

Art Gallery of Ontario: Optimizing the Digital Purchase Journey

Role: Lead UX Researcher

Timeline: September 2024 - December 2024

Methods: Competitive Analysis & Heuristics Evaluation, User Interviews, Ethnographic Research

Team: Solo Researcher

Client: Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)

The Challenge

The Art Gallery of Ontario wanted to **understand their digital user experience but didn't have clarity on where issues might exist** or what was preventing users from achieving their goals. My task was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation to **uncover any usability problems and identify opportunities for improvement.**

Research Goals

Initial Broad Investigation:

- Conduct a heuristic evaluation of AGO's digital experience
- Identify usability issues and pain points across the entire website
- Benchmark against industry competitors

Focused Investigation (Post-Analysis):

- Deep dive into the online purchase journey specifically
- Understand user behaviors, motivations, and expectations during ticket booking
- Compare digital and physical purchasing experiences
- Provide data-driven recommendations to increase conversion rates

My Role & Responsibilities

- Designed and executed a comprehensive research strategy incorporating multiple methodologies
 - Conducted competitive analysis & heuristic evaluation, user interviews, and ethnographic field research
 - Synthesized qualitative data using affinity mapping techniques
 - Created user personas and journey maps based on research findings
 - **Presented** actionable insights and recommendations to stakeholders
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My Approach

I employed a strategic three-phase mixed-methods approach, starting broad to identify problems, then narrowing focus to the purchase journey:

Phase 1: Competitive Analysis & Heuristic Evaluation

Goal: Understand AGO's position in the market and identify usability issues across the entire site.

Evaluated AGO's complete digital experience against key competitors (The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The British Museum) using established usability heuristics.

What I Discovered: Through this initial evaluation, I identified three major problem areas affecting the entire user experience:

1. Lack of digital interactive experiences - AGO was missing opportunities competitors were leveraging
2. **Unintuitive and confusing website design** - Navigation, information architecture, and interface elements creating friction

3. Weak conversion due to inefficient purchase process - The purchase path emerged as the most critical area needing improvement

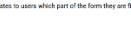
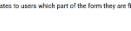
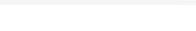
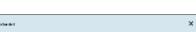
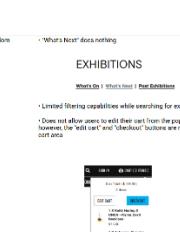
Key Finding: The purchase journey stood out as the primary conversion bottleneck, informing my decision to focus subsequent research on this specific area.

Research Artifact

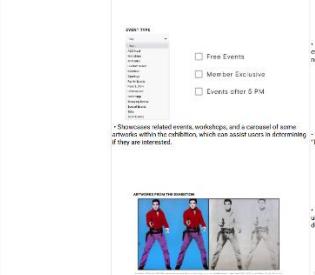
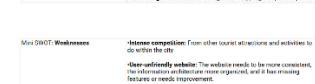
Heuristic Evaluation Matrix

