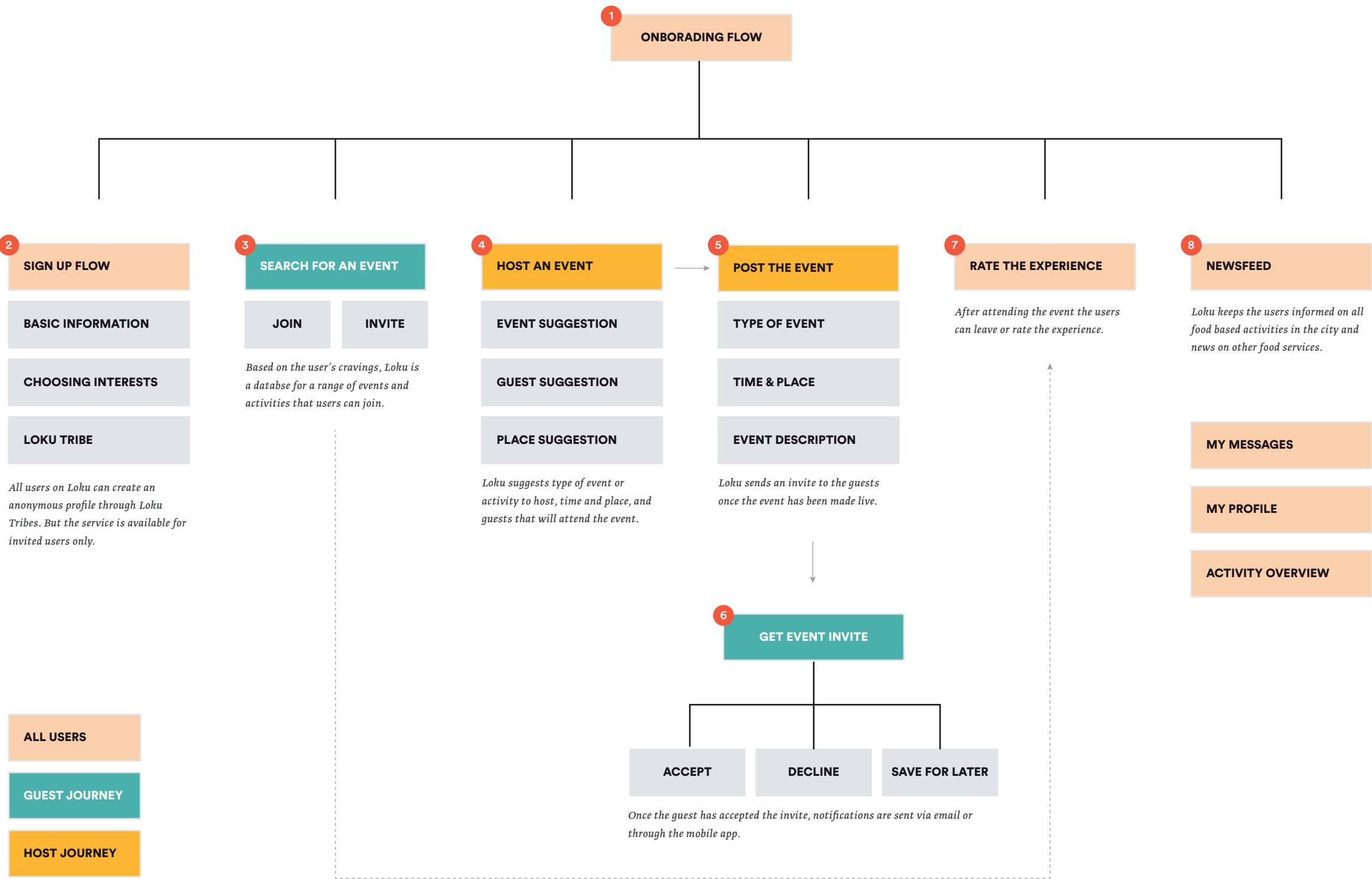
- discovering the kinds of information the site contains
- matching this information to the needs of the users
- determining the appropriate metadata structure

Taking these points into account, we created the information architecture for the Loku mobile application. These provided the guideline towards creating a wireframe for the mobile application. These wireframes display the crucial elements for a particular feature, to be seen on a certain screen, and do not necessarily represent the final layouts. We have included some sample wireframe for Loku which compliments the information architecture.

Key Takeaways:

After signing up, there are 3 ways in which a user can interact with Loku. First, when Loku or a friend invites them to recommended events. Second, when the user craves for a specific food experience and searches for it on Loku. Third, when the user decides to create and host an event with the help of Loku's suggestions and partners. Creating the wireframes helped design the overall structure for the application.





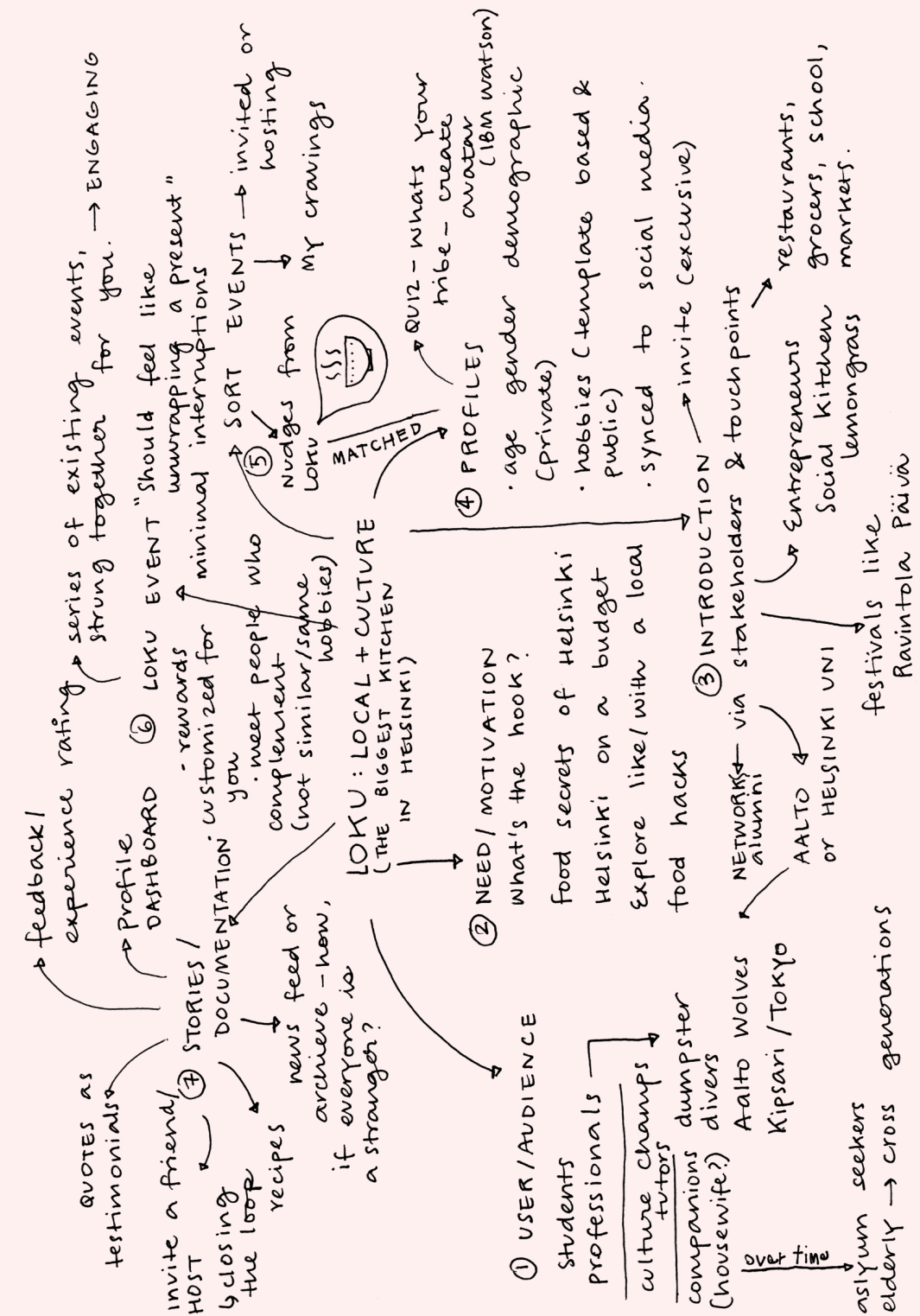


CHAPTER CONCLUSION:

The Service Design tools helped us develop Loku progressively and systematically. By mapping the stakeholder and creating personas we were able to define our core user group and stakeholders, keeping it within the scope of our thesis. Strategic insights from the research were developed in the customer journey phase while trying to keep the emphasis on creating a pleasing experience for Loku users. Each stage and touch-point of the service was then mapped out through a service blueprint.

By this point, the service was beginning to take a tangible shape and it was time to add flesh to the bones. Once we realised that the Loku service can be communicated most efficiently through a mobile app, we started building the information architecture. This skeletal framework helped us put together a visual guide to Loku, which has been further explained later on.

