

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU VILJANDI CULTURE ACADEMY

**Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery model
for audience engagement and art distribution**

Master's Thesis
Creative Project Management MA
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Table of Contents:

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research context	1
1.2 Problem definition	1
1.3 Aim of this thesis	3
1.4 Structure of this thesis	3
1.5 Research questions	4
1.6 Relevance of the study	5
2. Literature review and theoretical foundations	6
Introduction	6
2.1 Digital burnout and embodied experience	6
2.2 Audience development and informal cultural participation	7
2.3 Alternative art distribution models	8
2.4 Play, curiosity and emotional design	10
2.5 Summary of theoretical insights	11
Digital fatigue and the need for embodied encounters	11
Audience development beyond formal institutions	12
Alternative distribution in a fragmented landscape	12
Play, curiosity, and emotional design as engagement mechanisms	12
3. Methodological approach	14
3.1 Research design	14
3.2 Practice-based and reflective approach	14
3.3 Case context: Wendinand	15
3.4 Data collection methods	16
Survey	16
Interviews	17
Observations and reflections	17
3.5 Data analysis	17
3.6 Ethical considerations	17
3.7 Methodological limitations	18
3.8 Overview of collected materials	18
4. Presentation of project-related findings and analysis	20

Introduction	20
4.1 Wendinand as an unexpected cultural encounter	20
4.2 Low-threshold participation and audience development	23
4.3 Wendinand as an alternative art distribution model	26
4.4 Playfulness, curiosity and emotional engagement	28
4.5 Professional identity and sustainability	30
4.6 How the findings inform the project concept	32
4.7 Answers to research questions	34
5. Project concept	36
Introduction	36
5.1 Context, rationale, mission, and vision	36
5.1.1 Project context and background	36
5.1.2 Project rationale	37
5.1.3 Mission	38
5.1.4 Vision	38
5.2 Target groups and needs analysis	38
5.2.1 Primary target groups	38
5.2.2 Secondary target groups	40
5.2.3 Needs analysis	40
5.3 Strategic goals, expected outputs, and KPIs	41
5.3.1 Strategic goals	43
5.3.2 Expected outputs	44
5.3.3 KPIs	44
5.4 Project structure, timeline, and milestones	44
5.4.1 Project structure	45
5.4.2 Timeline	45
5.4.3 Milestones	46
5.5 Financial model and revenue logic	46
5.5.1 Cost structure	46
5.5.2 Revenue logic	48
5.5.3 Financial sustainability	49
5.6 Partnership and stakeholder plan	49
5.6.1 Key stakeholders	49

5.6.2 Venue partners	50
5.6.3 Collaborations	50
5.6.4 Wider network value	51
5.7 Communication and dissemination strategy	51
5.7.1 Communication objectives	51
5.7.2 Communication channels	52
5.7.3 Communication approach	53
5.8 Risk analysis and mitigation plan	55
5.8.1 Operational risks	55
5.8.2 Financial risks	56
5.8.3 Reputational and communication risks	56
5.8.4 Ethical risks	57
5.9 Feasibility and future development	58
5.10 Research-informed project design	59
6. Reflection and conclusions	61
6.1 Key research insights (from Chapters 1–4)	61
6.2 How insights shaped the Project Concept	62
6.3 Reflection and development journey	63
6.4 Limitations and future implications	64
6.5 Final conclusion	65
7. References	67
8. Annexes	69
Annex 1. Benchmarking template	69
Annex 2. Wendinand user interaction video (QR code and link)	78
Annex 3. Curriculum Vitae	79
Annex 4. Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public	80
AI use statement	81

Abstract

This thesis explores how an analogue, playful micro-gallery in public space can function as an alternative model of audience engagement and art distribution in the context of digital fatigue. The study is conducted through the development and pilot implementation of *Wendinand*, an artist-led project that distributes small-format artworks via a vending machine embedded in everyday social environments.

Using a practice-based methodology, the research combines theoretical perspectives on digital fatigue, audience development, and emotional design with empirical data collected through observation, a survey, and two interviews. The findings indicate that *Wendinand* enables spontaneous, low-threshold encounters with art, driven by visual curiosity, playful interaction, and situational context. The vending mechanism introduces an element of surprise, while the physical and place-based nature of the experience supports emotional engagement and memorability.

The research also identifies key design and operational tensions, particularly the need to balance simplicity with sufficient contextual clarity, as well as the constraints of time-intensive in-house production. While the model demonstrates viability at a micro-scale, its long-term sustainability depends on adapting production processes and scaling strategically.

The thesis contributes to both professional practice and academic discourse by demonstrating how small-scale, artist-led interventions can expand access to art beyond institutional and digital frameworks. It positions *Wendinand* as a complementary, place-based model that integrates artistic practice with alternative models of distribution and audience engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research context

In an increasingly digital world, art visibility and cultural participation are heavily shaped by online platforms and screen-based daily life. While digitalisation expands access to artistic content, it also influences how audiences discover, engage with, and value creative work. The extensive screen-based habits and routines are sparking discussions about digital burnout, referring to feelings of mental overload, attention issues, and physical, psychological as well as social problems (Erten & Özdemir, 2020).

This syndrome has been described as a consequence of the inability to fully disconnect from digital life, even during rest periods (Grant-Marshall, 2014). Alongside this context, voluntary digital disconnection practices have gained visibility as ways to restore a healthier balance between online and offline life. This has also been reflected in the growth of organised “digital detox” retreats and offline experience offerings, including within tourism and wellness contexts (Nassen et al., 2023).

As digital burnout does not always lead to a decrease in digital use, people continue to use digital platforms as a form of gratification and escapism from the very stress those same platforms cause (Zhao et al., 2022, as cited in Pires da Silva et al., 2024). In this thesis, Wendinand, an analogue micro-gallery model, is positioned as an embodied, sensory artistic encounter within this cultural shift, inviting offline curiosity and engagement in a low-threshold way while offering a kind of “circuit breaker” with added emotional value.

1.2 Problem definition

Traditional methods of engaging with art require intentional effort, time, and specific cultural knowledge. However, for individuals experiencing digital burnout, navigating cultural participation through formal art institutions can feel like an additional burden, as this syndrome

is characterized by a perceived inability to deal with daily routines and emotions (Erten & Özdemir, 2020).

Consequently, audiences often lean on online channels for "easier" cultural consumption, yet these platforms tend to make art discovery feel overwhelming and emotionally distant. In this saturated environment, art visibility is heavily influenced by algorithms and a continuous 24/7 flow of new content that contributes to digital exhaustion and a sense of "digital noise" (Detecon, 2013, as cited in Pires da Silva et al., 2024).

For creatives and artist-led initiatives, this creates the challenge of designing meaningful art encounters that have potential to reach audiences outside institutional setting while not adding to their already heavy digital burden. While artists seek accessible ways to connect, their audiences are often "trapped" in a digital loop. They continue to use online platforms not out of a productive interest in art, but instead as a form of often impulsive gratification and escapism to seek relief from the very same stress those screen-based routines cause (Zhao et al., 2022, as cited in Pires da Silva et al., 2024). In this context, online distribution often fails as a professional solution because it relies on the same "impulsive cycles" and stressors that define digital fatigue (Sharma et al., 2020).

Wendinand responds to this problem by offering an alternative way to effortlessly engage with culture: an analogue, and micro-scale model of art distribution, that meets the audience in an everyday space they already visit in an approachable way. By utilizing a tactile, public-space-based interaction, it brings small-format artworks into the physical realm in an intentionally low-threshold way. This micro-gallery model functions as a kind of "circuit breaker" by providing the temporary distraction and emotional relief. Audiences might currently be seeking that through digital escapism, but Wendinand helps relieving the exhaustion of the screens with a small, but meaningful, restorative, embodied sensory encounter (Rose & Dhandayudham, 2014).

1.3 Aim of this thesis

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery model for audience engagement and art distribution in the context of digital fatigue, focusing on its potential as a low-threshold, offline mode of encounter (see Figure 1 for implementation example). The thesis follows a dual structure, combining an academic research component with an applied project concept.



Figure 1. *Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery embedded in a café environment. Source: author.*

1.4 Structure of this thesis

The academic research component focuses on developing a theoretical and methodological framing needed to interpret Wendinand as a form of audience development and alternative art distribution model, positioning it within a wider discourse to provide justification for the project's design and reasoning.

The project concept component translates these findings into a feasible plan demonstrating strategic capabilities by detailing the project's mission, target groups, goals, KPIs, financial

model, stakeholder partnerships, communication strategy, strategic goals, and risk mitigation measures.

1.5 Research questions

The primary research question driving this study is: *How can an analogue, playful micro-gallery in public space function as an alternative model of audience engagement and art distribution in the context of digital fatigue?*

It is explored through the following sub-questions:

1. Audience development: *In what ways does Wendin and lower the threshold of participation and reshape who is considered an art audience?*
2. Distribution model: *How does this micro-scale model challenge or complement traditional art distribution channels such as galleries, online platforms, and institutions?*
3. Audience experience: *How do people experience art when it is encountered unexpectedly in everyday spaces rather than in formal cultural institutions?*

1.6 Relevance of the study

This study addresses a critical challenge in the creative industries: the failure of traditional and digital channels to connect with audiences experiencing digital burnout. It provides insights into audience development strategies that prioritize well-being and sensory experience by examining a micro-scale analogue model as an alternative art distribution channel.

By linking the findings to a structured project plan, it contributes to professional creative practice with a detailed overview of a concept focusing on place-based analogue art experience with an emphasis on accessibility and sparking audiences' curiosity.

2. Literature review and theoretical foundations

Introduction

This chapter establishes the key concepts and theoretical lenses used to frame Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery model for audience engagement and alternative art distribution. The goal is to build a theoretical foundation that supports the research questions and inform the applied project concept.

2.1 Digital burnout and embodied experience

While nearly every aspect of modern existence, including education, professional work, and social life, is now dependent on digital interfaces and algorithms (Zhao et al., 2024, as cited in Zhao et al., 2026), digital burnout has evolved into a widely spread cultural syndrome across both professional and personal spheres (Sharma et al., 2020). This state of physical and emotional exhaustion has been characterized by three core dimensions: digital aging - an individual's inability to balance the real and virtual worlds; digital deprivation - the psychological discomfort experienced when an individual is disconnected from the digital world; and emotional exhaustion - the depletion of an individual's internal psychological and emotional resources caused by continuous exposure to continuous algorithmically mediated information (Erten & Özdemir, 2020). These symptoms cause inability to cope with emotions, daily routines as well as contribute to constant fatigue (Erten & Özdemir, 2020; Pires da Silva et al., 2024).

Byung-Chul Han's research on the "burnout society" suggests that this fatigue is not just a consequence of extensive screen time, but the inevitable result of intense demand for constant digital presence and voluntary self-exploitation (Han, 2015). In this environment, people face heavy pressure to respond and participate in continuous 24/7 loop, which strains coping mechanisms, leading to a decline in well-being (Sharma et al., 2020). The paradox is, that this kind of exhaustion does not always lead to a decreased use of digital platforms. Instead, people tend to remain digitally "trapped", using the online world as a coping mechanism in form of impulsive gratification and escapism, seeking relief from the very same stress those screen-

based routines cause (Zhao et al., 2022, as cited in Pires da Silva et al., 2024). Within this ongoing loop, digital platforms intensify the sense of digital noise and emotional distance (Detecon, 2013, as cited in Pires da Silva et al., 2024), making intentional art discovery feel overwhelming. Though passive consumption (scrolling) remains possible, individuals are lacking the abilities for intentional action (Han, 2015) needed for meaningful art participation.

In order to break this cycle, it is suggested to shift towards “resonance” (Rosa, 2019). To balance a digitally saturated world that can feel “mute” and alienated, the antidote is found in physical space, creating resonance through meaningful interactions creating connection between the individual and the real world (Rosa, 2019). This supports the experience design of Wendin and as an intentional intervention: by moving away from the notion of it being simply a “nostalgic decoration” toward an offline-first art participation format. This kind of micro-gallery model offers restorative, sensory, place-based encounter that digital platforms cannot replicate. The effectiveness of this model as a “circuit breaker” leans onto its ability to satisfy the audience’s need for temporary distraction and emotional relief (Rose & Dhandayudham, 2014). Wendin and utilizes tactile art participation to restore a sense of presence and spark genuine curiosity in an approachable low-threshold way.

2.2 Audience development and informal cultural participation

The fundamental challenge with contemporary audience development is not a lack of interest, but a deep-seated assumption that the “default” way of accessing culture is through formal institutions such as museums and galleries (Miles & Gibson, 2016). Kawashima (2000) adds that it is so deeply rooted because it has always been closely tied to cultural competence and the psychological barrier remains even when physical and economic barriers are removed. The traditional model of audience development often considers only a narrow definition of participation, viewing those who do not visit museums or galleries as a target group needed to be persuaded into it (Kawashima, 2000).

Miles and Gibson (2016) argue that the problematic focus only on formal institutions hides the importance of other forms of cultural participation which are situated locally in the everyday realm. Their research into everyday participation finds that these individuals are actually highly

active in informal settings, but are discouraged to engage with formal institutions because they are intimidated by the unspoken requirement of cultural competence (Kawashima, 2000; Miles & Gibson, 2016). Qualitative interviews with focus groups by Kawashima discovered a surprising amount of concerns about the appropriate manners and protocol associated with attendance and preference to avoid unnecessary embarrassment when it comes to not only to attending art events but also to the buildings where they take place (Kawashima, 2000).