Companies	AGO (Art Gallery of Ontario)	The Met (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)	The British Museum	Summary/ Conclusions
Heuristic Evaluation Rating Scale: 1st, 2nd, 3rd				
Business - Understanding the Business Context Main offering or value proposition: What is the main offering or value this product or service brings to the customer/user? How is this positioned in the market?	The Art Gallery of Ontario is one of North America's prominent art galleries, showcasing over 120,000 art pieces. The AGO brings individuals together through a variety of exhibitions, events, and facilitating programs that help visitors better understand our world and each other.	The Metropolitan Museum of Art has two locations in New York City. Since 1870, visitors from near and far have come to appreciate and experience over 5,000 years of art history. Visitors can expect to feel enriched and connected through the museum's exhibitions, workshops, guided tours, performances, and events.	The British Museum was the first national public gallery in the world and has been freely accessible to local and international visitors since 1824. Inside, its grandiose architecture displays one of the world's most extensive art collections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AGO is one of the country's most recognized and innovative art museums. However, The Met's brand recognizability and art collection in the North American market may be higher than the AGO. In the US market, clients regard The Met favorably. While there are limitations in gauging The British Museum's status as it belongs within the United Kingdom market, clients highly regard it within the UK. The Met rates the highest of all three art museums, earning a 5.0 review on TripAdvisor and over 44,512 excellent reviews.
Name top 3 business goals: 1) 2) 3) How does each fulfill these goals?	1. Enhance & Increase Visitor Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and showcasing programs and exhibitions Hosting events and offering space rental Provide unique dining experiences Affordable and attainable pricing (Free for Ontarians under 24, Free admission on First Wednesday every month between 6-9 pm) Partnership with Tourist programs (Hilton Hotel) Cultivate an inclusive, accessible, and safe environment Providing assistive devices 2. Diversity, Inclusivity, and Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through acquisition and curation of art from artists from indigenous and marginalized communities 3. Generate Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through memberships, programs, events, and exhibitions Securing funding from patron programs and corporate partnerships Through retail operations 	1. Enhance & Increase Visitor Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and showcasing programs, exhibitions, and tours Hosting events and offering space rental Affordable and attainable pricing (Pay what you want program for NY state, NY, NJ, CT residents) Cultivate an inclusive, accessible, and safe environment Providing digital audio apps and guide with multilingual capability (Met Fifth Avenue and Audio Guide) Providing a digital interactive map of the museum Providing assistive devices 2. Improving Digital Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing and improving a variety of digital products: Audio guides, interactive map, the mobile Met Fifth Avenue app, online programs 3. Generate Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing funding from patron programs and corporate partnerships Through retail operations 	1. Enhance & Increase Visitor Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and showcasing workshops, exhibitions, trials, and tours Hosting events and offering space rental Affordable and attainable pricing (Free general admission) Providing digital audio apps for international visitors Providing assistive devices 2. Improving Digital Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitalization, cataloging, and categorization of the museum's entire collection, accessible to the public 3. Generate Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through memberships, workshops, events, trials, guided tours, and exhibitions Securing funding from patron programs and corporate partnerships Through retail operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While all three art museums have similar business goals, I will explore differences in the following points: Overall, all three focus on enhancing and increasing visitor attendance. Each museum has taken steps to lower or remove financial barriers that may have previously affected attendance. The AGO has implemented free admission to Ontarians under 24 and free admission for visitors between 6 pm and 9 pm on the first Wednesday of every month. The Met offers a "pay what you want" model to visitors between 6 pm and 9 pm on First Wednesday in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The British Museum offers free admission to all visitors, local and international. The AGO has focused on acquiring and curating its collection, focusing on acquiring and curating art from indigenous and marginalized communities. The Met and the British Museum have focused their efforts on improving their existing digital products and creating new ones. The British Museum has continued with its initiative to digitize its entire collection, which will be live in 2024. All three museums focus on generating revenue through exhibitions, memberships, patron programs, workshops, and programs. The Met and the British Museum offer self-guided and group tours in addition to their standard revenue models.
Features/features that address top 3 Features for goals: business goals 1) 2) 3) How does each fulfill these goals?	1. Enhance & Increase Visitor Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events Calendar Online Booking Visitor Information (Plan Ahead) Downloadable map and directions Education Programs Newsletter Sign Up Accessibility Features Social Media Integration News and Foyer (Online Art Magazine) Photos of the museum 2. Diversity, Inclusivity, and Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through acquisition of art from artists from indigenous and marginalized communities AGO X RBC Emerging Artists Program 3. Generate Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Booking Online Store Bistro and Espresso Bar Venue Rental Memberships and Corporate Membership tiers Curators Circle, AGO NEXT, Women's Art Initiative Events and Programs Donations 	Features for goals: 1. Enhance & Increase Visitor Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video of the Museum Virtual Tours (Plan Your Visit) Event and Exhibition List Online Booking Downloadable Map Newsletter Sign Up Workshops & Activities Digital Interactive Map News and Essays Searchable Collection Accessibility Features Audio, Video, and Podcasts Social Media Integration Information on Tours Photos of the museum 2. Improving Digital Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive Map Accessibility Features Digital Interactive Map (The Met Collection) Podcasts, Videos, Audio Guide, Met Fifth Avenue App Virtual Events 3. Generate Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Booking Online Store Food and Drink Venue Rental Membership Tiers Memberships (Cracherode Circle, Brooks Sewell Circle, and Godman Circle (Patron Circles), CaMMFA Group, Otley Group, Vollard Group) Events and Programs Donations 	Features for goals: 1. Enhance & Increase Visitor Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video of the Museum Virtual Tours (Plan Your Visit) Event and Exhibition List Online Booking Downloadable Map Newsletter Sign Up Late Openings on Fridays Social Media Integration Accessibility Features Audio Guide News Object Trials Hands-on Decks Podcasts and Blogs Social Media Integration Information on Tours Photos of the museum 2. Improving Digital Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Collection Accessibility Features Podcast Virtual Events 3. Generate Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online booking Online store Food and drink Membership tiers Memberships (Cracherode Circle, Brooks Sewell Circle, and Godman Circle (Patron Circles), CaMMFA Group, Otley Group, Vollard Group) Venue Rental Events and Programs Donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AGO mainly focuses on community and diversity efforts. They have partnered with RBC Emerging Artists to support Emerging Artists program. Efforts to produce works by emerging artists and programs catered towards Toronto art community. These initiatives appear to align with increasing visitor attendance and generating revenue for the museum. The site could assist the company as a tool for these initiatives and business goals, but the AGO's current website design does not align. The Met and the British Museum have focused more on implementing their site as tools to assist in their business goals and initiatives. The Met and the British Museum have produced various digital products, such as an audio mobile app, that visitors can use during their visit. They have also focused on creating experiences for visitors to engage with. They are utilizing the digital space to assist with visitor overall experience in and out of the museum.
On brand from a visual point of view e.g. simple and clean design, approachable, friendly, etc. Communication: Social Media, PR, Campaigns, advertising, events, communication Technology (do not fill out) Distribution channels (do not fill out) Pricing (do not fill out) Financials/Profitability (do not fill out) User, Tasks, Contexts				

	<p>Target audience profile How has the company addressed their needs?</p> <p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants family/children focused activities, should be educational and fun, spend quality time Events calendar, Family Programs, Children and Youth courses Child friendly environment, interaction with other children and families Local to the area, needs parking, and accessibility for strollers Plan ahead, Location, Hours, and Admission <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multilingual guides or options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Hilton Hotel tourist partnership Interested in unique experiences and learning about different cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events calendar, exhibitions, adult courses <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local to the area, needs directions from public transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locations, Hours, and Admissions, Plan ahead Strong interest in art, creativity, and personal expression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to gain knowledge and inspiration from techniques and research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth programs, Events calendar, Exhibitions Needs to be affordable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ontarians under 24 enter free 	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants family/children focused activities, should be educational and fun, spend quality time Workshops and Activities, Events, Exhibitions, Learning Resources Child friendly environment, interaction with other children and families Local to the area, needs parking, and accessibility for strollers Digital map, Plan your visit <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multilingual guides or options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audio Guide, Digital Guide Mobile App, Tours International <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multilingual Audio Guide, Digital Mobile App, Multilingual Tours, Site Has Multilingual Options Interested in unique experiences and learning about different cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tours, Exhibitions, Events, Workshops and Activities, Performances <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local to the area, needs directions from public transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan your Visit Strong interest in art, creativity, and personal expression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to gain knowledge and inspiration from techniques and research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young People Learning Programs, Adult Learning, Exhibitions and events, The British Museum Podcast, Collection Online, Blog Needs to be affordable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NY state, NY, NJ, and CT students can pay what you want 	<p>The target audience for all three museums is relatively the same—however, The Met does better than the AGO and the British Museum when catering to tourists and families needs on its website.</p> <p>The Met offers children a separate website that entertains them and their families to explore the Met, enhancing the experience and building excitement before they go to the museum.</p> <p>The Met offers its site in multiple languages and developed its mobile app with multilingual features. They also offer guided tours within the museum in different languages such as Spanish and TBM, which have no language features on their sites.</p> <p>The AGO's website does not offer multilingual features, which is a considerable barrier for non-English speaking international tourists looking to explore the museum online.</p> <p>The AGO should consider investing in or producing digital features or products for families and children on its website. It can become a tool to enhance and excite the families before they visit the museum.</p>
Tasks or JTBD (3 to 5)	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to find information on children/family focused activities or events to participate in Wants provide an enriching, creative, and educational experience for the entire family Online booking <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to gain knowledge about different cultures Wants to search for unique and fun experiences while travelling Wants to buy souvenirs for family and friends <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to be inspired by other artists Wants to attend courses to experiment with new techniques and mediums Wants to discover and research art 	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to find information on children/family focused activities or events to participate in Wants to provide an enriching, creative, and educational experience for the entire family Online booking <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to gain knowledge about different cultures Searching for unique and fun experiences while travelling Wants to buy souvenirs for family and friends <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to be inspired by other artists Wants to attend courses to experiment with new techniques and mediums Wants to discover and research art 	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to find information on children/family focused activities or events to participate in Wants to provide an enriching, creative, and educational experience for the entire family Online booking <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to gain knowledge about different cultures Searching for unique and fun experiences while travelling Wants to buy souvenirs for family and friends <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to be inspired by other artists Wants to attend courses to experiment with new techniques and mediums Wants to discover and research art
Context or Environment considerations (3 to 5)	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for family focused friendly events, workshops, and programs Desktop <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for exhibitions, general museum information, events while they are in the city Desktop <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for exhibitions, youth focused events, workshops, and programs Desktop Looking for learning resources 	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for family focused friendly events, workshops, and programs Desktop <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for exhibitions, general museum information, events while they are in the city Desktop <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for exhibitions, youth focused events, workshops, and programs Desktop Looking for learning resources 	<p>User One: Mother with Children (2 Adults & Young Children Ages 4-6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for family focused friendly events, workshops, and programs Desktop <p>User Two: Tourist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for exhibitions, general museum information, events while they are in the city Desktop <p>User Three: Post Secondary Art Student</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Home Looking for exhibitions, youth focused events, workshops, and programs Desktop Looking for learning resources
Accessibility - for disabilities Which aspects of accessibility is most important for this audience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convenient and efficient Information is broken into chunks and does not cause user cognitive overload Content is easy to understand Low response times and fast downloads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convenient and efficient Information is broken into chunks and does not cause user cognitive overload Content is easy to understand Low response times and fast downloads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convenient and efficient Information is broken into chunks and does not cause user cognitive overload Content is easy to understand Low response times and fast downloads
Looking for Opportunities / Learning to see like a designer // Usability Heuristics			

