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VISITOR SIGN  
- COMPARISON OF VISITOR SIGNS IN  
HELSINKI AND KYOTO -

Faculty Business Economics and Tourism  
2010

VAASA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Degree Program of Hotel and Restaurant Business

## **ABSTRACT**

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Title	Visitor Sign - Comparison of Visitor Signs in Helsinki and Kyoto -
Year	2010
Language	English
Pages	63 + 3 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Peter Smeds

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The purpose of this research was to learn the importance of visitor signs in tourist destinations, and study essential elements for good visitor sign establishment. Today many tourism destinations have realized the importance of visitor signs and the benefits it can bring to the tourism industry. Some destinations have created their own visitor sign establishment manuals to improve the signs for visitors.

This paper consists of two main parts, the theoretical study and empirical study. In the theoretical part, the importance of visitor signs, the history of development of signs and principles of designing and installing good signs are discussed. For the empirical part, researches on visitor signs in two international tourist destinations, Helsinki and Kyoto, were done in spring 2009 and winter 2010. Research data was collected in the form of photographic data collection of visitor signs in both cities and interviews with persons who are involved in sign installations.

The research result showed the importance of active involvement in visitor signs of the local tourism bureau and the necessity of improving the knowledge of designing effective signs among private tourist attraction owners.

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Keywords	Sign, Visitor sign, Pictogram
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Degree Program of Hotel and Restaurant Business

**TIIVISTELMÄ**

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Opinnäytetyön nimi	Vierailijaopasteet - Opasteiden vertailua Helsingin ja Kioton välillä
Vuosi	2010
Kieli	Englanti
Sivumäärä	63 + 3 liitettä
Ohjaaja	Peter Smeds

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Tämän tutkimustyön tarkoituksena oli oppia tuntemaan vierailijaopasteiden merkitys eri turistikohdeissa ja tutkia niiden oikeaoppista koostamista kohteittain. Nykypäivänä monet turistikohdeet ovat huomanneet kylttien ja opasteiden tärkeyden ja suuren hyödyn matkailualalle. Eräät matkakohteet ovatkin laatineet pieniä käsikirjoja parantamaan opasteiden ymmärrettävyyttä.

Tämä tutkimus käsittää kaksi eri osiota: teoreettisen osan ja empiirisen tutkimuksen. Teoreettisessa osassa käsitellään kylttien ja opasteiden tärkeyttä, kehityshistoriaa ja suunnittelu- ja asennuseriaatteita. Empiirisessä tutkimuksessa käsitellään kahta kansainvälistä kaupunkia, Helsinkiä ja Kiotoa, joissa tutkimuksia tehtiin talvella 2010 ja keväällä 2009. Tietoa kerättiin valokuvaten opasteita ja kylttejä molemmissa kaupungeissa ja haastatellen henkilöitä, jotka ovat tekemisissä kylttien kanssa.

Tutkimustulos osoitti, että paikallisen turismiosaston kuten myös yksityisten kohteiden omistajien, aktiivinen osallistuminen kylttien ja opasteiden suunnitteluun, asennukseen ja kehittämiseen on välttämätöntä.

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Avainsanat

Kyltti, Opaste, Kuvamerkki

## ABSTRACT

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Today traveling is a much more common event than a few decades ago; the number of international travelers has also increased rapidly during past decades. As the number of people traveling to new destinations increase, naturally the need for good guiding information tools grows. There are many different sources where travelers can get useful information, and one of them is the public/visitor sign.

### **1.1 Background Information**

Compared to the other subjects within the tourism field, visitor signs are one of the subjects which have not yet studied commonly. Despite the amount of studies done on this subject, visitor signs are one of the requisite elements for tourist destinations to be hospitable destination for tourists. Visitors are often highly dependent on the signs within new destination, e.g. to find a way, to confirm that one is moving toward the right direction. Without the signs visitors may feel insecure and frustrated, as it could be challenging for them to find the right way or even to know where they are standing. In order to be a visitor friendly and easily accessible destination where visitors can move comfortably, appropriate sign establishment becomes necessary. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

There is no manual which tells exactly where and which sign to install at certain places, since each destination is unique to its landscape/cityscape, therefore, every destination should carry out inspections in their area, e.g. by approaching tourist

attractions from various possible routes that majority of tourists would take, such as from the highway, nearest bus stop, and make their own plan for tourist sign installation, to see what information visitors might need at certain places. Inspection is the best way to understand where signs are required and what type of information is needed. In this paper signs in two different cities will be studied and through their comparison how good signs can be installed and what affects installing good signs can be learnt. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. World Tourism Organization, 2001.)

## **1.2 Motivation of the Study**

This thesis subject was chosen to be studied by virtue of the author's personal interest in public signs, especially the visitor signs. The interests in the study subject started to grow since she first recognized the importance of them and the fact that she was involuntarily but highly dependent on signs when visiting new cities/destinations a few years ago. As opportunity to write this paper rose, two cities, Helsinki and Kyoto, were selected to be studied closely under empirical part of study in this thesis as the author had some basic knowledge of the destinations and was interested in comparing them in this study. As mentioned earlier visitor signs are not studied as commonly as many other subjects within tourism industry and perhaps their importance is not as widely known as it should be either. Therefore this work is carried out with a wish of sharing the author's findings on this subject to the readers and to increase the awareness of visitor signs and its role in the tourism field.

### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to present the importance of the public and visitor signs for the tourists, therefore also for tourist destinations, and introduce the basic principles for establishing good visitor signs through the theoretical and empirical researches presented in this paper. Especially the empirical research part demonstrates good and bad practical examples of the sign installation and different methods of sign establishments used by two cities, which will hopefully give a clearer idea of how signs can be used, what they can do and how they can affect the hospitality of the destinations if applied properly to the readers.

### **1.4 Structure of the Paper**

This thesis consists of the following three main parts. The first part of this paper explores the principles of signs, together with some important reminders when installing signs with a short introduction of the definitions of the sign, and its development history. In the second part, visitor/public information signs in Kyoto city, Japan, and Helsinki city, Finland, will be studied and compared from various aspects based on the first part of this study (theoretical research). In the last part of this paper conclusion of the research and recommendation from the findings of this study will be presented.

## **1.5 Scope of the Research**

Tourists tend to use any signs available for them regardless of whether the sign is installed for visitors or not. Hence this paper will not only discuss signs which are built for visitors, but also general public signs, such as road signs and public signs at railway stations which are commonly used by tourists.

## **2. THEORETICAL RESEARCH**

During this theoretical research the positive elements of the visitor signs, history and development of the signs, and the important elements when designing and installing signs are discussed.

### **2.1 Signs**

Signs are extensively used in various public places such as at stations, airports, hotels, shopping centers, tourist attractions, on the streets and roads. Signs are installed by different authorities to achieve certain purposes e.g. to deliver message/information, and the authorities responsible for supervising sign installation and regulations on those vary from country to country. Visual communication takes an important role in human life. Study shows that people remember 80% of their visual perception while perception of hearing only occupies 10% of the brain. Therefore, it is important to use the full advantage of this great human visual ability in public sign communication, and send clear simple information and messages which can be easily interacted. (Hewlett-Packard Development Company, LP 2004, 2. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006, 12.)