By utilizing the public-place-based locations, Wendinand is not affected by these barriers and meets the visitor where they are already at, situating the art encounter in a setting that is familiar and comfortable - it's not about luring audiences to a conventional venue, but focusing on new participation at their chosen location(s) (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011). This moves the strategic thinking from how and when people are not participating to how they are interacting naturally in their daily life and common settings (Miles & Gibson, 2016).

Data from the Wendinand project's pilot phase support this theoretical potential: while the sample is small, early findings show that 25% of users identify as individuals who never or almost never visit traditional galleries. By being placed in an everyday environment like a cafe, for example, Wendinand successfully lowers the threshold of participation, reaching people traditionally considered as non-attenders that formal institutions struggle to reach (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011).

In this model, the encounter with art becomes a kind of gift found in an everyday routine rather than an intentional destination that requires prior cultural knowledge or a specific time and energy commitment. It ensures that art is not a separate distant sphere but is instead integrated into the "resonance" of the real world (Rosa, 2019). Ultimately, this approach allows the micro-gallery to function as an approachable catalyst of creativity rather than a gatekeeper, whether it is located in a cafe, a restaurant, bookstore, etc. (Simon, 2010).

2.3 Alternative art distribution models

For a long time, big institutions and commercial channels (like museums, galleries, and art markets) have acted as "gatekeepers," deciding which art gets shown and taken seriously, and

which does not (Kawashima, 2000; Simon, 2010). Instead of providing opportunities to stumble across art spontaneously, people have to deliberately plan to go to the purpose-built art venues (Kawashima, 2000). This traditional model is not reaching people it is not considering as their audience, though they are often still interested in active participation through alternative models (Miles & Gibson, 2016).

As a reaction to this imbalance, artists have been increasingly finding ways to connect to audiences by exploring new channels from the angle of what their audiences want and where they already are, moving from “product-led” to “target-led” distribution models (Kawashima, 2000). As Mark Banks’ (2017) work on creative justice explains there is a moral and professional responsibility to make art and culture available fairly across all social and geographical boundaries, rather than serving mostly elites. Alternative models have demonstrated that moving art into everyday settings can successfully bypass the intimidating atmosphere of formal institutions and build new demand where it previously did not exist (Kawashima, 2000).

In the digitally saturated world, the distribution landscape has become further fragmented. While online channels do offer easier access, they tend to be linked to the pressures of attention economy, as visibility is shaped by algorithms and a constant flow of digital noise (Pires da Silva et al., 2024). As this environment relies on the same impulsive cycles that contribute to digital burnout and emotional distance, it tends to fail as a professional solution for creatives seeking meaningful engagement (Pires da Silva et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2020).

Wendin and is responding to these challenges by operating as a micro-distribution format offering small-scale, repeatable, analogue model for art distribution. With formal institutional distribution requiring extra effort and cultural competence to navigate and digital distribution adding to users’ screen fatigue, this micro-gallery model uses a low-threshold physical encounter (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011; Kawashima, 2000; Pires da Silva et al., 2024; Simon, 2010).

2.4 Play, curiosity and emotional design

To understand Wendinand's positioning and how the public experiences art spontaneously in everyday spaces, it is helpful to transition from the logic of passive spectatorship toward a framework that prioritizes emotional resonance and playful engagement. "Play" mode functions as a critical indicator of well-being (Andersen, 2022), especially in a culture defined by digital burnout (Erten & Özdemir, 2020). Andersen (2022) establishes that play occurs only in the absence of stress and hunger, acting as a spontaneous behaviour that is a reward in itself. Situating a playful art encounter in public space provides the user a much needed "interval" from the demands of constant productivity, allowing them to enter a state where the goal is not achievement, but instead an immediate sensory engagement (Andersen, 2022; Han, 2015).

In this context, Wendinand's effectiveness lies in measured unpredictability: according to the "Goldilocks Principle", humans are most engaged by stimuli that are "just right", neither too predictable (boring), nor too chaotic (frightening) (Andersen, 2022). By using the vending machine format, it creates a playful search for the safe dose of exhilarating surprise, triggering curiosity that more formal and predictable institutions often fail to spark in adults. While adults tend to be rigid and rely on assumptions about how the world works, the playful ambiguity of the micro-gallery bypasses this fixed thinking, inviting them to explore the edges of what they currently know (Andersen, 2022).

Another aspect of what places the user in an open frame of mind is this project's emotional design, as positive feelings such as curiosity, surprise, and delight do exactly that (Norman, 2004). For Wendinand specifically, this means that the surprise and delight of the encounter is not merely an aesthetic choice, but a functional requirement to move the user from a state of digital withdrawal into active curiosity, recapturing depleted attention. Norman (2004) suggests that the emotional side of design may be more critical to a product's success than its practical elements, becoming especially important in today's attention economy.

The success of Wendinand as a micro-gallery depends on its ability to navigate a broader shift in cultural sphere that's moving away from "sit-back-and-be-told culture" towards a "making-and-doing culture" (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011). The public increasingly values opportunities to engage over passive reception of a finished artistic product (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011). As Brown and Novak-Leonard (2011) observe, the overflow of digital content

and rising expectations for self-guided, on-demand experiences have primed audiences for more active cultural practices. By prioritizing emotional resonance and playful engagement, Wendinand is offering a chance to interact rather than simply observe moving from merely delivering a product to enriching the experience (Kawashima, 2000).

This design is relying on curiosity acting as the primary driver of participation, making the little art encounter feel both safe and restorative (Miles & Gibson, 2016). By lowering the friction and threshold of participation, removing psychological barriers, Wendinand honours the belief that every human being has a natural creative value that matters on its own (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011). Ultimately, this small restorative “interval” provides the mental safety necessary for play to occur, allowing individuals to reclaim their humanity and well-being in an era dominated by the exhausting demands of performance, even for just a moment (Han, 2015). Han (2015) defines this “interval” as a sacred space free from the relentless demands of striving and productivity, where individuals can simply exist without the constant pressure of achievement.

2.5 Summary of theoretical insights

Chapter 2 established the theoretical framing used to interpret the context around Wendinand as well as the concept of an analogue micro-gallery model for audience engagement and alternative art distribution. The key insights can be summarised as follows:

Digital fatigue and the need for embodied encounters

The literature describes digital burnout as being linked to mental overload, reduced attention, and emotional exhaustion. This supports Wendinand’s positioning as a small, offline interruption that offers a brief sensory experience in physical space, framing the project as a response to a broader cultural condition rather than a transactional point of sale.

Audience development beyond formal institutions

Audience development research highlights that participation in the arts is shaped by cultural competence and psychological barriers, not just by access. By placing the project in everyday venues, Wendinand operates in the “vernacular dimension”, lowering the threshold for engagement and creating the potential to reach audiences who may not identify as traditional art attenders or be recognised as such by institutions.

Alternative distribution in a fragmented landscape

Traditional art distribution is shaped by institutional structures and formal channels, while digital visibility is influenced by platforms and algorithms. Wendinand can fill the gaps as a micro-distribution model: approachable, small-scale, repeatable, and less dependent on screen-based engagement, offering an alternative pathway for connecting art and audiences.

Play, curiosity, and emotional design as engagement mechanisms

Theoretical lenses on play and emotional design support the idea that surprise, curiosity, and measured unpredictability can effectively invite participation. In this sense, the nostalgic vending-machine interaction is not only an aesthetic choice, but a functional design element encouraging active engagement in an approachable way.

Figure 2 summarises the four lenses and shows how each lens informs a corresponding design/logic element in Wendinand.



Figure 2. *Summary of theoretical insights informing Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery model. Source: author.*

Overall, these insights position Wendinand as a place-based, low-threshold, and experience-led cultural format. Moving on, they inform the methodological approach in Chapter 3, guide the interpretation of pilot findings in Chapter 4, and provide foundation for the concept and planning decisions introduced in Chapter 5.

3. Methodological approach

3.1 Research design

This thesis uses a qualitative, practice-based, reflective case-study approach to explore Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery model for audience engagement and art distribution. The research combines an artist-researcher perspective with empirical data collected during the pilot phase of the project.

The aim is not to produce statistically generalisable results, but to identify the early signals and emerging patterns that help interpret how the concept functions in real life context.

3.2 Practice-based and reflective approach

In this practice-based research approach, the project itself functions as both the subject and the method of inquiry. The author has a dual role as both creator and researcher - designing, implementing, and observing the Wendinand concept, providing access to project planning, iteration decisions, and operational realities that would be difficult to capture from an external standpoint.

To support transparency and critical distance, the research follows a reflective approach that documents:

- design choices and the reasoning behind them,
- operational challenges and adaptations,
- observations about audience behaviour and engagement,
- learning moments throughout the pilot phase

3.3 Case context: Wendinand

Wendinand is an artist-led analogue micro-gallery disguised as a playful vending machine, offering small-format artworks in everyday public or semi-public spaces. The project is positioned as an offline-first intervention responding to digital fatigue and aiming to create self-directed moments of curiosity, surprise, and accessible art discovery. The interaction follows a simple, step-by-step process, as illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. *User interaction sequence with Wendinand, illustrating the step-by-step user process (visible as a video via QR code in Annex 2). Source: author.*

The research focuses on the pilot phase which involves testing the concept in two locations, allowing observation of audience engagement and behavioural patterns, as well as operational feasibility, and practical implementation in real-world conditions.

3.4 Data collection methods

The study combines multiple data sources:

Survey

The data was collected through a short questionnaire accessible via QR code placed inside the artwork packaging (see Figure 4), targeting individuals who had interacted with the machine and gathered insights into immediate reactions, motivations, overall experience, and perception of accessibility. The survey included short multiple-choice questions, optional open-ended questions and an overall experience rating.

At the time of finalising the thesis, the survey dataset was locked at 20 responses, which are treated as indicative early-stage feedback signals. All respondents allowed their answers to be used anonymously in this thesis.



Figure 4. *Artwork sleeves with integrated QR codes, embedded in the packaging to collect user feedback from participants. Source: author.*

Interviews

To complement and triangulate the survey data, two short qualitative interviews were conducted: one with an individual who had interacted with the machine and one with a representative of a host venue.

The low-pressure, anonymous format allowed participants to respond at their convenience and provided additional insight into personal experiences and observed patterns.

Observations and reflections

In addition, the research includes participant observation and reflective notes documented during pilot phase, capturing patterns of interactions, user behaviour, general feedback, brief at-side conversations with users and host venue employees, as well as practical challenges related to the implementation of the concept.

3.5 Data analysis

The data is analysed using thematic analysis, focusing on identifying recurring patterns across survey responses, interviews, and observational notes. Rather than aiming for statistically generalised results, the analysis focuses on interpreting key themes such as curiosity, accessibility, emotional engagement, experiences with digital burnout, and alternative modes of encountering art. These themes are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Participation in the survey and interviews was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose of the thesis and provided consent for their answers to be used anonymously for research purposes. No personally identifying information was collected, and participants were free to skip optional questions or discontinue at any time before submitting their

responses. Survey and interview questions were phrased as neutrally as possible in order to avoid leading participants toward specific responses or interpretations.

The observation process followed ethical research principles:

- Observations were conducted in a public or semi-public setting (e.g., a café)
- No personal identifying information was recorded
- Individuals remained anonymous in research notes
- Observations focused on general behaviour and interaction, not personal characteristics

Research notes and responses were stored securely and used only for thesis purposes.

3.7 Methodological limitations

The research is based on a relatively small data-set and the findings are context-specific, reflecting early-stage testing of the concept. The observations, reflections, and findings are not intended to be generalisable but as indicative signals. Additionally, the dual role of the researcher as both creator and observer may introduce subjective bias, which is addressed through reflective practice and mitigated by triangulation of data sources. Another limitation is that on-site observations capture only short encounters and may miss longer-term patterns. Finally, the pilot phase may reflect early feedback to novelty rather than stable long-term behaviour.

3.8 Overview of collected materials

The collected materials from the early pilot phase include:

- 20 questionnaire responses
- 2 qualitative interviews
- observational and reflective journal notes

Together, these sources provide feedback patterns (survey), more detailed perspectives (interviews), and contextual insight into real life use and operational conditions (observations/reflections), supporting a multi-perspective understanding of how Wendinand functions as an experiential and distribution model in practice.

4. Presentation of project-related findings and analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the early pilot phase of the Wendinand project, focusing on how the concept functions as an analogue micro-gallery in real life settings. The analysis brings together survey responses, interviews, and observational notes to identify emerging patterns in audience participation and experience from the perspectives of the audience, the host venue, and the creator.

These findings are organised thematically, reflecting key aspects of the project: audience experience, accessibility, emotional engagement, and feasibility considerations. These themes are interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2, and this chapter concludes by outlining how the findings inform the development of the project concept in Chapter 5.

4.1 Wendinand as an unexpected cultural encounter

Findings from the early pilot phase show that Wendinand does function as an unexpected cultural encounter in everyday environments. Rather than being actively sought out, interaction with the vending machine happens through spontaneous noticing, without needing a prior knowledge of the concept. Engagement takes place during routine activities such as visiting a café or bar, while placing orders, waiting, or simply being there socialising.

Survey responses support this pattern: participants frequently reported noticing Wendinand through its visual presence in the space. The machine's appearance was the most commonly selected reason for noticing it, chosen by 16 out of 20 respondents. This suggests that discovery is largely driven by visual presence in everyday routines rather than prior intention. This is further supported by the user interview, where the machine's colour and visual appearance were identified as the primary elements attracting initial attention.