The entire process enabled us to communicate the concept with real users and gather feedback on different features and values of Loku.





5. SERVICE SOLUTION: LOKU

The Design Tools mentioned in Chapter 4 helped us apply the strategic insights towards a practical service concept - Loku. This chapter begins with the proposal for Loku's visual brand language, with an emphasis on key features of the digital app, shown through user interface. After finalising the look and feel for the brand, we wanted to take our idea back to the users to observe if it does justice to our Design Brief. This was tested through:

- A Service walkthrough to test the relevance of the service
- A Participatory Workshop to validate the key features within the service and motivations for people to join

The UI and the brand language is a work in progress and will require additional usability testing and re-structuring, which is beyond the scope of the thesis. The ideas presented in this book is a suggestion or a step towards the final visual design.

5.1 BRANDING

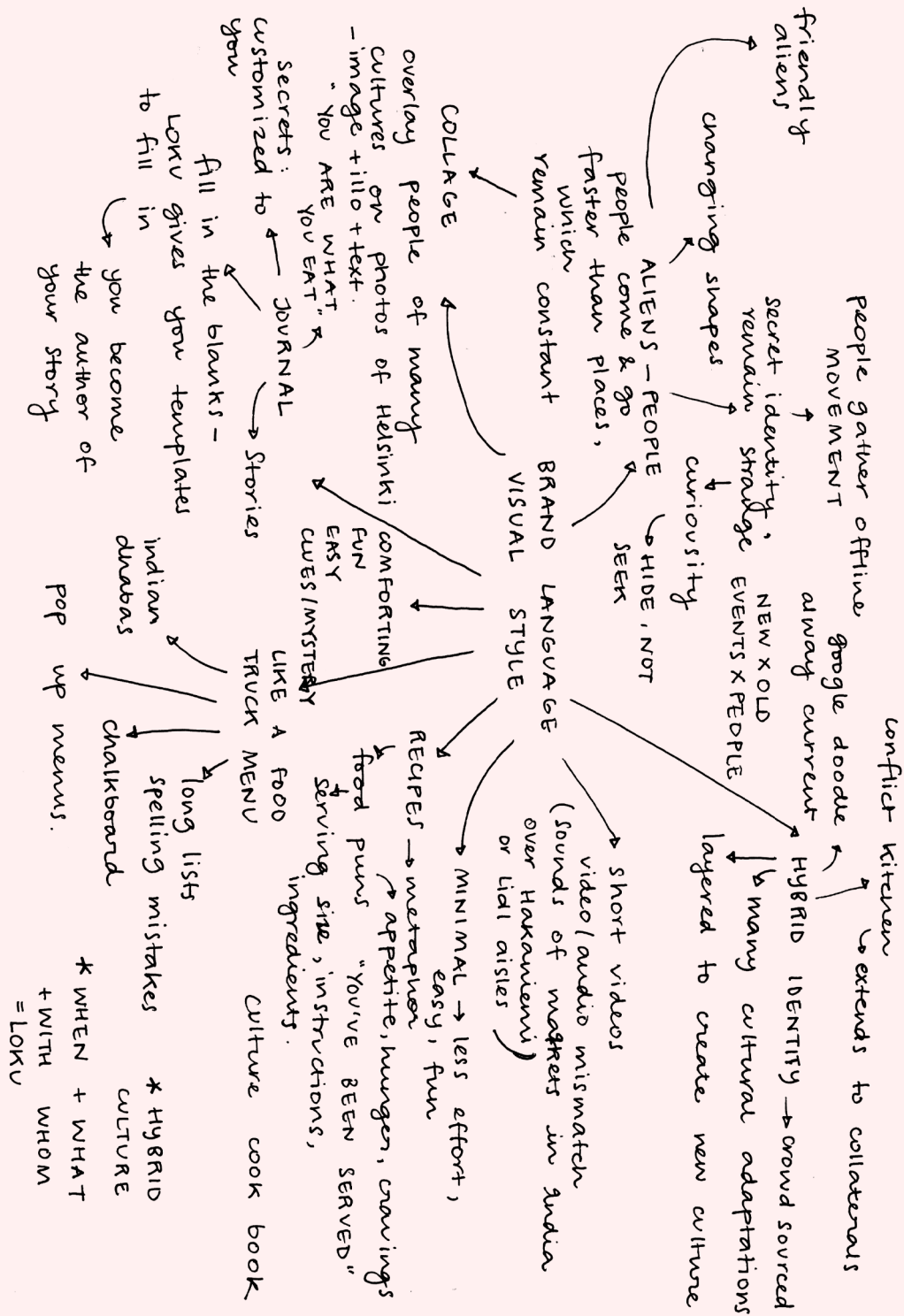
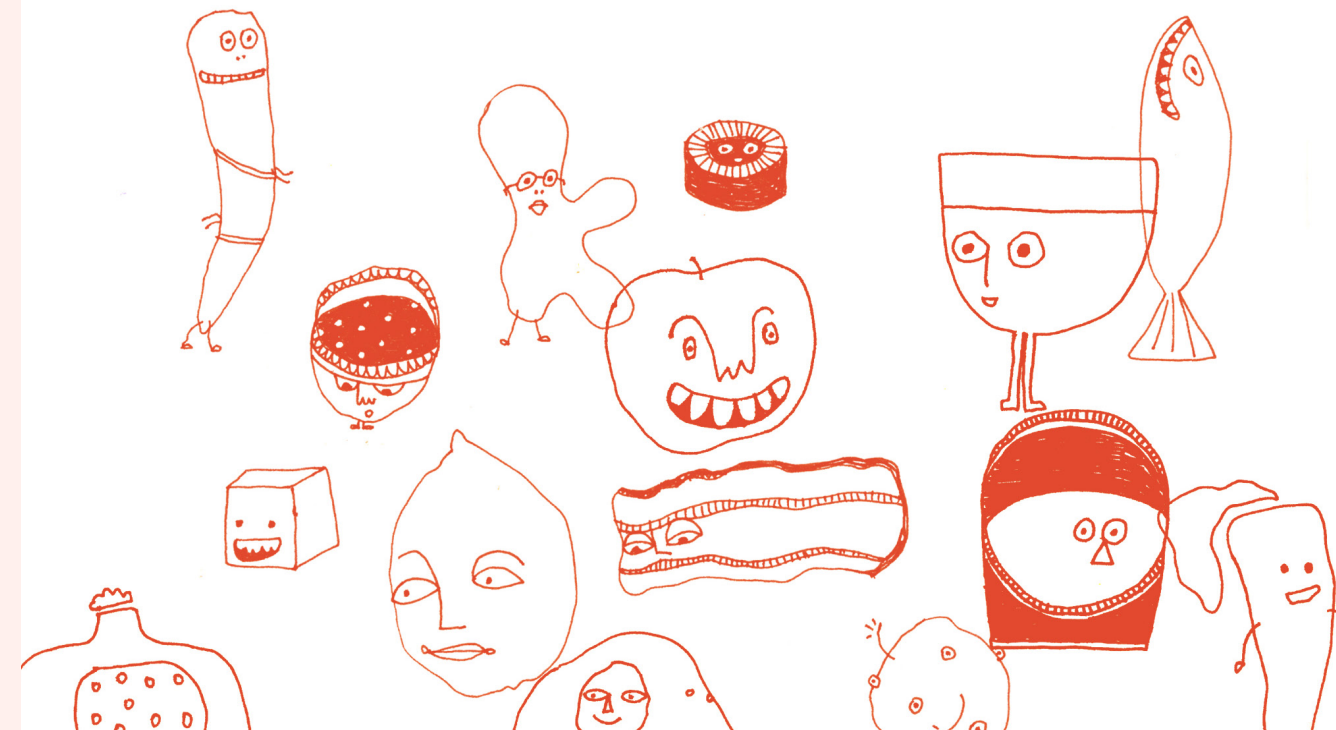
After creating the technical framework for Loku, it was time to give the concept a new visual appearance. The branding solution is based on the notion of locals, old and new, building their own culture and to break away from the dull routine of daily life.

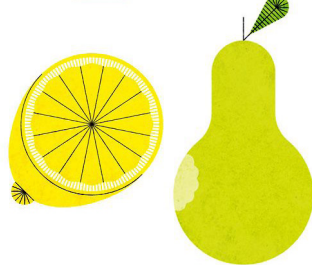
Loku is named by combining the word Local + Culture, replacing the C with K in order to align with the brand's outlandish personality and cosmopolitan goal.

In the Loku world, people belong to Loku Tribes represented by friendly and approachable mascots. This helps maintain the anonymity of the users, so that everyone can be free from biases or stereotyped images of people and culture. What you eat literally becomes who you are on Loku. The home screen on the app, for instance, is divided into 3 sections which the users can swipe through to view more options. This makes it easier for users to browse through the variety of events that Loku can integrate within its service. The visual language is kept, clean, colourful and easy to understand.