#### **2.1.1 Definition of the sign**

The word “sign” can recall a number of meanings to one’s mind. There are various definitions for the word. One online dictionary has 25 different definitions

for this word alone. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary has 6 definitions for the word and it defines sign in the meaning of a public sign as “a notice giving information, directions, a warning, etc.” with some examples of use; “a road sign, a shop sign” (Cambridge University Press 2010.). Another definition given by another dictionary in terms of the meaning used in this study is “a notice, bearing a name, direction, warning, or advertisement, that is displayed or posted for public view: a traffic sign; a store sign” (Dictionary.com 2010.).

The World Tourism Organization describes the term, sign, as follows: “The term “sign” denotes a mark, device or symbol used to be perceived and which allows to represent or to distinguish things, objects, concepts or places.” (World Tourism Organization 2001, 13.). Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary states “[For information / warning] a piece of paper, wood or metal that has writing or a picture on it that gives you information, instructions, a warning etc” (Oxford University Press 2000.). According to these definitions sign, as public signs, is an object to notify certain information which is displayed in public view that can contain all or either of writing, mark, symbol or picture to convey the message or information.

### 2.1.2 Brief history of the sign

One of the theories states that signs are a descendant of the printings. Before public signs were developed local authorities such as a toll-collector had taken a role as a guide, giving directions and best routes to the destinations. In 1552 the first guidebook of France with comments was published by a French printer,

Charles Estienne. In this guidebook Charles Estienne successfully introduced distance abbreviations, along with a list of major cities and towns and the distance between them in addition to the basic contents; introducing tourist attractions, history of regions etc. 'Le guide des chemins de France' immediately became model for cartographers and this abbreviation system is still benefited from today. As industrial development increased traffic, technology development established faster and easier traveling. Thus signals and signs were necessary to be developed at the same time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first public symbols were installed under tourist facilities at railway stations in England; since then signs have developed in many ways and have been installed at various public facilities. Today the number of travelers and traffic are continuously on the rise, therefore clear signs which can be interacted with not only by the locals, but also by different nationalities are becoming increasingly important. (University of Virginia 2010, Charles Estienne (1504-1564). World Tourism Organization 2001, 22.)

### 2.1.3 Different types of sign

There are different types of information signs. Common, basic signs are: *direction signs* which provide information to lead the user to specific locations, *identifying signs/tags* providing information of the sight (e.g. name of the attraction, opening hours, entrance fees), *map signs* providing the information of the surroundings and their location, and *regulation signs* which restrain the users' movement/action. There are also signs which are designed to influence the receivers by their information such as, indicative type of sign, imperative type of sign and suggestive type of sign. Indicative signs influence the thoughts of the receivers,

however the sign does not force the receiver to take any certain action. Imperative signs restrict/forbid the receiver from doing something and suggestive signs influence the receivers' feelings and lead them to behave in a certain way. (Kankochiikidukuri-Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006, 17.)

A map sign is very practical, it can provide multiple location and directional information. Moreover it can serve people who have different destinations. Depending on the type of the users (vehicle driver, pedestrians) their traveling distance varies, hence if the map is to assist a foot passenger the map should not include information further than the distance one can reach on foot. Another important element is that user of the map is able to identify where on the map they are standing, in this way the user can find the direction of their interest and measure the distance easily. Maps usually include numerous amount of information, especially for those who are new in the area, it can get very hard to process the information found on the map. Emphasizing some main landscapes in the map can ease the understanding. (Kankochiikidukuri-Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

#### 2.1.4 Visitor signs

Visitor signs are not only beneficial to the visitors, but they also bring opportunities to the local tourism business. They include e.g. guiding, informative, and regulative signs. The purpose of some of the signs is to guide visitors safely to the destination, showing them the appropriate route. Through the visitor signs,

tourist facilities which can be visited can be also notified to visitors. Sometimes it is difficult to define what goes under visitor sign and not, some signs consist of both general information and information particularly used by visitors and it can be seen as a public information sign or visitor sign. Common visitor signs are such as the tourist attraction signs and tourist service signs which present e.g. commercial tourist attractions, national parks, historic sites and towns, scenic tourist drives, accommodation facilities and visitor information centers (Position statement-Tourist signage guidelines, Tourism Western Australia. Devon County Council.).

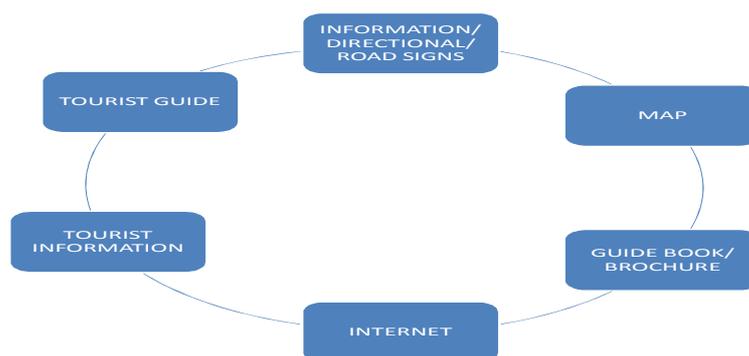
#### 2.1.5 Essential elements for good signs

Signs are established to warn, guide or protect the public or a specific group of people. For signs to perform on their full potential there are a number of conditional principles to be followed.

##### 2.1.5.1 Understanding the role of the signs

Providing a sufficient amount of assistance and information is important, however signs should not be over-installed since an excessive amount of signs may impair the scenery. Therefore, it is important to remember that signs are not meant to be, thus should not be used as a primary source of information to locate or reach sights, but as to confirm the locations and that the directions of the sights are right. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

The strength of the sign is to be able to provide necessary information on the location regardless of the time and who the user is. In many cases signs can only provide limited amounts of information in order to maintain their visibility, thus travelers should use e.g. a map or a guidebook as a primary source of information to locate and reach destinations and use signs as secondary supportive source of information. There are various sources that are to assist visitors with necessary information besides visitor signage, such as tourist information centers and guidebooks. Each information source has its strengths and weaknesses, a guidebook can contain much detailed information and it is portable, yet on the other hand it does not necessary have up-to-date information. Latest information may be easily found on the internet, but internet access is still limited when travelling outside. Therefore, it is recommended to use different sources to get information according to the purpose and place of use and obtain the best possible assistant from them. Establishing a network among different information sources involved within the destination and creating standardized design (e.g. pictogram, map, color) to be used in the materials can improve to facilitate interactions of the different information sources for the visitors. Figure 1. indicates the importance of the collaboration among different information sources. (Kankochiikidukuri-Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Position statement-Tourist signage guidelines, Tourism Western Australia.)



**Figure 1. Importance of the collaboration among information source**

(Kankochiikidukuri-Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005, 25.)

#### 2.1.5.2 Location

Even if the sign itself is well designed and easily interacted, if it is placed at the wrong location it cannot fully serve its purpose. For example directional signs are suitable to be installed in front of a public transportation center (e.g. railway station), bus stop, at the foot of stairs and at the fork of a road, where people make decisions on their directions, to assist them. If the distance to the destination is far, installing the sign at every moderate distance gives confidence to the user. It is also good to mention the distance to the destination on the board. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

#### 2.1.5.3 Color and shape

Color and shape of the sign take on an important role in creating a good sign. Because these two elements can immediately notify the type of the message it is

intending to send at first glance, even from a distance; e.g. a triangle shaped sign usually indicates warning or caution, which is often associated with red or yellow coloring, circle formed signs are regularly used to refer to prohibitions with a red background, when the color of the background is blue it refers to indexes. The basic shapes used for signs are circles, triangles and squares. Most commonly used colors are: red which represents prohibition and mandatory, yellow representing warning and caution, and blue which features general information. These sign shapes and colors are widely used across the world and, thus can be recognized universally, therefore highly recommended to adapt in destinations which receive international visitors. (Kankochiikidukuri-Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006, 34.)