Observational data indicates that attention is frequently drawn in by the nostalgic presence and the aesthetic visual of the machine itself, its distinct pink characteristics and analogue appearance make it stand out in real world context. It is especially effective if the machine is positioned within direct line of regular movement of the clients, such as near the ordering area where they stop to engage with the host venue staff. In most cases, people who approach the space, notice the machine almost immediately, but for some daily regulars it can become so familiar that it almost blends in with the venue atmosphere - in these instances, new signages with clear announcements have helped.

A short interview with the host venue representative similarly described the machine as a positive surprise for less frequent visitors, while noting that regular customers may stop noticing it over time.

The initial noticing is typically followed by a short phase of curiosity-driven exploration - people approach the machine, read the signage, look at the sample artwork on the machine, and when they are not alone, discuss it with others. The interaction is often not just individual, but creates a social interaction: observational notes document instances where one person's discovery sparks a group discussion, causing a ripple effect of engagement within the groups.

Emotional responses observed during these interactions suggest that the experience extends beyond a functional exchange. Participants displayed visible signs of excitement and enjoyment, including smiling, even laughter, and expressions of surprise, especially at the moment of turning the vending machine's mechanism, receiving and opening the paper sleeve carrying the artwork. In many cases, reactions were notably enthusiastic, with users immediately sharing their excitement with others, showing the artwork they received, and encouraging others to interact with the machine.

Survey responses further reinforce this by participating respondents describing the experience as "surprising", "interesting", "warm and excitement inducing", as well as stating that it "made me happy". One participant described leaving the café with a feeling of heightened satisfaction, suggesting that the encounter carries an emotional charge that extends beyond the moment of transaction.

However, one survey respondent noted that although the interaction was interesting and exciting, the artwork felt unclear without contextual information about the author or the work, suggesting that the encounter can weaken when interpretive cues are missing and may even produce confusion or disconnection.

At the same time, the observations indicate that the encounter is not universally immediate, guaranteed, or frictionless. Some people observe it from a distance or move past it without noticing or stopping to notice it. In some cases this appears to be influenced by situational constraints, such as customers having their hands occupied with carrying their food or navigating a crowded space trying not to block the flow of movement. This suggests that while the project does lower the threshold for participation, engagement remains dependent on momentary conditions and individual readiness to stop and interact.

Expectedly, the placement of the machine (within the host venue itself) plays a significant role in triggering and shaping the encounter. In one of the two observed venues, the machine was highly visible and effectively integrated into the flow of natural movement, resulting in frequent and frictionless interactions. In contrast, in the other venue, the machine was partially obscured and outside of the main field of view, making it less likely to be noticed and revisited once customers were seated. While the location was near the counter, some customers were served from their table, only noticing the machine when they decided to pour themselves the complementary water near the counter. These nuances highlight how the unexpected nature of the encounter is closely tied to not only novelty, but also practical and more obvious factors like visibility and spatial positioning (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. *Wendinand placement within host venues: visible within customer flow (left); partially obstructed from the main seating area (right). Source: author.*

Overall, these findings support that Wendinand does operate as a form of art encounter experienced spontaneously rather than being deliberately accessed. The experience is initiated through curiosity, social interaction, and situational context, positioning it as a low-threshold entry point to cultural engagement. This aligns with the theoretical perspective on informal cultural participation and the vernacular dimension, where engagement takes place within everyday settings rather than formal institutional environments (Miles & Gibson, 2016). In this sense, the unexpected encounter becomes a key mechanism through which the project reaches audiences outside traditional modes of art access.

4.2 Low-threshold participation and audience development

A recurring theme across the pilot-phase data is that Wendinand enables low-threshold engagement with art in everyday contexts. Once it is noticed, interaction with the machine requires minimal effort, no prior knowledge or extended commitment, making it accessible to a wide range of participants.

Survey responses suggest that the experience is perceived as easy to approach and emotionally inviting, with users describing it as “cozy”, “cute”, and “interesting”. The format does not require visitors to actively seek out art or enter a formal cultural setting, but instead allows engagement to happen naturally and spontaneously within already familiar environments such as cafés and bars, for example.

Observational data supports this by showing that interaction involves simple, intuitive actions: approaching the machine, inserting a coin, turning the mechanism, and receiving the artwork, without the need for in-depth instructions or external guidance. This kind of self-explanatory simplicity appears to reduce hesitation and enables participation even in brief moments, such as while waiting for their food/drink order to be filled. Since the logic and working mechanism of an analogue vending machine itself is already familiar to many people from their prior experience, the interaction comes off more as a nostalgic moment rather than an unfamiliar technology.

At the same time, the findings indicate that low threshold does not always mean universally accessible in all situations. As observed in Chapter 4.1, engagement is still influenced by situational factors such as physical constraints, time pressure, and visibility. This suggests that accessibility in this context is not absolute, but is influenced by momentary conditions and the busyness of the surrounding environment.

From an audience development perspective, the format shows potential to reach individuals who may not typically engage with art through traditional channels. By embedding the experience within everyday routines and reducing practical as well as psychological barriers, Wendin and creates an opportunity for unplanned participation. While the survey sample is too small to support generalisable statistical conclusions, 5 out of 20 participants reported they never (n=4) or almost never (n=1) visit art galleries or exhibitions in formal institutional settings (see Figure 6).

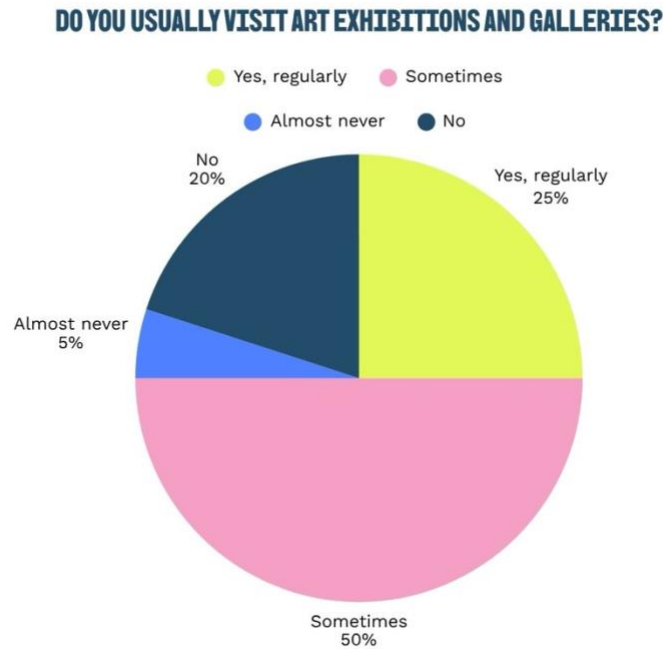


Figure 6. *Survey respondents' frequency of visiting art galleries and exhibitions. Source: author.*

A host venue representative described the audience as varied, mentioning Viljandi visitors, guests, and regulars purchasing the small artwork for themselves or as a gift for their friends, and noting in addition that while no clear age group stands out, interest appears most common among people working in or connected to the art and culture field.

Taken together, these results suggest that Wendinand attracts a mixed audience: it can reach some people who rarely engage with formal art institutions, while also resonating with individuals already connected to art and cultural scenes.

Overall, these findings suggest that Wendinand's model operates as a low-threshold cultural format, where accessibility is shaped by simplicity, familiarity of both the model itself as well as the surrounding environment, and the absence of formal expectations. This aligns with the audience development perspectives introduced in Chapter 2, which emphasise on reducing barriers to participation and expanding the definition of who is considered an art audience.

4.3 Wendinand as an alternative art distribution model

Rather than relying on curated exhibition spaces or algorithm-driven visibility, the project distributes small-format artworks directly through a physical, place-based interaction, functioning as an alternative model of art distribution.

Survey responses as well as observational data suggest that the encounter with the artwork is closely tied to the context in which it is discovered at. The artwork itself is inspired by and related to each specific host venue, but the act of purchasing in itself creates a connection between the small object and the experience of that place. Several respondents highlighted the idea of the artwork as a “memory” or a takeaway linked to a particular moment or environment. User interview also highlights the importance of place-based meaning: the participant described the purchase as a “cute souvenir” connected to the specific town, reinforcing the role of the artwork as a memory object linked to location.

At the same time, in contrast to traditional art purchases, where the viewer selects a specific work, Wendinand’s model involves an element of chance, where the exact outcome is a surprise within the collection available, introducing a degree of unpredictability to the whole distribution process. This shifts the focus from a deliberate selection to discovery and reinforces the experiential aspect of the exchange.

The user interview further suggests that while the element of surprise is appealing, it requires a degree of predictability, noting that they would only engage if they had a general understanding of the type or theme of the artwork, indicating that successful interaction depends on balancing curiosity with a basic level of informational clarity.

In addition, the user interview expressed interest in a broader range of small-format outputs beyond the current format.

However, as noted in Chapter 4.1, one survey response indicates that the lack of contextual information about the artwork and its author can create a sense of disconnection, suggesting

that while the model successfully reduces barriers to access, it likely may benefit from more context cues once the artwork is received and opened, without compromising the simplicity of the interaction.

Survey responses indicate that digital fatigue forms a relevant background condition among participants. Of the respondents who answered this later-added question, 12 out of 16 reported experiencing at least moderate everyday fatigue related to screens and digital environments (3–5 on a 5-point scale), while 8 out of 16 respondents rated this fatigue as high (4–5) (see Figure 7). Although the dataset remains small, these findings provide contextual support for interpreting an offline, tactile distribution encounter as a potential “circuit breaker” from screen-dominated routines.

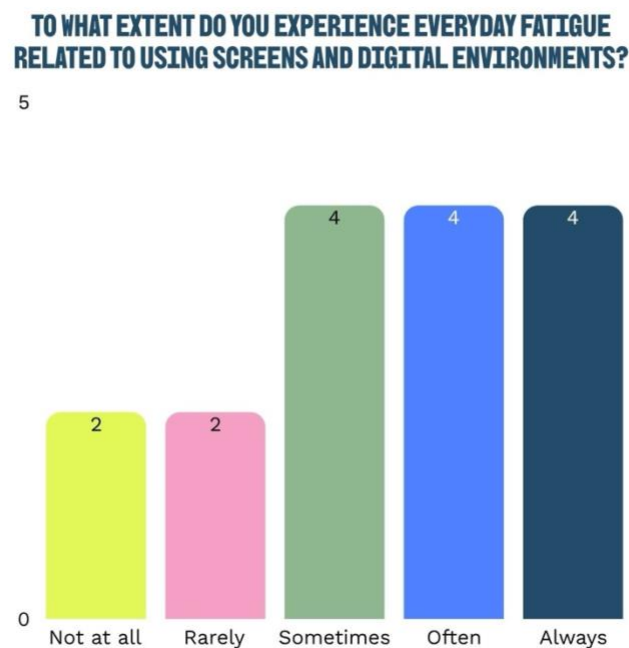


Figure 7. *Self-reported everyday digital fatigue among survey respondents (1–5 scale).*

Source: author.

Overall, Wendinand can indeed be defined as a micro-scale distribution model that connects art and audiences through physical presence, locality, and experience, offering an offline alternative pathway to both institutional and digital forms of art circulation.

4.4 Playfulness, curiosity and emotional engagement

Playfulness and curiosity emerge as central drivers of engagement with Wendinand. As discussed in Chapter 4.1, the initial interaction is often triggered by intrigue and curiosity, while the act of using the vending machine introduces a playful, almost game-like element into the experience.

Observational data highlights how the process of inserting a coin, turning the mechanism, and receiving a somewhat unknown outcome creates a sense of anticipation and excitement, transforming the interaction into a small moment of play, where the outcome is discovered rather than chosen. This also came up in the host venue interview, where the representative described the interaction as generating excitement and anticipation, particularly at the moment of turning the mechanism.

Survey responses further support curiosity as the main driver of engagement. When asked why they decided to try Wendinand in a multiple-choice question, 14 out of 20 respondents selected curiosity, making it the most common motivation, followed by the wish for a small art experience, selected by 10 out of 20 respondents. This suggests that the machine's ability to spark interest and invite exploration is central to the experience, while the interaction is still understood as an encounter with art rather than being driven by price or practical need.

Emotional responses reinforce this dynamic as well: in an optional open-ended survey question, 17 out of 20 respondents described the experience in one word or a short phrase, using expressions such as “fun”, “warm and exciting”, “surprising”, “made me happy”, and “a perfect souvenir” (see Figure 8). These responses suggest that the encounter generates a positive emotional charge that extends beyond the purely functional exchange. This playful quality was also reflected in user interview feedback, where the experience was compared to a “fun fair”, highlighting its game-like and entertaining nature.



Figure 8. Word cloud visualisation of participants' descriptions of their Wendinand experience based on responses to an optional open-ended survey question ($n=17$). Source: author.

Another contributing factor to this effect is the social dimension, as noted above, engagement often unfolds within groups, where the shared curiosity and collective reactions amplify the experience. This indicates that the emotional impact is not only individual, but can also be co-created through social interaction as well as extended by gifting the artwork.

The overall experience ratings further support this positive emotional response: 16 out of 20 respondents rated the experience 5 out of 5, while three rated it 4 and one rated it 3, resulting in an average rating of 4.75 out of 5 (see Figure 9).