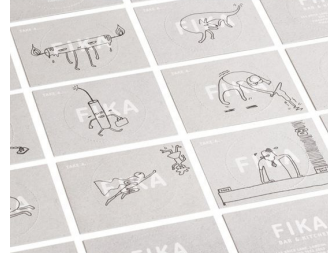
Our Loku branding is the result of rapid idea generation coming together to convey one story. We are extending the visual language and brand elements but it is a work in progress and is not within the scope of this thesis.

LOKU
LOKU
LOKU

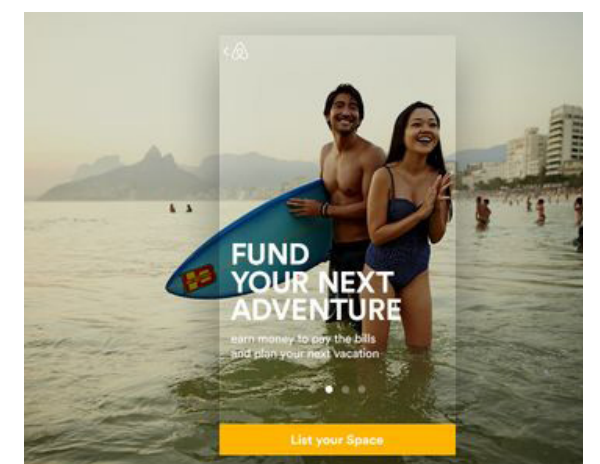
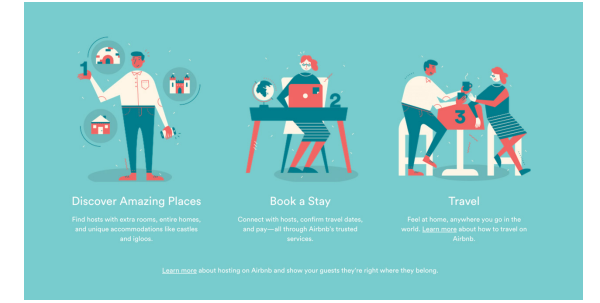




what's cooking?



ADVENTURE
WON'T FIND
YOU ON
THE COUCH.



MOOD-BOARDING

This mood board helps in curating the visual language, illustration style and tone of voice desired from Loku's Branding. A welcoming tone of voice is integral to the service's goal of meeting and inviting strangers into your social circles. Thus, the branding aims to feel warm, fun and friendly.

Image credit to their original authors

FULL LOGO LOCK UP

**BE
loku**

BE HUNGRY. BE LOKU

THE ELEMENTS

loku

BE HUNGRY. BE LOKU

The LOKU logotype is clean, adaptable and scalable for maximum legibility in all digital contexts. The brand mascots can be used with the logotype to maintain dynamism and playfulness.

SECONDARY TYPEFACE

Savu Condensed, 18pt

A QUICK BROWN
FOX JUMPED
OVER

Museo is well suited for display and text. We chose Museo because of its robust and highly legible form. In contrast to Museo, Savu is a handwritten font meant for captions and display.

PRIMARY TYPEFACE

Museo 700, 20pt

Nullam tincidunt nulla nibh, ut
hendrerit metus suscipit quis. Proin

VIVAMUS ORNARE SOLLICITUDIN PORTA

BRAND COLORS



#C8C8C8



#000000



#FAC33C



#5AD9D5



#4D2F41



#EF3F46

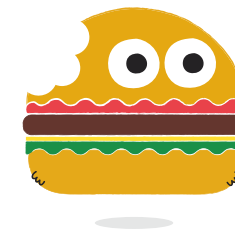
Text and background colors.

The chosen accent colors are vibrant and has maximum contrast when used together.

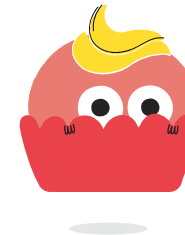
BRAND MASCOTS



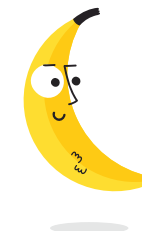
HI! I AM LOKU LEMO
WELCOME TO MY TRIBE.
LET'S ADD SOME ZEST TO
THIS EVENT!



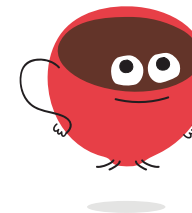
HI! I AM LOKU BORG
WELCOME TO MY TRIBE.
LETTUCE BE TOGETHER
FOREVER!



HI! I AM LOKU CUPOLA
WELCOME TO MY TRIBE.
YOU SEEM QUITE SWEET!



HI! I AM LOKU BANA
WELCOME TO MY TRIBE.
LET'S NEVER SPLIT!

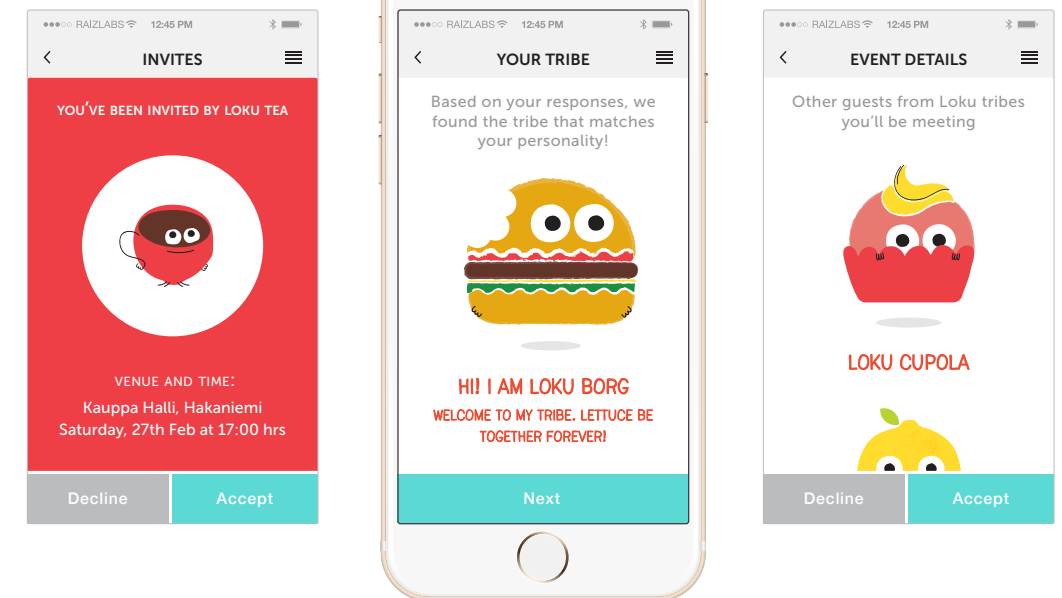
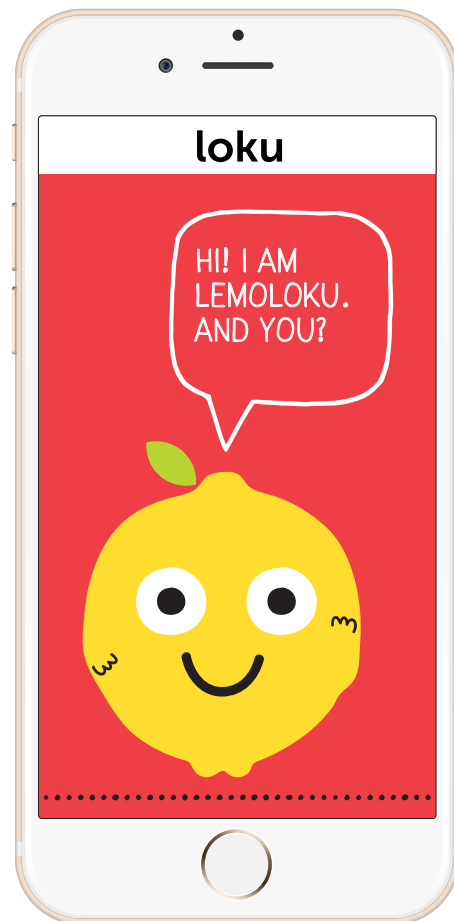


HI! I AM LOKU TEA
I LIVE ON AN ISLAND, GROW
VEGETABLES AT HOME AND
COLLECT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.
I HAVE SOME GREAT RECIPES AND
STORIES TO SHARE WITH YOU!

The concept of **Loku Tribe** is used to create anonymous profiles for Loku users. The illustrations are friendly, approachable and full of personality. The brand language is cheeky, fun and welcoming.

