

**Storytelling as the core of experience creation,
Taste of Viaporin Kekri case**

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| <p>This thesis explores the role of storytelling in design of experiential events. Secondary analysis was used to accumulate data about complex and interconnected relation of storytelling and experience design, as well as experience's defining features and its analogy with events. Based on that data, theoretical framework was created and later used to achieve the main objective of this paper — production of experiential storytelling-based event. Thesis overviews event's production process, covers its methodology, and presents the evaluation of final result.</p> <p>Further research examined the nature of storytelling and its major role in human development from anthropological, sociological, neuroscientific, and narratological points of view. Deep connections between storytelling, cognitive perception, and personal experience were revealed and bridged to experience design, this way accomplishing the second objective of determining profound reasons behind storytelling's importance in experience creation.</p> <p>The product of this thesis was a mini-event Taste of Viaporin Kekri that took place on 16th of October 2018. It was organized as a promotional stunt for Viaporin Kekri, one-day annual festival organized by Governing Body of Suomenlinna and Haaga-Helia UAS students. Storytelling component became a center of event binding other parts together and expanding experience to the pre-event stage of the customer journey. The event plan demonstrates how elements of storytelling and experience are reflected in the event's features, components, and touchpoints.</p> | |
| Keywords | |
| Storytelling, experience design, event design, Viaporin Kekri, Taste of Viaporin Kekri, storyworld | |

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1 Introduction

In autumn 2018, author of this thesis participated in event called Viaporin Kekri, an annual festival created in collaboration between Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science and Governing Body of Suomenlinna. For just one day, Viaporin Kekri turns Suomenlinna islands into a mystical world of spirits and old tales where people come to indulge in food, enjoy music and performances, and challenge themselves to look at the face of darkness, metaphorically and literally. Viaporin Kekri takes its inspiration from ancient Finnish traditions and mythology and hence is firmly grounded in storytelling. As one of the organizers, author was responsible for designing and maintaining event's website, including copywriting, which eventually led to production of all crucial texts for Viaporin Kekri. Textual content was strictly dictated by the event's story, and many other elements were dependent on it as well. That experience showcased to author that storytelling has a special role in experience and event creation and inspired her to explore it further in the thesis paper.

Author has a very personal connection to Viaporin Kekri. She was involved in three out of four times the event was organized performing different roles and gradually developing her skills. Partaking in Viaporin Kekri helped her discover her passions and find her strengths, and copywriting was one of them. Long-lasting interest in stories, fascination with cinema, and inclination towards visuals in general were personal factors that got author to voluntarily take up roles of copywriter, visual designer, and later, event designer.

Interrelation between experience and storytelling was known to author through many experience courses she took at school. She was also aware of many features that staged experience share with theatre. It was suggested by Viaporin Kekri project managers to create a theatrical mini-event that would serve as an experiential promotional stunt, and author was tasked to organize it. It was decided that this event will become a base for an empirical part of her future thesis work. The event was named Taste of Viaporin Kekri and handed entirely to author who became the head of production on all stages, from concept creation to execution. This event was a splendid opportunity to continue exploring the subject of storytelling in experience and event design and exercise gained knowledge by practically applying it.

1.1 Objectives

Essentially, Taste of Viaporin Kekri was an experiential marketing campaign, but author made a decision not to approach it from marketing point of view in this paper, as it was not her primal interest. What she was fascinated with and wanted to explore deeper was the

very nature of storytelling and its relation to experience. Author noticed that storytelling is often praised as a significant element of experience design in related literature, but at the same time is rarely discussed in detail and has a brief, almost taken-for-granted presence. It was clear that storytelling is in some way connected with human cognition, but how exactly was yet unknown to author. In order to understand the complex connections between the subjects and find out the reasonings behind a simple statement of storytelling's importance, author had to execute a thorough theoretical research using sources from many different fields. Taste of Viaporin Kekri served as a practical base and an illustration of those findings making the paper a product-based thesis.

The process unfolded over several stages. Preliminary research proved the crucial role of storytelling in experiential event design, and based on conclusions of that research, the first objective was established — *to create an event with a storytelling element at its core*. Taste of Viaporin Kekri became such event. The subobjective in that context was *to showcase the multifunctional practical substance of storytelling*.

As the profound reasons for storytelling powers and its multifunctionality were still unclear to author, the deeper research was conducted in order to achieve the second objective which was *to determine why storytelling is an important element in experience creation*. Combined results of theoretical analysis and project execution helped to reach the objective by answering the following questions:

- *How storytelling relates to human cognitive perception?*
- *What are the main functions of storytelling in experience design?*
- *Why storytelling is often overlooked in related literature?*

Based on a performed research and new findings, Taste of Viaporin Kekri was re-evaluated from a new perspective, which will be reflected in chapter four, in discussion of thesis process and learning outcomes.

1.2 Product overview

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was an immersive multi-sensory first-hand experience that heavily relied on storytelling and was majorly influenced by theatre and cinema. The audience consisted of bloggers and Instagram influencers who, as Viaporin Kekri team planned, would spread the word about the main event over their social media accounts and this way give it a substantial boost in visibility, specifically on Instagram platform, as Viaporin Kekri Instagram only recently came to existence and was in need of promotion. The event

meant to provide a sample of its parent-event, Viaporin Kekri, by showcasing the main elements — feasting, performance, and event’s mythology. It took a form of theatricalized dinner with guests participating in the story unfolding in front of them. Guests had a chance to experience the characters, the setting and the atmosphere — to have a taste of the event, so to say.

Taste of Viaporin Kekri consisted of three components that represented Viaporin Kekri’s essential features. Gastronomical experience in the form of a small dinner was a reflection of a feasting element, interactive theatrical action enriched by digital and sound design was a manifestation of performance element, and story imbedded in pre- and during-event stages was created as a variation of Viaporin Kekri’s original mythology. The background of Taste of Viaporin Kekri, and hence, its parent-event, including the source material, storyworld description, and production process will be discussed in a greater detail in chapter three. The event plan, i.e. the final version of the product including photo and graphic design materials used in the event, description of story, event components, and customer journey in relation to storytelling will be included in the appendix part of this paper.

1.3 Methods

The theoretical foundation for this thesis was compounded by performing a secondary analysis which is a research method that utilizes data accumulated and analysed by someone else (Kothari 2004, 111). During the planning stage of the product, the qualitative unstructured interviews with Viaporin Kekri project managers, who commissioned Taste of Viaporin Kekri to author, were used broadly. Additionally, designing and executing a product served as another method of studying the subject in question. The overall methodological base for the thesis will be explained in more detail in chapter three.

1.4 Key definitions

The terms central to the discussion of the thesis’ subjects are:

- *story and narrative*
- *storytelling*
- *storyworld*
- *experience*
- *events*

Stories, narratives and *storytelling* are widely talked about in subject-related literature, but rarely defined. Author will try to explain the reasons of this phenomenon in theoretical chapter, and for now, refers to the dictionary for terms’ definitions. According to Cambridge English dictionary, *story* is “a description, either true or imagined, of a connected

series of events”, while *narrative* is defined as “a story or a description of series of events” (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). Hereby, in their simplest forms, *story* and *narrative* are interchangeable, and that’s how they will be used in the rest of the paper.

In its basic form *storytelling* is “the activity of writing, telling, or reading stories” (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). Many sources define it through the functions storytelling serves in a given field. Based on analysed academic and non-academic material, author will suggest her own definition of *storytelling* further in the paper in an attempt to create a comprehensible explanation of the seemingly simple term.

As defined by Stackelberg (2011, 16) *storyworld* is “a shared universe within which the settings, characters, objects, events, and actions of one or more narratives exist”. Created universe allows numerous narratives to emerge and exist alongside each other (Stackelberg 2011, 89). What it means for an experiential event development process will be studied in chapter two.

According to Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen (2007, 22) *experience* is “an immediate, relatively isolated occurrence with a complex of emotions that makes an impression and represents a certain value for the individual within the context of a specific situation”. In its turn, an *event*, according to Getz (2005, in Berridge 2007, 5) is “an opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience”. There is an obvious connection of the terms *experience* and *event* as both of them exist in the same domain of application and share similarities in their definitions (Berridge 2007, 122). The closer look into relation between two terms will be attempted in the upcoming theoretical chapter.

This thesis not only studies the utilizing of storytelling in experience design, but also goes deeper into anthropological, neuroscientific and psychological background of storytelling in order to draw understanding of stories’ position in human life, both on universal and personal levels. It also uses narratological approach to storytelling, so to explore the influence of stories and narratives on human perception. Experiences and events are studied through the lens of neuroscience and psychology as to explain how exactly an occurrence turns into meaningful experience and in what way storytelling contributes to that process.

2 An examination of storytelling, experience and their relation

To continue discourse of the role of storytelling in experience design, and in Taste of Viaporin Kekri in particular, the theoretical foundation will be laid out in the following sub-chapters. Firstly, the role of storytelling in human life will be explored. Secondly, the main terms related to stories, as well as elements of the story that are important for the further discussion of the project, will be defined and analysed. Thirdly, experience and its connection with event creation will be studied. Finally, the interrelation of experience and storytelling will be expounded. Theoretical part will end with contemplation on position of storytelling in literature on experience design and related fields, and shortly set the scene for the empirical chapter.

2.1 Stories and storytelling

Storytelling is connected to human cognitive processes in the most fundamental way. From ancient times and up to 21st century, stories continue to be an essential element of human existence. Science and technology rapidly change storytelling by introducing new medias and tools, but the way we perceive, comprehend, analyse, and apply stories has remained the same throughout thousands of years.

Joan Didion, American writer and journalist, in her book “The White Album”, said that “we tell ourselves stories in order to live” (Greenhouse 2014). Indeed, anthropological studies prove that stories have played a crucial role in human mental and social development and in some ways defined the lives of modern people. The following subchapters will reveal the power of storytelling, how it played out in a process of human development, and why people always were and always will be affected by stories.

2.1.1 The role of storytelling in human life

Sometime, between 70.000 to 30.000 years ago, Sapiens underwent mysterious transformation which eventually made them the Sapiens of today. Historian Yuval Noah Harari in his book “Sapiens” defined this transition as Cognitive Revolution (Harari 2014, 23.) It is unclear what brought about those changes. One of the strongest theories suggests that random genetic mutations made a dramatic impact on how Sapiens think and communicate (Harari 2014, 23.) That set them apart from animals and other species. Sapiens’ unique newly acquired skill was abstract thinking, the ability to talk about things that do not exist (Harari 2014, 27). Many animals are able to build an effective communication, but that communication is very limited. Ants can pass along the warning of real and immediate danger, but only humans can contemplate a possibility of danger and come up with

improbable scenarios, such as the plot of Lars von Trier movie “Melancholia” where Earth is being hit by a recently discovered rouge planet of the same name. Of all known to us species, only humans can create a fictional story and fill it with meanings, messages, symbols and tricky metaphors. Myths, legends, religion and gods, all made their first appearance in times of Cognitive Revolution (Harari 2014, 27). We do not only imagine things, but also believe in them. This extraordinary power of believing in stories not just individually, but collectively, is what helped Sapiens cooperate flexibly in unprecedentedly large numbers and what brought them to further development (Harari 2014, 28). Any big social institution of today such as judicial system, financial system and state, is based on common legal myths and exists only in stories that people invent and tell each other (Harari 2014, 31). None of those things physically exists outside of their narratives. In this regard, collective imagination, the ability of humans to tell and believe in fiction, is one of the pillars of modern world.

On a smaller, personal level, storytelling is just as significant. A main way we learn about ourselves is through personal stories we communicate to others and through stories we hear about ourselves from other people (Reese, Yan, Jack & Hayne 2009, 29). This way we gain self-awareness and self-knowledge (Fireman, McVay, Flangan 2003, 4). Gradually, those pieces compile into a bigger story, our life story. We perceive particular events as personality-shaping, and memories of those events become chapters in ever-changing story of our life that we narrate to ourselves and others. That narrative is never final, as our perspective shifts and changes through time altered by gained experience and knowledge. We also adapt the story for the specific listener or circumstances, omitting some aspects, and focusing on others. Experience and personal story are tightly interlocked, structuring and defining each other, and that complex relationship is what grants an experience a private, individual meaning (Fireman, McVay, Flangan 2003, 4).

From ancient times, people use stories to understand themselves and each other, to cooperate and group, and also to make sense out of the intricate world surrounding them. Human ability to think in abstract terms, or in other words, metaphysically, is essentially an attempt to explain the unknown, or as Ferrell stated it — “to obtain knowledge without a rationally conscious action” (Ferrell 2000, 4). To turn an abstract thought into something more comprehensible, different tools can be used. Myths were one of such tools. According to Ferrel, “myth is a story one person conceptualizes in order to reveal a specific relationship to a reality he or she knows exists but cannot define or locate objectively” (Ferrell 2000, 4). Since the time Sapiens gained the skill of imagining things and well into nineteenth century, mythology served as a source for both religious and scientific explanations in most cultures across the world (Ferrell 2000, 4). Mateas and Sengers (2003, 1) make a

strong point in the very beginning of their book “Narrative Intelligence” by claiming that “people are narrative animals”. And narratives ask for structure. Our mind is constantly trying to build this structure, to connect different notions, and to seek explanations. That’s how myths emerged, in a hunt for a cause and a link. Classic French director Jean Luc Godard once said: “Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form” (Nitch 2019). As people acquired more knowledge about the subject, a particular myth would become modified or even completely replaced by new knowledge (Ferrell 2000, 5). In modern times, when each day the new data about our universe is revealed, when countless scientists work vigorously to prove thousands of theories, when curious minds can satisfy their informational cravings in one click, we still believe in myths. Quoting Ferrell, “just as life is a continuum, so are the problems and solutions of life” (Ferrell 2000, 5). Why do we exist? What happens after we die? What is the key to happiness? People are still anxiously pondering the same old questions looking for meanings and explanations.

Mythology is often present in modern stories. Sometimes, the connection is unintentional, as myths in their simplest form are just the continuation of human consciousness that is expressed as hopes and fears in art that human produce and consume (Ferrell 2000, 7). Viaporin Kekri is an example of an event that makes a direct reference to an old Finnish myth and even derives its name from it. In this case, old stories not only serve as inspiration and outline the storyworld, but also form the core of the event providing it with meanings. The author speculates that one of the reasons of event’s success is deep unconscious relation of people to the central stories of event. Those stories are universal and timeless, based on ancient omnipresent myths, and that’s why they were able to touch both Finnish and foreign visitors. The awe of nature elements, nervous excitement for darkness, respect towards the diseased, sentimental connection with the past, curiosity about the new, desire to experience something out of the ordinary – those are the forces drawing customers to the event. For Finnish visitors, Viaporin Kekri has a special meaning as it is tightly bonded to their treasured national history. It gives people a chance to reconnect with their national past on a very intuitive level, through fictional stories and images. While being a universal collective experience, Viaporin Kekri storyworld includes rather personal elements. The releasing of sorrows ritual, one of the central elements of the main event that was included in modified version in Taste of Viaporin Kekri as well, is the most prominent example of event story becoming a deeply personal experience. The devotion of Viaporin Kekri’s visitors to that little tradition, that is expressed through their active participation in the ritual and can also be tracked in visitors’ Instagram posts through viaporinkekri hashtag, shows how much of importance that story has for them. The sorrows ritual and its part in Taste of Viaporin Kekri will be explained in more details in chapter three.