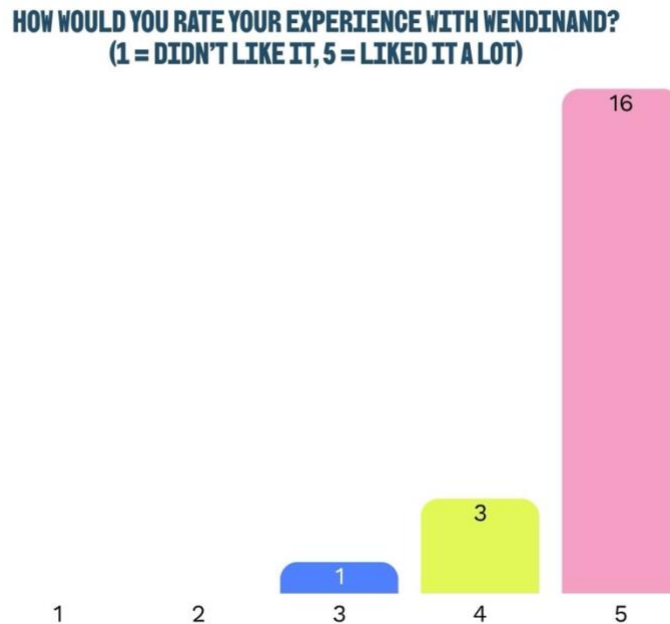


Figure 9. Overall experience ratings given by survey respondents on a 5-point scale. Source: author.

Together, these findings suggest that Wendinand’s model operates as an emotionally engaging format where play, curiosity, and shared experience contribute to its appeal. This aligns with the “Goldilocks Principle” introduced in Chapter 2, as well as the theoretical perspectives on emotional design and playful interaction, where surprise and anticipation function as key drivers of engagement.

4.5 Professional identity and sustainability

The pilot phase also provides valuable insight into the practical and professional dimensions of developing Wendinand as an artist-led project, including the sustainability demands of ongoing operations. As both creator and operator, the author’s role extends beyond artistic production, including technical problem-solving, material decisions, stakeholder coordination, and ongoing maintenance.

One key insight relates to the material design of the packaging that delivers the artwork via a narrow slot of the vending machine. Early iterations of the paper sleeves proved too thick to fit through, while the next version was too thin, leading to occasional jamming within the

machine's mechanism, especially when the machine was fully loaded. This occasionally disrupted the user experience, for example, the machine delivered slightly wrinkled outputs, or appeared empty when the paper got stuck causing the mechanism to stop turning. These issues also have sustainability implications, as repeated jams increase maintenance time and risk undermining user trust in the machine.

Subsequent adjustments involved testing thicker, more durable, and smooth textured paper stock while maintaining compatibility with both the vending mechanism as well as the cutting machine used in the production process. This trial-and-error prototyping resulted in a narrow margin between materials that are too fragile or too rigid, requiring iterative experimentation and research to achieve a functional and sustainable balance. It illustrates how the role expands into prototyping, quality control, and service reliability, competences typically associated with product and service design rather than standalone artistic production.



Figure 10. *Production, assembly, and testing of Wendinand's paper sleeve system. Source: author.*

A second sustainability-related finding concerns the time investment required for stock production. During the pilot phase, maintaining Wendinand involved recurring labour beyond artistic creation, including developing new designs, digitising and editing them, testing sticker materials, printing and cutting the artwork, producing the paper sleeves, stamping and branding

the sleeves, and tracking inventory for refilling. This highlighted that the project's sustainability depends not only on the reliability of the machine interaction but also on whether the ongoing production workload remains manageable for a solo creator, particularly if the model is expanded across multiple locations.

From the host venue perspective, the interview suggested that Wendinand was easy to accommodate within the daily workflow, requiring minimal staff involvement. However, sustaining this low-burden arrangement still depended on clear coordination regarding placement, basic instructions, and responsibilities.

These observations are examples of how small design decisions can significantly impact the reliability and perception of the final outcome of the experience. They also reflect the hybrid nature of the project, which operates at the intersection of artistic practice, product design, and service delivery.

From a professional perspective, this reinforces the importance of adaptability and iterative development in practice-based work, suggesting that maintaining the quality of the interaction requires ongoing attention and flexibility to both conceptual and operational aspects of the project.

4.6 How the findings inform the project concept

The pilot phase findings directly inform the development and structuring of the Wendinand project concept presented in the following Chapter 5, with the insights gained from observation, survey responses, and host venue interview translated into concrete design, operational, and strategic decisions.

Firstly, the importance of curiosity and spontaneous noticing, identified in Chapter 4.1, informs the emphasis on visual identity and spatial placement within the whole project. As the encounter is highly dependent on visibility and integration into everyday movement routines, Chapter 5 prioritises location selection and placement strategy as key components of implementation.

Secondly, the findings related to low-threshold participation in Chapter 4.2 support the decision to maintain a simple and intuitive interaction format, the use of coin-operated vending mechanism, minimal instructions, and familiar environments, ensuring that engagement is accessible without requiring prior knowledge or commitment. This provides the basis for both the user experience design and the operational workflow presented in Chapter 5.

While the instructions will remain minimal, the artwork itself requires an additional layer of context. As one survey respondent noted disappointment due to limited information about the artwork and its author, a need for a balance between low-threshold simplicity and sufficient interpretive framing is a valuable finding to consider moving forward.

Thirdly, the role of Wendin and as an alternative distribution model (Chapter 4.3) shapes the project concept's positioning and value proposition. The emphasis on locality, physical presence, and user experience informs the strategic direction of the concept as a micro-scale, place-based distribution model, with the main focus on it being an offline encounter.

The findings on play, curiosity, and emotional engagement in Chapter 4.4 influence the design logic of the interaction even further. The concept introduced in the next chapter leans toward enforcing the element of surprise and unpredictability. These are intentionally preserved as a core feature of the experience, reinforcing engagement and differentiating the concept from more conventional and expected modes of art consumption.

In addition, the social nature of the interaction informs stakeholder considerations, as the role of host venue is not limited to providing space, but extends to shaping the atmosphere and context in which the interaction occurs, supporting the inclusion of venue partnerships as an active component of the project's development.

Finally, the operational insights outlined in Chapter 4.5 highlight the importance of iterative testing, material optimisation, and workflow management. Practical challenges related to packaging, maintenance, and production workload directly inform decisions regarding production processes, including considerations of efficiency, scalability, and potential outsourcing of certain stock components. These insights ensure that the project concept

presented in Chapter 5 is grounded in tested, real-world conditions, and viable for sustainable development for a solo creator.

Overall, these findings demonstrate how Wendinand evolves through a feedback-informed process, where user behaviour, contextual factors, and operational realities shape the development of the concept, being aligned with practice-based methodologies, where design decisions are not only concept-driven, but also empirically informed.

The following section synthesises these findings by answering the research questions.

4.7 Answers to research questions

Based on the pilot-phase findings, Wendinand lowers the threshold of participation by placing art in familiar everyday environments where people can encounter it without prior planning, cultural confidence, or the intention to visit a formal art space. The simple vending-machine interaction, visual presence, low price point, and location within cafés and similar venues make participation approachable and brief. This expands the understanding of an art audience by including not only regular gallery visitors, but also people who engage with art casually, socially, or unexpectedly as part of everyday routines.

As a distribution model, Wendinand complements traditional galleries, institutions, and digital platforms by offering a small-scale, physical, place-based channel for circulating artworks. It does not replace existing art distribution structures, but provides an alternative pathway where the artwork is connected to a specific venue, moment, and experience. In contrast to algorithmic screen-based visibility, this model relies on physical presence, curiosity, and tactile interaction.

The findings suggest that art encountered unexpectedly in everyday spaces is experienced as playful, curious, social, and emotionally charged. The interaction creates anticipation and surprise, while also encouraging discussion, shared reactions, and personal attachment to the artwork as a memory object. At the same time, the findings show that the encounter depends on visibility, placement, timing, and sufficient contextual clarity. This suggests that the concept

works best when surprise and simplicity are balanced with enough contextual cues to communicate authorship and basic meaning.

Overall, Wendinand demonstrates how an analogue, playful micro-gallery in public space can function as a low-threshold model of audience engagement and art distribution. While the findings remain early-stage and context-specific, they indicate that meaningful art encounters can be created beyond both institutional and screen-based settings.

The findings in Chapter 4 reflect the pilot phase to date, while Chapter 5 translates these insights into a structured project concept, detailing pilot-phase goals and evaluation indicators as well as outlining how the model could develop beyond the pilot period.

5. Project concept

Introduction

Wendinand is an analogue micro-gallery disguised as a playful vending machine (“*elevuseautomaat*”) that offers small-format artworks in public spaces. In response to digital fatigue (Erten & Özdemir, 2020; Sharma et al., 2020), it encourages offline curiosity as a sign of well-being (Andersen, 2022) through a small but exciting, nostalgic, and approachable art encounter.

This chapter translates the research framing into a practical project plan for Wendinand, outlining the pilot-phase aims, activities, and the criteria used to assess feasibility.



Figure 11. *Wendinand installed within a host venue environment. Source: author.*

5.1 Context, rationale, mission, and vision

5.1.1 Project context and background

Wendinand is an artist-led analogue micro-gallery concept developed as small-scale, site-specific format for distributing art in everyday venues. It is presented through a playful vending

machine model (“*elevuseautomat*”) that distributes small-format artworks such as stickers and mini-prints. The concept is placed in everyday public and semi-public venues (e.g., cafés, restaurants, bookstores, and other informal cultural spaces) (the "vernacular dimension"; Miles & Gibson, 2016), where visitors can encounter it spontaneously (Kawashima, 2000). The interaction is simple and self-directed, facilitating a shift from a "sit-back-and-be-told culture" to a "making-and-doing culture" (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011). The user enters coins, turns the mechanical handle, receives a colourful cardboard sleeve, opens it to discover their surprise, and leaves with a tangible artwork that can be collected, gifted, or kept.

In this thesis, the pilot phase tests Wendinand in two locations to document how this model functions in real conditions: how audiences notice it, how they interact with it, what patterns emerge, and what operational routines (refilling, maintenance, production, and communication) are required to keep it running reliably.

5.1.2 Project rationale

As much of cultural engagement is now online, digital fatigue is increasingly affecting contemporary audiences' experiences, creating a growing need for offline, location-specific experiences (Erten & Özdemir, 2020; Sharma et al., 2020). At the same time, artistic visibility is often tied to constant online presence, with algorithms playing a significant role in determining how, where, and if people encounter creative work (Pires da Silva et al., 2024). This context is defined by a pervasive "culture of exhaustion" where the imperative to maximize efficiency and maintain constant connectivity often overwhelms the public's capacity for rest and reflection (Han, 2015).

Wendinand responds to this context by offering an analogue, public-space-based way to engage with art, creating moments of surprise and emotional connection outside the screen (Norman, 2004). By placing small-format artworks directly into everyday environments, what Miles and Gibson (2016) call the "vernacular dimension", the project lowers the threshold for discovery and invites spontaneous interaction with art as part of daily life. This model bypasses the intimidating “appropriate” manners and protocol of formal institutions, offering opportunities of engaged participation and meeting the traditionally categorized “non-attenders” in spaces where they already feel safe and comfortable (Banks, 2017; Kawashima, 2000).

In doing so, Wendinand provides an accessible alternative to screen-based cultural consumption, reconnecting artistic expression with physical realm, curiosity, and lived experience. By utilizing "measured unpredictability" and the "Goldilocks Principle," the project functions as a cognitive circuit breaker that triggers an open frame of mind (Andersen, 2022). This encounter provides a small restorative interval, a sacred space free from the relentless demands of striving and productivity, allowing individuals to reclaim their humanity and well-being in an era of exhaustion (Han, 2015).

5.1.3 Mission

Wendinand's mission is to create small, spontaneous encounters with art by bringing accessible and affordable, small-format artworks into everyday public spaces, inviting audiences to experience memorable moments of surprise, curiosity, and offline engagement.

5.1.4 Vision

Wendinand envisions an artist-led creative universe anchored in physical public spaces and extending into digital channels, offering audiences consistent and meaningful art encounters in an increasingly online everyday life.

5.2 Target groups and needs analysis

5.2.1 Primary target groups

Wendinand's primary audience consists of individuals who engage with everyday cultural environments such as cafés, bookstores, and creative venues, and are open to and excited by spontaneous, low-pressure experiences. Rather than targeting a strictly defined demographic group, the concept appeals to a mixed audience that includes both culturally engaged individuals and those who do not regularly participate in formal art contexts.

A key characteristic of this audience is openness to unplanned discovery and encountering art without actively seeking it out. As identified in Chapter 4, engagement with Wendinand is

typically triggered by curiosity and situational context rather than prior intention, making it particularly relevant for individuals who value accessible, informal, and experience-based forms of cultural participation brought closer to their daily routine.

At the same time, certain behavioural tendencies appeared more common among users in the pilot phase, such as an appreciation for tangible objects, small-scale collecting, gifting, and experience-based purchases. These tendencies align with the format of the project, where the artwork functions both as a physical object and as a memory linked to a specific moment or place.



Figure 12. *Examples of Wendinand artworks and sticker formats developed in relation to Viljandi locations and atmosphere. The visuals combine place-specific imagery, collectible small-format design, and hand-assembled packaging elements. Source: author.*

Reflecting the diverse audience observed during the pilot phase, this includes:

- local visitors to cafés, bookstores, and cultural venues,
- culturally curious tourists,
- people connected to creative or cultural fields,

- people interested in local culture, community, and urban/semi-urban creative neighbourhoods,
- people who enjoy analogue experiences, collecting, and gifting.

As the concept is designed to bring art encounters into everyday environments, the target audience is closely linked to the existing audiences of host venues. This approach ensures overlap between the venue's visitors and the intended users of Wendinand, supporting natural and context-based engagement.

