CO-CREATION FOR EXHIBITION DESIGN: THE CASE OF THE HIVE: CO-CREATION

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Introduction

The last decades, we experience a slow shift—in the way many cultural institutions globally relate to their visitors. This originates mainly from a current tension expressed from them to move away from a traditional conception of value making, into a more inclusive and user-centered one. Especially, as far as exhibition design is concerned, Co-creation and User Experience Design stand as two concepts which cultural institutions explore and are interested in to employ for the design of their exhibitions. However, most of the case museum professionals and specifically curators find it hard to apply and use these concepts efficiently. This happens mainly, because of the broad definitions and the ambiguity that these two notions can get. This leads to confusion for museum professionals that face difficulties when it comes to the design of meaningful experiences with the involvement of the public. Through the main research question to be: How can we create a digital toolkit or model able to suggest or create new, diverging museum experiences?

The toolkit needs to simulate impressions of those experiences and facilitate the processes to involve all stakeholders in the design process we highlight the importance of the aforementioned notions and the benefits that they can provide, through the examination of the design process of a co-creation toolkit specifically designed in order to bring together museum professionals and potential visitors to take place of the hosting of their exhibitions. The Hive: Co-creation incorporates multiple aspects that are taken into account in the design of exhibition, storytelling, wireframes, concept sketches, design method cards and gamification. Exhibition design and introduces a framework and a methodology that aims to foster further co-creation practices within cultural institutions.

Method

Design/ APPARATUS
For our project, we used the Agile: Scrum methodology, in combination with a Design Methods toolkit developed by MediaLAB Amsterdam. Every Sprint (three weeks duration) began with a goal-definition where our team decided on the main objectives, tasks, actions and methods that would be necessary to reach our goal by the end of every Sprint. Through the six Sprints that took place, we were able through this method to define our projects’ goals and intentions, understand clearly the context surrounding it, and know better our users and stakeholders’ needs and expectations so to move on with ideation, prototype creation and testing. Moreover, feedback insights played also a crucial role throughout our design process while we provided them with further ideas and defined every new Sprint goal. Overall, applied research was the one that progressively led to the design of The Hive: Co-Creation.

Participants
The main participants during the design process of our product were museum professionals, members of the public and our colleagues at MediaLAB Amsterdam. By conducting user testing through workshops, surveys or by holding a design of the hosting of our exhibitions at many phases, the functionality, content and design of The Hive: Co-Creation safeguard. Furthermore, we collaborated with museum professionals and made use of the Photo-Safari method, to understand better visitors’ preferences within exhibitions. We used all the feedback insights to make adjustments and bring about new developed versions of our product. The age and ethnography of all participants vary, with museum professionals and visitors to be between 24 and 50: Netherlands based, while MediaLAB interns between 19 and 31: International.

Materials
Throughout the design phase we made use of questionnaires, storyboards, wireframes, concept sketches, design method cards and digital design platforms. Further for our workshops we made use of the similar material while they proved easy to use and with low cost.

Procedure
Throughout the design process of The Hive: Co-Creation all participants were approached via email or direct contact. They were asked to provide feedback on the design of our workshop and through a workshop, to participate on interviews/surveys or express their perspectives through the Photo Safari method. Exhibition design was a cultural professional that visited MediaLAB for the presentation of our products were asked to provide recommendations for the improvement of our end product.

Discussion

The table above demonstrated the overall design process of The Hive: Co-Creation. For every Sprint; three weeks duration: we defined a certain goal, identified the design elements, actions and research and decided on the use of the most useful methods in order to reach or define a new concept. For Sprint 6: it was important first to make clear for whom we design for, so to better understand their possible needs and expectations regarding our end product. After a personal contact with museums professionals and our stakeholders along with a survey conducted with potential visitors, we gained a first overview on who they are and what are their expectations that is so to work with. This resulted on our first concept, which after evaluation proved to be time consuming for users and with need for further development.