In order to understand how to utilise storytelling for experience enhancing, it is necessary to study story elements and story structure starting with defining the terms at the centre of discussion.

2.1.2 Stories and narratives

As it was mentioned in introductory chapter, stories and storytelling often occur in related literature, but to author's fascination, hardly ever get defined. The author of this thesis went through many sources from different fields, and some of them even used the word storytelling in their titles, but somehow never acknowledged the term. In many cases, discourse would begin straight from the first page, without giving definitions to the terms central to discussion. In other examples, the definitions comply with the general ones found in dictionaries. Author believes it is happening for two reasons. The sources are either aimed at the audience that is well familiar with the subject and does not have a need to go over the basics, or the terms are seen as something comprehensible for the reader of any background, academic or non-academic. This way it all comes back to stories being essential part of our lives. They are so deeply integrated into most of our activities, both conscious and subconscious, that it might seem unnecessary to give explanations of the meaning behind the word, just as you do not have to explain to the reader what the word *chair* means.

Quoting Cambridge English dictionary, *story* is "a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). In its turn, *narrative* is described as "a story or a description of series of events" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). Thus, *story* and *narrative* are interchangeable terms. Miller elaborates describing *narrative* as "an account of events which are interesting or exciting in some way", but she also acknowledges the synonymy of two terms (Miller 2014). Turner in *Literary Mind* calls *story* a "narrative imagining" proving once again how the terms overlap each other (Turner 1996, 4).

Cron in "Wired for Story" states that story is "how what happens affects someone who is trying to achieve what turns out to be a difficult goal, and how he or she changes as a result" (Cron 2012, 11). This more detailed definition is clearly coming from the point of view of a story creation. Cron proceeds by suggesting that stories' main point essentially not the plot itself, i.e. not simply a succession of events, but how people, in the face of a reader, change through those events. This way, story is an "internal journey" (Cron 2012, 11). People care about stories when they feel like they can relate to them personally, when they are directly involved, so to say. It does not mean that one is able to enjoy a

movie or a book only if there's an undeniable resemblance between her and the main character's lives. Rather a power of interpretation makes us project bigger abstract narratives to our own specific lives, no matter how unrelated they are from the details of the story (Turner 1996, 7). This way, interpretation turns a narrative into a deeply personal experience.

The author has not come across a single source that would define storytelling, even those that are centred around it or a writing process approach the term literally. Cambridge English Dictionary (2019) explains storytelling as "the activity of writing, telling, or reading stories". Storytelling appears in sources from many different fields, and every field has its own interpretation of the term through the functions assigned to it that are of important interest or particular value to this specific field. Thus, storytelling is often seen as a tool, or a method which is defined from the point of view of its utilization. For instance, Dahlström in "Storytelling in Design" talks how storytelling helps UI/UX designers to understand, define, and design the products and services. Dahlström also talks about change in traditional storytelling, appearance of new digital forms of storytelling, and how it affects consumer expectations (Dahlström 2019.) Miller calls storytelling a "magical and powerful craft" and dedicates part three of her book to the ways digital storytelling can be applied to life: to teach and train, to promote and advertise, and to inform (Miller 2014). Hubspot, international marketing and product development company, in its detailed article "The Ultimate Guide to Storytelling" calls it "an art", their list of stories' functions include "solidifying abstract concepts and simplifying complex messages, bringing people together, inspiring and motivating" (Decker 18 April 2019).

Ultimately, storytelling serves the same purposes it did throughout long human history — it explains, connects, inspires, and personalizes. Therefore, author takes freedom to coin her own definition of storytelling based on performed research and this way, draw a conclusion in discussion of storytelling-related terms and their definitions in this paper. Thus, storytelling is a process of telling, writing, or communicating through other means a narrative that describes a sequence of events over time and charges that description with meanings or messages that have personal value for a receiver; storytelling is essential to human interaction, learning processes, constructing of one's self and structuring one's reality, and hence, can be applied to different fields, such as education, marketing, digital design, service design, architecture and spatial design, and many others, as a tool or a method of creating value of different sorts — facilitating of information perception, forming of relationships, generating of cognitive connections, etc. A deeper look at storytelling as part of event design and experience design will be taken in upcoming chapters.

2.1.3 Digital and transmedia storytelling

As the world changing rapidly, it's only natural that storytelling develops in accordance to those changes. With technologies inevitably infiltrating all aspects of our daily life, storytelling with its multi-functional nature gets heavily digitalized as well. This subchapter will shortly overview recently appeared forms of storytelling — digital and transmedia.

Viaporin Kekri, as well as Taste of Viaporin Kekri, uses different medias for promotion and communication purposes, but no transmedia or digital storytelling techniques were applied to marketing or content creation of these events so far. Hereby, this topic is a slight aberration from the main subject of the thesis. However, author felt that as both events are annual and in pre-production phase right at this very moment, digital and transmedia storytelling are worth exploring for the sake of future event development.

Digital storytelling is a vast field and is well-known and common to most in the form of video games, mobile apps, electronic kiosks, and Internet content. Miller (2014) defines it simply as “a narrative entertainment that reaches its audience via digital technology and media”. Its unique feature is interactivity — two-ways communication between consumer and narrative (Miller 2014). Apart from interactivity, digital storytelling has other characteristics. The narrative in digital storytelling is often non-linear merge of fiction and reality that sometimes breaks the fourth wall. Consumer has an authority to create or control characters, independence in navigating through story environment, and ability to share her experience with the community (Miller 2014.) Digital storytelling requires many skills from its creator, both technological and narrative, but despite the challenge, this form of storytelling might have a great potential in enriching the customer experience and can be applied to many fields, event design included.

A more complex and experimental form is a transmedia storytelling. It tells the story simultaneously across several forms of media with each media relating to a different aspect of the story (Miller 2014). Transmedia storytelling developed in late 1990s with Blair Witch Project leading the trend. A story of documentarists that got disappeared while investigating a case about forest witch consisted of two components — a movie, constructed purely of footage shot by the main characters, and a website. This project was prominent not only because it used two mediums to tell a single story, but because of the ways it approached that story. It was presented and treated as an ultimate truth (Miller 2014). All the elements on the website such as fake interviews with townsfolk and documentarists' families were cleverly designed to replicate reality and pull the consumers deep into mysterious unsettling storyworld. Blair Witch Project was a low-budget triumph and earned a cult status in filmmaking. This is a good example of how transmedia storytelling can be used

to create a richer and more immersive experience for the audience and as a result bring project to success (Dowd 2015). Transmedia storytelling main asset is its ability to bizarrely simulate real-life and build detailed, extremely deep stories (Miller 2014). With all that said, transmedia storytelling is a tricky instrument, and the fact that there are very few projects that could successfully apply it proves the point. Firstly, each aspect of the story told through its corresponding media should present a complete piece of a bigger story and be a satisfying experience in its own (Dowd 2015). Secondly, to design and develop a multifaceted immense world is not an easy task and requires expert skills in storytelling, as well as support from specialists from many other fields, such as graphic design, game design, web design, etc. Thirdly, not all stories can and should be told through several medias at the same time, some of them will succeed more from staying in a single medium. It can be tempting to follow the trend hoping that more customers will flock to the project enticed by the promise of digital wonders, but it is not always the best strategy. As Miller put it, “although digital storytelling is humankind’s newest way to enjoy narrative entertainment, it is part of this same great tradition” (Miller 2014). The story is still at the centre. So, both transmedia and digital storytelling are about an imaginative and engaging story tailored for the audience that is curious and impatient to explore a larger universe.

As it was stated in a previous paragraph, the new forms of storytelling can be extremely beneficial, but their production requires deep understanding of digital and transmedia approach, as well as major creative abilities. Nevertheless, the organisers of Viaporin Kekri, including the author of this thesis, would like to try to execute these forms of storytelling in upcoming events. Viaporin Kekri already has a well-established storyworld that plays with notions of time and blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. Moreover, it is interactive in nature since the customers are physically placed into the event universe and are active participants, as opposed to a tv-show or a book. Digital storytelling could create an actual interactive element in Viaporin Kekri that is not based purely on the intrinsic quality of the event experience, while transmedia storytelling could help enrich the existing storyworld, raise interest and engagement levels in customers, and ultimately make Viaporin Kekri a more experimental and experiential event which is one of our main goals for the following years.

2.1.4 Storyworld

As preceding subchapter exemplified, in recent years, storytelling grew to be a craft of worldbuilding and according to Jenkins, creators of modern time turn to designing captivating environments that are impossible to fully explore within a single story or a single medium (Jenkins 2006, 116). Transmedia storytelling is all about building an immense

well-constructed storyworld across different medias, but for a single medium narrative storyworld is just as constitutional.

As it was mentioned in introductory chapter, storyworld is a constructed world which contains settings, characters, objects, events, and actions of the narrative or narratives (Stackelberg 2011, 16). The borders of that curated universe are limitless. It can be a size of a galaxy, a planet, a country, a city, or much smaller. It can be on Earth or follow the Earth physical laws or be an entirely imagined world. The level of detail of the storyworld depends on the creative decision of designers behind this world, and most importantly, the stories at its core (Dowd 2015.) Any action taken about the contents and order of storyworld should enable storytelling, and as Dowd (2015) stated it, “open another door as much as possible”.

According to Ryan and Thon, storyworlds are constituted of six main components (Ryan & Thon 2014, 36). For the audience to actually believe the story, those components should remain consistent. It does not mean that storyworlds are supposed to be static, but that the laws and principles at the core of the world should be carefully thought through during the process of creating the story.

Storyworld elements include the following (Ryan & Thon 2014, 36):

1. Existents: characters and objects of the story that are of particular importance to the plot.
2. Setting: a certain place where the plot unfolds.
3. Physical laws: laws dictating the behaviour of objects in the storyworld. These can change from genre to genre (Stackelberg 2011, 89.)
4. Social rules and values: moral and ethical principles behind the actions of the characters.
5. Events: the events that form a core of the story including backstory and afterstory.
6. Mental events: characters’ emotional reactions to the physical events happening in the story.

Cognitive narratology studies narrative structures and the way humans design, perceive, and are affected by them (Martine 29 January 2019). David Herman, expert narratologist, was the one who came up with the term storyworld. The cognitive narratology approaches storyworld not only as an environment constructed by a storyteller, but also as a result of consumer’s cognitive activity aimed at comprehending the story (Martine 29 January 2019.) Our brain is wired to fill in the white spaces, create connections and come up with the justifications if such are not provided. This makes a reader/viewer/event visitor not only a consumer of the world, but also a co-creator.

To add up to incomplete descriptions, our imagination always uses real world as a model. This concept is called “the principle of minimal departure” as defined by Ryan (1992, in Ryan & Thon 2014, 36) or the “reality principle” as defined by Walton (Ryan & Thon 2014, 36). When story mentions an object that exists in reality, our brain automatically assigns all the real-world properties of this objects to its storyworld version until the text explicitly states that there’s a difference between the two versions (Ryan & Thon 2014, 36).

This thesis explores storytelling in the context of designing a particular event that is part of a bigger well-established event. Close interrelation of story and storyworld in Viaporin Kekri increases its value in several ways. Rich detailed storyworld is what sets Viaporin Kekri apart from other events in Helsinki area and makes it particularly distinguishable. This created universe allows numerous narratives to emerge and exist alongside each other which sets up a framework for further event development and creates endless opportunities for copywriters, creators, and consumers to explore (Stackelberg 2011, 89). Taste of Viaporin Kekri is an example of such opportunities. Another advantage comes from the notion that storyworlds are “imaginative experiences” at least partially constructed by the audience (Ryan & Thon 2014, 36). Last Viaporin Kekri was a showing example of customers making an independent, not-influenced by the organisers, decision to dress up as existing in the Viaporin Kekri lore “spirits” or as self-invented characters (figure 1) and this way position themselves directly into the event narrative. Thus, storyworld creates another dimension to the story and makes it a more personal experience for the visitors. The next subchapter will describe the core elements of stories and discuss why exactly people get invested into the story, and how a story-creator can use it to her advantage.

2.1.5 Story elements and structure

As it was stated in previous subchapters, storytelling can be applied to many fields for many different purposes. But the approach to creating a story, as well as its structure and core components, does not depend on the field, but is usually universal. Thus, developing a story for an event is essentially not very different from building a novel.

Stories can be systemized in a number of ways. There is no ubiquities structure applicable to all narratives. The story anatomy has been analysed for thousands of years by scholars, critics and writers alike, which resulted in multiple points of view on what are the fundamental story elements and characteristics. In this subchapter, the author will cover only the very basics of story structure, specifically the ones that are significant for a project discourse upcoming in empirical chapter. The topic of story structure is broad and complex

and is not the focal point of this thesis. Besides, the author is more concerned with what makes the story captivating and meaningful and how to keep story consumers transfixed, as pure awareness of story's classifications and elements does not secure a story's success.

In a conversation about story composition, the word *story* acquires a more specific, context-driven meaning. Dowd (2015) defines it as "all the raw material having to do with the characters, their actions, the conflict, both seen and unseen by the viewer or audience". A *story* should be distinguished from the *plot* which is the way in which that raw material is arranged and presented for the purpose of emotional impact on said audience (Dowd 2015). Absolutely all stories have plots, but nevertheless, some of them are character driven stories, while others are plot driven. The first are determined by character's unique features and focus on internal changes in those characters, as well as their relationships (Dowd 2015.) Plot-driven stories are built around happenings and changes brought by external factors. The difference between these two story types is not rigid, as plot and characters are entangled and affecting each other, but nevertheless, substantial to story development.

Another way of classifying stories is by genres. Genres are narrative structures characterized by specific themes, styles, situations, and settings that over time became widely recognizable as particular genre's identifiers (Dowd 2015). Thus, stories within a specific genre share the same features that the audience is familiar with and expects to encounter. Some genres might include into a narrative a specific type of protagonist or antagonist, or be centred around a certain type of conflict, or expressed in some recognizable aesthetics (Dowd 2015). There is no certain list of genres and the exact definition of what constitutes this or that genre is debatable too. Moreover, genres get divided into many sub-genres and hybrid story types. The most common genres include action, adventure, comedy, crime, documentary, drama, horror, musical, romance, science fiction, and thriller. The perception of genre can be rather subjective, but nevertheless, it helps both the creator and the audience to comprehend the story, sets up audience expectations, and makes it possible to create an element of surprise, for example to include an interesting genre-related allusion, an "Easter egg", or transform a narrative into something drastically different from expected genre's conventions.