5.2.2 Secondary target groups

In addition to direct users, Wendinand involves secondary target groups that support feasibility, reach, visibility, and long-term sustainability. These include:

- venue partners (hosts)
- digital followers (Instagram community, email list subscribers)
- supporters (monthly snail-mail subscribers via Patreon, print-on-demand online store customers)
- event organisers (weddings, private events, festivals who may value Wendinand as an experiential element)

While venue partners and events enable visibility in real-life settings, digital channels extend context and continuity beyond the physical locations. The pilot phase focuses on testing the physical installation, while digital and event-based extensions are envisioned for later phases.

5.2.3 Needs analysis

Wendinand responds to needs that emerge at the intersection of everyday routines, contemporary cultural participation, and screen-heavy life. For its audiences, the value lies in accessibility, sensory presence, and emotional reward rather than traditional attendance at formal institutions.

Key needs and motivations include:

- Low-threshold cultural participation: a brief, self-directed little art encounter in familiar venues, without requiring additional time or planning, specific cultural competence, or institutional entry
- Tactile, analogue relief: a small, embodied interaction that offers a physical counterbalance to screen-mediated discovery
- Curiosity, surprise, and play: measured unpredictability that makes participation feel light, approachable, and emotionally engaging
- Accessible, meaningful objects: affordable small-format works that can be kept, collected, gifted, or taken as a place-based memory
- Connection to local creative culture: an easy way to encounter and support an artist-led initiative within everyday community spaces

Together, these needs position Wendinand as a place-based, experience-led micro-gallery model that complements formal art settings by widening where and how art can be encountered.

5.3 Strategic goals, expected outputs, and KPIs

The following strategic framework outlines the key goals guiding Wendinand's pilot phase, along with their expected outputs and the key performance indicators (KPIs) and supporting indicators used to evaluate progress. It reflects operational stability, audience engagement, and identity development, ensuring that the concept is not only implemented but also measurable as well as iteratively improved based on real-world feedback.

In this thesis, KPIs refer to the primary, decision-driving measures used to evaluate each strategic goal, while supporting indicators provide complementary quantitative or qualitative evidence that helps interpret KPI trends.

Table 1. *Strategic goals, expected outputs, KPIs, and supporting indicators. Source: author.*

Strategic goal	Expected outputs	KPIs and supporting indicators
#1 Wendinand operates across the four pilot locations by the end of July 2026, with minimal downtime and a stable maintenance and restocking routine.	4/4 locations are installed, stocked, and operational with a consistent user flow	KPIs: • 4/4 locations consistently operational by end of July 2026 • Downtime incidents per location tracked (target: rare + quickly resolved and documented) Supporting indicators: • Predictable restocking rhythm per location (weekly/biweekly/monthly) • Workflow checklist completed and actively used • Photo documentation completed for each location at installation + at each refill visit
	Downtime incidents are recorded, quickly fixed, and become less frequent over time	
	Each location follows a predictable refill rhythm (weekly/biweekly/monthly as needed) with minimal stock-outs	
	A stable, repeatable workflow checklist exists and is consistently used across all locations	
	Photo documentation per location	
#2 Wendinand demonstrates consistent audience engagement across the 4 pilot locations.	Monthly baseline sales levels are established per location, showing repeatable engagement	KPIs: • Sales per location tracked per refill cycle + monthly baseline formed • Qualitative feedback volume + regularity (logged systematically) Supporting indicators: • Consistency across locations (comparative overview once 4/4 active) • Meaningful feedback logged (saved quotes from users/hosts) • Repeat engagement signals (collector behaviour identified) • Digital interactions (UGC tags/mentions that reference purchase/location)
	A steady stream of comparable feedback is collected across locations (enough to identify patterns and improve the experience)	
	First-time users understand the concept quickly, leading to higher interaction and meaningful feedback	
	Periodic comparison summary across all locations	

#3 Wendinand has an established artist-led identity and a cohesive communication approach that is applied consistently across physical touchpoints and supporting digital channels.	A single, usable reference document defining Wendinand’s tone of voice, key messages, visual rules + elements, and examples	KPIs: • Brand/communication framework created + used consistently • Consistency across physical touchpoints (machine + packaging + signage) across all locations Supporting indicators: • Sustainable content rhythm achieved (realistic frequency, not “marketing-heavy”) • Recognition signals (audiences recognise Wendinand’s character/voice) • Partner feedback on clarity + fit • Collection storytelling consistency (repeatable narrative template + archive logic)
	All locations use consistent machine presentation, instruction signage, packaging sleeves, so the experience feels coherent regardless of venue	
	On-brand communication in digital channels (mainly Instagram) consistently supports discovery and context (artist, collections, locations) without becoming marketing-heavy	

5.3.1 Strategic goals

The pilot phase this thesis focuses on, is guided by three strategic goals that reflect the core feasibility priorities of Wendinand (Table 1). The first focuses on operational stability, ensuring the concept can be reliably maintained across multiple locations with minimal downtime and a stable restocking routine, all while keeping in mind it is operated by a solo founder. The second strategic goal is about audience engagement, testing if the model generates repeatable interaction and connection beyond one-off novelty. The third focuses on the concept’s artist-led identity and communication coherence, making sure Wendinand’s brand is recognisable and consistent across physical touchpoints and supporting digital channels.

These goals define what can be interpreted as “success” in the pilot phase and provide a basis for iterations and scaling towards Wendinand as a repeatable micro-gallery and distribution model.

5.3.2 Expected outputs

The expected outputs describe what is produced and documented during the pilot phase in order to test the concept in real conditions. This includes both the tangible deliverables put in place (installations, collections, workflow/checklists, and communication/brand materials) as well as monitoring evidence generated through testing (refill and downtime logs, feedback records, and comparative summaries that allow sales baseline to be established).

In this thesis, outputs are treated as practical evidence of implementation, while KPIs and supporting indicators described in the next section are used to assess performance and progress toward the strategic goals.

Expected outputs of the pilot phase are presented in Table 1 and support evaluation of the project's expected outcomes through KPIs.

5.3.3 KPIs

KPIs and supporting indicators define how progress during the pilot phase will be evaluated. KPIs are used as the primary measures for each strategic goal, and supporting indicators provide additional quantitative or qualitative evidence that help interpret the results (Table 1).

The measures are tracked using simple logging systems such as refill and sales logs, downtime and maintenance notes, feedback log, and documentation of digital interactions, ensuring that the evaluation is grounded in real-world operations and can inform iterations throughout the pilot period.

5.4 Project structure, timeline, and milestones

The pilot phase of Wendinand is built as a lightweight, artist-led project with operational routines that are manageable for a solo founder. The following sections clarify project responsibilities, while the timeline and milestones provide an overview of how the concept evolves and is monitored for iteration.

5.4.1 Project structure

Wendinand is managed as a small-scale, artist-led project coordinated by a solo founder, while supported by a limited network of stakeholders. Venue partners provide the physical space and access needed for the vending machine installations and selected service providers may be used for production of stock. The structure is designed to keep operations manageable while ensuring consistent delivery across locations as well as supporting digital channels.

Core responsibilities:

- Founder/artist/project manager: concept development, artwork design and production, vending machine installation, restocking, maintenance, partner communication, marketing, evaluation and iteration
- Venue partners (hosts): provide placement and access, informal reporting of downtime incidents and user questions/feedback
- Service providers (as needed): printing and packaging production
- Vending machine producer/supplier (as needed): provides the vending machine units and technical support, spare parts, and maintenance guidance when required

5.4.2 Timeline

The pilot phase follows a sequence of preparation → launch → expansion → evaluation → next steps. While presented sequentially, several phases overlap and inform each other iteratively throughout the pilot period.

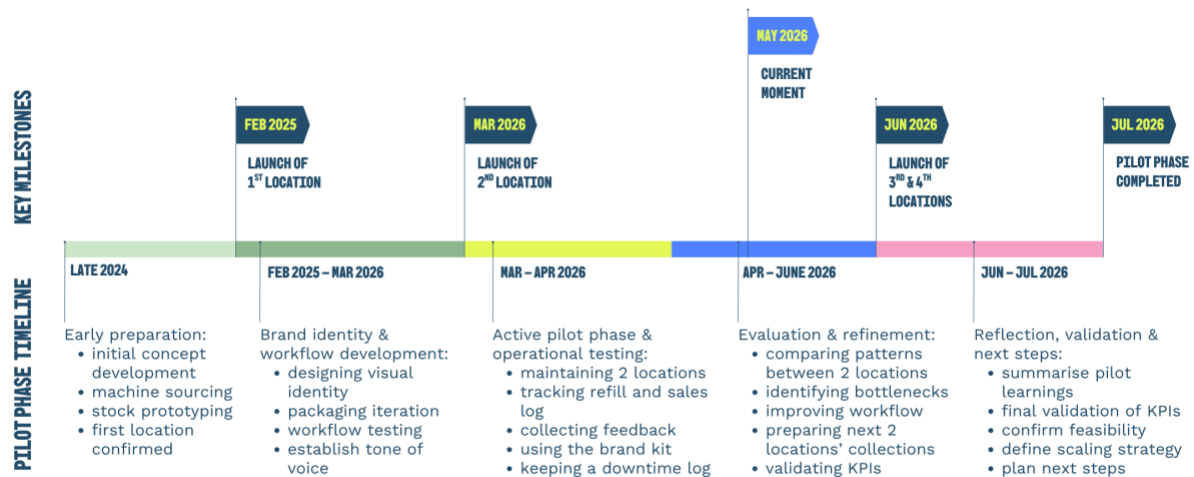


Figure 13. *Timeline of Wendinand's pilot phase, illustrating key milestones and development phases from initial preparation to evaluation and next-step planning. Source: author.*

5.4.3 Milestones

The pilot phase is monitored through milestone checkpoints that correspond to the key rollout moments shown in the timeline visual (Figure 13). These milestones focus primarily on the installation and launch of pilot locations, while continuous work on operational stability, audience engagement, and identity development is monitored in parallel through the KPIs and supporting indicators in Table 1.

In addition to rollout milestones (Figure 13), two additional checkpoints support readiness and consistency: a brand/communication framework is finalised and applied across touchpoints, and an operational toolkit is finalised and used for maintenance, restocking, and logging (in line with the indicators in Table 1).

5.5 Financial model and revenue logic

5.5.1 Cost structure

The cost structure of Wendinand is defined by low material costs, minimal fixed operational expenses, and a considerable reliance on the founder's time investment during the pilot phase.

The production cost per unit consists printed materials and packaging components that together form a very small fraction of the retail price which is fixed due to the vending mechanism. These costs remain stable across all locations, as production is currently carried out in-house using existing tools and equipment. Since the necessary production tools were already available prior to this project, they are not treated as additional setup costs within this pilot phase.

The primary fixed investment relates to the vending machines themselves: each unit costs approximately €300 (including shipping and customs fees), and four machines have been acquired to launch the pilot locations. These machines represent a one-time investment that is gradually recovered through ongoing sales, forming the core of the project. The supplier also provides technical support and spare parts, if needed, which helps reduce maintenance risks and supports operational continuity.

The system currently runs without typical recurring operational costs:

- Venue partners provide space without rental fees or revenue sharing, as Wendinand is positioned as an added value to their customers
- No maintenance or repair costs have been incurred during the pilot phase
- No travel or transport costs have been incurred in the pilot phase

These conditions reflect the current pilot phase and may change as the project scales and operational demands increase.

However, the most significant cost factor is the founder's time: production of stock is labour-intensive, with approximately 20 hours required to produce around 100 units, depending on workflow efficiency. In addition, time is required for creating the artwork, restocking, communication, and content creation. While this time investment is not monetised during the pilot period, it represents a critical constraint on scalability and is treated as a non-monetary cost within the model.

Since the pilot phase demonstrates a positive unit margin, but the time required for manual production significantly limits overall efficiency, a key structural constraint is revealed: the model is financially viable at a micro-scale, but to achieve sustainable growth, it requires a

shift towards outsourced stock production, leaving more time for higher-value activities such as designing the collections, marketing, and developing the long-term concept.

As the project moves beyond the pilot phase, the cost structure is evolving with it. While the current model operates with minimal recurring costs, scaling the project will introduce additional expenses, including:

- outsourced stock production
- transport and logistics for restocking
- digital platform costs (website maintenance, domain, platform fees such as Patreon)

These costs reflect a transition from a labour-intensive model toward a more scalable system, where financial investment replaces time-intensive manual production and enables long-term sustainability.

5.5.2 Revenue logic

Wendinand's revenue logic is based on low-cost transactions through a simple and accessible pricing structure: each item in the vending machine is sold at a fixed price of €2 across all locations, supporting consistent and straightforward user experience.

Given the low material cost per unit, this pricing allows production costs to be covered while contributing to overall project sustainability. The model relies on volume and repeat interactions rather than high individual transaction value, and remains viable with the transition towards outsourced stock production.

Based on initial pilot data, an average of approximately 35 items are sold per machine per month, with expected variation across locations and time periods. Considering the minimal marketing during the pilot phase, this together suggest potential for higher engagement as visibility increases. Most users purchase a single item, while local regular customers of partner venues showed signs of repeat engagement and collecting behaviour that indicates potential beyond one-time novelty.

Collaboration with host venues is based on mutual value: Wendinand contributes to the venue's atmosphere, customer experience, as well as offers a custom design inspired by their space. This means the revenue structure does not need to include profit sharing with the host venues, allowing revenue to remain fully within the project.