<p>1. Visibility of System Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates to users which page they are on  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates which options the user has filled and which part of the form they are filling  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes icons which page they are on  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes icons which part of the form they are filling  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unavailable times are greyed out for the user, however this table of available times is listing visually and cognitively for users.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBM and The Met's websites provide more visual feedback for users indicating their status regarding ticket checkout. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AGO is missing status visibility for checkouts and ticketing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both websites have icons which they used familiar icons beside each checkbox and quickly converted each category to users without extensive testing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratings: 1st - The British Museum, 2nd - The Met, 3rd - AGO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides icons to indicate which step of check out users are on  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes icons which page they are on  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes icons which bus is checked as well as using icons users are familiar with to convey information quickly  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates to users which page they are on  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates to users which part of the form they are filling  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes icons which page they are on  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifies user  	
<p>2. Match Between System and Reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We consider black dates in calendar available and blue dates as basic, users may become confused with this booking format. There are several ways to view this calendar, but users do not need it.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not mark the dates which have events in calendar view, forcing users to click through dates, there are not provided with clear information unless they click a date or choose the 'Details' option.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses icons that users are familiar with to convey information quickly.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same comments as the AGO booking ticket system.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Met's system were the best matched to the real world. When users choose a date, the system first, an empty space appears. Then users can see what events to quickly grasp and move through the motions to quickly book. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AGO's next 14 days use the same calendar table. However, their calendars have black squares for days where there are no events, and blue squares for days where there are events. This creates a busy feel; this system does not provide enough context for users have to parse what they are looking at. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Met and TBM use familiar icons to convey information in their exhibitions, events, and ticketing systems. They use icons for available date, time, location, audience type, price, and genre. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratings: 1st - The Met, 2nd - The British Museum, 3rd - AGO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not mark the dates which have events in calendar view, forcing users to click through dates, there are not provided with clear information unless they click a date or choose the 'Details' option.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses icons that users are familiar with to convey information quickly.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same comments as the AGO booking ticket system.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Met's system were the best matched to the real world. When users choose a date, the system first, an empty space appears. Then users can see what events to quickly grasp and move through the motions to quickly book. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AGO's next 14 days use the same calendar table. However, their calendars have black squares for days where there are no events, and blue squares for days where there are events. This creates a busy feel; this system does not provide enough context for users have to parse what they are looking at. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Met and TBM use familiar icons to convey information in their exhibitions, events, and ticketing systems. They use icons for available date, time, location, audience type, price, and genre. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratings: 1st - The Met, 2nd - The British Museum, 3rd - AGO 	
<p>3. User Control and Freedom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What's Next" does nothing <p>EXHIBITIONS</p> <p>Where Do I Start? Find Exhibitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited filtering capabilities while searching for exhibitions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not allow users to edit their cart from the pop-up basket, however, the 'Edit cart' and 'Checkout' buttons are not in a standard cart area.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to reach previous pages. 	<p>Stationery / Office</p> <p>Books Stationery Find Exhibitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to search previous pages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to navigate to previous pages. <p>Exhibitions</p> <p>Exhibitions Upcoming Past</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited filtering capabilities while searching for exhibitions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings users to a different part of the page with a list of scheduled dates. <p>Scheduled dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users are able to filter for events by date, audience, and category. <p>Exhibitions and events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to edit their basket from the pop-up basket  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to search previous pages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to navigate to previous pages. <p>Home > Events > Little Feet: explore your senses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings users to a different part of the page with a list of scheduled dates. <p>Scheduled dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users are able to filter for events by date, audience, and category. <p>Exhibitions and events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows users to edit their basket from the pop-up basket 