There are many applied models of story structure. The basic Beginning-Middle-End model was suggested by Aristotle. German critic Gustav Freytag adapted Aristotle model and created what became the most commonly used story structure called "Freytag's Triangle" (Stackelberg 2011, 91.)

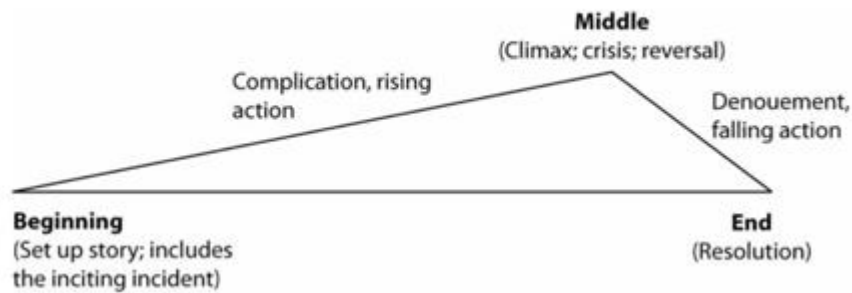


Figure 1. Freytag's Triangle (Stackelberg 2011, 92)

Based on Dowd, there are five elements that constitute Freytag's model (Dowd 2015):

1. Exposition (beginning, set up story) — revelation of initiating event, introduction of the main character, conflict, and setting; meant to create a sense of discovery for the audience.
2. Complication (rising action) — the protagonist is overcoming obstacles on the way to her goal/conflict resolution/etc.
3. Climax (crisis, reversal) — changing point of the action, main confrontation of the story.
4. Denouement (falling action) — instant consequences of the climax's outcome.
5. Resolution (end) — revelation of the crises' results, long-term effects.

Freytag's Triangle is a traditional straightforward narrative structure that is universal and can be easily applied to many mediums. Other models deal with more complicated structures, such as narratives with multiple flashbacks, stories that circle around critical moment revealing glimpses of it as the audience progresses through the narrative, stories with separate sequences of events that going to come together at the conclusion, and others (Stackelberg 2011, 92). Complex narratives like the abovementioned require careful planning and a wide range of imaginative power from their creators.

The most important element in any story is the character. No matter what structure the story utilizes, without character it becomes merely a series of events and loses its meaning. As it was discussed in subchapter 1.2., for an audience, story is an internal journey. The protagonist becomes a consumer's "surrogate" (Cron 2012, 22), through her we see, evaluate and experience the storyworld (Cron 2012, 17). We become emotionally involved with the character for variety of reasons, but what important is that if there is no character, there is no emotions. As Cron put it, "story is visceral" (Cron 2012, 17). Without protagonist, the narration becomes neutral, loses its subjectivity, and consequently a grip on its audience. It is important to state once again that for the consumer to get invested into the story, the main character or characters should feel relatable to her. It does not imply that the character is always expected to be "a good guy". The author already talked about

power of interpretation that makes us feel personally involved with the narrative, but from the character development point of view, what pulls people into the story is the characters' humanity, not their virtue. Kristen Kieffer in her blog dedicated to creative writing points out that what ties reader and character together and strengthens that connection is reader's empathy towards the character (Kieffer 23 May 2018). That is what helps audience understand character's actions, even if those actions are not admirable. Neuroscience suggests that mirror neurons are responsible for such reactions. These cells get active when we perform an action or when we watch someone else performing the same action, this way merging the difference between seeing and doing (Lehrer 1 July 2008). In the words of neuroscientist Marco Iacobini, a pioneer of mirror neuron research, "we have empathy for the fictional characters – we know how they're feeling – because we are literally experience the same feelings ourselves" (Gottschall 2013, 61).

Conflict is another fundamental story element. It is defined as "a serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests" (Oxford English Dictionary 2019). Conflicts in stories can be internal and external. External conflicts deal with outside forces. It can be a direct opposition of two or more characters, a battle with non-sentient enemies such as nature, the supernatural or technology, a collision of character views and those of a society, etc. Internal conflicts are "the mental, emotional, or spiritual struggles a person faces", it's a character-versus-self fight (Kieffer 18 September 2017). Conflict is a driving force behind the plot, it moves the story forward to its inevitable resolution. As Cron said, "we are looking for a reason to care" (Cron 2012, 13). A story ending may or may not bring a closure or a feeling of fulfilment, but the anticipation of this resolution is what creates initial interest in the audience and spikes up people's curiosity. Conflict brings in consequences that we are wired up to anticipate because it gives us a sense of thrill and excitement. According to neuroscience studies, we experience a dopamine rush every time we sense an intriguing information is coming, and that's how stories grab hold of us (Cron 2012, 13.)

Conflict essentially means tension. It is an easy way to keep the narration captivating which makes a conflict a narration technique. An hour-long roundtable Twitter event in Kristen Kieffer's storytelling blog (Kieffer 7 April 2017) revealed some interesting ways of intensifying drama and building up the suspense through conflict.

Writers from around the world suggested the following methods (Kieffer 7 April 2017):

- How can we ramp up the conflict as readers reach the stories' climatic sequences?
 - main character starts to sympathize with the antagonist
 - the stakes kept getting higher

- “all hope is lost” moment
- “the dark night of the soul” moment
- “the calm before the storm” moment
- introduction of time limits, “tickling time bombs”
- the antagonist force suddenly moves full speed ahead
- getting rid of plot armour
- bringing hero to the lowest point
- “everything goes to hell” moment.

Those are just few examples of how plot can be developed while pivoting on conflict. However, conflict is significant only because it brings the character to eventual transformation (Hackney 2 August 2016). If conflict leads nowhere, the story disappears into nothing, becomes meaningless and loses a personal relation to the audience. Conflict should be specifically connected to protagonist’s quest (Cron 2012, 18), and the more dramatic the change caused by a conflict, the more powerful the story becomes (Hackney 2 August 2016).

Mentioned briefly in a genre discussion, aesthetics plays an important role in visually expressed narratives whether they are placed in a virtual reality or a physical world. Tone is responsible for the emotional takeaway of the content, while style characterizes visual, sound, and written techniques of the story (Dowd 2015). These notions are closely linked to storyworld and jointly represent a brand identity. It is important to keep consistency and coherence when utilizing them for the sake of support of unified experience for the audience (Dowd 2015).

Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn, that all fundamental elements of story are closely entwined, together creating a compelling and intriguing storytelling experience. The story designer’s aim is to get the audience involved into the narrative from the very start by establishing a deep connection with the characters and outlining an intriguing conflict, build up the tension and anticipation of a major change at the end of the story, create a rich detailed storyworld, and finally, lay it out in front of the audience in a way that would turn navigating through the story into an exciting adventure full of revelations and moments of truths.

Due to stories’ flexible nature, these rules are applicable to all fields where storytelling can be used. Obviously, story production for a game design will be different from the one in advertising campaign in terms of included details, size of storyworld, functions it serves, and ways it is delivered to the customer. However, the essence of the story stays the same no matter the field, format, or medium. Because of the major role narratives play in human life and the way it affects human cognitive processes, storytelling is especially powerful in its ability to create a very personal and emotional connection to the audience.

As experiences apply to people's emotions on an individual level, it is only natural that storytelling is a big part of experience creation process. Therefore, the next chapter will cover the subject of experience — what defines an experience, what are its primal components, how experience affects people, and what is its connection to events. Finally, the deep connection between experiences and storytelling will be explored.

2.2 Experience design and storytelling

This thesis is centred around a project that is an event, however, it is approached from the experience perspective. Even though Taste of Viaporin Kekri was produced with event design canvas in mind (Event Design Collective 2019) and utilized organizational tools, such as Trello, and graphic design platform, such as Canva, author chose to view storytelling in the experience creation context and not to focus exclusively on practicalities of event design. It was done for several reasons. Firstly, in recent years experiences infiltrated modern economy overpowering services and becoming a main value-creating component (Sundbo & Darmer 2008, 1) and it is impossible to ignore this influence. Secondly, experiences and events are quite similar in nature. The terms are not interchangeable, as in case with stories and narratives, but one is defined through another, and both events and experiences are operated, as Berridge (2007, 122) stated “within a similar frame of reference”. Lastly, author's interests lie within experience domain, and a long-standing involvement in Viaporin Kekri production is rooted in event's experientiality.

Experience is a rather broad concept which is difficult to define in a single applicable-to-all term. Oxford Dictionary (Oxford Dictionaries 2019) explains it as “an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone” and immediately brings to light the ambiguous relation of terms *experience* and *event*. According to Getz (2005, in Berridge 2007, 5), an event is “an opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience”. The complex connections between two terms and their relation to storytelling will be looked into in the following subchapters.

2.2.1 The nature of experiences and events

Oxford Dictionary's definition of experience is very generalised (which is expected from the dictionary), but it points out one attribute essential to all experiences — memorability. Experience is something worth remembering, something that was impressive to the point that it turned into a cherished enduring memory. The quality of being memorable is what sets experiences apart from commodities, goods, and services (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 17).

Commodities, goods, and services are characterised by words referring to physical qualities, as replaceable, tangible, and intangible correspondingly. In contrast to that, experiences are described in words related to mental activity — they are memorable, as well as essentially personal, happening within the individual (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 17.)

It brings us to the uniqueness of experiences. There is no such thing as unified experience. An emotional and physical state of a person that gets herself involved in a staged event always affects the outcome of that interaction, i.e. shaping the experience (Pine & Gilmore 2001, 17.) Danish light artist Olafur Eliasson, creator of many spatial and light experiences, whose aim is to study and confront person's perceptions, notes that "what we have in common is that we are different" (Eliasson & Jenson 2001). The estimation and interpretation of experience happens in the context of individual's past experiences. It is unconscious and deeply personal process (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2007, 21.) Apart from memories which constitute past experience, what influences person's perceptions is expectations and knowledge (Sundbo & Darmer 2008, 204), and all together these elements are responsible for the fundamentally personal nature of experiences.

Boswijk & al. (2007, 22) suggest a rather intricate, but substantial explanation of experience that is "an immediate, relatively isolated occurrence with a complex of emotions that make an impression and represent a certain value for the individual within the context of a specific situation". Rephrasing, experience is an instant emotional reaction that leaves a long-lasting impression on an individual because it is in some way meaningful for her in this particular moment. Bar and Boshouwers (2018, 31) quote Alessandro Barrico, an Italian writer, who beautifully defined experience as "meeting the meaning". Engagement in the event or any other happening becomes memorable only when the person partaking in that experience finds it meaningful and relevant and is emotionally affected by becoming aware of those meanings (Smith & Hanover 2016). Endberg-Pederson and Meyhoff (2004, in Sundbo & Darmer 2008, 204) claim that emotions are paramount to human's ability to experience things in general. Emotions are expressed physically, be that expression conscious or subconscious, and due to mirror neurons, that were discussed in chapter 1.5, emotions are contagious (Sundbo & Darmer 2008, 205). By impacting emotional level of consumer, it is possible to increase imprint of experience.

Experiences affect people on many levels simultaneously — emotionally, intellectually, physically, and even spiritually (Pine & Gilmore 2001, 17). On a physical level, experiences are meant to be multi-sensory and influence customers through all five senses —

sight, touch, smell, sound and taste. Inclusion of senses into experience can be a demanding task as they are able to heighten an experience or completely distort it. Sensory engagement is one of the primary tools that makes experience immersive and thus more memorable. For instance, scent-encoded information is remembered over long period of time, because the sense of smell is neurologically in direct connection with memory. Smell is also able to bring back auto-biographical (i.e. personal and emotional) memories. Sensory perception is actually so powerful, that even thinking about an image, sound or smell is enough to create cognition (Krishna 2011.) That's why it is important that sensory stimuli are carefully designed and arranged cohesively and in harmony with experience theme and atmosphere.

Hereby, experience's decisive characteristics are memorability, personal uniqueness, meaningfulness, emotionality, and sensory perceptiveness. Events have the same elements at the core — they are unique occasions, sensory rich and operating on many levels of engagement (Berridge 2007, 122). Moreover, any event is an experience, though not every experience is an event. It can be said that event is a particular type of experience, and it is referred as such in this thesis.

Both experiences and events must be staged, as they do not exist on their own, and both result in interaction between the designed environment and consumer's prior physical and psychological state (Berridge 2007, 122). The highest point of that interaction is a participant's transformation. Just as story is supposed to result in protagonist's change, so the consumer, the protagonist of experience, is expected or expecting to undergo a transformation. At some moments of their life, people feel a need for a change within themselves. They are seeking for revelation, enlightenment, a ground-breaking knowledge, new levels of physical challenge, in other words something rewarding, long-lasting, and valuable on a very personal level. People wish to become different (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 242). Staged transformative experience is the top level of experience design and is particularly challenging. The memories of experience will inevitably disappear, but transformation lives beyond the consumption of experience, as it means a lasting change in personal beliefs, points of view, attitude or physical attributes (Pine & Gilmore 2011) 244). By its very nature, transformative experiences are epistemically transformative, meaning one cannot predict the results of the experience without undergoing it (Paul 2019). To create an opportunity for a major change, an experience designer has to gather immense amount of information about the customer to be able to predict what people truly want. This way, careful, detailed, backed-up by thorough research customizing is what turns a mere experience into a transformative one (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 244).

However, not every experience is meant to be transformative. It would be rather overwhelming to go through constant changes. Change happens only at the best possible moment and when there are preconditions for it. Transformative experience is a perfect product, an ideal case, a goal that experience designer is striving to achieve. Next subchapter will cover Experience Pyramid, a model created by Tarssanen and Kylänen (2005) that demonstrates what combination of components can turn experience into a transformative one.

2.2.2 Experience Pyramid

Experience Pyramid is a model representing an absolute experience that engages the customer on both mental and physical levels. It is useful for analysing a product by accessing its critical points, values and shortcomings (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 138.) There are two dimensions — six components of the product, and the consumer's personal experience that happens on five levels, motivational, physical, intellectual, emotional and mental. Experience elements are individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast and interaction. It is crucial to include these elements in all stages of experience design in order to keep it cohesive, balanced, and approachable.