Additional revenue streams planned for later phases include a subscription-based model (a monthly mail-based artwork delivery via Patreon), a print-on-demand online store, and a customised rentable solution. These are intended to function as a supporting ecosystem, extending engagement beyond physical locations and diversifying revenue over time.

5.5.3 Financial sustainability

Wendinand's financial sustainability is shaped not only by its revenue model, but by the alignment between financial logic and operational capacity. While the pricing and sales structure support viability at the unit level, long-term sustainability depends on reducing reliance on time-consuming manual production.

The pilot phase reveals a transitional need to shift the balance towards outsourced production, which increases cost per unit, but is the key to sustainability as the project depends on the solo founder's time and capacity. This highlights that the viability of the model lies not only in its ability to generate revenue, but in its flexibility to evolve operationally as it scales.

5.6 Partnership and stakeholder plan

5.6.1 Key stakeholders

Wendinand operates through a small set of key stakeholders that enable its practical implementation, including:

- Founder/artist/project manager
- Venue partners
- Users (audience)
- Production service providers

- Vending machine producer/supplier

The founder acts as the central coordinator, combining artistic, operational, and managerial responsibilities. Venue partners provide the physical context for the experience, while users activate the concept through participation. Production service providers are not involved in the pilot phase, but become increasingly relevant as the model scales. Vending machine producer/supplier provides the core element of the concept.

5.6.2 Venue partners

Venue partners hold an essential role in Wendinand's model: they provide both the physical setting and the social context in which the interaction takes place, allowing it to be embedded in people's daily routines. The collaboration is based on mutual value rather than financial exchange, as venues do not receive a revenue share, but benefit from the added experiential element that enhances the experience they offer to their customers.

In addition, their role extends beyond simply hosting to shaping the conditions of discovery and engagement. In practice, venue staff sometimes act as informal mediators of the experience by introducing the concept, providing context, and collecting feedback. During the pilot phase, they have described Wendinand as being positively received, generating excitement among customers and aligning well with the atmosphere of the space, without adding to staff workload.

5.6.3 Collaborations

During the pilot phase, collaboration is limited to venue partners and the vending machine supplier. Other collaborations (illustrators, brands, event organisers, and production service providers, when outsourcing begins) are considered optional future extensions, depending on feasibility, capacity, and alignment with Wendinand's artist-led identity.

5.6.4 Wider network value

Wendinand operates within a broader network of value exchange that extends beyond direct transactions, creating value for each stakeholder group:

- For users: an accessible and engaging art experience combined with a tangible, place-based object
- For venue partners: enhanced atmosphere, differentiation, and memorable customer engagement, reinforcing their identity as culture-oriented space
- For the founder: a platform for artistic expression, an outlet for a sustainable creative practice, as well as an alternative revenue stream

At a broader level, Wendinand contributes to the local cultural landscape by introducing a place-specific format for encountering art in everyday environments. By embedding small-format artworks into daily routines, it expands how and where cultural participation can take place, offering a complementary model to institutional and digital distribution

5.7 Communication and dissemination strategy

5.7.1 Communication objectives

The communication strategy of Wendinand is designed to support the overall experience of the project, rather than function as a separate promotional tool. Its primary role is to introduce the concept, trigger curiosity and engagement, as well as extend the interaction beyond the initial encounter.

The key communication objectives are:

- to introduce Wendinand as a concept that is quickly understandable and easy to engage with in everyday environments
- to trigger curiosity and invite spontaneous interaction with the physical installation
- to build recognition of Wendinand as a character within a distinct, artist-led universe

- to support repeat engagement by encouraging users to return to or look for the machine in different locations
- to extend and document the experience digitally, providing additional context and continuity beyond the physical encounter

Together, these objectives reflect that Wendinand's communication has an experience-first approach, which is focused on helping people enjoy the experience, rather than to advertise for attention or numbers.

5.7.2 Communication channels

Wendinand's communication takes place across a combination of physical and digital channels, that are both closely integrated with the user experience.

The primary communication channels include:

- Physical touchpoints: the vending machine itself, including its visual appearance, signage, sample artworks, and packaging sleeves, which act as the first point of contact and introduction to the concept
- Venue context: the placement of the machine within cafés, bars, and other cultural spaces, as well as informal mediation by venue staff who may introduce occasionally the concept to customers
- Digital channels: primarily Instagram, which functions as the main platform for storytelling, documentation, further context, and audience engagement
- Website: planned as a future channel to provide more structured information about the concept, active locations, collections, and details of customised rentable solution

Together, these channels form a hybrid communication system where the physical discovery is complemented by digital context and continuity.

5.7.3 Communication approach

Wendinand's communication approach is intentionally minimal, playful, narrative, and experience-led. Rather than relying on promotional language, communication is treated as part of the artwork's ecosystem: it supports discovery, reinforces the project's identity, and extends the emotional aftertaste of the encounter without over-explaining it.

A central principle of this approach is the use of two complementary voices that serve different functions:

- The artist voice: communicates the story **behind the artwork: the process, materials, references, and the reasoning behind collections or specific designs. This voice provides depth and authorship, offering context for those who want it, while remaining calm and accessible. It supports the project's credibility as an artist-led initiative and helps the audience connect the physical object to an intentional creative practice.
- The machine's character voice: communicates the **situational layer - information about locations, where Wendinand currently "lives," and short observations about the interactions it "witnesses": curiosity, hesitation, delight, social sharing, etc. This voice functions as a gentle narrative frame that keeps informational updates light and memorable, while reinforcing the project's core values of curiosity, playfulness, and offline noticing.

The vending machine itself as the character is positioned as an active persona rather than only as an object or sales point. Wendinand is a curious, observant creature that engages with its surroundings in a simple, wholesome, thoughtful, slightly unconventional, and playful yet meaningful way. This is reflected by a short, minimal copy, subtle humour, and an approachable tone that is almost odd at first glance. The character uses limited vocabulary and communicates through curiosity and attentiveness, learning about the context it inhabits as well as the range of emotions and experiences familiar to people in its world (see Figure 14).



Figure 14. Sample of Wendinand's visual identity and tone of voice, showing playful stamp-like visual elements, machine-persona copy sample, and handwritten process-based communication. Source: author.

Together, they create a balance between interpretive openness (the experience can remain surprising and self-directed) and contextual clarity (the audience can still understand what they encountered and who made it). The communication system aims to be recognisable and consistent across physical and digital touchpoints: the vending machine's signage and small text cues, packaging details, and social media storytelling all work together to make the project feel like one coherent world. In this sense, communication functions as an extension of the artwork itself, shaping how this creative project is perceived and experienced.

The aim of this approach is to frame the concept as a trigger for an open and playful state of mind that encourages users to notice their surroundings from a refreshed perspective. Overall, the project's communication avoids marketing-heavy messaging, focusing on small narrative cues that guide the user experience without fully defining it. This aligns well with the core of the concept as a spontaneous encounter that is discovered rather than explained or actively sought out.

5.8 Risk analysis and mitigation plan

5.8.1 Operational risks

Operational risks in Wendinand are primarily related to founder's capacity to maintain multiple locations, consistency of stock production, and the reliability of the vending mechanism.

The primary operational risk is the manual labour related to the production workload: as identified in Chapter 5.5, in-house production is time-consuming and is likely to become unsustainable once the project expands to more locations. If production capacity does not keep up with the demand, it creates a risk of stock shortages, inconsistent restocking, or too little time left for the overall operations and development of the concept. This issue is addressed by researching potential service providers to outsource some or all of stock production.

A second key risk identified during the early pilot phase is the sensitivity of the vending mechanism to material specifications: initial material selection of the paper sleeves resulted in occasional jamming, which disrupted the user experience and the malfunctioning created the impression that the machine is empty. The risk has been reduced through iterative testing of different materials, but to be cautious, it remains a relevant as there is a plan of outsourcing the production of those paper sleeves (the packaging of the artwork).

In addition, the distributed nature of the installations may cause logistical problems and unpredictable variability in visibility and interaction levels (between locations), which can affect stock planning, refill and maintenance trips, and overall performance.

Mitigation strategies include:

- gradual outsourcing of production to reduce time constraints
- ongoing testing of materials and reliable packaging specifications
- development and consistent use of a workflow checklist
- careful selection and evaluation of new locations based on user flow

5.8.2 Financial risks

Wendinand's financial risks are relatively low (in terms of material costs), but are closely tied to scaling decisions and time investment.

While the unit-level of the model demonstrates positive margins, overall financial stability depends on maintaining sufficient sales volume and managing the balance between production costs and time investment. A key risk is that increased production demands require outsourcing stock production, which raises cost per unit, and could affect profitability if not balanced by steady user flow and extended revenue streams (in later phases).

Another financial risk relates to the initial investment in vending machines. Although these costs are expected to be recovered over time, slow sales or underperforming locations would delay the process.

Mitigation strategies include:

- gradual scaling of locations rather than rapid expansion
- monitoring sales and engagement data to identify high- and low-performing locations and their contributing factors
- testing external production partners before fully outsourcing

5.8.3 Reputational and communication risks

Reputational risks are primarily linked to user experience and clarity of communication.

One risk that emerged through the pilot-phase survey is that the artwork may lead to feelings of disconnection due to a lack of contextual information about the art and its author. While minimal communication is a deliberate design choice, it requires intentional balance to ensure that users still feel satisfied with the experience.

Another risk is related to keeping communication and branding consistent across different touchpoints, avoiding weakening the overall value of the brand. As the communication approach is quite specific, the tone, messaging, and visual identity need to be recognisable across all locations as well as the digital platforms.

There is also the risk that overly subtle communication may result in the concept going unnoticed, particularly in environments where attention or visibility is limited or the machine is not optimally placed within the host venue.

An additional reputational risk relates to the balance between the character-driven communication and the presence of the artist. While the use of Wendinand as a character supports curiosity and engagement, an over-reliance on this narrative layer may obscure the artist-led nature of the project, creating a risk of weakening the core identity.

Mitigation strategies include:

- introducing subtle but clear context to complement each artwork
- maintaining a consistent brand and communication framework across all touchpoints
- testing the signage and messaging for clarity
- ensuring placement of the machines support visibility and allow effortless discovery
- keeping a clear and intentional balance between the character-driven narrative and the clarity of the artist's role

5.8.4 Ethical risks

Ethical considerations in Wendinand relate to transparency, user expectations, and the use of public or semi-public spaces.

One potential risk is that the element of surprise in the vending process may create a mismatch between the user's expectations and the actual outcome they receive. While unpredictability is part of the concept, it is equally important that users still have enough information to make an informed decision to participate. What has worked well so far, is having the sample artwork

from the specific collection displayed on the machine itself, so while the received item is a surprise, it is not completely new information.

Another consideration relates to the use of shared spaces: the installation should not disrupt the normal functioning of the venue or create inconveniences for the visitors or the staff. Maintaining a respectful presence is essential to sustaining partnerships and providing value to the venue's customers.

Mitigation strategies include:

- ensuring basic transparency about the nature of the product (type of item, price, overview of the collection displayed on the machine)
- working closely with venue partners to ensure appropriate placement and integration

5.9 Feasibility and future development

During the pilot phase, Wendinand demonstrates strong feasibility as a small-scale, artist-led project, supported by low material costs, a simple revenue model, and positive audience and venue partner response. The concept has proven operationally viable across two locations, with minimal technical issues and a manageable maintenance structure.

However, feasibility is currently conditioned by the founder's time investment, particularly in relation to in-house production. As identified in Chapter 5.5, the primary constraint on scalability is operational rather than financial. While the model is sustainable at a micro-scale, expanding to additional locations increases production demands, requiring adjustments to the workflow.

Future development therefore focuses on improving time efficiency while maintaining the core qualities of the project. A key step in this process is the gradual outsourcing of production, allowing the founder to reduce manual workload and shift focus towards design, concept development, and strategic growth. This transition involves identifying suitable production partners and testing quality, cost, and reliability.

In parallel, expanding the network of locations remains a central direction for growth, increasing both revenue potential as well as visibility, while reinforcing the project's role as an accessible, place-based micro-gallery.

Additional development opportunities include extending the project beyond physical installations through complementary channels, such as a mail-based subscription model and a print-on-demand online store, forming a broader ecosystem around Wendinand and supporting financial sustainability.

Overall, Wendinand is feasible as a scalable concept, provided that operational adjustments are made to balance production demands with available time and resources. Its future development is therefore based on refining the balance between artistic practice, operational efficiency, and financial sustainability.

5.10 Research-informed project design

This design and development of Wendinand are closely informed by the theoretical framework and empirical findings presented in this thesis. Rather than being purely concept-driven, the project is flexible to evolve through an iterative process in which the pilot phase itself as well as the research insights directly shape the project's design decisions.

The theoretical perspectives on digital fatigue and the need for embodied experience (Chapter 2) are reflected in the project's emphasis on physical interaction, tactile materials, and offline-first engagement. Wendinand functions as a small-scale interruption within everyday routines, offering an alternative to screen-based cultural consumption.

Insights from audience development theory are visible in the project's low-threshold design. By situating the experience in familiar environments such as cafés and bars, Wendinand reduces both practical and psychological barriers to participation. This is further supported by findings from the pilot phase (Chapter 4), which indicate that engagement is often triggered by curiosity and spontaneous discovery rather than prior intention.

The concept of alternative distribution models is reflected in the use of a vending machine format, which enables small-format artworks to be distributed outside traditional institutional or digital channels. This aligns with the project's positioning as a micro-scale, place-based distribution system.