Some destinations have adapted certain colors to be used for tourism related information signs. In this way it is easier to identify the general public signs and visitor signs. In Germany and the U.K. brown colored signs are used for tourism related signage, in Western Australia a brown background sign with white letterings is used for “directional signs to tourist attractions” and blue background with white letters for “directional signs to Tourist Services and Facilities” (Position statement-Tourist signage guidelines, Tourism Western Australia, 1.). (Highways agency. Industrial Accident Prevention Association 2007, 2. Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005, 57. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006.)

Using colors is beneficial in increasing the visibility of the sign, if correctly applied. Understanding the attributes of color and its variety of usage helps to

design a good sign. For example, the visibility of signs increases when the contrast of the colors used is great; e.g. black background with white pictogram brings better visual effects than black background with grey pictogram. Black background with white lettering/ pictogram combination inflates the white part, hence the letters/ pictogram can look bigger than the actual size. However using many different colors can complex the visibility of the sign, hence such appearance should be avoided. Moreover, there are some color combinations which decrease the visibility, therefore such matters should be studied in advance as well. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006.)

#### 2.1.5.4 Language

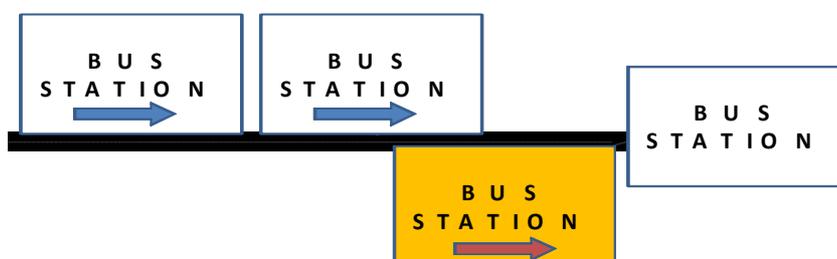
Signs are to provide important and assisting information to visitors and/or to the public at necessary places where the messages are to be delivered. If the provided information cannot be understood or correctly interacted there is no meaning for the sign to stand there. To allow the signs to be correctly understood by the users, sending clear messages is essential.

In addition to the information written in the local language(s), utilizing a universally recognizable language and communication tool such as English and pictograms on the sign can increase perception of the potential viewers. If the destination receives large numbers of certain nationalities/language groups, including some of those languages on the signs can be beneficial as well as hospitable to them. Nonetheless providing information in a number of different

languages does not necessary increase the perception of the signs since that could decrease the visibility of the whole sign. Therefore, which languages to be included and the number of the languages to be included should be well considered and only applied at necessary places e.g. main, important signs. (Kokudokotsusho 2005, 11.)

#### 2.1.5.5 Constancy

Providing consistent information is important in order to avoid any misleading situation or confusion for the user, e.g. if same information is provided repeatedly along the route or at different places. Figure 2. shows the example of possible misleading signs. Three signs give directions toward the same bus station, however the third sign has a different background color as well as the color of the arrow showing the direction. Due to the color differences, the third sign may give the impression that it is pointing to another bus station than the first two signs. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Position statement-Tourist signage guidelines, Tourism Western Australia.)



**Figure 2. Example of a misleading sign**

#### 2.1.5.6 Maintaining the sign

Maintaining the signs requires great care from updating the information to maintaining the condition of the signs. Especially signs installed outside can be easily weathered, by sun, wind, rain or other weather conditions, and as a result it can lose its original colors or even the form. Hence careful material choice is important for signs, a material which is not easily weathered, damaged or stained, yet easy to update information on. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

#### 2.1.5.7 User-friendly signs

Signs should be designed as user-friendly as possible. The users of the sign could vary from small children to seniors, handicapped to people from different countries, hence easily viewable and readily interactive signs become highly important. Having standard size for the pictograms and lettering, design and coloring for signs within a destination can lead to less confusion from the user and it also eases the reading of the signs. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Position statement-Tourist signage guidelines, Tourism Western Australia.)

## **2.2 Pictogram**

As globalization develops, the number of international travelers has increased dramatically and there is a great need for a cross-cultural communication tool for

tourists and tourism destinations as a way to communicate and notify useful and important information to their visitors. Pictograms and graphic signs are one of the communication tools that can be understood universally without special pre-education or preparation, even without having the same cultural background. Through this communication tool tourist destinations can deliver their messages to their tourists and provide them with necessary and important information to assist their visit. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. World Tourism Organization 2001.)

### 2.2.1 Definition of pictogram

Ryan Abullah and Roger Hubner define pictogram as “Pictorial representation. An iconic sign which represents complex facts, not through words or sounds but through visual carriers of meaning” (Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006, 11.).

A pictogram is an abstracted and simplified picture which represents facts through its form and it is one of the virtual languages. It can immediately draw attention to a certain object and can be understood alone, without the assistance of words or language. Such feature of the pictogram allows delivering public information to the receiver equally, regardless of their nationality or culture. Pictograms are often used at high traffic and cross-cultural public places such as airports, railway stations, tourist attractions, presenting e.g. assisting and warning information, through its graphical presentation.

## 2.2.2 Pictogram and its development

Pictogram has been developed over the years and today some of the pictograms are standardized to international standards. The key developments and elements of the development of pictograms are discussed below.

### 2.2.2.1 Early time

Pictograms may have impressions of modern innovation; in fact since early years of human history pictograms have been around. Pictographs and ideograms were the base of the written symbols such as Hieroglyphic letters and Cuneiform. Egyptian hieroglyphic is one of the hieroglyphics letters which was based on the graphical figures of animals and objects. In modern time, in early 18<sup>th</sup> century a great need for international traffic signs arose, as technology and industry developed and more frequent border crossing traffic increased. In 1909, first four international pictogram traffic signs, which are still in use today, were agreed on in Paris among 11 European countries. Later, in late 1920's the range of international traffic signs was expanded. In mid 1930's an Australian born philosopher and economist Otto Neurath established ISOTYPE (International System of Typographic Picture Education) together with Rudolf Carnap and Charles W. Morris and developed the standardization of public information pictograms, charts, diagrams and more. (Academic dictionaries and encyclopedias 2010. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006. Shiralee Saul 2002. Shiralee Saul 2002. Wikipedia Foundation 2010.)

### 2.2.2.2 Pictogram and Olympics

Another important factor of pictogram developments were the Olympic Games. Olympic pictograms, in other words pictorial signs of sports, were first used in the Berlin Olympics in 1936. 1964 Tokyo Olympics, which was the first Olympic Games held in Asia, developed the pictorial systems further. Since the different lettering system was used in Japan, it was necessary to find another way of communication besides lettering, a communication tool which was independent from country or culture. Ryan Abullah and Roger Hubner state that “1964 Tokyo Olympics was the real spur to present concept of the pictogram...abstract, systematically geometrical images were used to communicate facts to visitors, including different sports and general information” (Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner, 2006, 21.). The Tokyo Olympics were the catalyst for reorganization of pictogram in Japan, and since the Olympics it started to be used widely in the country. (John Jan Popovic. Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

### 2.2.2.3 ISO 7001

Nowadays pictograms are widely used at different public facilities in a number of different countries, some countries may have their standardized pictographic symbols, while others do not. The International Organization for Standardization published standardized pictogram and symbol for public facilities (ISO 7001:1990) in 1990. ISO 7001:2007, Graphical symbols – Public information symbols, a revised version of ISO 7001:1990 was published in 2007. This new issue of ISO 7001 includes “79 public information symbols designed for use in all

locations and all sectors where the public has access.” (International Organization for Standardization, 2007). The aim of this publication is to provide a communication tool for public information which can be used at public places (e.g. airport, shopping center, hospital, tourist facilities) and which can convey its information/ message by its virtual appearance. In the article published in 2007, International Organization for Standardization states that there are over 100 potential symbols that are identified for further consideration which might be included in future to ISO 7001. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006. Wikipedia Foundation 2010.)