<p>4. Consistency and Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The navigation bar is categorized due to its unclear categorization and organization. The "About Us" category is absent, and the placement of "Art Before" within this category is troubling. Users are required to manually close the navigation bar, which can be cumbersome to do. Users may not notice the "What's New?" resource in relation to exhibitions. Blur events display Search our online catalogue The shop navigation bar is inconsistent with the rest of the site. The shop navigation bar is inconsistent with the rest of the site. The shop navigation bar is inconsistent with the rest of the site. Allows e-commerce standards (favicons, quick view, add to cart) 	<p>Non-standard bar categorization and organization that makes it hard to users. Visitors have to navigate specifically for services. Users must go under "Learn with Us" and "Learning Resources" to find what they're looking for.</p> <p>Navigation bar categorization and organization that makes sense to users.</p> <p>"Dollomites" and "Collectives Online" lead to the same page.</p> <p>Library catalogue page is fairly consistent with the rest of the site.</p> <p>Library catalogue page is fairly consistent with the rest of the site.</p> <p>The shop navigation bar is inconsistent with the rest of the site.</p> <p>The shop navigation bar is inconsistent with the rest of the site.</p> <p>Large Animal Carving Pellet necklace \$120.00</p> <p>Confirmation of cart removal (Ticket)</p> <p>Confirmation of cart removal (Shop)</p> <p>Confirmation of cart removal (Ticket)</p> <p>All three sites provide users with a warning when items are removed from their cart.</p> <p>Booking Confirmation</p> <p>Event locations lead users to a digital interactive map with navigational capabilities.</p> <p>Storytime at The Met —Exploration</p> <p>"Quick View" allows users to add products to the cart quickly without having to navigate away.</p> <p>Event locations lead users to a downloadable map.</p> <p>The Met and TMM have integrated map feature into their events, exhibition, news, and program pages. This allows users to access to a digital map with navigational features to direct them to the location of the event or exhibition map with directions through a product link.</p> <p>The AGO does not provide additional digital resources for users managing within the museum.</p> <p>The AGO and The Met allow users to view a past search history by clicking on off-page of the shopping experience.</p> <p>Ratings: 1st: The Met. 2nd: The British Museum. 3rd: AGO</p>
<p>6. Recognition Rather Than Recall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Quick View" allows visitors to add products to the cart quickly without having to navigate away. Event locations lead users to a digital interactive map with navigational capabilities. "Quick View" allows users to add products to the cart quickly without having to navigate away. Allows for users to view their previous search history 	<p>Event locations lead users to a digital interactive map with navigational capabilities.</p> <p>Storytime at The Met —Exploration</p> <p>"Quick View" allows users to add products to the cart quickly without having to navigate away.</p> <p>Allows for users to view their previous search history</p>

7. Flexibility and Efficiency of Use	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Users can't sign out as guests, which limits their flexibility. - Allows for guest checkout; this provides users with the flexibility of not having to make an account. - Allows for guest checkout; this provides users with the flexibility of not having to make an account. - The Met and The Met. Art & Design offer great features such as guest checkout, mobile optimization, offering remote access to essential information, and filtering capabilities for convenience. - The AGO restricts user flexibility during the checkout process by requiring users to log in and download guest checkout. Users must restart the process to edit their carts. <p>• Rating: 1st - The Met. Art & Design, 2nd - The British Museum, 3rd - AGO</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lets users immediately plan their visit from the homepage and accelerates the process of finding information. - Lets users jump straight to different sections, increases efficiency. - Lets users filter search results by category, "Membership Exclusive", Free Events, Member Exclusive, and Events after 5 PM. - Lets users jump straight to different sections, improves user experience by allowing them to quickly find the information they need. - Lets users immediately plan their visit from the homepage and accelerates the process of finding information. - Lets users jump straight to different sections, increases efficiency. - Lets users filter search results by category, "Membership Exclusive", Free Events, Member Exclusive, and Events after 5 PM. - Lets users jump straight to different sections, improves user experience by allowing them to quickly find the information they need. - Lets users immediately plan their visit from the homepage and accelerates the process of finding information. - Lets users jump straight to different sections, increases efficiency. - Lets users filter search results by category, "Membership Exclusive", Free Events, Member Exclusive, and Events after 5 PM. - Lets users jump straight to different sections, improves user experience by allowing them to quickly find the information they need.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows related events, workshops, and a calendar of some activities within the exhibition, which can assist users in determining if they are interested. - Shows related events, workshops, and a calendar of some activities within the exhibition, which can assist users in determining if they are interested. - Shows related events, workshops, and a calendar of some activities within the exhibition, which can assist users in determining if they are interested. - Shows related events, workshops, and a calendar of some activities within the exhibition, which can assist users in determining if they are interested. - Shows related events, workshops, and a calendar of some activities within the exhibition, which can assist users in determining if they are interested. - Shows related events, workshops, and a calendar of some activities within the exhibition, which can assist users in determining if they are interested.
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B. Analysis & Design Summary	
Min SWOT: Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community and diversity-based initiatives: Partnering with NGOs to create the Lemniscus art program, showcasing and commissioning art from indigenous and marginalized artists, and providing frequent and accessible educational programs. - Consumer Financial Readiness: By allowing visitors under 24 to add items to their cart and then pay at the end of their visit. - Promoting art education: Through courses, programs, events, and
Min SWOT: Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal competition: From other tourist attractions and activities to do within the city. - User unfriendly website: The website needs to be more consistent, the information architecture more organized, and it has missing features such as a search bar. - Tourism: Non-English speaking tourists face barriers.
Min SWOT: Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Media: Creating a social media presence can attract more visitors and increase web traffic. - Online Content: Inspire the website and develop digital interactive content or products for families, children, and schools.
Min SWOT: Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism: Future in travel as tourism could negatively impact business. - Competition: Other tourist attractions may offer better experiences online and in person, which could draw visitors away.
Defense on External Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defense on External Funding: The Met relies heavily on donations, government grants, etc.
External Feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External feature: It reports on provenance of art and artifacts and how these artifacts have been preserved.
Collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborations: Collaborations with luxury brands and celebrities to bring visibility and donations (Met Gala).
Digitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digitization: Digitization of the museum's collection to prevent an educational resource to the public.
Collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborations: Collaborations with other museums and learning centers to produce new exhibitions and trade art.
Defenses on External Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defenses on External Funding: Heavy reliance on external funding is unstable and subject to the fluctuations of the economy.
External Feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External feature: Changes in government funding or economic fluctuations could affect its financial stability.

Phase 2: User Interviews (Purchase Journey Focus)

Goal: Understand user experiences, behaviors, and pain points specifically within the purchase journey.

Based on insights from Phase 1, I designed a focused research study to deeply investigate the ticket purchasing process. I developed both specific hypotheses to test and open-ended research questions to guide my inquiry.