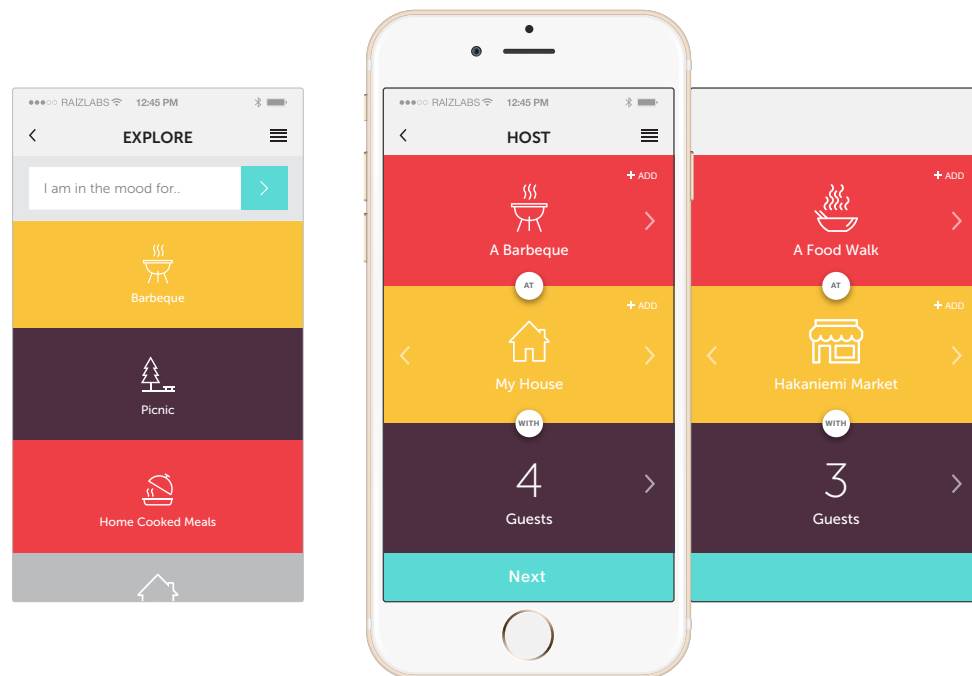
5.2 USER INTERFACE

With the information architecture and wireframes at hand, we refined the UI for key screens that could help communicate Loku's capabilities.



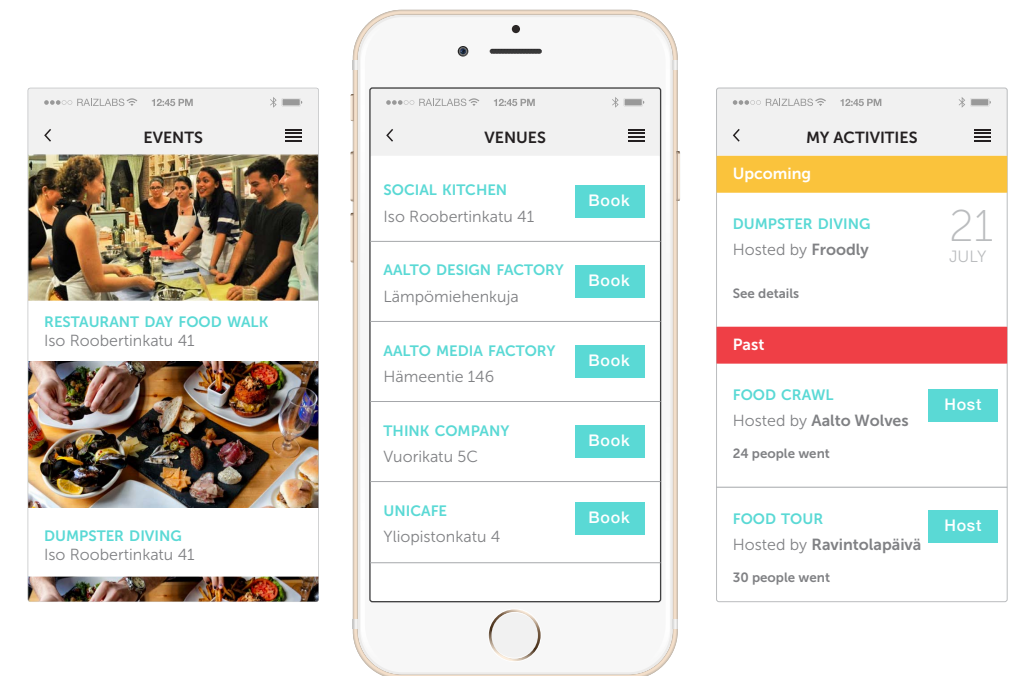
ENTER LOKU: YOU'VE BEEN INVITED!

Instead of a typical profile setup, Loku asks the user a few questions about her/his eating habits, the city and how they like to socialize. This information assigns the user to a tribe, after which she/he operate in the Loku universe based solely on their food interests and not age, ethnicity or gender.



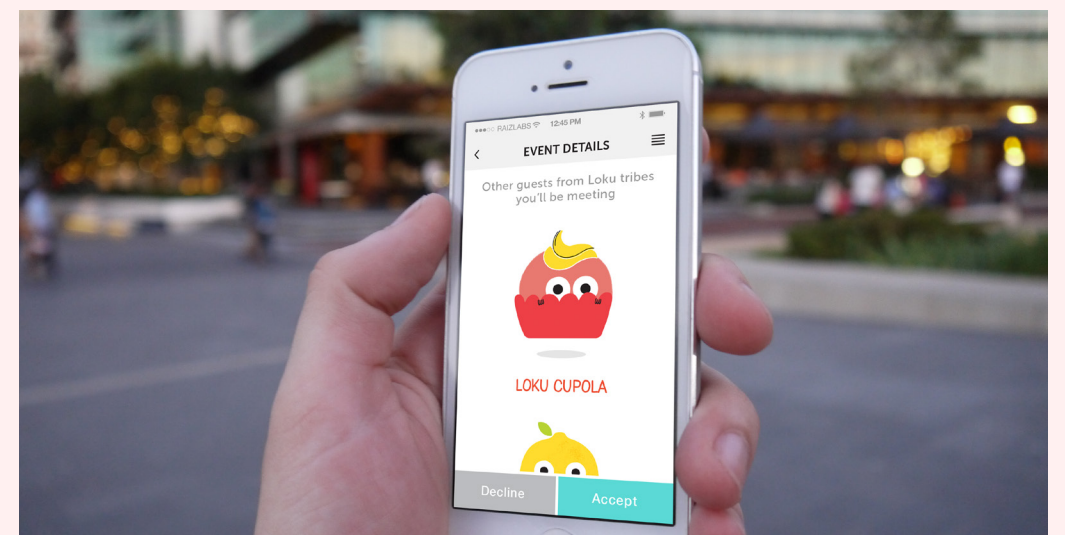
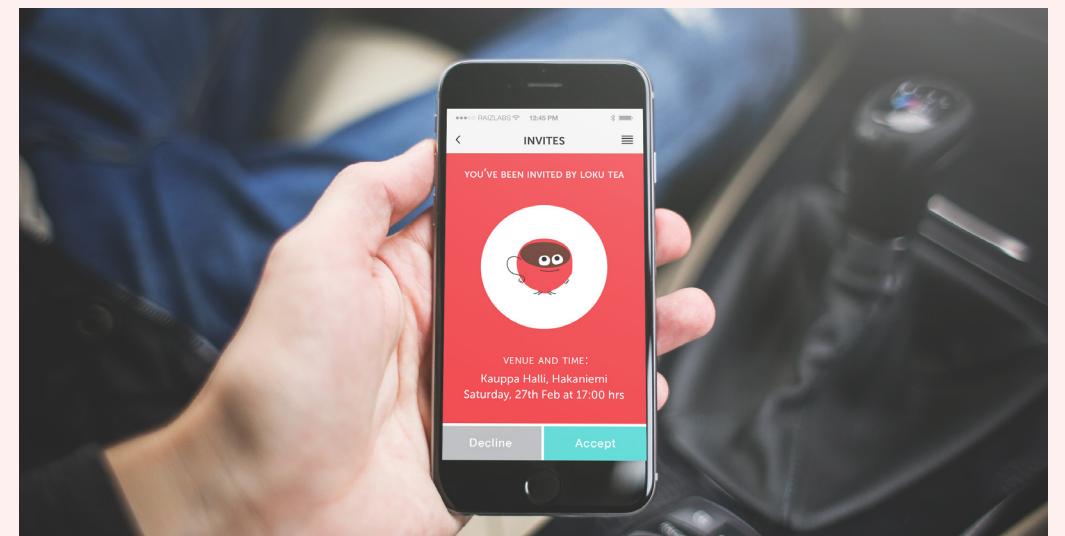
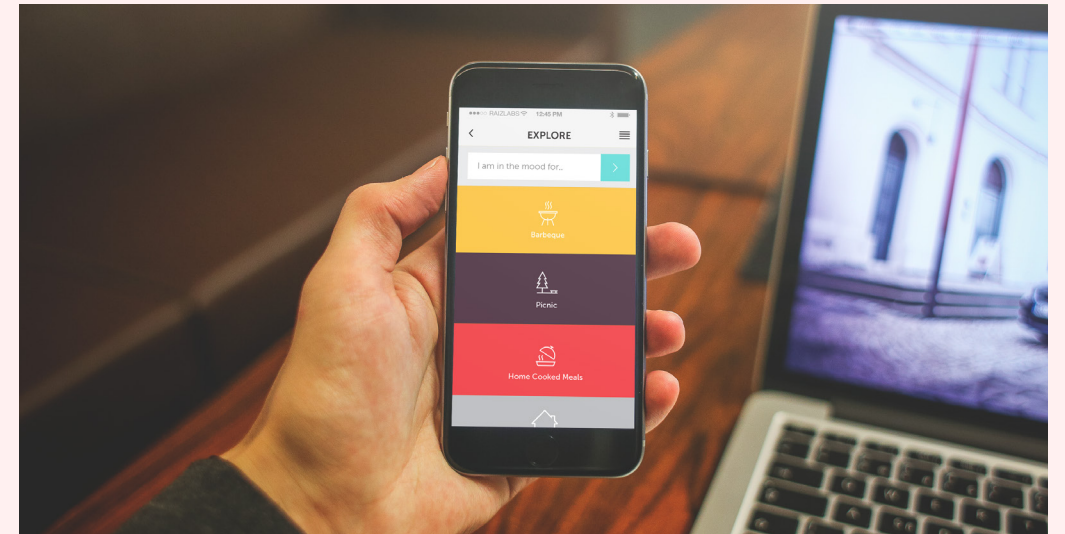
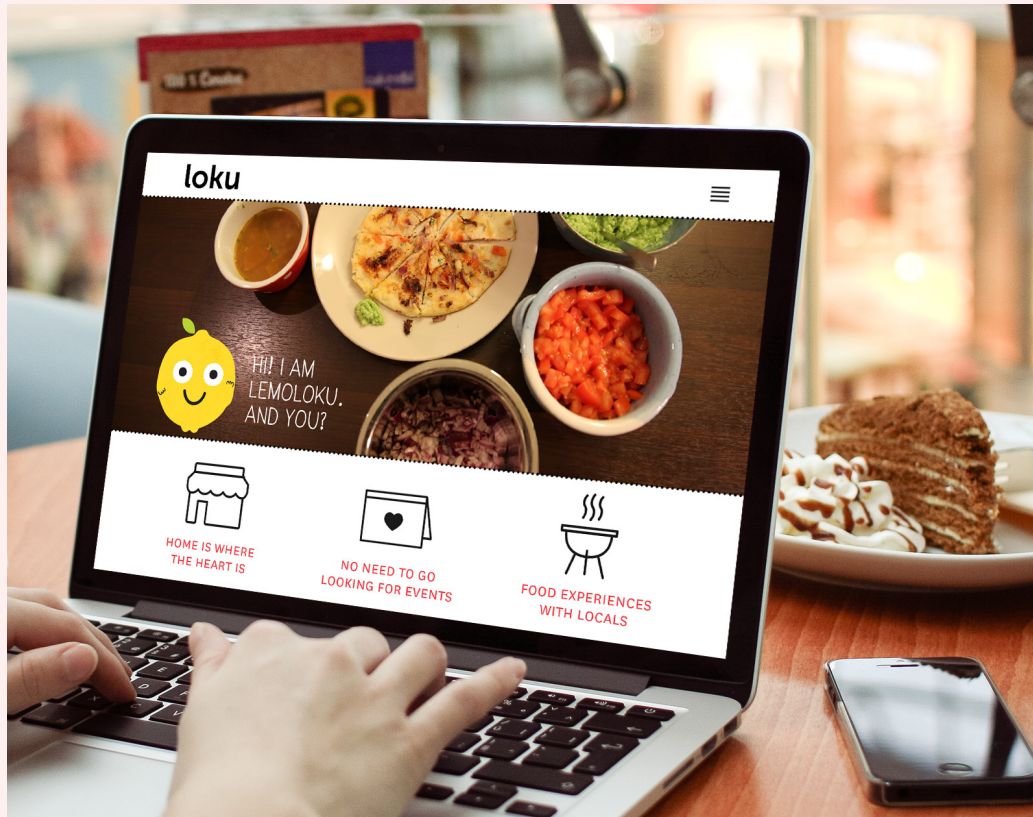
EXPLORE LOKU: WHAT'S YOUR CRAVING?