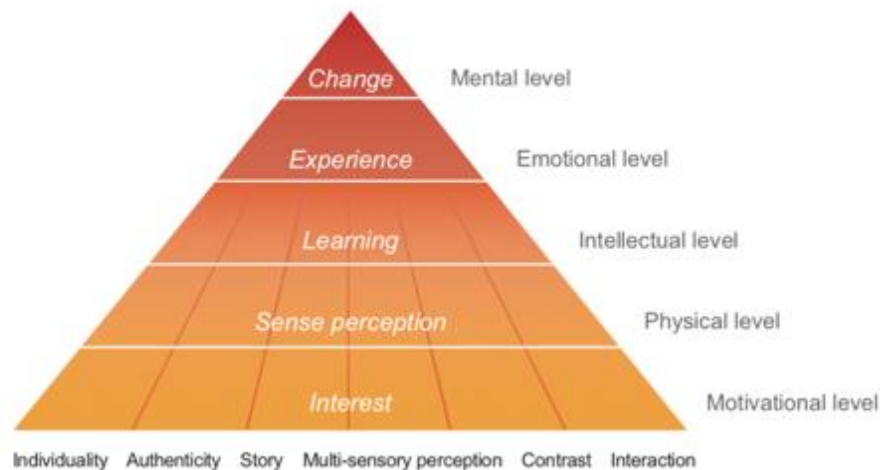


Figure 2. Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 139)

Experience starts with an encounter of information about it, then the decision to participate is being made, and anticipation begins to develop (Berridge 2007, 122). Customer experience develops from an impulse that turns into an interest. The next stage is a process of partaking in a staged product followed by contemplating on the experienced and feasibly undergoing a transformation (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 147.) Ideally, all six experience

components should be presented on every level of customer's experience. That combination would create well rounded, detailed, complex experience that would be meaningful, memorable, and possibly leading to customer's change.

The lowest level of consumer's experience is motivational level and it is the first stage of experience, which was discussed in a previous paragraph. That's when motivation to participate and expectations about the experience are being formed. On next level, called physical, customer is actually experiencing the product through her senses, and as LaSalle & Bitton described it, the product is "received, tried, recognized, acknowledged and brought into consciousness first-hand" (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 148). On intellectual level participants are cognitively processing sensory information of the ongoing experience and acting upon it. That is when the opinions are formed, and the customer decides whether she is satisfied with experience or not (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 148.) Emotional level covers emotional reactions of the customers, while on mental level, transformation and permanent change occur.

Individuality of the product refers to its uniqueness. Ideally, there should be no product that is exactly as the one in production. Individuality can also mean customization of the experience which might lead to a potential transformation as it was discussed in a previous paragraph (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 142.)

Authenticity element brings in discussion of complex and ambiguous nature of the term. There is no single opinion on what is, actually, an authentic experience because of intricacy of the term that is defined by the situation it is used in. Authenticity can mean self-governance (Paul 2019), genuineness (Oxford English Dictionary), regionality (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 142), and other things. Objectively, universal "genuine" or "real" is simply a non-existent notion (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 143). Holding something as authentic means placing it in a particular context that dictates a definition of authenticity and describes it from a subjective point of view. In short, authentic means original, and it is required to define what constitutes original in a taken setting.

As multi-sensory perception was studied in a preceding subchapter, it is omitted from the description of experience elements. Contrast is an element accountable for creating a significant difference between the experience and consumer's everyday life (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 145). Setting a customer to encounter something uncommon and out of the ordinary enriches experience and creates an opportunity for personal growth or change of perspective. It is closely linked with memorability as well.

Interaction stands for resultful relation between the product which is an experience, its designer, and participant (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 146). It means that there is understanding of customer's needs from the organisers' side, and that customers' expectations about the product are in compliance with its suggested value. Interaction also includes communication between the participants themselves. Positive relationships between experience provider and consumer can contribute to customer research which in its turn is a basis for creating transformative experiences.

Finally, there comes a story element. This is a point where two major themes of this thesis come together. The immense importance of storytelling in experience design will be covered in the next subchapters.

2.2.3 Interrelation of storytelling and experiences

Many authors recognize significance of stories and the fundamental position that they take in experience design. According to Tarssanen & Kylänen (2005, 144), "story is one of the most essential features of a good experience product". A genuine story is what links together experience and reality creating context. It is a source of meaning and a glue that keeps together all other experience elements (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 144.) Smith & Hanover (2016, 93) acknowledge a major stories' influence by bluntly stating that all best experiences are centred around a story. Artificial intelligence theorist and cognitive psychologist Roger Schank declares stories to be "the vehicles" that people use to apprehend and interpret experiences and communicate them later to specific audiences (Smith & Hanover 2016, 93). It directly relates to the ancient and ever-present role of stories which is to make sense out of the world. Bär & Boshouwers in their recently released book 'WOW Worlds of Wonder' that explores the process behind creation of spatial experiences, call a story the second most important component of any experience project, with the first being the customer, and position stories as responsible for delivering a message to the experience participant in the most gripping and comprehensible way possible (Bär & Boshouwers 2018, 216.) "WOW Worlds of Wonder" sees storytelling as central to creation and production of experiences and assigns it to a specific member of experience design team whose role is to manage content and make certain that the message to the customer is delivered and all media elements constitute a part of a total narrative both in terms of used material and style. This way, story leads all creative producers involved into project (Bär & Boshouwers 2018, 216).

Pine and Gilmore, the originators of experience movement, talk about storytelling in the context of theming, an element that is granted a significant importance in their research.

They essentially equate theming with storytelling by saying that “theming means scripting a story” (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 71). It is also emphasized that absolutely every experience exists within a theme, and thus, a story (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 73). Pine and Gilmore’s approach to theming correlates with a notion of storyworld. Themes centred around story are powerful tools that effectively pull customers into imagined world of experience affecting customer’s sense of reality and unifying all other experience elements (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 78).

Jacksons characteristics of experience demonstrate a close interconnection of all terms that were discussed in the context of experience design, but also draws more attention to storytelling this way creating a rather comprehensive recap of experience contents.

According to Jackson, experience is constituted by following elements (Berridge 2007, 119):

- development of cohesive theme;
- consumption as interaction and engagement through full use of senses;
- development of relationships;
- emotions;
- creativity and collaboration;
- transformation;
- visual imagery;
- authenticity;
- theatrical analogy including scripting and storytelling.

Berridge follows Pine and Gilmore (2011, 209) and suggests utilizing theatrical elements in the experience development, particularly in the process of event creation. It comes from the notion that performance is a fundamental part of experience. The reason why theatre, and not cinema is taken as a model even though it is also based on a script and depicts a gradually developing narrative, is that theatrical performance happens in the immediate presence of consumer, just as an actual experience or event (Berridge 2007, 257.) Pine and Gilmore structure the whole process of experience creation after theatre organization. Thus, they employ the terms of role, cast, characters, scripting, stage crew, and attach theatre production functions to experience team naming its members director, producer, screenwriter, set designer, technician, costume designer, and others (Pine and Gilmore 2011, 211).

Smith and Hanover (2016, 93) also indicate influence of theatrical design on experience creation and emphasize the role of space in supporting a story, this way bringing the discussion back to terms of setting and storyworld.

Smith and Hanover state that the following rules of theatrical engagement contribute to experience creation (Smith & Hanover 2016, 94):

- Space is not static.
- Transitions are important.
- A grand entrance has impact.
- Lightning and sound enhance the experience.
- Great experiences are designed around great journeys through space.

Bär and Boshouwers (2018, 15) call physical spaces that communicate a message or a story “narrative spaces” and point out that this phrase is a synonym to “storyworld” and “3D storytelling” (Bär and Boshouwers 2018, 16) reinforcing a connection between space, story, and experience. Apart from storyworld, Smith and Hanover (2016, 94) include other elements of story experience design as well, such as existents, conflict, and plot.

Author sees theatrical approach and the range of its application in various sources as a further proof of undeniable significance of storytelling in experience design, since theatre model serves here as an explicit way to implement a story and bring it to life. Storytelling might be hiding under different names — theming, dramaturgy, theatrical approach, narratives, etc, but it is proven to be absolutely essential for experience creation.

2.2.4 Rationale behind importance of storytelling in experience design

Executed research of anthropological, sociological, neuroscientific, and narratological sources clarified the causes of storytelling being a crucial component in experience creation, and hence experiential event creation. Therefore, the second objective of this thesis can now be reached through presenting the answers to its subobjectives.

How storytelling relates to human cognitive perception?

- Humans’ distinctive feature, abstract thinking is responsible for human’s ability to come up with imagined narratives and collectively believe in those narratives.
- Stories unite people on the basis of their shared believes and similarity of their experiences.
- Storytelling is instrumental to a person’s self-awareness, identity perception, and connection to other people.
- Storytelling contributes to the process of comprehending complex concepts and creating structural connections between notions.

What are the main functions of storytelling in experience design?

- Constructing relatable and identifiable context for the experience
- Attaching meaning to the experience
- Uniting other elements of experience and keep them coherent and structured
- Making experience personal through the power of interpretation

- Pulling customer into the world of experience and making it possible for people to experience it in groups through the ability of collective abstract thinking
- Affecting customer's sense of reality and thus the memorability and emotiveness of experience
- Conveying the message of experience in a way that is easy to understand and remember
- Creating a pre-condition for a possible personal transformation
- Encouraging interactions between the experience participants

Why storytelling is often overlooked in related literature?

Author speculates that the intrinsic ever-present nature of storytelling often causes academics to not cover definitions of terms story and storytelling, as they are perceived as something not requiring explanation. Being present in almost all of human activities, storytelling might be seen as something obvious to reader or researcher of any level which might not always be true. Moreover, storytelling is often used under other names such as theming, dramaturgy, theatrical approach, and others. These factors do not justify the almost negligent approach to storytelling in many of experience and event design sources that claim it to be an essential element in experience and event creation, but rarely explain why, instead suggesting to just accept the statement. Author draws attention to this phenomenon and points out that this topic can become a starting point for another, more detailed and profound research.

2.3 Storytelling-based framework for experiential event creation

Overview of literature on storytelling, experiences and events performed by author introduced great number of terms, notions, and components. Both storytelling and experiences are complex, multi-layered concepts and they can be approached from different angles depending on the context. To make matter more complicated, many elements of both storytelling and experiences are overlapping each other or intersecting at particular points. Author attempted to systemize vast amount of data retrieved through research by arranging synopsis of that data in the form of a table, and then removing repeating elements and selecting ultimate, unifying components that represent the essence of two concepts in question.

Table 1. Outline of essential storytelling and experience elements

| Source | Element | Author's focus |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Stories and storytelling</i> | | |
| Ryan & Thon 2014 | Storyworld: - Existents (characters and objects) | - Storyworld o Characters o Objects |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting - Physical laws - Social rules and values - Events - Mental events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Setting o Events (including conflict) o Laws and rules - Freytag's Triangle structure - aesthetics |
| Dowd 2015 | Plot | |
| Dowd 2015 | Genre | |
| Freytag in Stackelberg 2011 | Freytag's Triangle structure | - |
| Cron 2012 | Character | - |
| Cron 2012 | Conflict | |
| Dowd 2015 | Aesthetics | |
| <i>Experiences and events</i> | | |
| Boswijk & al. 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional - Memorable - Meaningful - Personally unique - Multi-sensory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authentic - Memorable - Multi-sensory - Visually rich - Interactive - Thematically coherent - Analogous to theatre o Grand entrance o Use of lightning and sound o Journey through space |
| Pine & Gilmore 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personally unique - Multi-sensory | |
| Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuality - Authenticity - Story - Multi-sensory perception - Contrast - Interaction | |
| Jackson in Berridge 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cohesive theme - Interactivity - Multi-sensory activation - Relationships - Emotions - Creativity and collaboration - Transformation - Visual imagery - Authenticity - Theatrical analogy (scripting and storytelling) | |
| Smith & Hanover 2016 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dynamic space - Transitions - A grand entrance - Lightning and sound - Journey through space | |

Finally, author presented systemized data in a form of a diagram which became her own framework for storytelling-based experiential event that was later utilized and referred to as support for structure and source for content in author's project.

Next chapter will cover an empirical part of this thesis — Taste of Viaporin Kekri, an experimental mini-event formed on the basis of Viaporin Kekri for promotional purposes. Taste of Viaporin Kekri utilized abovementioned theoretical framework as a model in order to reach the objective of this thesis by bringing storytelling and experiences together.

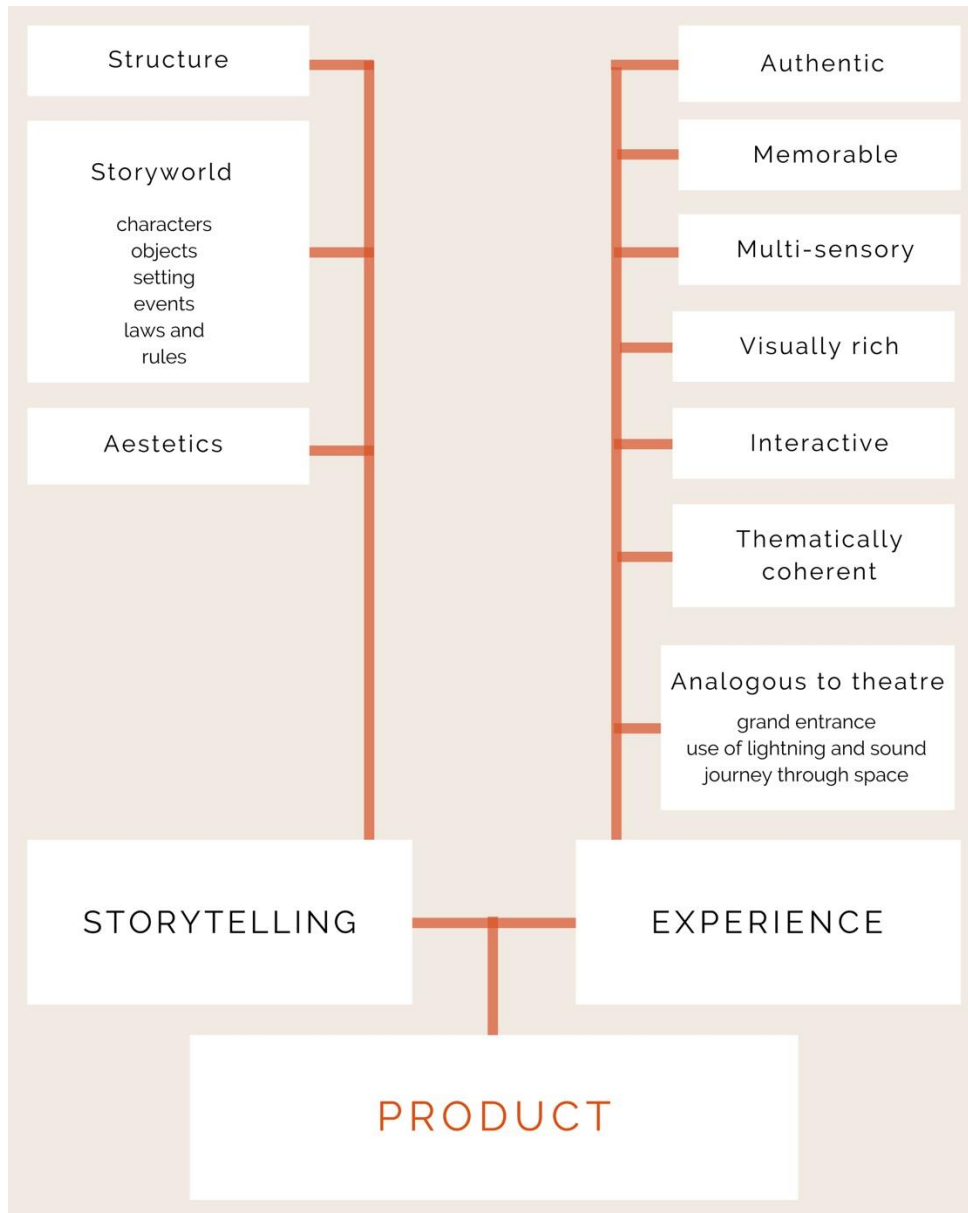


Figure 3. Theoretical framework originated by author

Planning and execution of the product

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was in many ways an experiment, and its production process reflects it. Despite of it being created on the basis of a clear theoretical framework and with reference to Event Design Canvas, it included many elements that were tested for the first time in a given environment and context and that contributed to a definite sense of uncertainty in the result. However, the experimental nature of the event is what made it unique and exciting to work on.