Hypothesis

Based on my competitive analysis findings, I developed hypotheses to guide my investigation:

1. *When users can edit their cart from any page, it increases the conversion rate*
2. *Users forced to create an account or sign in during checkout have a higher chance of abandoning their cart*
3. *Users prefer the calendar button to book tickets rather than the list button*
4. *Users prefer a date picker that visually aligns with real-life models*
5. *Users prefer to book tickets by viewing months over days or weeks*
6. *When users can see events on the calendar, it increases the conversion rate*

Research Questions

To guide my interviews, I developed these research questions:

1. *What do users usually expect when it comes to cart customization?*
2. *How do users feel when signing in or creating an account to check out?*
3. *How do they feel about the length of the checkout process?*
4. *What do users usually expect when choosing dates & times during the booking process?*
5. *What challenges do users face when checking out?*
6. *Are there specific parts of the purchase path they experience challenges with?*
7. *Is there a particular point at which users are most likely to abandon their cart?*

Methodology

I conducted 6 in-depth user interviews, each lasting one hour, to understand:

- User needs and goals when purchasing tickets
- Behaviors and emotional responses during the purchase flow

- Specific pain points at each step of checkout
- Expectations for cart management, account creation, and booking
- Moments where users considered abandoning their purchase

Tools Used:

- Screener for participant recruitment (targeted users who had attempted online purchases)
- Discussion guide focused on purchase journey touchpoints
- Audio recording and observation notes
- Consent forms ensuring ethical practices

Research Artifacts

Screener

Screener for the AGO

Looking for adults who have children who are interested in bringing their children to the AGO

1. Hello, my name is Caylin.
I am a student ux researcher at Humber North Polytechnic. I am conducting research on checkout processes. If selected, you will have a chance to participate in this research study. Would you be interested?

If Yes, continue

No Thank you answer: Thank you for your time, unfortunately you do not qualify for this study. Perhaps we will have another opportunity to chat in the future.

2. Will you be available for approximately hour long interview the week of October 25th to 29th, from 2 pm to 9 pm?
 - a. Yes (Continue)
 - b. No (No thank you)
3. Which age group are you in?
 - a. Under 18 (No thank you)
 - b. 20-30 years (Continue)
 - c. 40-50 years (Continue)
 - d. 60 and above (No thank you)
4. Which option would best describe yourself?
 - a. Single with no children (No thank you)
 - b. Single with children (Continue)
 - c. Married with no children (No thank you)
 - d. Married with children (Continue)
5. Which of these places would you most likely visit with your family?
 - a. Zoo/ Aquarium
 - b. Amusement park
 - c. Art Gallery/ Art Museum - Must choose this one to move on, else No thank you answer
 - d. Other: Please State
6. How do you prefer to purchase tickets for events?
 - a. Online – Must choose this one to move on, else No thank you answer
 - b. In person
 - c. Over the phone

7. These interviews will be conducted online, what video platforms are you familiar with?
- Zoom (**Continue**)
 - Google Meet (**Continue**)
 - Microsoft Teams (**Continue**)
 - Skype (No thank you)
 - Other (No thank you)
8. Are you okay with being audio and video recorded during the interview?
- Yes (Continue)**
 - No (Thank you)
9. You have been selected to participate in our research study. Please confirm that you can attend an interview during the following dates and time
- I am available to attend an interview from 2 pm to 9 pm on October 25th
 - I am available to attend an interview from 2 pm to 9 pm on October 26th
 - I am available to attend an interview from 2 pm to 9 pm on October 27th
 - I am available to attend an interview from 2 pm to 9 pm on October 28th
 - I am available to attend an interview from 2 pm to 9 pm on October 29th
10. Can you give me your name, phone number, and email address so that we can contact you?
11. Let's chat a bit about getting your consent, respecting your privacy, and personal data. Also, I'd like to go over a couple of things that will help us prepare for our upcoming session...

Thank you for your time and agreeing to participate in my study

Affinity Maps



Phase 3: Ethnographic Research (Physical vs. Digital Comparison)

Goal: Understand the disconnect between physical and digital purchasing experiences.

Conducted on-site observational research at the AGO to identify why the physical experience worked well but the digital experience struggled. This helped me understand users' mental models and expectations.

Observation Focus Areas:

- Entrance area and wayfinding
- Ticket information presentation
- Physical purchase process and interactions
- User emotions and body language
- Differences between in-person and online flows

Research Artifacts

Affinity Maps

Natural World	
<p>Entrance Outside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hours of operation are only posted at the front; there are none posted the entrance.- Somers displaying current exhibitions signs are located near the entrance, but no sign points to the Box Office and Shop or from the street.- No sign for main entrance from the street. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Young adults- Older adults- Elderly- Single gender- Young families with children	<p>Entrance Inside (Front & Coat Check)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Coat Check is a simple service desk with mobile units use the same queue line. They may not have been longer to heavier compared to the stops on the side.- Physical map does not indicate it as a stop.- Entry point to the gallery is through the galleries, the QR code and one on the upgrade in small.- Upgrade with the entrance card/gift card is in the walls.- Upgrade with the entrance card/gift card is in the walls.- Guests are asked to scan QR code to purchase a ticket.- All ticket info is displayed in a screen. <p>Ticket Purchasing Line up & Counter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Observed guests experiencing confusion about where the line up for the ticket.- Lack of information regarding the ticketing process, such as what is included in the annual pass, what is included in the past annual pass.- Why should I buy that as an Adult?- How do I become a member?- What is included in becoming a member?- Annual membership begins in a past annual pass.- Physical map does not show where the ticket counter is located.- Full staff at the ticket purchasing counter.- Staff are trying to prevent annual passes or memberships.- All ticket info is displayed in a screen. <p>Gallery Entrance Checkpoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Security & staff at checkpoints to scan tickets and open bags to their bag policy.- Maps provided in an unlabelled box after the checkpoint.- Directory map with QR code to digitally downloadable map.