Loku offers experiences as a combination of food activities, people and places. This allows a user to choose an experience from Loku's suggestions. Some examples could be - A Barbeque at Suomenlinna; A Thai Food Walk at Ravintolapäivä; Shopping and cooking Sushi with a cultural champion etc.



SHARE LOKU: BECOME A CULTURAL CHAMPION!

Loku strings together existing places and platforms with people into epic experiences. It brings entrepreneurs who are passionate about the same goal closer to users, and creates a space for collaboration. Loku makes it easier for new and old locals to host events and become cultural champions.





5.3 SERVICE WALK-THROUGH & PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP

The concept of Loku was tested and validated with a service walk-through and a participatory workshop. We selected a sample of 5 participants, comprising of both old and new locals of Helsinki. The participants are students and professionals from different racial and cultural backgrounds.

The service walk-through made these users experience a scenario where they meet strangers, shop at the Indian market and find their way to the host's house together. Our intent was to understand how easy or challenging it is to follow the steps within Loku. We also wanted to observe how four strangers would self-organize and collaborate, when given a task.

For the participatory workshop, we planned 3 activities which would explore their understanding of Loku and validate some of our decisions regarding features and activities built into Loku.

The aims of the walk-through and workshop were to

- See how people interpreted the Loku Brand Collaterals.
- Find a balance between feeling curious, yet comfortable.
- Understand the essence of Loku, according to users.
- Validate motivations to use Loku.
- Co-create the experience of individual stages of the service.

SERVICE WALK-THROUGH

A Service Walk-through is a simulation of a service experience. In this case, we recreated one scenario within Loku, with real users, mock prototypes of Loku's app, props and real physical touch points. Our guests and hosts had never interacted with each other, and didn't know who else was invited.

The objective was to “learn by doing”, and capture suggestions and insights from participants. This exercise helped us identify and validate the core motivations for users. It helped us get closer to the unique selling point of Loku on the one hand, and identify features of the service that are unnecessary on the other.

01. CREATE EVENT

A friend volunteered to host the event as a seasoned Loku user. He was familiarized with Loku's mission and we co-created a grocery list and dinner menu, taking his motivations into consideration.

02. INVITE

Guests were invited to meet for a Loku event. They could visit Loku's FB Page or use the emailers in order to know what Loku does.

03. SIGN UP TO LOKU

A sign up quiz to was sent to all participants, with 3 questions about the culinary, travel and social preferences. On the basis of the answers, they were introduced to their Loku tribe.

04. JOIN EVENT

The participants were notified that Loku has found an event customized for them. 2 guests were given the whole agenda, and the other 2 were notified only of the meeting point.

05. ATTEND

Using prompts from an app prototype, the participants went through the agenda for the event.

CHOOSING THE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



OLD LOCAL **KAROLINE KWON**

Student at Aalto

Karoline, moved to Helsinki from Canada 3 years ago. She is socially active, and has been trying out platforms like Sportsetter to find activities and hobbies that are easy to plug into.



VESA VUORI

Student at Aalto

Vesa is a resident of Helsinki. Vesa actively invites people to his house for sauna and movie screenings, and is constantly surprised that not many people invite others home.



NEW LOCAL **VIDHA SAUMYA**

Artist from India

Vidha, moved to Helsinki from India to be with her husband. They often host cooking classes and events through which they meet people. She also is working on an art exhibition.



RAPHAEL MUTISO

Design professional from Kenya

Raphael is a user experience designer from Nairobi. He moved to Helsinki recently. He doesn't know anyone apart from his new office colleagues, and is seeing snow and winter for the first time in his life.



HOST **KAUSHIK ESHWAR**

Young professional working in Helsinki

Kaushik has been in Helsinki for a while. He came to Finland 4 years ago as a student. He wants to share his culture (via food), to welcome people and also interact with a new bunch of people he would ordinarily not meet.

PLANNING THE TESTING PHASE

After establishing the goals, setting the agenda and choosing the participants, we put together a step-by-step plan for conducting the workshop.

CHOOSING VENUES

We chose to conduct the walkthrough in the Indian Market, as our host being an Indian national decided to prepare an Indian meal for the guests. With the help and permission from the Market staff we were able to document the journey inside the store. The dinner was planned at the host's residence.

PREPARING THE PARTICIPANTS

We sent out emailers to the participants inviting them to the event. Two participants received a detailed agenda of the evening and the other two participants were to receive prompts. We gave them Loku stickers so that they could be identified by the other guests.

BEGINNING

We clarified the goals of the service testing, what is going to be covered and run through any house rules, such as use of mobiles, documenting experiences. We ensured that it was clear what is being asked of participants and if anyone had any initial questions. The participants didn't know each other so we had a quick round of introductions.

FACILITATING

We were in the background recording conversations, taking notes and facilitating decision making as and when the participants were confused or didn't know the next steps. During the co-creation workshop we conducted various activities to gather their opinion. We introduced each activity before it was undertaken, with the help of some examples, and made it clear to everyone what is expected of them. Finally, we allocated time for each activity, so as to not lose track of time.

CLOSING

After the activities, we spent some time at the end of the workshop going through what had been achieved, looking at next steps, and generally tying all the loose ends.

RECORDING OUTPUT

We used audio video to record parts of the session. The outputs were in the form of post-it notes, sketches, scribbles, ideas and lists.