Because of it being a part and a representation of a bigger event, which planning and execution was happening simultaneously, Taste of Viaporin Kekri was both limited and advanced by it. This chapter will describe the close connection between Taste of Viaporin Kekri and its source, Viaporin Kekri, and overview the methods used in the creation of the product. It will also give an account of the production process of Taste of Viaporin Kekri, the risks the organizing team had to face, and behind the scenes of event's implementation. Finally, the project outcomes will be evaluated.

2.4 Taste of Viaporin Kekri, background

Being a part of Viaporin Kekri, Taste of Viaporin Kekri is defined through its parent-event, in particular, through its storyworld, background, aims, and specific approach to experiences. In its turn, Viaporin Kekri is a complex multi-component event that is impossible to explain in one sentence. In four years of its existence, Viaporin Kekri expanded its lore, created long-lasting characteristic traditions and rituals, developed and strengthened its brand, and established recognizable visual features. Success of Taste of Viaporin Kekri secured its position as a newly-founded tradition that will be recreated with appropriate variations in the upcoming Viaporin Kekri 2019.

The following subchapters will look into background of the two events in questions and explore their relation. Firstly, the story of Viaporin Kekri production and its organizational structure will be described. Secondly, the mythological sources of Viaporin Kekri will be explored. Thirdly, the self-established tradition of Viaporin Kekri that found representation in Taste of Viaporin Kekri will be stated. Finally, Taste of Viaporin Kekri and its coming into existence will be discussed.

2.4.1 Viaporin Kekri, overview of organisational structure

Viaporin Kekri is a collaborative project planned and executed by Haaga-Helia students and Governing Body of Suomenlinna. Viaporin Kekri is an annual occasion, with 2019

marking the fifth time it is organized. It takes place over the period of one day, in early November, on Suomenlinna islands. The event is a result of collective effort of Haaga-Helia representatives — students and project coordinator and initiator, Violeta Salonen, Suomenlinna agent — currently, event manager Paula Lappalainen, as well as Suomenlinna-based and Helsinki-based businesses.

When writing texts for Viaporin Kekri website, author of this thesis described the event's goals and content in following words: "Viaporin Kekri is an educational experiment for Haaga-Helia, learning opportunity and networking exercise for its students, and a carefully crafted event for Suomenlinna visitors built up of fine storytelling, lively performances, immersive experiences, art, food, music and unique atmosphere" (Viaporin Kekri 2019). Another goal of Viaporin Kekri coming from Suomenlinna perspective is a promotion of the islands as a worthy destination in off-season, as well as giving publicity and revenue opportunities to Suomenlinna small businesses.

Production of Viaporin Kekri is led by organizing team that consists of Haaga-Helia initiative students. The team is led by two project managers that represent Suomenlinna and Haaga-Helia perspectives and provide needed networking and financial support, as well as execute final decisions about the event. Other members of the team take care of marketing, communication with business partners, and design of graphic and web materials. Another important element of Viaporin Kekri team is first-year students of Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management degree for whom participation in the event is obligatory as it is part of the course on experiences, a major introductory block of their studies. Coordinating and scheduling first-years students who mostly perform supportive roles is another task for organizing team.

Viaporin Kekri is a project created to give students an opportunity to explore their abilities, take new responsibilities, and show their ambitions through giving them an authority of co-creating Viaporin Kekri together with project managers. 2018 showed an unprecedented level of freshmen' engagement into the event with students bravely taking the roles of experience creators, and venue and schedule managers, which at the end, led to massive expansion of organizing team. Several years ago, author of the thesis was one of those proactive students herself and that's how Taste of Viaporin Kekri eventually came to life.

With the organizational background of Viaporin Kekri covered, next subchapter is meant to explore mythological background behind the two events central to the thesis and the ways they interpret and utilize that material.

2.4.2 Viaporin Kekri, mythological and narrative sources

Viaporin Kekri is firmly rooted in Finnish pagan stories that gave the event its name and inspired its vast storyworld. Tradition of *kekri* dates hundreds of years back, into pre-Christian era of Finland. Christianity came to Finland in the twelfth century, but practices of folk religions not only continued to be a vital part of Finns' social life for centuries, but got mixed with Christian theological concepts, this way creating a unique set of mythological believes. Michael Agricola, the founder of literary Finnish language, in his 1551 book called *The Book of Psalms*, places *kekri* in the list of main mythological agents acknowledged by people of provinces Tavastia and Karelia as gods (Raudvere & Schjodt 2012, 185.)

Agricola describes *kekri* as god of specific significance who "made the cattle grow fatter" (Raudvere & Schjodt 2012, 205). However, the names of some deities, including *kekri*, were also used to refer to certain times of transitions that happened every year and were tightly connected to economic and social aspects of peasants' life. Thus, *kekri* symbolized the end of harvesting and cattle husbandry cycle that took place in early November. Under the influence of Catholicism, *kekri* became a word for a feast that celebrated those events, similar to thanksgiving tradition (Raudvere & Schjodt 2012, 206.)

At the end of his list of mythological agents, Agricola mentions other traditions typical for Finnish societies of that time, such as worshipping of many unanimated things, including fire and "bones of the dead", as well as rituals of taking food to the graves of the dead as a sacrifice (Raudvere & Schjodt 2012, 206).

Viaporin Kekri took centuries-old Finnish mythology and transferred it to a modern-day Suomenlinna, reinterpreting and reimagining the old stories and creating new meanings. While, it might seem as Viaporin Kekri is distorting history, author disagrees with this point of view. After all, twelfth-century Finns did exactly the same — interpreted newly-arrived Christians doctrines and stories based on their existing cultural and social reality and granted them new metaphorical meanings that correlated to that reality (Raudvere & Schjodt (2012, 187). It all brings the discussion back to the ever-lasting power of storytelling and human need to create connections and figure out the changing world around them.

This way the meanings of *kekri* that Viaporin Kekri chose to obtain from its complex source are *kekri* as a god, *kekri* as a feast, and *kekri* as time of transitions. The first two found were present in Taste of Viaporin Kekri and became a backbone of its story.

2.4.3 Viaporin Kekri, new traditions

In conversation about mythological and spiritual background of Viaporin Kekri, it seems appropriate to mention two of its most prominent self-established traditions in order to provide more context for Taste of Viaporin Kekri — burning of Kekripukki and sorrows ritual. Those are the examples of how event uses its sources to create new narratives and how it expresses its main themes through actions and experiences.

Burning of Kekripukki, a giant goat made of straw, is a direct reference to old *kekri* traditions and its complex mythology. Here, Kekripukki is a representation of *kekri* as a god of cattle and harvest, and the process of burning it is a metaphorical stepping into winter, going through and accepting that transition. In terms of the event content and structure, it is a great spectacle and the climax point of the festival, as well as an action awaited by audience.



Figure 5. Burning of Kekripukki (Kokkonen 2015)

The sorrows ritual, briefly mentioned in chapter two, gives visitors a chance to symbolically let go of things, events, words or thoughts, that upset or frustrate them. Sorrows written on pieces of paper are collected and then burned together with Kekripukki at the end of the festival. This way, fire metaphorically relieves people of their sadness. The ritual was used in Taste of Viaporin Kekri, however, the papers were not burned due to safety

reasons but disposed of in a different way in accordance to the story. Author had a chance to take a look at those papers and was struck by the deep intimacy and sincerity of sorrows that guests shared. She speculates, that darkness of the venue where Taste of Viaporin Kekri took place, the anonymity of the ritual, and the power of storytelling turned that part of the action into extremely personal experience.

Next subchapter will cover methodology behind this thesis, including methods applied to creation of Taste of Viaporin Kekri, as well as compounding of its theoretical background.

2.5 Methodology

As it was exposed in chapter one, the main methods applied to this thesis are secondary analysis, unstructured interviews, and an event production.

Secondary analysis, as a research method for exploration of theoretical base, was chosen as it gave author an opportunity to re-evaluate existing studies from a new perspective (Smith 2008, 41). Specifically, author used supplementary secondary analysis defined by Heaton (2004, 43) as “a more in-depth focus on an emergent issue or aspect of the data, which was not addressed, or was only partially addressed, by the primary research” in order to perform a comprehensive insightful research that would include various approaches to the main subject in question.

In the empirical part of this thesis, author used a series of qualitative unstructured interviews. The subjects of those interviews were Viaporin Kekri project managers who tasked author with production of Taste of Viaporin Kekri. This type of interview does not refer to a structure of pre-designed questions, allowing interviewer more freedom in navigating through conversation and inquiring for details (Kothari 2004, 98). Unstructured interview as a method was chosen due to Taste of Viaporin Kekri being a part of Viaporin Kekri, with two events getting planned and ideated simultaneously over a period of several months. During meetings with project managers, author had to discuss not only Taste of Viaporin Kekri, but great number of other issues, as she was a part of Viaporin Kekri organising team. That contributed to a somewhat chaotic nature of interviews in contrast to pre-designed interviews that follow a strict framework of questions.

As for creating a product, it is approached not only as the final result, but also as a method of exploring the subjects in question. Working on Taste of Viaporin Kekri provided a deeper insight into a process of applying storytelling to experiential event production and served as a demonstration of an intrinsic connection between the explored topics.

Next chapter will report on the process of Taste of Viaporin Kekri creation, describe the timeline of product production, explain its organisational structure, and look behind the scenes of the event.

2.6 Production process

In May 2018, during the initial planning stages of Viaporin Kekri, the project managers, Violeta Salonen and Paula Lappalainen, suggested to produce an experiential promotional event Taste of Viaporin Kekri and author volunteered to handle the task. She was trusted with almost full authority over the event which was an exceptional opportunity to make independent decisions about all stages of event production and put to use the knowledge acquired during studies in Haaga-Helia UAS and through participation in Viaporin Kekri production. Heikki-Tapio Helppikangas, who together with author was involved in Hospitality Innovation and Imagineering exchange program, was invited to join Taste of Viaporin Kekri as a second manager. The team also included volunteers from first-year Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management program who were actively engaged in event creation process. Apart from author, second manager, and group of first-year students, there were other people involved during different stages of production. The following table visually demonstrates the division of roles and responsibilities in Taste of Viaporin Kekri team:

Table 2. Division of roles in Taste of Viaporin Kekri team

| Team members | Group roles | Individual roles |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Project manager 1 (author) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept and story development - Props design - Coordination of other team members - Props purchase - Setting up of the venue - Event implementation - Acting different roles in performance part of the event with the aim to be able to control the action and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial concept outline - Final decisions on the event - Freshmen recruitment - Copywriting - Graphic design - Visual design - Control of digital elements during the performance part of the event |
| Project manager 2 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating menu for the feast - Calculations of products' consumption for the feast - Organisational matters |
| Freshmen students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-creation of story and theatrical action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video projection editing and design |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting different roles in performance part of the event - Make-up - Help with organisational matters (transportation, cleaning, etc.) - Costumes design | |
| Other volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting different roles in performance part of the event | |
| Music designer | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of musical pieces specifically suiting particular parts of the story and action |
| Viaporin Kekri manager 1 and 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of beer sponsor - Help with transportation and purchasing - Financial support - Securing access to venue - Contacting potential guests through Suomenlinna network | |

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was planned to take place on 16th of October 2018. The development phase took around two and a half months. First interviews with Viaporin Kekri project managers and ideation sessions happened at the end of May 2018 with defining the aims of the event and outlining its main themes. Organisational work and concept development started in early August. It was the time when the budget was negotiated, and the venue was chosen. By the end of the month, format, story outline and aesthetics were established. In late August, the group of volunteers entered Taste of Viaporin Kekri team. September was dedicated to further concept development, story design and compiling a list of bloggers and influencers who could get interested in the event and whose followers correlate with Viaporin Kekri target audience. Invitational email was sent out at the beginning of October. It included poster meant to raise interest in potential guests through visuals and storytelling and short introductory information from Suomenlinna coordinator. During that month, team members were busy with experience creation process, specifically, developing a story and experimenting with digital elements. A person was assigned to create musical pieces for particular moments in story to enhance participants' experience and bring it to the new level of theatricality. The team was also experimenting with The Box technology, a 360 degrees projector available through Haaga-Helia UAS, to add another digital element and create a modern twist to the folklore-based story. Several workshops were organised for Taste of Viaporin Kekri team to co-create, polish the story, discuss the inevitably emerging issues and exchange opinions. October was dedicated to final airbrushing of different experience elements and organisational moments, such as food purchase,

transportation of props from school to Suomenlinna, printing materials, etc. 16th of October was spent on arranging the venue (props, technology, decoration) and final rehearsals. Taste of Viaporin Kekri ended with team discussion of the process and results of the event, and later private evaluation with Viaporin Kekri project managers. The very final stage of the event production was transportation of the props, handling the spendings, and other organisational moments. The timeline of the product development and execution is compactly presented in a diagram:

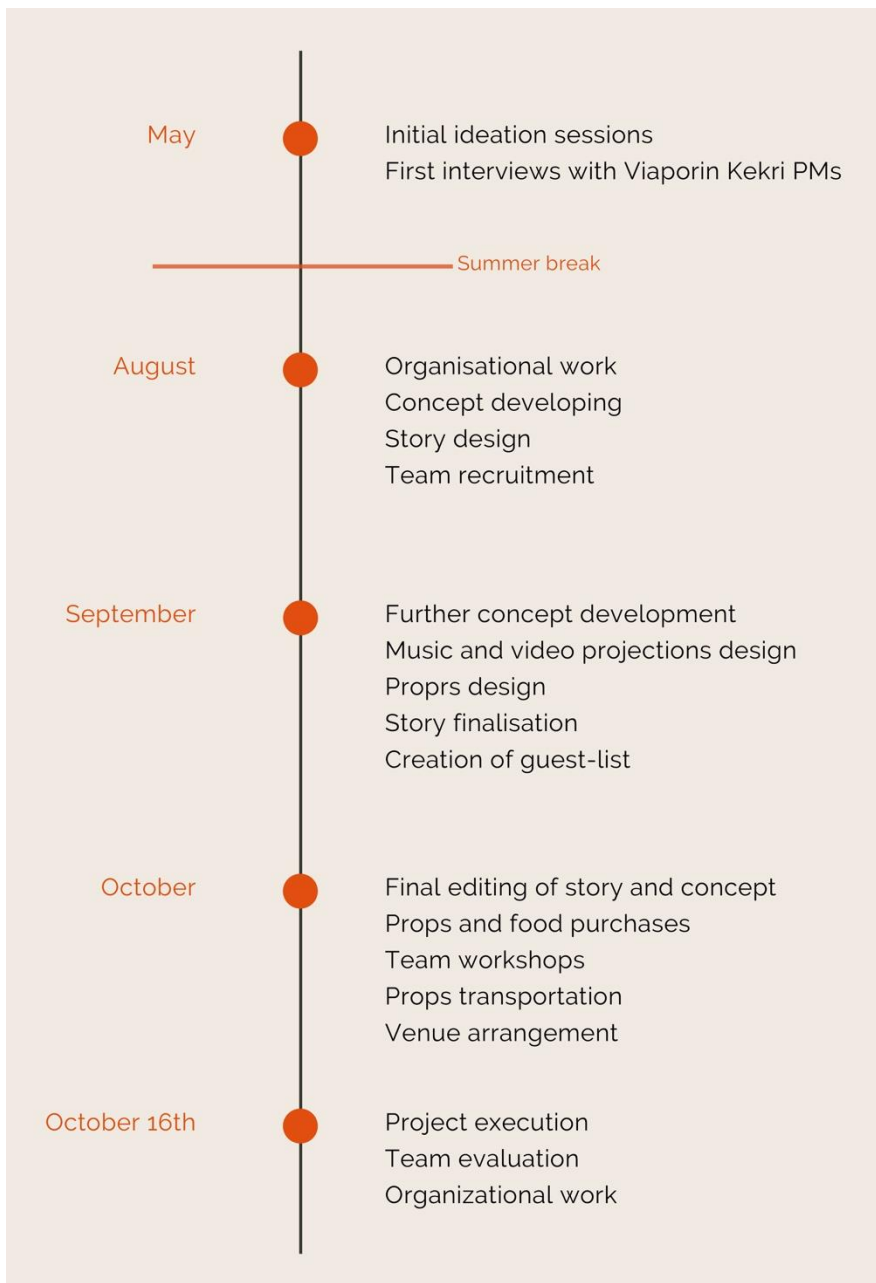


Figure 6. Taste of Viaporin Kekri production timeline

Concept and story development phase required the most effort both from the project managers and the rest of the team and took the longest time to produce. As Taste of Viaporin

Kekri was built around story that served as connection between different stages of event, as well as the entrance into experience, it was extremely important to produce a coherent detailed narrative that would be comprehensible and logical, both for visitors and for the rest of the team. Motivations of characters and the context of the story needed to be meticulously explained to the performers in order for them to know how to act in case guests have questions or behave not according to the plan. Some of the performers also had to improvise on spot, be able to bend the script according to the changing circumstances, be flexible while staying in character. Taste of Viaporin Kekri managers paid special attention to delivering the story to performers, both in written form and through many discussions.

Another element heavily relying on communication was creation of soundtrack. Music designer was the only person outside of the project and it was essential to reach a certain point of understanding as Viaporin Kekri is a complicated multi-layered concept with a very particular stand on aesthetics, visuals, and atmosphere. Music designer was needed to comprehend the complexity of Taste of Viaporin Kekri story and storyworld, project managers' approach to the event production, the nature of experiences in general, and other things. Author and music designer had to exchange many lengthy emails to make sure that both of them are on the same page and the result of that collaboration fits perfectly with the product.

Tools used in the event production include various graphic design platforms, such as Canva and Photoshop, organizational service Trello, and Facebook chat as the main source of connection with the main cast of team members. Communication with Viaporin Kekri managers was performed through emails and personal meetings. Taste of Viaporin Kekri organizers actively used presentations and moodboards both as inspirational tool and as to make certain that the rest of the team is in agreement about the content and aesthetics of the event.

As people included in creation and implementation of Taste of Viaporin Kekri were volunteers who devoted significant amount of their free time to this project, to keep the spirits high and the atmosphere friendly and stress-free was the primal goal of the project's managers and author in particular. Despite the franticness and hastiness of execution day, Taste of Viaporin Kekri team seemed to have a good time and hopefully through their involvement with the project gained understanding and perspective on the production of experiential event and the application of storytelling to experiences. Author wants to finish this chapter with an expression of gratitude to all the driven and curious enthusiasts who

signed up for Taste of Viaporin Kekri and helped it happen. The upcoming chapter will discuss the limitations and risks that author and her team had to face during the production process.



Figure 7. Taste of Viaporin Kekri team (Kahyaoglu 2018)

2.7 Limitations and risks

As any low-budget event run by volunteers who learn as they go, Viaporin Kekri had to encounter inevitable limitations and complications. Financial constraints are the first to come to author's mind. Suomenlinna provided a budget of 600 euro for the event which was more than enough for the production of Taste of Viaporin Kekri, as it was specifically designed to be supported by that amount of money or less. However, with bigger financial opportunities, some of the project's elements could have been majorly improved and updated. The gastronomical component in particular could have been expressed in much more unique way, this way increasing the value of the event overall. The initial idea was to hire catering service and create an original menu that would go with the story. But at the end, Taste of Viaporin Kekri had to rely on a simple solution of cheese and meats boards, which worked well, but was lacking the sense of novelty and uniqueness. Higher budget

could also allow to enhance visual side of the event and create quality memorabilia, which in its turn would help to create long-lasting impression on the customer.

Uncertainty was the greater risk that author and Taste of Viaporin Kekri team had to deal with. It relates both to experimentality of some elements, such as the use of video projector in a venue with given architectural features, as well as unsureness about guests' participation. It was unclear till the very last moment how many guests would join the event because of cancellations and no-show-ups that, although are common, caused some disturbance into the event plan. The biggest fear was that the number of guests will be insufficient for a good collective experience or that there will be no guests whatsoever. Luckily, there was enough participants so that the event outcome would be unaffected.

Geography is another issue that Taste of Viaporin Kekri organisers had to deal with. The remoteness of the venue and the long commute to Suomenlinna made it more difficult to gather team members for rehearsals and workshops, as well as to convince guests to devote big part of their day to the event. It also complicated transportation of props, especially fragile items such as dishes and video projector. However, Viaporin Kekri product managers and team members did everything in their abilities to expedite the transportation of many props and were of a great help. As for the guests, the ones who chose to join the event were served a great surprise and did not regret coming to the island on a beautiful autumn day.

Technical complications are almost unavoidable in any event execution. In case with Taste of Viaporin Kekri, author took a role of sound and video technician in the action part of the event and had to face some issues with alignment of performance, music and projections. Because of the technicalities of procedures behind those elements it was physically not possible for sound and video projections to be started simultaneously in particular part of the action. This way, the performance was a bit less cinematic that author would like it to be. Fortunately, guests were not aware of the script, so it left to remain author's personal frustration. And to team's biggest luck the moment of guests entering the venue went smoothly with all elements perfectly working together and producing desired theatrical effect.

Next chapter will attempt to assess the outcome of the project and define its possible value for its parent-event, Viaporin Kekri, and the industry.

2.8 Project evaluation

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was attended by 12 guests and it went smoothly and mostly according to the plan. The event lasted for about an hour and after it was over, organisers stepped out to greet visitors, discuss their impression on the experience and provide some insights into the organisation of event. Reaction was positive, and guests not only thoroughly enjoyed the action itself, but got excited about the guided walk through Suomenlinna on the way to the event. The weather was beautiful, and visitors admitted to coming to realisation of how rarely they visit Suomenlinna in off-season and that it is a wonderful destination in autumn as well. Later in a day, all participants posted images and videos to their Instagram stories with Viaporin Kekri hashtags, and author personally thanked them for coming.

Viaporin Kekri project managers and Taste of Viaporin Kekri commissioners, Violeta Salonen and Paula Lappalainen, were among guests as they wanted to witness first-hand both the result of the team creative work and visitors' reactions. Based on their experience as guests, as well as their inside knowledge of the project and its context, Viaporin Kekri managers provided insightful feedback both about the organising process and execution of event, gave detailed opinions on its outcomes, and assessed author's performance as project ideator and manager. The feedback was positive and shared many common points. Due to rather lengthy size of feedback, author will summarize the main points in a quick overview. It was noted that Taste of Viaporin Kekri "helped visitors to see Suomenlinna from a new perspective and experience new details and curiosities that fortress has to offer" (Lappalainen 14 May 2019), as well as "promote Suomenlinna venue and other island's services" (Salonen 14 May 2019). That resonates with the stance of Governing Body of Suomenlinna on Viaporin Kekri event in general, which is — "to increase common knowledge of Suomenlinna as a year-round destination" (Lappalainen 14 May 2019). It was also stated that "main bloggers and media got a bit deeper insight of the story of kekri and could therefore communicate it to their followers in their own words (brand sentiment was being established there); they got to experience "taste of what is to come" – so they could advocate for Viaporin Kekri" (Salonen 14 May 2019). As for the project implementation, both project managers agree that the event was "well-executed" (Lappalainen 14 May 2019), "with a multi-disciplinary approach in mind" (Salonen 14 May 2019), and successfully applied storytelling to experience creation.

In terms of personal value that this project holds for author, she can say quite certainly that it was a success. Taste of Viaporin Kekri was exactly the source of knowledge and practical experience that author hoped it to be. She tries to tame her critical nature and

not to focus on project's shortcomings (such as not taking timely actions to measure its personal effect on guests or marketing effect on the broader audience), but rather see them as opportunities for future development of Taste of Viaporin Kekri which due to its many benefits, both for Suomenlinna and students behind the project, secured its place as a newly established tradition of Viaporin Kekri event. The learning outcome of this thesis work and advantages it gave to author will be discussed in greater detail in next chapter.

3 Thesis discussion

This thesis is an exploration of storytelling in relation to experience design. To use storytelling efficiently, one should be aware of how exactly stories influence people and how story elements function within the narrative. The knowledge of storytelling nature is directly related to the success of experience built around it. Thus, on a broad level, the subject of this paper is relevant to experience industry because it combines different perspectives and draws conclusions that help to comprehend the logic behind the application of storytelling in experiences. What this thesis brought to author on an individual scope will be described in the following subchapters.

3.1 Thesis process

Writing this thesis was an enjoyable process, despite some difficulties author had to face along the way. The subject of this paper is of a personal interest to her, so it was exciting to conduct research, study sources from different fields, and discover connections between the notions. Author is glad that she had an opportunity to explore something that feels relatable to her professional aspirations and that will be of use in her future work. Because of a personal involvement with Viaporin Kekri, established interest in experiences and visual design, and support provided by her future thesis supervisor, Violeta Salonen, it was easy to choose the subject and begin working on it.

Producing experiential event with a level of authority that was granted to author cannot be called anything less than a thrilling adventure. Suomenlinna and its mysterious spaces were amazing sources of inspiration, and it felt as if ancient Finnish myths were telling a story to author and her writing partner, rather than they were creating it. Approaching event creation with new understanding of human nature and powers of storytelling was an experience drastically different from whatever she went through before. To “play” theatre and create an event that is an actual representation of the phrase “out-of-the-ordinary”, to fill the story of the event with deeply personal but approachable meanings, to extend the event experience beyond the venue walls, all of that while working with a group of brilliant engaged people was a truly wonderful way to finish four years of university studies.

In terms of timeline, the thesis writing process was somewhat stretched over a long period of time, overall taking almost a year. After execution of Taste of Viaporin Kekri and Viaporin Kekri, author had to postpone writing of thesis for several months due to a series of events in her personal life, and it was not easy to get back on track. Another difficulty,

that many graduating students have to experience, is combining thesis work with an actual work. That was the biggest challenge author had to go through. To concentrate on proper research work while working restaurant shifts till midnight was not easy. However, those were the only issues in the process of thesis writing that author had to encounter, and she considers herself very lucky. There were tedious and overwhelming moments, as in any difficult work, but those were never boring and always rewarding. Overall, the writing of this paper was a laborious, but exciting and extremely inspiring affair.

3.2 Learning outcomes

The thesis objectives were defined not only through the logic of the subject in question and the results of preliminary literature research, but also in accordance to author's personal interests. She volunteered to create Taste of Viaporin Kekri because the promise of opportunities that event held intrigued author. The subject of storytelling was chosen because of its relation to author's passion with cinema, visual storytelling, video games and fantasy storyworlds. The interest in processes that would explain storytelling importance in experience design was also an expression of individual curiosity. This way, whatever conclusions, findings and connections the result of the event production and theoretical research brought are of a personal importance to author and feel like a personal achievement of sorts.

The biggest revelation was exploring the nature of storytelling from anthropological, narratological, and sociological angles, because combinations of these approaches is what made it clear for author why storytelling is such a powerful element in experience and event design. To review experiential theory and study it from neuroscientific and psychological points of view provided author with new perspectives about the subject and cemented her knowledge about it. Finally, author gained understanding of what roles storytelling plying in experience and design creation and how it can be utilized through practical experience of producing her own mini-event.

What is just as important is the ideas that this research and product execution planted in author. As she is still a part of Viaporin Kekri organisational team despite her upcoming graduation, and because Taste of Viaporin Kekri became another original tradition of its parent-event, author compounded a list of insights, ideas, sources, and discussion topics that she is going to bring up in the future team meetings. For example, transmedia and digital storytelling is something that became a particular interest for author and that she hopes to utilize in Viaporin Kekri 2019. Another point she feels a need to focus on is mar-

keting that was underrepresented in Taste of Viaporin Kekri despite it being a promotional event in the first place. Author believes that with newly acquired knowledge on experience and storytelling, she and Viaporin Kekri team can drastically change the marketing approach of the event.