Signage & Navigation	Ticket Purchasing	Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours of operation are only provided at the front, there are none past the outside entrance. Early resort signage promoting a free annual pass for guests between the QR code and rest on the sign is small; observed other guests struggle to read the sign. All signage within the entrance (and galleries) is on the walls either a easy to miss or in awkward positions, guests have to crane their neck up. Bag boy checkers everywhere around the front entrance, was not aware of their bag policy, no signs posted about their policies. Banners on the hallway connecting the coat check room to the front entrance, they have information on the current exhibitions with the gallery. However, they are easily missed by guests if they do not head to the coat check area or are preoccupied with their task. The information desk does not have any signage to indicate to guests it's location or purpose the physical map has the symbol but does not include it in the legend. Observed a guest return a wheelchair, however, did not observe signage where they could reenter a wheelchair. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information not provided on the physical map Observed guests experiencing confusion about where the line up for the ticket counter was. There is a separate line up for members but the sign is easily missed, there is only one sign that provides this information. No hours of operation/gallery closing times displayed in ticket purchasing area Observed people standing in the line up while they waited for someone, not knowing they were standing in it. Curving structure is a ramp, saw multiple visitors guess with mobility aids like the stools on the ramp. They may not have been aware of the ramp because of the lack of visual indicator. It is also much longer to reverse compared to the 3 steps on the side. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signs did not indicate it is a ramp - Physical map does not indicate it as a ramp Observed guests experiencing confusion about where the line up for the ticket counter was. There is a separate line up for members but the sign is easily missed, there is only one sign that provides this information. Observed people standing in the line up while they waited for someone, not knowing they were standing in it. Directory/map with QR code to digitally downloadable map Maps provided in an unlabelled box after the checkpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For purchasing tickets, the staff only require payment type and postal code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process was extremely fast and efficient - Transaction lasted approximately 2-3 mins in total Physical tickets sold at the counter For purchasing tickets, the staff only require payment type and postal code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process was extremely fast and efficient - Transaction lasted approximately 2-3 mins in total Full staff at the ticket purchasing counter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guests did not have to wait long to purchase a ticket - Staff did not try to promote annual passes or memberships Cancel QR on counter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear what the app is or what it does Almost accidentally bought a paid annual pass because it was first in the list All ticket info is displayed on a tv screen No hours of operation/gallery closing times displayed in ticket purchasing area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No signs or promotions of current exhibitions at the ticket purchasing area Hours of operation are only provided at the front, there are none past the outside entrance Signage showing where the entrances are to the Bistro and Shop is from the street. Bag boy checkers everywhere around the front entrance, was not aware of their bag policy, no signs posted about their policies. Banners on the hallway connecting the coat check room to the front entrance, they have information on the current exhibitions with the gallery. However, they are easily missed by guests if they do not head to the coat check area or are preoccupied with their task. Lack of information regarding the differences between ticket types what is included in each annual pass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What perks does it have? - Why should I buy that vs an Adult single day pass - How do I become a member? - What is included in becoming a member? Cancel QR on counter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear what the app is or what it does No hours of operation/gallery closing times displayed in ticket purchasing area

Information Architecture and Visibility	Navigation & Wayfinding (Planning a Trip)	Ticket Purchasing Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No signs or promotions of current exhibitions at the ticket purchasing area Hours of operation are only provided at the front, there are none past the outside entrance Signage showing where the entrances are to the Bistro and Shop is from the street. No sign for main entrance from the street. Bag boy checkers everywhere around the front entrance, was not aware of their bag policy, no signs posted about their policies. Banners on the hallway connecting the coat check room to the front entrance, they have information on the current exhibitions within the gallery. However, they are easily missed by guests if they do not head to the coat check area or are preoccupied with their task. Lack of information regarding the differences between ticket types specifically what is included in the paid annual pass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What perks does it have? - Why should I buy that vs an Adult single day pass - How do I become a member? - What is included in becoming a member? Cancel QR on counter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear what the app is or what it does No hours of operation/gallery closing times displayed in ticket purchasing area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours of operation are only provided at the front, there are none past the outside entrance Early resort signage promoting a free annual pass for guests between the QR code and rest on the sign is small; observed other guests struggle to read the sign. All signage within the entrance (and galleries) is on the walls either a easy to miss or in awkward positions, guests have to crane their neck up. Bag boy checkers everywhere around the front entrance, was not aware of their bag policy, no signs posted about their policies. Banners on the hallway connecting the coat check room to the front entrance, they have information on the current exhibitions with the gallery. However, they are easily missed by guests if they do not head to the coat check area or are preoccupied with their task. The information desk does not have any signage to indicate to guests it's location or purpose the physical map has the symbol but does not include it in the legend. Observed a guest return a wheelchair, however, did not observe signage where they could reenter a wheelchair. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information not provided on the physical map Observed guests experiencing confusion about where the line up for the ticket counter was. There is a separate line up for members but the sign is easily missed, there is only one sign that provides this information. Observed people standing in the line up while they waited for someone, not knowing they were standing in it. Curving structure is a ramp, saw multiple visitors guess with mobility aids like the stools on the ramp. They may not have been aware of the ramp because of the lack of visual indicator. It is also much longer to reverse compared to the 3 steps on the side. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signs did not indicate it is a ramp - Physical map does not indicate it as a ramp Observed guests experiencing confusion about where the line up for the ticket counter was. There is a separate line up for members but the sign is easily missed, there is only one sign that provides this information. Observed people standing in the line up while they waited for someone, not knowing they were standing in it. Directory/map with QR code to digitally downloadable map Maps provided in an unlabelled box after the checkpoint. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For purchasing tickets, the staff only require payment type and postal code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process was extremely fast and efficient - Transaction lasted approximately 2-3 mins in total Physical tickets sold at the counter For purchasing tickets, the staff only require payment type and postal code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process was extremely fast and efficient - Transaction lasted approximately 2-3 mins in total Full staff at the ticket purchasing counter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guests did not have to wait long to purchase a ticket - Staff did not try to promote annual passes or memberships Cancel QR on counter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear what the app is or what it does Almost accidentally bought a paid annual pass because it was first in the list All ticket info is displayed on a tv screen No hours of operation/gallery closing times displayed in ticket purchasing area