THE EXPERIENCE

Gathering at Hakaniemi Square

"I am not sure what the plan is, but I think they are going to show me an app prototype.." -Vesa



Shopping at the Indian Market

"What is this funny thing that looks like Custard? I wanna try it!" - Karoline

"I buy Indian ingredients from the Asian store next door, they have the same stuff, but cheaper.." - Vidha

"I never know what to buy at these stores.." - Vesa



On the bus to meet the host

"So Vidha, is the story of Ramayana true? I used to watch it every Sunday on TV in Nairobi too.." - Raphael



Cooking & eating together

"Do you want to listen to Adele's Hello in Swahili?" - Raphael

"You can assemble and cook your own Uttapam, I'm here to help if you need" - Kaushik

"Is this like an Indian Pizza?" -Vesa

PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP

After an evening of shopping, travelling, cooking and eating together, the hosts and guests participated in a brainstorming and co-creation workshop.

The workshop was divided into 3 activities. The first one set the stage for the session by making the participants reflect on what they expected from Loku, what it turned out to be. With the second activity, participants deep dived into their experience and brainstormed ways to improve specific aspects of the service. In the final activity, they took decisions to communicate what is at the core of Loku.

01. EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

Brainstorm using word cue cards to reflect over what they expected Loku to be, and what their eventual experience was.

Objective: To understand how clearly we had communicated the concept, and to get participants warmed up in reflecting on their evening and express how they feel.

02. PROS & CONS FOR USER JOURNEY

A discussion following the user journey and sharing what they enjoyed most and what was challenging.

Objective: To stress on different stages of the service and identify what works, what's the core of the service and what can be removed or improved. This activity helps understand what excites the user most, and validate the smaller ideas that come together as Loku.

03. DESIGNING POSTER FOR LOKU

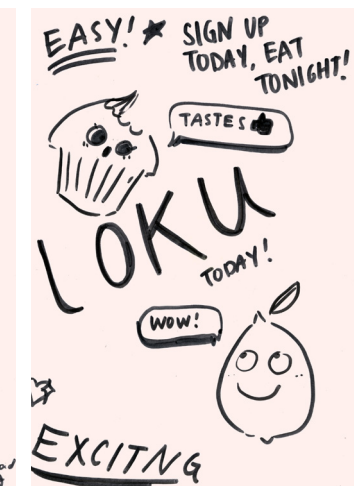
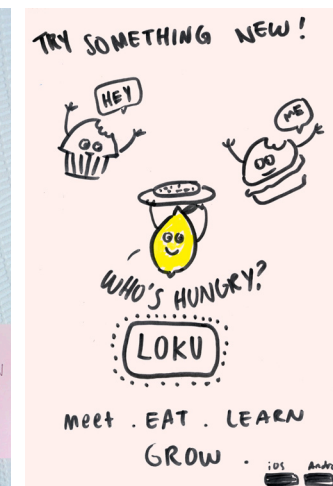
A sign up quiz to was sent to all participants, with 3 questions about the culinary, travel and social preferences.

Objective: To sum up the whole experience from a user's perspective and see how it aligns with our Elevator pitch.



"I usually find Uttapams boring, but cooking with new people made the experience refreshing" - Vidha

"Loku can be the biggest restaurant in the World, without owning a single restaurant." - Raphael



"The app does the thinking and planning for me, and I am put under the Loku Spell"

"On the one hand bringing a friend would be comforting, on the other hand I wouldn't talk as much to other people at the dinner."



5.4 VALIDATION & INSIGHTS

INTERPRETATION OF THE LOKU BRAND COLLATERALS?

- Users did not entirely grasp what type of events can be hosted through Loku.
- The branding and mascots were very well received.
- Loku communicated a friendly and welcoming tone to the users.

BALANCING CURIOSITY AND COMFORT

- Motivation to participate comes from the event itself or a desire to try something new. Thus, they would want to know more about the event itself.
- Users enjoyed keeping their ethnicity and gender anonymous. They liked their Loku tribes, and would be willing to share their interests or hobbies to introduce themselves.
- Users are comfortable with the prospect of meeting strangers in small groups, as long as they trust the service. This trust can be gained by personal invites from known friends, and overall experience ratings.
- Some users liked the option of bringing other friends along.
- Users enjoyed the mystery around the tasks and people in the event. Thus, they did not want any photos/news feed/stories within the service. It is more about the experience, and less about its documentation.

MOTIVATION TO USE LOKU

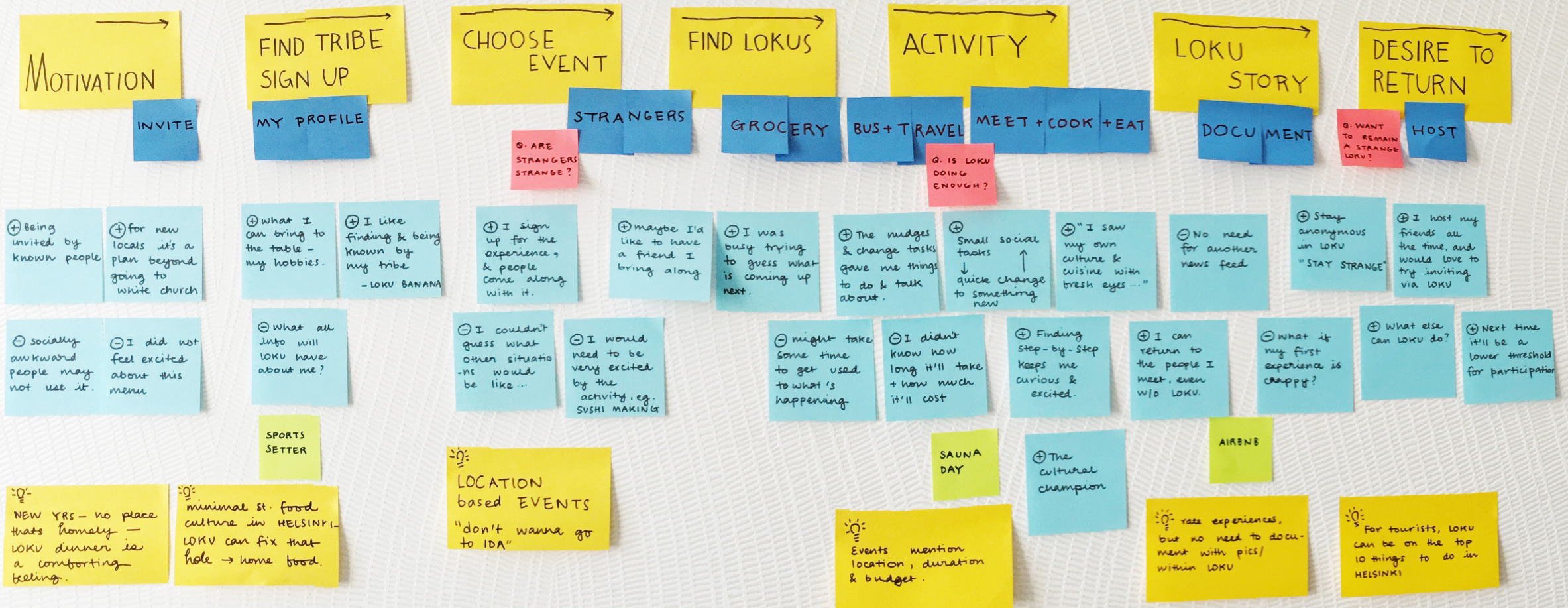
- Nature of the event itself
- Being invited personally by a friend
- Loku's customization and proactiveness

"Sometimes I don't even know what I want to do, so how can I search for it?"
- Karoline

ESSENCE OF LOKU

- Exciting events with small tasks, and meeting new friends along the way.
- Loku is the biggest restaurant in Helsinki, without owning a single space.
- Loku is a slice of Helsinki culture on the list of 10 things to do in Helsinki.

"We need to eat at least twice a day, so there is always an opportunity"
- Vidha



EXPERIENCE OF STAGES IN LOKU?

"Loku's service is a frame within which I can create any experience I want."

- Vesa

PRE EVENT: INVITATION AND SIGN UP

- Personal invitations and nominations would make users more inclined towards attending events.
- Being invited by a friend made them feel safe.
- Not having to search for events is an advantage.
- The sign-up process/profile worked well for users.
- The branding and Tribe Mascots felt friendly.
- Not knowing exactly what will happen and who they will meet was intriguing

DURING EVENT

- Small tasks and a constant change of location/environment acted as a trigger to keep users engaged and made them interact with each other.
- Everyone learnt something new. In particular, they were happy to be invited to someone's home, and felt it can help peek into Helsinki's local culture.
- There were concerns regarding the duration, budget and location of the event. These factors effect motivation to participate, and should be clarified during sign up.
- They recommended that while signing up for an event, we should be able to sign up for small responsibilities (such as chopping/cleaning) to reduce pressure on the host.