### 2.2.3 Strengths of the pictogram in signs

The strength of the pictograms is not only supporting the lettering information and universal reorganization, it can also notify the sign of e.g. tourist information, from a distance as it has high visibility compared to a lettered word. Pictograms can be used alone without lettered information in various occasions. Not only does it make the sign more visually appealing, but it also saves space on the information board, compare to information written in letters, where additional information can be placed. In practice, pictograms are used alone in a number of different places without any support of the letters. One of the most common pictogram used alone is the “restroom” pictogram. A pictogram alone can deliver clear information to the viewer if used correctly. (Kankochiikidukuri- Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005. Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner 2006.)

Ryan and Roger stated that “pictograms are used to warn, guide or protect and need to be immediately decipherable... must get right to the head of the matter by visually conveying a vital piece of information in such a way that it cannot be misunderstood”(Ryan Abullah & Roger Hubner, 2006, 6.). Pictogram is a virtual communication tool conveying certain information by its visual representation. The virtual representation is not only presented by pictorial symbol of the pictogram, but frequently in association with its design (the form, color used) and its surroundings where the sign stands. Today pictogram is greatly adapted at different places around the world and is widely recommended to be applied in public signs for its conveying ability regardless of users’ language skills or cultural background. Pictogram is a great communication tool in today’s busy globalized world, to bring the best outcome of pictographic signs understanding its weaknesses and strengths is essential. (Kankochiikidukuri-Annaihyoshikikenkyukai 2005.)

### **2.3 Summary of Theoretical Research**

Various basic yet important factors in designing and installing signs have been discussed during this theoretical research, together with its role and development history. The role of the signs was discussed that signs are not meant to be used as a primary source of information, but as a complementary information source e.g. to the guidebook. Through this theoretical research the positive impact of the signs on users was also found that signs are not only useful to visitors, but visitors can gain confidence in moving in new destinations through good signs. Moreover, numbers of different elements which need to be considered when designing and

installing signs were discussed such as the combination of the colors used on the signs, which can either improve or decrease the visibility of the sign. Furthermore, as an effective universal communication tool for today's world pictogram and its features were introduced. Pictographic signs have been used as a universal communication tool for over half a century now, and the demands on pictographic signs are growing stronger than ever in this growing universalizing world. The important fact was that signs (information, public, road, visitor) are a very practical tool for users and beneficial for both visitors and destinations, but only when they are installed at right circumstances.

### **3. INTRODUCTION TO STUDY CITIES**

Two international tourist destinations were chosen to be studied closely for this study, Helsinki and Kyoto. Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, is located in the southern part of Finland on the shore of Gulf of Finland. Kyoto is a popular historical tourist destination situated in western-central of Honshu Island in Japan.

These two different destinations were chosen to be studied as both Helsinki and Kyoto receive a large number of international tourists and are fairly developed tourist destinations to compare. In addition, these two cities not only have very different cultures but also the majority of the visitors' origins differ from each other, which is interesting to compare and study how those elements may reflect on their signs.

#### **3.1 Helsinki and Kyoto**

As an introduction to the study cities, the basic facts and figures of the study cities are presented below. First brief introduction to Helsinki city is presented which is followed by the numbers and facts regarding their tourism business. In the same manner another study city, Kyoto, is introduced to the readers.

##### **3.1.1 Helsinki city in brief**

Helsinki is the capital city of Finland with over half a million inhabitants located in southern Finland. The city with over 450 years of history lies on the Baltic Sea,

surrounded by numbers of small islands archipelago. The city has strongly been historically influenced by both Sweden and Russia, which created a unique culture and cityscape from an architectural perspective. Today Helsinki is also widely recognized as a city of design. (City of Helsinki 2010.)

### 3.1.2 Helsinki in numbers

According to City of Helsinki, year 2008 was a record breaking year in terms of nights spent in Helsinki by both domestic visitors (41% nights/1,3 million nights) and foreign visitors (59%/ 1,8 million nights) with over 3 million nights which resulted in growth of 3,3% from the previous year 2007. 45% of the bednights were made by leisure travelers while the majority of bednights were by business travelers (51%) in Helsinki during the year 2008. (City of Helsinki 2009.)

Among the foreign visitors, travelers from Russia were the largest group of bed occupancy in Helsinki (total of 251,874nights) with a strong growth of 28% to the previous year (2007). The other major markets of nationalities were Germany (179,197 nights), Britain (154,306 nights), Sweden (130,306 nights), the United States (122,417 nights) and Japan (86,133 nights). During 2008, India was recognized as a new important market for Helsinki which is growing the number of incoming travelers to Helsinki, approximately 36,000 nights were spent in Helsinki by Indian visitors in 2008. (City of Helsinki 2009.)

International cruise traffic has also grown in year 2008, the number of passengers increased by 38% (360,000 passengers) compared to the year 2007. The majority

of the passengers of the cruise were from the USA, Canada, Britain, Germany and Spain. These cruise visits alone brought approximately 47 million euro to Helsinki. (City of Helsinki 2009.)

### 3.1.3 Kyoto city in brief

Kyoto, the former capital city of Japan, is located in the central part of Honshu Island. The city holds nearly 1,5 million inhabitants and is the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest city in Japan. Kyoto was the capital city of Japan for over 1000 years until the governmental transfer to Tokyo in 1868. Even after the capital's transfer Kyoto remained as an important business city and as a centre of culture of the country. Kyoto is a popular tourist destination known as a place where traditions and modern life co-exist. (KYOTO Prefectural Government Tourism Division 2010. Wikipedia Foundation 2010.)

### 3.1.4 Kyoto in numbers

During the year 2008, Kyoto has received over 50 million visitors (+1,5% to previous year) which resulted in the breaking of the record in numbers of visitors visited in a year according to City of Kyoto. Tourism business brought approximately JPY 656,2 billion (4,687 billion EUR) during this year to the city. Of the 50 million visitors, 74% were day trippers and the rest, 26% stayed night(s) in Kyoto. Kyoto is also a popular destination among Japanese school groups, during the year 2008 over a million Japanese school students visited Kyoto as a part of school trips. (City of Kyoto 2009.)

Among the 50 million visitors nearly a million were foreign visitors who stayed overnight in Kyoto, the number of foreign guests' bednights increased 1,1% to previous year in 2008. During year 2008, there was a decrease in number of American and Korean visitors who spent nights in Kyoto compared to the year 2007. On the other hand overnight visitors from Australia, Germany (+43,6%) and France (+26,8%) dramatically increased. Americans were the largest group of bed occupancy in accommodation facilities in Kyoto among foreign visitors, followed by Taiwan (12%), Australia (7%), France (5,9%), China (5,2%), Britain (4,4%), South Korea (4,3%) in 2008. Among foreign residents living in Japan, South Koreans had the largest number of bednights in Kyoto in 2008, and they were the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest group of bed occupancy in Kyoto among foreign visitors in the year 2007. According to City of Kyoto 34,9% of the visitors had entered to Kyoto using JR (Japan Railways), 26,6% by other private railways, 29% by private vehicles, and 9,5% by buses. (City of Kyoto 2009.)