Field Notes

Date:	Project Name: AGO Ethnography	Type of Research: Comparing Digital vs Natural World Ticket Purchase Paths
Time:	Researcher Name: Caitlyn Young	
Area of Observation:	Ticket Purchase Path	
Activities		
- GOING TO COAT CHECK	ENVIRONMENTS	INTERACTIONS
- GOING TO STORE PURCHASING TICKETS	LIMITED SIGNAGE / COAT CHECK SIGNAGE EASY TO MISS	- GOING TO COAT CHECK (NOT MENTIONED ONLINE)
- LOCKING @ PHONES	LIMITED SIGNAGE / COAT CHECK SIGNAGE EASY TO MISS	- LINE UP BARBERS
- STANDING @ GREETING DESK	BIG SIZE BOX CHECKERS EVERYWHERE	- LIMP UP SIGNAGE AND UNDERNEATH DESK
- HIDDEN BALLOONS OF CURRENT EXHIBITS	HIDDEN ENVIRONMENT	- BAG FAIR CHECKING
- FRIENDLY STAFF	NOT EASY TO FIND (LOCATED UNDER READING)	- FRONT GREETING FRESH
- COUPLE OF STARS @ FRONT	USER UNFRIENDLY	- FRONT GREETING CHECK
- MOBILITY AID USER	WHERE ARE WHEEL CHAIRS TO DRAFT?	- OLDER ADULTS (ELDERLY)
- TICKET OF SIGNAGE ON WALLS	SIGNAGE IS ON WALLS	- FRONT GREETING ASSISTING PEOPLE
- LOW LIGHTING (VERD DIM, MOOD)	LOW LIGHTING (VERD DIM, MOOD)	- HANG AROUND STANDING
- DEAD NOT 2 APPARENT	APPARENT	- HAD TO BE POINTED TO WHERE THE LINE UP IS
- LIVE WORKERS @ PURCHASE DESK	NO SIGNAGE FOR EXHIBITION @ PURCHASING KIOSK	- STAFF (LOTS) @ FRONT DESK + CHECKOUT
OBJECTS		
USERS		
OTHER COMMENTS		
This is the second setting I visited. The activities are being recorded here. This is the general setting to when the activities are being recorded. The interactions are being recorded here. The objects are being recorded here. The users are being recorded here. Other comments are being recorded here.		

Key Findings

From Broad Evaluation to Focused Insights

My initial competitive analysis revealed three overarching problems with AGO's digital presence. Further research through user interviews and ethnography allowed me to deeply understand the most critical area: the purchase journey.

Initial Discovery: Site-Wide Issues

1. Missing Digital Interactive Experiences

- Competitors offered virtual tours and digital collection access
- AGO relied heavily on in-person experiences
- Limited online engagement opportunities

2. Unintuitive Website Design

- Confusing navigation with random categories

- Calendar interface with poor visual design (blacked out boxes for available dates)
- Too many view options with no clear advantage between them
- Difficult trip planning due to scattered information

3. Weak Purchase Conversion

- Multiple obscure features grouped together
 - Inefficient purchase flows causing user drop-off
 - This became my primary focus for deeper investigation
-

Key Findings: Purchase Journey Pain Points

Through user interviews and affinity mapping, I identified three critical problem areas within the purchase flow:

1. Account Creation Barriers

- Complex account creation process creating unnecessary friction
- Security and privacy concerns deterring users
- Difficult password management leading to frustration
- Forced account creation during checkout increasing abandonment

"Why do I need to create an account just to buy a ticket? It feels like they want too much of my personal information." - Participant

2. Cart Management Issues

- Cart sessions expiring too quickly, forcing users to restart
- Inability to edit cart efficiently
- Long, complex checkout process with unnecessary steps
- Poor cart customization limiting user control

Impact: Users expressed frustration at having to repeat the entire booking process when cart sessions timed out or when they wanted to make simple changes.

Shopping Cart

Your current cart contents are listed below.

All prices are in Canadian dollars.

General Admission

Friday, September 27, 2024
Art Gallery of Ontario

General Admission	2 Item(s)	Adult (18+)	\$30.00
General Admission	1 Item(s)	Youth (Age 10-17)	\$15.00

Subtotal (Includes HST)	\$75.00
Service Fee	\$6.00
Total (CAD)	\$81.00

[Continue Shopping](#)

[Check Out](#)

3. Ticket Booking Complexity

- Over-simplified calendar lacking necessary information
- Unintuitive time slot booking system
- Missing system status indicators leaving users confused

Cognitive Dissonance: My ethnographic research revealed significant differences between the smooth physical ticket purchasing experience and the frustrating digital experience, creating misaligned mental models.

Events

[What's On](#) [Hours & Location](#) [Browse Events](#)

Select the date of your visit below.

[Calendar](#) [List](#)

Filter by Date Range

December 1, 2025 to March 1, 2026 [Reset Date Range](#)

Dec 1, 2025 – Mar 1, 2026

General Admission		
Tuesday, December 2, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Wednesday, December 3, 2025	General Admission & First Wednesday Free	Buy Tickets >
Thursday, December 4, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Friday, December 5, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Saturday, December 6, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Sunday, December 7, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Tuesday, December 9, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Wednesday, December 10, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Thursday, December 11, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Friday, December 12, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Saturday, December 13, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Sunday, December 14, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Tuesday, December 16, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Wednesday, December 17, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Thursday, December 18, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Friday, December 19, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >
Saturday, December 20, 2025	General Admission	Buy Tickets >

Events
Select the date of your visit

[Calendar](#) [List](#)

September 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
General Admission	General Admission	General Admission				
22	23	24	25	8:00 p.m. Art Bash	General Admission	General Admission
General Admission	General Admission	General Admission				
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
General Admission	General Admission	General Admission				

4. Information Architecture & Navigation

- Disorganized site structure making trip planning difficult
- Critical information hidden or hard to find
- Lack of clear wayfinding on both digital and physical platforms
- Users forced to depend on staff for basic information

EVENTS AT THE AGO

There's something new with every season!

Whether you're an art aficionado, new to the art scene, or a family looking for fun, we have a variety of events for all ages. Use the filters to find the event that's right for you, like family events, upcoming talks, artist openings, performances and more.