In addition, working on this thesis pointed out to author areas of a future exploration. Experiential marketing, brand development, and their connection to brand story are something that author wants to investigate more. Since these topics are mostly discussed in relation to Viaporin Kekri, author feels the need to conduct a thorough research on Finnish mythology in Finnish-language sources in order to find new meanings, collect inspiration, expand event's storyworld and gain an even deeper understanding of its background.

Finally, the event plan that is attached to appendix of this paper, theoretical framework for storytelling-based experiential events from chapter two, as well as overall research results, are applicable to a broad range of events and experiences, and can serve as a base, reference and example for production of experiential events that are grounded in dramaturgy and storytelling.

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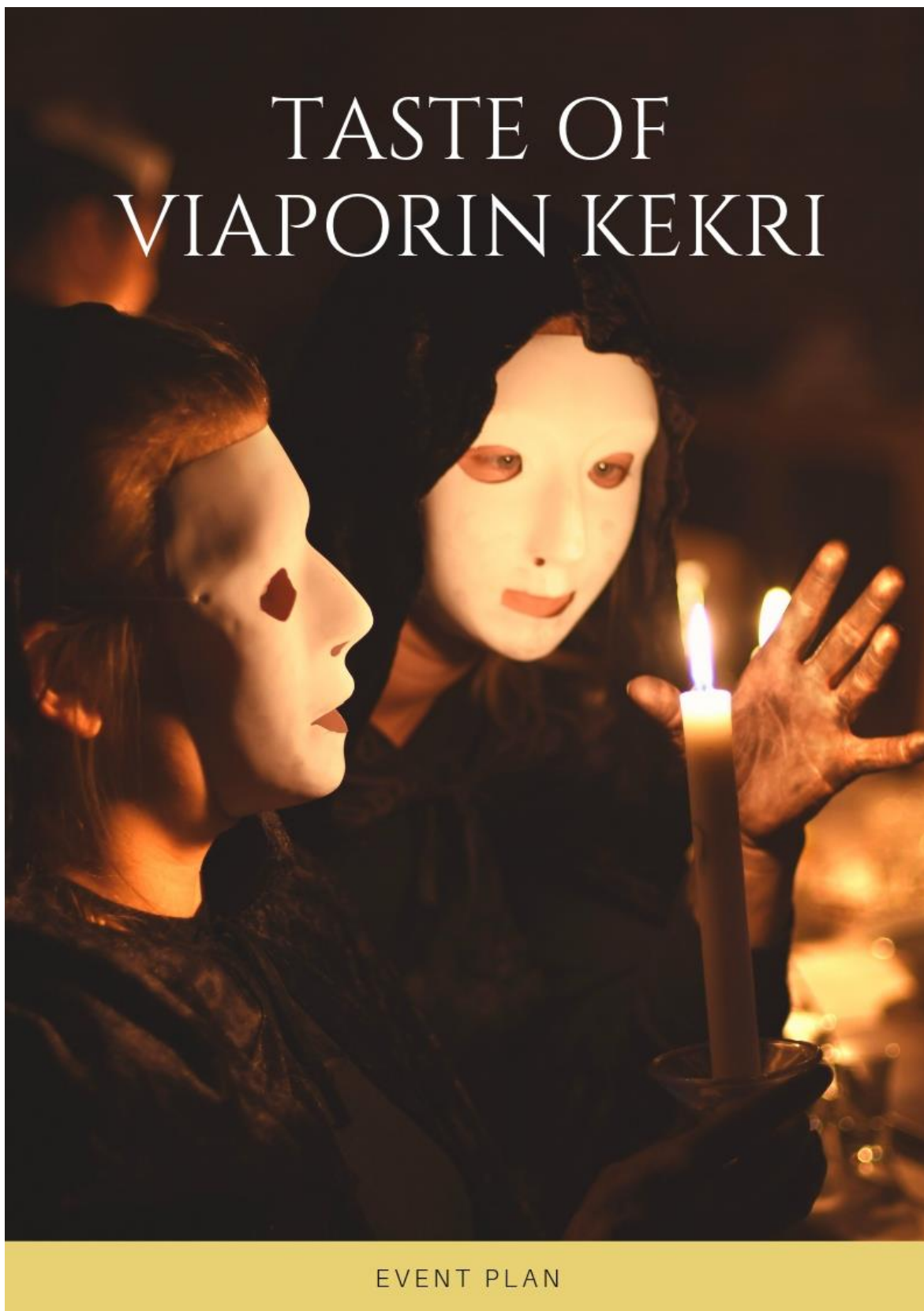
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ESSENCE

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was an experiential 1.5 hour mini-event that took place on 16th of October 2018, on Suomenlinna. It was part of annual one-day festival Viaporin Kekri that happened later that year, in November.

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was designed as an immersive multi-sensory first-hand experience strongly grounded in storytelling. It consisted of a short dinner intertwined with theatrical action that guests actively participated in.

PURPOSE

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was an experiential marketing stunt meant to provide a sample of its parent-event, Viaporin Kekri, by showcasing its main elements — feasting, performance, and mythology.

The audience was formed by bloggers and Instagram influencers whose followers correlate with Viaporin Kekri target audience — experience-seekers. Bloggers were expected to spread the word about main event over their social media accounts and this way give Viaporin Kekri a substantial boost in visibility.

GUESTS

Guest 1

📷 22.200 followers

Guest 2

📷 11.000 followers

Guest 3

📷 10.300 followers

Guest 4

📷 2.600 followers

Guest 5

📷 2.400 followers

Guest 6

Guest 7

Viaporin Kekri project
managers

Guests were encouraged to bring a companion. Overall number of participants was 12. Potential audience reach-out was 50000 people.

EXPERIENTIAL EVENT FRAMEWORK



STORYWORLD

Taste of Viaporin Kekri is part of Viaporin Kekri event and thus resides in its storyworld. Viaporin Kekri takes place on Suomenlinna islands, in our days. Geography and the notion of time repeat the reality, while the characters and rules of the world are fictional.

The story is rooted in ancient Finnish festival kekri that used to mark both the end of the harvesting season and the end of the calendar year. On kekri, people indulged in generous feast and payed their respects to the dead. It was believed that during festival spirits of dead ancestors come back to the world of living to check whether their land is taken care of. The main character was a Kekri Buck (Kekripukki), a young man dressed in a goat-like costume, who would roam around the village at night asking for offerings in exchange for promise of fertility for land and cattle.

Kekri Buck and the spirits of deceased became the main characters of Viaporin Kekri and were present in Taste of Viaporin Kekri as well. However, the story and therefore, the laws that govern the world and guide the characters' actions, were reshaped by the venue, Gunpowder Magazine (Ruutikellari in Finnish) that was used in a mini-event. It is a grand vaulted space with no windows that served as a storage for gunpowder back in the days. In Taste of Viaporin Kekri, it took shape of "the other world", the realm of spirits and darkness ruled by Kekripukki. Some details of the world were not explicitly explained; however, the story was thought through in great detail, and guiding character had answers for all why-s and how-s of guests. The outline of the world and its rules were revealed through storytelling elements such as invitation poster and guest agreement.

STORYWORLD: LOCATION



Gunpowder Magazine, Suomenlinna

Sources, from top: suomenlinna.fi; aslltk.com; topituomenen.fi

STORY

Invitation
poster

Selected people are invited to be guests at feast hosted by mighty Kekripukki, an ancient god-like spirit of harvest and death in his dark lair on Suomenlinna Islands. The participants receive a strange letter promising that “what is meant to be unseen” will reveal itself to them. The letter, however, doesn't disclose the details of the happening or who stands behind it.

Guest
agreement

On a set day, the guests arrive to Kauppatori, to catch a ferry to the islands, and are greeted by a middle-man in leather coat that gives them the papers to sign. The papers are agreements, and participants have to assent to possibility of them losing their soul and never returning to the big land.

Upon arrival, guests are greeted by their Guide. He explains who their mysterious host is and reveals that they are heading to the place that serves as an entrance to the spirit's realm ruled by Kekripukki. They walk together through Suomenlinna, to its distant part, to a small building under the hill by the sea.

Structure point— beginning

STORY

Cue music:
Kekripukkitulee,
20 sec piece

Upon entering the building, Guide explains that in order to secure their safety, the guests should give spirits an offering, a light. Participants walk into a completely dark hall, and for a glimpse of several seconds, see a horned bearded figure in the tiny window on the other side of the room lit by a small light. It becomes pitch-black dark again and Guide lights the candles and gives them one by one to several guests encouraging them to “share the light”. Shadow-like black-hooded creatures start to appear from darkness. Those are the spirits. They are quiet, their white faces are emotionless, but they seem to be attracted to light. They reach their blackened hands towards the candles, caress them, and gather around to admire them.

Cue music:
Ruokailu,
18 min piece
on repeat

Spirits proceed to place the lit candles on the tables in the far end of the hall, and this is the sign of the beginning of the feast. Guide and guests take their place at the tables, but Guide explains that they are not allowed to sit down, before Kekripukki joins them. At the end of the room, there are ancient wooden double-doors. Loud knock makes spirit shiver nervously. One door opens, and a hunchback spirit is seen dragging a chair across the floor. It places the chair at the head of the table, and it is time now to greet Pukki. He enters the room wearing a hay-adorned robe and bears his significance and power silently. His presence feels threatening, but nevertheless he nods to guests and everyone can sit down now. Suddenly walls go up in flames, this is the start of the feast.

Cue video
projection

Structure point — rising action

STORY

Guests find little pieces of paper next to their plates. Guide explains that as a curtesy, Kekripukki agreed to release them of sadness and sorrow. His servant Jesse, a trapped human soul who is now a pitiful hunchback figure, is to collect those papers. As he makes his somber walk around the tables, his pacing becomes slower, his breathing harder, and he leans more and more towards the ground. Burdened by collected sorrows, he finally sits in the corner and mourns his lost humanity with sad moaning. The spirits roam around the hall, too fearful to interact with guests, but drawn to humans' warmth they come quite close. The feast continues.

Structure point – culmination

After food and drinks are gone and guests are enjoying the conversations, something menacing starts to happen. Kekripukki is visibly displeased, he leaves the table and moves around, the spirits flock to him. Guide expresses his concern and tells guests that it might be a sign for them to leave. The fire goes off abruptly, the candles die, and the spirits start to move slowly towards the guests. Guide hastens everyone to leave immediately. Poor Jesse is helping humans by showing the way through the narrow dark hallway. The guests are fleeing the dark kingdom, while spirits are rushing after them making terrifying sounds. Finally, they reach the end of the hallway and safety. Guide closes heavy door behind them. Guests hear spirits banging and moaning, the noise of their disappointment and anger gradually fades away. Guide congratulates guests on escaping in one piece and praises their bravery. The adventure is over.

Projection is off

Cue music:
Pankene Henkesi
Edestä,
5 min piece on
repeat

Structure point – end



STORYWORLD: MAIN FEATURES

In short, the storyworld of Viaporin Kekri can be described in following terms:

Setting: Suomenlinna islands, modern time. Gunpowder Magazine — spirits' lightless realm ruled by Kekri Pukki.

Characters: Kekripukki, spirits of deceased, Jesse, Stranger, Guide, guests.

Objects: invitation poster, guest agreement, table placements, food and drinks, offerings, sorrows.

Rules and laws of the world:

- spirits and Pukki can leave their ghostly realm only on kekri day, that's why guests have to enter their world instead
- humans are unable to enter the spirits' realm
- guests of Taste of Viaporin Kekri are specifically invited by Pukki to participate in the feast and entertain him
- guests can't enter the spirits' realm without Guide
- guests are meant to give spirits an offering in the form of light to secure their safety
- human soul can get trapped in the world of dead forever

CHARACTERS

Guests

Participants of the event that perform as characters because of their high level of interaction and involvement into the story.

Stranger

Person who greets guests at Kauppatori; is part of the group of mysterious Guides, striders who are able to travel between the world of living and dead. Can be identified by long leather coat and blackened fingers, the prominent feature of Guides, whose hands turned black because of their close contact with otherworldly darkness. Helps to gather guests in one point, gives out the guests' agreements and ferry tickets. Handles practicalities in a matter-of-factly manner, as if all that is happening is an everyday, and even boring business.

Guide

Person helping guests to navigate through the island and a shadowy kingdom of Pukki. The link between the worlds of spirits and living. A peculiar figure dressed in black, that has blackened fingers and wears multiple amulets. The way of talking hints at possibility of the guide being centuries old. Has a power to enter the spirits' realm and bring guests with him. Seems to possess knowledge about human existence, Suomenlinna secrets, and death, but does not reveal much. Collects guest agreements, sees the participants to the venue, explains the practicalities without breaking the experience. Is responsible for guests' safety during the feast with Pukki.

CHARACTERS

Spirits

Silent souls of deceased living in the world of darkness. Harmless, but obedient to Kekripukki urges.

Kekripukki

A powerful dual-natured creature that can gift people with luck, but also bring merciless destruction. A god-like figure of agrarian communities, wears hay-adorned robe and a crown decorated with horns made of bare tree twigs. Uses thick tree branch as a staff, symbol of power and magic. Spends its days in the world of dead, in the company of its loyal spirits. Chaotic and unpredictable.

Jesse

A soul of visitor that got trapped in the spirits' realm. A hunchback figure in black deformed by the weight of human sorrows that he carries. Helps guests to escape his fate securing their retreat.

EVENT: DETAILS

Costumes

Spirits' costumes consisted of white masks and black hooded capes used for Viaporin Kekri. Their faces and fingers were smudged with black paint. Jesse didn't wear a mask and had a hunchback. Kekripukki costume was a DIY project created with materials that were at hand, such as tree branches. Guide was dressed in clothes of his own possession. Stranger wore one of the organisers grandfather's leather coat.

Flames on the wall

An atmosphere-creating element was meant to add a modern twist to a mythology-based story and visually enrich it. The flames were created with 360-degree projector borrowed from Haaga-Helia UAS. Projections of moving flames were positioned at the entrance part of the hall, so that the guests sitting at the table in the other part of the room could enjoy the view of flames going up the wall without projection lights distracting their vision.





EVENT: DETAILS

Music

Musical pieces were specifically created to enhance particular parts of the story and produce theatrical multi-layered effect. The music was composed by Peter Flink, a di-j who experimented with different sounds and came up with ambient compositions that created an otherworldly, slightly menacing feeling. Three tracks were used in the event. Kekripukkitulee was meant to emphasize the grand entrance moment and first appearance of Kekripukki. Ruokailu was a quiet but somewhat unnerving 18 minutes piece that served as a background music during the offering ritual, sorrow ritual, and the feast. Fast-paced and threatening Pakene Henkesi Edestä played during hurried retreat of guests and Guide.