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION**

In this chapter the research methodology used for this study and implementation of the researches are introduced, as well as how the reliability and validity of the research were kept during the study.

### **4.1 The Aim of the Research**

The aim of this research is to closely study visitor signs in Helsinki and Kyoto, and to find characteristics of visitor signs of the cities', their strengths and weaknesses. Through the findings from the research analyze the outcome of the research and evaluate the cities from their visitor signs' installation perspective and if any, suggest possible improvements on their visitor signs.

### **4.2 Research Method**

In this study qualitative research was used as a research method. This research method was chosen for the study as qualitative research does not limit the study objects and allows to study and to carry out the research without restraint compared to quantitative research.

### **4.3 Implementation of the Research**

During this study two different types of qualitative researches were done, photographic collection of signs in the study cities, and interviews with some

persons from e.g. tourism bureau. Both photographic data collection and the face to face interviews for Kyoto were implemented in 2009 April in Kyoto city. Photographic data collection and electronic interviews/ interactions (by e-mails) for Helsinki were carried during the winter of 2009-2010.

#### 4.3.1 Photographic data collections

The idea of data collection for this study was to collect photographs of signs in both study cities, Helsinki and Kyoto, and use those collected photographs as research data. The photographs were collected by the author herself. 2-3 days were spent in each destination visiting different tourist attractions and high traffic facilities, photographing different kinds of signs which were used / likely to be used by visitors. Approximately 200 photographs were taken during the data collection in Kyoto and 130 photographs were taken in Helsinki.

#### 4.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were more or less done freely, basic questions were asked and the interviewees answered the questions. Based on the interviewees' answers additional questions were asked on the spot.

During the research in Kyoto two interviews were held. One was at planning and policy division of tourism bureau (City of Kyoto), with a lady who was in charge of visitor signs. The other interview was with the personnel from regional transport division of ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism Kyoto

office. Through these interviews policy on Kyoto city's visitor signs and regulation on sign installation were discussed.

Interviews regarding signs in Helsinki were done less officially compared to those of Kyoto. Information regarding sign installation in Suomenlinna was given by the tourism manager of the governing body of Suomenlinna through e-mail exchanges. There were also contacts with Helsinki City Tourist & Convention Bureau, however the interaction with them was limited hence very little facts were found through this contact.

#### **4.4 Reliability and Validity of the Research**

As the nature of qualitative research it is sometimes challenging to maintain high reliability compared to quantitative research. In order to increase the reliability of the research two different qualitative researches were done, photographic data collections and interviews with e.g. tourism bureau, to get background information. During the photographic data collections, numerous signs from different parts of the cities were collected. The results of interviews from the two cities were also important elements for the research and added additional reliability to the research. (Donald Ratcliff. Virginia Cano.)

Validity of the research is kept by analyzing the research data based on the theoretical research. In this way the research subject will be followed and studied as they were mentioned earlier in the aim of the study. Moreover by analyzing the data in comparison/based on other source (literature used in theoretical research)

data interactions are kept as comprehensive as possible. (Donald Ratcliff. Virginia Cano.)

## **5. ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE RESEARCH**

In this chapter collected research data will be studied and analyzed. Research data are first categorized according to where the signs were found (e.g. high traffic public facilities, tourist attractions), then secondly according to the types of the signs (e.g. direction signs, identifying signs/tag, map sign, regulation sign). Signs under each category are analyzed based on the findings from theoretical research. In the end of this chapter the results of the research are compared on the destination level. The findings from interviews are also discussed during this chapter.

### **5.1 Helsinki**

Approximately 130 photographs of different visitor signs, information signs, and road signs were taken during photographic data collection in Helsinki in 2010. Photographs were taken in and around the central railway station, where numeracy visitors walk across. Also photographs of different signs were collected at and around the main tourist attractions, shopping streets, streets around and to the tourist attractions.

#### **5.1.1 Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau**

In Helsinki's tourist strategy 2006-2008 a proposal plan of improving the number of signs in English was mentioned. Through email interaction with Helsinki City tourist and Convention Bureau in 2010, it was said that still the visitor signs are a

problem for Helsinki. However neither exact problems nor from which aspects the problems occur were mentioned. (Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau 2008. Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau 2010.)

In 2007 a group which included personnel from Helsinki city tourist office and building supervision office of the City of Helsinki, published a report on signs in Helsinki and how to develop the system, unfortunately this report could not be obtained before finishing this study paper hence the contents are unknown. (Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau 2010.)

#### 5.1.2 Signs in high traffic public facilities / areas in Helsinki

Under Signs in high traffic public facilities /areas in Helsinki, the visitor and public signs found at the central railway station, direction signs, map signs and regulation signs found in the city center are analyzed and evaluated.

##### 5.1.2.1 Signs at the central railway station

At the central railway station most signs were information and direction signs, mainly indicating the directions of facilities and services such as toilets, elevators, restaurants, ticket sales office and metro by pictographic signs (see Figure 3.). The information is clear and can be easily conveyed, as pictogram does not take much space compared to written information therefore many service and facility information were able to be provided on one board. No map sign presenting the locations of facilities and services of the building was found. Considering the size

of the railway station, it might be considered that a service map is needed, if there was a service map of the station it would be great assistance for the visitors.



**Figure 3. Direction signs at Helsinki central railway station**

#### 5.1.2.2 Direction signs in the city center

There were a poor number of direction signs found in high traffic public areas in the city center of Helsinki. So called “Direction sign for light traffic (pedestrian and cycle traffic)” (Finnish road administration 2007, 6.) were the main direction signs found in the city center, however they are not easily visible as they are installed at a higher position than the pedestrian’s line of sight (see Figure 4.). Furthermore, this direction sign indicates destinations only in Finnish and Swedish hence foreign visitors might not be able to gain any benefit from these signs. Other direction signs found were such as WC direction sign near Esplanade Park, and traffic direction signs for vehicles.