AFTER EVENT: LOKU STORIES

- Our users felt that documentation of Loku events was not essential to the core service offering.
- Loku stories or recipes are not integral to the native app or a user's motivation to join. Instead, we could use hashtag or tweets to create a social media presence.
- Users don't want to know/be able to identify each other within the service even after an event. They prefer to exchange contact information outside of Loku if needed.



WORKSHOP WRAP UP

1. EVENT OFFERING IS THE KEY MOTIVATION
2. PERSONAL INVITATIONS TRUMP FB EVENTS
3. USERS ENJOY BEING REPRESENTED
BY THEIR LOKU TRIBE
4. SMALL TASKS SPARK CONVERSATION
5. LOKU IS A MATCHMAKER,
BUT INTERACTIONS HAPPEN ORGANICALLY

SEVEN POINT ANALYSIS FOR LOKU

In the research phase, we analysed case studies on the basis of indicators specifically created for, and relevant to our aims (refer to page 43). We used the same indicators to recap our efforts towards creating a service concept that encourages cultural curiosity.

	CK	RP	UI	CDWS	LET	TWS	SK	LOKU
FACE TO FACE DIALOGUE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
LOW THRESHOLD FOR PARTICIPATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
ADDRESSING STEREOTYPES	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
VISIBLE BRAND & RECALL VALUE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SCALABILITY	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
VIALE BUSINESS MODEL	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
MONETIZATION	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Effective ● Partially Effective ● Not Effective

1. Face to face dialogue: All Loku experiences facilitate face to face dialogue among users and with the touch-points, (such as the Indian store and the Cultural Champion in the case of the service walkthrough). During the workshop we limited the number of participants to 5, who said that a gathering of this size gave them an opportunity to interact with everyone.

2. Low threshold for participation: Users would like to be a part of Loku if invited by their friends, but may require more incentives to actively use the service. Other factors such as location, budget, duration will help them sign up. We also need to find more ways of motivating old locals to be a part of Loku. For the service walkthrough, we did this by taking the old local - Vesa, into a space (the Indian store) which he was less familiar with than the new locals.

3. Addressing stereotypes: Our pilot users enjoyed the feeling of anonymity on Loku, and preferred being identified by their Loku Tribe even after the event. They all preferred being matched by hobbies and food interests rather than ethnicity. However, if Loku is scaled beyond University circles, we may need to revisit the risks of anonymity. For now, the invite based sign up is sufficient.

4. Visible brand & recall value: Loku and its mascots were interpreted as fun, memorable and friendly. We incorporate them into the service walkthrough by assigning each participant to a Loku Tribe, in the app prototype, in stickers to find each other etc. These will be developed further with a clear branding and communication strategy. Eventually, the events offered and positive testimonials will be the key to gaining momentum and popularizing Loku.

5. Scalable: Loku can be adapted and scaled to other user groups and contexts. However, in order to succeed it requires a partnership with multiple stakeholders and thus cannot be implemented rapidly or independently.

6. Viable business model: While mapping the service, we accounted for values and benefits for possible stakeholders. Within the University, Loku can channel efforts by AYY, orientation programs, tutoring programs etc. to make them more seamless, viable and efficient. At a city or ministry level, a service like Loku is in line with Helsinki's efforts to boost Food Tourism, while also supporting and promoting small businesses. However, creating a robust business plan is not within the scope of this thesis and will be developed in the next phase.

7. Monetization: As this stage, Loku is not planned to involve money. We got an encouraging response from the Barter experiment at Ravintolapäiva (refer to page 65), and we hope that our service will advocate such alternate methods for transaction.



6. CONCLUSION

Based on the learnings from the literature review and the analysis of the seven case studies in Chapter 3, we were able to draw four conclusions to answer the main research question:

How can eating together play a role in encouraging cultural curiosity?

- By facilitating personal interactions and experiences which provide a fresh point of view, and breaks any biases.
- By providing a platform for people to feed their curiosity without any inhibitions.
- By encouraging an informal dialogue between people.
- By adding value to people's social habits.

The answers to the research question was made actionable and further broken down into three challenges which is tackled through the key features of Loku, as shown in Chapter 5:

1. **Tackling stereotypes:** Loku user's are recognised through their designated Tribe instead of age, ethnicity or gender.
2. **Cultivating social habits:** Loku sends out customized invitations and nudges users to emerge out of their comfort zone.
3. **Bringing people together:** Loku ties people, markets, kitchens and communities together onto one platform, to encourage collaborations and new experiences.

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

The User Centered Design approach and Service Design Tools brought context and order to our design process. In the course of this work, we had many exciting and eye opening interactions with a motley of inspiring people.

As a team, we were constantly in conversation with each other, brainstorming and articulating our thoughts followed by dividing responsibilities and developing ideas to test with users. On the one hand - doing a joint thesis and combining skills helped us play to our strengths, while on the other hand it also gave us the an opportunity to challenge ourselves and each other. The past one year of addressing this design challenge together has been full of negotiation, frustration, excitement, learning and fresh perspectives.

We believe that now is an opportune time for a service like Loku to exist. We have identified a need amongst people, and simultaneously a lot of grassroot initiatives which are working towards this goal. Bringing these elements together can have a big impact in building welcoming multicultural communities.

The ideas presented in this study can be considered as a reference for further development or research study. The next phase would involve further understanding of other user groups, partners and stakeholders and will require a strong support from the policy makers as well. With this guidance accompanied by a robust implementation plan, Loku can be piloted, tested and scaled effectively.



Translates to: 'Love not hate'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

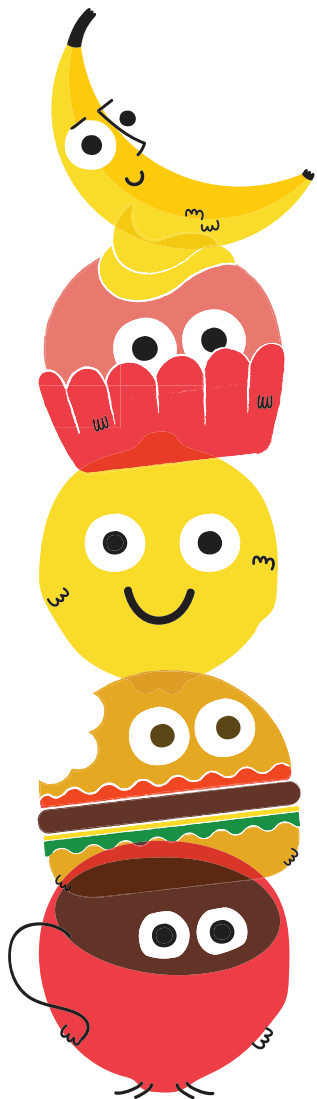
“People who love to eat, are always the best people.” - Julia Child

Thank you to all the old and new locals of Helsinki who guided and inspired us, and showed up for all the discussions, dinners and workshops!

Our Mentors: Zach Dodson & Veronica Fossa

At Aalto: Jonathan Hildén, Pekka Niskanen, Saku Heinänen, Heidi Uppa, Marije Vogelzang & Marjatta Itkonen, Peter McGrory

Family & Friends: Jaako, Vahid, Pranuthi, Amal, Melanie, Liisa, Timo, Sara, Vesa, Karoline, Raphael, Vidha, Palash, Upasana, Gaurav, Linda, Apurba & Kaushik



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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Indians living in Finland

CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN HELSINKI

They say the way to someone's heart is through their stomach. We are exploring how food can help the diverse people of Helsinki understand each others culture better. We would love to hear what's cooking in your head!

Q1. What is your name?

Short answer text

Q2. How old are you?

Short answer text

Q3. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Q4. What brings you to Finland?

- ☐ Job
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Study
- ☐ Travel

Q5. Rate these challenges of living in Finland?

Language	<input type="radio"/> Easy	<input type="radio"/> Manageable	<input type="radio"/> Difficult	<input type="radio"/> Almost impossible
People	<input type="radio"/> Easy	<input type="radio"/> Manageable	<input type="radio"/> Difficult	<input type="radio"/> Almost impossible
Weather	<input type="radio"/> Easy	<input type="radio"/> Manageable	<input type="radio"/> Difficult	<input type="radio"/> Almost impossible
Food	<input type="radio"/> Easy	<input type="radio"/> Manageable	<input type="radio"/> Difficult	<input type="radio"/> Almost impossible
Laws	<input type="radio"/> Easy	<input type="radio"/> Manageable	<input type="radio"/> Difficult	<input type="radio"/> Almost impossible
Cultural differences	<input type="radio"/> Easy	<input type="radio"/> Manageable	<input type="radio"/> Difficult	<input type="radio"/> Almost impossible

Q6. According to you, what is the best platform for sharing Indian culture with foreigners?

- ☐ Hanging out over a meal or drink

☐ Taking them for festival celebrations
- ☐ Show them a great Indian film!