Empirical findings from the pilot phase further inform specific design adjustments. For example, observations and survey responses indicate that engagement is primarily driven by curiosity and spontaneous discovery, reinforcing the importance of maintaining low-threshold interaction and avoiding over-explanation. At the same time, feedback revealed ambiguity regarding authorship, highlighting the need for clearer contextual cues within the experience. These insights have informed decisions related to communication, framing, and user guidance.

Finally, the role of play, curiosity, and emotional engagement, as discussed in Chapter 2, is embedded in the interaction design of Wendinand: the element of surprise and the act of discovery are intentionally preserved as central features of the interaction, reinforcing user engagement and positive experience.

Overall, Wendinand demonstrates a research-informed approach in which theory and practice are continuously connected. The project does not simply illustrate theoretical concepts, but actively tests and refines them in real-world conditions, contributing to an applied understanding of audience engagement and alternative art distribution models.

6. Reflection and conclusions

6.1 Key research insights (from Chapters 1–4)

This thesis explored how an analogue, playful micro-gallery disguised as a vending machine in public space can function as an alternative model of audience engagement and art distribution in the context of digital fatigue. The findings from the pilot phase indicate that Wendinand operates as a low-threshold, experience-led format that enables spontaneous encounters with art beyond formal institutional settings.

Firstly, the research demonstrates that engagement is effectively initiated through unexpected discovery in everyday environments. Rather than being actively sought out, interaction is triggered by visual presence, curiosity, and situational context, supporting the idea that meaningful cultural participation can emerge through incidental encounters embedded within daily routines.

Secondly, Wendinand functions as a low-threshold participation model. The simplicity and familiarity of the analogue vending interaction reduces both practical and psychological barriers, allowing engagement to occur without prior knowledge or commitment. Accessibility in this context is not only physical, but about emotional and cognitive ease. While not universally frictionless, the model creates favourable conditions for spontaneous participation within familiar and socially comfortable environments.

Thirdly, the project operates as an alternative micro-scale art distribution model. By placing small-format artworks into public space, Wendinand bypasses both institutional barriers and algorithm-driven visibility. The artwork becomes part of a place-based experience, functioning not only as an object, but as a memory linked to a specific moment and location. The element of surprise further shifts the focus from deliberate selection to experiential discovery, reinforcing engagement through curiosity.

At the same time, the findings highlight the importance of balance. While minimal communication and unpredictability are central to the concept, the absence of contextual cues

can lead to moments of disconnection. This reveals that successful experience design depends on carefully balancing clarity with interpretive openness.

Fourthly, the research highlights the hybrid nature of the project as both artistic practice and service system. The role of the creator extends beyond artistic production into areas such as product design, workflow management, and stakeholder coordination. This reveals that the sustainability of such a model depends not only on conceptual strength, but also on operational reliability and the ability to balance creative and logistical demands.

Finally, playfulness and emotional engagement emerge as key drivers of interaction. Anticipation, analogue nostalgia, and surprise transform the encounter into a small moment of play, creating a form of engagement that differs from both digital and institutional experiences. In this sense, Wendinand does not simply distribute artworks, but creates conditions for micro-scale cultural encounters embedded within everyday life.

6.2 How insights shaped the Project Concept

The insights from the pilot phase directly informed the development of the project concept presented in Chapter 5, translating theoretical perspectives and empirical data into strategic and operational decisions.

The importance of spontaneous discovery led to a strong emphasis on visual identity and spatial placement. As engagement depends on visibility and integration into customers' movement flows, location selection is treated as a priority.

Findings related to low-threshold participation reinforced the decision to maintain a simple and intuitive interaction format: the coin-operated mechanism, minimal instructions, and familiar environments remain the core to preserving accessibility.

At the same time, the need for cleared interpretive context informed adjustments to the informational layer of the artwork. The concept describes the need for added subtle contextual cues that clarify authorship and meaning without compromising the overall simplicity.

The role of Wendinand as an alternative distribution model shaped the project's positioning as a micro-scale, place-based system. The concept emphasises locality, physical presence, and experiential value, framing the project not only as an artistic intervention but as a repeatable distribution format.

Insights related to playfulness and emotional engagement informed the decision to preserve measured unpredictability as a defining feature of the experience. The element of surprise is intentionally maintained as a core mechanism that differentiates Wendinand from more conventional forms of art consumption.

Finally, the operational findings significantly influenced the feasibility planning: insights related to production workload and material constraints led to the inclusion plans for outsourcing as a key strategic direction, ensuring that the concept becomes scalable while maintaining quality and consistency.

Overall, the project concept demonstrates how practice-based insights can be translated into a structured and viable model, potentially achieving long-term sustainability.

6.3 Reflection and development journey

The development of Wendinand reflects a practice-based research approach in which making, observing, and reflecting are closely interconnected. The dual role of the author as both creator and researcher provided direct access to the development of the project, enabling detailed observation of both user behaviour and operational dynamics.

A key learning from this process is the importance of iterative development, as the project evolved through continuous testing and adjustment, where small decisions had a significant impact on the overall experience. This highlights the value of working in real-world contexts, where assumptions are tested against practical constraints.

At the same time, this dual role required conscious critical distance. While proximity to the project enabled detailed insight, it also required careful reflection to avoid confirming

assumptions without sufficient evidence. This is where the use of multiple data sources really supported the process by introducing alternative perspectives.

Benchmarking across the pilot phase further reinforced the importance of measurable indicators in practice-based work: defining goals, tracking engagement, and documenting operational patterns allowed the project to move beyond intuition toward more structured evaluation and informed iteration.

The development journey also reflects an expanded professional practice, as the project required competencies beyond artistic creation, including system design, logistics, communication, and coordination. This hybrid role illustrates the realities of artist-led initiatives operating outside institutional frameworks.

Overall, the development journey shows how practice-based research can function both as a method of inquiry and as a form of professional development, where learning emerges through doing, reflecting, and refining.

The project therefore functions not only as an artistic outcome, but also as a process through which practice, research, and professional development intersect.

6.4 Limitations and future implications

This study is based on a small-scale pilot phase, and its findings are indicative signals, rather than generalisable conclusions. The limited number of locations and survey responses provides early insight, but does not capture long-term patterns of engagement.

It is important to keep in mind that the novelty of the concept may influence initial reactions, meaning that responses reflect mostly first encounters rather than sustained interaction over time. Observations reflect short-term behaviour, but provide limited evidence of repeat engagement.

Although this is addressed through careful reflection to avoid bias as well as triangulation of empirical data, the dual role of the researcher may introduce potential subjectivity.

Additionally, one survey question (about digital fatigue) was added after a few first responses were already collected, resulting in slightly varying response counts across dataset.

From an operational perspective, the pilot phase highlights constraints related to time-intensive production and manual workflows, leading to the conclusion that while the model is viable at a micro-scale, its long-term sustainability depends on adapting an outsourced production process to improve efficiency.

Despite these limitations, the findings point toward clear future directions: user feedback indicates interest in a broader range of formats and outputs, suggesting potential expansion into wider product ecosystem, including print-on-demand online store and mail-based subscription model, both of which are considered for future development.

Future research could extend the concept study across more locations and over a longer period, allowing for deeper analysis of behavioural patterns and repeat engagement. Further exploration of the balance between simplicity and contextual clarity could also refine the overall user experience.

6.5 Final conclusion

Wendinand demonstrates that small-scale, analogue interventions can offer meaningful alternatives to both digital and institutional forms of cultural engagement. By embedding art into everyday environments and combining physical presence, playful interaction, and emotional design, it offers an alternative way for connecting audiences with art outside both institutional and digital frameworks.

In the context of digital fatigue, the project highlights the value of small-scale, embodied encounters that provide a temporary “interval” from screen-based routines. These encounters are not defined by depth of interpretation or duration, but by their ability to spark curiosity, create emotional resonance, and integrate art into daily life in an accessible way.

Rather than replacing existing systems, Wendinand operates as a complementary model that expands how and where art can be encountered. It shows that cultural participation can emerge

through informal, everyday contexts, without requiring prior intention or specialised knowledge.

At the same time, the research underscores that the success of such models depends on the integration of artistic vision with practical implementation. Long-term sustainability requires not only conceptual clarity, but also operational reliability, adaptability, and strategic planning.

Ultimately, Wendinand suggests that expanding cultural participation does not necessarily require larger systems, but more accessible points of entry.

In this sense, the project contributes to both professional practice and academic discourse by demonstrating how artist-led, place-based formats can respond to contemporary cultural conditions, creating new ways of connecting art and audiences in an increasingly digital world.

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8. Annexes

Annex 1. Benchmarking template

1. Introductory Benchmark: Starting Point

Section	Guiding Questions	
Project concept and context	<i>What is the initial idea for your project?</i> <i>What issue, need, or opportunity does it address? In which context or sector is it situated?</i>	Wendinand is an analogue micro-gallery disguised as a playful vending machine (“elevuseautomaat”), offering small-format art in public spaces. Blending curiosity, design, and storytelling, it transforms everyday locations into moments of creative discovery, where art is found rather than sought after. The project serves as an alternative offline space for artists. In an increasingly digital world, artists struggle to reach audiences beyond the screen, while people, facing online fatigue, long for real and tangible experiences. Within Estonia’s cultural landscape, where much of art discovery happens online or in formal gallery settings, Wendinand introduces a more approachable, low-threshold way to engage with creativity. Traditional galleries and art spaces often feel distant or intimidating to those outside the art scene -Wendinand, by contrast, brings playfulness, accessibility, and affordability into familiar community environments such as cafés and other local venues, reimagining how art can fit into people’s everyday routines. Each machine’s contents are created to reflect the spirit of their location and community, making every encounter feel both resonating and uplifting.
Rationale and objectives	<i>Why is this project relevant and necessary?</i> <i>What are the main goals and intended outcomes?</i>	Wendinand aims to make art approachable, joyful, and personal. By turning vending into a ritual of discovery, the project invites people to slow down, notice, and connect - both with art and with their own curiosity. At its core, the project responds to a wider need for tangible, emotionally engaging encounters with creativity in a world increasingly dominated by screens. Many people feel disconnected from traditional art spaces or intimidated by the gallery environment. Wendinand offers an alternative - an accessible, playful bridge between artists and everyday audiences. The main goal is to offer community members and passersby small moments of surprise and wonder, transforming an ordinary action into a memorable little experience. I’m deeply interested in how emotions shape perception - how feelings create thoughts and thoughts

		create reality - and Wendinand serves as a physical reminder of that. Its wider objectives are to: • create an artist-led, low-tech platform that enables visibility for art and tangible encounters for audiences • explore new models of art distribution and audience engagement beyond digital and gallery systems • develop local collaborations between artists, small businesses, and cultural spaces • evolve my artistic practice into a sustainable, community-oriented creative (micro-)enterprise In a broader sense, Wendinand challenges the growing digital fatigue and reintroduces the joy of physical discovery - nurturing a slower, more mindful relationship with art and community.
Personal development goals	<i>What specific competencies or knowledge areas do you aim to strengthen during the programme (e.g., project planning, leadership, research methods, communication, financial management)?</i>	Through the MA in Creative Project Management, I aim to deepen both the strategic and reflective aspects of my creative practice - strengthening the skills needed to sustain Wendinand and future art projects. Specifically, I seek to develop: • strategic project planning - designing clear and adaptable frameworks for long-term artistic and entrepreneurial visions • creative leadership - facilitating collaborations with artists, partners, and communities while maintaining an authentic artistic voice • research and documentation methods - applying reflective and evidence-based approaches to project design, evaluation, and storytelling • communication and storytelling - articulating artistic ideas and values clearly and with confidence • financial management - structuring budgets, funding options and applications, as well as sustainable business models that support creative independence.
Self-assessment of current skills	<i>How do you evaluate your present abilities and experience relevant to creative project management? Which areas do you identify as strengths, and where do you</i>	Having worked across visual art, theatre, and small business contexts - and drawing from my background in visual technology of the performing arts - I have developed strong experience in visual design, creative direction, and multidisciplinary collaboration. My strengths are in concept development, aesthetics, and visual storytelling - the ability to create cohesive visual worlds that connect emotionally and invite audiences into a shared narrative. At the same time, I recognize a need to strengthen my long-term project structuring, systematic research methods, and financial planning skills. I also aim to become more

	<i>see a need for development?</i>	confident in making difficult decisions, leading teams, and communicating a clear vision within collaborative settings as well as in the context of marketing. Developing these areas will help me bridge creative intuition with strategic implementation, transforming ideas like Wendinand into sustainable, well-managed creative initiatives.
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2. Main Benchmarking Template: Cumulative Development Across Phases