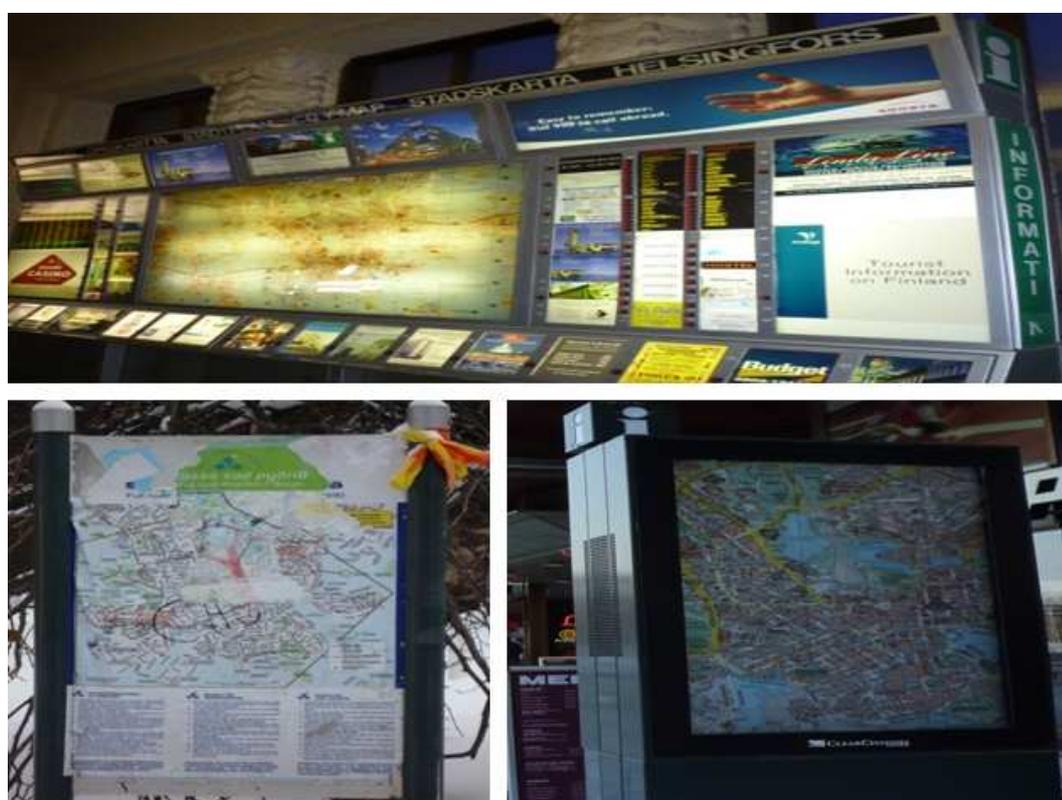


**Figure 4. Direction signs in Helsinki city center**

#### 5.1.2.3 Map signs in the city center

There were some map signs of the city; at the railway station, outside of the railway station and on the main streets. All the maps found were inappropriate in one way or another. The map found inside of the central railway station had an excessive amount of advertisement / information around the map which decreased the visibility of the whole sign. The signs which were installed at main streets could have been more beneficial if they had had indication of current locations, as well as the scale of the distance. Despite the numbers of these map signs around city center, it is not easy for first time visitors to immediately locate their location on the map, and even if they can it is again challenging to know the distance to certain locations from there. Moreover, the color combination of the map, pastel colors, has decreased the visibility of the map. Increasing the difference between used colors and using less pastel colors can improve the visibility of the map. The

positive side of the findings was that the same designed map was used at the railway station and on the streets and the map signs on the streets had “i” pictographic sign on top of the sign. This sign can catch people’s eyes and people can notice the existence of this map sign easily. Some maps found in the city center were badly weathered and ruined so that they could hardly be used. By having seasonal check-up and maintenance such results can be avoided. Figure 5. shows the examples of maps found in the city center.



**Figure 5. Top: map at the station, left: poorly maintained map found in the city, right: new maps in the city**

#### 5.1.2.4 Regulation signs in the city center

No special regulation signs were found, except for signs forbidding smoking and/or parking bicycles.

#### 5.1.3 Signs at tourist attractions in Helsinki

The visitor and public signs found at tourist attractions in Helsinki are studied closely below.

##### 5.1.3.1 Suomenlinna

One of the most popular tourist attractions in Helsinki and a UNESCO's World Heritage site is built on 6 islands. The visitor and information signs at Suomenlinna were well structured, clear yet easily interacted. As Suomenlinna has very advanced visitor signs within Helsinki, it was decided to study the signs in Suomenlinna separately from other. A contact to the tourism manager of the Governing body of Suomenlinna was made to interview details of sign planning and rules if there were any.

According to the responses, the signs in Suomenlinna are not only for visitors but also for the residents on the island. The design of the signs is their own, the sign planning process for Suomenlinna started in 1981, nearly 30 years ago and 8 architects have been involved in planning and developing the sign system in

Suomenlinna since then. No literature was used for sign planning or advice was not given by authorities and tourism organizations. (Virolainen 2010.)

#### 5.1.3.1.1 Direction signs in Suomenlinna

Signposts are installed at every fork in the road. The signposts show the directions of different services and destinations within Suomenlinna (names of the islands, restaurants, museums, church, Naval Academy etc.) and distance to those places (see Figure 6.). Some services which are especially used by visitors also include the name of the service in English besides Finnish and Swedish. The signs also include pictographic signs which increase the possibility of interaction among visitors with a different language background. On top of the mentioned elements, signs indicating main routes have blue color background which increases the visibility of the important information and of the whole sign too.



Figure 6. Direction sign in Suomenlinna

#### 5.1.3.1.2 Identifying signs/tags in Suomenlinna

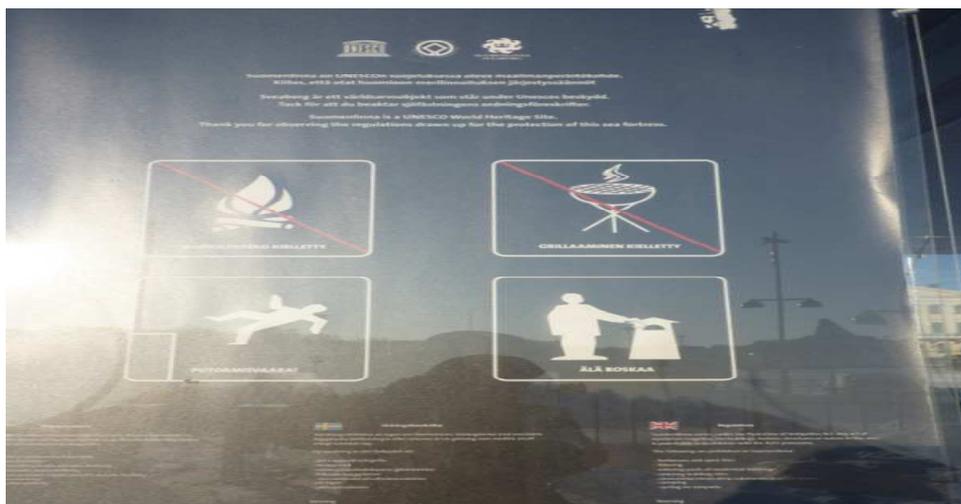
At every main site the identifying / information sign had been installed which included information of its history and its role (in Finnish, Swedish and English) with graphic presentation. The signs also indicated the current location in Suomenlinna which is useful for visitors to locate themselves. In front of museums, their opening hours were mentioned.

#### 5.1.3.1.3 Map signs in Suomenlinna

Throughout the islands, the same map design was used in map signs which ease the interactions with the map at different locations. During the research in Suomenlinna only one map located at the pier had no indication of current location on the map, all other maps found in Suomenlinna had indication of the current location which adds great benefit on the maps. Each facility, service spot and site were listed with numbers, which were also placed over the maps to be easily located.

#### 5.1.3.1.4 Regulation signs in Suomenlinna

Few regulation signs were found in Suomenlinna, especially those which concerned visitors were at the entrance of (pier) Suomenlinna. Figure 7. shows a regulation sign which prohibits open fire, littering etc in Suomenlinna.



**Figure 7. Regulation sign in Suomenlinna**

### 5.1.3.2 Other attractions in Helsinki

Under other attractions in Helsinki, visitor and public signs found at tourist attractions in Helsinki, except for Suomenlinna, are discussed.

#### 5.1.3.2.1 Direction signs at tourist attractions

During the research, only a few direction / location signs were found at / around the tourist attractions in Helsinki. “Location sign” which shows the direction of the facility (attraction) with arrow was found near a popular tourist attraction, Temppeliaukio church and Seurasaari, where an open-air museum is located.