For the Sprints 2 and 3, we recurred on literature and museums professionals and museum professionals and museum and also made an analysis of the results that derived from the storyboards that we conducted in the context of the project. Significant roles in our vision to the end of MediaLAB, was a list of all the aspects that museum professionals take into account and that can influence for the design of every new exhibition. This list was provided to us by the research group Experience Design for Crossmedia Content. G Emir (17) of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences which is a co-founder of our project. We decided to make use of twenty aspects from this list, while after research they proved to be the most efficient for the scope of our design since it was important to make relevant and easy to execute activities out of them.

The next steps we undertook included professional meetings in order to discuss our design on the many different phases. Further, during this process we decided that Co-Creation was the most accurate method to use as the milestone of our product, since Co-Creation provides the users with the opportunity to come up with relevant solutions to various problems through mutual understanding and respect. Furthermore, the bees had time and the intrinsic need to be generally willing to bring something from nature into a human centered design. Fascinated by the way the bees collaborate all together within a hive for the best result within their small community, we decided that museums could use our product as a case study for their research and thus we did not have a clear idea of how it can function. Finding participants for a user testing is a process that needs time and thus it was easier for our team to test our toolkit with museum professionals since it was easier to find and contact them through a preexisting network of our partners.

The results from the tests we conducted were very encouraging and most important it was an opportunity for us but also for museum professionals to see what we have created and decide if they would be interested to use it or not. Taking this into account it is very important that from now on there will be more using testing with actual visitors and more research based on its use and the goals it progresses to accomplish.

Further, The Hive: Co-Creation website is still under development and is the one that still also more time in order to be fully functional. We encourage and invite other scholars or designers interested on similar projects to use our product as a case study for their research and to pursue new insights that could be important for the further development of The Hive: Co-Creation. Culture related projects like this one can last for years but most of the cases the final outcome can lead to problem solving.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>METHODS</th>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Define a clear concept with the aim to design an end product for help museum professionals to better understand which museum is suitable for exhibitions, that best respond to their visitors needs.</td>
<td>Understand curators’, visitors’ and stakeholders’ needs and problems in order to define the function of our end product.</td>
<td>An iPad application that visitors will make a selection from a set of tools related to the upcoming exhibition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Create a smart guide including information on co-creation, experience design and evaluation frameworks to be used for the creation of a new concept.</td>
<td>Define the elements that constitute a co-creative museum experience. Implement the smart guide information into a new concept.</td>
<td>On-line interviews, Boundary Storming, Photo Safaris, Infographics, Brainstorming, Concept switch, Storyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Develop all the products of the Hive: Co-Creation.</td>
<td>Create a complete toolkit, improve prototype, test cards with users and analyze feedback.</td>
<td>Develop new activity cards. Provide a manual for evaluation User test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Improve game board. Make a product packaging, a website, a video for the product and write a research paper.</td>
<td>Improve the design and the questions provided on the game board. Make a scenario for the video. Make a clickable prototype for the game board. Design the product packaging. Apply a virtual framework.</td>
<td>Literature Review, Boarding Review, Storyboard, Design platforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Create a clear game board for facilitators that helps the workshop structure. undefine the content of the cards, improve instruction manual.</td>
<td>Literature Review, Boarding Review, Storyboard Design platforms</td>
<td>User test, Feedback evaluation, Literature Review.</td>
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Next Steps

We made use of the time given for this project to deliver the best possible outcome. However, after extensive research and contact with other professionals who work on similar projects we realized that five months are not enough in order to achieve all the potential goals of a product.

The design and content of The Hive: Co-Creation has been developed in a more than satisfied level and there are few developments needed before it will be fully functional. Nevertheless, as far as its functionality is concerned, we didn’t manage to involve the museum professionals we have met, and thus we do not have a clear idea of how it can function. Finding participants for a user testing is a process that needs time and thus it was easier for our team to test our toolkit with museum professionals since it was easier to find and contact them through a preexisting network of our partners.

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