Feast

In accordance to the story, food was designed to be simple and rustic. It consisted mostly of meats, fish, cheese, bread, and beer. It was arranged in heaps on wooden plates and decorated with herbs, apples, and little bouquets of wild and autumn flowers.

EXPERIENTIAL EVENT CHARACTERISTICS

Authentic

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was authentic in two ways. Firstly, it made references to traditional Finnish myths. Secondly, it was an original story created specifically for given setting, audience, and purpose. It didn't have analogues in a Helsinki area that would explore experience creation on the same level of storytelling involvement.

Memorable

Taste of Viaporin Kekri was an out-of-the ordinary experience. It took place on Suomenlinna island in off-season, in a venue that is unavailable for casual visitors. It combined storytelling, theatrical, gastronomical and digital elements at once that is a rare occurrence in local event scene. It directly affected participants emotive state — it was frightening, exciting, curious, and unexpected. It is also deeply personal experience through participating in sorrows ritual. All these factors turned Taste of Viaporin Kekri into memorable event.

Multi-sensory

Taste of Viaporin Kekri directly affected almost all senses. Sight — through flaming projections, characters' costumes, table decorations, venue features etc. Smell — through aromas of food (fresh bread, cheese, meats, apples), burning candles, wooden floors of the venue. Sound — through specifically designed for the event musical pieces and Guide's calming commentary. Taste — through food and beer.

Analogous with theater

Taste of Viaporin Kekri explicitly followed the rules of theatrical engagement by creating a moment of grand entrance, meaningful use of sound and lightning effect, and by building an experience around literal moving through space as guests had to come to Suomenlinna from Helsinki, go through the island to reach the venue, and then explore Gunpowder Magazine from the inside.

EXPERIENTIAL EVENT CHARACTERISTICS

Thematically cohesive

Being part of Viaporin Kekri, Taste of Viaporin Kekri followed it both in terms of branding and visual appearance, and in terms of approach to storytelling. The same fonts, logos, and style were used for graphic design materials, spirits were dressed in roughly the same costumes, and same type of story was used as a base. Inside of the event, all elements were connected as well. The orange of flame projections was repeated in flower composition on the tables. The table styling followed the rustic origins of the story.

Visually rich

Taste of Viaporin Kekri used both physical and digital props to create a vibrant memorable visuals. Tables were decorated with bouquets composed of purchased flowers and dry October grass found outside of the venue. Decoration followed the theme of autumn, harvest, and death of nature. All performers were dressed in costumes and ripped of their human appearance. Digital element was presented by flaming projections that covered one-third of 130 m2 space.

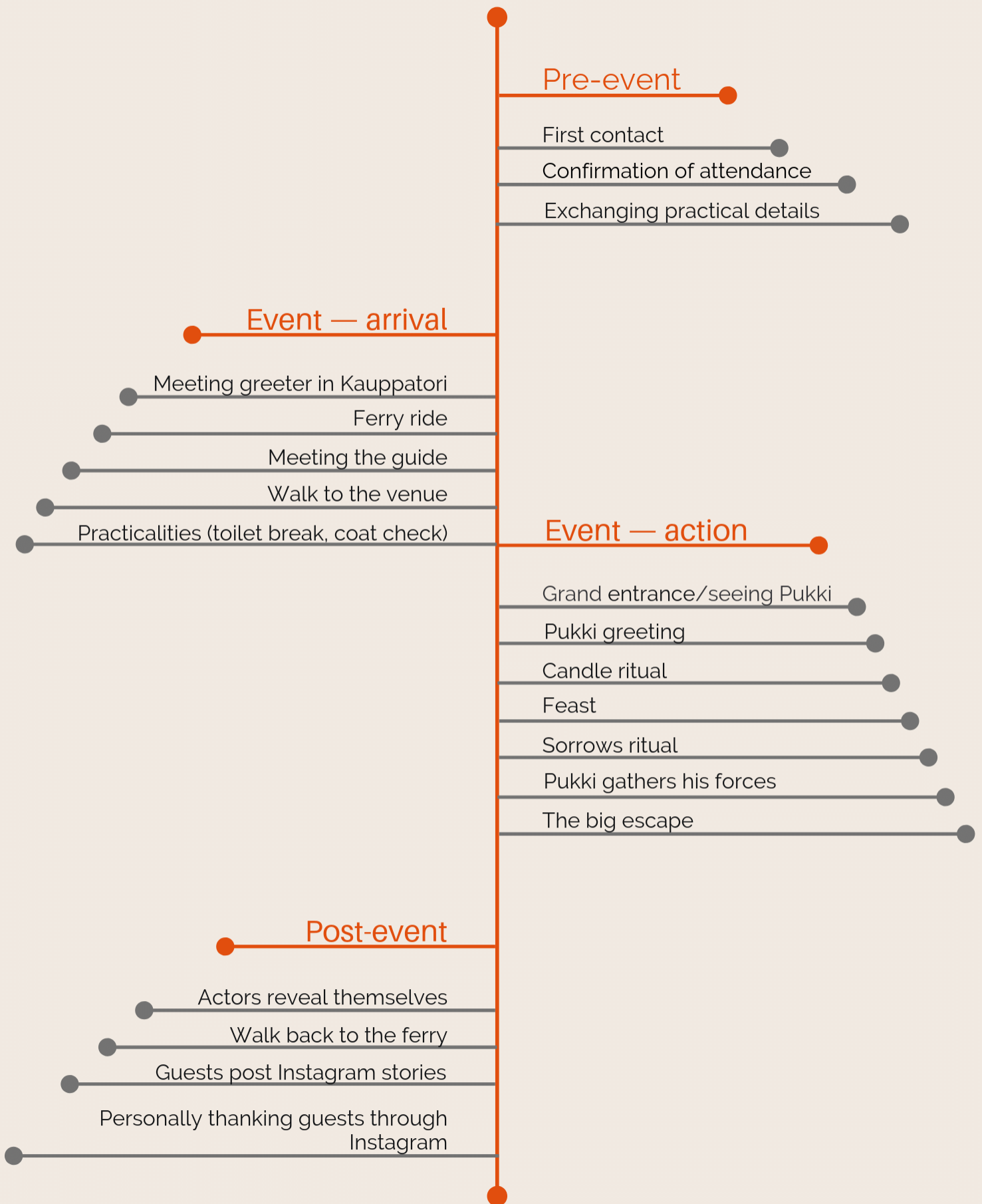
Interactive

Guests were directly involved into action through interacting with the guide, offering and sorrows ritual, feasting, and communicating between each other. Even though their actions didn't affect the flow of the story and were controlled by the script, their participance was a primal element of the event experience overall.



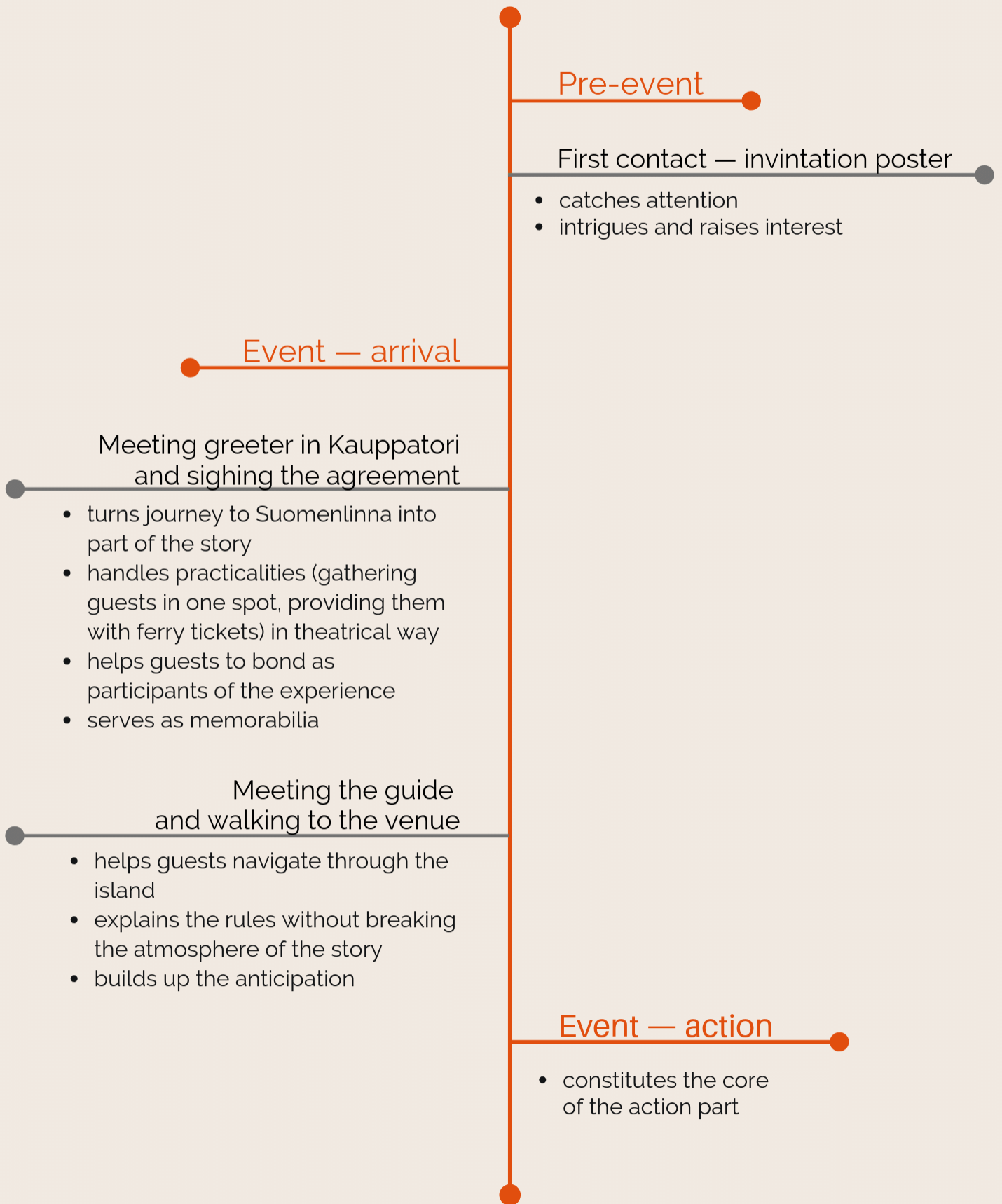
THE PRODUCT

CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP



THE PRODUCT

STORYTELLING ELEMENT IN CUSTOMER JOURNEY



INVITATION POSTER



TASTE OF VIAPORIN KEKRI

16.10. at 15.00 in Suomenlinna

You are honoured an entry to the place
where no time exists, no light casts shadow
and no word is uttered.

On 16th of October, that what is meant to
be unseen will reveal itself to you. Have no
fear, you will be safe.

Even in the darkest corners of Suomenlinna,
you will be treated as a guest and met with
food and drinks. But that generosity comes
at price.

Come. Taste it. Feel it. See it.



THE PRODUCT

GUEST AGREEMENT



TASTE OF VIAPORIN KEKRI *Agreement*

Dear guest.

You were invited to the place where no living human has an entry. A thrilling adventure awaits you, but it is just as dangerous as exciting. We promise you protection, but your safety is your duty only. Be attentive, cautious and respectful, and you will leave the island in one piece.

After this boat reaches the shores of Suomenlinna, you'll meet your guide and guard. He will lead you through the darkness and won't let you go astray. Guide might answer your questions, but remember that some mysteries of Suomenlinna shadowy world are not to be explained.

By signing this agreement, you release the organisers of responsibility over intactness of your body and soul. In case you had to stay on Suomenlinna permanently, we don't take upon ourselves the task of notifying your relatives or arranging your funeral.

PLEASE, LEAVE YOUR SIGNATURE HERE

Bear in mind, that despite the possibility of losing your soul, this event is meant for you to enjoy. We praise your bravery and curiosity.

Regards,
organisers of Taste of Viaporin Kekri

PERSONALISED TABLE PLACEMENT



SILJA SUNDBERG
and friend

The mighty Kekripukki invites you to feast with him. Enjoy this simple food and curious drinks, share them with your neighbour, and be grateful for your life and for the warm light homes that wait for you on the big land.

Kekripukki gifts you an opportunity of releasing your sins and sorrows. His servant Jesse will be carrying your burdens from now on. Please, write them down on the paper that you find next to your plate and Jesse will do his sombre round to collect them during the feast.

The drinks are provided by Kekripukki's friends
from

COOL HEAD BREW





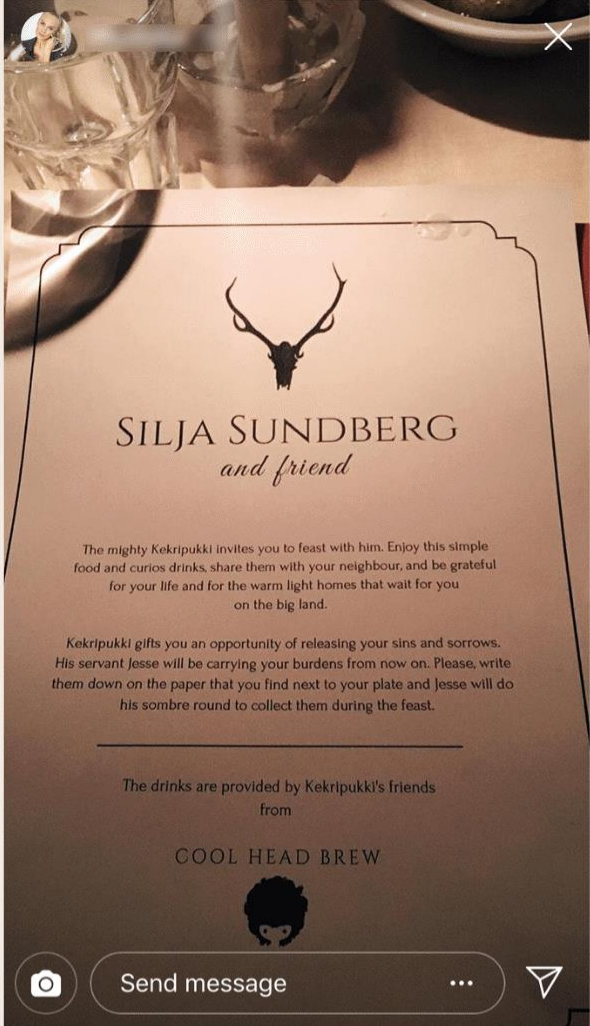
THE PRODUCT



THE PRODUCT



THE PRODUCT





ALEKSANDRA DVORNIKOVA

2019

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ERALP KAHYAOGU