#### 5.1.3.2.2 Identifying signs/tags at tourist attractions

An identifying sign was found during the research in Helsinki at the famous Esplanade Park. The sign provided information of the park's history and a graphic image of the park with current location indication and services and facilities provided within the park. The information was written in Finnish, Swedish and English.

#### 5.1.4 Pictographic signs

Overall, pictographic signs were actively adapted in signs in Helsinki. In most cases pictograms were used alone without any support of written information which shows that the role of the pictogram is correctly understood among people installing those signs and if pictograms are used correctly they alone can interact the message.

## 5.2 Kyoto

During the research in Kyoto about 200 photographs of various signs were collected in spring 2009. The photographs were collected in 3 days, at the railway station, at a number of tourist attractions, on the main streets and streets to attractions. Two places were visited to do interviews regarding visitor signs in Kyoto during the visit. Wooden materials were commonly used for signs in Kyoto, as a material of a sign wood is not highly recommended as it can be easily weathered. However, signs found in Kyoto were all well maintained, and wooden

signs fit well to the surroundings, therefore it did not become a concern in this study.

### 5.2.1 Planning and policy division of tourism bureau -City of Kyoto

As mentioned earlier in the paper, an interview with a person who was responsible of planning and installing visitor signs (by City of Kyoto) was conducted.

Among a numerous number of visitor signs in Kyoto, Kyoto city (tourism bureau) is only concerned about their own sign installations. Kyoto city tourism bureau designs and installs the visitor signs according to the visitor sign installation guideline by the regional transport division of ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism of Japan (Kokudokotsusho 2005.). Nowadays signs installed by Kyoto city tourism bureau include 4 languages: Japanese, English, Korean and Chinese. The use of the English language in signs is strongly recommended by the above mentioned guideline, in addition to English, including the languages of major visitors is also recommended, which is the reason why Korean and Chinese languages are included widely in signs in Kyoto. The basic types of visitor signs installed by the city tourist bureau are map signs (local sightseeing guide map), direction signs, identifying sign (the name and history of the site), and location signs. By 2009, approximately a total of 500 identifying signs are installed in Kyoto city by the tourist bureau. Figure 8. shows some of the visitor signs installed by Kyoto city tourism bureau. (Kyoto city tourism bureau 2009.)



**Figure 8. Top left: identifying sign, below left: map sign, middle: location sign/identifying sign, right: location sign**

### 5.2.2 Regional transport division of ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism

The regional transport division of ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism (Kokudokotsusho in Japanese) is one of the authorities involved in sign installation in public traffic spaces in Japan. Kokudokotsusho also published the visitor sign installation guideline in 2005 which Kyoto city tourism bureau is following, hence an interview regarding public signs was arranged.

The main aim of traffic signs is to maintain the traffic to run smoothly by installing necessary signs along the road to assist the public. During the interview the interviewee mentioned that “numbers of traffic signs which are also widely used by visitors are installed by various authorities and organizations”. Some of

them are installed by the owners of the tourist sights, some are by Kyoto city, Kyoto prefecture, or country of Japan. The authorities change according to the owner of the road; if the road is owned by the city, the city installs traffic signs along the road, if the prefecture owns the road the prefecture is responsible for traffic signs along their road. Through the interview the difficulties of standardizing the traffic signs became obvious as many different authorities are involved and responsible for their own signs. (regional transport division of ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism 2009.)

### 5.2.3 Signs in high traffic public facilities / areas in Kyoto

Under signs in high traffic public facilities / areas in Kyoto, the visitor and public information signs found at the central railway station and in the city center of Kyoto are analyzed and discussed.

#### 5.2.3.1 Signs at the central railway station

Inside and outside of the railway station, numerous amounts of visitor / information signs were found. Inside of the railway station most of the signs were directional signs and included information written in 4 different languages (Japanese, English, Chinese and Korean). Pictographic signs were also used in nearly every sign found, however some of the signs had information written only in Japanese and English. Some map signs were found outside of the station.

Kyoto central railway station is located in part of a building where a department store, a theater and shopping centers are situated, hence countless amount of visitor and information signs were installed throughout the station and the building. As different companies and authorities are involved in installing signs, pictograms representing same services were slightly different from place to place e.g. pictogram of express train, toilets. There was no dramatic difference among signs and pictograms used, however standardizing the pictograms would increase the successful interactions by sign users. Figure 9. shows some of the visitor and information signs found at central railway station in Kyoto.



Figure 9. Direction signs at Kyoto railway station

#### 5.2.3.2 Direction signs in the city center

Countless direction signs were found in the city center of Kyoto. Along high traffic roads, numbers of traffic signs included direction information to the main tourist attractions written in both Japanese and English, which frequently included pictogram indicating the types of the attraction (e.g. temple, museum).

#### 5.2.3.3 Identifying signs/tags in the city center

Very few identifying signs were found in the city center, in most cases identifying signs were installed together with location signs and/ or direction signs. Identifying signs were more commonly found at tourists attractions.

#### 5.2.3.4 Map signs in the city center

Most map signs were found along the main streets where visitors frequently walk past, and around popular visitor attractions. Most maps found on the streets were those installed by the city tourist bureau. Those maps highlighted the information of the local landmarks and tourist attractions within a 2 km radius (approximately). Pictograms are used to locate attractions and landmarks on the map. Some maps which were installed nearby high traffic areas were bigger than commonly installed map signs. They also included information regarding local public transportation availabilities which brings additional benefit for users.

#### 5.2.4 Signs at tourist attractions in Kyoto

Compared to the signs found in the city centre, signs at tourist attractions were less advanced, as in most cases each attraction is responsible for installing signs on their property and they do not have good knowledge of designing and installing signs. At many sights in Kyoto signs had ruined the sights, as too many and different design signs were installed in one place and/ or visibility of the sign was over prioritized hence the sign became the biggest object of the place.

##### 5.2.4.1 Direction signs at tourist attractions

Many popular tourist attractions in Kyoto, such as temples and shrines often have large premises, which make it essential to install direction signs within the premises to guide the route and facilities to the visitors. As most of the large attractions have a one-way route for visitors, direction signs are found along the routes, indicating the correct route at fork in the path or indicating facilities e.g. toilets. Most of the direction signs inside of the premises were written in Japanese (sometimes also in English) with an arrow showing the direction, however as the directed one-way routes are usually simple hence even the signs were written in only one language it can still be interacted easily by any users. Compared to other direction signs found in the city center and high traffic public places, signs within tourist attractions were lacking the use of pictogram and foreign language(s). Figure 10. shows some examples of visitor signs found at tourist attractions in Kyoto.



**Figure 10. Direction signs at tourist attractions in Kyoto**

#### 5.2.4.2 Identifying signs/tags at tourist attractions

Every tourist attraction visited during the research had some kind of identifying signs. The bigger and more popular the attraction the more signs were found. Some had information of the opening hours and entrance fees, while others had history and information of the attractions. Especially identifying signs which were installed by Kyoto city (and tourism bureau) had information written also in English besides Japanese and often in Chinese and Korean as well. Other identifying signs, especially those which tell history of the attractions, prepared by private owners lacked the ability of providing equal information in different languages and often were found with signs only in Japanese. See Figure 11. for some examples of identifying signs/ tags found at tourist attractions in Kyoto.



**Figure 11. Identifying signs/ tag at tourist attractions in Kyoto**

#### 5.2.4.3 Regulation signs at tourist attractions

Some regulation signs such as prohibiting smoking at certain areas, feeding birds, entering to certain places were found during the research within tourist attractions. Most of the signs were written in Japanese and had pictographic signs to increase the understanding of the message by people without skills of reading Japanese.