☐ I wish there was a great way to share
- ☐ Language centres are a good platform

☐ Other

Q7. How can we better/positively represent India in Indian food stores or restaurants

- ☐ I think colourful posters are the next best thing since sliced bread
- ☐ Selling Bollywood DVDs & souvenirs are the way to go
- ☐ An expert Indian at the counter can sell anything
- ☐ It doesn't matter. The stores are beautiful the way they are
- ☐ Other

Q8. Mention 3 most awesome things people say to you about the Indian culture/country

Q9. Mention 3 things that you wish people understood better about the Indian culture/country

Q10. Mention 3 things that will make you feel more at home in Helsinki.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Non-Indian Nationals living in Finland

CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN HELSINKI

They say the way to someone's heart is through their stomach. We are exploring how food can help the diverse people of Helsinki understand each others culture better. We would love to hear what's cooking in your head!

Q1. How old are you?

Short answer text

Q2. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Q3. What is your nationality?

Short answer text

Q4. Where do your spend most of your days?

- ☐ School
- ☐ Work
- ☐ Home
- ☐ Other

Q5. Which of these popular Indian dishes have you tasted??

- ☐ Tikka Masala

☐ Masala Dosa

☐ Samosas

☐ Idli Sambar

☐ Goan Fish Curry

☐ Palak Paneer
- ☐ Mango Lassi

☐ Chilly Chicken

☐ Pork Vindaloo

☐ Curd Rice

☐ Other

Q6. You think Indian food is..

- ☐ Sweet

☐ Colourful

☐ Spicy

☐ Vegetarian

☐ Heavy

☐ Healthy

Q7. Let's talk about the Indian Grocery Stores..

- ☐ I like visiting the Indian Stores often

☐ I don't know what I would buy at the stores
- ☐ I go to Indian Ravintolas, but not to the stores

☐ I don't like Indian food
- ☐ Others

Q8. Would any of the following encourage you to visit the Indian Store more often?

- ☐ Recipes and recommendations within the store

☐ Bollywood DVDs
- ☐ A happy assistant at my service

☐ Better interiors
- ☐ Facebook updates of what is in the store

☐ Other
- ☐ Interesting information about Indian customs

Q9. How do you go about preparing an Indian dish?

- ☐ I know how to cook some Indian dishes well

☐ I ask an Indian friend to guide me
- ☐ I google recipes

☐ Other

Q10. According to you, what is the best platform for cultural exchange?

- ☐ A community like Couchsurfing meetups
- ☐ Google if/when I am curious to know something
- ☐ Hanging at a bar with my international friends/colleagues
- ☐ Invite friends home for a meal
- ☐ I wish there was a better way

Q11. What Indian food ingredients are usually stocked in your kitchen cabinet?

Q12. Mention 3 awesome things people often say about your culture/country

Q13. Mention 3 things you wish people understood better about your culture/country

Q14. Mention 3 things that would make non-natives feel at home in Helsinki?

Q15. We would love to know who you are!

Appendix 2: Responses to questions collected during Ravintolapäivä

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BEFRIEND PEOPLE OF OTHER NATIONALITIES?

Usually there is some interest we share
(doesn't matter what nationality)

WHAT PLATFORM DO YOU USE TO DO THE SAME?

Other parents in kindergarten/
facebook, hobbies.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BEFRIEND PEOPLE OF OTHER NATIONALITIES?

As an international student, I guess I am
quite open-minded and causal, willing to meet people.
So interesting story is the good byproduct?

WHAT PLATFORM DO YOU USE TO DO THE SAME?

I travel, a lot,
couchsurfing, via friends ☺

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BEFRIEND PEOPLE OF OTHER NATIONALITIES?

to learn and better understand the world
we live in. to get more out of life.

WHAT PLATFORM DO YOU USE TO DO THE SAME?

beer, food. travel, airbnb.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BEFRIEND PEOPLE OF OTHER NATIONALITIES?

WORK & FOOD

WHAT PLATFORM DO YOU USE TO DO THE SAME?

RESTAURANT DINS IN HELSINKI
WORKING TRIPS ABROAD

Appendix 3: Culture probe poster conducted at the Indian Market, Hakaniemi

JULY'2015

MO	TU	WD	TH	FR	SA	SU
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

THE ART OF EATING

Indians show affection for guests with repeated & generous servings of food. So brace yourself for a giant yummy meal!

An exploration of cultural integration through food stories. To know more about the project email us at: lisa.lee@aalto.fi or disha.roy@aalto.fi

Appendix 4: Questionnaire sent to workshop participants

BASED ON YOUR RESPONSES WE FOUND THE TRIBE THAT MATCHES YOUR PERSONALITY.

HI! I AM LOKU CUPOLA
WELCOME TO MY TRIBE.
YOU SEEM QUITE SWEET!

YOU'VE BEEN INVITED BY AN OLD LOKU TEA
He lives on an island, grows vegetables at home and collects musical instruments.
He has some great recipes and stories to share with you!

VENUE AND TIME:
Kauppa Halli, Hakaniemi (look out for Loku flags!)
Saturday, 27th Feb at 17:00 hrs

OTHER GUESTS FROM LOKU TRIBES YOU'LL BE MEETING

Loku Borg

Loku Bana

Loku Lemo

WHAT'S NEXT
Please let us know if you have any food allergies, and drop your phone numbers to us!
Thanks, and see you soon. :)

You've been served!

In order to find your Loku Tribe and match you with ideal dinner companions, we'd like to know a bit more about you.
Please reply to these 3 questions:

* Required

BE HUNGRY. BE LOKU

What do you crave for when you're feeling blue? *

☐ Instant noodle

☐ Take out Pizza

☐ A homemade recipe

☐ Other: _____

What is your idea of a great Friday night? *

☐ Drinks, Dancing or Clubbing

☐ Good food and Netflix in bed

☐ Sauna, Dinner and good conversation

☐ Other: _____

What's your primary influence while planning a holiday? *

☐ Blogs, Pinterest and Air BnB inspiration

☐ Budget tips and flight offers

☐ Bucket list and recommendations from friends

☐ Other: _____

Appendix 4: Mock screens sent to workshop participants during the service walkthrough

Welcome to the world of Loku!

YOU'RE INVITED

We've been developing Loku as part of our Design Thesis and now we want test the concept to see if it works for our future users. Together with you, we want to make Loku the best platform to meet new and old locals so that they can share their culture, stories, and of course some good food!

Since this event will be an experience prototype, not everything will be perfect. But with your help, we can make Loku as beautiful and easy to use as possible.

WHAT IS LOKU

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Feeling at home begins with knowing a city and making friends who you can call family.

NO NEED TO GO LOOKING FOR EVENTS

With Loku, experiences come knocking on your doorstep, to satiate your craving for the day.

FOOD EXPERIENCES WITH LOCALS

Food events are hosted by locals for the new ones. From sharing meals to a trip to the market, Loku finds you the perfect company.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Stories are more interesting than nationalities, so leave your stereotypes behind and join Loku.

WE'RE SO EXCITED TO HAVE YOU ON BOARD WITH US

In order to find you a perfect company we need to know a bit about you. Please reply to this email with the answers to these 3 questions:

WHAT'S NEXT

We will send you instructions about the event in our next email. So keep a look out!

In the meantime go like our Facebook page

HERE ARE THE DETAILS OF THE EVENT

GATHER

17:00 HRS
KAUPPA HALLI, HAKANIEMI
(look out for guests wearing Loku badges)

SCAVENGE

17:10 HRS
INDIAN MARKET, HAKANIEMI
(Buy things on the grocery list and you can also pick up 2 snacks of your choice from the market)

MEET

18:00 HRS
PAJALAHDENTIE 25 B, 28 LAUTTASAARI
DOOR CODE: 1357A
(Head over to the final destination and meet your host)

COOK & EAT

18:15 HRS
PAJALAHDENTIE 25 B, 28 LAUTTASAARI
(Participate in the cooking process & enjoy your meal)

WHAT'S NEXT

You will receive a reminder from Loku few hours before the event starts

YOUR HOST SENT YOU A MESSAGE

WHAT'S ON THE MENU

For the evening we will be preparing Vegetarian Uttapam. It is a thick pancake-like dish made by cooking ingredients in a batter with different toppings. It's usually served with a side of spicy chutney. BYOB: Some drinks will be provided but be free to bring whatever you might want to drink.

GROCERY LIST

- 1 packet of pre made Dosa mix
- 1 packet of Dosa powder
- 1 bunch Curry leaves
- 1 packet of dessicated coconut
- 5 green chillies
- Fresh coriander

WHAT'S NEXT

You will receive a reminder from Loku few hours before the event starts

Appendix 5: Mock screens sent to workshop participants during the service walkthrough

Event details

TASK 1

Saturday, February 27

GATHER

Look out for guests wearing Loku flags

17:00 HRS

Kauppa Halli, Hakaniemi

Done

Event details

TASK 2

Saturday, February 27

SCAVENGE

Buy things on the grocery list and you can also pick up 2 snacks of your choice from the market

17:10 HRS

Indian Market, Hakaniemi

Message from the host

Event details

TASK 3

Saturday, February 27

MEET

Head over to the final destination and meet your host

18:00 HRS

Pajalahdentie 25 B, 28

Done

Event details

TASK 4

Saturday, February 27

COOK & ENJOY

Participate in the cooking process & enjoy your meal

18:00 HRS

Pajalahdentie 25 B, 28

Done