Planning an Event? Discover how you can host your next event at the AGO. [Learn more.](#)

[Calendar](#) [List](#) [Browse](#)

Search Events

Sorry, no events found for your selection. Try another selection, or [Browse Events](#)

< DECEMBER 2025 >

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

User Persona



User Persona
Jessica
40 F
Toronto, ON
Parent of 2 children (Ages: 5 & 10)

Motivations

Create meaningful experiences for children
Maximize time with family with efficient planning
Support arts and the local community

Behaviour

Researches for activities on mobile during commute or down time
Checks reviews and social media before committing
Will abandon cart if ticket purchasing takes longer than 3 minutes
Prefers to purchase tickets in advance

Pain Points

Searching across multiple pages for basic information
Mandatory account creation for simple purchases
Unclear wayfinding upon arrival despite research
Hidden policies & fees



User Journey Map

USER JOURNEY MAP: AGO PURCHASE PATH					
		JESSICA		SCENARIO	
PHASE	PRE-PLANNING	TICKET PURCHASE (ONLINE)	ARRIVING ON-SITE	TICKET PURCHASE (IN-PERSON)	EXPLORING GALLERY
TASKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Searches for tickets Browses homepage Looks for parking info Checks accessibility options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clicks 'Tickets' Selects date, time, and ticket type Reviews complex checkout process Abandons purchase and decides to buy tickets in-person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enters building Looks for signage Approaches information desk Asks staff for directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches ticket counter States ticket types and exhibition Payment gets processed quickly Receives tickets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigates to exhibit Uses printed map or asks staff Searches for restrooms & amenities
MINDSET	"I just want to know how much it costs and where to park. Why is this so complicated?"	"Why do I need to create an account just to buy tickets?"	"There's no clear sign telling me where to go. Everyone's just standing around and looking lost."	"That was actually really easy. Why couldn't buying online be like this?"	"I keep getting lost."
EMOTIONS		Frustrated & Anxious	Overwhelmed		
PAIN POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information split across multiple pages Parking details buried Unable to quickly view pricing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +5 step checkout vs expected 2-3 steps Unnecessary personal information required (forced account creation) Mental model mismatch with universal e-commerce expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users often asked staff for directions Inadequate directional signage Entrance congestion from info desk crowd Digital map not detailed enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive dissonance: physical ticket purchase is easier than digital User expectation unalignment Lost online conversion opportunity Hidden value proposition (programs & classes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum wayfinding is unclear No digital gallery guide and interactive map
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a clear 'Plan Your Visit' page Provide a ticket pricing overview Display parking & transit info prominently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add guest checkout option Reduce number of steps to check out Add a progress indicator Match standard e-commerce checkout flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place prominent wayfinding signage Add a detailed and interactive floor map to website QR codes for instant digital assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model online checkout flow to in-person simplicity Additional information displays around entrances & ticket purchasing area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Signage with QR codes Implement a digital gallery guide & interactive map

Design Recommendations

Based on findings, I provided strategic recommendations across these key areas:

1. Account Creation

- Implement guest checkout option
- Reduce required personal information
- Provide clear value proposition for creating an account
- Improve password management UX

2. Cart Management

- Extend cart session timeout
- Enable in-cart editing without restarting flow
- Streamline checkout to reduce steps
- Add cart saving functionality

3. Ticket Booking

- Redesign calendar to show events and availability clearly
- Add system status indicators throughout process
- Display all fees upfront
- Implement confirmation emails immediately
- Align digital experience with physical mental models

4. Information Architecture

- Reorganize site structure for intuitive trip planning
 - Develop clear content strategy
 - Improve search and filtering capabilities
 - Add digital wayfinding resources
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Research Impact

Validated Hypotheses

The study confirmed the following hypotheses:

- Forced account creation during checkout increases cart abandonment
- Users prefer calendar views that show available events clearly
- Cart editing capabilities directly impact conversion rates
- Cognitive dissonance between physical and digital experiences negatively impacts online satisfaction

Business Value

Revenue Impact:

- Clear roadmap to reduce cart abandonment and increase online ticket sales
- Opportunity to convert more visitors into members and patrons through improved digital experience
- Potential to decrease dependency on in-person ticket sales, reducing operational costs

Competitive Positioning:

- Insights into how AGO's digital experience compared to leading cultural institutions
- Strategic recommendations to match or exceed industry standards
- Identification of unique opportunities competitors weren't leveraging

User Experience & Brand:

- Data-driven understanding of user frustrations damaging brand perception
- Prioritized improvements to increase customer satisfaction and trust
- Framework for creating consistent experiences between physical and digital touchpoints

Operational Efficiency:

- Reduced burden on front desk staff by improving digital self-service
 - Better traffic flow in physical space by addressing digital wayfinding gaps
 - Foundation for future product decisions grounded in user research
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Methodology Highlights

What Worked Well:

- Mixed-method approach provided comprehensive insights
- Ethnographic research revealed unexpected insights about physical/digital disconnect
- Affinity mapping enabled efficient synthesis of qualitative data
- Stakeholder presentations effectively communicated findings

Challenges & Solutions

- Challenge: Participant Recruitment & No-Shows
 - Solution: Recruited 2 extra participants (5 total for 3 needed interviews) and sent email reminders one day before sessions
- Challenge: Technical Issues During Remote Interviews
 - Solution: Tested all technology before interviews and prepared backup software/meeting platforms
- Challenge: Restricted Site Access for Ethnography
 - Solution: Prepared official information letter explaining research purpose to present if questioned by staff

What I'd Do Differently

- Include more diverse participant demographics in future studies
 - Incorporate quantitative analytics data to strengthen findings
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Skills Demonstrated

- **Research Design:** Designed a multi-phase research approach that strategically narrowed from broad evaluation to focused investigation
 - **Competitive Analysis:** Evaluated AGO against industry leaders using heuristic principles to identify usability gaps and market opportunities
 - **User Interviews:** Conducted 6 in-depth interviews to uncover user behaviors, motivations, and emotional responses throughout the purchase journey
 - **Ethnographic Research:** Observed real world user behaviours on-site to understand the disconnect between physical and digital experiences
 - **Synthesis:** Created user personas and journey maps from raw data
 - **Hypothesis Testing:** Developed and validated specific assumptions about user behaviour to guide design recommendations
 - **Ethics:** Ensured participant privacy, consent, and data security throughout
 - **Stakeholder Communication:** Translated complex research findings into clear, actionable presentations for client decision-making
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Next Steps

1. **Prioritize quick wins:** Implement guest checkout, extended cart timeout
 2. **Usability testing:** Conduct usability testing on redesigned flows
 3. **Monitor conversion rates**
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Deliverables

- Comprehensive research reports with synthesized findings
- User persona and journey maps

- Annotated competitive analysis
 - Prioritized recommendations for redesign
 - Presentation decks for stakeholder communication
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