Section	Guiding Questions	Phase 1 (Initiation, Sept–Oct)	Phase 2 (Planning, Nov–Mar)	Phase 3 (Evaluation, Apr–May)
1. Summary of progress	<i>What has been achieved or clarified during this phase? What key steps were taken in developing your research and project concept?</i>	During this phase, the initial project idea was defined as Wendinand: an analogue micro-gallery disguised as a playful vending machine. The project's context, rationale, and objectives were clarified through the first lectures' learning process. The main focus was to position Wendinand as a low-threshold way to bring small-format artworks into everyday public spaces and to respond to digital fatigue, limited offline art discovery, and the perceived distance of traditional gallery environments. Key steps included formulating the initial project problem,	During this phase, Wendinand developed from an initial concept into a more structured project and research topic. The research focus became clearer, especially around digital fatigue, audience engagement, accessibility, and alternative models of art distribution. I worked on connecting the practical project to theoretical concepts and began developing the project concept more systematically, including target groups, stakeholder relationships, operational needs, and possible evaluation methods. The project also became more grounded through	During this phase, the academic research and project concept were brought together into a coherent final thesis. The project was clarified as an artist-led analogue micro-gallery model for audience engagement and art distribution. The written part developed through theory, methodology, findings, and reflection, while the applied project concept was structured through mission, vision, target groups, goals, KPIs, timeline, financial logic, stakeholder planning, communication, and risk analysis. Survey responses, observation notes, and interviews

		identifying personal learning goals, and beginning to connect the project to creative project management, audience engagement, and sustainable artistic practice.	practical experience with the existing machine, venue context, audience reactions, and the realities of maintaining an analogue vending-based format.	helped evaluate Wendinand not only as an idea, but as a tested pilot with emerging evidence of audience interest, curiosity, and accessibility. Looking back, I am grateful for the earlier decision to shift the project from a general platform for artists toward a more personal, artist-led creative practice, because I now understand more clearly how much this changes both my own role within the project and the way the project can be run in practice.
2. Insights gained	<i>What have you learned from literature, supervision, or stakeholder interaction? How have these insights shaped your thinking or direction?</i>	The first phase helped clarify that Wendinand was not only a visual or product-based idea, but a possible model for creating small, emotionally engaging encounters with art. Early reflection showed that the project addressed several overlapping needs: audiences' desire for tangible experiences, artists' need for offline visibility,	Literature and supervision helped me understand Wendinand as more than a playful vending machine. It could be analysed as a low-threshold audience engagement model that creates tactile, site-specific encounters with art. A major personal and strategic insight was realising that I did not want to design a	The final stage proved that Wendinand's value lies not only in distributing artworks, but in creating memorable encounters through surprise, tactility, place, and emotional response. Literature helped connect this to digital fatigue, audience development, play, and resonance, while feedback from

		and my own search for a sustainable, community-rooted creative practice. The main insight has been that the project's value lies in the encounter itself: the surprise, curiosity, and accessibility created by finding art in an unexpected everyday setting.	professional life where my main role would become maintaining machines and managing a platform for others. This shifted my thinking from Wendin and as a broad artist platform toward Wendin and as an artist-led outlet for my own curiosity, visual language, and creative practice. Future collaborations remain possible, but no longer as the central operating model.	users and venues showed how the project functions in real everyday settings. A key methodological insight came through supervision, when I understood that adding both a user interview and a host venue interview created triangulation. This helped me see the project from several perspectives more clearly and reduce bias as well as the risk of relying only on my own artist-researcher viewpoint.
3. Challenges encountered	<i>What conceptual, methodological, or practical challenges have arisen? How did you address or plan to address them?</i>	The main challenge at this stage was that the project was still broad and partly undefined. Wendin and could be understood as an art project, a distribution platform, a community project, or a small creative enterprise, and the relationship between these directions was not yet fully clear. There was also a need to define the research problem more precisely and avoid	The main conceptual challenge was narrowing the project's scope. At first, Wendin and could be developed as a platform for other artists, a community initiative, a product-based business, or an artwork in itself. This created uncertainty about scale, role, and long-term sustainability. Practical challenges also became clearer, including the	The main challenge was translating a living, intuitive, and partly messy creative project into a concise academic and managerial structure. I had to balance the artist-researcher perspective with enough critical distance, and avoid overclaiming based on a small pilot sample. Another challenge was deciding how much new data to include in the final stage, as

		describing the project only through intuition or aesthetic intention. This was addressed by identifying the key problem areas: digital fatigue, limited accessibility of traditional art spaces, and the need for sustainable creative practice.	physical limitations of the machine, packaging thickness, stock-production (time-investment), and restocking. I addressed these challenges by reconsidering the project's core purpose and focusing on a smaller, more sustainable artist-led model rather than premature expansion.	additional survey responses continued to arrive. I addressed this by treating the data as early qualitative signals rather than definitive proof, and by using observation, survey responses, and interviews together to create a more balanced understanding of the project's impact.
4. Updated project focus	<i>Has the scope, rationale, or approach of your project changed? If yes, why and how? How does this align with your academic findings?</i>	During Phase 1, the project focus did not change significantly, but it became more clearly articulated. Wendinand was framed as an analogue micro-gallery and a playful offline art-distribution model situated in everyday public spaces. The rationale became more connected to audience development and the accessibility of art, rather than only to the production of small-format artworks. This focus creates a foundation and potential themes for later academic research.	The project focus changed significantly during this phase. Instead of developing Wendinand primarily as an open platform for all interested artists, I began repositioning it as an artist-led analogue micro-gallery connected to my own artistic practice. This shift aligned with the academic direction of the thesis, which increasingly focuses on the quality of the audience encounter rather than only on distribution or visibility. The project's rationale	By the final phase, the project focus had become much clearer. Wendinand is no longer framed mainly as a general platform for other artists, but as an artist-led creative universe and analogue micro-gallery model rooted in my own practice. Its future development may include selected collaborations, but the core model is based on a coherent artistic identity, site-specific content, and carefully managed and curated public-space encounters. This aligns with the academic

			became more precise: Wendinand offers an alternative way to experience and distribute art through surprise, tactility, everyday settings, and site-specific storytelling.	findings, which suggest that the project's strength lies in lowering thresholds, creating curiosity, and offering tactile alternatives to both gallery-based and screen-based art discovery.
5. Personal development reflection	<i>How have your skills, confidence, or professional understanding evolved? What competencies are you developing most actively?</i>	This phase helped me identify the main competencies I needed to strengthen during the programme. I recognised my strengths in visual storytelling, concept development, and creating cohesive artistic worlds, while also identifying the need to develop stronger project planning, research methods, financial thinking, communication, and strategic decision-making. The process also made me more aware that creative intuition needed to be supported by clearer structures in order for Wendinand to become a sustainable and professionally grounded project.	This phase strengthened my ability to make strategic decisions and recognise when an idea needs to become smaller in order to become more sustainable. I became more confident in questioning the original platform model and choosing a direction that better supported my own artistic practice. I also developed my understanding of research methods, theoretical framing, and project planning. The most active competencies during this phase were strategic focus, reflective decision-making, stakeholder thinking, and connecting intuitive artistic choices with	This phase strengthened my confidence in connecting artistic intuition with research, strategy, and evidence. I developed a clearer understanding of how to evaluate a creative project without reducing it only to numbers, and how to support subjective audience experience with observation, feedback, and theoretical framing. I also became more confident in defining sustainable boundaries for the project. Instead of expanding too quickly or forcing Wendinand into a platform model, I now understand the importance of building systems that support the

			clearer academic and managerial reasoning.	artistic core, my own working capacity, and meaningful stakeholder relationships.
6. Next steps	<i>What are your priorities for the next phase? What tasks, research, or stakeholder actions will you focus on?</i>	The next priorities are to refine the research direction, develop a stronger theoretical foundation, and begin translating the project idea into a more structured project concept. This includes clarifying the research question, identifying relevant literature on digital fatigue, audience development, play, and emotional/tactile engagement, and thinking through the practical structure of Wendinand as a project. The next phase also requires more concrete planning around venues, audience feedback, operational workflow, and possible models for implementation.	The next priorities are to finalise the research question, work on the theoretical framework, and develop a more complete project concept. This includes planning audience feedback collection, clarifying the role of host venues, and deciding how to evaluate Wendinand's impact. I also need to continue documenting practical observations, refine the project's mission and vision, and translate the developing insights into concrete planning tools such as goals, KPIs, timeline, financial logic, stakeholder analysis, communication strategy, and risk assessment.	After the thesis, the next step is to continue developing Wendinand carefully as a real-world project. Priorities include improving operational systems, researching services to outsource stock production, developing clearer authorship and communication cues, and continuing site-specific collaborations with suitable venues. I also plan to use the thesis findings to guide future decisions around scaling, financial sustainability, audience engagement, and possible selected collaborations. The immediate focus is to complete and defend the thesis, as well as the pilot phase in general, and then continue

				Wendinand at a pace that supports both artistic quality and practical sustainability.
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What problem is your project solving?

- Societal / cultural - digital fatigue, disconnection from physical experiences
- Art-world - limited accessibility and intimidation of traditional art spaces
- Personal / creative - my search for sustainable, community-rooted artistic practice

In an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, people are losing touch with the simple joy of physical, unplanned encounters - especially within art and culture. Much of art discovery now happens through screens, algorithms, or formal institutions that can feel distant or intimidating to those outside the art scene.

At the same time, emerging artists struggle to reach audiences offline and find accessible, sustainable ways to share their work beyond galleries and social media. There is a growing gap between artistic creation and everyday community life - a gap where curiosity and presence could thrive, but rarely do.

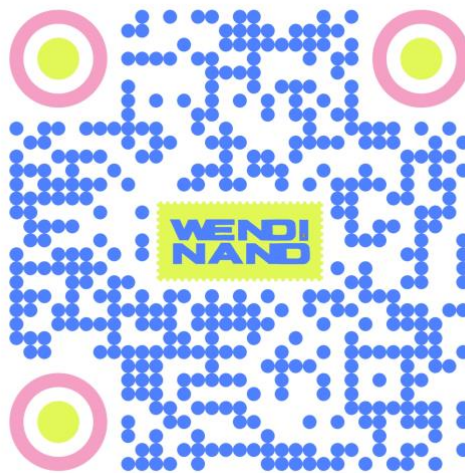
Wendinand responds to this by creating small, tangible moments of (offline) connection through playful vending machines that distribute locally made art in public spaces. It reintroduces surprise, curiosity, and art discovery into the daily cultural experience - transforming a simple act of vending into an invitation to slow down, feel, and connect.

Annex 2. Wendinand user interaction video (QR code and link)

The video demonstrates the basic user interaction sequence with Wendinand: inserting a coin, turning the mechanism, receiving the paper sleeve, and opening the artwork.

Scan the QR code below, or use this link: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DX6lMWAMyZK/>

Note: The page may display a login or sign-up pop-up, but the video can still be viewed without logging in by closing the pop-up window.



Annex 3. Curriculum Vitae

KATRE SULANE: CV

INTERDISCIPLINARY VISUAL
ARTIST & ENTREPRENEUR

Katre Sulane

A CURIOUS VISUAL THINKER

SKILLS

VIDEOGRAPHY

PHOTOGRAPHY

VIDEO PROJECTION

ANIMATION

MARKETING + BRANDING

GRAPHIC DESIGN

ABOUT ME



A MULTIFACETED INTERDISCIPLINARY VISUAL ARTIST WITH A UNIQUE SKILL SET AND A DIVERSE BACKGROUND OF OVER TEN YEARS IN PERFORMING ARTS, DIGITAL MEDIA, AND E-COMMERCE. ACCOMPANIED BY BA DEGREES IN MULTIMEDIA AND LIGHTING DESIGN, THE COMBINATION OF VISUAL THINKING AND A KEEN EYE FOR DETAIL SHOWS UP ESPECIALLY WELL IN VARIOUS FORMS OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION - INCLUDING VIDEO, ILLUSTRATION, ANIMATION, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND GRAPHIC DESIGN. BEYOND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE: HIGH APPRECIATION FOR FOSTERING FRUITFUL COLLABORATION AND STRONG INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TO DRIVE EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK, AND DELIVER GREAT CONNECTIONS.

EMBRACING A HUMBLE MINDSET, EVERY PROJECT PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING WHILE MAKING SURE THE OUTCOME REFLECTS A SPRINKLE OF MAGIC.

WORK EXPERIENCE

VIDREC OÜ | 2016 - ...
Freelance visual artist & Entrepreneur
TALLINN, ESTONIA + KAMLOOPS, BC, CANADA

VICTORIA OLT GALLERY | 2024-2025
Social Media Marketing
TALLINN, ESTONIA

UGALA THEATRE | 2014 - 2019
Video artist
VILJANDI, ESTONIA

SAKALA CENTRE | 2014 - 2015
Lighting designer
VILJANDI, ESTONIA

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU VILJANDI
CULTURE ACADEMY | 2025 - PRESENT
MA: Creative Project Management
VILJANDI, ESTONIA

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU VILJANDI
CULTURE ACADEMY | 2012 - 2016
BA: Visual technology of the performing arts: multimedia specialist & lighting designer
VILJANDI, ESTONIA

GUSTAV ADOLF GRAMMAR SCHOOL |
2000-2012
Secondary school
TALLINN, ESTONIA

LANGUAGE

ESTONIAN	→ C2
ENGLISH	→ C1

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Date: 10.05.2026

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Wendinand as an analogue micro-gallery model ,
for audience engagement and art distribution

(title of thesis)

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(supervisor's name)

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Katre Sulane

10/05/2026

AI use statement

During the development of this thesis, artificial intelligence tools were used as supportive aids for organisation, reflection, and language refinement. NotebookLM was used to work with selected literature and source materials, including summarising and comparing texts during the literature review process. Notion AI was used to support structuring and clarity checks based on the author's own project documentation created during the academic year (*Wendinand: The Backbone*). ChatGPT was used to support phrasing and the refinement of ideas during the writing and project development process, as well as an occasional reflective support tool for clarifying priorities, checking overall coherence.

All AI-generated outputs were critically reviewed, edited, and rewritten by the author. AI tools were not used to generate research findings, fabricate sources, or replace the author's analysis or interpretation. All final arguments, methodological decisions, project conclusions, and written content were verified and approved by the author to ensure accuracy, originality, and academic integrity.

The research design, data collection, analysis, project development, conclusions, and final responsibility for the content remain the author's own.