#### 5.2.5 Pictographic signs

Pictogram has been actively adapted to signs in Kyoto, however pictograms were rarely used alone. Especially considering the amount of information provided around central railway station, some commonly used pictograms (toilets, elevator) could have been used alone without any assistance of written information in order

to reduce the amount of information offered in one sign and to increase visibility. Most of the pictograms used in Kyoto were universally recognized pictograms, while some pictograms were ones which are only used in Japan, e.g. pictograms representing shrines and temples.

### **5.3 Comparison of the Two Cities**

Through the research analysis many different findings were discovered. In this part of the study, different elements regarding signs are compared.

#### **5.3.1 Tourism Bureau**

The tourist bureaus of both destinations were aware of the importance of the visitor signs. While the tourism bureau of Kyoto city is active on sign installations, the tourism bureau of Helsinki city has not yet taken dramatic actions for improvement. As the city tourism bureau in general takes an important role in the destination's tourism planning and development, the tourism bureau of Helsinki city should put more effort to visitor signs in the city.

#### **5.3.2 Signs in high traffic public facilities /areas**

In general the number and quality of signs in high traffic public places were much better in Kyoto than in Helsinki. However, the Helsinki central railway station direction signs were to some extent better than the ones at the railway station in Kyoto. Helsinki railway station had understood the features of the pictograms well

and showed that pictographic signs alone are enough to convey information to users. While signs at the Kyoto central railway station always included written information to even commonly known pictograms (e.g. toilets), which resulted in very crowded, complicated signs.

### 5.3.3 Signs at tourist attractions

Compared to Helsinki, more signs were available at most of the tourist attractions visited in Kyoto during the research. In Helsinki, except for Suomenlinna, very little visitor signs were found at tourist attractions. On the other hand various types of signs were available at tourist attractions in Kyoto, some of them were installed by the owner of the place while some were installed by the Kyoto tourism bureau. The lack of knowledge in designing signs was seen, e.g. different styles and color of signs were installed within the same property, lack of use of pictograms, as well as the limited ability in providing information in another language than Japanese.

### 5.3.4 Use of pictograms

In both cities pictograms had been used relatively well. Nonetheless, pictograms can be actively adapted more on signs at tourist attractions in Kyoto, especially since their weakness is the ability to communicate with foreign visitors. Pictograms do not require written information to convey the message. They can be interacted regardless of the users' language abilities, moreover they can be easily adapted on signs.

#### 5.4 The Result of the Comparison

The results of the above comparison are below in a table (see Table 1.). As it can be seen from the Table 1, Kyoto has more elements which are advanced than Helsinki in terms of visitor signs. The last compared element, the use of the pictogram, was considered that it is fairly used and the level of usage is moderate in both cities. In the next chapter the conclusion of the analysis and this comparison will be discussed.

**Table 1. Result of the comparison**

	<b>Helsinki</b>	<b>Kyoto</b>	<b>Advanced city</b>
<b>Tourism Bureau</b>	inactive	active	Kyoto
<b>Signs in high traffic public areas</b>	signs are lacking (except central railway station)	adequate amount of signs. Some signs can be improved by understanding the features of pictograms	Kyoto
<b>Signs at tourist attractions</b>	signs are lacking	adequate amount of signs. Improvement on sign design and information in foreign languages are needed	Kyoto
<b>Use of pictograms</b>	well	well, can be improved on the private level	fair

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The theoretical and empirical researches brought various findings of public and visitor signs in many ways. General principles for good signs were studied during theoretical research, and practical visitor sign studies were done on signs from Helsinki city and Kyoto city where both good and bad examples were found.

Through the study the importance of the visitor signs was re-confirmed, it was also in knowledge of the tourism bureaus of both studied cities'. Helsinki city tourism bureau has known their problem with visitor signs already since 2006, yet no special actions have been taken, while Kyoto city tourism bureau is actively involved in sign installation and its development. As the analysis on visitor signs in both cities started, the importance of the role of the tourism bureau was immediately noticed. Besides the visitor / public signs found at railway station, most signs, which were also well structured and designed, had been installed by the Kyoto city tourism bureau. In Kyoto numerous amount of visitor signs were found during the research and in fact most of them had been authorized by Kyoto city tourism bureau, except the signs installed by private owners. If the signs installed by Kyoto city were not counted in this study, the results of both cities could have been very similar which makes us realize the ability and importance of the tourism bureau's efforts on installing signs.

During the research many signs which included international language that can be easily understood by foreign visitors, such as English, and pictogram were found.

As visitors from China and Korea are one of the major nationalities of foreign visitors in Kyoto those languages were also actively adapted in signs in Kyoto.

In both cities various elements are still to be improved. As the findings from this research show the tourism bureau takes on an important role in improving the visitor signs of the destination, therefore for Helsinki to improve its visitor signs, close involvement of the tourism bureau would be essential especially in the development of visitor signs in public places and on the road. Kyoto on the other hand already has good visitor signs which are also maintained well throughout the city. The next challenge for Kyoto is to improve the visitor signs on private premises such as signs installed by owners of the attractions, to improve the contents and design of the signs.

This study showed that through this kind of research tourist destinations can measure their level of visitor sign installations, and find any elements to improve for a better communication through signs as well as to find any weaknesses in their systems. Therefore, similar studies are recommended to tourist destinations.

## **7. SUMMMARY**

This research was done during spring 2009 and winter 2010 in Helsinki and Kyoto. The aim of this paper was to study and learn the importance of the visitor signs and principles of good visitor signs through theoretical research and empirical research.

Different publications and internet sources were used for the theoretical research part to discuss the role of visitor signs, its history and benefits of using pictograms. For the empirical research, photographic data collection of visitor signs from Helsinki and Kyoto were collected by the author herself, approximately 200 photographs of different visitor signs from Kyoto and 130 photographs from Helsinki were collected during photographic data collection. Interviews with some persons involved in visitor signs were also conducted. The research method used for this study was the qualitative research method.

The result of the research indicated the importance of active involvement of the tourism bureau in the development of visitor signs. Moreover some struggles in the ability on providing information in foreign languages were found in the private sector. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge in designing and installing good signs among attraction authorities was found.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

Questions asked to tourism bureau(s):

1. Do you consider visitor signs as an important element for tourism destinations?
2. Are you (tourism bureau) involved in visitor sign installations in the city?
3. How many visitor signs are installed in the city?
4. What types of signs are you installing as visitor signs?
5. Is there any guideline you are using for designing and installing visitor signs?
6. On what do you concentrate when designing and installing visitor signs and to what kind of elements do you pay attention especially?
7. Is there any element you are trying to/would like to improve on your visitor signs?

## **APPENDIX 2**

Questions asked at regional transport division of ministry of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism, Kyoto office:

1. How are you involved in sign installations in general?
2. How are you involved in visitor sign installations?
3. What is the purpose of installing signs from your point of view?
4. Are there many authorities involved in installing signs? How?

### **APPENDIX 3**

Questions asked to Suomenlinna visitor centre:

1. Who is responsible for designing and installing visitor signs in Suomenlinna?
2. Why do you install the signs?
3. Is there any guideline you use/used for designing and installing visitor signs?
4. Is there any guideline or requirements regarding visitor sign installation from UNESCO?
5. Did you get some advice from the Finnish government, tourism organizations and/or Helsinki city tourism office on how to design or install visitor signs?
6. To which elements do you especially pay attention when designing and installing signs?